

One of the fantastic things about being an MP is that you get to visit schools on a regular basis in your constituency. I meet wonderfully innocent, and therefore disarmingly honest, children of all ages who have no qualms in asking the question that brings pride and embarrassment in equal measure to their teachers.

Yet it is their teachers who enable this freedom of thought, quite often without even thinking about it. The best educators are those who go beyond the rigorous structures of curriculum or lesson planning and allow pupils to explore their imagination and curiosity in order to inspire learning.

That is why I always love reading the nominations in the KM's favourite teacher feature. The teachers you like and remember are often the most inspirational. I left school nearly 20 years ago now but I still recall my favourite teachers from both Primary and Secondary School, and both of whom I hope are secretly following my career with some pride that they shaped me into the woman I am today.

Mr Pickering was my 3rd year teacher at junior school. He was a large (isn't everyone at that age) ginger bearded man who let our imaginations run wild, especially when it came to writing stories. At secondary school, Miss Morton was my History and later on Politics teacher. She would bounce around the classroom writing and drawing frenetically on the blackboard, keeping an entire class enraptured.

Teachers and politicians rarely enjoy mutual love and will probably disagree on lots of issues, but politicians should be mindful that they often owe their careers to those who taught and inspired them. So next time the honest, innocent child asks the embarrassing question they should perhaps congratulate the teacher for giving their pupils the freedom of thought in the first place.