

eis ABERDEEN EIS NEWSLETTER

The Educational
Institute of Scotland

April 2003

PROBATIONER TEACHERS

The TV licence has gone up to £112 and a lot of people are grumbling about it. Car road tax is a minimum of £105 but we pay it without much thought. Is it not more important to invest a similar (in fact, smaller) sum to protect your working conditions and receive sound professional advice? Probationers receive one-year's free membership with the EIS when signing up as a newly qualified teacher.

This year, unlike previous years, many probationer teachers have not joined. The annual fee costs less than both the TV licence and road tax and could be much more valuable to you in times of crisis. In fact, the EIS has already campaigned on behalf of **all** this year's probationers in Aberdeen.

Back in August some probationers were immediately concerned about Aberdeen City Council's interpretation of probationers' annual salary and how it was to be paid. On making enquiries it appeared that Aberdeen probationers would be paid a significant amount less than other Scottish probationers. After months of talking to various personnel and agencies I was concerned that the problem would not be resolved by

working alone. As a member of the EIS I decided to ask them for help. A matter that had taken months to try and work out, was resolved in a matter of weeks once the EIS were campaigning on behalf of all city probationers. Without the EIS I do not know when Aberdeen probationers would have received a guar-

antee that we would receive the full annual salary. This problem was resolved by the EIS for **all** Aberdeen probationers, whether a member of the EIS or not.

Without union membership, probationers would have been left to tackle this problem alone, and what worries

the EIS is the lack of interest from newly qualified teachers in joining a union. In previous years the EIS has enjoyed 95% uptake in membership, but unexpectedly this year the number of new members has dropped dramatically.

When working in a profession such as teaching, it is essential to have the backing and security of a well-respected and reputable union. Without union sup-

"In fact, the EIS has already campaigned on behalf of *all* this year's probationers in Aberdeen."

(Continued on page 7)

CONTENTS

Probationer Teachers	This Page
Pick Your Pigeonhole!	Page 2
Health & Safety Issues	Page 3
In Search of the Holy Grail of 100% Inclusion	Pages 4 & 5
Secretary's Report	Pages 6 & 7
Contacts	Page 8

Pick Your Pigeonhole



Hands up all those who can remember when you taught a class and the only distinction was the pupils who went to ‘remedial’? Then came the days when you had your class, the pupils who went to remedial and the pupils who had a social worker. Next we added in psychologists and changed remedial to learning support. Suddenly we got the hang of labels and life took on a whole new meaning.

I can write a shopping list quicker than I can label all the children in my class. There’s SEN, SEBD with Behaviour Support input, SEBD (shared placement), SEBD (you’re on your own with this one!), Support for Learning, dyslexia, dyspraxia, Tourettes, autism, Aspergers, downright difficult, demanding, levels A-E in ability, and then the couple that are left are mainstream! So many labels and so little success!

We discuss, assess, diagnose until the cows come home, and what does it get us? A class full of children, all neatly labelled, each one requiring significant one to one input and no way of meeting the needs of any them. Inclusion means that we welcome everyone into our schools and then provide part-time solutions for full-time problems. You can be badly behaved, but only from 9.30 – 10.00 on Friday morning ‘cos that’s your slot for the Behaviour Support teacher! Mean-time everything will be okay because the teacher will modify the curriculum.

Funny, I thought I’d been modifying the curriculum for years, only we used to call it group teaching. These days it’s nothing more than a euphemism for “don’t confront the child and let him do what he wants when he wants”. This often involves using the computer to the extent that no other children can get on it, much to their annoyance. Now we’re into the business of explaining,

as discreetly as possible, that Johnny is “different”. No problem there, the others have already spotted the difference; he’s the one stopping them from getting their turn on the computer!

A child who is diagnosed with a learning and/or behaviour difficulty does not just have it for a few minutes every day. It is usually a long-term problem requiring a long-term solution. Instead, they get a few periods a week in a small group, or one-to-one if they’re very lucky, and spend the rest of their time in a class of other needy pupils with a teacher who is trying to be all things to all pupils, give everyone individual attention **and** modify the curriculum into infinity!

