



General Teaching Council  
for Northern Ireland

General Teaching Council for NI

# termtalk

The Official Newsletter of the General Teaching Council SEPTEMBER 05

## termtalk



Our fourth edition of **termtalk** coincides with the start of another school year. For all of us this brings new challenges as we reconnect with colleagues, interact afresh with our students and settle again to the demanding pulse of school life.

For some, namely our beginning teachers, this is a particularly exciting and challenging time, and in recognition of this we have included a section in this **termtalk** entitled "Learning in Community – Induction and EPD". As our new colleagues, embark on the first stages of their careers they will seek guidance and reassurance from their long-serving colleagues and this is wholly appropriate. The reality, of course, is that as professionals we all contribute to the collective understanding of issues. Indeed, this is the basis of the Council's commitment to building dynamic communities of practice. It is also the foundation of our proposals in regard to CPD.

The notion of community implies a shared vision and a shared understanding of priorities, and we in the Council have, through our various publications and "mailings", attempted to inform teachers as to our role and priorities. We are anxious to augment this by offering an opportunity for teachers to meet with officers and members of Council, at specially arranged information seminars during October and November.

The coming school year will also see the election of a new Council and the seminars will provide an opportunity for you to gain an insight into this important process and how you can make your voice heard.

*Eddie McArdle*

Eddie McArdle  
Registrar, GTCNI

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### The Registrar announces details of a seminar programme that will take place across Northern Ireland in October and November.

The Council, in issuing its first Corporate Plan in 2004, committed itself to a culture of partnership, co-operative working and open communication. To date via **termtalk**, direct mailings, contributions to union conferences and our website we have sought to provide teachers with an insight into our work.

However, we are anxious to develop this programme of outreach further, and to that end, we have organised a series of information seminars to be delivered across Northern Ireland.

Our intention is to offer participants an opportunity to:

- be informed about the Council's goals and progress towards achieving key targets and objectives;
- reflect on the concept of professionally-led regulation;
- discuss the implications for the profession of an ever more aggressive culture of accountability;
- learn of our ongoing discussions with the Department of Education on issues such as a professional development framework; and

- receive an update on the arrangements for the election of Council members and the designation of teachers to specific electoral rolls.

It is intended that Council members will join staff officers at each of the venues.

### The Information Seminar Programme:

- Belfast: The Holiday Inn, 22 Ormeau Avenue, on 17th October 2005 at 4.30pm
- Ballymena: The Leighinmohr Hotel, Leighinmohr, on 26th October 2005 at 4.30pm
- Armagh: City Hotel, 2 Friary Road, on 7th November 2005 at 4.30pm
- Derry: The Everglades Hotel, Prehen Road, on 23rd November 2005 at 4.30pm
- Enniskillen: The Killyhevlin Hotel, on 30th November 2005 at 4.30pm

I would urge all to make an effort to attend one of the seminars. As Registrar, I would certainly value the opportunity to meet with and to hear the views of fellow professionals.

**GTCNI - a new voice for teachers**

# GTCNI Notice Board

## GTCNI Annual Lecture

As a body committed to raising the status of teaching as a profession, the Council has resisted the trend towards a "technicist" approach to teaching. GTCNI has long argued for the re-intellectualisation of professional discourse and a rejection of the simplistic notion of standards and training prevalent in some jurisdictions.

As part of our commitment to the development of meaningful professional exchange the Council has invited Professor Geoff Whitty, Director of the Institute of Education, University of London, to deliver our inaugural Annual Lecture on "Professionalism in a New Era":

Professor Whitty has had a distinguished academic career holding senior posts in a number of educational institutions and is currently a GTC England Council member. He has published extensively in academic journals and has served on the editorial boards of a range of international periodicals, and acted as the academic advisor on the GTCNI's review of teacher competences.

Further details of the lecture will be published in future editions of *termtalk* and on the Council's website.

## GTCNI Election 2006

The current Council is in the last year of its term of office and a new election will be held early in 2006. The administrative arrangements for the the election will be put in place in the coming months, including the creation of an electoral role.

The election affords you, as a teacher, the opportunity to play a meaningful role in shaping the future work of your professional body, either by standing as a candidate or actively supporting a candidate.

