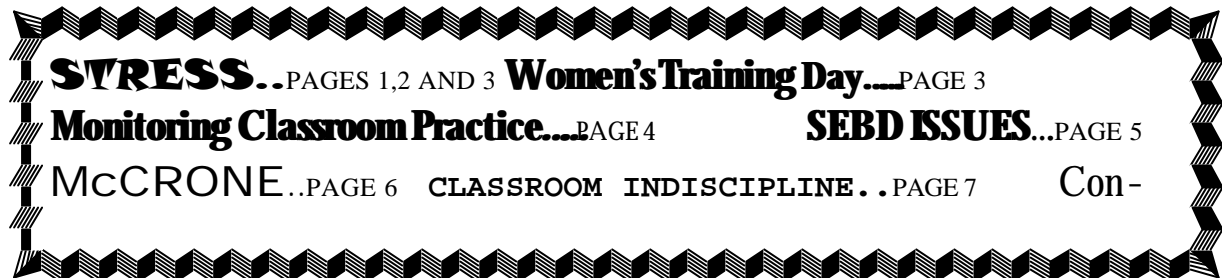




ABERDEEN EIS NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2001



STRESS

by Rob Peaker,
EIS Health & Safety Officer

Stress is an increasingly important Health & Safety issue, and, if the McCrone Deal is properly implemented regarding the 35 hour week, we do, both collectively and individually, have it within our power to do something about it.

I attended a course on Stress Management for the EIS on behalf of teachers. I wrote a lengthy report for future reference. The following is a shortened version and may prove helpful. I have tried not to be judgmental, nor to let my prejudices get in the way of objective reporting! Personally, dealing with disaffected pupils causes me some stress. My stress levels have risen due to the inadequacies of the Inclusion Policy – little or no training and poor provision of resources – and the feeling that things can only get worse! Please use some time this coming year to discuss the issues as a staff and see if some progress can be made.

Report on Stress Conference – ‘Lemon Tree’ – 13th March 2001

(Organised by Personnel Dept. (Michael Bennett))

For all staff, but especially those who manage staff.

Before making a start it should be made clear that although Stress is a H&S issue it is very difficult to define. Similar stressors can have radically different outcomes depending on the persons being ‘stressed’. Some personalities use ‘being stressed’ or over-worked as a kind of status symbol. Admitting to **Stress** still carries unwanted stigma, and often other reasons for being ‘unwell’ will be given. It is long-term stress that carries the real risk so try to spot it early and reduce it.

CONSIDER THE WORLD WE ACTUALLY WORK IN AT PRESENT AND FOR THE FORSEEABLE FUTURE. It is one of

*TOO LITTLE TIME
TOO FEW RESOURCES
BUDGET CUTS*

SQUARE the CIRCLE!

There were 4 main elements to the day:

- Understanding Stress in the Workplace
- Stress and Employment Law
- Council’s Stress Policy
- Possible techniques for helping to deal with Stress

Understanding Stress in the Workplace

There is a view that too little pressure makes you soporific; too much and you are tense and struggling; the right amount makes you feel ready and energised. To go into the high or low pressure bands is okay for a short time. It is the duration of the demands that matters. People need a certain resilience to cope with the demands.

How can a manager recognise stress in others and themselves?

The key is in how a person’s behaviour changes. Their thoughts, feelings and physiology may change but these changes are private (at least, initially). You have to pick up on behavioural changes without jumping to conclusions.

Flight or fight?

We all have an instinctive reaction to danger or threat. If you constantly feel threatened, the response will produce stress. If a body prepares for ‘flight or fight’ too often, these changes will mess you up. Do

(contd on next page)

Stress and Employment Law

There is no particular law on Stress. Cases are usually brought under negligence or disability legislation.

Employers have a 'duty of care'. Action can be taken against an employer on a number of issues like long hours, work/life balance (new Human Rights Act), unfair or constructive dismissal, many aspects of H&S law (especially the 1992 European 'Six Pack'), Prevention of Harassment Act, Bullying etc.

So far, the number of stress-related cases is low, but the key one is *Walker* (1995). It showed that risk to employees' mental health could be a breach of duty of care. There has to be a reasonably safe system of work and steps must be taken to protect employees from reasonably foreseeable risks. The stress causing the injury has to be in the workplace. If the work is demanding and stressful, then it is likely that an employer could argue that injury could not be foreseen in the first instance. The second injury (nervous breakdown) in the Walker case could have been foreseen and no additional support was given (if it had been, then proving negligence would have been more difficult).