I hate to say it, but any parent who took the time to read the mission statements in any of our schools could probably sue under the trades description act. In our efforts to include everyone we are making it virtually impossible to deliver to anyone. We have to learn that inclusion can work in different ways and that it isn’t always right to place children in their local school just because it makes us feel good. Pigeonholing children is a dangerous game – when the lid comes off the box the consequences can be disastrous for anyone caught in the crossfire.

Inclusion is a marvellous aspiration but we live and teach in the real world. Shoot me down in flames but let’s do all our children a favour, let’s stop pretending we have all the answers and can do the impossible. If we only take on what we know we can truly deliver then maybe we can have inclusion that is truly meaningful and worthy of the name!

Mary Matheson

STOP PRESS.....

Motions for the EIS Annual General Meeting in Perth on 5th, 6th and 7th June are in schools.

Check with your school rep if you have not seen a copy of this year’s motions.

The closing date for amendments is Tuesday 29th April prior to the meeting at 7.15pm on that date in the Grammar School .

HEALTH & SAFETY

This is a version of a paper that I presented recently at both the Central H&S Committee and the Education Dept H&S Committee. Concerned debate took place. Each committee has convened further meetings to consider what is agreed to be one of the most troubling aspects of education at this time. I would be very interested in any comments you may have, especially your solutions!

Stress and the Threats of Violence and Abuse

There is a duty of care on employers to take steps to protect employees from harmful stress.

An invisible visitor to any of the council's workplaces would find situations where employees were suffering ill health because of harmful stress. The council has made attempts to combat this, perhaps with some success, but harmful stress is on the increase here and throughout the country and further action is needed.

In the school sector there are stressors that have been with us for years and have become, to most staff, an accepted part of the job (whether these should be accepted is for a future debate). These stressors would include:

- Absent staff and having to cover their classes
- Marking work late at night
- Deadlines that cannot be met
- An expectation that teachers should volunteer for unpaid additional duties
- Expectations are high and resources often do not match this.
- Increased use of ICT with little adequate training
- Drowning in paper as we strive to record our every move for future scrutiny

This picture is similar in all departments of the council, but staff still strive to be professional and deliver as good a service as they can. Management try to support them in this task.

There is, however, a stressor that is on the increase probably in all departments, but in none more so than the education sector. That is the threat of violence and abuse. This is one stressor that we must never allow to become 'acceptable', but unless the threat is recognised, identified and measures agreed to combat it, then it will become part of living in the 21st century. It doesn't have to be so.

Incident reporting procedures in Aberdeen have had mixed response from staff, but in schools they

have been very successful and have enabled us to identify that there is a huge problem. The figures in Aberdeen schools have now flattened out at a consistently high level. The figures from the Scottish Executive ('Scotsman') recently show that levels have increased nationally by 700% in the last 4 years. This is shocking, but the rise is not confined to schools. Staff are being assaulted and abused in increasing numbers in many areas of public service.

Perhaps in education, we were too keen to accept the **principle of inclusion** before we had the resources and expertise to deal with the consequences of change. Maybe we should agree that each child should be given the resources to enable him/her to have a real chance to reach their full potential before we talk about principles.

It could be argued that many pupils fail to achieve because we agreed the principle before we agreed the cost.

If the inclusion of SEBD pupils into mainstream has contributed to the problem it is certainly not the only factor. Violence against staff has been on the rise for many years.

There will be increasing claims of negligence against the council if more action is not taken now to protect staff from violence and abuse.

'Zero Tolerance' of violence against women by men is accepted as a civilised response to the problem. The same response is needed in this case. Unfortunately, we aren't getting it.

In education, there are many reasons for this; all understandable, but many lead us down the path of accepting the unacceptable.