Between now and Christmas, the Council will contact you regarding your designation on the electoral roll and with details regarding the nomination of candidates and the arrangements for the election itself.

The term of office of the next Council will coincide with a period of change and reform unparalleled since the introduction of the Education Reform Order NI in 1989. In the decade following, the voice of the profession was at best muted and the concerns of professionals brushed aside. The irony is that many of the changes now to be put in place reflect the thinking of practitioners at the time.

By exercising your right to vote, you will be guaranteeing that the voice of the profession is heard and cannot be ignored. Our next edition of *termtalk* will carry more details of the electoral process.

education  
**eni**  
northern ireland  
2005

The King's Hall, Belfast  
13-14 October 2005

**Education in Northern Ireland is changing**

Education Northern Ireland 2005, the largest general resources Show and professional development opportunity in the area, will focus on these changes and what educational resources and equipment will be needed.

This is your chance to attend THE event for education in Northern Ireland and be involved from the start of this new learning landscape.

BESA  
Media Partner  
**The Belfast Telegraph**

Register online  
and find out more at  
[www.eni.org.uk](http://www.eni.org.uk)

Listen to some of the best speakers in Leadership, Assessment, Inclusion and much more!

# “Education For Everyone – Let’s Learn Together”

The start of every school year brings new opportunities and new challenges to Northern Ireland’s schools, and the introduction of the Special Education Needs and Disability Order (SENDO) 2005/2006 will be no exception. GTCNI asked the Equality Commission to provide teachers with a short synopsis of the implications of SENDO.

## What is SENDO

This new law mirrors existing legislation implemented from September 2002 in England and Wales. The aim of SENDO is to strengthen the rights of children with Special Education Needs to be educated in mainstream education and to introduce disability discrimination legislation to schools and other educational institutions.

## Changes to the SEN Process

SENDO has changed aspects of the Special Education Needs process. Information relating to this aspect of SENDO can be found in the Department of Education’s “Supplementary Guidance to the Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs,” or teachers looking for further guidance can contact the Special Educational Needs Department of their relevant Education and Library Board.

## New Disability Discrimination Duties

**SENDO places a duty on bodies responsible for the provision of education and associated services, admissions and expulsions in schools:**

- not to treat disabled pupils and prospective pupils less favourably for a reason related to their disability;
- to make “reasonable adjustments” to all policies, procedures and practices to ensure that a disabled pupil/prospective pupil is not placed at a substantial disadvantage compared to non disabled pupils (this duty is both an anticipatory and reactive duty); and



- to work towards making school life more accessible to disabled pupils and prospective pupils. For example in terms of premises, the curriculum and written information.

## Rights and Responsibilities

SENDO affords protection from disability discrimination to all disabled pupils and prospective pupils. It specifies Education and Library Boards and Boards of Governors of grant-aided schools or Proprietors of non grant-aided schools as the bodies responsible under its disability discrimination duties.

## Guidance on the New SENDO Disability Discrimination Duties

The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland has produced a SENDO Disability Discrimination Code of Practice for Schools. This Code aims to describe discrimination, it also provides examples of when discrimination may occur, even if unintentional, and builds on existing good practice in schools and Education and Library Boards.

**The SENDO Disability Discrimination Code and other guidance are available free from the Commission:**

**Telephone 028 9050 0600**  
**Fax: 028 9024 8687**  
**Textphone: 028 9050 0589**  
**email: [info@equalityni.org](mailto:info@equalityni.org)**  
**Website: [www.equalityni.org](http://www.equalityni.org)**

## Conclusion

- SENDO will present significant challenges for Northern Ireland’s schools but teachers will undoubtedly embrace this with their proven professionalism; and
- SENDO presents the opportunity for education providers to achieve the vision of the Disability Rights Task Force as stated in its December 1999 report “From Exclusion to Inclusion”:

“Inclusion of disabled people throughout their school and college life is one of the most powerful levers in banishing stereotypes and negative attitudes towards disabled people amongst the next generation. When disabled and non disabled people are educated together, this sends powerful messages to the whole community about the potential for a truly integrated and diverse society”



In this article Pat Carville, the Principal of St Patrick's College in Dungannon, reflects on how her school is responding to the inclusion and SENDO agenda.

