

eis ABERDEEN EIS NEWSLETTER

The Educational
Institute of Scotland

December 2004

Why don't they ask us
what we think?

What idiot came
up with this for a
policy?

We could have
told them it
wouldn't work!

You can tell that whoever came
up with this hasn't seen the inside
of a school, let alone a classroom
for years!

Look Who's Talking!

Anyone who has ever uttered, thought of, or nodded agreement to any of the above statements should be pleased to know that their time has come. Yes indeed you, the teaching professional, are about to be asked for your opinion on what is a key policy here in Aberdeen -

INCLUSION

Arrangements have been put in place for every teacher in permanent employment with the authority to give their views on this most hotly debated topic. All members of staff will be asked to participate in a questionnaire-type survey of opinion, and twenty of the city's schools have been targeted for visits. It is to be hoped that the format of the questionnaire will allow staff to express not only any positive experiences

they and their pupils have enjoyed, but also their very real concerns about the efficacy of the current policy as well as letting them raise matters in a constructive manner.

Staff in the city's schools are dealing on a daily basis with pupils exhibiting a wide range of needs; from the gifted child, to those with specific learning disorders as well as an ever increasing population in the category of SEBD. Secondary teachers often talk about particular times of day they dread because they know a certain difficult class will be turning up at that time. The situation in primary schools can be much more fraught. There, the teacher knows that the class turning up at nine o'clock is with them for the whole day, not just a couple of pe-

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riods. And with no extended management team, guidance staff, behavioural base or support staff to call on there is little respite for teacher or pupils. The bland suggestion that the teacher is deficient in their organisation, that the timetable only needs to be tweaked, or that a resource, much needed elsewhere in school, be transferred temporarily does nothing to convince staff that their concerns are being taken seriously. Nor does it begin to address the very real needs of the affected pupils.

This review is not an inspection of how well your school, or indeed you as an individual, are delivering the policy. It is about whether the current policy is working.

As professionals teaching in schools on a daily basis you are the people best equipped to give information on the best and worst of what is happening. Without that information, the mantra of 'Inclusion in Aberdeen is not just happening, but happening successfully' will continue to be trumpeted to all who care to listen and no improvements will be made. So ask yourself these and other questions,

- ▶ Do we have sufficient trained staff?
- ▶ Are all staff sufficiently trained?
- ▶ Are children always placed appropriately according to their needs?
- ▶ Is the system able to deal with the numbers already in our schools?
- ▶ How easy is it to have concerns addressed?
- ▶ How much support is available in schools for both

staff and pupils?

- ▶ How successfully has training been delivered to all those involved in inclusion?
- ▶ Do you feel sufficiently included in the inclusion process?
- ▶ Is learning and teaching being enhanced/compromised as a result of the current arrangements?

Think of children you work with who come under the inclusion umbrella. As a professional do you think their experience is fantastic, good, OK, tolerable, unsatisfactory?

Making any of the points above or raising a legitimate concern does not mean that you do not believe in inclusion. On the contrary, it means that you take inclusion very seriously. A bum on a seat in a mainstream school may tick the 'Is inclusion taking place?' box but it goes nowhere near to ticking the box headed 'Is meaningful, successful inclusion taking place?'

So, you have your chance. Remember the old advert, 'It's good to talk.'? In this case it couldn't be more apt. Not only might it be good to talk, but, some good might actually come of it. Grab the opportunity with both hands; speak up for yourself and your pupils.

Who's talking?

Aberdeen's teachers, that's who!



Mary Matheson
Aberdeen City EIS Executive Committee

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 (see page 8)

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

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

HEALTH & SAFETY

Smoking Points

(“Counterblast to Tobacco -

...this vile custom of tobacco taking”

– James VI

“Can’t do without it; keeps me sane”

– teacher)

A lot has been spoken and written recently about issues of freedom, choice and the nanny-state in relation to fox hunting, drinking and smoking.

