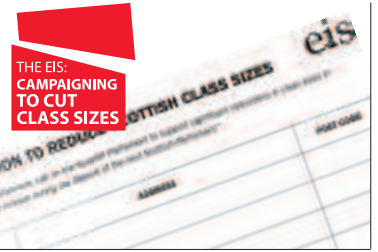


Nursery teachers axed
Are local authorities damaging nursery education?



Class Sizes petition
Have you signed up yet?



SEJ



One Scotland celebrating diversity

How education can help create a truly diverse Scotland for all young people p08

Financial Advice for Retired or Retiring Members

Retirement can be a time of change and uncertainty. Your income and outgoings will change dramatically, as will your needs and objectives.

If you are approaching retirement you may need advice on the best way to put your savings to work or, if you have already retired, you may want someone to check that you have done the right thing with your investments.

Lump Sum and Investment Advice

When you retire you receive a tax free lump sum from the superannuation scheme equal to 3 x your annual pension. We can help by offering independent advice on a number of ways to invest this lump sum to provide you with an additional regular income. In many cases you can still access your capital if you need to and even retain potential growth on your investment!

Investing in this way could provide an extremely tax efficient regular income to supplement your Superannuation pension.

In addition to this, many of you will have savings or investments such as ISAs, PEPs, Bonds etc. that might not be suitable any more given your change in circumstances.

It is important to review these investments and we can offer independent advice on restructuring your existing portfolio, or even on improving on the low rates of return from some Bank and Building Society accounts.

Inheritance Tax

One of the greatest concerns for many of our members is Inheritance Tax, currently charged at 40% and applicable to all estates valued over £285,000*.

This may seem like a high figure but, bearing in mind that property values - which have risen sharply in recent years - are included in the estate, as well as savings, investments and life insurance, many members exceed this tax bracket without realising it.

With good advice and sound financial planning it is possible to reduce or even wipe out any tax liability your estate may have.

For further information on Investments or Inheritance Tax Planning call us now on 0141 332 8004 and an EIS Independent Financial Adviser can discuss your requirements further.



08

Multicultural Scotland

How schools can support cultural diversity.



12

Put it to the vote!

Education is the big issue.



14

Nursery teachers

Defending pre-five education.



18

Malawi teachers

Global Teachers making an impact.



Special features

Mobile misuse	16
Page Scholarship	20
Health issues	22
Road safety	23
SEJ Forum	29

Regular features

News	04
Council News	07
EIS Contacts	24
Recipes	26
Crossword	27
Sudoku	28
Letters	30



Comment



Celebrating Scotland's cultural diversity

Every area of Scotland has welcomed into its schools children from minority cultural and ethnic backgrounds. The EIS welcomes this diversity of cultures which enriches all our lives.

Many youngsters from a minority ethnic background are members of families well established in communities throughout Scotland. But in recent years many young people have come with their families from countries which have recently joined the European Union. Many other pupils are members of the families of asylum seekers. Pupils and teachers alike report on the great value which children bring to schools through their diverse cultural and linguistic experiences.

However, these welcome developments place new responsibilities on the Scottish Parliament, the Executive and Councils. Many young people, whatever their age and family background need well planned support in learning English as an additional language.

Many of the young people from minority cultural and ethnic backgrounds are exposed to risk. This is especially true of the children of asylum seekers. Although they are welcomed in schools by fellow pupils and by teachers and other staff, they are too often subject to racism and racist abuse by both individuals and groups in Scotland. The shameful and brutal practice of dawn raids on some of the most vulnerable families and children still continues in this country.

Scotland must celebrate the diversity of the population which now lives, works and is educated within this country. The teaching profession will be enriched by the recruitment of members of all communities and cultures in Scotland. For the future prosperity of the country we should encourage more families and young people to come and live in Scotland. In this SEJ, we look at some of the steps that schools can take to support a multi-cultural Scotland. We also examine the treatment of children from asylum-seeking families, including the shameful practices of dawn raids and detention in Dungavel. ■

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Photo: Alan Richardson

Champion for Europe

EIS leader elected as President of European education body

“...teachers too must work together across boundaries to formulate strategies and seek to influence key international institutions in favour of high quality, public education...”

Ronnie Smith,
EIS General Secretary

EIS General Secretary, Ronnie Smith, has been elected to serve for a three year term as President of the Education International Pan-European structure, which incorporates the European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE). Education International (EI), based in Brussels, is the world’s largest Global Union Federation and its European region represents around 140 teacher organisations in 41 European countries.

Following his election at the triennial conference held in Luxembourg, Mr Smith said, “Coming from a small country positioned on the periphery of Europe, it is a great privilege to be given the opportunity to serve as President and confirms Scotland’s growing standing in

the international education community. Europe is a very diverse region, in terms of the size and wealth of countries. And while our education systems vary greatly, it is clear that Europe is increasing its interest and influence on national education systems.”

He continued, “Just as our governments coordinate their actions and exchange information and ideas, teachers too must work together across boundaries to formulate strategies and seek to influence key international institutions in favour of high quality, public education with properly qualified and remunerated teachers at the heart of that provision. I look forward to working with colleagues across Europe in the coming period to develop and promote the policies needed to meet these challenges.” ■

Survey on occupational stress and health

A study is being conducted at Liverpool John Moores University into occupational stress, investigating the experience of physical symptoms and beliefs regarding health. The study has been funded by the HSE as part of their initiative to investigate the relationship between stress and health.

Participation involves completion of an online questionnaire, which takes approximately 20 minutes and can be accessed from the internet. The online format ensures maximum confidentiality and anonymity, and all data will be covered by the Data Protection Act (1998).

If you decide to take part you have the option to be entered into a prize draw, with the first prize a £250 holiday voucher, and runners-up prizes including 2 x £50 Amazon vouchers, 5 x £20, and 7 x £15 Amazon vouchers.

If you would like to participate then please enter the address below into your browser, or alternatively the survey can be accessed from a link on the EIS website. The questionnaire can be completed at any time from the internet.

www.survey.ljmu.ac.uk/ljmuocc ■

New Year honour for EIS member

Long time EIS member George McGrattan, principal teacher of computing at Garnock Academy in North Ayrshire, was among those honoured in the Queen’s New Year Honours list. Mr McGrattan was awarded an MBE for services to education. The SEJ congratulates Mr McGrattan on his award.

Others in education who received honours included Highland education director Bruce Robertson (OBE), Tom Drake of the SQA (OBE), Head of Support for Learning at SEED Mike Gibson (OBE), and Fiona Tunstall (MBE), a clerical assistant at St Brigid’s primary school in Glasgow. ■

If you would like any further details concerning the questionnaire then please contact the research team using the details below:

Laura Goodwin MSc, BSc.
Tel: 0151 231 4488
Email: L.Goodwin1@ljmu.ac.uk



Little progress in making schools safer workplaces

Figures released by the EIS show that there has been little progress in making Scotland's schools and colleges safer places in which to work. In the last year, injuries to teachers and lecturers resulting from accidents or assaults during working hours have led to total compensation payouts (including legal expenses) of around a quarter of a million pounds. The number of serious incidents and the level of compensation awarded has remained almost unchanged since last year, illustrating that progress has been slow and that much more needs to be done to make all schools and colleges a safe place for teaching and learning.

The major compensation awards to EIS members in the last 12 months have all been the result of accidents, such as slips and falls, or from attacks by pupils on teaching staff. The figure of almost £250,000 (comprising of over £170,000 in compensation to claimants with the remainder being the estimated legal costs to employers) illustrates that the health and safety of those working and learning in schools must take a higher priority.

EIS General Secretary, Ronnie Smith, said, "The lack of progress in making our schools and colleges the safest possible environment for teaching and learning is a real cause for concern. While it is a fact of life that accidents occur, all employers have an obligation to do everything they can to protect their employees and to ensure that they can work in a safe and secure environment. Many of the personal injury incidents that we are highlighting here fall into the category of being 'avoidable incidents' where, had the correct procedures been followed, then the injury would have been far less likely to occur. A large number of incidents are slips and falls in cases where following correct safety procedures could have prevented the injuries. If employers take more care in

providing safe facilities for pupils and teachers, then injuries of this type will become less common – and it is in everyone's interest for that to happen."

The figures on compensation claims held by the EIS show that the biggest risk to teachers and lecturers in the workplace remains slips, trips or falls. Many of these incidents result in injuries and all incidents have the potential of very serious consequences. While slips, trips and falls are the most common hazards in the workplace, they are also among the most easily avoided by compliance with health and safety law and observing Health and Safety Executive (HSE) guidance. Health & Safety representatives in all educational establishments in Scotland have access to relevant advice and information via the EIS Health & Safety handbook.

Removing slip, trip and fall hazards would improve safety not just for teaching staff, but also for pupils, students and visitors to establishments who also have a clear right to expect a safe environment in our schools, colleges and universities.

While many of the accidents which happen in our schools and colleges could be avoided by proper application of correct procedures, the issue of assaults on teaching staff cannot be solved so readily. Teachers, in common with many other public service workers, are far too often on the receiving end of assaults in the course of their work. Employers have a duty to assess and minimise the risk facing teachers, and also to send a clear message that all violent conduct – physical or verbal – will not be tolerated or condoned. ■

"While it is a fact of life that accidents occur, all employers have an obligation to do everything they can to protect their employees and to ensure that they can work in a safe and secure environment."

Ronnie Smith,
EIS General Secretary

Compensation for EIS members 2005/2006	
Personal Injury, slipped in school car park	£50,000
Personal Injury, slipped on water	£5,000
Personal Injury, injured while trying to break up pupils fighting	£2,475
Personal Injury, slipped in school car park	£8,000
Personal Injury, slipped and fell in dining hall	£2,800
Personal Injury, hearing loss due to exposure to noise	£4,500
Personal Injury, tripped over torn mat	£3,000
Personal Injury, hit in the face by heavy door	£4,000
Personal Injury, tripped over cable and fell	£3,600
Personal Injury, slipped on wet floor	£2,500
Personal Injury, slipped on ice	£1,750
Personal Injury, hit by light falling from ceiling	£4,000
Personal Injury, injured while trying to break up pupils fighting	£1,500
Personal Injury, slipped on wet floor	£7,000
Personal Injury, injuries to shoulder caused by pushing pupils in wheelchairs	£4,000
Personal Injury, slipped on spilt liquid	£9,250
Personal Injury, while avoiding falling object, sustained injuries to elbow	£2,000
Assault, hit by pupil	£1,250
Assault, injuries to face	£18,625
Assault, object thrown by pupil	£1,500
Assault, punched by pupil	£26,184
Assault, pushed by pupil	£1,000
Assault, hit by pupil	£1,000
Assault, attacked by pupil	£3,500
Assault, hit by pupil	£3,520
TOTAL	£171,954

Defending the 21st Century Agreement

The EIS has hit back at recent negative media coverage following the HMIE report into the impact of the 21st Century Teaching Agreement (also known as the McCrone Agreement).

General Secretary Ronnie Smith said, "The 21st Century Teaching Agreement has brought a great deal to Scottish education in terms of stability, an enhancement of the professional standards in teaching, and a renewed emphasis on continuing professional development throughout each individual teacher's career."

