

**Cutting
class sizes**
The EIS calls for Local
Authorities to play
their part in reducing
class sizes.



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SEJ

Time for a healthy change in schools

New advice for pupils and teachers
on health and well-being p08

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08 Healthy Schools

Putting teachers at the heart of health promotion in schools. The tools are available to make it happen!



12 Cutting class sizes

Scotlands' Local Authorities must do their part in helping to cut class sizes by 2007.



18 Teacher compensation

A quarter of a million pounds has been paid out to teachers injured at work. Clearly something needs to be done to improve health and safety.



20 Art Competition

Fight racism and win some fantastic prizes for your school!



Special features

| | |
|------------------------------|----|
| Safe Computer Use | 10 |
| Protecting Nursery Education | 14 |
| Health PULL OUT | 16 |
| Page Scholarship | 22 |
| Religious Observance | 26 |

Regular features

| | |
|--------------|----|
| News | 04 |
| Council News | 07 |
| Recipes | 11 |
| Contacts | 25 |
| Crossword | 27 |
| Sudoku | 28 |
| Letters | 29 |
| SEJ Forum | 30 |



Comment



Looking after body and mind

The EIS has always retained an interest in the health and welfare of teachers. An issue of the SEJ from 1931 gives significant attention, on the front page, to a report on the health of Scottish school children. 'Of one thing we may be perfectly sure,' the report notes 'the school children of this country are better nourished than at any previous time.' Nutrition was considered 'at the foundation' of health in schools, but the Report also noted that 80 per cent of the building plans submitted into the Board of Education the preceding year contained proposals to improve ventilation and access to natural sunlight. 'Abundance of fresh air and sunlight.. is contributory in the highest degree to the natural growth and health of the normal child.'

Both of these issues are discussed in the new EIS publication *Putting teachers at the heart of health promoting schools* (see pp8-9). Although great advances have been made in recent years to improve school meals and promote physical activity in schools, the new advice provides practical advice to teachers, schools and education authorities. There is also some discussion of a difficult but important area: emotional wellbeing. The booklet has been issued to all schools, but if you would like an additional copy please contact your Area Office or EIS headquarters.

In the spirit of health promotion there is a pull-out poster on healthy eating for your classroom in the centre of this new look SEJ, and also some healthy recipes on page 11. ■

Class sizes remain a key issue for teachers

The issue of class sizes remains top of the agenda for classroom teachers and for the EIS. In this SEJ we argue that it should be a high priority for Local Authorities too. While the Scottish Executive's partnership agreement has committed Ministers to reduce class sizes in the first year of primary and in the first two years of secondary in English and Maths, much more still needs to be done if we are to provide the best educational opportunities for all of Scotland's young people.

Modern teaching methods, which are more focussed on the individual needs of each pupil, require much smaller class sizes if they are to be successfully implemented. The time is now right for class sizes to be reduced – school rolls are falling, and the Executive is already committed to increasing the teaching workforce. This is an opportunity not to be missed – reducing class sizes must be a shared priority, for Local Authorities as much as for the Scottish Executive, to allow Scotland's education system to (effectively) meet the needs of all Scotland's pupils. ■

Our new look

This edition of the SEJ is the first to highlight a fresh new look for the magazine. We hope that the new design style, layout and typeface will help make the SEJ brighter, clearer and easier to read. Are we succeeding? We have made a conscious effort to comply with current RNIB guidelines on legibility, and would welcome any feedback from SEJ readers on our new look. You can tell us your thoughts by writing to the editor at the usual address. ■

THE EIS:
CAMPAIGNING
TO CUT
CLASS SIZES

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Iraqi and Kurdish teacher trade unionists visit EIS

A group of Iraqi / Kurdish teacher trade unionists visited EIS Headquarters in Edinburgh last November as part of a delegation organised by the TUC.



Photo: Mark Jackson

Pictured here are EIS President **Jack Barnett** and EIS Assistant Secretary **Ken Wimbor** with the members of the Iraqi / Kurdish delegation: **Abdullah al-Hamed Th.Abass**, the Head of ITU, **Dr Amer Y Khudhir**, member of the ITU Executive Committee and Head of the International department of the union, **Abd H Nisar**, member of the ITU Executive Committee, **Mahdy Ali Lafta**, Head of the ITU in Baghdad Al Risafa, **Baidaa. Kh. Kadhem**, Deputy Head of Women's Affairs in Baghdad Al Risafa, **Bushra Taleea**, Head of Women's Affairs in Baghdad, **Yousif Saleh**, the General Secretary of the IKTU. Also pictured are the three professional translators who accompanied the delegation throughout their visit to the UK.

The visit was part of a longer visit to Britain and, while in Scotland, the delegation met with senior representatives of the EIS and with members of the EIS anti-racist sub-committee. The delegation spent the morning in the EIS Moray Place headquarters, before being provided with a guided tour of the Scottish Parliament in the afternoon.

The purposes of the visit were to increase international awareness of the Iraqi and Kurdish teacher unions and the issues that they face, to promote solidarity between Iraqi / Kurdish teaching unions and British teaching unions, and to offer development opportunities for leaders of the Iraqi / Kurdish teaching unions by demonstrating to them the activities of British teaching unions.

Obituary John Weir DSO OBE MA FEIS JP

National EIS President 1972-1973

John Weir's awards indicate the wide experience he had in life and public affairs. He started his teaching career before World War II. John had a distinguished career and was headmaster at Glaisnock rural school and Bank Street primary school in Ayrshire. Pupils regarded him with affection.

Being a man of prodigious energy he took an active part in the EIS. He was a National President of the EIS (1972), a member of the national executive and President of Ayrshire EIS. The list of committees he served on was endless. In Ayrshire, we turned to John Weir for advice, particularly on matters of law and tenure. Ayrshire education committee also benefited greatly from John Weir's presence on it.

After he retired, he was active in promoting the interests of teachers as chairman of the Retired Teachers Association. John Weir was a kind, generous and approachable Christian gentleman. - Robert Bryan

EIS members honoured for services to education

The Queen's New Year Honours list included five EIS members who were recognised and honoured for their services to Scottish education.

Among those honoured was John Cassidy, Programme Co-ordinator at Cardonald College and a senior member of the EIS Further Education Lecturers' Association (FELA). Mr Cassidy is an EIS-FELA representative on the EIS Council, and is a member of the EIS-FELA Executive and convener of the EIS-FELA Education and Equalities committee. Mr Cassidy is also a former President of the Further Education association of the EIS.



John Cassidy MBE

Other honours and recipients include: Angus Macleod of Inverness College - MBE, **Patricia Peattie** (Retired) of Napier University - OBE, **Philip Thorne** of St David's RC High School, Dalkeith - MBE and **Anthony Walker** (Retired) of Barony College - MBE.

Photo: Alan Richardson

New Guidance on Student Complaints

A new guidance document *Student Complaints: Guidance for Branch Negotiators* has recently been issued. The guidance sets out a framework

for dealing with student complaints, including the responsibility on HEIs for supporting staff in such circumstances. The document is available from the EIS website (www.eis.org.uk) or from the F&HE Department at EIS HQ.

EIS LGBT Seminar

The EIS Education and Equality department wishes to arrange a seminar for LGBT members to discuss relevant issues. If you would be interested in such a seminar please contact Kate Blackwell at kblackwell@eis.org.uk or telephone 0131 225 6244 to allow us to determine interest in such an event. All replies will be treated in strictest confidence.

130 years of informing EIS members

The EIS has been publishing news information for EIS members for exactly 130 years. The first newspaper published (originally on a weekly basis) by the EIS was “*The Educational News*” published in January 1876. Later the paper changed its name to “*The Scottish Educational Journal*”. The EIS itself was established in 1847.

We quote from the leader in the first “*Educational News*” - “What then is to be our aim? The same as that of the Educational Institute. It is to work towards forming the large mass of teachers into a well organised body animated by high aims and determined to do good work. In other words, often used in regard to the Institute, its aim is to help in elevating the profession... The profession will be elevated then, and only then, when the members of it, feeling the deep importance of their vocation, endeavour to infuse sweetness, charity, and truth into the national life...”

“But we have also to keep our eye on the general public. And here we encounter a difficulty of enormous proportions. The public believe that they know everything about Education, the number of speakers who undertake to instruct us in Education is infinite. It seems the easiest subject in the world; and yet it is one of the most difficult, if not the most difficult. How are we to dispel this illusion? We think that teachers can do a great deal in this direction. There is one argument which is sure ultimately to prevail with our countrymen. It is the argument from experience...”

And we feel assured that, if teachers themselves make an effort to let their experience be known, the public will listen and be grateful for the information, for the last few years have proved to us incontestably that the Scottish nation feels a profound interest and has great faith in Education.”

EIS members responded in letters to “*The Educational News*”. The “*Educational News*” of 22 January 1876 published three letters. We quote from all three of them.

DEAR SIR,
The Government Pension Scheme.-

“The Government [must] be pressed to fulfil its promises, and do justice to our righteous claims...”

The English teachers have been very active [in defending their pension scheme], and their efforts have not proved fruitless. Let us also be up and doing, to show that we feel keenly, not, indeed, the failure of the pension scheme so much as the treatment we have received and which no government would have offered to any other class of public service.”

Yours etc
A C Cameron, Fettercairn,
13 January 1876.

DEAR SIR,

The Apathy of Teachers.-

“Your remarks on the “apathy” of teachers, were to some extent just and well merited; but to make this the sole, or even the principal cause why teachers do not subscribe to “*The Educational News*” is, I think, a great mistake. Teachers, like every other class of men, are strongly influenced by self interest; they look out for something that will be of personal advantage, either professionally or socially, but, in this case, more especially professionally... In school management, how many things are there in which we would desire to have the knowledge and experience of others? Improvements in school furniture and apparatus; the best methods of teaching (with some it may be “cramming”)... The best means of stimulating the young to energetic exertion in their studies; how to treat the indolent and froward; how to encourage, how to punish; what are the limits, advantages, and disadvantages of both?”

