



With friends like these who needs enemies – El Mazi, 15

A few months ago there was a boy who won an award at school. He used to get into trouble a lot, but he turned himself around. His friends teased him for it. They thought anyone who wins awards is 'un-cool'. The boy had been called 'outstanding' in the report from the local business he'd worked for as part of 'Inspires Me Week', which helped all students to be inspired about their future. So why would his so-called friends bring him down? Shouldn't they be proud of him...?

Coming from a school with many behavioural problems, every day I witness students who are pressured to muck about and chat back to teachers. "Come on, let's bunk" is something I hear almost every day. Peer-pressure is obviously common; whether it be misbehaving, smoking or getting involved in bitching or other people's conflicts. It's sad to think about all the pupils who are fooled into throwing their futures away just to look cool in front of their 'friends'.

That boy who won the award two months ago deserved it and changed his ways. So what if his mates didn't like it? Many people bring others down so they can feel better about themselves. Just because there are people who aren't willing to succeed, does not mean you have to be one of them. After all, it's your life.

The first year of secondary school was so different from any other time I'd spent during my school life. I made new friends who didn't go to my primary school and I longed to fit in. I ended up hanging around with people who had a negative attitude towards school. Looking back I felt a bit like I was being brainwashed by my new 'friends'. Whenever I did something bad I felt like the group was accepting me. In hindsight they didn't really care about me, or each other. My behaviour got so bad that when my tutor met my mum during parents evening, I was told to go somewhere else so they could speak alone. I think my Tutor was

afraid of how I might react if I had stayed there.

Education is something my parents care about. One of their main priorities is to make sure we succeed in school so we can have a stable future. They know how

In my opinion, being different means you stand out. Especially in today's society, when it's really hard to find jobs.

People who bring others down have self-esteem issues. They want you not to succeed because they feel they won't.

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hard it is to survive in the 'real world'. Once my mum realised how bad I had become she was massively upset and decided to ram home some harsh truths about life. I felt so ashamed. Not just because I had let down my parents but because I had realised how much valuable time I had wasted.

I changed my ways. I found a love for learning once again and this time I wasn't ready to throw my education out the window just to fit in. It's funny how now I don't even speak to that group of ex-friends. I don't even care about fitting in.

That way they're not alone. If they don't care about education that's their choice, it's not yours. They won't have fancy cars, and the nice houses (if that's what you want). If you want to succeed then pay attention in class and be somebody you can be proud of.

Quality assured

By Oya Varol, 18

Great news from the Exposure office! We've become the first Haringey-based youth organisation to gain a 'Bronze Level London Youth Quality Mark', a special youth quality assurance award accredited by City & Guilds.

This shows that Exposure is a good environment for young people, committed to providing the best service for us.

By achieving the award, Exposure has proven that it is open, responsible and safe, and can meet legal requirements. This will help improve fundraising prospects.

As a young person, it makes me feel I'm attending the right place. Exposure provides a supportive and stimulating place for young people like me.

The assessment looked at important areas such as child protection, equality, health and safety, young people's achievement, staffing and management.



Exposure films...

By Florin Jacquin, 18

Exposure's young people have just put the final touches to a new film about the riots that began in Tottenham last August.

Project Leader, Florence Codjoe said "Hometown Glory" explores the effect on Tottenham and its people, with an attempt to dispel the myths of an uninspired community."

To see Hometown Glory, along with all other films Exposure has made, visit www.youtube.com/exposureuk