He added, "As the HMIE report itself acknowledges, the impact of the Agreement on pupil attainment is much more difficult to measure but there are signs that progress is continuing to be made. The Agreement was a long-term investment in Scotland's educational future, and all the signs are that we remain on course in delivering the improvements that we all want to see."

See SEJ Forum on page 29 of this SEJ for more on the 21st Century Teaching Agreement. ■

Lifelong Learning priorities for a new Parliament

The EIS will be making Lifelong Learning a priority campaigning issue in the run up to the Scottish Parliamentary elections in May. More and more young people and adult learners are benefiting from Further and Higher Education in Scotland. Links between Further Education and schools grow closer through the school/college partnerships and through Skills for Work courses. The growing emphasis on vocational education for many young people means an increased role for Further Education in most communities.

There is concern today about the numbers of young people who are not in education, employment or training (the NEET group). The Higher Education sector continues to grow and develop in Scotland but student hardship is a reality facing many young people pursuing their courses at university. The introduction of top-up fees in English university is putting ever increasing pressure on universities in Scotland. In addition lecturing staff in Further and Higher Education continue to be poorly remunerated and in Further Education have no national negotiating forum nor professional body overseeing the qualifications of lecturing staff.

The EIS believes in the highest educational standards for all teachers and lecturers in Further and Higher Education, and also in a level of pay which reflects those standards and the demanding work undertaken.

The EIS manifesto for education, currently in development, together with a mini manifesto dedicated to issues in Further and Higher education, will be launched in the run up to the elections and will be available in all establishments. Among the key issues will be fairer funding for FE institutions, opposition to university top-up fees, and fair pay for all lecturers in all sectors. ■

...lecturing staff in Further and Higher Education continue to be poorly remunerated and in Further Education have no national negotiating forum...

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- Property market statistics and news
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EIS to consider additional class size advice

The Scottish Executive's recent advice to local authorities regarding the implementation of its class size reduction commitments was a keenly discussed issue at January's meeting of the national EIS Council in Edinburgh.

A reference in the Scottish Executive's letter to a local authority obligation to deliver *average* class sizes of 20 pupils in Secondary 1 and 2 classes in English and Maths by August 2007 rather than maximum class sizes at that level has been the cause of significant concern for many teachers and has been criticised by the EIS.

The EIS, responding to the concerns of Local Associations, has already sent a letter of advice to secondary school representatives, which states, "The EIS is opposed to the concept of flexibility in relation to the revised class size maxima to be introduced, and will continue to pursue this matter with the Minister."



Kirsty Devaney: "Local Association involvement key to class size petition."

The advice also states, "While critical of the way in which the Scottish Executive is acting on its commitment to cut certain class sizes, the EIS recognises that progress is being made. The Scottish Executive is providing funding to Authorities which will make it possible for no S1 or S2 English or Maths class to exceed 20 pupils by August 2007. Work is now required at school, Authority and national level to pursue that objective."

Council discussed the Scottish Executive letter and the EIS response, and consideration is to

be given to issuing additional guidance for secondary school EIS representatives on the pursuit of EIS objectives in relation to the Scottish Executive's plans for S1/2 Maths and English class sizes.

EIS Petition to Cut Class Sizes

Again discussing class size reductions, specifically the EIS petition to the Scottish Parliament on the issue, Vice-President Kirsty Devaney presented a paper outlining the planned EIS campaign in the run up to the elections in May. Ms Devaney highlighted that copies of the EIS Class Size petition had now been sent to each individual member at their home address together with a reply-paid envelope for the return of the completed petition form. She added that additional petition forms had also been sent to all schools, and were available for download from the EIS website. However, Ms Devaney added that "Local Associations will have an absolutely key role in the Class Size petition campaign, and active involvement at a local level will be vitally important to ensuring a successful campaign and a significant petition to the Parliament." ■

Pensions Reform

Salaries Committee convener Malcolm Maciver told Council that the EIS response to the consultation on the Scottish Teachers' Superannuation Scheme (STSS) reform package had now been approved and submitted to the Scottish Public Pensions Agency (SPPA). Mr Maciver told Council "The EIS supports this reform package. The package of reforms produced during discussions offers an attractive package for both current and new scheme members. The scheme has been fully costed by the Government Actuary's Department and offers a sustainable scheme."

Mr Maciver added, "The EIS Salaries Committee unanimously supported the package, and advice on the proposed changes has already been provided to EIS members."

Salary Settlement

Salaries convener, Malcolm Maciver, told Council that the Scottish Negotiating Committee for Teachers (SNCT) will consider at its next meeting the question of a supplemental increase, on top of the already agreed 2.25% to take effect on 1 April 2007. Under the 4-year pay agreement reached in 2004, the April 2007 rise is to be revisited if the increase in the average Consumer Price Index (CPI) for 2006, compared to 2005, exceeds 2.25%. It has now been established that the CPI increase for 2006 was 2.33% which is marginally (0.08%) above the threshold that triggers a review.

Standards for Classroom Assistants

George MacBride, convener of the Education Committee, told Council that the EIS had submitted a response to the Review of National Occupational Standards for Teaching/Classroom Assistants.

Mr MacBride said, "This is a major review of these standards, which also takes into account the creation of a new body with responsibility for these standards. In our response, we have emphasised the need for a separate specification for both classroom assistants, which would apply in Scotland, and also for teaching assistants which would apply in England."

Education for Peace

Sonia Kordiak (Midlothian) won overwhelming support from Council on her motion to update and re-issue the EIS publication *Education for Peace*.

Ms Kordiak said, "This publication, dating from 1990, was significantly ahead of its time, and so did not receive as much attention as it deserved. Education for Peace has relevance across the Curriculum, and the types of issues raised are extremely relevant to our pupils and to society." Council agreed, and supported the call to revise and re-issue the publication.



One Scotland - celebrating diversity

Over the next four pages, the SEJ celebrates the many diverse cultures which combine to create the Scotland that we know today. Scotland is a culturally rich and diverse country, with people from many backgrounds integrating successfully in their communities. The EIS is committed to an equalities agenda and works with others to support the integration of minority ethnic pupils and teachers into schools and the community. Here, we highlight some of the work which the EIS is currently involved in to support families from asylum seeking backgrounds, as well as steps that can be taken to combat discrimination and racism in schools and society.

Recent events have highlighted the importance of people from all backgrounds working together for the sake of our evolving multi-cultural society. Continuing conflicts, particularly in the Middle East, and the international terrorist

threat have combined to create an environment where ethnic and racial tensions have been brought into sharp focus.

Young people today lead complex lives, with many pressures and many worries. Thanks to the media, young people are better informed than ever of the types of global issues which influence their own lives. But formal education still has a vital role to play in helping young people to interpret the mass of information they are presented with on a daily basis, to allow them to make an informed judgement on the rights and wrongs of the world that they live in.

Firstly, we examine some of the positive steps that schools can take to tackle ethnic discrimination and racism. Then, over the page, we look at the continuing issue of dawn raids and the detention of minority ethnic children from asylum-seeking families.

Tackling ethnic discrimination in schools

Scotland is proud to be a multi-cultural society. Only by remaining vigilant against threats against this society, and by working together, can we continue to provide the best educational opportunities for all our young people, no matter what their cultural, religious or ethnic background.

Teachers may need to tackle particular issues such as Islamophobia and anti-semitism within the framework of each school's more general work on racism.

What can schools do?

A whole school approach, developed within local authority guidelines, could be developed aimed at providing support to individual teachers faced with pupils experiencing difficulties. Schools should endeavour to maintain as normal an atmosphere as possible: a stable environment will assist pupils to cope with stress arising from their personal circumstances.

It is worth noting that racist attacks increase at times of tension and war. Addressing the issues with pupils may help to avoid racist attacks and abuse and ensure that pupils are given a more balanced view than may be provided by the media.

Support from outside agencies

In looking at issues around anti-semitism and Islamophobia, schools may want to involve the wider community including parents, and community groups to provide an outside perspective to pupils on the impact of racist abuse and vandalism.

Information on appropriate agencies which can offer additional support to staff should be made available in the school.

Supporting teachers

Teachers may be faced with the additional responsibility of helping pupils deal with their emotional responses to military action in the Middle East. Teachers also may need assistance with coping with the emotional demands made on them. Some teachers from minority ethnic backgrounds may be particularly vulnerable in schools, both from pupils and parents.

Tension between different ethnic groups

A major issue which may arise is the possibility of heightened tension between different ethnic and religious groups which has already been seen in wider society. This is particularly true where negative and stereotyped views of Islam and of Muslims are held.

Teachers should be especially vigilant for any signs of name calling, abuse and bullying, particularly of Muslim pupils, and for any signs of tension between pupils from different ethnic groups.

Any racist taunting or abuse on grounds of assumed ethnic group or religion should be firmly and sensitively dealt with by teachers as part of their whole school approach to tackling discrimination and racism.

The situation may require opportunities for individual pupils to receive counselling away from the classroom on a one-to-one basis.

Support for pupils

Many schools are likely to have pupils who have relatives or close family friends who are in the armed forces especially in Iraq or who reside in the Gulf region. Pupils may have particular worries about their relatives' or friends' safety, which may affect their emotional well-being and ability to concentrate or participate fully in school life.

It is important for teachers to respond sensitively to the worries and fears of all pupils. Helping them express those fears may help them cope. It may also be useful to give pupils an opportunity to discuss their worries openly and help them, in getting the dangers into perspective.

Teachers will know how best to respond to the individual needs of their pupils. Some will benefit from discussion in class whilst others will need an individual approach. It is important that teachers provide a calm, rational approach to the needs of pupils. ■

For further information on EIS policy in these areas, including a leaflet on Islamophobia contact Kate Blackwell on kblackwell@eis.org.uk

Show Racism the Red Card schools' competition 2007

Show
Racism
the
Red
Card

The EIS has launched its latest anti-racism competition for all Scottish schools in partnership with the charity Show Racism the Red Card. The competition is intended to help schools and pupils explore the important issue of combating racism.

Commenting, EIS General Secretary Ronnie Smith said, "The EIS is pleased to announce that it has launched its latest anti-racism competition for Scottish Schools in partnership with the charity Show Racism the Red Card. We have worked together extremely effectively in the past, and previous initiatives that we have run with Show Racism the Red Card have proven to be extremely well received in schools. By launching this competition, we hope that young people across the country will take some time to consider the issues and think about how they can help to combat racism and other forms of discrimination.

"Sadly, there is a small minority of people in our country who seek to stir up racial tension and divide our society on ethnic grounds. We cannot allow them to do so, and the involvement of all young people is absolutely essential in ensuring that our diverse, multi-cultural society continues to thrive."

The beginning of a new school term is a good time for young people to reflect on some of the major issues of inequality which present very real problems for so many people in our society. All forms of discrimination – no matter if they are based on race, religion, gender, disability, age or sexual orientation – have absolutely no place in a civilised society. It is through young people that society's attitudes can most readily be changed, so hopefully more young people than ever before will take part in the competition this year.

Although the specific focus of this competition is on combating racism, the EIS continues its work to combat all forms of discrimination and injustice that can blight our society. It is the responsibility of all of us, both young and old, to work together to create a truly equal society where all people are valued and respected.

