

The school staff room at lunchtime. Teachers and teaching assistants are sat eating.

GEOFF My class are doing a Singathon for the Christmas Appeal. Do you want to sponsor them?

LAURA I've heard them practise. If you do a sponsored silence instead, I'll give you a fiver.

GEOFF That's not very charitable!

LAURA I don't feel very charitable at this time of year. Too many charity ads.

KAREN I know what you mean. Neglected children looking at you like puppies...

LAURA ...puppies looking at you like neglected children.

GEOFF You old miseries. It's supposed to be the season of goodwill.

KAREN I've got goodwill. But I do my bit already. I have a direct debit that goes out each month to a school charity in Tanzania. I just don't like the way these adverts tug at your heart strings. They make the children look so pathetic. It's all about pity.

MARY Well, if that's what works, isn't it better the charities get more money?

LAURA Not if loads of it goes on advertising. If I give money to charity, I want it to go to the people who need it, not to pay for TV adverts.

MARY Do you give money to charity?

LAURA Not at the moment, no.

MARY Then the ads aren't aimed at you. Maybe they need a bit of pity to get people to part with their money, to make them feel good about helping.

KAREN It shouldn't be about how you feel. It should be about what's right. I think it's wrong that children anywhere don't get a good education, because they're just like our children.

TOM But what about children in this country? Lots of them have a miserable time too. We can't fix the world.

LAURA I can't fix my washing machine. That's where my money will be going.

LUCY I think it's best to put your charity where it makes the biggest difference. You can save a life in some countries for the same money it costs to look after a dog in Battersea Dogs' home here.

MARY But the puppies look so cute.

LUCY That's just the problem. It should be a rational decision, not based on which charity has the best adverts.

LAURA You're all making me feel guilty now. Geoff, I'll give you £2 if you promise not to do "Away in a Manger".