Different individuals may need differing levels of support from the employer. If it is reasonably clear that an employee needs help, then it should be given. If not, and injury occurs then it is likely negligence could be proved. The degree of help necessary may be difficult to assess.

Likely lines of defence for the employer would be:

- Took all reasonable steps
- Could not have foreseen
- Not informed
- Employee took risk at own free will (but employee would have to know what the risk was)

In Scotland, you have to sustain a medical mental injury, as a result of stress, before any case can be brought, e.g. clinical depression. Many cases are brought under the heading 'Disability', since this is easier to prove than Stress.

There are no signs that work patterns will stop changing. If staff feel they are disposable, they will not work as well. The British have a 'long working hours are OK' culture' (at least, most seem to wish to be able to choose). It would seem that coping skills need to be developed to deal with the ever-changing workplace.

(contd from page 1) staff see you (manager) as a threat? As individuals, do we see too many non-existent threats? Do a threat audit! Are they really threats? Do something about those that are, if that is possible (more support in classes/ability to remove disruptive pupils/talk to someone/prepare better lessons/get time for this). If not, build up your resilience.

What do you do when you've spotted it? Don't ignore it!

How can people build up resilience?

Build up a number of 'stability zones'.

Relaxation

Exercise (move!)

Get fitter

Garden Fish

Run

Buy a motorbike

Keep chickens

Paint Join a club

Go to the staffroom (pleasant?)

Dream Be an EIS rep.....

Don't do any of these if they seem like another threat! (we are all different)

- ◆ Managing pressure should be like managing all other aspects of work
- ◆ Can't really recognise stress in others if you are stressed. Staff will not approach a manager for help if they perceive him/her to be stressed.
- ◆ Show concern if you be-



lieve someone is stressed, but don't say, "Are you stressed"!

Suggestions for action in schools

1. Hand out this brief summary of the training day and related aspects.
2. Get a speaker into school to talk about the difficulties associated with identifying and dealing with Stress.
3. Get leaflets for staff on aspects of Stress Management (see Personnel)
4. Go through important parts of the course with staff, including the Policy.
5. Tell staff about counselling and other support facilities.
6. Get staff to prioritise work-

- load and stick to sensible levels; i.e. McCrone Deal.
7. Contact Morieda Williamson on 522823 (Employee Development)
 8. Use Intranet site (when, if ever, available)
 9. Tell staff that management appreciate that levels of Stress are rising.
 10. Put some sensible and achievable ideas into action, e.g. take breaks, go to staffroom, sit down and share worries, better facilities for eating and exercise, tell staff not to take work home too often, tell staff not to 'live and breathe school'.
 11. Get as many staff as possible/sensible onto Stress Management courses
Once again!

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Rob Peaker
EIS Health & Safety Officer

Council's Stress Policy

This is in need of review (it was produced in 1997) because Stress issues have become much more important in the last few years. However, there was an early commitment from the Council to try and lay down guidelines to lessen the effects. Unfortunately, it is clear that most staff either do not know of the existence of the policy or have never seen it. Stress Awareness is the vital first step in trying to deal with it.

- The policy acknowledges 'the crucial role of managers' and 'undertakes to provide them with adequate training and guidance'. This has not taken place ...up until now.
- It also asks employees to 'develop a responsible and balanced approach to work and their personal lives'.
- It agrees that the duty of care extends to 'management of the risks to the psychological well-being and health of its employees'.
- Annual reports on the effectiveness of the policy should go to Personnel (I'm not sure that this happens)
- The policy lists other Council policies that relate to the policy (these should be added to).

Staff should consult the policy and consider the following 3 issues:

1. What you should be doing according to the policy
2. What you are doing
3. What you need to do to come up to standard.

Put these additional points into place. Keep trying to improve in light of experience and as new policies appear.