The EIS/Show Racism the Red Card schools' competition is open to all schools in Scotland and has been designed to assist pupils and

teachers at all stages to consider the issues of racial discrimination and ways of combating intolerance. Pupils are asked to make use of a special video and resource pack, which has been sent to all Scottish schools thanks to funding support from the Scottish Executive's One Scotland campaign, and then produce a piece of work, such as a painting or poem, on an anti-racist theme. There are different categories for pupils of different age groups, and there are major prizes available for the winning pupils and their schools. The competition runs until Friday 23rd February 2007, with the prize-giving scheduled to take place at a special event at Scotland's national stadium, Hampden Park on 19 April 2007. ■

Flashback: Then Scotland coach Walter Smith with last year's first prize winners Nina Haveron and Emily Pollock from Greenock Academy.

Photos: Alan Wylie



School Prizes:

Overall 1st Prize Winner: £1000

Category Winners

1st: £750

2nd: £400

3rd: £100 & Digital Camera

Pupil Prizes include:

- VIP days out to SPL clubs
- Signed SPL club shirts
- Signed SPL club balls
- Tickets for SPL matches

**Closing date for entries:
Friday 23 February**

Entry forms were sent to all schools in the January edition of the EIS Representatives' bulletin. You can also register online at www.eis.org.uk or by calling the EIS Equalities Dept on 0131 225 6244.



Dawn raids

Damaging schools and communities

The EIS has spoken out against the use of dawn raids in the forced extradition of unsuccessful asylum seekers. The EIS has condemned the practice of dawn raids and argues that, in addition to being extremely harrowing for the refugee families themselves, the sudden disappearance of children from schools is also extremely stressful for their fellow pupils and their teachers.

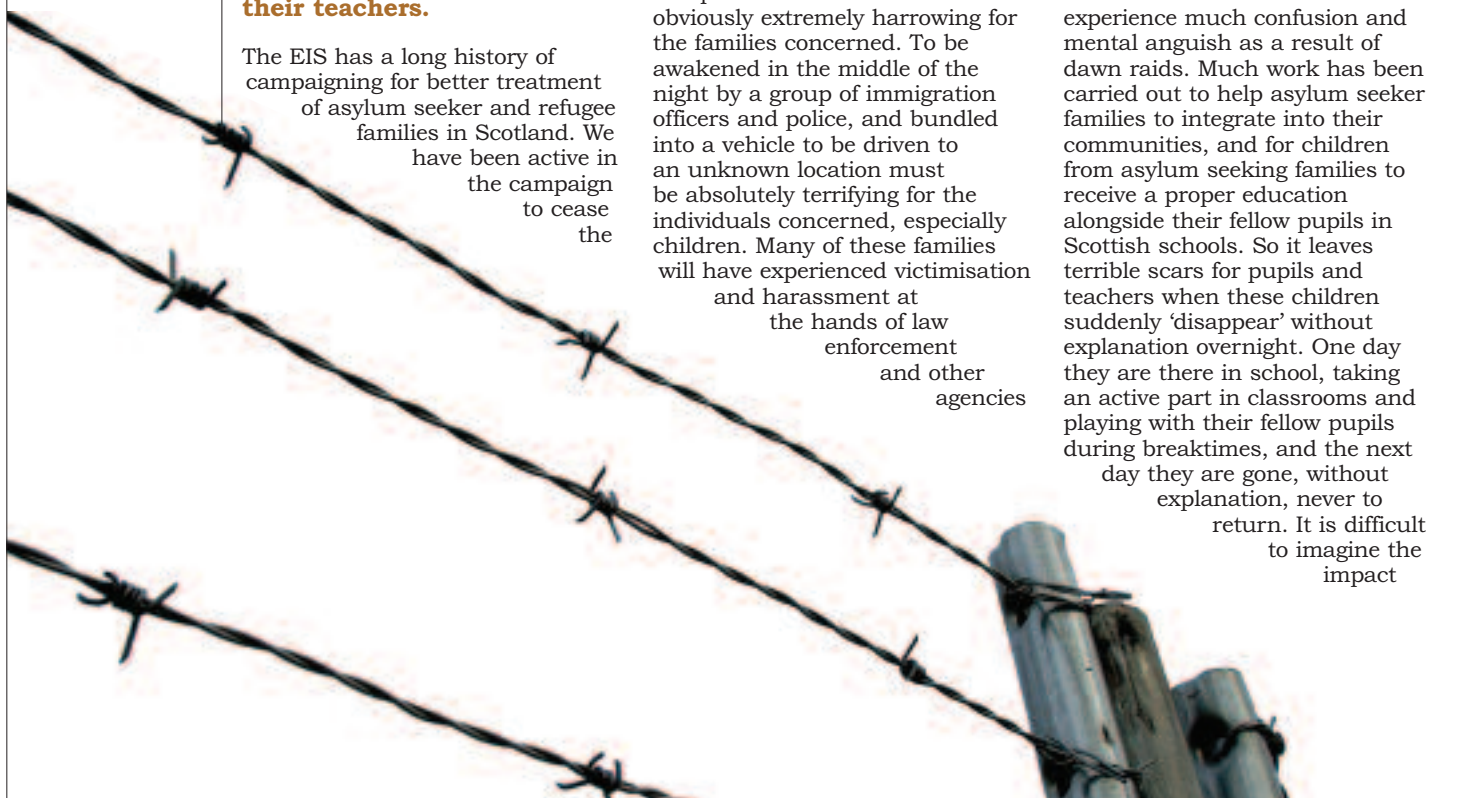
The EIS has a long history of campaigning for better treatment of asylum seeker and refugee families in Scotland. We have been active in the campaign to cease the

practice of detaining families with children, and we have repeatedly called for the closure of the Dungavel detention centre in South Lanarkshire. Asylum seeker families deserve fair treatment and respect, not to be suddenly torn away from their homes and their communities in the middle of the night to be imprisoned in a former jail in order then to be forcibly removed from the country. There has to be a better and a more humane way to treat these people.

The practice of dawn raids is obviously extremely harrowing for the families concerned. To be awakened in the middle of the night by a group of immigration officers and police, and bundled into a vehicle to be driven to an unknown location must be absolutely terrifying for the individuals concerned, especially children. Many of these families will have experienced victimisation and harassment at the hands of law enforcement and other agencies

in their own native countries. The terror they must experience during dawn raids must bring back horrific memories for a significant number of asylum seeker families. It will be particularly traumatic for young children.

But, while the families themselves suffer this fear and horror, they are not the only people to be affected by the use of dawn raids. Those left behind – their neighbours and their communities and, for the children, their classmates and teachers - also experience much confusion and mental anguish as a result of dawn raids. Much work has been carried out to help asylum seeker families to integrate into their communities, and for children from asylum seeking families to receive a proper education alongside their fellow pupils in Scottish schools. So it leaves terrible scars for pupils and teachers when these children suddenly 'disappear' without explanation overnight. One day they are there in school, taking an active part in classrooms and playing with their fellow pupils during breaktimes, and the next day they are gone, without explanation, never to return. It is difficult to imagine the impact





There simply has to be a better way than snatching families and children away from their homes, their communities, their schools and their friends in the middle of the night.



this must have on young, impressionable minds to have their friends disappear so suddenly and without trace or explanation.

A significant number of schools, in areas right across Scotland, are now speaking out against the use of dawn raids and highlighting the great deal of damage that they do to pupils and to the school community. Teachers at Shawlands Academy in Glasgow recently wrote to the EIS, highlighting the case of one of their pupils who had been taken to Dungavel following a dawn raid. They said, “The pupil concerned is a diligent, sensitive girl whose friends reported the raid to our

headteacher. The children were very distressed on her behalf. Effective learning cannot take place in a custodial, segregated environment in an atmosphere of fear and insecurity.” Pupils and teachers at another school, Drumchapel High school, have also been organising a campaign calling for improved rights for children from asylum-seeking families, particularly while they are preparing for exams. Yet, while some progress has been made by such campaigning, the use of dawn raids and the detention of families with children in Dungavel continues.

It is time for a radical rethink on the use of dawn raids as a means

of removing unsuccessful asylum seekers. While we must accept that some applicants for asylum will ultimately be unsuccessful and will eventually be required to leave the country, that does not justify mistreating them in such a terrifying way. There simply has to be a better way than snatching families and children away from their homes, their communities, their schools and their friends in the middle of the night. The continued use of dawn raids and the detention of asylum seekers in Dungavel is a shame on our country, and we must continue to fight this policy until the government finally sees the light and begins to treat these people with dignity and respect. ■

“The most important single concern for teachers, pupils and indeed for parents is serious indiscipline by a minority of pupils in Scottish schools.”

Ronnie Smith, EIS General Secretary

Briefly

The EIS has launched a major campaign to ensure that education is a key issue in the Scottish Parliamentary and local authority elections in May.

Put it to the vote!

EIS continues to raise the profile of education at Holyrood

As the SEJ announced last month, the EIS has launched a major campaign to ensure that education is a key issue in the Scottish Parliamentary and local authority elections in May. The EIS Manifesto for Education is currently in development and will be launched, along with other related materials, in the run up to the elections. A major advertising campaign will also highlight the importance of education and encourage voters to turn out and have their say on Scottish education. Already underway is the EIS campaign to cut class sizes, including the petition to the Scottish Parliament (see article opposite) which all members are encouraged to support.

The EIS aims to put education at the heart of the campaign leading to the Scottish Parliamentary Elections on 3 May. This was recently announced by EIS General Secretary Ronnie Smith. He said, “There is no single issue more important in this campaign than education. It accounts for the major part of the budget controlled by the Scottish Parliament. Also investing in education is the best way of ensuring a good future for all young people in Scotland”.

Mr Smith went on to highlight the EIS in campaigning towards May 2007 would concentrate on four areas - pupil indiscipline, class sizes, nursery education and lifelong learning.

Indiscipline

He said, “The most important single concern for teachers, pupils and indeed for parents is serious indiscipline by a minority of pupils in Scottish schools. Incidents of violence and serious assault are mercifully rare in this country. The biggest problem in our classrooms is the persistent minor offender – the kind of pupil whose behaviour means that the other pupils in the class lose out. Recent research shows that problems of indiscipline, while not significantly getting worse, are not

improving. In recent years there has been significant investment by the Scottish Executive aimed at improving pupil discipline. However, to date, there is little evidence that this is reaching individual classrooms in most primary and secondary schools. To be effective, discipline strategies must involve every teacher, every pupil and indeed every parent. Equally teachers must know that they will be supported in tackling the indiscipline of individual pupils. For example, in the last resort every school must have the right to exclude a pupil who is persistently disruptive and damaging teaching and learning in the classroom and the school”.

Class sizes

On class sizes Mr Smith said, “*The New Curriculum – A Curriculum for Excellence (ACE)* – together with new means of assessing pupils will only be effective if class sizes are reduced across primary and secondary schools. The Scottish Executive has gone some way on this by reducing class sizes in primary 1 and in English and Maths in Secondary 1 and 2. It will be for the new Administration elected on 3 May to take this further by commitments to reduce class sizes in other years in the primary

school and in other subjects in secondary. A cut in pupil numbers in the next few years will make such necessary reductions possible”.