In St Patrick's College we have been mindful of the need to develop an inclusive school and over recent years we have embedded the best principles of inclusion into our ethos, policies and practices. In doing this we find ourselves well placed to meet the challenges arising from the new SENDO legislation which came into force on 1st September 2005. However, it will be an ongoing challenge to ensure that all staff are aware of the implications of SENDO both for themselves and the wider school community. With the potential increase in young people with special needs and disabilities accessing education in mainstream schools there are significant implications across the whole spectrum of school activities, not least the resources necessary to implement SENDO.

The profile of our year 8 intake is very diverse and includes pupils for whom English is a second language. This year, as part of our inclusion strategy, and with the help of Ciaran McCrumlish and Averil Morrow of the Southern Education and Library Board, we have developed a new year 8 induction process which helps pupils develop their social and communication skills by using ICT and other multi-media resources in a highly creative way.

Our new induction programme provides pupils, from different primary schools, cultures and language backgrounds, with a collaborative learning experience which promotes their self-esteem and confidence, as well as the ability to mix together in a friendly atmosphere.

In St Patrick's we recognise that inclusion is a process, but we feel that with the commitment of the whole school community, we are in a position to overcome the challenges of inclusion.



As a beginning teacher you are about to embark on a stimulating and rewarding career. In the years ahead, you will face many professional challenges, but also opportunities for continuing professional development (CPD). The Induction and Early Professional Development (EPD) phases will provide you with guidance and support to enable you to grow in confidence as a reflective practitioner.

The articles that follow have been organised by Keiron Mellon, the Assistant Advisory Officer for Induction and EPD with the Western Education and Library Board. The first article describes the supporting role of CASS during Induction and EPD. This is followed by a teacher tutor perspective on the role of the school as a professional community supporting beginning teachers. Two teachers, who have recent experience of Induction and EPD, then reflect on the benefits of the process.

## The Role of CASS.

**Keiron Mellon, Assistant Advisory Officer for Induction and EPD, with the Western ELB describes the role of CASS in supporting beginning teachers.**

Induction, during the first year of teaching, is a crucial phase in the early teacher education process, and the Curriculum Advisory and Support Service (CASS) of each of the Education and Library Boards acts as lead partner in this stage.

Teachers undertaking Induction and EPD should register with their ELB's CASS department. For contact details see page 8.

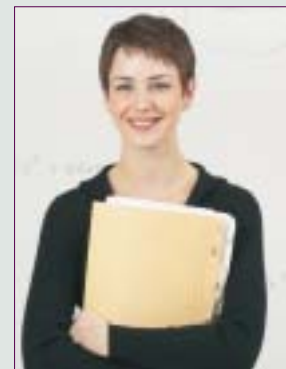
The CASS provides:

- a point of contact when you leave university or college and guides, supports and advises you through the Induction process and after in Early Professional Development;

- your school with seven days of substitute cover: two of these are for the Induction process and related issues, four are for subject specific development, at Board or Interboard level, and one day may be set aside for school based work such as shadowing other experienced teachers. Teachers in Special Education get an extra support day;

- an opportunity to reflect collaboratively on progress and discuss possible solutions to problems away from the distraction of the classroom and with advisory officers on hand to offer advice and support; and