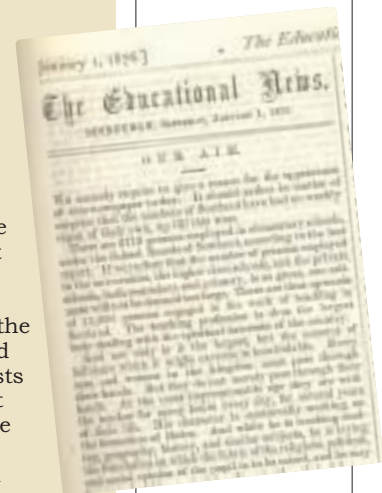
Yours etc
B A

DEAR SIR,

Female Teachers.-

“Now that women are so cordially welcomed in the scholastic field, now that the advantages of self-improvement are freely thrown open to them in the Educational Institute and elsewhere – now that posts of high honour and great emolument are accessible to them, it will be truly lamentable if our women teachers remain sunk in apathy and self-satisfaction. It is not so in England... How is it, then, that in Scotland (I speak particularly of Edinburgh) so few women teachers seem to take any interest in educational movements of any kind? The number of lady members of The Educational Institute is insignificant.”

Yours etc
W B Hodgson,
January 20 1876 ■



Almost £85,000 in overseas aid allocated by EIS in past year



The EIS has announced that almost £85,000 in overseas aid has been allocated by the organisation over the past year, with the largest contributions going to a fund established to support victims of the Tsunami which struck parts of south eastern Asia on Boxing Day last year. All the projects funded by the EIS are linked to educational development in the countries concerned.

The EIS has paid over £46,000 into a special Education International (EI) fund which was established to provide relief for victims of the Tsunami. Education International is a global union federation, and the only organisation representing education workers in every corner of the globe. An initial donation of £25,000 was allocated from the central EIS development co-operation fund to the EI appeal shortly after the Tsunami struck, and this was later supplemented by an additional £22,000 which was donated by EIS local associations or by individual teachers and lecturers in Scotland's schools, colleges and universities.

More recently, the EIS made a £10,000 donation to the EI appeal established to support victims of the South Asia earthquake which recently devastated parts of Pakistan, India and Afghanistan. A special account has been set up where EIS local associations and EIS members in schools, colleges and universities can make contributions to the Earthquake appeal fund.

A further £25,000 has been allocated from the EIS development co-operation fund in the last year to assist EI projects in the Caribbean region, Africa, Latin America, Central and Eastern Europe.

Earthquake appeal fund – account details Please send your donations to:

South Asia Earthquake Appeal/
EI Solidarity Fund, ING Bank, Brussels Branch,
Avenue Marnix 24, 1000 Belgium
Account Number: 310-1006170-75
IBAN number: BE05 3101 0061 7075
SWIFT code: BBRUBEBB

“Discipline has always been an issue in education for as long as I remember. Unfortunately, the media invariably highlights the most extreme cases and, although these are important, they are in the minority. It is the low-level indiscipline within our schools which causes the most difficulty for our teachers.”

Helen Connor

“The EI funds are being invested in projects which will bring long-term relief to the thousands of people who have been affected.”

Ronnie Smith

Further details on the EIS South Asia Earthquake appeal are also available from the EIS website at:
<http://www.ei-ie.org/en/news/20051013a.htm>

Heading towards better school discipline

In addition to being Scotland's largest union for classroom teachers, the EIS is also the leading union in terms of representing headteachers in Scotland. The EIS has more headteacher members than any other Scottish union, and has an established network for headteachers. The EIS Headteacher Network recently organised a national conference in Edinburgh for headteacher members to discuss key issues for headteachers and schools across Scotland.

Key speakers at the conference included EIS General Secretary Ronnie Smith and Philip Rycroft, then the head of the teachers' division at the Scottish Executive Education Department (SEED).

Other key EIS speakers were Education convener George MacBride, who spoke on school curricular reform, and Salaries convener Malcolm Maciver who provided a review of the 21st Century Teaching Agreement.

EIS Council Member Helen Connor (North Lanarkshire), who represents the EIS on the Ministerial Working Group on pupil behaviour, provided an overview of current developments aimed at combating indiscipline in schools. Highlighting some of the key issues, Ms Connor said, “Discipline has always been an issue in education for as long as I remember. Unfortunately, the media invariably highlights the most extreme cases and, although these are important, they are in the minority. It is the low-level indiscipline within our schools which causes the most difficulty for our teachers.”

Echoing the comments of other speakers and highlighting EIS policy, Ms Connor added, “There is no doubt in my mind that the smaller the class the easier the discipline. I stress that this does not mean we are saying that small classes will not have discipline difficulties, but they are much more manageable in a class of 20 than a class of 33.”



General Secretary Ronnie Smith chats with headteacher members at the recent conference.

Photograph: Drew Farrell

Protecting headteacher posts when schools close

The continuing debate around ways of improving parental involvement in schools was again on the agenda as the EIS Council convened for its first meeting of 2006. The EIS response to a Scottish Executive consultation paper on Parental Involvement in Headteacher and Depute Headteacher Appointment Procedures was discussed and subsequently approved by Council.

A key concern for the EIS is ensuring that headteachers are protected as a result of the proposals. The EIS paper states:

“An important issue to be addressed is whether vacant headteacher or depute headteacher posts should be advertised nationally or whether there is to be a more limited circulation. The EIS would agree that the national advertising of headteacher and depute headteacher posts should continue to be the norm but that there are situations (school closures, falling rolls etc) when local authorities should have more flexibility than is allowed under existing legislation.”

“Consideration will also have to be given to any criteria which might restrict those eligible to apply for post. This is particularly important in situations of school closure, amalgamation or falling school roles where Local Negotiating Committees for Teachers (LNCTs) may already have concluded collective agreements on replacement.”

“Under employment law, local authorities have a statutory duty to offer suitable alternative employment. Mergers, school closures and falling rolls may lead to more qualified promoted members of staff being declared surplus to requirements. Authorities should have to agree redeployment strategies for such staff with teacher trade unions within the LNCT.”

Presenting the paper to Council, Vice President Peter Quigley said, “The principle of the proposals is that parents should be involved in the appointment process for headteachers and depute headteachers. Precise details of how this would operate, through parent councils or parent forums, have yet to emerge but the EIS is committed to improving parental involvement in schools.”

The EIS response to the consultation states, “The EIS supports the principle of parental involvement in the process of appointing senior staff in Scottish schools.”

The strong EIS support for the

repeal of the 1988 School Boards (Scotland) act is also made clear in the EIS response.

The paper goes on to highlight EIS support for the main principles behind the legislation to improve parental involvement in Scotland’s schools, but also cautions that any new legislation must allow for the fact that, “across the country, there are collective agreements which have been approved by the LNCTs which impact on a range of aspects of the appointments processes.”

The paper states, “EIS support for the main principles of the Bill is predicated on the move away from centralist prescription thus allowing local authorities, Parent Forums and Parent Councils more flexibility than existed under the School Board’s regime. On this basis it is our view that the new procedures should allow account to be taken of particular local circumstances in the development of these new procedures through final agreement within the relevant LNCT. Consideration will also have to be given to important anti-discrimination and equalities issues within the national regulatory framework.”

EIS issues warning over potential PLP ‘paper trails’

Education convener George MacBride, in his report to Council, issued a warning over the potential that Personal Learning Planning (PLP) for pupils, if not properly managed, could create substantial additional administrative work for teachers and reduce the time available for teaching, planning and evaluation.

“Learners learn best when they understand what they are trying to learn, when they are given feedback about the quality of their work and what they can do to improve it. Personal Learning Planning is a process, it is not a

product and cannot be about filling in tick boxes on sheets of paper or on a computer screen. Personal Learning Planning cannot be about the creation of paper trails, nor can it be about writing and filing pages of notes about every pupil in the class or setting a myriad of targets for each child to achieve on a monthly basis”, said Mr MacBride.

“Personal Learning Planning should always build on what teachers already do daily – we observe, we listen, we assess, we provide advice, we plan strategies and we talk with children about how to improve their learning. Effective Personal Learning Planning makes us more conscious of these procedures and supports us in developing our own practice. If local authority representatives do not pay heed to what teachers are saying, PLP will ultimately fail”, added Mr MacBride.

Removal of age & stage must not place pressure on pupils

In light of recent developments in East Renfrewshire, the EIS Council issued a warning that the removal of the regulations on Age & Stage must not be used by local authorities to adopt a ‘one size fits all’ approach in presenting pupils early for examinations such as Standard Grade. “Early presentation should only be considered where it is appropriate for individual pupils, following detailed discussions between teachers, parents and pupils”, warned Education convener George MacBride.

Protecting nursery education

Council members were made aware of the worrying potential developments in Glasgow regarding the proposed removal of 37 qualified nursery teachers from nursery schools.

COUNCIL NEWS SNIPS

- A request for a contribution towards a trade union tribute to the late Mick McGahey (NUM Scotland) was recently received from Midlothian Trades Union Council. In light of the importance of Mr McGahey to the Scottish trade union movement, it was agreed that the EIS nationally would donate £300 to the financial appeal and that information inviting additional contributions would be circulated to all EIS Local Associations.

“An important issue to be addressed is whether vacant headteacher or depute headteacher posts should be advertised nationally or whether there is to be a more limited circulation.”

Healthy schools

Briefly

By promoting healthy eating, physical activity and emotional well-being, healthy teachers can teach better and healthy pupils will learn better.

It's time to put teachers at the heart of health promotion in schools

Every school in Scotland is to receive new advice on how to become a health-promoting school. The advice is published in a new EIS booklet called *Putting teachers at the heart of health promoting schools*. Teachers will have access to practical ideas about how they can make themselves and their pupils more healthy. The advice will also help schools and education authorities involve front-line teachers in health promotion.

The case for health-promotion in schools is very clear. The link between health, performance and behaviour has been studied widely and significant international research consistently shows that pupils who eat well, exercise properly, and are happy, behave and perform better in the classroom. The new advice offers practical suggestions about how schools and teachers can achieve that.

More than healthy eating

Real progress has been made in Scotland in providing good school meals, but the new advice booklet notes that one in five 12 year olds



To receive a copy of *Putting teachers at the heart of health promoting schools* call EIS HQ on 0131 225 6244

is now obese. It is becoming increasingly clear that improvements in diet alone will not automatically lead to better health. The booklet argues that we need to look more widely at the facilities offered by schools. Building new schools or refurbishing existing schools provides the ideal opportunity to help make young people and staff healthier. Properly planned school locations are important to allow teachers and pupils to be able to choose healthy ways to travel to their school. There must also be good sports facilities readily available to all pupils, and more facilities for staff who wish to cycle to work, such as changing rooms and storage facilities. Classroom design is critical, and the EIS has long argued that teachers and pupils both need good daylight and ventilation. There are disturbing circumstances where classrooms are ventilated so poorly that it impacts on learning and teaching.