Mr Smith went on to comment on the third campaigning issue, nursery education which is covered on pp14-15 of this SEJ.

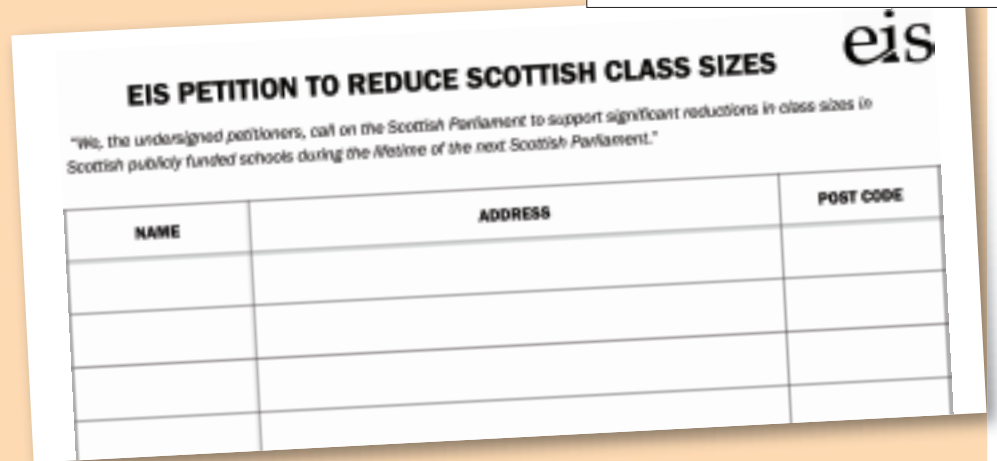
Lifelong learning

The EIS will also be campaigning on key issues in Further and Higher Education (see page 6 of this SEJ for more details). Among the priorities the EIS will focus on are improved funding for Further and Higher Education, better career development and a professional body for FE lecturers, and continuing opposition to university top-up fees.

Spring offensive

The EIS will be launching its own full Manifesto for Scottish education in the Spring. Other areas to be covered in the Manifesto will be the new curriculum, new means of assessment and also the changing face of Scottish schools through the growing number of pupils from an ethnic minority background, from new European Union states and also from asylum seeking families.





Have you signed up for smaller class sizes yet?

**THE EIS:
CAMPAIGNING
TO CUT
CLASS SIZES**

The EIS recently launched a campaign, urging teachers, parents and the wider public to sign up for smaller class sizes in Scotland's schools. The EIS class sizes petition is calling on the Scottish Parliament to commit to further significant reductions in class sizes, to give all pupils the chance to meet their full potential.

Highlighting that class size petition forms have now been sent to all members and are now available in all schools, EIS General Secretary Ronnie Smith said, "Further significant reductions in class sizes are absolutely vital if Scottish education is to continue to improve in the years to come. We are urging all teachers, parents and the wider public to support our petition to cut Scotland's class sizes. Smaller class sizes bring clear benefits to pupils, so we must send a clear message to our politicians – Scotland's pupils deserve the best, so class sizes must be reduced."

Early signs of support for the campaign are encouraging with thousands of people already signing up. The initial response from teachers in schools across Scotland has been extremely supportive of the petition, and the EIS is hopeful of collecting many thousands of signatures to formally present to the Scottish Parliament.

Parents are also being encouraged to sign up for smaller classes, as research evidence demonstrates that pupils from all backgrounds and of all levels of academic ability benefit from learning in smaller classes, with pupils from the most disadvantaged backgrounds gaining the most from the increased individual teacher attention that class size reductions inevitably bring.

EIS General Secretary Ronnie Smith added, "Modern teaching methods, including personal learning planning for all pupils, necessitate smaller classes if they are to be implemented successfully. It is simply not possible to tailor individual learning objectives for up to 33 pupils in a class. If our young people are to get the individual attention that they deserve, then class sizes simply must be reduced. The best gift that Scotland's politicians could give Scotland's school pupils this year is a clear and lasting commitment to reduce class sizes in our schools."

Class size campaign petition forms are available in all schools, and have also been sent to each individual member at their home address. Additional forms can be downloaded from www.eis.org.uk

Please do all that you can to support the EIS class sizes campaign. Sign up for smaller class sizes before the deadline of 23 February. ■

The EIS Class Sizes petition campaign runs until 23 February 2007. After this date, all signatures will be collated and formally presented to the Scottish Parliament.

The EIS will also be running a major publicity campaign involving billboard and other outside media concentrating on the four EIS priority areas of pupil indiscipline, class sizes, nursery education and lifelong learning. Mr Smith said, "This will be the biggest pre-election campaign that the EIS has ever mounted. It is our aim to raise the profile of education in every part of Scotland. We want to encourage the people of Scotland to use their vote in both the Parliamentary elections and in the local council elections on the same day. We want voters of all ages to look very closely at the kind of commitments the political parties are making on educational issues. It will then be for the voters themselves to decide whom they trust to lead the process of change in education over the next four years. The EIS will not be campaigning either for or against any political party. We'll be encouraging people to vote and we put our faith in the people of Scotland to make the right decision on 3 May to benefit our young people". ■

- Look out for further publicity on the EIS campaign for education in the next issue of SEJ. Campaign materials such as the manifesto and related publications will be available in all education establishments.

Deadline for signatures: 23 February



Where's my teacher?

Youngsters denied the best start in life as teaching posts are axed

Scottish nursery pupils will no longer be guaranteed the best start in life as nursery teaching posts are increasingly being axed by local councils. Recent figures show that around 120 nursery teaching posts have been cut in nursery schools across Scotland in the past year.

New figures which show a reduction in the number of teachers working in nursery schools and classes confirm the worst fears of the EIS. At the same time as the numbers of children aged 3-5 in pre-school education are increasing, the number of teaching posts is being cut.

Research evidence confirms that qualified teachers in a pre-five setting are the best way of ensuring quality provision. Recent HMIE findings which, while recognising the growth in various types of pre-five provision, have particular praise for nursery schools and classes. Also, recent findings of the Education Committee of the Scottish Parliament indicated

support for the continuation of nursery teachers working within nursery schools and classes. With all the weight of evidence pointing to the value of nursery education it is perverse that local councils should now be reducing the numbers of nursery teachers working in their area. General Secretary Ronnie Smith has pointed to the removal of 37 nursery teachers in Glasgow last year. He said, "It now appears that Glasgow is leading the way in a direction which no parent could have wished. Other authorities are now starting to follow by removing nursery teachers from schools and classes".

There is no educational rationale for this development. The removal of nursery teachers is purely a

budget saving device. It is a false economy because increasingly children will lose out on the benefits which quality nursery education can bring. *A Curriculum for Excellence* will mean for the first time there will be a curriculum from ages 3 to 18 for Scotland's youngsters. EIS officials who have been involved in these developments have sought to develop a seamless curriculum for very young children right up to the point at which young people consider their options on moving towards further and higher education. The intention is to make the link not only between primary and secondary much smoother than it has been, but also the link between pre-school and primary. The best way of

"The removal of nursery teachers is purely a budget saving device."



Viewpoint... Nursery schools need nursery teachers

"The EIS will continue to campaign for access to the highest quality nursery education for all young children. Research evidence demonstrates that nursery education, led by fully qualified nursery teachers, gives children the best

start in life. The recent investigation by the Scottish Parliament's Education Committee, to which I presented evidence on behalf of the EIS, supported the conclusion that nursery teachers are vital to a quality nursery education

experience, and that this is particularly beneficial to children from disadvantaged backgrounds. It is scandalous that, despite the weight of evidence and the support of the Scottish Parliament for nursery education led by qualified teachers,

local authorities continue to remove class teachers from their nursery schools and replace them with less qualified staff. Action is needed to ensure that all young children, no matter where they live and no matter what their family circumstances, have the right to

access a quality nursery education with qualified nursery teachers." ■

Norma Anne Watson

Vice-Convenor of the EIS Education Committee and a Nursery Headteacher in West Lothian

assuring this link is through nursery teachers working with young children with responsibility for the delivery of a curriculum and who then work with their primary colleagues at the point at which the children enter primary school. It is difficult to see how real continuity can be maintained while nursery teachers are being removed from pre-five settings.

The EIS will be making nursery education a key priority in the coming Scottish Parliamentary elections. We will be seeking assurances from all political parties as to how they see the development of nursery education in the future. It is sad that, while the Scottish Parliament, through its Education Committee, has recognised the value of nursery education, this has not been carried through by commitments to date by the Scottish Executive or by local authorities.

Ronnie Smith added that he recognised that there should be a diversity of provision in the pre-5 sector and welcomed recent recommendations that others working within the sector including nursery nurses should have a clear structure and the opportunity to gain further qualifications. He said, however, "Flexibility of provision is important. However, every parent of a child aged 3-5 should have the guarantee of access to a nursery school or nursery class with qualified teachers if they wish it. It is this right which is being removed through the action of a number of local councils". ■



The Herald

The best start in life

Editorial Comment

December 29 2006

What do we mean by the term "nursery"? Is it a place where pre-school children are deposited while their parents are at work? Or is it the place where our young tool up intellectually for "big school"? Add in their function in delivering healthcare and social work and we have an idea of the complexity of what is being demanded. The various templates only partly overlap. In particular, the requirements of a childcare facility, available from dawn to well after dusk, differ markedly from those of an educational institution.

Evidence suggests a strong correlation between the qualifications of staff and the quality of the nursery product. In Scandinavian countries with high levels of teenage numeracy and literacy, despite a delayed start at primary school, the key feature appears to be the quality of nursery teaching.

At a time when Scotland is attempting to improve nursery education, it simply does not make sense for the number of qualified nursery teachers to be falling, as we report today.

Earlier this year, Glasgow City Council replaced nearly 40 nursery teachers with less qualified staff on lower salaries, working more flexible hours. This seemed a perverse decision in an area containing one of the highest levels of poverty-related educational under-achievement in Europe. Other councils are now following Glasgow's lead, a lead in the wrong direction, in our view.

Nurseries expected to stay open for long hours each day, clearly need nursery nurses and other care staff. Big strides have been made in their training and qualifications and this is welcome but it does not justify the reduction in numbers of nursery teachers who can do so much to improve the life chances of the most disadvantaged youngsters.

Cutting their numbers to achieve budget savings is a false economy without any educational justification.

It is simply not good enough for the Scottish Executive and Cosla to play Pontius Pilate on this issue by saying that it is a matter for individual councils. Every child in Scotland deserves a flying start. ■

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Mobile misuse

Teachers have long been concerned about the potential for mobile phones to be used to bully pupils, but now the prevalence of camera phones has taken the problem to a new level in our schools.



Snap happy?

Tackling the problem of camera phones in schools

The EIS has launched new guidance for schools, aimed at supporting teachers in tackling the misuse of mobile phones in the classroom. The new guidance document, which has been sent to all Scottish schools, offers advice on practical steps which can be taken to introduce workable policies on mobile phone use in schools.

The potential for misuse of camera and video phones in schools is a constant concern for many teachers, pupils and parents. A number of recent incidents have highlighted the potential for camera and video phones to be abused to bully, harass or embarrass pupils or teachers in schools.