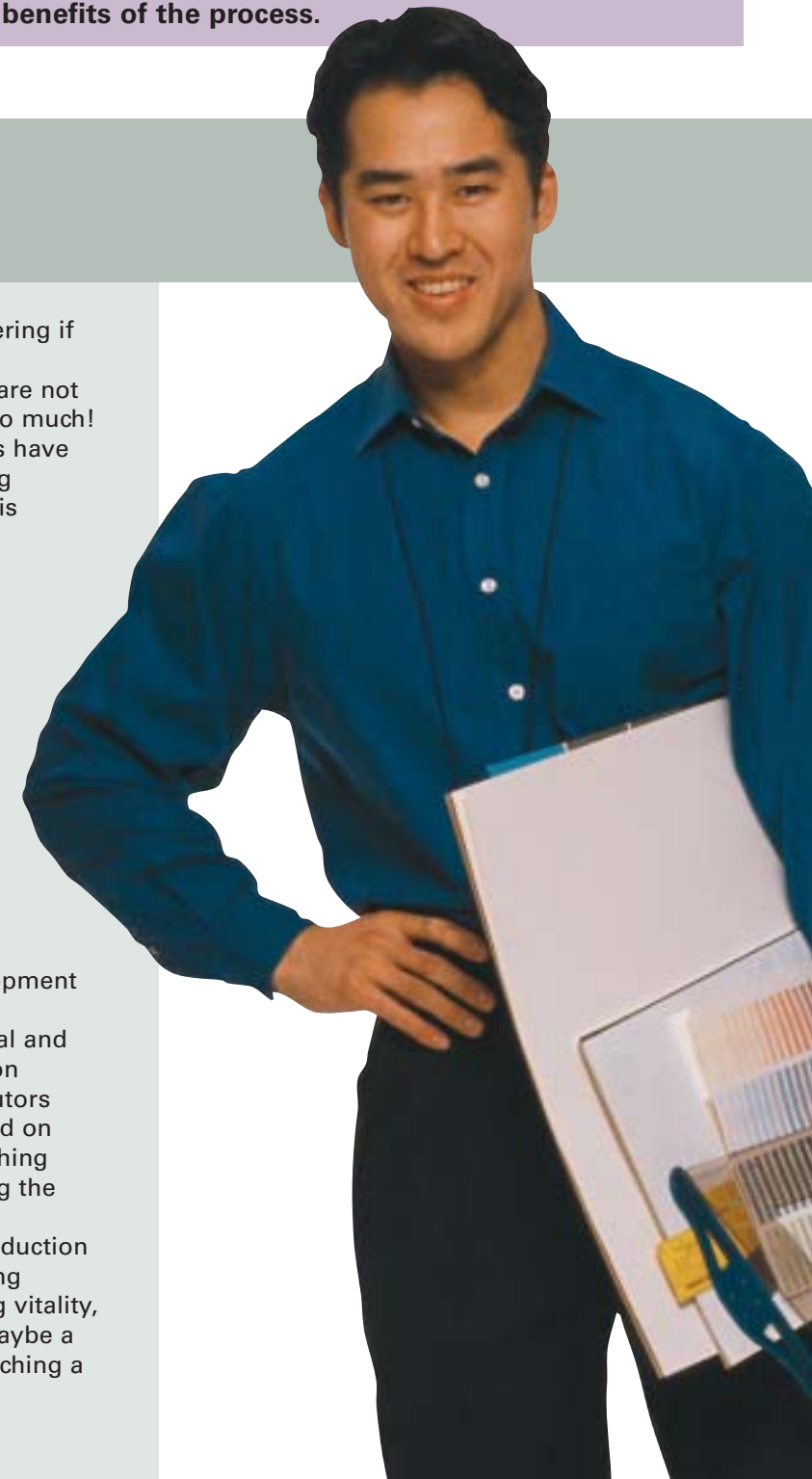
- an opportunity to learn with and from each other, to network, share resources and to keep up to date with what supply work may be available.



As a beginning teacher you must also develop a portfolio which should contain evidence of your professional development. This should be based on an action plan, which you should revisit during the year. It should contain examples of pupils' work, classroom teaching and planning along with any feedback from classroom observations. It should also contain any interim and summative reports from your teacher tutor based on your progress throughout the year.

You will also discover that professional feedback from an experienced colleague after classroom observation takes the

stress out of wondering if your work is up to standard, or if you are not doing enough or too much! Often teacher tutors have to remind beginning teachers that there is an "off switch" and they need to find it. CASS also provides training for teacher tutors who help to raise the profile of the beginning teachers in school and ensure a positive whole school support structure for your professional development through mentoring, meetings and formal and informal feedback on progress. Teacher tutors have often remarked on how their own teaching developed following the observation of new colleagues in the induction process as beginning teachers often bring vitality, enthusiasm, and maybe a different way of teaching a familiar topic.



