



General Teaching Council
for Northern Ireland

General Teaching Council for NI

termtalk

The Official Newsletter of the General Teaching Council

AUTUMN 08

termtalk



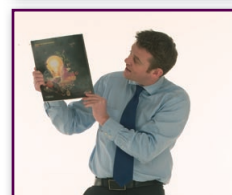
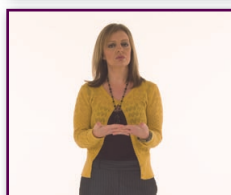
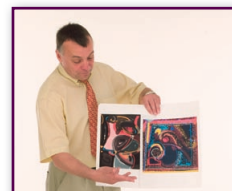
Welcome to the autumn edition of **termtalk**. At this time of great change the Council continues to engage with the Department of Education and the Employing Authorities on professional issues and continues to emphasise, to the wider education service, the vitally important work undertaken by teachers.

Teachers are working in challenging and uncertain times and it is imperative that, in these circumstances, the profession is resolute - acting at all times with professional integrity - and at the same time able to be responsive to society's ever increasing expectations.

This **termtalk** covers a wide range of relevant educational issues: ethical practice; the principles of effective teaching and learning; the emotionally intelligent school; assessment for learning; and autism. I hope you find this **termtalk** interesting and informative.

Eddie McArdle

Eddie McArdle
Registrar, GTCNI



Teacher Quality and School Improvement

The imminent publication, by the Department of Education, of *Every School a Good School (A Policy for School Improvement)* will potentially set the parameters within which schools and teachers will work for the foreseeable future. It also forms another part of the very complicated educational policy jigsaw which teachers and the wider community are struggling to piece together.

With *Every School a Good School* in mind, this edition of **termtalk** features a number of articles related to the ethical basis of teachers' work and also on the importance of developing an evidence-informed professionalism. More than ever, schools and teachers are being asked to account for the teaching methodologies they use. Therefore, the ability to justify professional practice can be regarded as a hallmark of highly competent teaching. In this sense, the Council's publication, *Teaching: The Reflective Profession* (incorporating the Northern Ireland Teacher Competences), is a powerful resource at the disposal of all teachers.

It is also noteworthy that the current policy on school improvement comes at the same time as a seminal report, *How the world's best-performing school*

systems come out top' (the McKinsey Report), written by Michael Barber and Mona Mourshed, is published. One of the significant conclusions of the report is that:

"The quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers."

Teaching quality is, therefore, a sine qua non of school improvement and while the McKinsey Report recognises that context, culture, politics and governance are influential, achieving universally high outcomes is only possible by putting in place mechanisms to ensure that schools deliver high-quality instruction to every child.

The conclusions of the McKinsey Report should immediately focus policy makers' attention, more directly, on the quality of the professional development and support structures all teachers rightly deserve, as they respond to the challenges that lie ahead. **GTC**



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GTCNI – a new voice for teachers

GTCNI Updates

Registration Team Update

With over 27,300 teachers currently registered with the Council, the Registration Team has its hands full keeping records up-to-date, but if you've...Moved House?...Changed Job? or...Got Married?...we want to hear from you. You can keep your details on the register up-to-date by simply emailing the Registration Team on registration@gtcni.org.uk or calling us on 028 9033 3390. Please note name changes will require documentary evidence such as a photocopy of your marriage licence.

Renewal of Registration for 2008/2009 Registration Year

The renewal process for the 2008/2009 registration year is now complete and all registered teachers should be in possession of written confirmation of registration for the current year. If, for some reason, you have not yet received your 'Confirmation of Reigistration', simply call or email the Registration Team and it can be reissued.

Registration of New Graduates

The registration process for '2008 Graduates' is now complete. All graduates from the Northern Ireland providers of Initial Teacher Education are now registered, or have been given the opportunity to register, with the Council.

School Lists and Up-to-date Records.

The Registration Team has just written out to every grant-aided school in Northern Ireland asking them to confirm details on each of their teachers. So now would be a good time to make sure that the address details held by your employer are accurate and up-to-date.

GTCNI and NISTR

The Registration Team has encountered some confusion among teachers regarding the difference between the role of the Council and the role of the Northern Ireland Substitute Teacher Register (NISTR).

The GTCNI is the independent regulatory body for the teaching profession, established by the Education (NI) Order 1998. Registration is required for all teachers, including peripatetic teachers, working in grant-aided schools in Northern Ireland, regardless of permanent/temporary/substitute nature of their employment. Employing authorities are also required to ensure that they only employ teachers that are registered with the GTCNI.

The Department of Education, in Circular 2006/07 issued in March 2006, advised schools that only teachers on the Northern Ireland Substitute Teacher Register (NISTR) should be employed as substitute teachers from 1 September 2006.

Accordingly, all teachers working in grant-aided schools in Northern Ireland must register with GTCNI, and only those teachers wishing to work in a substitute/supply capacity should register with both GTCNI and NISTR.

If you wish to work as a substitute teacher in Northern Ireland and would like to find out more about the NISTR please contact their administrators on 02890 564000 ext 4427 or email them directly on: subteach@belb.co.uk

GTCNI Policy Update

The Council continues to work on a number of policy areas. The second consultation on *Every School a Good School*, this time relating to a strategy for improving literacy and numeracy has been issued by the Department of Education. The Council is also working with the Department to develop its role in the accreditation of initial teacher education courses/programmes. The 26 September 2008 was the closing date for receipt of bursary applications and these are currently being evaluated. The Council also continues to support citizenship education by co-sponsoring and promoting the Pramerica Spirit of the Community Awards.

GTCNI Notice Board

Newtownards Model Primary School becomes first Primary School to be awarded ICT specialist status

Newtownards Model Primary School has become the first primary school to be awarded the prestigious ICT specialist status.

The award has been made by the British Educational Communications and Technology Agency (BECTA). This agency is responsible for delivery of the government's technology strategy for schools and the learning community.

An assessment by a trained independent assessor in June 2008 led to the awarding of specialist school status.

The school was highly praised in all eight criteria of the award including leadership and management, teaching and resources (interactive whiteboards in all classrooms), pupil engagement and proficiency, and the school devised SEN programme involving individualised computerised learning programmes/laptops. The assessor highly praised the level of training of the teaching staff in use of ICT to enhance learning and the high quality pedagogy and classroom learning.

Diary Date

Professor Andrew Pollard, Director of the Teaching and Learning Research Programme,



will give the fourth GTCNI Annual Lecture on Tuesday 31 March 2009 at 7.00pm.

Further details will be available in the next edition of **termtalk**.

A new era for Teacher CPD

Ten television programmes that aim to support the professional development of primary teachers in both Northern Ireland and the Republic will be made available on Information TV, on Sky Channel 166 and Freesat Channel 406, during November and December 2008. They can also be accessed via the web during transmission slots at www.information.tv and at any time at www.ppps.ie or www.neelb.tv

The programmes were developed by NEELB CASS and the Primary Professional Development Service in the Republic. They include studio discussions illustrated by footage of classroom teaching and the development of key themes currently relevant to schools.

Substitute teaching opportunities for teachers with good Irish Language skills

Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta, the Council for Irish Medium Education is keen to make contact with qualified teachers, both primary and secondary, regardless of their specialist subject(s) whether unemployed, retired or otherwise who have a good level of oral and written skills in Irish. Substitute teachers are in extremely short supply in this sector and there are regular opportunities in Irish Medium Schools. If you are available, or know of someone who is, Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta can be contacted at **90321475** or by email: tmacgiollabhride@comhairle.org

EPD1 Course for Special Needs Teachers

Are you a teacher in a special school, a unit or learning support centre? Are your pupils working towards Level 1 or at maximum Level 2?