EIS General Secretary Ronnie Smith says, "The misuse of mobile phones in schools, particularly those with a camera or video function, is a growing problem for pupils and teachers. Teachers have long been concerned about the potential for mobile phones to be used to bully pupils, but now the prevalence of camera phones has taken the problem to a new level in our schools. The potential for pupils or teachers to be photographed or videoed without their knowledge is a real concern,

and represents a serious breach of privacy and personal liberty."

We have all seen highly publicised examples of mobile phone bullying in the media. From so called 'happy-slapping' incidents in the playground, to inappropriate photography prompted by voyeurism and which amounts to serious harassment.

Advances in mobile phone technology, coupled with the rapid growth in file sharing websites where video clips can very quickly be viewed by millions of internet users, have exacerbated the problems created by mobile phone bullying. Schools need to have robust, yet practical, procedures in place to address the problem of mobile phone misuse. It is hoped that this new EIS guidance – the first national guidance available on mobile phone use in schools – will allow schools to agree policies

that will be practical and helpful to teachers, parents and pupils.

Many pupils will have received mobile phones as Christmas gifts, and they will be eager to use them. However, pupils and parents have to be aware that there are limitations on appropriate use of phones in the school setting. There has to be a clear and shared understanding on the acceptable use of this technology – and on the potential consequences of misuse.

Extracts from the EIS guidance paper on mobile phone use in schools is reproduced here for your information. It is hoped that this policy paper will also equip EIS negotiators for discussions on mobile phone policies at a local level. ■

Misuse of camera and video phones by pupils

Concerns

The EIS is concerned over reports of misuse of mobile phones with camera and video capabilities by pupils in schools.

Images of teachers and other pupils can be sent to other mobile phones or e-mail addresses and can be posted on the internet. There have also been reports of teachers being deliberately provoked to anger by pupils for the purpose of recording the reaction. Mobile phones with camera and video functions may be used as a means of bullying other pupils and harassing teachers, for example, in circumstances where images are taken without permission and are used to humiliate or intimidate.

As well as misuse of camera and video mobile phones, the use of text messages as a tool for bullying is a practice that has been increasing.

Mobile guidelines

Local Authorities and schools will have policies on mobile phones currently in place. Camera and video phones pose a problem for schools and it is important that policies are reviewed to cover guidelines/prohibitions on these phones.

There are three options for a policy on mobile phones:

1. ban all mobile phones from schools.
2. ban all mobile phones with a camera/video function.
3. allow mobile phones to be brought into school under strict limitations on use, for example, requiring all phones to be turned-off during the pupil day and put away during lessons. It would be a misuse of a mobile phone to record staff or other pupils without permission.

Options 1 and 2 would be less likely to gain parental support and, therefore, 3 would probably be the most practicable.

Whichever option is adopted the policy should cover pupil discipline procedures and sanctions for breaches of the policy. Under option 3 the sanctions would apply to using phones outwith permitted areas

“Mobile phones with camera and video functions may be used as a means of bullying other pupils and harassing teachers...”

and times and recording staff and pupils without permission.

Policies should be explicit about the rights of staff to confiscate mobile phones where the policy is breached, the logging by schools of confiscated items, the return of confiscated items and deletion of images which are in breach of the policy. Good practice would be for confiscated phones to be held by the school office and return arranged by the Headteacher or other senior manager.

The EIS advises that staff should be consulted in the formulation of the policy and that the policy's effectiveness should be assessed following implementation and revised in the light of experience.

Parents should also be informed of the terms of a policy and engaged to ensure their co-operation and effective implementation of the policy.

The EIS also advises members not to agree to allow pupils to photograph them by camera phone.

Harassment

If a teacher is subject to any form of harassment from pupils, including the misuse of camera mobile phones to this purpose, he/she should immediately report the incident(s) to the Headteacher. Advice and support can also be obtained from the EIS Local Association Secretary. Headteachers suffering similar harassment should report this to their local authority education department. ■

Extracted from the EIS Policy Paper on camera phone misuse, available from the EIS Rep in all schools.



water and health resources on tap

Helping create healthy bodies and minds in your classroom.

Scottish Water can provide you with resources to help you promote healthy living and develop your pupils' understanding of the health benefits associated with drinking the recommended daily amount of water.

Drinking 6-8 glasses of water every day can help your class stay hydrated & alert.

To find out more about water and health, visit www.scottishwater.co.uk/ontap - you can request materials for your school by completing the online forms.

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Malawi

“For the Scottish teachers, the scheme is a hugely enriching experience both personally and professionally and offers a unique opportunity for further professional development.”

Ronnie Smith, EIS General Secretary

Briefly

EIS member teachers travel to Malawi for six weeks to work with colleagues in schools there.



Photographs by: Heather Cameron

Global partners

A group of eleven Scottish teachers last year became the first to participate in a placement scheme in the African nation of Malawi. The eleven Scottish teachers, nine of whom are EIS members, participated in the Malawi School Improvement Project which is run by Link Community Development with funding support from the Scottish Executive. The Scottish teachers travelled to Malawi during school holidays and spent six weeks working with colleagues in schools there.

The Malawi School Improvement Project commenced in 2005 with funding from the Scottish Executive Education Department International Division. The project has the aim of fostering educational development in both Malawi and Scotland. The project provides schools and teachers in both countries with structured and supported opportunities for professional development and school improvement. The project is focussed on the creation of strong, mutually beneficial partnerships between teachers and schools in Malawi and Scotland.

Commenting on the programme, EIS General Secretary Ronnie Smith said, “The Global Teachers programme is an extremely valuable initiative, which has much to offer for all the teachers involved. For the Scottish teachers, the scheme is a hugely enriching experience both personally and professionally and offers a unique opportunity for further professional development. By working with fellow education

professionals facing very difficult challenges in developing nations, Scottish teachers learn a great deal about themselves and can discover previously untapped skills and aptitudes which they can then go on to develop further. The host nations, schools and teachers also benefit hugely from the different perspective that Scottish teachers bring with them. It is extremely heartening that so many Scottish teachers are willingly giving up time during

their holiday period to travel to developing nations such as Malawi to offer their support in initiatives being undertaken to provide an improved education system for the country’s young people.”

The EIS itself supports educational development around the world by donating 1% of its annual subscription income to projects with an educational or trade-union focus.





Comment from a Global Teacher

Heather E Cameron, Global Teacher, Chiphazi School, Malawi 2006

"I would like to share with all SEJ readers a special project that I am involved in since my return from Malawi for Chiphazi School. This project has been supported by Link Community Development and the District Commissioner in Dedza. The plan is to demolish a school block which is well past its sell by date and in its place build a new block with four classrooms and to include a staffroom for the teachers which could be used by the community for meetings as well as a Nursery and a Clinic to save mothers and babies long walks to the hospital. This was discussed at a Village

Development Committee (VDC) meeting during my stay at Chiphazi in July 2006. They had a list of six proposals for 2007 and could only afford one. It was suggested that maybe if they built the new school block it could be used in different purposes at different times rather like a Learning Community in Scotland.

I'm in the process of organising a Music for Malawi Concert in the Fruitmarket in the City Halls, Candelriggs in Glasgow on Saturday 31st March, 2007. (Further information from: heathercameron@aol.com).

I hope to raise £10,000 from the event which will be a concert, a raffle and an auction on the night for my school. If I make extra it is my intention for the other Global Teachers from Link to make a request for cash for a project in their school.

I'm really excited about returning to Chiphazi at my own expense this Easter 2007 to meet Chiphazi VDC, The District Commissioner and Planners and The Speical Project Committee to discuss their needs and to take the plans forward to the next stage." ■

"The plan is to demolish a school block which is well past its sell by date and in its place build a new block with four classrooms and to include a staffroom for the teachers..."

Heather Cameron,
Global Teacher

Global Teachers Programme

The Global Teachers Programme offers teachers and headteachers a unique professional and personal development experience, which lasts 15 months and is centred around a five-week placement on one of LCD's development projects in Africa. Link Community Development provides GTs with comprehensive training and support before, during and after the placement to ensure all groups benefit mutually both in the South and in the North.

Link Community Development

Link Community Development (LCD) works to improve the quality of education for children in Malawi, South Africa, Ghana and Uganda. We work in partnership with education departments to share skills and resources, and build capacity, including providing vital training to teachers, headteachers, parents and District officials. In the UK, we run the Global Teachers Programme and Link Schools Programme which both supplement our work in the South and raise awareness of international development issues.

Malawi School Improvement Project

The Malawi School Improvement Project (MSIP) commenced in November 2005 with funding from the Scottish Executive Education Department International Division. The project is focussed on the creation of strong, mutually beneficial partnerships between educationists and institutions in Malawi and Scotland.

The above aims will be achieved through expansion of LCD's Southern work into Malawi, where LCD has set up a new school and District development project in partnership with the Ministry of Education, following LCD's tried and tested model. The project will include the Global Teachers

Programme, the Link Schools Programme, and a school and District development programme.

Global Teachers Recruitment, Support & Training

The Global Teachers were selected to join the programme and notified of their success in March 2006. Prior to placement, each GT attended two residential training weekends designed to introduce Global Teachers to all aspects of the programme, to prepare them for living and working in Malawi and to allow them to start forming mutually supportive teams and networks with each other and with Link staff. As well as being introduced to LCD and the GTP, training focused on introducing Malawi, education in Malawi, the professional role of a GT on placement in Malawi, and back in Scotland, and on health and safety preparation.

The support of Global Teachers continued in Malawi. LCD staff visited all GTs within their first two days on placement and again at least weekly thereafter to offer support and ideas and to agree with the GT and Head Teacher programmes of work and training. Staff also visited to check on minor health problems and to attend workshops run by GTs and events associated with the National Day of Education.

On the second weekend GTs returned to Dedza for two nights for an interim evaluation weekend when placements were formally reviewed and work plans agreed for the two following weeks in schools, and a great deal of informal exchange of ideas and suggestions took place.

In the final post-school week of the placement LCD staff accompanied GTs to Lake Malawi for three nights and on a variety of walks and other activities in the one free day in each of Dedza and Lilongwe.

To find out more and to apply,
please see www.lcd.org.uk/uk/gtp/
or email scotland@lcd.org.uk



Land of opportunity



The Walter Hines Page Scholar for 2006, Ann Fisher, reports on her visit to the USA. The Scholarship is administered by the English Speaking Union in Scotland working with the EIS, and is awarded annually to allow an EIS member to travel to the United States of America and study an aspect of education which is of particular interest and relevance to the scholar's own work. During her time in the USA, Ann visited schools in Massachusetts, North & South Carolina, Arizona and Hawaii. A teacher in West Dunbartonshire, Ann is also an EIS Learning Representative.

Aloha! Ann Fisher found a warm welcome in Hawaii.



The Walter Hines Page Scholarship is the ultimate CPD experience; £1750 to be spent on travel to the USA to study an aspect of American education which is of professional relevance to the scholar. In 2006, I chose to study a mixture of Gifted and Special Educational programmes and the opportunity turned out to be a cultural and educational feast.