The work of teacher tutors is central to the Induction and EPD process. Kay Millar, from Limavady High School, gives a personal perspective on her experiences of working with beginning teachers.

The role of teacher tutor in a large secondary school is both challenging and rewarding. Each year I am responsible for eight or more beginning teachers, or teachers on EPD, not including the number of temporary teachers who pass through the portals for maternity or sick cover, all of whom have to be integrated and catered for.

The newly qualified staff and their integration into school life is a whole school issue and it is important that they know whom to approach for advice and assistance. To do this effectively everyone should know the purpose and language of Induction. Staff, with posts of responsibility, need to know who is going through Induction and EPD, and how their progress is monitored. Timetabling issues are important and it is particularly helpful if the new teacher is provided with extra time concessions to become familiar with a demanding new environment. Protected non-teaching time is a bonus! Ideally planning time with the Teacher Tutor or Head of Department should also be available.

Each new teacher is a valuable resource to any school but needs to be supported to fit in, professionally and socially, and take on board all the complexities of each individual teaching environment. Time, therefore, has to be set aside to ensure that they are made familiar with the layout and ethos of their new school. All members of staff, especially those with curriculum and pastoral responsibilities, need to be made aware of the kinds of support they can give a beginning teacher. Providing support for new teachers can be a positive learning experience for all staff involved, who are often impressed by their innovation and enthusiasm. Should the new teacher be struggling, or need support, this ensures that there is a wide and varied support-base available.

It is also important that the school's mission statement, all school policies and whole school and relevant departmental plans are available and that new staff know who to approach for clarification on issues which may arise from these documents.

I have learned and gained a great deal from this post and feel privileged to have the confidence of the new teachers I have worked with. They are keen, fresh and enthusiastic and are the source of many new ideas and perspectives. I gain as much from them as they do from me, proving that learning is a lifelong process!



**Stephanie Samuel, who is starting her second year of teaching at St Mary's College, Derry, reflects on her induction programme and how the experience helped to develop her classroom practice.**

In my first term as a beginning teacher, I was told that I would have to complete an induction year. At that particular time I was inundated by so many different things that I thought "this is just another thing I have to do". The induction process involved attending several training days organised by my local Education and Library Board and producing a portfolio of evidence, based on



experience and work undertaken during my first year of teaching. I remember attending the first training day in September 2004 along with a few other colleagues. We travelled together in the car and talked about what lay ahead. At this point I felt we were all overwhelmed by the challenges that we were faced with.

However, when I arrived at the course all my apprehensions seemed to diminish as I felt that I was with people who were all experiencing the same difficulties and fears that I too was feeling. The various activities, workshops on such relevant issues as bullying, classroom management and discipline were invaluable, and gave me many ideas that I could take back to the classroom. The atmosphere at all times was friendly and warm where people could speak openly and freely without feeling intimidated or uncomfortable.

When I returned to school, I had great support from my Principal, Teacher Tutor and Head of

Department who offered help and assistance at every stage enabling me to complete my portfolio of evidence. I had three visits from an Adviser from the Western Education and Library Board, throughout the course of the year, who offered guidance on the work that I had produced and how to make improvements where necessary. The training days were great to meet up with other beginning teachers where we could share ideas and views. When I returned to school after these training days I definitely felt more refreshed and confident to face whatever came my way.

I feel that by completing "Induction" I have picked up many strategies and techniques to help me deal with various issues. I also feel that it has helped me deal with situations relating to

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classroom management more effectively and efficiently.

Although my first year as a beginning teacher has been very demanding, it has also been very enjoyable and this has been made possible by the support and guidance I received from colleagues and the CASS staff, as part of an excellent induction programme.



# EPD- what's in it for me?

Having completed an onerous course of initial teacher education and a demanding induction year, the requirement to engage in early professional development (EPD) programme can be seen as just another hurdle to overcome. However, if approached in a positive manner, EPD can consolidate your professional practice and act as a springboard for further learning. Ursula Smyth, of Malone College in Belfast, looks back on her EPD experiences.

Now, that I have come through the EPD process I can reflect on the experience, and how I developed as a teacher. EPD provided a platform to continually undertake self-assessment. It is an opportunity to step back and look at ways in which we can enhance the unique and privileged relationship with our students, and inspire them to reach their full potential.