At a recent meeting to discuss many corporate H&S items, smoking was the issue that most raised hackles and emotions; opponents’ body language (mainly twitches) suggesting degrees of addiction both to the drug, and to the desire to ‘save’ smokers ‘from themselves’.

With the Scottish Executive determined to ban smoking in all public places in 2006, Aberdeen City Council has no choice but to do the same (but should the council do it earlier?).



It is really quite fun to consider the arguments:

- ‘My Body ..’ – true, but illness and death affect others’ bodies too
- ‘Clean air in pubs’ – true, but smokers tend to be more entertaining than non-smokers.
- ‘Less peer pressure for youngsters to smoke at clubs and pubs. I like this one.
- ‘Passive smoking – no-one should have to inhale other people’s smoke. Similarly, no-one should ever again have to listen to the miserable moaning of non-smokers - “It’s bad for you, you know/ Makes your clothes smell/Each one takes 5 minutes off your life/ You’re 10 times more likely ...blah, blah, blah”.
- ‘I’m addicted so I need my smokers’ break’ – I doubt that someone addicted to sex, heroin and/or alcohol could argue successfully for similar breaks.
- ‘Many smokers secretly desire a ban so they can give up’ - I think there is a lot of truth in this
- ‘Nanny State’ – can’t please everyone. Do nothing and the state is irresponsible. Worse still, H&S concerns mean that inaction could be negligent. Ban and there are cries of ‘Nanny State!’ (What are nannies anyway?)

I believe that smoking will still be allowed on Bennachie.

Now, about fox hunting ...

Stress

A much clearer and more useful Stress Policy will be agreed soon. To accompany this there will be an information booklet on how to deal with stress. All council staff should receive this in 2005. The advice is the best I have seen yet and may be very valuable.

All managers will receive training in how to apply the policy and look after staff (including themselves).

It is still possible to enjoy teaching and to enjoy being in front of children; you don’t have to go on secondment or sneak out on your CPD courses. This may cause stress to your colleagues.

Try this stress reducing mantra

(cross-legged, outside ear-shot of neighbours):

“I love teaching; all you need is love”

Repeat 5 times and go to the pub.

INCIDENT REPORTING

Please report all incidents of violence and abuse on the form and submit to management. If you do not receive a copy of the action taken within 10 working days, then remind management that it is their duty to provide this. If you still fail to receive it, then contact me.

All completed forms must be copied and sent to ‘Education’ and then onto the H&S dept. This dept collates all returns for presentation to the Corporate H&S Committee. Trends can be identified and action can be taken. If you have any worries or evidence that the forms are not being properly processed in your school, then contact me.

Rob Peaker
Aberdeen City EIS H&S Officer
(Contact details on page 8)

REVIEW OF THE WORKINGS OF THE INCLUSION POLICY

At the 30.8.04 Education and Leisure Committee it was agreed that a major review of the process of inclusion of SEN and SEBD in Aberdeen schools should take place. The comprehensive review programme would involve:-

- Research into existing policy and practice, including visits to schools and interviews with staff from education and partner agencies;
- A consultative review of the workings of the Inclusion policy, including staff and parents to determine where we are and how we should proceed in the future;
- A service-wide questionnaire will be produced and distributed to all service areas;
- A series of focus groups will be created to have in-depth discussion about the approach to inclusion and future requirements.

It was agreed that the Review Group should consist of Councillor Pam McDonald (Convener), Councillors Allan, Freel, Leslie and May. External members Paul Davie, a church representative and myself to represent the teacher trade unions were added. It was also suggested that a 25% sample of the views of Aberdeen teachers be sought (bullet point 3 above). I successfully argued on 30.8.04 that because Inclusion was the issue which had prompted most response from Aberdeen teachers in recent years that all teachers be sampled.