Prior to the 2004 Additional Support for Learning Act, my focus as a Network Support Teacher (NST) in West Dunbartonshire was on pupils with learning difficulties but the new act also brought the need to cater for pupils with high ability or particular talents. Because of my involvement in this field and a desire to track down strategies

that were genuinely inclusive, I spent many hours researching programmes that claimed to enhance the creativity and thinking skills of all pupils. With this in mind, The English Speaking Union (ESU) helped me organise an itinerary covering school visits from 1st to 12th Grade and spanning the spectrum of public & private provision. I visited schools in Boston, North & South Carolina, Phoenix and Hawaii.

One of the duties of the Page Scholar is to be prepared to speak to groups in the USA. I went laden to the gunwales with Scottish Country Dance music, pictures of Scotland at its best, a powerpoint presentation and a book of Burns' poetry, just in case...

As it turned out, I needed everything – I addressed ESU member gatherings in North & South Carolina, taught the Gay Gordons & Strip the Willow to 11th & 12th graders in Arizona and had fascinating conversations with pupils from the age of 6 to 18 in every state I visited. The two most commonly asked questions from young and old alike were "Is the Loch Ness monster true?" and "What does haggis taste like?"

One of the unexpected treats of the study trip was the hospitality of host families and the opportunity to savour local customs instead of characterless hotel rooms. I tasted everything from kalua pig in downtown Honolulu to shrimp & grits & collared greens in Greensboro (I just wish I could let you hear the accent!).

Campaigning for the mid-term elections was in full swing when I arrived in America and George Dubya landed in North Carolina half an hour before me with Oprah just behind. Sadly I didn't bump into either. The 300,000,000th American was born while I was there but none of the newspapers could pinpoint the exact baby until one wag came up with the suggestion that it wasn't a baby at all, it was in fact an adult who had sneaked across the border that day!

In elementary, middle and high schools, it didn't take long for myself and class teachers to appreciate we faced similar challenges on a daily basis and



in spite of being separated by the Atlantic Ocean, we were all singing from the same hymn sheet. I heard about the issues surrounding the “No Child Left Behind” policy and strategies developed for ESL pupils. As the Principal of a huge elementary school in North Carolina commented after leaving me with two of his Special Ed teachers for a couple of hours...“Y’all seem to have bonded real quick!”

Delightful as the social & cultural aspects were, the main focus of the trip was educational and in particular to observe in action, a programme which would extend the independent thinking skills of the wide range of abilities evident in a typical Scottish classroom.

Research had led me to believe I would find this in classrooms influenced by Dr Thomas Jackson in Hawaii and I was not disappointed. Tom is the inspirational leader of P4C Hawaii. In a multicultural setting, emanating from the Department of Philosophy at the University of Hawaii, P4C is delivered to students of all ages from K1 to Senior High with the aim of promoting thinking beyond the memorisation level. There is no creaming off of the top 10% and no extraction of those with learning difficulties for specialist input.

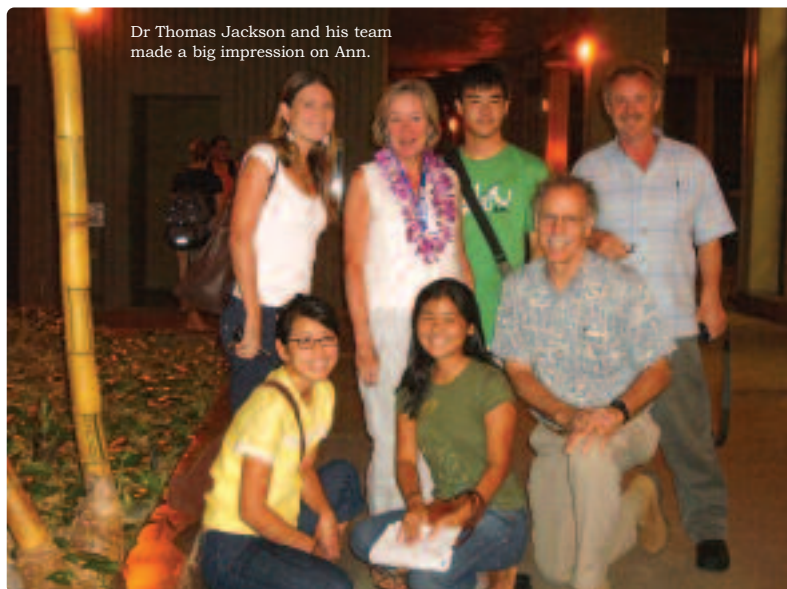
One morning, I saw a 1st Grade class explore their deepest feelings within the safety of the P4C community then in the afternoon, I listened to a “lively” 10th Grade English class use the P4C structure to interrogate a novel dealing with rape and social exclusion. There wasn’t a snigger, rude remark or put down uttered. The theme of the novel was dissected at a level meaningful to the class while the highly skilled P4C teacher stood back as

“In elementary, middle and high schools, it didn’t take long for myself and class teachers to appreciate we faced similar challenges on a daily basis and in spite of being separated by the Atlantic Ocean...”

Ann Fisher,
Page Scholar



All colours, all cultures – Hawaii is highly diverse.



Dr Thomas Jackson and his team made a big impression on Ann.

facilitator. At both levels, P4C encouraged pupil centred analysis and reflection on the beliefs that shaped their lives and gave them the structure to form their own opinions. Hawaii is 2,400 miles from land in one direction and 3,800 in the other and the upshot of this is that it acts as a focal point for the fusion of east/west cultures – an unforeseen bonus.

One restriction on P4C as a teaching tool in Hawaii was an overcrowded curriculum but with Scotland’s *Curriculum for Excellence* aiming to help young people “make reasoned evaluations” and “develop informed, ethical views of complex issues”, a strategy which encourages creative thinking should find a comfortable home.

I left Hawaii with a heavy heart (nothing to do with the sun, surf and spirit of aloha!) determined nonetheless to introduce into Scottish schools in some small way, the unique brand of Philosophy for Children I had experienced with Dr Jackson and his team of committed teachers.

The once in a lifetime opportunity offered by the Page Scholarship to Scottish teachers and lecturers cannot be overestimated; to be given the chance to observe alternative practice in USA and bring home fond memories as well as forging ongoing links with teachers across the pond can only be beneficial to the children we teach. ■

Living a mentally healthy life



Carolyn Roberts, Research and Influence Manager for the Scottish Association for Mental Health, takes a look at the issue of stress and how it can affect the mental health of education professionals.

We all have stresses in our lives, and teachers probably have more stress than most. A recent Sunday Herald article highlighted this, citing Edinburgh University research which found that 90% of teachers think the profession is quite to very stressful, with almost 25% reporting symptoms of stress, including anxiety and depression.

So, in between working, running your home, and looking after your family, do you ever find time to think about your mental health? No? You're not alone. Many of us don't give a thought to our mental well-being in our daily lives. Yet the World Health Organisation has said that there is no health without mental health – which suggests that health is about more than physical fitness.

Perhaps you are not convinced that mental health is anything to do with you. Maybe you think it only matters to people who have mental health problems. But we all have times when we feel happy, sad, stressed or anxious – all of which are expressions of mental health. And since one in four people in Scotland will experience a mental health problem at some point in their lives, if you don't experience problems yourself, the chances are you know someone who does.

If you're feeling anxious or unhappy, then possibly the single most important thing you can do is to talk to someone about it. This can be difficult – people are often concerned about what others will think if we admit we're not coping. But friends and family might be glad to help, and sharing our feelings can help to put things in proportion or get a fresh perspective. If it's not possible to speak to people you know, try calling a helpline such as the Samaritans or Breathing Space. They will listen to you impartially and can offer non-judgemental emotional support. Your GP can also provide help, or you can call NHS 24 for around-the-clock advice.

It can also help to identify your key triggers for stress, and think in advance about ways of coping with them. Practices like yoga, meditation and mindfulness techniques and breathing exercises can all provide ways of dealing with such triggers.

And if, like many teachers, you find that your work is a key source of stress in your life, don't be afraid to ask for help. Local authorities, as employers, owe their staff a duty of care, and should ensure that employees are not subjected to undue stress. All employers should assess the risk of staff developing stress-related ill-health and should take measures to control that risk. Local authorities should have policies in place to deal with – and ideally, to prevent – excess stress, and should provide you with support when you need it.

But as always, prevention is better than cure, and there are things that we as individuals can do to protect ourselves. A little time spent nurturing our mental health and well-being can go a long way in improving the quality of our lives and preventing problems from developing. The message that SAMH constantly strives to get across is: don't wait until you get ill to think about mental well-being. There are many ways to protect and enhance mental health, and different approaches work for different people.

For example, there is increasing evidence that diet can play an important part in maintaining good mental health. A healthy diet can benefit you mentally as well as physically: aim to have plenty of

water, fruit and vegetables, whole grains and nuts, with oily fish and lean red meat from time to time.

Many people also find that exercise can help. Physical exercise has an immediate effect on our mood, often making us feel more positive. It can also provide something to focus on and an opportunity to meet new people, both of which can help to maintain a positive mental attitude.

Another issue to consider is alcohol – a particularly relevant subject given that Christmas is recently past, a time when many of us will have drunk more than usual. Alcohol is a depressant. If you're feeling down to start with, drinking too much will only make you feel worse. Drinking in moderation – or not at all – is an important part of staying mentally well.

All of these actions can help to maintain good mental health. But no-one can guarantee that you won't experience problems at some point – just like no amount of physical exercise can guarantee an illness-free life. If you're experiencing real difficulties, there is no shame in asking for help – in fact it takes guts to do so.

We all have mental health – sometimes it's good, sometimes it's bad, but it is always important. Why not take a minute to ask yourself: how's your mental health? ■

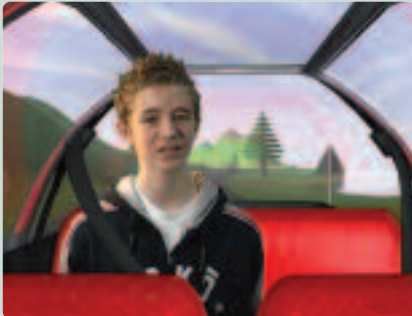


This is SAMH's own information line, which is not a counselling service but provides info on mental health and advice on legal and welfare rights
SAMH Information Line (0141 568 7000, open Mon-Fri 2.00-4.30pm)

Other useful numbers:
The Samaritans (08457 90 90 90), Breathing Space (0800 83 85 87) and NHS 24 (08454 24 24 24)

Briefly

Catherine Wheaton, an Education Adviser with Road Safety Scotland, takes a look at current practice on road safety education and explains how a new resource pack can help schools engage young people in this vital aspect of their education.



Giving road safety a different image

The language and imagery that is associated with Road Safety Education (RSE) sits comfortably within the Primary school curriculum. Streetsense, Road Safety Scotland's (RSS) primary resource, embodies a broad range of experiences including early years activities and gives children a sense of growing into an adult environment learning the risk assessments that must be made when crossing the road.

By P6 and P7 young people are beginning to be able to assess speed, distance and conspicuity. They can learn to cycle safely through the Scottish Cycle Training Scheme and are already beginning to make independent journeys. The law with regard to in-car safety and the rules of the road with regard to speed limits and stopping distances are taught, leaving young people in no doubt about the consequences of 'messing about' on the road or failing to pay attention. The question is; whilst you might be paying attention – can the same be said of the driver?