In order to gain most benefit from the process there are a few essential ingredients required to reach the desired outcome:

- as new teachers we all want to succeed and impress our more experienced colleagues. EPD should be viewed as an opportunity to introduce new ideas and skills;
- a good mentor is invaluable because of their knowledge of how to manage pupils and maintain discipline;
- watching other teachers teach can provide useful tips on controlling classes and finding alternative ways to get the best out of different ability ranges;
- take time to decide on your EPD focus and set yourself small realistic goals;

- use your day allowance to formulate your ideas and develop your lesson plans. Once you have a set of lessons in place the other pieces of the EPD process will begin to fall into place; and

- remember that we all have our good and bad days, but like our pupils we are on a learning continuum.

As I now begin my sixth year as a teacher, I feel that completing EPD was an important stage in my professional growth and development. I am grateful to my colleagues for their time, availability, practical assistance and above all their advice.

## Induction Officers

Board	Induction Officer	Address/Telephone Number Email
BELB	Katherine Jelly (Primary)	BELB Headquarters 40 Academy Street Belfast BT1 2NQ Tel: 02890564189 Email: katherinej@belb.co.uk Email: michaelmc@belb.co.uk
	Michael McConkey (Post Primary)	
NEELB	Lorna Ferguson	NEELB Antrim Board Centre 17 Lough Road Antrim BT41 4DH Tel: 02894482264 Email: lorna.ferguson@neelb.org.uk Email: alison.higginson@neelb.org.uk
	Alison Higginson	
SEELB	Diane Creighton (Post Primary)	SEELB Headquarters Grahamsbridge Road Dundonald BT16 2HS D Creighton Tel 02890566595 Email diane.creighton@seelb.org.uk A Noble Tel: 02890566368 Email: ann.noble@seelb.org.uk
	Ann Noble (Primary)	
SELB	John Ferguson (Post primary)	Email john.ferguson@selb.org
	Tom Mullan (Post Primary)	
	Hilary McLean (Nursery, Primary, Post Primary)	
WELB	Keiron Mellon	North West Teachers' Centre 24 Temple Road Strathfoyle Lderry BT41 1UP Tel: 028 7186 1116 Email: keiron.mellon@welbni.org

# Professional development in Montgomery County USA

**Marian McGreevy, Principal of St Colmcille's High School and John McGrath Principal of Legamaddy Primary School, have recently returned from an International Leadership Exchange Programme on staff development organised by RTU. In this article they suggest that the effectiveness of staff development in schools can be enhanced when a staff development coordinator system is in place.**

The focus of our two visits to Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS), as part of the RTU International Leadership Exchange Programme, was Staff Development. The whole approach to Professional Development in MCPS was extremely impressive and there were valuable lessons to be learnt.

There were a number of important features of the MCPS staff development system. The one that impressed us the most, in all high schools and middle schools visited, was that of the staff development teacher.

This is a pivotal role in the whole professional development structure in MCPS. The school based staff development teacher (SDT) is a teacher who fosters development and growth of professional learning communities and facilitates job-embedded staff development. In collaboration with the principal, school leadership, and other stakeholders, the SDT supports the goal of building staff capacity to meet system wide and local school initiatives to increase student learning.

This clearly defined role was established 5 years ago and every school has got one. This job is very

needs focused; the needs coming from staff and individual schools. The role was highly respected by all levels of teachers and principals spoken to.

The SDT assumes a variety of roles in supporting school staff, these include:

- ★ Catalyst for change
- ★ Coach
- ★ Consultant
- ★ Facilitator
- ★ Programme manager
- ★ Resource provider
- ★ Trainer

The outcome of this initiative in MCPS is that they were transferring responsibility for professional development to the individual teacher not just to the school. The importance of having a full time staff development teacher was considered crucial by all.



threatening way.

Overall there have been major population and cultural changes in MCPS over the past 20 years. The professional development system, now in place, has enabled teachers, administrators and leadership teams to respond to these changes in an effective way.

The system is entirely effectiveness driven. However, in our opinion there was a conflict between having such an emphasis on staff development yet

teachers had to operate within a tight centralised curriculum with a strong emphasis on teaching.

