

## 6.3 Education in the home, schools and universities

### YOUR CHALLENGE

1. Use a chart such as the one on page 80 to collect evidence from boxes A–K on these pages which supports or challenges the following statement:  
**The opportunities for better education increased during Elizabeth's reign.**
2. Write a paragraph developing or correcting the statement above, using the evidence in your chart.



The number of children going to school increased during Elizabeth's reign. This tells us that it was a time of relative prosperity, when some people, at least, had enough money to pay for their children's education. In addition, learning was valued and individual aspirations were encouraged. However, for the majority of people, education was a luxury, especially when worried about starvation, taxation, war or disease. At times when the population was just trying to survive, most people did not send their sons to school regularly.

**A.** Most people were still too poor to send their children to school. By the end of Elizabeth's reign, 30 per cent of men and fewer than 10 per cent of women could read or write, although the majority of gentry and yeomen were literate.

**B.** Educational opportunities increased for all classes and ages, but it was mainly boys from well-off families who benefited the most. The upper classes increasingly saw a university education as necessary for a career at court.

**C.** A countryman, speaking in the early seventeenth century, said:

*This is all we go to school for: to read common prayers at church and set down common prices at markets, write a letter and make a bond, set down the day of our births, our marriage day, and make our wills when we are sick for the disposing of our goods when we are dead.*

**D.**



▲ Discipline was harsh in many Elizabethan schools. Schoolmasters frequently used a birch rod to beat pupils who had not done their work or had broken a rule.

The background image shows a public school; these became really popular for the sons of the wealthy classes in Elizabeth's reign.