Duties and responsibilities are outlined in the policy and include:

- ◆ Managers will promote and maintain systems of management and behaviour at work, which adhere to the policy's principles.
- ◆ Employees are required to report matters of concern relating to H&S at work, including stress, to the appropriate manager.
- ◆ Employees should inform management where personal stress is affecting their work



WOMEN'S TRAINING DAY

*By Lynda Carnie
Equal Opportunities Officer*

In September 1999 Veronica Rankin [EIS National Equal Opportunities Officer] ran a very successful Women's Training Day for Aberdeen Local Association. The Local Executive agreed that a similar event should be offered again in two years time. I have provisionally arranged Friday 7 September 2001 as the date for this event and have invited Veronica to be the tutor. The main issues covered will be communication skills, building confidence and looking at the support the EIS can provide. Particular emphasis will be placed on assertiveness and negotiating skills bearing in mind the agreements that have to be reached in schools as a result of the McCrone recommendations. The day is not aimed at Reps in schools as there are training days offered

for Reps at other times of the year and some of the same issues will be covered. We hope that women who are not presently active in the EIS but would like to get involved at some stage will consider applying or perhaps women who need support to enable them to participate fully in the process of reaching agreement on collective time in establishments.

If you would like to discuss the day with me or would like to indicate your interest at this early stage, please get in touch with me at the number listed on the back of the newsletter. The authority has sanctioned the Training Day and therefore cover will be available to schools if it is required.

Secretary's Report

By Bill Ross

MONITORING CLASSROOM PRACTICE

Dear Colleagues,

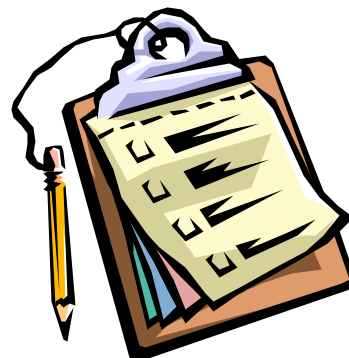
For this term's Newsletter I am returning to a well-worn theme, that of Monitoring Classroom Practice. The Authority position, agreed with the Teaching Unions, is quite clearly stated in Circulars INF/ASC/16/97 dated 17 March 1997 and INF/ASC/55/97 dated 30 June 1997. It states quite specifically in the first of these, "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" and in the second of these circulars it states, "... 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 has been arranged".



This to my mind is quite clear. Monitoring classroom practice is not about a member of senior management sitting at the back of a class appraising a fully qualified, fully GTC registered teacher's delivery of the curriculum or classroom management but is purely about identifying how the learning needs of the children can be met and identifying what support is necessary to help the teacher meet these learning needs, either

through additional material resources, through additional classroom assistant or auxiliary support, or any other support which can be identified. The whole focus is on the needs of the children not the performance of the teacher. It should also be made clear that monitoring of classroom practice as set out above is not connected in any way to staff development and review, where a separate local agreement exists.

The EIS recently produced a booklet which was sent to all reps. It is entitled "Teacher Professionalism and the Scottish Parliament". A section in this booklet entitled "Supervision and Direction of Teachers" states, "*Teachers, after full registration with the General Teaching Council, do not require day to day supervision and direction*". Further on it states, "*access to a classroom by senior staff with the express purpose of monitoring the work of an individual teacher is unacceptable to the EIS*". The document later states, "*Teacher autonomy, as stated above, cannot be absolute. If individual teachers are to be supported by senior staff, this may involve access to their classroom by appropriate senior staff. Such access may be informal and designed to facilitate communication. When more formal visits take place there should be agreement within the school on the circumstances and timing of any visits. Visits should be strictly within the context of learning and teaching and the overall welfare of the school and pupils in the school. For example, visits to classrooms could involve access to individual pupils, or groups of pupils; health and safety issues; matters related to the refurbishment of the schools; or to assist a general overview of*



the work of the school and of classes in the school. All such visits should be with a view to later discussion of general issues with teachers. The use of check-lists by senior staff during such general visits is unacceptable to the EIS".

All classroom observation arrangements must be in line with the local agreement referred to in the first paragraph and should be agreed by teachers in schools through the procedures of the School Development Planning process. They are in the context of learning and teaching in the classroom, nothing else. A member of senior management sitting at the front or back of a class with a check list on the performance of a teacher is as ludicrous as an Education Officer following a Head teacher round a school with a check-list on his/her performance.

If any EIS reps or EIS members feel that their school is not adhering to the procedures outlined above then they should contact me.

W.A. Ross
Local Association Secretary

MOVING TOO FAST

I am a passionate supporter of inclusive education. However, as an assistant head teacher in Aberdeen, I am fully aware of the daily pressures faced by classroom teachers and senior managers in dealing with disruptive pupils.

Unfortunately, I recognise that inclusion can never be 100% and there will always be a need for off-site pupils with social, educational and behavioural difficulties (SEBD).

In the past six years I have helped negotiate shared placements for three pupils at Redcraigs.

