

Harness power and persuasion

By Karen Doherty and Georgia Coleridge

The year ahead will be a difficult year for school Heads. As the financial thumbscrews of the recession clamp down on families, parents are becoming even more demanding: they want to justify the sacrifice they're making for their child's education and proof that it's worth every penny.

Stressed parents are certainly more unreasonable. According to the *Daily Telegraph*, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of solicitors specialising in education law, who will side with disgruntled parents and 'blow a hole in the arguments of the educational establishment'.

Then there is the perennial problem of emotional parents, who won't listen to reason when they feel their child has been wronged. Last term, one mother marched into the headmaster's office at a large public school, absolutely shaking with rage.

"I am a lioness," she announced to the Head, "and you have unfairly punished my cub. Now you will have to deal with me." (Her cub, by the way, was a hulking 18-year-old, caught out-of-hours and out-of-bounds at a local pub.) And you thought Dame Susie Leather was a problem.

Equally difficult are the over-anxious parents – a nightmare for boarding schools, if they won't leave their children alone to settle in. Apparently one Hong Kong family was so worried about leaving their son at boarding school they practically camped outside his bedroom window for two weeks. When he



opened his curtains in the morning, there they were, sitting on a wall, waving at him.

And is there a prep school Head who hasn't been bombarded with helpful advice from bossy parents on how to run their school?

So how can you keep parents on your side, so you can spend more time running your school and less time managing the parents?

We can give you the answer. For our bestselling book, *Seven Secrets of Successful Parenting*, we interviewed literally hundreds of parents, and we know how they tick. We have divided them into seven types. They all have their good points, which is why they've chosen your school. But they all have their bad points, which is why some of them can be so difficult.

With eight children between us, at a mixture of independent day and boarding schools, we have inside information on what parents really want. We've also interviewed a wide range of school Heads, and pass on their success stories and ideas.

For more information visit website KarenAndGeorgia.com