In Scotland, 368 young people between the age of 0 – 15 were killed or seriously injured in 2005, on the roads. Although this figure is dropping, it is still more than any other single cause of accidental death. It is well known that transition and change of school are periods when young people can be distracted and misjudge a situation on the road.

In the speedway of life, wanting to be liked, to be one of the crowd and to fit in, is more important than anything. The perception amongst many in this group is that road safety was something covered at primary school.

When you reach your teens you've done all that, you can tell the stories; you had a close shave yourself, perhaps, and survived to tell the tale. Yet, it is at this age that young people should develop further strategies to keep themselves safe when out on the road with friends, particularly at night, and in cars. This is one of the most 'at risk' groups on the roads. In re-engaging with them we need to talk about road safety using a different language. We should lose the term 'road safety' altogether. Attitudes to drink/drug driving, speeding and distraction are being formed at this stage and it is important that this is the right time to explore these issues. Leaving it until they are old enough for a provisional licence, is leaving it too late.

Crash Magnets, a road safety tool box for secondary schools, is a new classroom resource developed by Road Safety Scotland. This resource asks young people to think about their own behaviour. Most young people of this age think crashes happen to other people. We need to engage young people by making this subject relevant to their lives and experiences; image conscious, diverse, multi-media in style and most of all, enjoyable.

RSE is vitally important in shaping opinions and attitudes to: speeding; drink-driving; drug-driving; and in-car safety. *Crash Magnets* targets young people before they sit the driving test, to try and ensure their wellbeing on the road by encouraging them to make the right decisions for themselves, and others, in the same way that they would on any other health issue. Alcohol misuse, peer influence and relationships can also be explored within this resource.

Comprising a DVD with five programmes, the resource covers subjects such as driver and pedestrian distraction, speed and the cruise culture. It delves into the role of the accident and emergency services and the harrowing aftermath of a serious crash.

Contained within the tool box are situation cards and case studies to stimulate discussion and inform debate. www.crashmagnets.com is being launched in the spring, making all the classroom activities available on-line.

Crash Magnets allows young people to explore their own feelings and attitudes. It also acknowledges that driving brings great benefits in developing independence, giving the freedom to go where you want. The car has a status and pulling power that, for some people, defines them as an adult, but this must be balanced with an understanding of the dangers of behaving irresponsibly at the wheel.

All the resources are freely available from local Road Safety Units to all schools in Scotland. For further information log on to www.roadsafetyscotland.org.uk ■

The perception is that road safety was something covered at primary school.

For more information and class activities:
www.roadsafetyscotland.org.uk
and www.crashmagnets.com

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Supercharged by superfoods

Can superfoods really improve your health? We don't really care when they taste so good. This month we cast our eye over four foodstuffs that are alleged to have health-giving properties. There is not doubt that a diet rich in fresh fruit and vegetables will improve your concentration and energy levels at school.

With very powerful antioxidants, significant claims have been made for a simple cup of green tea regarding defence against disease and general alertness. Would you notice any effect if you drank green tea? Find out yourself by drinking green tea instead of coffee for a week.

Our three-times a week breakfast blueberry smoothie

Blueberries not only look and taste great but contain antioxidants known as anthocyanidins which may contribute to good circulation and healthy skin. The berries also contain an acid which is purported to prevent abnormal cellular changes.

Makes 1

75g blueberries
2 ice cubes
6 tablespoons of natural, live yoghurt
Dash of orange juice or other fruit juice or syrup

Add the blueberries and all other ingredients to a liquidiser and blend until smooth. Drink immediately. This will give you a real boost in the morning.

Carrot & pumpkin seed salad

Carrots don't just improve your eyesight – they perk up your salad. Fresh bunches of carrots often taste nicer. Pumpkin seeds are a good source of zinc. This salad can be made in advance and taken to work for lunch.

Makes 1

1 serving of salad leaves
1 carrot, grated
1 cucumber, peeled and diced
1 tablespoon pumpkin seeds
5 small tomatoes, halved
1 block of parmesan cheese
fresh herbs, to taste
1 orange
2 soft-boiled eggs, quartered

Combine all ingredients except the orange and cheese in a large serving bowl. Using a potato peeler, shave off thin slices of parmesan and scatter on top of the salad. Squeeze the juice of half of the orange onto the salad. Enjoy.

Broccoli, garlic and lemon

Various compounds in broccoli – more technically calabrese – may prevent stomach ulcers and may assist in preventing stomach cancers, breast cancer and cardio-vascular disease. Purple sprouting broccoli boasts similar claims. Garlic is probably the most widely used medicinal plant in the world. Although its health benefits are amplified when raw, they do not disappear completely with cooking.

This is an excellent way to serve the vegetable.

1 head of broccoli
1 tablespoon butter
2 cloves garlic, finely minced
juice of half a lemon
salt
pepper

Using a covered metal sieve set over a pan of boiling water, steam the broccoli until tender. This will take about 6 minutes. Drain.

Heat the butter in a heavy non stick pan over medium heat. Add the garlic and sauté for one minute. Add the cooked broccoli, lemon juice and salt and pepper to taste, cooking briefly to allow the flavours to mix.

Yoghurt snack

This snack is good morning or night. Yoghurt is an excellent source of calcium, and, if it is marked 'live', contains millions of

tiny bacteria which are good for your digestion. It is also very easy to make yoghurt at home using milk. The principle is that the milk, once scalded, is mixed with two spoonfuls of the live yoghurt (or your previous batch) and maintained at about 40C for 6-8 hours. You can do this in a hot airing cupboard, but very simple and cheap appliances exist to correctly regulate the temperature for yogurt making. The seeds contain protein, fibre and vitamins and minerals.

250ml live natural yoghurt

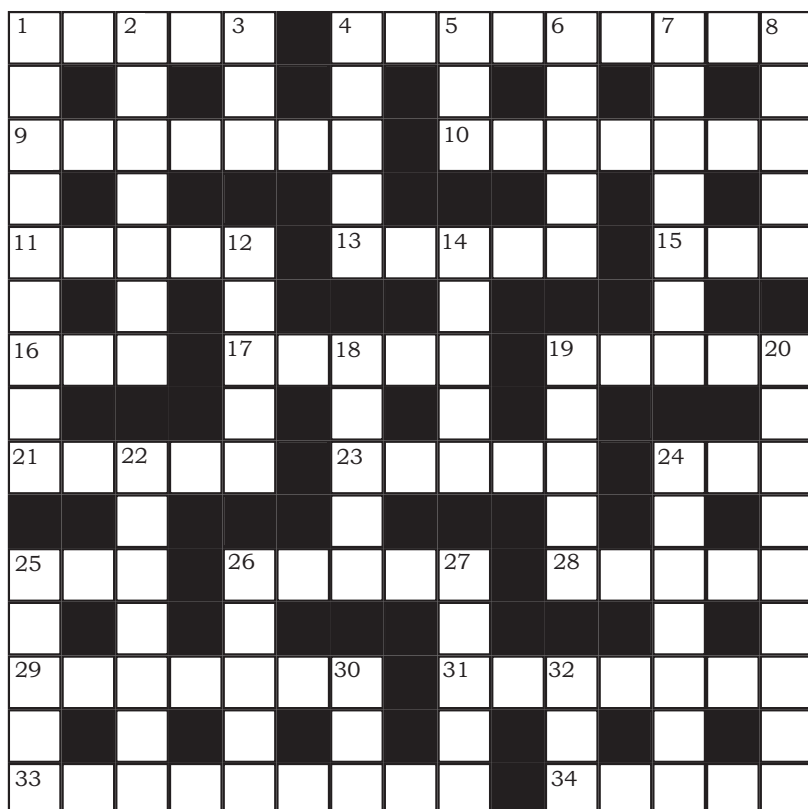
1 handful of fruit of your choice – berries, sliced apples, bananas, plums etc

4 walnut halves

1 spoon of seeds – pumpkin, linseed, sesame, sunflower, flax
1 spoon dried papaya
1 teaspoon of honey

Mix the honey and yoghurt in a bowl and add all other ingredients.





Answers to crossword no.43

Across: 1 Class 4 Ceaseless 9 Bladder 10 Cursive 11 Elite 13 Scale 15 Tie 16 Awe 17 Caste 19 Chess 21 Serge 23 Bravo 24 Pea 25 Awn 26 Siege 28 Spree 29 Animate 31 Sessile 33 Segregate 34 Banns

Down: 1 Cable-cars 2 Avarice 3 Sad 4 Corps 5 Arc 6 Eerie 7 Epistle 8 Suede 12 Emcee 14 Arena 18 Sabre 19 Chops 20 Shapeless 22 Running 24 Portion 25 Amass 26 Slave 27 Ensue 30 Era 32 Sob

CROSSWORD WINNER – Congratulations to **Cathleen Stokes** from Fife who was the winner of SEJ cryptic crossword no 43. Ms Stokes receives a £20 book token.

CLUES

Across

- 1 Can be identified by unusual shape of the moon (5)
- 4 Look out given laic comprehension (9)
- 9 Missing the point, she is no Peron in disguise (7)
- 10 Small mobile home hurries off (7)
- 11 Open land where muslim people of Africa live (5)
- 13 Make metal from small fish (5)
- 15 Last month begins unless life terminates (3)
- 16 Draw round ones neck perhaps (3)
- 17 Pariah, the French each united (5)
- 19 Put clothes on the crab maybe! (5)
- 21 The heavenly body arrives on time (5)
- 23 President Bush erratically entertained wedding official (5)
- 24 Modern joint! (3)
- 25 Active Galaxy Nucleus on the agenda (3)
- 26 Era, period or concentrated hours at the outset (5)
- 28 Glowing headless limb (5)
- 29 Cephalopod co-opt us into different group (7)
- 31 Endlessly courageous fuss and bluster (7)
- 33 Communist celestial body or bar perhaps (3,6)
- 34 Dotty dance! (5)

Down

- 1 Put cinema rushes into your tyres perhaps (9)
- 2 Sounds of single Swedish pop group had haliotis (7)
- 3 Priest in religious order (3)
- 4 Counterpart of Aphrodite found in the evening sky (5)
- 5 Groovy petrol to an American (3)
- 6 Steal compound to the smallest extent (5)
- 7 Poseidon's counterpart found to be inept, uneven and extremely large (7)
- 8 Greet the flying white heron (5)
- 12 Rent old Croatian city (5)
- 14 Had a heart attack on the surface of the planet (5)
- 18 Cartoon dog, furthest from the sun (5)
- 19 Ones nadir generously exposed in funereal air (5)
- 20 Its proven, USA is exploding star (9)
- 22 Recorded formally in sixty second blocks (7)
- 24 Remove spite from inhospitable, fancy boot attachment (7)
- 25 The French love our ma to bits (5)
- 26 Remove former short skin from the fashion show (5)
- 27 I'm used to wearing the same dress (5)
- 30 Very bright but backward student body (3)
- 32 Only one very big hill (3)

Work out and win

A £20 book token is the prize in the SEJ cryptic crossword. Send your completed entry to the SEJ Editor, 46 Moray Place, Edinburgh, EH3 6BH by **Friday, 23 February 2007**. The first all correct entry picked at random will win. Details of the winner, along with the solutions to this month's puzzle, will be published in the next SEJ. Employees of the EIS and their families are not eligible to participate in the competition.