Teachers' health

Healthy schools are not just about pupils' health, however, and in the current debate on health promoting schools, the health of teachers is too easily overlooked. Simple things – like

making sure staffrooms have fresh drinking water on tap and facilities for preparing healthy meals – can go a long way towards improving the long-term health of teachers. The advice calls for investment in facilities in staff rooms such as cookers, dishwashers, and suitable processes for keeping them clean and in good working order.

Emotional health

As well as healthy eating and physical activity, the new advice also tackles the difficult issue of emotional health both for pupils and for teachers. George MacBride described emotional well-being in schools as a forgotten problem: "The stigma associated with mental health is damaging, and must be challenged. Our advice today calls for a new focus on the emotional health of pupils and teachers alike. For pupils, tackling bullying is a priority, but staff must also be trained in spotting early-warning signs of emotional ill-health. For teachers, smaller class-sizes and the consequent better discipline would reduce issues arising from overload and stress. Until then, every council in Scotland has a responsibility to provide proper support for their teaching staff. Sadly not all do." ■



"Teachers are busy professionals, but we know that healthy teachers teach better and healthy pupils learn better. Our new advice is important to ensure that teachers are fully involved in new developments. It

will help teachers keep up to date with health issues, and help senior managers understand how better to involve staff, including teaching staff. There is also a clear need for a national training package on health promoting schools." ■

George MacBride
Convener,
EIS Education
Committee

See centre pages of this SEJ for our pullout health poster!

Good health and attainment

There is growing academic research to suggest that healthy pupils attain higher levels of academic outcomes. In 2001, the Scottish Council for Research in Education at the University of Glasgow undertook an extensive review of recent medical and educational studies from across a large number of countries into the link between health and attainment. They concluded that:

- better diet enhances the neurological development of the brain, cognitive processes, and short-term and long-term attainment in school
- the effects of passive smoking, high blood lead levels, anaemia and the level and quality of light all impact on attainment
- poor mental health is associated with low achievement at school
- participation in breakfast clubs improves test scores and attendance rates

campaign

Some ideas from the new advice booklet

Healthy eating

- embed healthy eating into the curriculum by providing teachers with high-quality resources
- provide suitable staffroom facilities for teachers to eat healthily
- ensure teachers have access to fresh water in classrooms
- work with parents of children who bring packed lunches to advise them on healthy choices
- education authorities should fund breakfast clubs

Physical activity

- facilitate healthier routes to work
- Councils should provide discount or free entry to gyms and swimming pools for their staff
- Provide centrally-purchased pedometers for staff to monitor their physical activity
- Provide a bike-users' allowance as well as car mileage allowance for teachers who need to use their own transport for work

Emotional well-being in Schools

- make teachers and managers more aware of the causes and signs of stress
- be aware of workload and ensure that nationally-agreed conditions of service are adhered to
- make sufficient staffroom space available
- offer complementary therapies to staff from time to time
- allow employees to self-refer to occupational health advisors
- Councils should provide a confidential listening service for worried or distressed employees.



What is a health-promoting school?

The World Health Organisation said in 1995 that 'a health promoting school is one in which all members of the school community work together to provide pupils with integrated and positive experiences and structures which promote and protect their health. This includes both the formal and informal curriculum in health, the creation of a safe and healthy school environment, the provision of appropriate health services and the involvement of the family and wider community in efforts to promote health'. The Scottish Executive has said that every school in Scotland will become a health-promoting school by 2007.

The Scottish Health Promoting Schools Unit

The Scottish Health Promoting Schools Unit was established by the Scottish Executive in May 2002 to provide national leadership, co-ordination and support for partnership working aimed at developing health promoting schools throughout Scotland.

The unit provides links to useful resources for teachers and case studies of successful projects at www.healthpromotingschools.co.uk



"The introduction of a smoking ban in public places on 26th March 2006 is only one element of our comprehensive action to improve Scotland's health.

"It is vital we teach young Scots the

benefits of a healthy diet and lifestyle. By inspiring good habits in children we can help ensure they eat well and take plenty of exercise for the rest of their lives.

"Hungry for Success is already making a difference to our children's diets and we are doing all we can to help improve the exercise they take. But we need the continued support and dedication of

teachers because their work in the classroom is crucial to making healthy living interesting and exciting." ■

Jack McConnell
First Minister



"Promoting a healthy lifestyle in schools is incredibly important and actually quite simple. Providing good, wholesome lunches using fewer additives and higher quality ingredients is a great place to start. But working with the children for all-round health benefits, including aspects of exercise and mental wellbeing, is even better."

Nick Nairn

More health promoting features >

Protecting against Computer injury

Jim Jamieson

Jim Jamieson, a senior associate and radiation protection adviser with the Scottish Schools Equipment Research Centre (SSERC), explains how taking a few simple steps can improve the health and safety of all computer users.

Climb an ice gully and you are aware of danger. Is the ice firm? Will there be unstable snow? In extreme sports you live on the edge, relying on equipment, skills, experience, friends and judgement. How different from sitting down in front of your computer with your guard at ease because there is no sense of danger. Yet the HSE statistics clearly show that many computer workers will be harmed from just that. The 2004/05 figures reveal that each year over two million people suffer from ill health which they think is work-related. The most common types of work-related illnesses were musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) – in particular those affecting the back and upper limbs – and stress and other types of mental illness. MSDs account for around a third of the total incidence and the jobs carrying the highest risks include typists. The number of working days lost from musculoskeletal disorders in 2004/05 is estimated to be around 11.6 million.

For computer users, the risk of harm comes from the combination of three factors: (1) bad posture; (2) working for long periods of time without a break; and (3) working too often. Bad posture can arise from one or more factors such as an incorrectly set up workstation, not sitting correctly on the seat, stretching to control the mouse, or other poor practices. But even with the occurrence of bad posture, the likelihood that this will lead to injuries depends on too long a duration of many sessions at the keyboard and too high a frequency or number of occasions a day this happens.

In other words, sitting incorrectly at a computer, if done occasionally, is unlikely to cause harm, but doing so repeatedly, for long periods of time, puts the user at a significant risk of injury.

If a workstation is incorrectly set up, then this can often result in bad practices becoming habitual. The tendons and nerves in the wrist are particularly vulnerable to repeated strain. The time limit for

any repeated muscular action putting tendons under strain is about an hour – setting the limit for any single sitting at a workstation. If repeated flexing of the tendon or muscle in an awkward posture continues, the tendon can become frayed and lumpy and start to calcify. Damage can be irreparable, but avoidance is simple. A ten-minute break after an hour at the keyboard allows the tendon to relax and recover.

Guidance for children

To address the fact that children are at risk of harm from computer-related injuries, the New Educational Development Division of SEED commissioned SSERC to draw up safety guidance on the use in schools of display screen equipment by children. Distribution of the guidance to councils and independent schools took place in October 2005. Distribution from councils out to schools should now have taken place. Every school should have a 4-page, A5-sized leaflet summarising the main points. They should also have a CD-ROM with the full guidance in electronic format. Two of these files are PowerPoint presentations; one for training teachers, and the other, children. In addition to that, every secondary school should have a paper copy of the Employers' Guide, a 72-page A4-sized book. The electronic files can also be downloaded from the SSERC and LTS websites.

The premise on which the guidance relies is that, first of all, teachers must be trained in computer safety, and, secondly, teachers would then train children in what to do. While there is a lot that employers can and should do in providing workstations suitable for use by children, the ergonomic fitment of each child to his or her workstation, who then hot-desks to another, and then another in the course of a day, really has to be done by that child. Children therefore should be taught how to set up workstations, and need to be made aware of the risk factors

that were outlined at the beginning of this article.

Because of the newness of this guidance, the training of children and adolescents should now be occurring with all year groups. Eventually, once the guidance beds down, the appropriate stage for much of the training will be, in my opinion, with middle or upper-primary year groups.

A series of four seminars were held around Scotland to raise awareness of the guidance. The response to the guidance was generally very positive, but a number of difficulties were raised. The problem of inadequate facilities and equipment is one that I expect time will take care of. The guidance provides specifications. These will, I trust, enable councils and contractors to design new installations to suitable standards, or bring about improvements to existing setups.

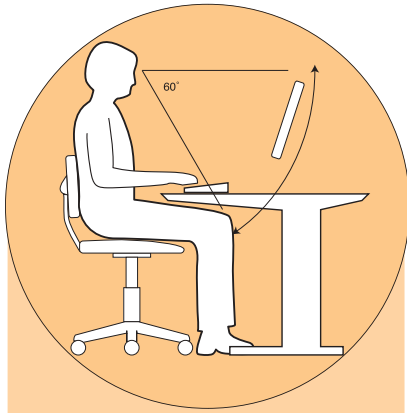
But in health and safety, the provision of correct technical measures is relatively easy. Far, far harder is that of overcoming human behaviour. It is cool to be casual. How do teachers instill in youngsters a respect for posture? (Incidentally, a child is much less likely to be harmed from sitting at a school desk than at a computer workstation. When at a school desk, the child can radically shift position – sitting up, or leaning on an elbow, or so on – whereas when working at a computer the same posture needs to be kept and hand/arm movements repeated.) I am reassured by a piece of anecdotal evidence from a computer teacher, who has observed that the “nerds” in his classes tend to be the ones who adjust their chairs and sit correctly. Is this an example of people doing the right thing when they need to? My hope is that if children are taught how to set up computer workstations and sit at them correctly from an early age, it will become automatic. I feel uncomfortable sitting at a strange workstation that I have not adjusted to suit me. It's a similar sense of unease that I get from not fastening a car seatbelt. Once the guidance takes root, my belief is that children and teenagers will learn to look after themselves pretty effectively and grow to expect to be provided with workstations that meet with their ergonomic needs. It may be that it is when they leave school, and what they do in their leisure time, that the guidance is really needed. But, then, isn't that one of the purposes of school? ■

“If a work station is incorrectly set up, then this can often result in bad practices becoming habitual.”