Are you interested in joining an online and face-to-face course, meeting the teacher competences for EPD1?

The 7 week course offers support in reflective online discussions, develops your ICT skills, and invites you to create and share a multimedia literacy resource for classroom use.

The course begins in January. Sign-up by early November!

To find out more or to sign-up please contact Norma Price: nprice@c2kni.org.uk

LIFT OFF for Human Rights in Education

In the article that follows, Mary Kerr from Amnesty International describes the 'LIFT OFF' human rights project being taught in some local primary schools and provides details of a forthcoming conference.

Human Rights Education, which was once viewed with scepticism by some and as a niche subject by others, is finding growing support among Northern Ireland primary schools, with approximately 200 local schools having signed-up to the LIFT OFF network. LIFT OFF is a home-grown initiative, conceived by Amnesty International, INTO and UTU and designed to promote the teaching and practice of respect for human rights within the primary school. The emphasis is very much on respect and equal opportunity, with children encouraged to learn how to communicate with each other and work together in a way that is respectful of everyone's rights. One teacher who has used one of the LIFT OFF teacher-developed books (*The Right Start*) in her classroom sums this up in a nutshell:

"The Right Start was not designed to teach human rights in faraway countries: it was about learning new attitudes to each other in our own classroom, our own school."

Schools that have been involved with LIFT OFF, have remarked on the impact that learning about human rights has made to children's self-esteem as well as on their interpersonal skills. One area where the impact has been most evident has been in conflict resolution. Human rights education equips children with skills which enable them to prevent conflicts from escalating and to arrive at solutions that are respectful of everyone involved. One child whose school has been involved with LIFT OFF explains, "There doesn't have to be a loser for someone to win...there's like another way to solve things."

The LIFT OFF initiative, in conjunction with the Human Rights Commission, will be holding its fourth annual cross-border human rights education conference in the Wellington Park Hotel, Belfast on Thursday, 6th November. This event attracts a range of local and international



LIFT OFF partners and speakers at last year's conference on 13 December 2007 in Dublin Castle



Caitriona Ruane MLA, the Minister of Education, with a pupil from Bunscoil an tSléibhe Dhuibh at the launch of materials for the LIFT OFF scheme

educationalists and is an opportunity for all to find out more about the benefits of a human rights-based approach to education and to meet with some of the teachers and children who have been involved with LIFT OFF.

Informative and interactive, the conference aims to encourage reflection and action among participants with regards to making human rights education a reality for children. This year our keynote speaker will be Dr Linda King,

UNESCO chief of section for rights and values in education. A series of workshops, including one that will be run by children, will give participants the chance to learn more how human rights can add value to a child's experience in school. **GTC**

To find out more about the conference or LIFT OFF, please contact Mary Kerr on 028 90 643000 or at **Mary.Kerr@amnesty.org.uk** Alternatively visit our website at **www.liftoffschools.org**

The 2009 Pramerica Spirit of Community Awards



The Council is once again delighted to be co-sponsoring, with the National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals, the Pramerica Spirit of Community Awards.

This will be the third year of the awards and, once again, young people in post-primary schools throughout Ireland are eligible to apply. The awards seek to recognise the volunteer and charitable activities carried out by young people. They also provide an opportunity to salute deserving students, inspire young people to get involved in community service activities and attract widespread recognition for their schools. The award scheme is also very much in keeping with the concept of active citizenship which is an integral part of the Northern Ireland Curriculum.

Last year three students from schools in Northern Ireland were among the twenty finalists who attended a gala dinner award ceremony in Belfast. Caoimhe Mahony, a student at St Mary's College in Derry, was recognised for her work in raising awareness among young people about the dangers of alcohol and drug abuse. While Orlaith McLaughlin, another a pupil at St Mary's College in Derry, was recognised for her volunteer work with the Ulster Cancer Foundation. Jennifer Hatch, a student at Glenlola College, was recognised for her volunteer work at the Abbeyfield Residential Home.

This year 15 finalists will be awarded a silver medallion, €500 and an invitation to the gala awards dinner. At this event, two All-Ireland Youth Volunteers

of the Year will be named, each of whom will receive €1000 for their chosen charity and trip to the United States.

Schools have already been informed about the Spirit of Community Awards and principals, wishing to enter pupils, should ensure that a maximum of two applications from their schools (junior and senior categories) are forwarded no later than 14 November to:

The Pramerica Spirit of Community Awards

Pramerica Systems Ireland
Letterkenny Office Park
Letterkenny
Co. Donegal **GTC**



The 2008 Pramerica Spirit of Community finalists at the gala award ceremony in Belfast earlier this year. Also included in the picture are Caitriona Ruane MLA, the Minister of Education, who presented the awards, the Nobel Laureate Mr John Hume who chaired the final awarding panel and Mrs Sally McKee, chairperson of GTCNI

Teaching: an Ethical Practice

*GTCNI has, since it was established, sought to promote the ethical basis of teacher professionalism and to emphasise that we need to establish ourselves, more fully, as an evidence-informed profession. With this in mind, **termtalk** asked two eminent educationalists to address these important issues. First of all, Dr Margaret Reynolds, formerly of St Mary's University College, examines the ethical basis of teaching. This is followed with an article by Professor Merryn Hutchings, from the Institute for Policy Studies in Education at London Metropolitan University who considers the very topical debate on teachers' gender by asking; do boys need male teachers?*

The Ethical Basis of Teaching

Michael Polanyi, the renowned philosopher of science, was well known for saying that "we know more than we can tell." By that he meant that we develop knowledge and skills throughout our lives and that this becomes a framework through which we filter experience, make decisions about what to do and carry those decisions through. In fact our capacity to act, he claims, is dependent on this framework.

This is particularly so when we engage in an activity in which we are very skilled. Think about multi-tasking for example; can we really explain how we thread our way through our commitments, making decisions about priorities on the hoof, organising and completing tasks to keep the many aspects of our roles on track? Moreover, it is often very difficult for us to retrace our steps and explain to others how exactly we make decisions and balance tasks through to successful completion. I believe this is true no more so than in teaching. If you consider the successful teacher, it is often difficult for them to retell why they chose to do things in this way instead of that, or how they seem to do the right thing almost instinctively.

This kind of expert practice is not simply a gift of nature. Teachers learn how to teach well and they learn how to make good decisions about what to do in a given situation. An individual may have a set of latent gifts that enables them to become a good teacher but these are honed and developed. Teachers have learned how

to be successful in a range of standard and non-standard ways: learning from teacher education courses; from other professional colleagues; and from experience. It is out of this personal learning framework that successful teaching springs. It is useful to think of this framework as a pair of glasses through which we 'see' and make sense of, for example, the classroom and schools.

But there are other crucial elements to effective teaching that are also learned and developed. These are the values or ethics of teaching and perhaps these are even more difficult to define and trace in our practice. It can seem that it is almost impossible to get a clear idea of what these values are, except of course we now have a Code of Values and Professional Practice, which the GTCNI has integrated into the revised competence framework for teachers. Much more difficult, perhaps, is a conception of how these values function. Insofar as the professional values influence, in a real way, our actions in the classroom they form a code of ethics. This code of ethics functions as a set of imperatives to act in certain ways that anchors the profession to goals that we know are desirable.

