



EIS Newsletter

November 2000

Inclusion to end in S5!

Secondary school provision in Aberdeen has been under review now for the past two or three years. In June, the Aberdeen City Council Education Committee during its consideration that an overcrowded Aberdeen Grammar School might be unable to cope with all its in-zone S1 pupils, decided to explore the possibility of a Sixth Year College or Colleges in Aberdeen. In 1999/2000 there were 850 students in the sixth years of our 13 secondary schools studying CSYS courses, Higher courses and modular and certificate courses.

Clearly the thinking of some councillors was that by removing 6th year students from AGS and other secondaries, pressure would be eased lower down the school.

At the August 31st Education Committee, the Director of Education proposed that ACC embark on a feasibility study on Sixth Year Colleges. **I proposed no action** for the following reasons:

- Inclusion – The Committee had just passed a proposal to close Cordyce special school and replace it with 4 disaggre-

gated units throughout the City. Over the past few years we have seen other special schools closed or merged as local bases were set up. I stated that the concept of a Sixth Year College flies totally in the opposite direction from inclusive education with its mantra that every child should be educated in his/her local school.

- Any attempt to segregate S6 would not make sense because the Higher Still programme covers two years.
- Financially these proposals could be a double-edged sword. If you take away the sixth year, the viability of certain fifth year classes would be called into question.
- Valuable experience of students gained over five years of schooling by Guidance teachers would be lost, as would the potential to offer careers advice to S6 students.
- Most City secondaries operate S6 support schemes to help younger pupils cope with the stresses of the P7 → S1 transition. It is clear that these

(Continued on page 2)

Welcome to our

latest

Newsletter

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Inside this issue:

page 2

Inclusion to end in S5!(continued)

page 3

HMI

page 4

An Inspector calls

Page 5

STUC Women's Conference

Page 6 & 7

Health & Safety

Page 8

Contacts

(Continued from page 1)

schemes not only benefit S1 pupils but also improve the responsibility and attitude of the senior students involved.

- Travel costs will be greater for students travelling all over the City to one or two centres than if local consortia arrangements similar to those at Bankhead/Dyce and Kincoth/Torry are encouraged and developed.
- Motivation of staff could suffer if the students they have worked with for 5 years are creamed off into a Sixth Year College.
- After the recent SQA debacle a period of stability is needed in schools to bed in the many changes rushed through in recent years, which helped contribute to the current mess.

I urged the Committee to **reject the proposal for a feasibility study** because it would only tie up Directorate, Education Officer and school personnel time when the system is already un-

der too much pressure. **Unfortunately I lost the vote 17 – 4** and at the October 31st Education Committee we were presented with a 10-point plan of action for the feasibility study covering curricular areas, costs and views of FHE providers and employers. It was also agreed that visits be made to Sixth Form Colleges in England prior to an initial report being made to the January Education Committee.

During the debate, several councillors mentioned Sixth **Form** Colleges instead of Sixth **Year** Colleges. There is confusion here in that some Committee members were unaware that the English Sixth **Form** covers the two-year period of upper and lower sixth. And this leads me to my major fear! If a Sixth Year College were set up in Aberdeen, it would only be a matter of time before our S5 students followed them there. This would threaten the Scottish tra-

dition of comprehensive education and raise the prospect of a return to junior and senior secondaries.

Finally, in recent years we have seen several Aberdeen City Council kites flown on the front page of the Times Educational Supplement as certain individuals embarked on what I considered to be little more than CV construction. The five-term year/3 week summer holidays and all through schools are to name but two ideas that have disappeared without trace. I would hope that their most recent kite, the concept of the Sixth Year College, would also return to earth like a lead balloon.

Grant Bruce
ACC Education Committee
Teacher Representative

Dates for your diary ~ more information will be sent to you later

January: Letter to school reps calling for ~
Nominations for:-
LA Officials & LA Executive
Executive Council
Motions

March: LA AGM (Date to be arranged)

President's visit ~ 20th ~ Atholl Hotel



Secretary's Report

By Bill Ross

Her Majesty's Inspectorate

The following motion was passed overwhelmingly at the EIS AGM in June:-

"That this AGM instruct Executive Council to devise methods to protect members from pressure from HMP".

This motion is now being processed. There is however already in schools EIS advice with regard to inspections. I will return to this later.

From talks with EIS members in schools which have been inspected or are about to be inspected I am well aware of the pressures being put upon teachers and Headteachers. It is unacceptable.

The role of the Inspectorate is quite straight forward; inspectors are there to support schools and Local Authorities in carrying out agreed initiatives; they are not there to look for faults at every turn and report them to the public. One of the major problems with Inspectors' reports being published is, I believe, the attitude of the media, who are far more interested in reporting negative aspects of a report rather than the positive aspects which usually far outweigh any negative references. There is certainly not balanced reporting and I can certainly understand

the bitterness felt by many teachers on reading in the local paper an inspection report which is a skewed version of the actual report and does not convey all the hard work that is going on in the school.