Jim Jamieson

The guidance is available as electronic files on a CD-ROM issued to every school. It can also be downloaded from the LTS and SSERC websites:

www.ltsotland.org.uk/ictineducation/
and www.sserc.org.uk



Keys to good posture

- Set the top of the screen just below eye level (see diagram)
- Swivel or tilt the screen remove glare
- Keep your forearms and hands horizontal
- Don't bend your wrists by more than 15°
- Position the mouse very close to the keyboard
- Shift your keyboard back from the lip of your desk giving your hands space to rest
- Keep your thighs horizontal. Don't lean forward such that your weight is supported by your thighs
- Keep the space under your desk free of clutter
- Keep your feet flat on the floor; use a footrest if need be
- Adjust the chair height so that your elbows are at the same height as the keyboard
- Sit erect, or lean slightly back by about 5° letting the backrest support some of your weight
- Adjust the backrest to support the small of your back
- Maintain the curvature of the spine
- Sit back in the chair
- Keep your shoulders relaxed
- Keep your head up
- Keep your elbows tucked in at your sides
- Place the document holder next to the screen

Format of guidance:

Teachers' Guide
60 page A4 document
(no print-run has been arranged)

Teachers' Guide:
short format
Leaflet (4 pages, A5)

Teachers' Training
presentation
PowerPoint presentation

Pupils' Training
Presentation
PowerPoint presentation

Employers' Guide
72 page A4 document with CD-ROM
with files of all the packages

Simple food for a healthier lifestyle

One reason why it is more difficult to eat healthily is that eating healthily requires some planning. Junk food is often faster, usually cheaper, and frequently convenient. After all, not many local chip shops do a successful line in steamed vegetables to go. But with a little ingenuity at a good greengrocer – coupled with a firm determination never again to eat a white pudding supper – you can easily make positive choices about the food you eat.

Here we present two takes on every-day dishes that are just a little bit more healthy than their traditional counterparts.

Potato and root mash

Mashed potato should never come out of a packet. And with half a dozen wonderful other tubers available in our shops, you should try these different mashes out (If you are using yam, be sure to peel it thickly with a knife and wash the surface you cut it on – the thick outer layer is mildly poisonous but the flesh is rendered harmless through boiling).

Four large floury potatoes

A similar quantity of any of the following:
celeriac / yam / Jerusalem artichoke / cassava / sweet potato / turnip / swede

3 tablespoons of low-fat natural yoghurt

salt

black pepper

1 teaspoons wholegrain mustard

Place the peeled potatoes and peeled root vegetables, chopped, in a covered pan of water and bring to the boil. Boil gently until they are soft. Turnip boils faster than potatoes, whereas swede and celeriac will take five or so minutes longer. When they are cooked, drain well and return to the pan. Mash together with the yoghurt, salt, black pepper and mustard. Serve as you would with straightforward mash.

Serves four

Alternatives to pasta

If you need some carbohydrate in your meal, but want fewer calories per serving, maybe it is time you tried the humble cous-cous. Cous-cous is a form of cracked wheat and is similar to bulgar wheat which is prepared in the same way.

2 cups cous-cous/bulgar wheat

A little oil for frying

1 small red onion

1 clove or garlic or ginger

1 red pepper (could be roasted)

White wine vinegar

1 teaspoons sugar

Vegetable stock

2 teaspoons of some spices:

try fennel, caraway, cumin, or coriander seeds

In a heavy pan, heat the oil and add the finely chopped pepper, onion and spices. Sweat (ie, cook on a low heat with the lid on) with the garlic or ginger for 3-4 minutes, but do not allow to burn. Add the vinegar – a tablespoonful or so – and sugar. Then add the cous-cous. Pour boiling stock over to cover the cous-cous and leave with the lid on, off the heat, until all the liquid is absorbed. You may need to add a little more water if the cous-cous looks too dry. Season and serve immediately. You may need to fork it to remove any lumps. You could try adding some pumpkin seeds for an unusual twist.



“A balanced diet is important, and the message about eating five portions of fruit and vegetables is ubiquitous for a reason. Cutting back on calories doesn't necessarily mean eating less: it means eating different things.”

Over the limit?

Briefly

Smaller class sizes bring clear educational benefits. To meet the Scottish Executive's commitment to reduce class sizes, local authorities need to plan ahead in setting staffing levels.

Local Authorities must act to meet class size cuts

The EIS has called for Scotland's 32 Local Authorities to take action to play their part in ensuring that existing commitments to reduce class sizes by 2007 are met. Local authorities need to start planning to ensure that sufficient numbers of teachers are in place in their schools to meet the planned class size cuts. In this article, EIS General Secretary Ronnie Smith explains how class size reductions will benefit Scotland's education system and its pupils, and calls for local authorities to play their part in delivering greater opportunities for all of Scotland's young people.

Ronnie Smith, EIS General Secretary

The Scottish Executive's existing class size commitments under the Labour / Liberal Democrat Partnership Agreement call for a class size reduction to a maximum of 25 pupils in Primary 1, and a maximum of 20 pupils in Secondary 1 & 2 classes in English and Maths, by 2007.

It is absolutely essential that all Scotland's local authorities start planning ahead for how they intend to meet the commitments to reduce class sizes by 2007. The Education Minister, Peter Peacock, has publicly stated that sufficient funding will be made available to all local authorities to allow them to meet, or even

exceed, the planned class size cuts. Scotland's local authorities must play their part in meeting these commitments, and they must start moving towards the targets for reductions in class sizes now. If we are to deliver the best for all young people and allow teachers to spend more time with each individual pupil, then

Scotland's local authorities have to put in place strategies for the scheduled class size reductions. At a time when we are assured extra funding is being provided to enable more teachers to be recruited, in some areas we hear of plans to cut education budgets and staffing. It makes no sense for money to be poured in at one end of our education system, only for it to merely leak out at the other end.

Local authorities must employ sufficient teachers to deliver on these commitments and resist any temptation to dilute or circumvent the very clear promises made by the Scottish Executive. This is about improving the educational chances of all our pupils by giving them the chance to learn in smaller classes. This is not about improving adult/pupil ratios by employing more classroom assistants, nor is it about amalgamating classes and assigning two teachers to a larger group.

In increasing the teaching force, it will be important also not to lose sight of the importance of an adequate supply of substitute teachers needed to cover for staff absence. Any attempt by authorities to follow the dilutionary model of England which allows teaching assistants to teach whole classes will be vigorously challenged.

The EIS is issuing a challenge to all political parties to look at going beyond the existing targets beyond 2007. We are looking for continuous improvement in class sizes so that Scotland can move up the international league table. If we have 53,000 FTE teachers, together with the projected drop

in pupil numbers and major replacement of the school estate – there will rarely have been a better opportunity to cut class sizes so that all pupils can receive the individual attention that modern teaching methods demand.

Research evidence shows that smaller class sizes bring clear educational benefits. By reducing class sizes, we can allow each individual child more time to spend with their teacher and this will bring obvious benefits in terms of improved pupil behaviour, educational performance and attainment. Reducing class sizes is all about providing the best for each individual child and it is vital, now that the Scottish Executive has made these commitments to cut class sizes, that Scotland's local authorities meet their end of the bargain and ensure that enough teachers are in place to allow every pupil the opportunities that they deserve.

The EIS has produced a briefing paper to be sent to all Scottish MPs and MSPs, which explains the EIS position on class sizes and explains the rationale behind the policy and highlights the educational benefits for pupils in reducing class sizes. The EIS has also produced a leaflet, which has been sent to all schools, highlighting the aims of EIS campaigning on the class sizes issue. Copies of these publications can be obtained from EIS HQ. ■

THE EIS: CAMPAIGNING TO CUT CLASS SIZES

The EIS is committed to the campaign to reduce class sizes.



“By reducing class sizes, we can allow each individual child more time to spend with their teacher and this will bring obvious benefits in terms of improved pupil behaviour.”

Ronnie Smith, EIS General Secretary

What are the maximum class size figures now in Scottish schools?

| Stage | Class Size Limit |
|-------------------------|------------------|
| Primary 1-3 | 30 |
| Primary 4 – Secondary 2 | 33 |
| Secondary 3-6 | 30 |
| Secondary (Practical) | 20 |
| Special Education | 6-10 |
| Primary (Composite) | 25 |

How do class sizes in Scotland compare with class sizes in other European countries?

Average class sizes in primary schools across Europe are set out

| Country | Class size average (Primary) |
|----------------|------------------------------|
| England | 26.2 |
| Ireland | 24.2 |
| Scotland | 23.9 |
| France | 22.3 |
| Germany | 22.2 |
| Czech Republic | 21.3 |
| Netherlands | 21.2 |
| Hungary | 20.5 |
| Austria | 20.0 |
| Belgium | 20.0 |
| Denmark | 19.4 |
| Spain | 19.4 |
| Portugal | 18.7 |
| Italy | 18.1 |
| Norway | 17.4 |
| Greece | 17.2 |

Source: Eurydice & OECD

It is much more difficult to draw up a similar table for secondary schools because these are organised in different ways in different countries.

How will a cut in class sizes make a difference for Scottish pupils?

According to research evidence the main benefits for pupils are:

- More time spent with the teacher
- Higher pupil attainment
- Disadvantaged pupils stand to gain
- Better pupil motivation
- More quality pupil learning, less routine tasks
- Improved pupil behaviour

What are EIS priorities in cutting class sizes?

The first EIS priority is that Scottish Ministers' commitment to have 53,000 teachers in our schools by 2007 must be in place within the agreed timescale. Ministers have also agreed that the maximum in Primary 1 will be 25 and that classes in English and Mathematics in S1 and S2 will have a maximum of 20 pupils. The EIS is clear that the number of teachers should also be maintained at 53,000 beyond 2007. This will permit further reductions in class size as the number of pupils slowly drops. EIS policy ultimately is for a class size maximum of 20 in all primary and secondary schools, with a maximum of 15 for composite classes.

Ensuring quality nursery education

Removing qualified nursery teachers will have a devastating effect

Proposed cuts by a number of councils in nursery education provision will damage the prospects of children entering primary schools. A number of councils are putting forward plans to reduce or close down nursery education provision in their area. The EIS is continuing its campaign to ensure access to quality nursery education, led by qualified nursery teachers, for all 3 to 5 year olds in Scotland.

The proposals, which a number of councils are now contemplating, to dilute or close down nursery education provision in their area is one of the most damaging developments to education in recent years. The City of Glasgow Council, for example, is proposing the removal of 37 nursery teachers so that no nursery schools will have a class teacher. A number of other councils are bringing forward proposals which will lead to a serious diminution in the quality of nursery provision in their area.

Nursery headteacher and vice convener of the EIS Education Committee Norma Anne Watson comments "These proposals would mean that pre-5 provision would be delivered in a number of areas without qualified nursery teachers teaching in nursery schools or in nursery classes within primary schools. The effects of this would mean that pre-5 provision would be met without the input of qualified nursery teachers. While different forms of pre-5 provision suit the needs of different families, the total removal of a nursery education option reduces the choice that parents are able to make and removes the option of the highest guaranteed quality provision".