The values that we develop as teachers then are not simply a matter of individual choice; there is a moral vocabulary that belongs to teaching that reflects a shared sense of what is for the good. The core values are linked directly to moral values and the commitments, listed in the Code of Values and Professional Practice, can be read across to how these core values would operate in tandem with the traditional goals of teaching, for instance, the commitment to respect

and the promotion of the personal development of each child.

Values are central to how we choose to teach from day-to-day because they form the foundation, along with knowledge and skills for selection between alternatives for action. They can also facilitate understanding of what we do because they provide a common basis for understanding the purposes and the process of deliberation which underpins action; teachers know for example that pupils and parents are due respect and they can read this in their own actions and those of others.

Values have recognisable forms of expression and these represent the process of choosing and acting which are guided by the values to which the person subscribes. For example, it is more typical for us to stop and deal with inappropriate behaviour by pupils in the corridor than walk on by. Thus much of what teachers do is centrally linked to the common professional values that have been learned through socialisation into the profession. This does not mean that all teachers act in the same way but that patterns can be identified in professional practice, in general, that reflect core values and goals associated with teaching.

Values can be really difficult to identify and talk through with others but they are revealed in our actions every day. The identification of a Code of Values and Professional Practice by the GTCNI, as foundational to competent teaching, makes it imperative that we begin, as teachers, to look at this 'secret garden' that lies at the heart of what happens in schools. This can be a great challenge but it gives the opportunity for the teaching profession, like other professions such as medicine, to uncover the deep structure of what we do and how we should be doing it. It also gives us the opportunity to induct student teachers more overtly into the evaluative dimension to teaching by, for example, using the Code of Values and Professional Practice to assist discussion of what is appropriate in classroom practice, rather than simply what 'works'.

A copy of the Code of Values and Professional Practice can be found in the 'publications' section of the Council's website: www.gtcni.org.uk

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Teaching: an Ethical Practice



Do boys need male teachers?

There is a widespread acceptance in most western countries that more male teachers are needed in primary schools. Policy-makers argue that they should serve as role models for boys to ensure that they acquire the 'right' sort of masculine identity. Primary schools are seen as feminised and feminising, both in the preponderance of women teachers and in the process of learning.

There is generally little discussion of the sort of masculine behaviour that may be beneficial for boys. Sometimes it is assumed that masculine interests (such as football), and the firm discipline that men allegedly provide, are the key factors. At other times, male teachers are urged to demonstrate that men can be caring and gentle, and that it is not effeminate to work hard at school and enjoy reading. In either case, it is assumed that boys taught by men will do better at school.

Research evidence has challenged these arguments. It has been shown that children prefer a good teacher, and do not mind whether it is a man or a woman,¹ and that the sex of the teachers they have been taught by is not related to attainment levels at age eleven.²

Our research³ in England involved observation in 50 classes of seven to eight year olds, half taught by men and half by women, and interviews each teacher and six children in each class. One of our aims was to explore whether children perceived their teachers as role models. We asked the children what they liked about their teachers and in what ways they would like to be like them, and compared the characteristics put forward by four groups: girls taught by women; girls taught by men; boys taught by women and boys taught by men.

The broad pattern of responses was similar across all four groups; the teachers' behaviour towards others (being fair, generous, helpful,

explaining etc.) was the most frequently identified factor in whether the child liked them, followed by their character (being funny, good, nice) and their occupational behaviour (being a teacher, having the authority, skills, knowledge etc. that go with that role, setting work that the child enjoyed).

There were, however, some differences across groups. Some of these related to the sex of the teacher. Male teachers were more often described as 'fun' or 'funny' by both girls and boys.

“ He jokes and stuff and sometimes he plays music and dances to it and he's dead funny. ”

(Girl)

Only men teachers were liked because they had the particular skills and knowledge that goes with being a teacher. Women teachers were more often liked because they gave rewards, such as stickers, and because they did not shout (a behaviour mainly associated with male teachers).

Teaching: an Ethical Practice

In comparison with boys, girls more often described their teachers (of either sex) as 'nice' and 'kind':

“ She’s kind and nice and when we’ve been good she rewards us, she might give us a jelly bean or some chocolate. ” (Girl)

But both boys and girls more often described teachers of the same sex as themselves as nice, in comparison to those of the other sex. Similarly, 'kind' was slightly more often used to describe 'same-sex' teachers.

Just over half the children identified some way in which they would like to be like their teacher (perhaps the most basic characteristic of a role model). Marginally more girls than boys wanted to be like their teachers, and marginally more of those taught by teachers of the same sex. However, almost half those taught by a teacher of the opposite sex identified some characteristic they would like to emulate. The single characteristic most often identified

was being a teacher; almost half the children said they would like to become teachers (probably because this is one of the few occupations that children regularly observe).

The girls taught by women most often said that they wanted to be kind, generous, nice and pretty like their teachers:

“ Because she has long hair, and I just like her, I want to be like her. ” (Girl taught by a woman)

Girls taught by men referred to rather different characteristics: having specific skills and being funny:

“ I would like to be like my teacher because he knows how to play the piano very well, and he knows how to type well, and he knows when to joke and when to stop. ” (Girl taught by a man)

Boys taught by men similarly talked about skills and knowledge and humour, but also emphasised the intelligence and authority of teachers:

“ I wish I could boss everybody about and tell them what to do. ”

“ I’d like to know as much about history. ” (Boys taught by men)

What is striking is that the boys taught by women referred to a similar range of characteristics: having authority, intelligence and knowledge:

“ She knows a lot of science, that’s why [I’d like to be like her], and maths. ” (Boy taught by a woman)

Interestingly science was only referred to in relation to women teachers.

What, then, can we conclude from this? There is little evidence to suggest that male teachers are needed to be role models for the boys, who seemed to be finding equally useful models in their women teachers. However, it is somewhat worrying that girls taught by women identified such a narrow range of positive characteristics, with a strong emphasis on being nice, kind and pretty!

The research suggests that it is important that both girls and boys encounter both male and female teachers. But rather than arguing that teachers should act as role models only for the children of their own sex, a more useful perspective would be that all teachers should challenge stereotypical views in an attempt to free children from the limitations of current predominant constructions of masculinity and femininity. **GTC**



¹ Ashley and Lee (2003) *Women teaching boys: caring and working in the primary school*, Trentham.

² Carrington, Tymms and Merrell (2008) Role models, school improvement and the gender gap: do men bring out the best in boys and women in girls? *British Educational Research Journal*, 34,3, 315-327.

³ Investigating gender as a factor in pupil-teacher relations and perceptions, funded by the ESRC (RES-000-23-0624), led by Professor Christine Skelton. The team also included Prof Bruce Carrington, Prof Becky Francis, Dr Barbara Read and Ian Hall. A fuller version of this article appeared in the *Oxford Review of Education* (2008), 34,2 135-159.

Teaching, professionalism and pedagogy

GTCNI continues to promote evidence-informed practice as a necessary condition for sustainable school improvement. This must also be accompanied by high quality continuing professional development for all teachers. In the article that follows, Professor Andrew Pollard, Director of the Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP), situates teacher professionalism within the context of evidence-informed practice. To accompany his article the Council has included 10 principles of effective teaching and learning; these principles have been developed by the TLRP, based on research evidence from 22 school projects about what really makes a difference in the classroom. In publishing this important article, the Council hopes to empower teachers and schools as they respond to the 'Every School a Good School' agenda.