There is, I believe among teachers, a misunderstanding of the role of the inspector as defined above. **All teachers in Aberdeen City are employed by the Local Authority and only they have the power to take action against a teacher.** The Inspectorate, contrary to the belief of many teachers, does not have that power; all the Inspectorate can do is make recommendations on how possible improvements could be made and they do not have the power to instigate any kind of disciplinary action against any teacher or headteacher.

Again I am hearing from members that their school was "instructed" by the Inspectorate to make some change or another. The Inspectorate do not have that power. They can only recommend change, but if that change is contrary to a national or local agreement then it can only come about through the proper negotiating mechanism either nationally or locally, i.e. through the teaching unions.

Where I become annoyed, and I have raised this with our Headquarters in Edinburgh, is when a school is criticised for not following some initiative, which has not been agreed at local level in consultation with the teaching unions, or when there is a local agreement but it is at odds with what the Inspectorate think should be happening. The Director of Education has made it quite clear to the teaching unions on more than one occasion that the Local Authority is in charge of the pace of any new developments, not the Inspectorate.

Referring to the recent advice sent out by EIS Headquarters regarding Standards and Quality Inspections and Care and Welfare Inspections, I would recommend that all members get ac-

(Continued on page 5)

An Inspector Calls

*By Mary Matheson
LA President*

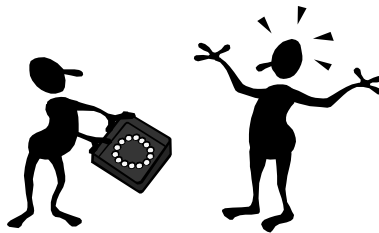
I've said it before and I'll **never** say it again "Are they mad? You won't catch me doing all that stuff before the Inspectors arrive."

It's like some horrible disease. The minute you hear the news you feel stunned and disbelieving that, after all these years, they've actually managed to find you. There's a week of real panic and running around like headless chickens while everybody confirms with everybody else that no, they're not prepared, they don't feel confident, they'll never be ready and yes, they do feel bloody awful. This is followed by the week of relative calm as the sleepless nights catch up and the staff wanders around in a catatonic state wondering what 'Doom' actually looks like.

'Doom' arrives in the guise of the Reporting Inspector who spends a great deal of his time with the Head Teacher and then does the grand tour of the school pre the staff meeting. It's all jolly bonhomie as we try to find some humour in the situation but the underlying current of nervous tension is close to the surface. There will be no announced visits – too stressful by far. We'll just 'pop in' as we're passing. Suddenly the inspection of English has become English plus ICT. Where did that come from we wonder? The next day it's a

case of 'The Inspectors need the followingsamples of work.' We're sure they do, but why couldn't they have been requested earlier with the initial documentation? All points for the EIS monitoring form.

Stress levels are mounting as teachers, who have no non-class contact time, attempt to juggle endless tasks in an effort not to sell the pupils, the school or themselves short. Every spare pair of hands is at the



beck and call of the Head Teacher but the staff carry on unsupported and requests for help go largely unanswered. Visiting Specialists do their best to encourage and raise morale but the troops are feeling threatened, tired and vulnerable. Deadlines shift and the pressure mounts. To cap it all there's a Parents' Night to deal with and then post Inspection there's the all too imminent Christmas concert and parties! Whoever said 'There's no rest for the wicked.' must have had this situation in mind.

Inspection week and, dare I say it, in some ways it was actually a relief. The jungle drums beat loud and fast, 'They're in Pri-

mary 3.' So at least we knew we had a temporary respite. It was actually horrible to be the last person waiting for a visit and dreading the 'unknown'. The questions were pleasantly put but sharp. They were rigorous in the extreme and no court in the land could have demanded

more evidence. Show me, explain how, on what basis have you differentiated/not differentiated, outline your programme of mental maths skills, where's your proof, let me see your assessment.....

And this week? Well, it's all over bar the shouting. The headie has had the verbal feedback and since no one has been summoned to the inner sanctum 'for a quiet word' it looks like we've made the grade. The staff is still quite shell shocked from the experience – either that or it's the after effect of the weekend's hangovers! The final verdict has still to be committed to paper and only then will we really know 'How Good Is Our School.'

Inspectors? I wouldn't have their job for a pension. Let's just hope I'm collecting mine before they decide to call again.

*Mary Matheson
L.A. President*



STUC WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

*By Lynda Carnie
Equal Opportunities Officer*

The STUC held its 73rd Women's Conference in Perth on 21/22 November. The main theme of the conference was 'Working for Women' and there were many interesting motions put to the conference. The links which the Women's Committee of the STUC have established with the Scottish Executive was evident from the number of women MSP's who made a contribution to the Conference- Jackie Baillie, Susan Deacon and Kate MacLean.

Although the level of women within our Parliament is among

the highest in Europe, much work has still to be carried out to ensure that women achieve greater levels of representation, not only in the Scottish Parliament, but also at UK level, in local government and in a range of public appointments. In recognition of this the Women's Committee has committed a lot of time over the last year to relaunch the 50=50 campaign. I will be recommending to our Local Executive that they support the campaign and welcome hearing from any members who would like more information

about the campaign.