Cutting quality for a price

It is quite clear from the approach of many councils that the proposals which are



"Councils must withdraw plans to dilute and cut back on nursery education provision."

Norma Anne Watson

being considered are largely in the context of cuts to the education budget which are being considered for 2006-2007. Councils are, to put it simply, looking for a cheaper option at the expense of quality. The proposals are quite at variance with the commitment of the Scottish Executive to prioritise quality education for children in the two years leading up to primary school. Councils must re-consider their position as a matter of urgency and, if necessary, the Scottish Executive must step in to prevent the downgrading of nursery provision which will lead to a reduction in quality education for very young children.

The proposed cuts are also at odds with important new developments in Scottish education, especially the new Curriculum for Excellence for ages 3 to 18. The new curriculum being

proposed for Scottish youngsters at all levels mean a rich, diverse and flexible curriculum appropriate for children at all ages. It means establishing closer links between primary and secondary schools and also nursery and primary schools. If children are to have the best start in life it is important that they are equipped to progress smoothly through the new curriculum from the very beginning of their time in primary school. The only way that this can be guaranteed is through being taught by fully qualified nursery teachers in the two years before primary school. Such teachers are also registered with the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS). Nursery pupils should have the same entitlement to a properly trained, qualified and registered teacher as their primary counterparts. Education authorities are being short-sighted and are acting contrary to Scottish





Executive intentions, if they seek to remove the option of a quality curriculum appropriate for children aged under five.

Campaign leaflet

The EIS will be campaigning actively in support of quality nursery education provision. An EIS leaflet "Nursery Education: Providing the Best for Scotland's Three and Four Year Olds" has recently been redesigned and updated and was issued to all primary and nursery schools in January. The leaflet will also be made available to teachers and parents campaigning on the issue. The leaflet refers to the considerable research evidence that shows that the best guarantee of a quality start in education is through local education authority run nursery schools and nursery classes with appropriately qualified staff. The main research evidence in this area is from The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) project published at the end of 2004.

Schools Inspections reports published by Her Majesty's Inspectorate in Education (HMIE) also confirm that, in Scotland, nursery schools and classes are the best guarantee of quality education provision for 3-5 year olds. More recently research evidence presented to the Early Years Inquiry of the Education Committee of the Scottish Parliament through the Autumn of 2005 confirmed work already undertaken in this area.

Norma Anne Watson adds, "The commitment of the Scottish Executive is to a quality education experience right from ages three and four right through to Lifelong Learning. What is now starting to happen in councils throughout Scotland undermines commitments that have been given in this area. Councils must withdraw plans to dilute and cut back on nursery education provision. Equally the Scottish Executive cannot stand back while a central plank of education provision is being reduced or eliminated." ■



British teachers wanted to visit Uganda, Sudan and Lebanon

"It has been a completely life-changing experience. The trip totally exceeded my expectations and I absolutely loved every minute of it."

Sara Bluett, teacher who visited Uganda in October 2005

This is a fantastic opportunity to gain a unique first-hand experience and in-depth insight into the lives of some of the most challenging teaching and learning environments in the world today. We are looking for fully qualified teachers who are keen to develop their own understanding of development issues to join trips to Uganda, Sudan or Lebanon. We are looking for those willing to bring back this unique experience to share with students and raise awareness amongst pupils, staff and the school community. There is no cost for joining the trip but teachers need to raise funds for schools and education projects in countries that Education Action supports.

If you are interested please call Sally on 0207 426 5802 or email insight@education-action.org. Details of insight information days in London and Edinburgh in March 2006 are available on our website www.education-action.org



Superb holiday deals for EIS members

Top discounts on all the best holidays from leading operators.*

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*Terms and conditions apply

Apollo Travel Direct

5 things you can do to improve your health



1

Think about what you eat

Changing what you eat will make you feel better and make you more healthy. Look at the labels on food and see what you are eating for each meal.

Aim to eat five portions of fruit and vegetables every day. Fruit and juice, a side-salad with lunch and vegetables with a main meal are all easy ways of doing this.

Reduce the amount of fat, sugar and salt you eat.

Aim to have a balanced diet with lots of different types of food.



2

Take more physical activity

Walking to school, taking up a sport, and walking to the shops all count as physical activity.

...ces of different types of food.



3

Be aware of your emotional health

How you feel is important. If you feel unhappy, stressed, or worried, you will not perform as well as you can at school or work.

Be aware of what causes you stress and where you can get help. Make time for you by doing something relaxing as often as you can in your free time.

There is nothing embarrassing about looking for help when your emotional health is poor, but it is difficult. 1 in 4 people in Scotland will experience mental health problems at some point in their lives, and www.seemescotland.org.uk is a useful website.

Adults should build up 30 minutes of moderate activity on most days of the week. Young people should build up at least 60 minutes of moderate activity on most days of the week.

Doing this will reduce the risk of heart attack and strokes and make you feel in better shape.

4

Don't smoke

Smoking will make you die younger, make you less fit, and can make you smell unpleasant. Smoking a packet a day costs about £1,200 a year. The easiest way to stop smoking is not to start.

You can call Smokeline on 0800 84 84 84 to help you quit.



5

Know where to get hold of more advice!

All schools have a copy of the EIS booklet, *Putting Teachers at the Heart of Health Promoting Schools*.

You can also use the NHS Scotland website www.hebs.com. It has lots of advice on your health and how you can improve it.



Only you can improve your health!

Briefly

The number of accidents and injuries to teachers and lecturers is still too high. Working with the EIS and the Health and Safety Executive, educational employers could prevent most incidents.



CAUTION

Protecting teaching staff at work

Scotland's education authorities and educational establishments paid out almost a quarter of a million pounds in compensation (including legal expenses) to EIS members as a result of industrial accidents or attacks against teaching staff last year. The figure of almost a quarter of a million pounds illustrates that more still has to be done to improve employee health and safety in Scotland's educational establishments.

Much work to do

The EIS is calling for all educational employers to refocus on making employee health and safety a priority throughout 2006. Just as educational establishments have a duty of care to young people in their pupil or student community, they also have a duty of care to the teachers and lecturers in their employment. All employers have the legal responsibility of ensuring a safe and secure working environment for their employees. While educational employers do seem to be taking steps to improve employee health and safety, there is much more which can be done to ensure

that accidents and injuries to teachers and lecturers are kept to a minimum. By working together with the EIS, the Health and Safety Executive and others, educational employers can help ensure the safety of staff, pupils and students and help create a safe environment for teaching and learning.

Commenting on the level of compensation won in the past year, General Secretary, Ronnie Smith, says, "The figure of almost a quarter of a million pounds paid out as a result of injuries to EIS members over the past year is very worrying. While the compensation figure is slightly

The figures on compensation claims held by the EIS show that the biggest risk to teachers and lecturers in the workplace is through slips, trips or falls.

less than last year, the number of incidents is still far too high. This shows that more still needs to be done in our schools, colleges and universities to ensure the safety and well-being of teaching staff. While the EIS will always do everything it can to support the claims of members who have suffered an injury, our obvious preference would be for compensation claims to become far less common due to a reduction in accidents and attacks against teaching staff. All employers have to take the health and safety of their employees seriously, and, sadly there are still indications that some employers in the education sector are still failing to take the proper steps to ensure the health and safety of their staff."

A claim of £1,800 was won by a claimant with the help of the EIS, for injuries sustained slipping on an unlit cobbled pathway.

“It happened quite fast and without warning. A pupil suddenly lost control and I had to restrain him physically from attacking another student. I was then kicked and punched. I felt I had no other option but to press for compensation.”

ANONYMOUS TEACHER

The figures on compensation claims held by the EIS show that the biggest risk to teachers and lecturers in the workplace is through 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

With the help of the EIS a Personal Injury stress claim was settled out of court for £50,000.

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.

Injury through assault

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.

Stress factor

Ronnie Smith also commented on an out of court settlement arising from a case arising from a psychiatric injury: “Occupational stress is a major problem facing teachers and lecturers. The EIS has always been aware that the legal hurdles on ‘stress’ cases have been particularly difficult to overcome. This particular out of court

settlement is a small, but significant, victory for the EIS. Employers should be using the Health and Safety Executive’s management standards to work with the EIS at local authority and educational establishment level to reduce the impact of occupational stress.”

The financial cost

Quite apart from the cost to educational establishments – and thus the taxpayer – in legal fees and in settling claims for compensation, we must also consider the hidden costs in these cases. These would include personal costs to the individual concerned through their pain and suffering, as well as the effects on their personal and home life. There are also considerable additional costs to employers due to the employee’s absence from work whilst recovering from injuries, and the added cost of arranging replacement cover. There will also be significant costs to the National Health Service in treating the injured. Much of this could be avoided if employers took health and safety matters more seriously and ensured that correct procedures were followed at all times. ■

If you have suffered personal injury at work through stress, accident or assault, please contact your EIS representative or branch secretary. Advice is also available from the Employment Relations Department at EIS HQ on 0131 225 6244.



Could you be a CAB adviser?

Scotland’s frontline Citizens Advice Bureaux are urging teachers who are about to retire to consider volunteering as CAB advisers.

CAB advisers, 85 per cent of whom are trained volunteers, help people with problems ranging from debt and welfare benefits, to employment rights and nuisance neighbours. Last year in Scotland, they dealt with personal debt totalling £157.8m and won over £40m for clients in unclaimed benefits and other entitlements.

Today’s CAB service uses IT to take advice beyond the high street office, into doctors’ surgeries, sheriff courts, community centres, libraries and supermarkets. Its 15,000-page information system is now compressed onto a single CD-ROM disk that can be used anywhere a laptop computer can.

What kind of person becomes a CAB volunteer? “People of all ages and backgrounds willing to devote just a few hours each week to helping their local community,” says Kaliani Lyle of Citizens Advice Scotland. “Retired people, people in work or between jobs, students, parents. You don’t need lots of experience or prior knowledge because our training programme is very comprehensive. But you do need to be a good listener, non-judgmental, able to keep a confidence and to do basic arithmetic.

“And we don’t just need volunteer advisers. Because each CAB is an individual charity, we also need people to sit on our management committee. And skills like marketing or fundraising would also be useful.

“It’s the kind of work where you never know what query or problem you are going to deal with next. But it can be fascinating finding out the answers for people, and it’s very friendly and sociable. So many people have found volunteering with their local bureau one of the most interesting and worthwhile things they’ve ever done. And they feel they’ve made a real difference!”