The expertise of teachers in making subtle and complex judgements about teaching and learning and in managing large groups of children is not very well understood in our societies. And maybe we are not too good at explaining it either! One consequence is that teachers may not get the credit and respect they deserve. Another is that governments can sometimes introduce new policies and practices with inadequate consultation.

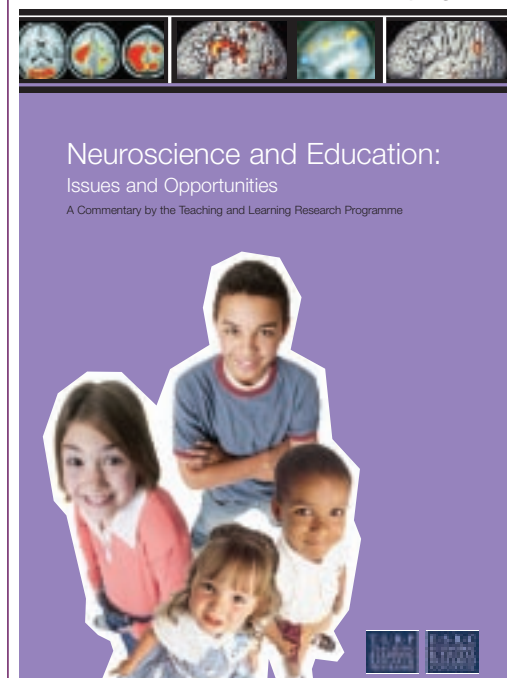
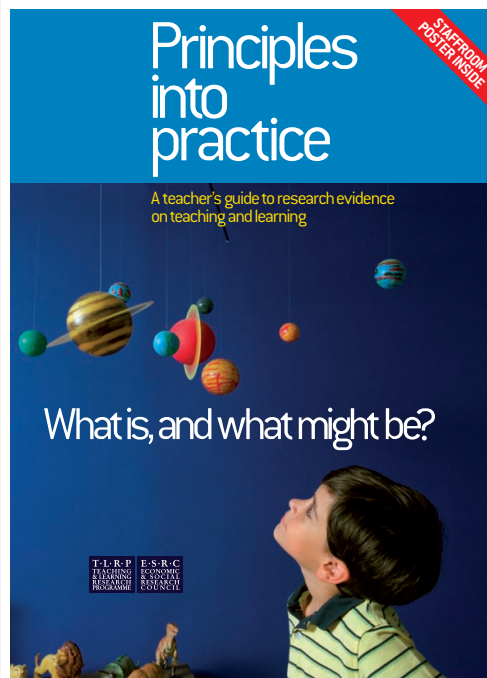
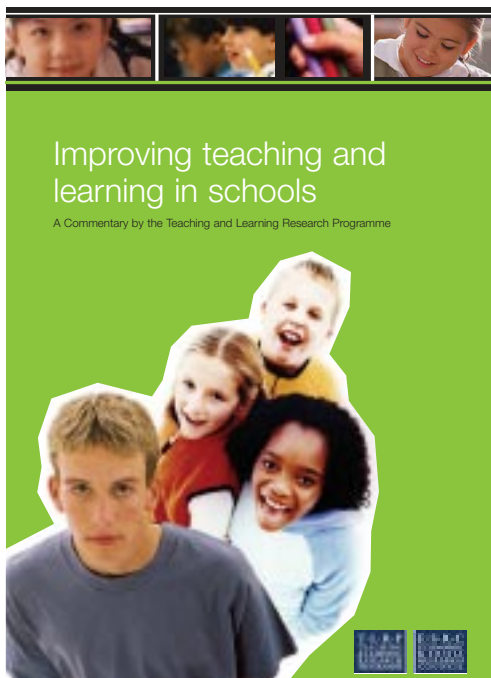
Indeed, both media and politicians are susceptible to reaching for simple 'solutions' which fail to recognise the nature and range of the educational issues which teachers routinely consider. In this, they are sometimes encouraged by researchers offering to pinpoint 'what works' so that these methods can be disseminated to teachers for classroom application.

These are impoverished positions for two major reasons. First, the reality is that, however much we may know about effective teaching

and learning, implementation is always mediated by teacher judgement. There are no magic bullets. Second, education has moral purposes and consequences, so that teaching is never simply a technical activity.

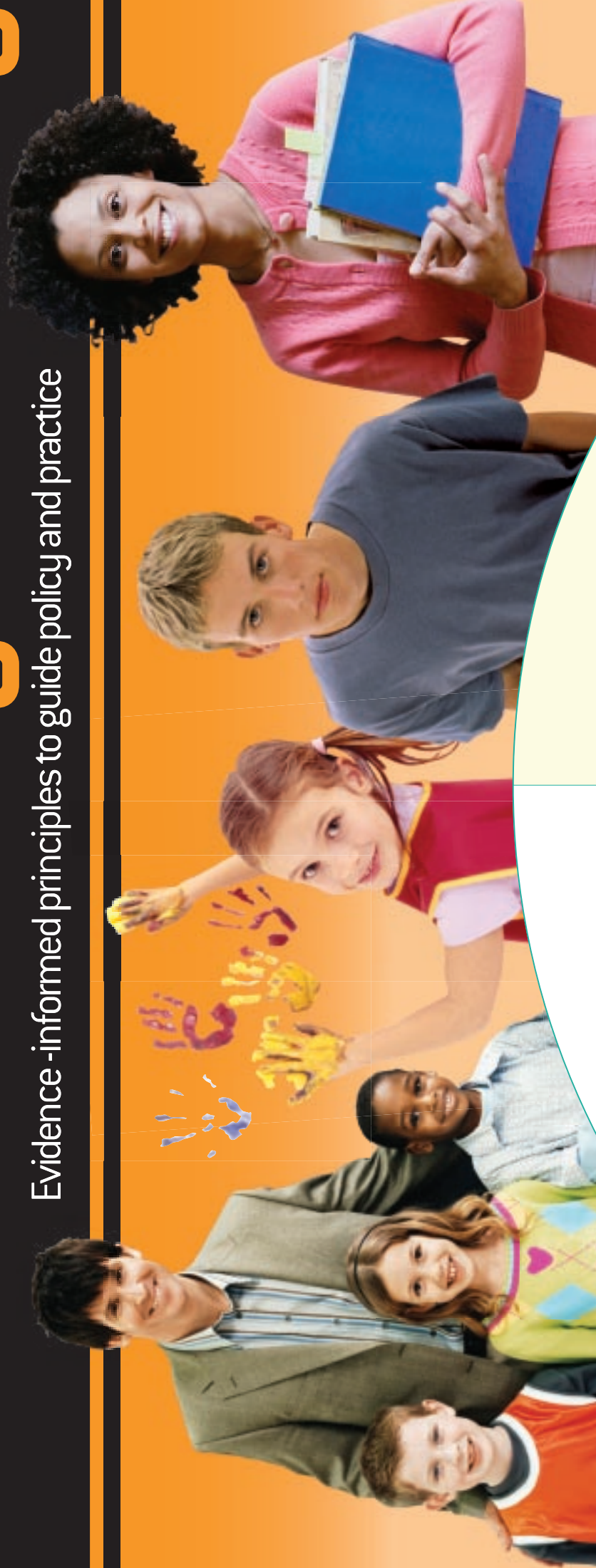
As a consequence, judgements about appropriateness must always be made. The essence of teacher professionalism might therefore be viewed as the exercise of skills, knowledge and judgement about teaching, learning and education for the public good.