At the 2.11.04 Education & Leisure committee, Graham Wark Head of Neighbourhood Services (Central) reported that 21 schools (16 primary and 5 secondary) were to be visited by Prof. Donnie MacLeod and Brenda Frier of the Centre for Inclusion and Equity in Education (CIEE). During these visits the views of teachers, support staff, pupils and parents would be sought. CIEE staff will also have meetings with SEN

HTs and their staff, and staff from the different outside agencies which support schools.

Donnie MacLeod and Brenda Frier spent the day in my own school Dyce Academy on 23.11.04 interviewing pupils, teachers, support staff, PTGs, SfL and SMT as well as visiting our pupil support base and MICAS (autistic) base. The other 20 data collection reviews will be completed by January 2005 and if they still have to visit your school, **make sure you get a chance to speak to them.** It would appear that it has been decided to hold off issuing the questionnaire to staff until after the holidays.

To date the Review Group given the task of overseeing the whole process has not met. The timetable for the process has slipped and it will probably be Easter 2005 before any draft report appears for consultation with schools and subsequent presentation to the Education and Leisure Committee before summer 2005.

A major issue for the Review to consider will be the requirements within the new *additional support needs bill* which will become law in the autumn of 2005, and the impact this will have on Aberdeen City Council and its resources. Records of Needs are to be phased out and replaced with Coordinated Support Plans. The number of pupils with new CSPs will be very much greater than the number of pupils with RONs and this could become a major workload problem for schools. The new proposals also outline enhanced mediation procedures for parents, which again could provide a workload problem for staff.

Grant Bruce
Education & Leisure Committee Teacher Representative

Summary

- 1. If your school has been chosen for a visit from CIEE personnel, make sure you get a chance to speak to them.**
- 2. Review questionnaires will be issued to schools in the near future so please take the time to complete and return these so that the views of ALL staff can influence future policy making.**

ONE WORKPLACE—EQUAL RIGHTS



The STUC have recently launched an initiative 'One Workplace Equal Rights'. The Campaign focuses on preventing discrimination in the workplace for marginalized workers.

Many employers claim to promote equality of opportunity but often there is a wide gap between what exists on paper and how it is implemented. Trade Unions can make a difference by ensuring that employers actually deliver on what they commit to.

The Campaign aims to promote equality by offering support, training and advice. One of the first steps in this is a series of residential weekend schools free of charge to trade union representatives. These courses will focus on how to:

- Recognise Discrimination
- Use the Law to combat Discrimination

- Implement Equal Opportunities Best Practice
- Promote Equality and Increase TU Membership

The course that is most convenient for Aberdeen is being held in Dundee at the Swallow Hotel from 25-27 March 2005. However other courses are being held in Edinburgh and Inverness. If you are interested in finding out more or applying for these courses please get in touch with me by e-mail.

Lynda Carnie
Aberdeen City EIS Executive
(Contact details are on page 8)



RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE in SCHOOLS

In November 2002 a national review was set up to examine Religious Observance in Scottish schools.

The findings of the review group were published on 16th May 2004. The review group's report and recommendations have been circulated to all local authorities in Scotland. As yet no local authority has adopted the recommendations as policy. One reason for this could be that they have not been asked to do so. The Minister of Education has not issued a circular to local authorities instructing them to implement anything in the report. No date has yet been set for a policy statement by the Minister of Education.

The review group recommends a high standard of quality of Religious Observance in schools. It does not specify a timetable for frequency. A recent conference was held in Aberdeen, attended by Head Teachers and School Chaplains to discuss the review group's report.

Alan Smith
Aberdeen City EIS Executive Committee

SECRETARY'S REPORT

The following is a report from the Local Association Meeting held on Tuesday 30th November 2004 in the Station Hotel.