We can try to keep pupils in school and in class at all costs. This is possibly good for the individual pupil, but may be very bad for other pupils and for staff. There is a cost. When the numbers are low,

(Continued on page 5)

In Search of the Holy Grail of 100% Inclusion

Exclusions – Aberdeen City Council’s New Policy and Procedures

Circular PP/ASC/030/02, "Exclusions - draft policy procedures" was issued on 7 November 2002. It contained a 36 page ACC draft policy and the 33 page Scottish Executive circular (July 2002) on which it was based. As much as it amazes an exclusions anorak like myself, I am aware that some of you out there reading this article had neither the time nor the inclination to study this 70 page circular. In retrospect if you did not get a chance to study and comment on the draft you were the smart ones because the paper which went through the Education and Leisure committee on 11/03/03 was virtually unchanged after the 4-month consultation period.

I, on the other hand, was part of a 5 strong Aberdeen EIS sub-group which, after a 3 hour meeting, submitted a 12-point response. As far as I can see, none of the points we made either found their way into the final policy paper or have been responded to in writing.

Our first and main comment was about the balance of the draft document. We suggested that a paragraph hidden in page 17 of the document be moved to become a prominent preamble. This vital paragraph mentioned the rights of all children in a class or a school to an education that is free of disruption, and of the requirements of our members to be allowed to do their jobs in tolerable conditions. This latter demand has been further justified by the most recent statistics on abuse and violence towards teachers. Aberdeen EIS stressed that the rights of disruptive pupils, whilst important, should not be the paramount consideration. Head teachers, senior and middle management and classroom teachers should not come under pressure to view the exclusion of a pupil as an admission of failure. We stressed that in all schools at all stages there will be times

when the exclusion of a pupil is the only appropriate professional response to unacceptable conduct.

Unfortunately, like the rest of our points, this was not only ignored but also not even acknowledged.

But should we have expected anything else?**NO!**

For the past 3 or 4 years anyone who has questioned ACC's SEBD inclusion policy has been dismissed as though they were some educational Luddite or right wing Fascist.

Inclusion is one of ACC Education Department's operating principles - but so are Entitlement and Achievement. Surely a class of 25 pupils is entitled to a working environment which is not disrupted by 2 or 3 pupils with EBD. Can we seriously allow the achievement of the majority to be hindered just so we can say that all pupils are educated in their local neighbourhood school?

I think not!and I suspect most of you EIS members out there agree with me. It's just a pity that we have struggled to get the current administration in Aberdeen and the Scottish Executive to listen to classroom professionals and school senior managers who have been stating for several years now that the balance has swung too far in favour of the disruptive minority.

But there are signs especially at Scottish Executive level that our message is getting through. Lately there have been clear signs that ministers are distancing themselves from the controversial target to reduce the number of exclusions by a third. Even Education Minister, Cathy Jamieson, has had to concede that Headteachers must be able to exclude pupils as a last resort if they feel it is the only answer.

(Continued on page 5)

(Continued from page 4)

"Exclusion Targets!"

.....**if they feel it is the only answer!"**

I have always dismissed exclusion targets because to me the concept implied that senior managers were gaily excluding pupils just because they felt like it.

Cathy,.....of course we only exclude as a **last resort**, and every August, as the new session dawns, this secondary school senior manager sets himself an exclusion target of **zero**.

It is a sad reflection of our changing society, but not of the workers in our schools, that, despite the Scottish Executive's targets, exclusions in Aberdeen secondaries have increased by 30% in the period when they were expected to drop by a third.

I end with one final statistic issued by Cathy Jamieson along with the announcement at the end of March that the ministerial-led discipline task group had reconvened because **"teachers tell me that they**

continue to have very real concerns about the level of disruption in the classroom."

She stated that the number of Scottish secure accommodation places for school age pupils was to be increased by 30%.

Nice to know that inclusion is working Cathy!

Grant Bruce

(Continued from page 3)

we can, perhaps, afford it. When the numbers reach a critical level (which may already have been reached and surpassed) the cost far outweighs any benefit. In fact, at this stage there is no benefit. Staff can feel confused and angry and desperate. They feel that they have been set adrift in the lonely, unforgiving seas of educational experimentation!

The problem has to be confronted. First we agree there is a problem and then we try to address it.

