

Mirror, mirror on the wall

Marc Armitage

An unusual thing happened on a bus journey of mine the other day – or at least I hope it was unusual.

I was on a bus in London on a very rainy day heading to a school I was due to work at (and no that's not the unusual bit despite the fact that some of my friends and colleagues think I wouldn't know what a bus looked like if it came up and bit me). It was this: a group of young children and adults very clearly from some kind of childcare setting (corporate staff clothing, children in similar wet weather gear) got on the bus too.

One of the adults was, quite frankly, obnoxious. She snapped and snarled at all the kids in their wet-weather clothing and generally ignored everything that was going on around her including the obvious stares she was getting from a number of other passengers.

It didn't stop there though as at a number of points she interrupted her obviously important conversation with another member of staff to bark orders at one or more of her charges all of which were in the 'whatever-ever-it-is-you're-doing-just-stop-it' category. To give just one example, she told one of the kids in no uncertain terms to stop what he was doing ... and the thing he was doing was making shapes with his finger in the condensation inside the window he was sat alongside.

Up to this point the situation was being quietly filed in the 'list-of-things-you-are-doing-that-are-winding-me-up' category. But I didn't say anything. The finger drawing comment irked me though, and I was thinking of saying something about this when (fortunately perhaps) they got off the bus.

I got to thinking about this afterwards and thought maybe I should be more charitable; maybe this happened simply because it was a bad day. It didn't.

By pure chance this person also got on the same bus as me on the way back from working at my school and was just as rude, obnoxious and blind to the two children in school uniforms that were now travelling with her. These were her children, and I know that because she told one of them she was fed up of dealing with him and was going to tell his father to sort him out when they got home. All the time she was ranting on about this-and-that he just sat quietly in his seat with a vacant expression, drawing shapes with his finger in the condensation in the window. And in turn she told him, in no uncertain terms, to stop doing it.

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