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Effective teaching and learning

Evidence-informed principles to guide policy and practice



10 DEMANDS CONSISTENT POLICY FRAMEWORKS WITH SUPPORT FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING AS THEIR PRIMARY FOCUS

Policies at national, local and institutional levels need to recognise the fundamental importance of teaching and learning. They should be designed to make sure everyone has access to learning environments in which they can thrive.

9 DEPENDS ON TEACHER LEARNING

The importance of teachers learning continuously in order to develop their knowledge and skill, and adapt and

1 EQUIPS LEARNERS FOR LIFE IN ITS BROADEST SENSE

Learning should aim to help people to develop the intellectual, personal and social resources that will enable them to participate as active citizens and workers and to flourish as individuals in a diverse and changing society. This implies a broad view of learning outcomes and that equity and social justice are taken

2 ENGAGES WITH VALUED FORMS OF KNOWLEDGE

Teaching and learning should engage with the big ideas, facts, processes, language and narratives of subjects so

seriously.

knowledge and skills, and adapt and develop their roles, especially through classroom inquiry, should be recognised and supported.

language and narratives of subjects so that learners understand what constitutes quality and standards in particular disciplines.

8 RECOGNISES THE SIGNIFICANCE OF INFORMAL LEARNING

Informal learning, such as learning out of school, should be recognised as being at least as significant as formal learning and should be valued and used appropriately in formal education.

7 FOSTERS BOTH INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIAL PROCESSES AND OUTCOMES

Learning is a social activity. Learners should be encouraged to work with others, to share ideas and to build knowledge together. Consulting learners and giving them a voice is both an expectation and a right.

3 RECOGNISES THE IMPORTANCE OF PRIOR EXPERIENCE AND LEARNING

Teaching should take account of what learners know already in order to plan their next steps. This means building on prior learning as well as taking account of the personal and cultural experiences of different groups.

4 REQUIRES THE TEACHER TO SCAFFOLD LEARNING

Teachers should provide activities which support learners as they move forward, not just intellectually, but also socially and emotionally, so that once these supports are removed, the learning is secure.

5 NEEDS ASSESSMENT TO BE CONGRUENT WITH LEARNING

Assessment should help to advance learning as well as to determine whether learning has taken place. It should be designed and carried out so that it measures learning outcomes in a dependable way and also provides feedback for future learning.

6 PROMOTES THE ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT OF THE LEARNER

A chief goal of teaching and learning should be the promotion of learners' independence and autonomy. This involves acquiring a repertoire of learning strategies and practices, developing a positive attitude towards learning, and confidence in oneself as a good learner.



Teaching, professionalism and pedagogy

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But how can such a position be developed, promoted and defended so that the profession can be better understood? My view is that we need to start by reasserting the role of pedagogy and teacher expertise. Indeed, a challenging chain of argument starts from a definition of what we mean by 'pedagogy':

1. Pedagogy is the practice of teaching as informed by a structured body of knowledge and combined with moral purpose.
2. By progressively acquiring such knowledge and mastering pedagogical expertise – through initial formation, continuing development and reflective experience – teachers are entitled to be treated as professionals.
3. Teachers should scrutinise and evaluate their practice to make rationally defensible professional judgements beyond pragmatic constraints and/or ideological concerns.

Put another way, this line of reasoning suggests the various forms of reflective practice, classroom-based research and other forms of professional enquiry are essential to the improvement of teachers' own understanding and, in turn, to public perception and respect for the activity of teaching. We have to establish ourselves as an 'evidence-informed profession'.

The resources contained in my handbook on *Reflective Teaching*, for which a new edition was published this year, are all about activities of this sort and will support enquiry on a very wide range of topics from classroom behaviour to curriculum planning and from pupil consultation to home-school relationships. Of course, such detailed work cannot happen all the time but the use of occasional, but explicit, classroom enquiries has been found to be extremely effective in providing reflective learning experiences. When planning a classroom study, whether a teacher or researcher, we are faced by three decisions:



1. Which facet of classroom life should be investigated and why?
2. What evidence to collect and how?
3. How should the findings be analysed, interpreted and applied?

But teachers don't need to tackle these challenges in isolation for it has been found to be much more effective, if possible, to work as a group of colleagues working on a shared topic.

Additionally, outputs from organisations such as the Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP) have been explicitly designed to support teachers in developing the quality of evidence-informed judgements. For example, evidence from twenty-two TLRP school projects led to the production of a set of 'principles for effective teaching and learning'. This was sent out in poster form to all UK schools (and can be downloaded from <http://www.tlrp.org/findings>); see the center pages of *termtalk* for a copy of the ten principles.

Building on experience as well as evidence, these principles seem to apply across the board and provide a yardstick for reflection and analysis.

The suggestion then is that successful policy implementation and sustainable improvement are best achieved through the expert judgement of skilled and knowledgeable professionals – and TLRP's contention is that such

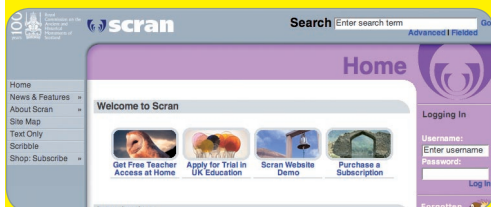
judgements are best informed by educational principles, rather than by decontextualised prescription. Teachers are key mediators and must use judgements about circumstances, contexts, pupils, objectives and teaching approaches, bearing in mind appropriate values, goals and educational principles.

If we can focus on this, and on processes for the continuous improvement of understanding and judgement, then the status and respect of the profession will grow. Nor should we ever forget that teaching continues to present wonderful opportunities for making a difference to the life of every child who comes through the classroom door. Today we have the evidence and the tools at our disposal to help children become skilled and enthusiastic lifelong learners, and to grow and learn themselves throughout their own lives and careers. As they develop, so should we. **GTC**

T·L·R·P
TEACHING
& LEARNING
RESEARCH
PROGRAMME



'Global Conflict' from the Danes – surely not? Here is a journalist role-play resource suitable for citizenship, politics, history, language (in seven languages – with English bizarrely under the American flag) and media classes which unpicks controversial world events with a critical skills-based exploration of human rights, genocide, emigration in, for example, Palestine and Latin America, with scenarios from Africa and Asia on the way next year. Sample simulations (bear with the slow download) on www.globalconflicts.eu with the subscription service going live in January 2009. Engaging and thought provoking.



SCRAN, part of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland. Don't be misled by the name. This learning resource service hosts 360,000 images, movies and sounds from 300 museums, galleries, archives and the media across the UK. Its resources are designed to be built easily into teaching packs and online learning trails. Free demo and trial on <http://www.scran.ac.uk/>



Journey to Excellence: attention planners of school staff development days. The Scottish Inspectorate offers www.journeytoexcellence.org.uk a first-rate collection of 600 videos – 'streamable' and 'downloadable' in bite-sized chunks – also linked in themes to start and sustain discussions including, for example, on assessment, active learning, meeting learners' needs, self-evaluation, motivation and leadership. Interviews from leading global thinkers are highly pertinent in any staffroom;

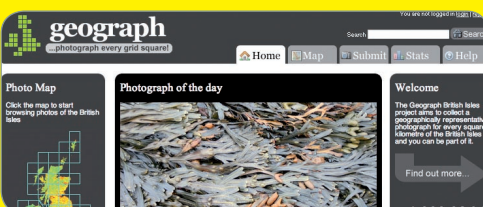
A regular feature book-marking educational resource and information websites.

