

The Caretaker's Cat.

The caretaker's cat was not happy. Wherever she tried to sit someone shooed her away. If it weren't for the big Tom at the pub opposite who hissed and spat at her, she would have had a mosey over to St. Andrews on the corner to check out the family of church mice who had taken up residence.

Goodness only knows what was going on. Living at the village school she was usually the centre of attention with everyone stopping to give her a stroke, to which she purred on cue. Whenever a child was upset, she was always called upon for a cuddle to take the unfortunate girl or boy's mind off her or his woes. Yes, she was a Very Important Cat. But not today.

The children had not even arrived at school but everywhere was a hive of activity. Bustling and tidying and straightening. Mending and restoring. Cleaning and painting until everywhere gleamed like new. It had been like this for days. Old faded pictures had been taken down in the corridor and replaced; classroom walls were decorated with newly painted artwork. The best school work was put out on display. The toilets were scrubbed and polished and new soap was at every basin. Tempers were fraught and the normally placid headmaster was going around jabbing his finger frantically.

The children were lining up outside. The disruptive bigger boys were being siphoned off and led out to a waiting bus. Hmm, thought the cat. 'I wonder where they are off to'.

She leaped up to an open window and was perplexed to hear the teacher telling the children "now for today if you know the answer to my question put your right hand up, but if you don't know the answer put your left hand up. I want all hands up. Johnny do you know which is your right hand? All put up your right hands, put them down, now all put up your left hands. Good. Please remember all hands must go up".

In the next door classroom the cat watched as the teacher went round the class straightening children's ties and checking what was on the tables. "George, bring your catapult here - you can have it back at the end of school. Tilly, don't wipe your nose on your sleeve. Sit up straight everyone and start filling in your worksheets. Quietly now".

The cat walked around the outside of the school and saw the headmaster opening the door to a smartly dressed lady with a briefcase. The cat followed them. As the headmaster walked down the corridor slightly ahead of the lady, the cat saw that he had his hand out at right angles to his arm. 'How strange' thought the cat. She slid past then turned back to look again, but this time from the front where anyone approaching could clearly see it. There, boldly written on the headmaster's palm, were the letters 'OFSTED'.

Yes, the School Inspector had arrived.