This means the pupils spends some of the week in his or her mainstream school and some of the week in Redcraigs.

There the very good, experienced staff work with youngsters to raise their self-esteem and develop strategies to help them better cope with mainstream education.

If the youngster learns to cope, a return to full-time education can follow but this would be in the pupil's own school.

I, therefore cannot understand the rationale for relocating Redcraigs to Torry Academy—or any other city secondary.

Inclusion for Redcraigs pupils

would be a full-time return to the pupil's mainstream secondary.

Carden School, for primary SEBD pupils, contains some children who are full-time and some who have a shared placement with their local primaries.

My concern about the plan to close Carden and move it to three sites in the city is that we are moving too fast.

I proposed setting up one pilot mainstream primary base, using existing primary staff and continuing to use Carden until at least June 2002.

The evaluation of any pilot would let us know if this new set-up was going to work. If it did not, Carden would still be there as a fall-back.

Cordyce is a school for about 35 secondary SEBD pupils who, for various reasons, were unable to maintain their mainstream place.

The problem is that in recent years, very few pupils have been able to return to mainstream classes from Cordyce.

I don't believe the current proposals to split Cordyce to four sites round the city will turn this around and improve pupil inclusion.

Like Carden, I think we are going too fast and on Tuesday I proposed

that we initiate consultation on the setting-up of a pilot education centre for student support, staffed by some Cordyce personnel.

Some day I would like to think that we could do away with Cordyce and Carden, but this can only happen when a new ethos and culture for dealing with primary SEBD pupils is established.

This will take several years to work its way through the system and time enough for the current population of Cordyce to leave education.

In Cordyce, as well as Redcraigs and Carden, we are dealing with some of the most vulnerable pupils in the city.

It is essential that whatever we put in place must be right—because if it's not, what future will they have to look forward to?

It is time for teachers, parents and pupils in the city to make their views known so that we on the Education and Leisure Committee can take on board what you want and not what we might think you want.

Grant Bruce
Teacher Representative on the
Education Committee

Coming soon.....

155th Annual General Meeting
PERTH 7th-9th JUNE 2001

Listen to the radio Watch telly Read the Papers

See page 7 for a brief list of issues to be debated.....

A CHANCE TO RECLAIM YOUR LIFE!

At a well-attended and, at times, heated special Local Association meeting held on 8th May, implications of the agreement reached following the McCrone Report were discussed.

It was very encouraging to see such a large percentage of Aberdeen schools represented, to consider an agreement which should be a turning point in terms of giving all teachers more control over their working time and workload.

Pending forthcoming advice from a short-term working group, the EIS has advised all schools to begin discussions as soon as possible, with a view to establishing their programme for the next working year. A meeting for heads of establishments will also take place in June to discuss the implications of McCrone. This meeting would seem crucial, given that in some schools, management appear to be unaware, for example, that PAT (planned activity time) will no longer exist!

The main part of the meeting concerned the intended new climate in schools of “consensual agreement” in terms of the use of non-contact hours beyond marking and preparation time.

In the upper stages of primary schools, for example, the amount of time remaining for “collegiate activities” is 57 hours over a session, or 1½ hours per week. This is what remains for all activities above and beyond preparation, teaching and marking.

Clearly a great deal of prioritising will need to take place in schools, but perhaps contrary to what has happened in the past, all teaching staff will have the right to discuss and agree to the use of this time.



The main areas of concern regarding the use of “collegiate” time appear to be those of forward planning and report writing in the primary school. It is clear that major changes are required to these if all the other whole-school activities, such as parents’ nights, staff meetings, etc., are to be accommodated within the annual 57 hours. I, for one, am delighted with the prospect of the ridiculously cumbersome and verbose Primary Report being consigned to the waste bin. As someone relatively new to teaching, I wonder how we managed to become lumbered with it in the first place. Was an appropriate time commitment ever estimated? Has



its efficacy ever been properly examined? Despite preparing reports on computer, using as many shortcuts as possible, they take a disproportionate amount of time to complete and use up many hours of my own time.

Although forward planning has gone through many permutations over recent years, we seem no nearer agreeing city-wide to an easily-completed, useful format based on current good practice.

For both reporting and forward planning I would suggest that tick-boxes are more than adequate, and would help rid us of the nonsense of well-qualified professionals wasting valuable teaching and preparation time writing screeds of

notes which must be discussed and marked(!) by over-stretched school managers.