This term's websights were spotted at the Scottish Learning Festival in Glasgow in September; an outstanding annual event, combining talks and an accessible exhibition, opened by the SNP's Fiona Hyslop MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Education and attended by some 7,000 Scottish teachers as well as educators from 14 other countries, including a small number from here. Its worthwhile fare should tempt more across the Irish Sea, not least to hear how similar challenges are being tackled. See <http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/slf/> for streaming video keynotes.

make your own choice about using practice examples from Scottish classrooms. Download the relevant PDF pack from the Professional Development menu – the videos are linked within – or use the movie finder.



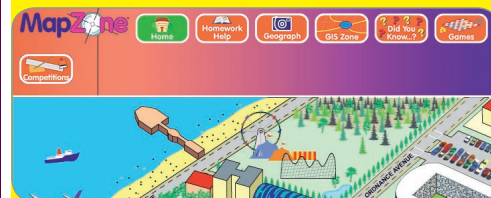
WWF on the WWW
The **One Planet Schools** website www.wwf.org.uk/oneplanetschools provides a stimulating range of free online and downloadable resources and project links on sustainability issues. Register for termly posters and find a calculator for your school's Global Footprint on www.ltscotland.org.uk/sustainabledevelopment/schoolsglobalfootprint



Grab Your Grid Square!
Lay claim to your school's grid square, add your own photographs and view those left under creative commons license on <http://schools.geograph.org.uk>



I'll vote for it
www.election-maps.co.uk maps local and Westminster constituencies and election data and supports with teaching resources.



And, whilst coverage is GB only – Ordnance Survey provides useful map clips and free teaching resources on www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/mapzone and www.old-maps.co.uk provides comparison maps over 100 old.



Modern Languages in the Primary School
Advance notice of a site launching in March 2009. www.GrowStoryGrow.com offers animated stories as a basis for vocabulary building. Register for a trial now. <http://www.beelingua.com/> shows what to expect.



EdiNA - Education Image Gallery – a footnote to last term's issue on digital images, this newly launched site contains 50,000 copyright-cleared images from 19th century to the present day for use in schools on www.jcs.nen.gov.uk at a low-cost subscription rate and 30-day free trial. While there, check out the Times, Guardian and Observer archives, the reference resources and the music, art, history, languages and sciences resources. Email s.fahmyschools@jisc.ac.uk

If you would like to share your favourite website, on any educational theme, please email your links and comments to profjohn@gtni.org.uk

Emotional Intelligence – A Central Life Skill

There is a growing awareness that promoting the emotional health and well-being of pupils and teachers can have a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning in schools. In the article that follows, St Joseph's Primary and Nursery in Crumlin describe the benefits to be realised from developing an emotionally intelligent school.



Within this we focused on awareness of emotions 'in self', regulating emotions 'in self' and empathising and working with the emotions of others. Each of these competencies included a list of characteristics to consider and were central to the staff, pupil and parent programmes.

The Process

Having included EI on the school development plan we began the process with the staff programme. Initially this involved training and developing the EI competencies of the senior leadership team followed by training of all other staff. The pupil programme was initiated following the staff training and the programme for parents was offered once EI became an integral part of school life.

About Us

At St Joseph's we are proud to be recognised as an emotionally intelligent organisation. We are a school of 830 pupils of whom 104 are nursery children. We have over 70 teaching and non-teaching staff.

We consider ourselves to be an innovative, highly committed, forward thinking school. We have been involved in many initiatives and consider the Emotional Intelligence (EI) programme to have had an immense and positive impact on every aspect of school life.

Background

We first became involved through the RTU programme "Creating an Emotionally Intelligent School". We were very aware of the changing and increasingly demanding needs within society and felt that a programme which focused on developing emotional competencies could only be a benefit. We acknowledged that many problems result from a lack of emotional competencies and saw the importance of laying solid emotional foundations for dealing with all that life has to throw at us. We felt there would be much to gain for ourselves, our families and indeed the wider school community, in undertaking this work.

Around the same time, we were undertaking a review of our

leadership and management structures and believed that our work in developing EI would be beneficial. The people in our school are very important to us and an opportunity to provide a very different type of training, which would be very personal to each individual, was a challenge but something we felt was very worthwhile.

Another factor was the need to embrace change; the Revised Curriculum and the emphasis on personal development meant that the programme was timely and fitted into our thinking. We could see how this approach, which focused on the needs of staff as well as pupils, would help raise standards in the longer term.

Defining EI

There is a wealth of literature available and many definitions but the one we chose to focus on was:

“ We are able to recognise and to understand our emotions and our emotional behaviour: to express our emotions in an appropriate manner and to strive to understand the emotions felt, expressed and demonstrated by others. ”

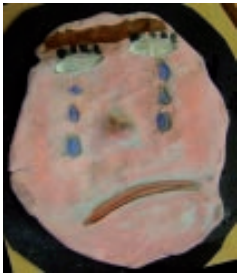
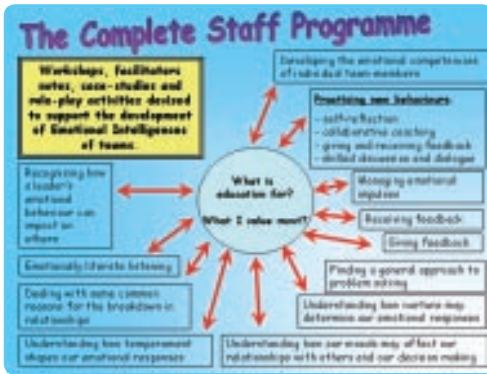
Sheelagh McGrogan

The Staff Programme

Training has had a huge impact on staff. It has helped us develop our own emotional competencies and raised awareness of the need for sensitivity at times when communicating with each other.



Emotional Intelligence – A Central Life Skill



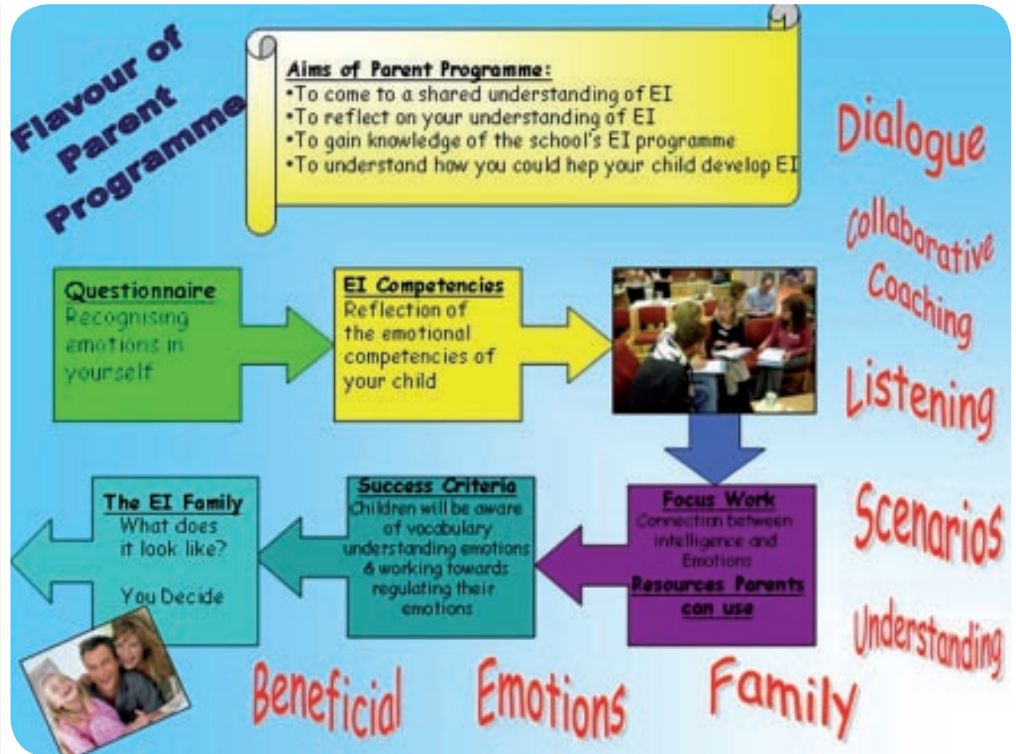
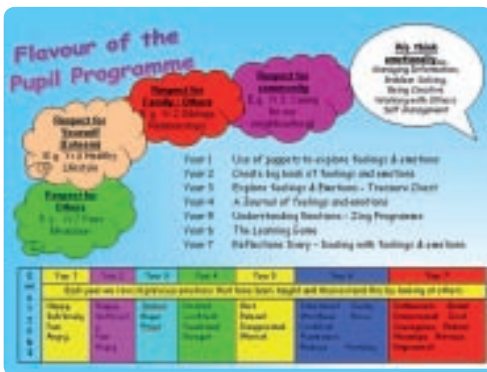
We became more aware of our actions, attitudes and behaviours. Through the programme many skills have been developed,