Risk assessment ideas should be applied to stress issues much more rigorously. 'Reduce or remove the stressor' is risk assessment in a simple phrase. If this isn't possible, then new, safer working practices must be employed.

Hopefully, the two working groups will achieve something. In the meantime, remember that one of the reasons why the issue is finally being taken se-

riously at all levels in the country is because people in Aberdeen did their duty and completed the **Incident Forms**. Even when the incident figures got Aberdeen some bad press, the Chief Executive and management in Education continued to be supportive. They should be applauded because this cannot be said to be true across the whole country. Some other authorities were very slow or reluctant to compile figures. In Aberdeen this was never the case. It is vital you all continue to report. Abuse at work is not acceptable. Report each and every incident. If you are unhappy with the response, tell your school management and then contact me or Roddy or your school rep.

Don't ignore itit won't go away!

Rob Peaker

Local Association Health & Safety Officer

SECRETARY'S REPORT

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION & THE MONITORING OF CLASSROOM PRACTICE

Members in schools continue to seek clarification on this issue, especially when an HMIE inspection or the resultant Follow-Up Visit is imminent. . You should be aware of the following:

Authority Policy

The Authority's policy, **which must be adhered to in all schools** (and which is consistent with EIS advice) is contained in two circulars on the subject of Monitoring of Classroom Practice issued in 1997. (references: INF/ASC/16/97 and INF/ASC/55/97). The key paragraphs are:

- a) *"It was agreed that classroom observation in the context of school-based self-evaluation is not linked to appraisal. In this context, classroom observation can only take place if full consultation, preparation and feedback have been arranged".*
- b) *"In the context of evaluation, formal classroom observation should be subject to planning and preparation, including consultation with staff and arranging feedback to staff, with the aim of being supportive and of promoting improvement."*

HMIE View

In the course of recent discussions at national level, HMIE representatives made it clear to the EIS that, in their view, the main criterion for classroom observation is the extent to which it improves the process of teaching and learning in schools. It should be noted that "How Good is Our School?" emphasizes team work, discussion with staff, working with peers, consultation, support and improvement. In other words, it recommends a collegial process.

EIS Policy

The key features of EIS Policy (consistent with Authority Policy and HMIE advice) are as follows:

- ▶ Classroom Observation Procedures should be well known and accepted by all through the School Development Planning process.
- ▶ Classroom observation should be based on a collegiate approach to school management and form part of self, school and departmental evaluation.
- ▶ Classroom observation should be carried out with a view to later discussion on general issues among teaching colleagues.
- ▶ Classroom, observation should take place within the context of improving learning and teaching in the school as a whole.
- ▶ Classroom observation may be undertaken by teachers other than Senior Promoted Staff.
- ▶ Classroom observation visits should be subject to advance agreement in respect of their timing and purpose.
- ▶ Classroom observation should not focus on the performance of individual teachers,
- ▶ Classroom observation should not be associated with disciplinary procedures.
- ▶ Classroom observation should not be part of Staff development and Review.

Advice to Aberdeen City EIS Members

Make sure that any proposed arrangements for the Monitoring of Classroom Practice in your school are put to the teaching staff via the McCrone Committee for consideration and agreement, **prior to implementation.**

Make sure that any arrangements put in place are consistent with Authority Policy, HMIE Advice and EIS policy (above).

In cases of doubt, go to your EIS representative. For further advice, contact myself.

PARAGRAPH 8.5: TRANSFER OF TEMPORARY TEACHERS TO PERMANENT STAFF

EIS Temporary Teachers should note that Aberdeen City Council continues to honour the terms of Paragraph 8.5 of the Scheme of Salaries and Conditions of Service for Teachers. ("the Yellow Book"). This paragraph reads as follows:

"A teacher who is employed on the temporary staff may at any time apply for a transfer to the permanent staff and their application shall normally not be re-

fused if a teacher has given satisfactory full-time continuous service for a period of one year. Transfer, where granted, should normally be from 1st August."