Some debate has arisen as to how prescriptive the use of “collegiate” hours ought to be. In my opinion, Local Authorities must acknowledge the undeniable fact that from August teachers will work a 35 hour week, and it must be possible for all activities to be completed within this time. If they do not want us to spend the majority of our non-contact time on over-elaborate, and sometimes unnecessary paperwork, I feel it is incumbent on the Local Authority to very quickly provide all schools with efficient, easily managed and useful formats for both reporting and forward planning. If these are not forthcoming, the spirit of McCrone would suggest that each individual school has the right to produce its own expedient reports and forward plans without city-wide consistency.

In order to make a success of the new agreement, it is up to all of us in schools to grasp the idea of openness and to make our voices heard. Autocracies will no longer be sustained as there is now a responsibility, indeed a professional duty, on all staff to make their views known in an open, relaxed forum. Don’t leave it all to your EIS rep!

In conclusion, I believe we have in McCrone an opportunity to address workload issues in a positive and professional way. For too long teachers have had additional duties and bureaucracy thrown at them. We have accepted such impositions, often with barely a whimper, based on notions of “goodwill” and resignation. Let’s take this opportunity, not to become clock-watching malcontents, but to use our professional skills where they are best employed— working with children in the classroom. Let’s all work together to help get rid of the unnecessary baggage. Try to work an

efficient 35 hour week with no weekend forward planning, no Easter holiday report writing, no endless evenings preparing worksheets and please don't go into school before your summer break is over to put up frieze paper! If you cannot do it within 35 hours-DON'T DO IT!



Reclaim your life—play golf, go to the pub, talk to your family evenand re-energise yourself!

You may find you can begin to enjoy the job you are trained to do.



Phil McIntosh

AGM MOTIONS 2001

Curriculum Balance@ Workload; Behaviour;
Higher Still; Internal Assessment ;
ICT Training(Chartered Teacher Accrediting(
Drugs☠Exclusion; SEN Auxiliaries(Inclusion;
Guidance Provision(Reporting to Parents;
Specialists in Primary Schools(
McCrone(Class Size
(HMI ☠
Collegiate Decision Making(CPD(Stress;
Violence ; Temporary Contracts(
Complaints Against Teachers; Pensions£

TACKLING INDISCIPLINE

All good things come to those who wait.....

The Scottish Executive has set a target to reduce exclusions by a third. They have sent a task force around the country asking teachers how to tackle indiscipline in schools.

Discipline is of paramount importance to the front-line teacher. Support materials have been produced commercially, and schools have felt the real need to train staff. We have become nothing short of virtuoso in every possible strategy from “Tiny Tickable ‘Tainable Targets’” to “Time Out”. We have guessed, checked and improved the situation over and over again.. We know what works for a while. We know what would work brilliantly (if it were resourced). We know what doesn't work.

What the Education Minister and HMI Chief Inspector have made very clear is that they are talking about reducing exclusion from education, not exclusion from mainstream school classrooms,

and they also agree that removal from the mainstream school is in some cases the best course of action. At present it is the *only* option when the munificent skills of the classroom teacher have been stretched to exhaustion and don't work any more. We have all been there.

Inclusion is about giving equal opportunities to all. Nobody should be excluded from education. The inability of some pupils to be educated with a peer group of twenty to thirty others must be seen as a symptom of a learning difficulty that needs specific support. Physical or practical difficulties are easier to identify and to provide for.

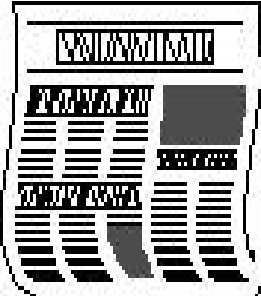
Social and emotional problems often are the root cause of poor attitude, aggression, and inability to communicate feelings or work cooperatively. Effective therapeutic support is essential, keeping pupils *in* the system and receiving education.

Teachers can not be expected to be calmly assertive when confronted with persistent deliberate inappropriate classroom behaviour, knowing there is no designated back-up at school level. A behaviour support department that can be accessed at any time must be a top priority recommendation of this task group.

In order to improve classroom discipline *and* support children with real, though indiscernible needs, the gap between good school based strategies and exclusion must be addressed. Then we can remove forever the sad cycle of pupils with development needs drifting through the system as it is at present, only to arrive back in the mainstream set up, where their needs were originally identified by the professional in the front line

a classroom teacher.

Evelyn Provatos



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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~

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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***