Geraldine Rooney, a former science teacher, volunteers with Edinburgh’s Pilton CAB. “I find it challenging and satisfying,” she says. “Many of the skills you learn in teaching – such as listening and being able to elicit information – are really important as a bureau adviser.”

*** If you’d like to find out more about volunteering, contact your local CAB or visit www.cas.org.uk**



Briefly
Win some fantastic prizes
and fight discrimination
by entering our art and
poetry competition!

Seeing red: the art of tackling racism

Helping schools to combat racism and discrimination

To help schools and pupils explore the important issue of racism, the EIS is again running an anti-racism competition for all Scottish schools in partnership with the charity Show Racism the Red Card.

Describing ongoing EIS work aimed at promoting equalities initiatives in schools, EIS Equalities convener Margaret Nicol said, "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."

Discussing the EIS / Show Racism the Red Card schools' art competition for 2006, Ms Nicol said, "The EIS is pleased, once again, to be running an 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."

Although the specific focus of this competition is on combating racism, we are all far too aware of other forms of discrimination and injustice that often blight our society. The often shameful treatment of refugees and asylum seekers in this country, some of which is itself prompted purely by ignorance and racism, is another important issue. It is a great shame on this country that our way of welcoming refugees, who have been driven out of their own country through no fault of their own, often leaves so much to be desired. The fact that so many people who have been hounded out of their own countries by intimidation and fear are then imprisoned by the UK government and hounded relentlessly by sections of the



"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."

Margaret Nicol

press shows how far we have to go before we can truly say we are a country free from racism and all other forms of discrimination. 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' art 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 an artwork, 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 17th February 2006, with the prize-giving scheduled to take place at a special event at Scotland's national stadium, Hampden Park, in March.

About the schools' anti-racism competition

The Schools' Arts Competition helps schools promote racial equality by providing teachers and pupils with the opportunity to examine racism and anti-racist strategies. Each school in Scotland will have the SRTRC video and education pack, which were distributed free of charge to all schools by the Scottish Executive as part of the One Scotland Campaign.

The Scottish Executive has supported and promoted this competition, now in its 4th year, in recognition of its contribution to the curriculum and raising awareness of racism in schools.



photographs: Alan Wylie

The categories for this year's competition are:

- Primary 1-4 artwork
- Primary 1-4 poetry
- Primary 5-7 artwork
- Primary 5-7 poetry
- Secondary artwork
- Secondary poetry

To enter the competition, pupils are asked to watch the video available in all schools, and then produce a work of art on an anti-racist theme.



Big prizes up for grabs for competition winners!

Following discussions with competition sponsors, the schools' prizes available to the winners in this year's Show Racism the Red Card competition have now been announced:

| | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| National Overall winner: | £1000 |
| Category winners, 1st place: | £750 |
| Category winners, 2nd place: | £400 |
| Category winners, 3rd place: | £50 |
| | & Digital camera |



In addition to these fabulous prizes for schools, a whole host of football related prizes, ranging from signed football kit to special match day tickets from Scotland's top clubs, will be awarded to the winning pupils.



Final chance to enter! The closing date for entries to this year's competition is Friday, 17 February. Make sure your school and your pupils are in the running by getting your entries in today!

Full competition details and application forms have been sent to all schools via the EIS Representatives' Bulletin. Further details and an online registration form are also available from the EIS website at www.eis.org.uk

Loch Ness: an Educational Dimension

All Scottish teachers and education officers are invited to view "The 3D Loch Ness Experience" on Edinburgh's Royal Mile. This provides a new educational resource for primary school visits which are supported with on-line work packs from www.3dlochness.com. Teachers viewing on a complimentary basis may bring their immediate families but should provide some identification.

The 39 seat auditorium provides immediacy and interaction through the use of stereoscopic viewing. The presentation length of 25minutes lies within the attention span of most children and it is envisaged that the visit might be made as an addition to educational outings to Edinburgh's larger attractions. The cost is £2.50 per pupil and accompanying adults are free of charge.

The designer is Adrian Shine, leader of the Loch Ness Project. He acts as presenter and uses the monster story as an interpretive thread to introduce more general appreciation of the environment, particularly from an ecological point of view.

Despite its clear appeal to children, it is not immediately obvious to teachers just how useful the monster debate is as a vehicle for exploring techniques of general enquiry and ecological reasoning. The subject is generally regarded as purely cultural.

The presentation consists of two main parts. The first part is devoted to what people report seeing in the loch and other forms of evidence. This develops through a repartee, raising questions on the assessment of evidence such as volume, veracity, misidentification, bias, hoax and the pitfalls of unexplained instrumental findings.

The second part of the presentation opposes the status of eyewitness evidence and conviction as used in the process of law for example, with the scientific method, using ecological exploration of the loch's different habitats, food chains and a simple biomass pyramid. This part of the presentation focuses on the low productivity of the loch and is supported by the on-line work pack "Food Chains and Pyramids". ■



To book your school visit, contact:

3D LOCH NESS
Loch Ness Discovery Centre, 1 Parliament Square
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Briefly

Peer development practices could easily be introduced into any Scottish school. Evidence of the benefits for professionals and youngsters was found in the USA by last year's Page Scholar.



photograph: Mark Jackson

Good Practice in the US Mid West

The Page Scholarship for 2005 was awarded to Gordon Lobban, Principal Teacher Curriculum Support at Trinity Academy in Edinburgh. Here, Gordon reports on his trip to the USA where he visited schools in Illinois and Ohio and shared ideas with colleagues relating to innovative methods of promoting the use of best practice in teaching and learning.

Gordon Lobban, PT Curriculum Support, Trinity Academy, Edinburgh

In May 2005 I had the privilege of visiting around 15 schools and professional training centres in cities in the US mid west, in Chicago, Cincinnati, Columbus and Cleveland. Schools ranged from small suburban Junior Highs to huge 2000+ Senior Highs and from selective independent schools commanding close to \$20000 per year fees to very challenging urban inner city public (state) schools. In all there were gems of good practice. In all, the commitment and professionalism of staff I met was outstanding. To all I am grateful for the time they took to share their ideas,

“Failure to provide evidence of professional development can result in cancellation, by the state, of the licence to teach - dismissal from the profession in effect.”

practices and challenges. We can all learn something from them.

The focus of my research was on good practices (GP) in teaching and learning (T and L); how schools identify and disseminate good practice, what mechanisms (formal and informal) they put in place to promote better teaching and learning. I learned of many individual practices. They can be grouped into two main themes - Peer Support Mechanisms, and Student Evaluations of Teachers' Courses and Lessons.

Peer Support Mechanisms.

It is important to outline two features of teaching in the US (certainly in the mid west). Firstly CPD is, to all intents and purposes, a compulsory and integral part of each teacher's working life. Secondly, teachers in the state sector work via a licence renewable every five years. Failure to provide evidence of professional development can result in cancellation, by the state, of the licence to teach - dismissal from the profession in effect.

One mechanism I encountered in a challenging south side Chicago school is typical of an informal support mechanism. The school called it "Teacher Triads"

- three staff choose their own triad (most likely a cross curricular group)
- they meet and teacher one outlines a lesson to be delivered
- the lesson is observed by teachers two and three
- they meet to discuss the lesson
- the goal is to observe and report on two things which worked well and two things which could be improved on
- the lesson may be remodelled and re taught to a different group
- the process can be repeated with triad teachers rotating
- cover is provided for lesson observation and feedback
- there is no reporting to school managers
- a record is kept for CPD accreditation.

A more formal, management led approach to peer support I encountered in Chicago was the "Critical Friends Group" (CFG). Each group, and there were several in this school, comprised six to eight teachers, is cross curricular, appointed a chairperson and met once per month for one hour. Their purpose is to learn from each other in a collaborative manner

- each member, in turn, presents an aspect of his / her own work or student's work to the group. This may be student teaching materials, assessments, samples of student's work or videotape of a lesson. Typically it is an aspect of work the teacher is, in one way or another, unhappy with.
- critical feedback is invited
- feedback has to be structured into 'warm', 'cool' and 'probing questions' categories
- feedback should avoid being crudely judgmental.

School managers see CFG's as a "professional teeth cleaning" exercise which brings together younger and experienced staff to reflect on practices. It encourages teachers to think more critically and be more energised to share, cooperate and learn. CFG's promote a sense of worth and achieve stronger connections across staff.

All of the above approaches are variations on a theme. With management support all can be easily introduced into any Scottish school. All, in my view, promote professional development and bring a better quality of T and L to our students.

Student Evaluations of Teachers, Courses and Lessons.

I had assumed that this would be a more controversial area among teaching staff but was surprised to find how well developed and how common these practices are in both state and private schools. Their integration into school life has led to acceptance as 'the norm' and practice, as I understand, is widespread.

In schools in Columbus and Cleveland I found annual evaluations completed by all teachers, all parents and all students. Different topics are covered in each survey. They range from school buses, school safety, classroom management and the learning environment to teaching quality and course content and delivery. Results are collated, presented to the school board and held by the local school district authority and local library where they are open to public scrutiny. These evaluations impact on T and L to form the basis of departmental reviews, forward planning and professional development needs over at least the forthcoming 12 months.

'Unofficial' student evaluations of teachers and courses are common. Typically each subject department will prepare its own pro-forma for students use. Surveys are administered by the class teacher. They are completed anonymously by students and go directly to the class teacher who collates the results. The end of a course or unit of work is commonly used as an appropriate time for evaluations to take place. School managers and departmental leaders are involved only to the extent where they can ask individual teachers "What did you learn from the survey?" They do not have access to raw data, only the class teacher does. This system encourages reflection, self-assessment and critical thinking from teachers. More importantly, it is self-controlled and non-threatening.

A school in Cincinnati takes the above approach one step further. A class is chosen through mutual agreement between the teacher under evaluation and a peer teacher (appointed by the Head

Teacher and in normal circumstances the departmental head or line manager). Student responses (anonymous) are passed, in the first instance, to the peer teacher. They are read and summarised before both teachers meet to discuss the evaluation. A summary statement is agreed on, co-signed and a copy placed in the teacher's file. This is an annual event for all class teachers.

The student evaluation forms themselves are interesting. One used by a Junior High (equivalent S2) student ran to 8 - 10 questions and two sides of A4. Students are asked to circle a response to a particular statement e.g. SA (strongly agree), A (agree), D (disagree), SD (strongly disagree). Statements are always worded positively. e.g. "The language used by the teacher is clear" or "The materials we use are well presented". Senior students are asked more probing questions and given the opportunity to amplify, expand or explain. I was assured that, on the whole, students take these evaluations seriously and the percentage of 'spoiled papers' is small.