Name:.....

Address:.....

.....

.....

Return to: SEJ, 46 Moray Place, Edinburgh, EH3 6BH

Sudoku

Sudoku

supplied by: Lovatts Publications

To play: Complete the grid so that every row, column and every three-by-three box contains the digits 1 to 9. Just use the logic to solve - no maths required! Have fun!

Rating: EASY

					5		9	3
5					1	8		
9		7	3					1
7	9			4	2			3
6				3				4
	4		6	9				2
	2				9	7		6
		5	2					9
1	7		8					

SEJ Dec 06 Sudoku solution

7	5	1	2	8	9	6	3	4
2	8	3	6	5	4	9	7	1
4	9	6	7	3	1	5	2	8
1	7	9	8	4	5	3	6	2
3	2	8	9	7	6	1	4	5
5	6	4	3	1	2	7	8	9
8	3	2	1	9	7	4	5	6
6	1	5	4	2	3	8	9	7
9	4	7	5	6	8	2	1	3

Many thanks to the many readers who entered the SEJ End of Year Quiz, published in the December edition. The first all-correct entry drawn came from **Jenny Ross** from **Aberdeen**. Congratulations to Ms Ross, who wins £50 of gift vouchers.

Festive Quiz Answers

Section 1 2006 - Were you paying attention?

- Pluto (which, by the way, subsequently lost its status as a planet in August 2006)
- Turin
- The ban on smoking in public places
- Berlin Hauptbahnhof
- Lordi
- Italy
- Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest
- Fidel Castro, President of Cuba
- Secretary-General of the United Nations. His term of office runs from 1 January 2007 until 31 December 2011
- Genesis

Section 2 Song Lyrics

- Madness - Baggly Trousers
- Alanis Morissette - Ironic
- Police - Every Breath You Take
- Meatloaf - Bat Out of Hell
- Bon Jovi - Livin' on a Prayer
- Boston - More Than a Feeling
- Bee Gees (or Steps) - Tragedy
- Queen - Killer Queen
- ABBA - The Winner Takes It All
- Avril Lavigne - Complicated

Section 3 1906 Trivia

- Theodore Roosevelt
- Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev
- (c) Torino
- Rolls-Royce
- Henry Campbell-Bannerman
- The International Morse Code distress signal SOS
- Samuel Beckett
- Gustav Mahler
- (b) April
- George Sanders

Section 4 Horses for Courses

- Nicholas Evans
- Robert Redford
- America
- Richard Harris
- Dover
- Dragonfly
- Ayr, Hamilton, Kelso, Musselburgh and Perth
- Richard III
- Boxer, Molly and Clover.
- Racing Cars

Section 5 And finally...

- Sacramento
- Ranulph Fiennes
- Nelson Mandela
- Tourist Trophy
- Salvador Dali
- Torchwood
- The single transferable vote electoral system.
- Red
- Abraham Maslow
- Ford Mondeo

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Defending the teaching profession

Newly graduated Chartered Teacher and EIS Learning Representative David Thomson responds to some of the recent negative reporting of the 21st Century Teaching Agreement (McCrone Agreement). Mr Thomson argues that the enhanced professional status of teaching, brought about as a result of the Agreement, is beginning to produce benefits for Scottish education.

David Thomson, New Teacher Co-ordinator (Secondary) - Renfrewshire Council

The McCrone Agreement was promoted as a means to modernising the teaching profession and I liked the idea of the availability of high quality CPD opportunities and the possibility to upgrade skills to Chartered Teacher status. Having worked through the 12-module programme I recently qualified from the University of Paisley as a Master of Education, Chartered Teacher. Qualifying in the early eighties as a teacher of Technical Education the Chartered Teacher programme offered me a new challenge resulting in a high level of personal development and the opportunity for reflection.

Questioning and reflecting upon personal professional development involved liaison with colleagues. It became clear during the modules that, as teachers, we are often remote in our own classrooms. I noticed after completing modules colleagues would seek advice on how to find resources to improve their individual learning and practice.

I was to learn that the programme provides the chance to modernise teaching skills to benefit the pupils we teach.

As a Chartered Teacher I am seconded to support new teachers in Renfrewshire's secondary schools and this involves providing advice and support to advance professional standards to help them achieve the Standard for Full Registration. I consider that course readings, research and projects undertaken during the Chartered Teacher programme equip me to be the colleague that can provide trusted practical advice and support.

The General Teaching Council (Scotland) recently highlighted that there is a global pattern that suggests that in advanced, affluent countries it is increasingly difficult to find graduates who want to devote themselves to working in public services. The McCrone Agreement has a cost implication but I consider that this has been necessary to attract the quality of individual that the teaching profession requires. Working closely with a large numbers of new teachers, it is evident that the McCrone Agreement is attracting the highly qualified professionals required to advance Scottish education.

The major re-structuring of the teaching profession has also changed the structures and responsibilities for promoted staff in secondary schools. The consequence of the reduced management structures has been to diminish the promotion possibilities for newer entrants to the profession. Discussions with new teachers indicate that many see the Chartered Teacher programme as a possible route to promotion and a way to advance their classroom skills.

A recent HM Inspectors study reported that the main elements of the McCrone Agreement had been implemented, but it questioned the impact on pupils. Although it was seen to provide much stability in the classroom it was suggested that as yet the £2bn deal had not shown any significant improvement in pupils' learning. In schools I have seen many examples of good practice advanced by the McCrone Agreement and believe it is important to have professional recognition for those colleagues whose ambition is to stay in the classroom and improve their practice.

Supporting colleagues with their personal development has led me to ascertain that we have a modern progressive education system which the McCrone Agreement supports. If the Agreement is to be reviewed I consider that it is essential to promote the skills developed by the Chartered Teacher programme and also provide the reassurance that teachers who complete the courses can maintain their commitment to personal development. To further encourage teachers to undertake the courses, consideration should be given to making this a route to a promoted post.

I have been energised by the Chartered Teacher programme and see it as an excellent opportunity for real progress in Scottish education. I envisage that as a Chartered Teacher I will continue to raise my colleagues' awareness of life-long learning and would hope to have a continuing influence on embedding reflective skills by supporting good practice. The opportunity to learn improves the quality of life at work and opens up new opportunities for teachers. Teachers continuing professional development is a real opportunity that is likely to raise the attainment of the young people we teach. ■



“The McCrone Agreement has a cost implication but I consider that this has been necessary to attract the quality of individual that the teaching profession requires.”

David Thomson

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The place of useful learning

Letters

THE EDITOR welcomes your letters but reserves the right to edit them. Please write to:

The SEJ Editor, 46 Moray Place, Edinburgh, EH3 6BH

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Please note that to be considered for publication, letters sent must include a full postal address. All opinions expressed in letters and articles are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily reflect EIS policy.

Class sizes

Dear Editor

As an EIS Vice-President of some time ago I can't let the December issue of the Journal (Vol. 90 No. 6) pass without comment. Firstly, I found the contents very positive and hopeful, and augur well for 2007. Secondly, I am disturbed about the class size issue, and would that David Drever's article be embedded on the notice board of every staffroom and be displayed at every parents' meeting.

As a long time activist of the 60's, 70's and 80's and now retired I must state that I have not noticed much change in class sizes since the original teachers' contract was signed. As the Vice-President in 1976 and Salaries and Conditions Convener before that I was among the leaders who achieved that maximum class size of 33, 30 and 20.

I well recall speaking at my first public meeting in Kirkcaldy and calling on all teachers to follow the new maximum class sizes "without exception". "Not even on a temporary, crisis or holding situation?" I was asked - and the answer was an unequivocal "no, never".

And that is how the contract about class sizes began. At that time Scotland led other European countries - but what's been happening of late? I read in David Drever's article that we are now far outwith the premier league.

Nevertheless I find Mr Drever's article enlightening and heartening. As I said, it should be flourished everywhere. Certainly the Interim Report from the

Scottish Executive's Ministerial Working Group has some poignant points - BUT no recommendations! So where do EIS members go now? The petition is fine, but I cannot envisage any parent or politician or MSP or MP not signing it. If all 60,000 members each managed to complete one petition page then this would indeed be an eventful petition. OK, but then what? Everybody in Scotland must agree to the sentiments contained in the petition.

What was considered as an alternative? Was there an alternative petition wording? A petition spelling out the new maximum class sizes as was done 30 years ago? There was in my time a huge and lengthy campaign all over Scotland seeking public support for the contract; and all the major political parties and their leaders were regularly canvassed and lobbied both regularly and at every opportunity. Scottish teachers won this campaign hands down.

I can't envisage the EIS members, the Council or the Executive of my generation waiting till after the next Scottish Parliamentary election! Maybe someone will explain why the waiting?

Hopefully all does progress well in 2007 and I wish all members a very good and positive new year. I realise I am of a different generation, and can but wish everyone well on the basis of all the politically good news in the December 2006 Journal.

Yours etc,
Ron Page
Glenrothes, Fife

Borrowed images?

Dear Editor

On the front cover of the December issue of the SEJ, you appear to borrow heavily from Christian Christmas tradition and imagery.

You substitute Scottish politicians bearing gifts in place of the three wise men and the school with the star above it would I think replace the stable of Bethlehem.

However, this appears to be as far as you go to promote the Christian message at Christmas. It would appear that you are willing to borrow from the tradition of Christmas, but give nothing back in return. Can you see that this is how some people may view your approach?

Yours etc,
Francis Donnelly,
Glasgow

Living with meningitis

Dear Editor

It seemed to be an unlikely coincidence that two items of the December 2006 edition of the SEJ could have a specific link and direct relevance to my own set of circumstances, which has resulted in this letter being written.

I read your article on Meningitis with great interest and noted that:

"survivors can be left with severe, disabling after-effects, including brain damage, deafness and where septicaemia has occurred, limb loss."

Meningitis is not an illness that is exclusive to infants, children and young adults. It will attack any age group and is no respecter of occupation.

The nursery, school or college is an ideal place for children or young people to catch the disease. Meningitis does not distinguish between children and adults. Adults in these environments can be vulnerable and do fall victim to it. Some die, others survive.

I am a long serving teacher, who after surviving Meningococcal Meningitis, have direct experience of this disease and of its after-effects. I have to wholeheartedly agree with what survivors can expect after the illness.

Surviving is merely the first hurdle.

Regaining health and fitness are the next difficulties to be cleared.

The most daunting and seemingly unending set of barriers follow and in my experience, they are exclusively work-related.

The word "struggle" has been the most effective description of what survivors can expect to encounter on returning to work.

Apart from the very occasional information piece or news item, there is little understanding of this illness or the lasting effects it has on those who survive, particularly in the workplace.

The article on Meningitis was aimed at awareness-raising, to help teachers inform children and their parents. It would have been useful to mention the damage done to serving teachers who fall victim to it.

From experience and from reading correspondence like that of the secondary school teacher suffering from Colitis, there is a serious problem in our schools in relation to the understanding, the treatment and acceptance of colleagues and support staff who are disabled.

I would like to think this letter could go some way in raising awareness of disability in the workplace and in fostering a growing awareness of the need for unqualified support for those colleagues who are disabled.

Yours etc,
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