Temporary teachers who have qualified for a permanent post in terms of Para. 8.5 should contact:

The Education Staffing Services Unit,
Summerhill Centre,
Stronsay Drive,
ABERDEEN AB15 6JA

BILL ROSS, FEIS

Members will be gratified to learn that the EIS National Board of Examiners have conferred on Bill Ross, my predecessor, the honorary degree of Fellow of the Educational Institute of Scotland. This honour, which is not bestowed lightly, reflects credit not only on Bill himself, but on Aberdeen City Local Association as a whole. Bill will be presented with his award at the ceremony which takes place at the National Annual General Meeting to be held in Perth in June. The following extract is from the citation which supported Bill's nomination.

"Bill Ross has been an excellent ambassa-

dor for the Institute. His wisdom and common sense have brought about agreements with Aberdeen City Council which would have proved impossible for a less skilled negotiator. His sense of humour, his courtesy and his integrity are held in high esteem by all who have had dealings with him. This has reflected positively on the EIS and enhanced its reputation in the North-East of Scotland."

Roddy Robertson

(Continued from page 1)

port many issues would not be campaigned for, and many concerns would not be raised.

Initiatives and developments proposed by the Scottish Executive, such as McCrone, can only work well with EIS backing. One of the great strengths of the institute over many years has been the fact that it commands the allegiance of a huge majority of Scottish teachers compared to other professional teachers' associations. The EIS has around 52,000 members and is consequently the largest teaching union, representing around 80% of Scottish teachers and lecturers.

Another great strength is that the EIS always dominates negotiations locally and has established good working relationships with councillors and officials of the employing authority. This has worked to the members' advantage, as you can imagine what the situation would be with a number

of small fragmented unions each competing for their own interests.

Even in the best organised schools sometimes problems can arise between teachers and management which cannot go unresolved, and this is where the EIS with its organisation of representatives and field officers, as well as local executives, has a distinct advantage in helping the individual member.

So probationers, you still have the chance to claim the remainder of your free year's membership by joining now, and will have the security and support of the EIS when stepping out as a fully registered teacher this August. I was glad the EIS was there for me when I raised the problem with salaries. I will certainly be continuing my membership and I hope you will too.

Suzanne Mackenzie
Probationer Teacher

Student Teachers and Probationer Teachers

The EIS offers legal services and advice to all members.

EIS benefits include insurance against theft and damages.

The EIS works closely with the wider community in Scotland in support and defence of Scottish education. The EIS has introduced 2 new telephone helplines for members. One helpline is aimed at helping members with stress, bereavement and victimisation; the other is a personal legal helpline. Both these helplines are open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

For further information contact Rod Robertson or Stuart Topp (see page 8)

And if you haven't already joined.....

Ask your school rep for a Membership Pack.....TODAY!****

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, Roddy Robertson (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.

LA Secretary: Roddy Robertson
**OFFICE: Summerhill Centre, Stronsay Drive
 Aberdeen, AB15 6JA**

Tel: 01224 346375

Fax: 01224 346374

Email: rrobertson@eis.org.uk

HOME: 9 Rosebank Place

Aberdeen AB11 6XN

Tel: 01224 575565

~

Assistant Secretary: Evelyn Provatos

Tel: School 633363

Home: 593591

Email: evelyn.provatos@talk21.com

~

Treasurer: Grant Bruce

Tel: 725118

Home: 316158

Email: gbruceeis@aol.com

~

Health & Safety Officer: Rob Peaker

Tel: School 310184

Home: 01569 731197

Email: rpeakereis@aol.com

~

Equal Opportunities Officer: Lynda Carnie

Tel: School 820887

Email: lccarnie@aol.com

EIS Area Officer: Stuart Topp

1 Ardross Street

Inverness

EIS

We hope that you found this newsletter of use. Please pass this copy to another colleague and do not hesitate to photocopy all or part to ensure wider distribution.

We would welcome comments from members about issues raised in this edition, what you would like us to include in future issues and ideas about other ways of communicating with members. We would also welcome contributions for inclusion in future issues.

Please contact any of the LA officials listed on this page if you require more information on any of the issues addressed

The Aberdeen Local Association Website can be found at:

www.eis-aberdeen.org.uk