Again, these approaches are variations on a theme. Teachers I met accepted evaluations as part of the job. If introduced carefully through negotiation and consensus and used with care and sensitivity they can be a useful tool in helping to bring better T and L experiences to our youngsters. ■

The Page Scholarship is awarded annually by the EIS, in partnership with the English Speaking Union in Scotland.



ENGLISH-SPEAKING UNION
SCOTLAND

Summary

My experience is that there are a lot of dedicated professionals in the US developing innovative strategies to best meet the needs of youngsters in their care. Their system groans under financial and political pressures in a way we do not appreciate or experience - just ask the next American teacher you meet about President Bush's "No Child Left Behind" policy - and stand well back.

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Talking about Religious Observance

Ken Coulter examines the issue of Religious Observance in schools and discusses the new obligations which require discussion and action on the part of schools across Scotland.

Ken Coulter, Development Officer, Learning and Teaching Scotland

With sex and politics, religion is the third member of the unmentionable trinity of polite conversation. In Scottish Education, what is quaintly called Religious Observance was the daft relative you didn't want your friends to know existed, never mind talk to. Since February 2005 this has all changed.

The HMIE report *Standards and Quality In Secondary schools: Religious and Moral Education 1995 – 2000* drew attention to widespread non-compliance with Circular 6/91 on Religious Observance (RO) in non-denominational schools. A Review Group was set up, chaired by Anne Wilson, the Dundee Director of Education. For three years the Review Group deliberated the issues, initiated widespread consultation and received 1500 submissions from the Scottish public. The Religious Observance Review Group (RORG) Report was published in May 2004. Circular 1/2005 in February 2005 required schools and local authorities to act on the Report. We are now compelled to discuss what RO is and respond.

Assemblies?

"So that'll be about assemblies then? When I was at school we had some excellent/ duff/ stonkingly brilliant/ boring/ any other adjective you can think of/ assemblies."

Since being seconded as Development Officer: Religious Observance to LTScotland in May 2005, similar conversations have been had throughout the country. Assemblies, which were the traditional way of delivering RO, have had an impact on generations of Scots. This impact has often, sadly, been negative.

Wrong name?

Another frequent conversation has been "Why is it still called Religious Observance?" This seems an obvious question, as it is now not about religion, and not about observing, but participating. The RORG debated this issue and accepted the term RO in the 1980 Education Act. A different name required changing the Act and was beyond the Group's remit.

What is it then? RO is now about providing opportunities for spiritual development of all members of the school community. Spiritual development is about

- Sensing mystery
- Sensing values
- Sensing meaningfulness
- Changed quality of awareness
- Sensing otherness and
- Sensing challenge

It is also shared values. RO is defined as:

"community acts which aim to promote the spiritual development of all members of the school community and express and celebrate the shared values of the school community"

"...it is now not about religion, and not about observing, but participating."

It's not my job, I'm an RME teacher?

Traditionally, many RME teachers have poked RO with a very long stick and run off. Some have viewed involvement in RO as a compromise of integrity and independence. To appear to support one particular faith as opposed to others would sabotage messages about inclusion.

The Report and Circular alleviate this concern. RO is no longer about supporting one world view; it is about spiritual development for all school members. The RORG rejected the English term assemblies of "a broadly Christian nature", asserting that that they could be either Christian or non-Christian. The Circular does, however, encourage recognition of Scotland's Christian heritage and use of the rich resources therein. The Circular also requires schools to recognise that in their community will be those of other faiths and no faiths. The key feature is integrity. Schools must provide opportunities for spiritual development which allow all to participate with integrity.

These opportunities must occur a minimum of six times per year plus traditional celebrations, throughout the year and tied in with the rhythm of the school calendar.

Under the new definition, there is common ground with RME; the opportunity of Personal Search. A challenge to all RME teachers is to be involved, and integrating RO as a feature of Personal Search.



Are there resources?

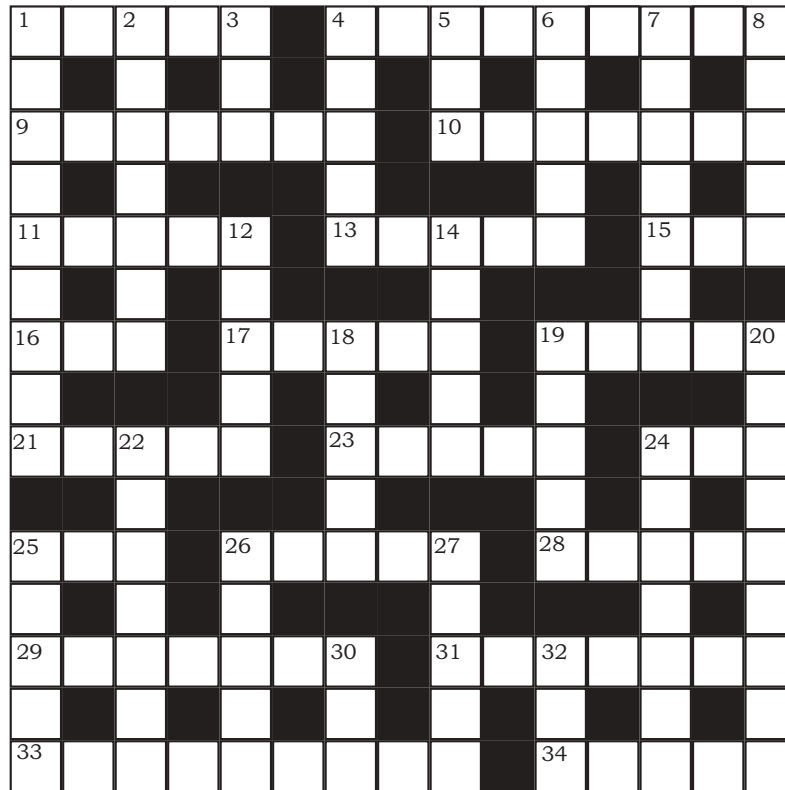
The Development Officer remit involves discussing with and working with local authority policy makers, visiting schools and chaplaincy teams, meeting with faith representatives and seeing some excellent examples of good RO throughout Scotland. It is often asked "And are there resources?" Available in 2006 will be a website with: exemplars and links to resources; evaluative tools; and, a toolkit of how to do it. The important issue is understanding the processes involved in delivering RO. Once understood, the possible available resources will be seen as infinite.

So is it about assemblies then?

The answer is yes and no. The purpose is not to put on all singing all dancing assemblies which "wow" pupils and staff and ensure high attendance on that last day of term. This may be a by-product. The key is about providing opportunities for spiritual development. One possible vehicle for delivering this may be the assembly, but that can only be one of a range of strategies delivering RO. The Report challenges all teachers to creativity, teamwork, development of chaplaincy and requires schools to consider questions of location and the rhythm of the school year in order to enable spiritual development. The Report allows for the inclusion of faith groups in the informal curriculum. RO delivers on A Curriculum for Excellence. RO is about spirituality across the curriculum.

But it is not for pupils only, for RORG clearly states that all people are spiritual and all are involved in the unique search for human identity. This includes pupils and adults in school, from whatever background, collaborating on and discussing "what is spiritual?" ■

Ken Coulter is a teacher of Religious and Moral Education, and currently seconded from Douglas Inch school in Glasgow to Learning and Teaching Scotland as Development Officer, Religious Observance. Before training to become an RME teacher at Jordanhill, Ken previously worked as a milkman, asbestos stripper and a church minister.



Answers to crossword 38

Across: 1 Nasal
4 Vengeance 9 Mansion 10 Neither
11 Pluto 13 Scone
15 Ash 16 Agn
17 Hbomb 19 Villa
21 Error 23 Inter
24 Cam 25 Pea
26 Panic 28 Epoch
29 Kitbags
31 Marceau
33 Redplanet
34 Phase

Down: 1 Nameplate
2 Sanjuan 3 Lei
4 Venus 5 Nan
6 Elide 7 Nahuatl
8 Earth 12 Other
14 Orbit 18 Orion
19 Verve
20 Almshouse
22 Roasted
24 Cholera 25 Poker
26 Pearl 27 Comet
30 Sun 32 Rip

CROSSWORD WINNER – Congratulations to **Vanessa Hawthorn, East Linton** who was the winner of SEJ cryptic 38. Ms Hawthorn receives a £20 book token.

Crossword 39

CLUES

Across

- 1 Upset penal colony in Asia (5)
- 4 A male gut a revolutionary country produced (9)
- 9 Not in Vietnam I biased against (7)
- 10 The army man came from a small state on the Bay of Bengal (7)
- 11 Collect a service by the sound of it ! (5)
- 13 Very quickly took Hydrogen from native american (5)
- 15 In the oven a nice piece of bread was found (3)
- 16 Toy brick lost head and developed a view of oneself (3)
- 17 Started to energise gifted young Principal Teacher working in North Africa (5)
- 19 Ditto ! (5)
- 21 Cleverly steal the smallest amount possible (5)
- 23 Oriental Country founded on Scots Gold perhaps (5)
- 24 Cut the end off a large bag and make a small one (3)
- 25 World wide spider's home (3)
- 26 East African country which has overtaken Yale University on the inside (5)
- 28 The French love to talk about it ? (5)
- 29 Volcanic atoll not under a tropical umbrella principally (7)
- 31 Drag elf to where the coward flinched (3,4)
- 33 Land I was zealously starting to miss (9)
- 34 The friendly islands in Kingston, Gabon (5)

Down

- 1 Pal Ronnie, in a way, was unique (9)
- 2 Splendid ceremonial an original fish rose to the surface (7)
- 3 Small dog or workroom! (3)
- 4 State to get a hang on (5)
- 5 Started a remote manufacturing process for gun (3)
- 6 Avoid Ms Peron of French extraction (5)
- 7 Give gun to singer reportedly from former Soviet Republic (7)
- 8 Riches taken from Chairperson for cover (5)
- 12 He was despatched to get the perfume apparently (5)
- 14 I can't get involved in small adventure (5)
- 18 Could be the enemy of the state (5)
- 19 Found a rub-a-dub in the Antilles (5)
- 20 Again a cur attacked me in Central America (9)
- 22 Potassium removed from a Balkan I discovered (7)
- 24 Bloated like heads, rivers and stomachs can be (7)
- 25 Take in the views of ones spouses (5)
- 26 Uniform colour ? (5)
- 27 Right in corrosive environment producing pungent fumes (5)
- 30 The land of the bush ? (3)
- 32 Full-stop, period. (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 **Monday, 27 February 2006**. 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.