One of the most memorable contributions to the conference came from Baroness Blood who spoke very movingly of the fight of women in Northern Ireland to be involved in the decision-making process at a political level- it was a powerful reminder of the contribution that ordinary women on the ground and in the community can make when they work together.

Lynda Carnie

McCrone
 31st December ~ negotiations finish
 12th January ~ Special Executive Council
 then Information into schools

(Continued from page 3)
cess to this advice, especially the part relating specifically to "Advice for EIS Members". In relation to what I have said above I would draw your attention to paragraph 7 which states; "Any discrepancy between the report's recommendations and the

school development plan and other areas of agreed education authority or school policy should be reported by the EIS representative to the EIS local association secretary, who should raise the matter with the Director of Education. The action plan following the inspection must be

developed and agreed as part of the school development plan."

I would also urge all EIS Reps to study the HMI Inspection Checklist prior to an inspection and to complete the HMI Inspection Monitoring form after the inspection.

In conclusion I would like to emphasise again that the Inspectorate's role as part of the educational process is quite clear. If you feel that any inspectors are overstepping their remit then let the EIS know.

W.A.Ross

Health & Safety Report

*By Rob Peaker,
EIS Health & Safety Officer*

To get the healthy and safe conditions to which you are entitled, it is sometimes necessary to quote H&S regulations and AOCs (Approved Codes of Practice). Many managers clearly see the value of providing good working conditions, but genuinely have trouble providing the cash; others need much more persuasion.

It is very important to try and strike up relationships with managers based on trust and respect, so that they will realise you'll make reasonable requests and, likewise, you'll understand when they plead poverty ...again! But don't stop there. Get agreement that there is a problem and decide on a means to solve it, even if ever so slowly.

I have no money and no power, just a mission to right wrongs, fight H&S injustice and tilt at windmills. I have sometimes felt totally impotent ...and that brings me onto the subject of

Stress

Aberdeen City Council have a Stress Management Group, whose task it is to monitor factors that might create harmful levels of stress, and try to devise procedures to reduce these. Sometime in the New Year, a

message is due to go into your payslip reminding you to take all the breaks to which you are entitled. You have a responsibility to look after your own health, so don't increase your stress levels by working in your breaks. Learn to say, "NO".

There are to be Stress Awareness conferences from March onwards. These are designed to ensure that senior staff in Education (and other depts.) are fully aware of the causes and consequences of harmful stress. Make sure that your school is represented. Ask for a report back.

Please keep completing the Incident Reporting Forms, as and when necessary. The Scottish Executive talks about the difficulty of striking a balance between meeting the needs of socially excluded pupils and preventing other pupils and staff from being adversely affected. We know that balance has not been achieved. This is clear from the statistical data the Executive receives. The level of abuse is a national scandal and will not decline until additional

resources are forthcoming. Diligent completion of the incident forms will help to pull open the purse strings. Locally, the statistics are presented to the Central H&S Committee, and it is here I ask what the Authority intends doing about them.

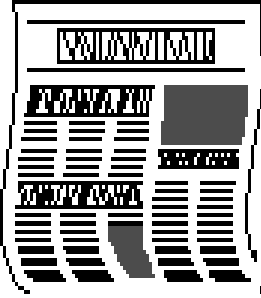
I am very concerned about the administering of Ritalin in schools. There is a working party set up to produce guidelines for schools on this and other medication issues. I would be very grateful if anyone involved in this could pass any useful information, good or bad, on to me.

It is clear from the national guidelines that the Health Board is responsible for administering all medications in schools. Teachers can volunteer to help if they wish. With a contractual 35 hour week being a distinct possibility in the New Year, it may be appropriate for any would-be volunteers to seriously reconsider their position, and let the Health Board employ someone to do these tasks. I continually wonder why teachers, who claim to be stretched to breaking point, volunteer to do even more (see Stress above)

All staff are entitled, in law, to access to a supply of wholesome water. Some schools get their drinking water from a storage tank and the taste may not con-

(Continued on page 7)





We hope that you found this newsletter of use. We intend to produce one each term and would welcome comments from members about :

- this edition
- what you would like us to include in future issues
- other ways of communicating with members

We would also welcome contributions for inclusion in future issues.

Please contact any of the LA officials listed below if you require more information on any of the issues addressed in this newsletter.

If you require assistance you should in the first instance contact your school EIS Representative. If she/he is unable to answer your enquiry you should contact the LA secretary, Bill Ross (who may wish to contact the local area officer for further advice.) If he is unavailable please do not hesitate to contact any of the officials listed below. We are always pleased to help with advice, support and information.

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Our Local Officer, Graeme Campbell, covers Aberdeenshire, Angus, Dundee, Perth & Kinross, Fife as well as Aberdeen. See the SEJ for his address and telephone number.

***The Aberdeen Local Association Website can be found at:
www.eis-aberdeen.org.uk***