leading to a positive school culture, a staff open to change who enjoy distributed leadership roles and have high morale. Better working relations have led to a very positive environment and this has been the foundation of the pupil programme.

The Pupil Programme

Our children really enjoy the programme. They work more co-operatively, can better deal with their own emotions and are getting better at recognising the emotions of others. They are articulate and have developed a language with which to express how they are feeling.

Our EI programme has clear links with the Revised Curriculum and has had positive outcomes throughout the school. The children explore values and virtues reflected in the PDMU objectives. By KS2 the EI competencies are quite highly developed and it is helping our



children focus on learning for life. It helps them to face difficult real-life situations, such as remaining confident in the face of failure and encouraging them to have different perspectives and take risks with their thinking. They are very able to celebrate diversity and are quite adept at challenging bias and prejudice within society. Pupils are achieving high levels in both academic and non-academic areas.

Parents

Our parents have given very positive feedback following their participation in the EI programme. Through a series of questionnaires, discussions, self-reflection and workshops parents were eager to come to a greater understanding of EI from a family perspective and were enthusiastic about the links between intelligence and emotions. Parents were given the opportunity to practice the skills of listening, dialogue and collaborative coaching and were keen to put these to the test at home!

A Successful Feeling

We have reaped great benefits from our work in developing EI. We have a greater understanding of the importance of EI in promoting effective leadership, learning and teaching. The programme has developed further our

work in self-evaluation and reflective practice. Dialogue, collaborative coaching and feedback are an integral part of the way we move forward and improve. Through our pupil programme we see greater inclusion and social cohesion. We spend less time dealing with behavioural problems and children are more able to articulate feelings, reflect on behaviours and empathise with others. Pupil confidence in their own abilities has led to increased self-esteem and self-worth. We believe it has a positive impact on the mental health of both pupils and staff. As a result of our work on Emotional Intelligence, we have been recognised as a 'Best Practice Organisation' by the Department of Personnel and Finance (NI) and won the Irish News Workplace and Employment Award for Best Place to Work, Small Organisation. **GTC**

"The first step towards success is believing we can succeed." (School Vision)

If you would like to know more visit our school website on www.stjosephscrumlin.co.uk

Click on the Curriculum tab and then on Emotional Intelligence.

Beginning Teachers Celebrate the Completion of Induction

Keiron Mellon, of the Curriculum Advisory and Support Service, describes the recent WELB celebration for teachers who successfully completed Induction and notes the challenges faced in a very precarious employment situation.

The month of June heralded celebration events for those beginning teachers who were awarded Western Education and Library Board (WELB) certificates for the successful completion of Induction. The teachers came together to reflect on their professional development, to discuss 'lessons learned', share good practice, consider the 'what ifs' and celebrate their success at having completed their Induction year. Present at the events were the Rev R. Herron Chairman of the WELB, Mr. Paddy Mackey WELB/SELB Head of Teaching and Learning, Mr Gerry Devlin from GTCNI along with principals and teacher tutors from WELB schools.

Tributes were paid to all the beginning teachers for their professionalism and commitment to teaching, and gratitude was extended to the school principals for their continuing support for the programme. The beginning teachers present were reminded that the WELB would continue to support the professional development of its teachers and ensure that schools and pupils have all the necessary resources to enable them to achieve their goals so that young people can make a positive contribution, socially and economically, to their community.

It was emphasised that the Induction process in Northern Ireland is made more difficult for beginning teachers because of the shortage of full-time permanent positions. Many beginning teachers now work in a similar way to 'locum tenens' in the medical profession covering part-time working, maternity leave and illnesses or replacing teachers on a career breaks. This situation has been a challenge for the management of the Induction process especially for those in the ELBs and teacher tutor colleagues who provide essential support to beginning teachers. It also has had implications for principals and schools who need to adapt to beginning teachers' developmental needs as they move from school



process in schools. It is also a key element of school improvement and the beginning of what Louise Stoll has termed, "the sustained continuous learning of teachers and the school itself, for the purpose of enhancing pupils' learning." Moreover, it is predicated on the principles and processes used by professionals who develop through critical reflective practice supported by peer mentoring.

In order to become involved in the programme all beginning teachers should register with their local Education and Library Board, whether they are in employment or not. **GTC**



to school while, at the same time, maintaining the integrity of the Induction programme itself.

These are very challenging times for the education service in Northern Ireland. However, within this context, we are very fortunate and privileged to have a highly qualified and professionally committed workforce, able and willing to exploit future opportunities that will ensure quality teaching and learning in our classrooms.

The Northern Ireland Integrated Induction Programme is the beginning of teacher professional development and part of the capacity building

Induction and Reflective Practice

Many beginning teachers will now be embarking on the 'Induction' process. Janene Lyttle from the Newtownards Model Primary School describes her experience of Induction and how this was aided by the ethos of reflective practice that operates in her school.

In September 2007, I accepted a permanent, primary four post in Newtownards Model Primary School. Having graduated the previous July, I was fully aware that I would have to complete the beginning teacher Induction year. However, I was unsure of what the process involved and what the expectations were. My principal arranged for a CASS officer to be assigned to me and I was visited at school four times, to monitor my Induction and to see how I was settling into school life. It was during the discussions with the CASS officer that I became aware of what evidence my Induction portfolio should contain. On his recommendation, I also attended some beginning teacher courses held at the Education and Library Board. These courses were excellent in providing support and guidelines, however, I feel that my Induction was made easier by the ethos of the school to which I was appointed and the 'open door attitude' of my teacher tutor.

Newtownards Model, by nature and ethos, is a self-evaluating school, continually striving to improve its teaching, policies and approach to the curriculum. As regular classroom observation is an integral part of school life, I immediately became at ease with this element of my Induction process. Through observation, my principal and teacher tutor were able to share ideas and teaching techniques as well as

making suggestions for my future plan of action. The school is very ICT driven, having recently been the first primary school in Northern Ireland to attain the prestigious BECTA Charter Mark. Therefore, for my second 'Action Plan', I was able to draw on the strengths of the school and use its resources to develop my own ICT skills further.