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Address:

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Sudoku

supplied by: Sudoku solver syndication and design

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

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

Vocabulary builder

What is the meaning of the word: **OPHTHALMOPHOBIA** n.

- (a) fear of losing one's eyesight (b) fear of staring at others
(c) fear of being stared at (d) fear of wearing spectacles

Five Minute Quiz

- Which family lives at 742 Evergreen Terrace?
- Who was born in 742 and became king of the Franks in 768?
- What number usually goes with 768 to give a common resolution for computer display monitors?
- The USS Monitor was the first ironclad warship of the United States Navy. Designed by Swedish engineer John Ericsson, in which war did she participate?
- Under what name did these four Swedish musicians - Ulvaeus, Fåltskog, Anderson and Lyngstad - perform and record music?

EIS End of Year Quiz THE ANSWERS

Many thanks to the many SEJ readers who took the time to enter the EIS end of year quiz from our last edition of 2005.

The winner of the competition is Alan Stopani from West Lothian. Mr Stopani wins £50 of gift vouchers.

Section 1 2005-Were you paying attention?

- Turkey
- Sudan
- The Kyoto Protocol which is intended to cut the global emissions of greenhouse gases
- Shaun Murphy
- The number of Scottish seats in the House of Commons following the 2005 General Election.
- Su Duko
- Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince
- Top of the Pops
- Mount Everest
- Daniel Craig

Section 2 Film Quotes

- On the Waterfront
- The Wizard of Oz
- Taxi Driver
- Cool Hand Luke
- Jerry Maguire
- A Few Good Men
- Wall Street
- Casablanca
- Dead Poets Society
- Forrest Gump

Section 3 1905 Trivia

- MCMV
- Chelsea Football Club
- Albert Einstein
- Third Lanark
- The Cullinan Diamond
- Henry Ford
- Portsmouth, New Hampshire ending the Russo-Japanese War
- Norway and Sweden
- La Mer by Claude Debussy
- HMS Dreadnought

Section 4 Food and Drink

- Falisker comes from Skye. The others come from Islay.
- Gazpacho
- Pinot Noir
- Stilton
- Coca-Cola
- Saffron
- Calvados
- The Waldorf-Astoria Hotel created the Waldorf salad
- Mama Told Me (Not To Come) by Three Dog Night. (I'll give you Tom Jones as well!)
- Bruschetta

Section 5 And finally...

- Real Madrid, Ajax, Bayern Munich and AC Milan
- Baby Love by the Supremes
- Carry On Sergeant
- A Hard Day's Night
- Trevor Baylis
- Coffee
- (Everything I do) I do it for you
- "Summer Breeze" by the Isley Brothers
- A Yankee
- Nicholas Parsons

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ANSWERS:
2.Charlemagne. 3.1024 4.The American Civil War 5.ABBA
Vocabulary builder (c) Five minute quiz 1.The Simpsons

Malicious complaints

Dear Editor

I write to you as a follow up to your cover story "Teachers in the firing line" in your SEJ December 2005 issue (Vol 89 No 6).

I am one of those teachers who has been subjected to unfounded and malicious complaints over a period of almost two years resulting in me being suspended three times which covered a total of 60 weeks. There is no protection for a teacher when there is a vendetta against you and the parents will try to name and shame at every opportunity and in any way they can. I was subjected to a barrage of allegations some going back seven years, fliers which named and shamed me being distributed throughout the community, a protest with banners outside the school gate and three police investigations. A committee of parents was formed which resulted in ten letters being sent to the local and national papers, the MSP and councillors, the Director of Education and the Children's Commissioner. Finally someone informed a national paper where I lived resulting in me being confronted by a reporter on my doorstep while being secretly photographed. Where is the protection and human rights? There seems to be none, especially when parents are able to get hold of confidential information.

In Children's Commissioner Kathleen Marshall's article in the SEJ, she writes "the making of an

allegation leads to child protection 'machinery' going into operation" which is true. In my case, I believe suspension was discussed in the Education Department before I was informed that an allegation had been made! Kathleen Marshall also writes that she "wants to help address what injustices exist in the system". One way is not to immediately treat the teachers as guilty, remove them from the school telling them not to discuss or have contact with pupils and colleagues and also not subjecting them to a long drawn out investigation which can be as long as two years. In my case I had to wait five months before I was even informed by the police of the actual allegation. A further three months followed before it ended up with everything being dropped. No investigation should just be dropped or left incomplete especially after a lengthy investigation as it is not to the best interest of either party. I requested three different investigations concerning myself being carried out to try to clear my name at the Education Department level but each time I was denied the opportunity. I was informed that the authority could find a teacher guilty but they were not prepared to say that one is innocent. Instead they will say that all proceedings are dropped which leaves a feeling that there is still some doubt with one's conduct. To try to prove my innocence to the parents and to demonstrate the support I had from my colleagues, I felt I had to return to the school after the first

two suspensions but on the third occasion I very reluctantly had to accept a compulsory transfer to a school on the other side of the city.

The past two traumatic years have affected my confidence, self-esteem and enthusiasm towards teaching and has made me feel very depressed, vulnerable and apprehensive in many of the daily situations which arise in teaching. During the 29 years of teaching I was never suspected of any unprofessional behaviour and yet because of some vendetta against me, there is now a remaining seed of doubt which results in the prospect of me having to prove my innocence for the rest of my teaching career.

Once everything has been dropped and in the eyes of the authority been concluded, you are expected to pick up the pieces in a new environment, put everything behind you and move forward as if nothing had ever happened. This is impossible and unreasonable to do due to the hurt and injustice one feels and the knowledge that those who lied or misconstrued the truth have got off scot free and it will take a long time for it to fade. As Andrew Gibb states in the SEJ, the system "is hard to bear and many who experience it never return to the profession even when a case is dismissed".

Yours etc.
name and address supplied



"I was informed that the authority could find a teacher guilty but they were not prepared to say that one is innocent."

An International Success Story?

Dear Editor

I read with a degree of scepticism, based on considerable experience, the short article by Peter Peacock in the December SEJ (Vol 89 No 6) about Scotland being in "the premier league of education."

International studies do provide useful comparisons but their results are not necessarily reliable. Just as the TIMSS study indicated that Scotland was at or near the bottom of the league and resulted in much frenetic activity by HMIe and the like, the PISA studies need much closer scrutiny for us to be able to pat ourselves on the back.



Peter Peacock

However, having recently written to the minister directly about "Scotland being left behind in Europe", with regards to the use of technology in the teaching

and learning of Mathematics, it is my opinion that we are not learning "from world-class experience." Indeed in the book "*The Case for CAS*", along with colleagues from Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Switzerland, we have detailed just exactly how far behind much of Europe we are in this field. The book, edited and proof read by international colleagues, indicates just how far we have to go to just catch up.

I will not bombard the readers with detail, but suffice it to say these comments are based on 30 years in Scottish education, considerable experience abroad, and on home based research carried out in schools in Scotland.

We have a long way to go before we can say that we are "punching above our weight."

Yours etc.

Ian A Forbes
Moray House School of Education
The University of Edinburgh

**THE EDITOR welcomes your letters but reserves the right to edit them. Please write to:
The SEJ Editor, 46 Moray Place, Edinburgh, EH3 6BH
F: 0131 220 3151 E: sej@eis.org.uk**

Please note that to be considered for publication, letters sent must include a full postal address.

“History is who we are and why we are the way we are.”

David C. McCullough

Curriculum for Excellence

History at the heart



Duncan Toms, PT History, Bearsden Academy, East Dunbartonshire

Towards the end of 2005 the political pigeon was prematurely put among the curricular cats by a report in TESS (4.11.05) of remarks by the Education Minister that, as a result of the curriculum review, history might no longer be taught as a discrete, time-tabled subject in S1/2. The reaction in both educational and political circles was sharp, especially as the curriculum review was supposed to be a consultative process, yet it appeared that important decisions had already been made behind the scenes with no public discussion or consultation with interested parties.

The subsequent ‘debate’, however, was somewhat one-sided as no-one defended the suggestion and Peter Peacock himself effectively denied that he had made it, issuing a statement staunchly supporting the teaching of history. Given the more ‘flexible’ and locally devolved nature of the proposed new curriculum, however, individual local authorities and/or headteachers may try to ‘rationalise’ time-tabling and staffing by dropping subject areas such as history regardless of educational considerations – as is already happening to many subject departments due to new promoted post and faculty structures.

But, on a more positive note, the curriculum review and the controversy stirred up by the TESS report provide an historic opportunity to explain and clarify the importance of history in the curriculum – as all subjects are being invited to do in the context of developing young people as “successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors”. History can and should play a major and essential role in each of these objectives.

Successful learners: History is well placed to take advantage of the recent emphasis on different ways of learning and formative assessment methods. It tends to be thought of as a literary subject and does develop essential transferable skills such as careful research, critical thinking and extended writing. But, through the use of video, ICT and illustrated text-books, it also lends itself well to audio-visual teaching and learning and, through the use of role play, interactive whiteboards and field trips, to activity centred methods. Given the scope for different views and interpretations in history, formative assessment techniques such as thinking time, class discussion and peer assessment also fit in very well with the nature of the subject.

Confident individuals: What gives individuals confidence is the

feeling that they understand themselves and the context or environment in which they have to operate. What could be more necessary for this than an understanding of the society in which they live and work, and how can this be achieved without a knowledge and understanding of the historical circumstances and forces at play in its development? This has become especially apparent with regard to Scottish society due to the emergence of a greater awareness of our national identity and the establishment of the Scottish Parliament. In the words of David C. McCullough, “History is who we are and why we are the way we are”.

Responsible citizens: To develop both the ability and the motivation to function as responsible citizens, young people must understand the historical processes which have given rise to and sustain our democracy, not just as a series of legislative reforms but as the result of a continuing struggle and the sacrifices of our forebears. The study of national and international history is also essential to alert them to the possible uses and abuses of political, economic and other forms of power as well as the implications of major challenges such as poverty, racism and environmental degradation for both contemporary understanding and responsible action.

Effective contributors: The way history is taught nowadays encourages pupils to study and evaluate sources of evidence and come to their own conclusions.

So the aim should be to maximise history’s vital and unique contribution within a relevant and coherent curriculum. This can be achieved by supporting and encouraging those whose specialist knowledge of and enthusiasm for the subject makes them effective teachers. ■



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