Reduction in Maximum Class Contact Time

a) The Local Agreement (Circular INF/ASC/107/04, 28 May 2004)

The main item on the agenda of the Aberdeen EIS Local Association Meeting of 30th November was the Reduction of Maximum Class Contact Time. The LA Executive had decided that it was important to monitor the implementation of the local agreement in the City's primary schools. A commitment had also been given to a meeting of EIS Specialist Teachers held in May, 2004, that they would be given an opportunity before Christmas to highlight particular problems affecting them as a result of the new arrangements.

b) Survey

Prior to the LA Meeting, a sub-group of the Executive (Evelyn Provatos, Carole Thorpe, Heather Collie and Suzanne MacKenzie) had prepared and sent to school reps a questionnaire designed to provide a broad picture of what is happening across the city.

c) Advice

There was a very encouraging turnout of both primary teacher and specialist teacher members at the LA Meeting. From the concerns raised, both in the responses to the questionnaire and on the night, I was able to re-emphasise the following points (which are clearly listed in the

Principles set out in the Agreement):

- The current arrangements are for one year only and will be reviewed by the end of March, 2005.
- The reduction applies to all teachers, including specialist teachers, SFL teachers and relief teachers (both permanent and casual).
- Part-time teachers are entitled to a *pro rata* reduction in class contact time.



d) Specialist Teachers

Some Specialist Teacher colleagues raised difficulties in relation to Principle g) of the Agreement which states that “*non-class contact time should normally be for a minimum of 45 minutes*” To quote one colleague, *‘the situation in my schools is very mixed, say about 50/50. In some, the headteacher is very accommodating indeed, while in others I only get the odd couple of minutes here and there. This is no use whatsoever.’* Specialist Teachers who encounter an unwillingness on the part of Senior Management to try and provide them with meaningful blocks of non-contact time should note that Principle g) goes on to say that non-contact periods must be agreed between the teacher and the line-manager. Specialist Teacher members who are unable to reach agreement with management should bring this to my attention.



PENSION REFORM CONSULTATION

Consultation on the reform of the Scottish Teachers' Superannuation Scheme (STSS) is currently underway. It follows the Government's Green Paper on public pension reform. This will see the pension age rise to 65 (minimum 55).

The present consultation makes it clear that some savings from increasing the retirement age can be used to improve the STSS. The main options include:

- Moving from a pension based on 1/80th of salary to 1/60th.
- Increase benefits for partners and families.
- Greater flexibility in accessing pension funds.
- Greater flexibility for premature retirement through 'winding down', stepping down etc.

Consultation papers are available in school – please see your Head teacher for a copy. The consultation document is also available on line at:

www.scotland.gov.uk/sppa

(under Pension Reform - Teachers – Consultation)

It is vitally important that we take part in this process; otherwise very important decisions that will affect our future will be made without our input.

The closing date for consultation returns is 14th January 2005.

For further information please see the joint union booklet "*It's your pension – so have your say*" advising on the consultation process (also available on the EIS web-site:

www.eis.org.uk

Alternatively, contact Mike Paul at St Machar Academy (01224 492855) for more information.

REMEMBER

...it's still not too late to influence your MP about the Green Paper on the increase in pension ages. For a copy of a model letter see the EIS Aberdeen web-site on:

www.eis-aberdeen.org.uk

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

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Assistant Secretary: Evelyn Provatos

Tel: School 633363

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Treasurer: Grant Bruce

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~

Health & Safety Officer: Rob Peaker

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~

Equal Opportunities Officer: Lynda Carnie

Tel: School 820887

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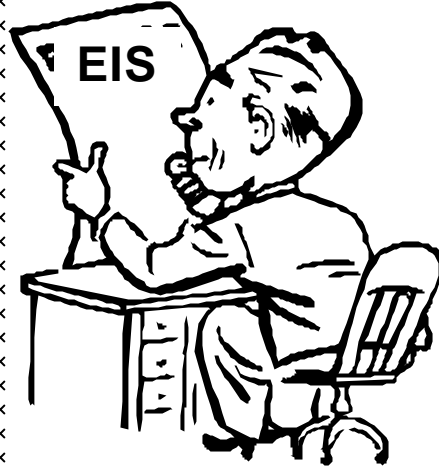
EIS Area Officer: Stuart Topp

1 Ardross Street

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Tel: 01463 712822



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