On completing Induction, I feel I have gained a wealth of skills, strategies and techniques which I can incorporate daily into my planning and classroom

teaching. Furthermore, the support from my teacher tutor, principal and advice from colleagues has aided in integrating me fully into school life, making my new job less daunting. My first year of teaching has certainly been demanding but, at the same time, thoroughly rewarding. With careful guidance and support, my Induction year became less of a hindrance and more of a positive learning experience. **GTC**



Janene working with a group of pupils.



School's out at Newtownards Model Primary School.

Kilkeel Primary School – Assessment for Learning

In this article Colin Quinn, Vice-Principal of Kilkeel Primary School, describes his approach to Assessment for Learning (AfL).

Teachers must be clear about what is being taught and consequently pupils will be sure of what needs to be learnt. This is vitally important, as pupils can become passive in the learning process and they must be made aware of their role.

In every classroom in Kilkeel Primary School a WALT board is used to display learning intentions. Success criteria, which may be agreed with the pupils or WILF (what I'm looking for) are also displayed. Another key aspect of my teaching is 'wait or thinking time'; my practice now is to insist on 'no hands' and to give time to think before answering. I also write up all answers regardless of their correctness and sometimes get pupils to compete in a 'Who wants to be a millionaire with the answers?' I also use a system of traffic light cards for feedback.

Two very important aspects of AfL are peer and self-assessment. I always ask pupils to put a 'smiley' or 'frowning' face on their work to indicate their level of success.

Every Friday pupils complete a review of the week rather than a Friday test. It basically has the same purpose but again places the responsibility onto the pupils and makes them accountable for their week's work. I carry out my Friday spelling test but then add in questions regarding any new learning from my learning intentions. We swap and mark and discuss any problems. I insist they don't give marks out of 10, as I am interested in learning and progression. It is important for pupils to be able to explain their mistakes and ask for guidance rather than being content with a meaningless score. Pupils then write onto a wipe clean card their 2 stars (successes) and their wish (something they need to work on). We then allow time for discussion and questions. This is a powerful tool for celebrating success and setting up the learning for next week. I also have a giant learning tree on the wall onto which I get the pupils to stick (using a post it) learning intentions after lessons. This is also great for revision or referring to when you begin to doubt you've actually taught something!

Peer assessment is a valuable teaching and learning tool. It not only informs the person being assessed but it also reinforces learning for the assessor.

This is especially successful in written work. I feel it allows the process of writing to develop rather than the pupils completing the work and handing it in, and again absolving themselves of responsibility for it. I choose pieces of work periodically, during the writing process, and photocopy them onto an overhead transparency. I then display it on my whiteboard and model the marking process. I emphasise the marking criteria for this particular task. To help pupils become independent I have a 'stuck board' to refer to, rather than asking me right away.

Pupils in my class were questioned for the recent 'Consulting Pupils on the Assessment of their Learning' project. The researchers found that the pupils spoke positively about assessment. They understood the principles and practices of assessment, compared to pupils whose experiences of assessment were restricted to tests and examinations. They were also able to put forward a variety of valuable suggestions regarding a proposed pupil profile confidently. AfL clearly had an impact on these pupils. **GTC**



Mr Quinn with some of his P7 pupils under their 'learning tree'

Teaching young people with autism

As part of our continuing coverage of special educational needs issues Gillian Smyth, who teaches in Tor Bank Special School, describes autism and suggests some approaches that teachers may wish to investigate further.

What is autism?

Autism is a lifelong developmental disability. It is part of the autism spectrum and is sometimes referred to as an autism spectrum disorder, or an ASD. The word 'spectrum' is used because, while all people with autism share three main areas of difficulty, the disability will affect them in very different ways. While some individuals are able to live relatively everyday lives, others will require a lifetime of specialist support.

The three main areas of difficulty which all people with autism share are sometimes known as the 'triad of impairments'. These involve difficulties with:

- social communication;
- social interaction; and
- social imagination.

Difficulty with social communication

People with autism have difficulties with both verbal and non-verbal language; even body language may not be understood or it may be misunderstood. Some people with autism are not able to speak, or they may have only limited speech. While others, who can verbally communicate, can be extremely literal and talk at length about their own interests or present

echolalia (repeating back what someone says).

Difficulty with social interaction

People with autism can also have difficulties with everyday social interaction. Their ability to develop friendships is generally limited as is their capacity to understand other people's emotional expressions. For example, in a classroom context, pupils with autism may find normal social interactions difficult.

Difficulty with social imagination

Difficulty with social imagination does not mean no imagination at all, it simply can mean difficulty in understanding, working out and predicting other people's thoughts, behaviour and actions. Therefore routine becomes safe, and unpredictability and change can be distressing.

Some approaches used

The triad of impairments outlined above present teachers with significant challenges. However, there are a number of techniques which are useful, in appropriate contexts, to help teachers manage these impairments. Among

the techniques and options available are:

- Picture Exchange Communication System;
- Sensory Integration;
- Applied Behaviour Analysis; and
- Treatment and Education of Autistic and Communication Handicapped Children

Space prevents a detailed review of each of these approaches and it must be emphasised that they should only be used after teachers have received appropriate professional development and training and also within the context of the school's special educational needs policy and guidance. However, by way of example, the Picture Exchange Communication System is an extremely important tool for autism intervention. At one time it was thought by many people that children with severe autism could not learn to communicate. However, use of the Picture Exchange Communication System showed that just about any child with autism can learn at least some form of communication. With Picture Exchange Communication System verbal language is replaced with the use of picture cards for communication.

Teachers generally, and those with a particular interest in special needs, might find it useful to find out more about these interventions and to consider how and, in what context, they might be appropriate in their own professional settings. **GTC**



The National Autistic Society

NASA Space Shuttle Crew Land in Northern Ireland

The six astronauts who took part in the June 2008 NASA Mission to the International Space Station, visited specialist science schools and talked to pupils about their experiences in space.

The purpose of the visit, on the 9 and 10 September, was to promote interest in and knowledge of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and to draw attention to the opportunities and exciting careers available to those who study STEM subjects. The visit was sponsored by the Department of Education and the NI Science Park (NISP).

At a civic reception in the Titanic Quarter Pump House, an invited audience was captivated by a presentation in which the astronauts relived their experiences in space by talking over video of their mission. They were welcomed by NISP Chief Executive, Norman Apsley and the First Minister, Peter Robinson who spoke of our rich cultural heritage in engineering and the importance of our young people using their skills to boost the economy.

The astronauts related their STEM experiences at school, explaining how their learning helped their careers in science and engineering. Many young people asked the

astronauts perceptive questions such as, "How did you feel about planet earth when you looked down from the space station 350 miles above us?" Following this question and answer session the astronauts mingled with teachers and guests; and pupils from Antrim Primary, Coleraine Academical Institution, Glenlola Collegiate and St Anne's Primary, Corkey, had an opportunity to display their local and national award-winning curriculum projects.

The following day the astronauts travelled to 5 specialist science schools (Lumen Christi College, Carrickfergus Grammar, Dromore High, Loreto College, Coleraine and St Colman's College, Newry) to give presentations to pupils and staff. In all some 3,000 pupils met the spacemen and another 10,000 listened to a live broadcast through C2k video conferencing. Pupils in other schools posed questions through remote access organised by NEELB staff.

The organisers of the visit were thrilled with the young people's response and the enthusiasm generated in the science specialist schools and their local communities. **GTC**

Web addresses: www.neelb.tv and www.isset.org



Staff and pupils of Antrim Primary School meet US astronauts