The challenge for us in Northern Ireland is to reflect on what we could learn and develop from the MCPS approach to staff development. How can we, with much more limited resources, try to implement some aspects of the staff development process?



However there was some criticism of one staff development teacher per school as being unfair because the size and type of school was not considered.

The quality of people doing this task was exceptionally high, and all teachers spoken to were extremely appreciative of the excellent support role played by these teachers in a non-

We have much to celebrate in our work in Northern Ireland, but as we are at a crucial time of growth, change and development, it is important for us to learn from world-wide best practice.

# A Kinder Place, a Different World



*In the following article acting principal, Linda Patterson, tells how P5 pupils at Millisle Primary School benefited from the experience of making a DVD about Jewish refugees.*

"A Kinder Place, a Different World", were the words uttered by a P5 Millisle Primary School pupil during one of our Digital Story Telling sessions. These words summarised eight week's work on an exciting project about the Jewish evacuation to Millisle during 1938-1948. They were eight wonderful sessions and ones which none of my children nor I will ever forget.

The South Eastern Education and Library Board funded the project which commenced in January 2005, and by 17th March 2005 my P5 children had made a DVD about the Jewish refugees coming to live on a farm in Millisle during the Second World War.



Over 300 people passed through the farm in a 10 year period, and it is one of the lesser known stories of how a community helped a number of Jewish people survive this traumatic period of history.

The film begins with my pupils stepping out of a real black and white photograph, depicting some of the Jewish children, standing in front of one of the farm buildings. They then act out many of incidents mentioned in the "Faraway Home" novel by Marilyn Taylor, a famous author from Dublin, who also agreed to participate in the DVD.

My pupils were trained in the use of cameras and editing software by Ken Armstrong, our multimedia trainer.

The DVD has met with great reviews including one from Robert Sugar, currently living in New York, who was one of the Jewish boys in the photograph. In his opinion "The best moment of the film is as the children arise and become us, passing on the story of humanity which is really what it's all about." He even sent a fan letter to my pupils and is including the film in his Kindertransport Exhibitions which are shown all over the world. Ards Borough Council also congratulated the children for their fine work, by holding a reception and film launch in



the Town Hall in June. The film is available to purchase for school and private use, by contacting Millisle Primary School on 02891861471.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank the SEELB and Department of Education for the finance necessary for this project. My pupils and I thoroughly enjoyed the film-making and Fridays in Millisle will never quite be the same!





# The Reflective Teacher



**At a series of conferences in June 2005, the Education and Training Inspectorate (the Inspectorate), in conjunction with the General Teaching Council (GTCNI), launched a document called “The Reflective Teacher”.**

Almost 1000 teachers attended the launch conferences, and as a result many schools and individual teachers are requesting a copy of the document.

“The Reflective Teacher” adds to the range of other documents published by the Inspectorate, other documents which are designed to support schools with the process of self-evaluation, leading to improvement. “The Reflective Teacher” is different, in that it is designed to support the individual teacher to evaluate the quality of his/her work, and so recognise the associated strengths and identify areas for improvement.

In publishing this document, the Inspectorate is sharing with teachers indicators of good practice, which reflect the many examples of good practice seen by inspectors during the course of their visits to schools. At the recent launch of the Chief Inspector’s Report, Miss Matchett, the Chief Inspector, stated that;

“The quality of the teaching force in Northern Ireland is second to none.”

It was with this statement in mind that “The Reflective Teacher” was launched.

The purpose of the document is to:

- provide a structure which helps teachers to add to, and improve their own process of evaluation;
- provide quality indicators of good practice;
- help teachers to recognise their strengths;
- assist teachers to recognise any areas for improvement, and gain the appropriate support to improve; and

- improve the outcomes for the pupils by improving the quality of teaching.

In publishing this document, the Inspectorate emphasises that it is:

- for the use of the individual teacher, as determined by them;
- not to be used in the appraisal process;
- not part of the inspection process; and
- designed to allow a teacher to use the sections of the document in any order, and at times which suit ongoing work.

**Copies of the document are available to individual teachers from:**

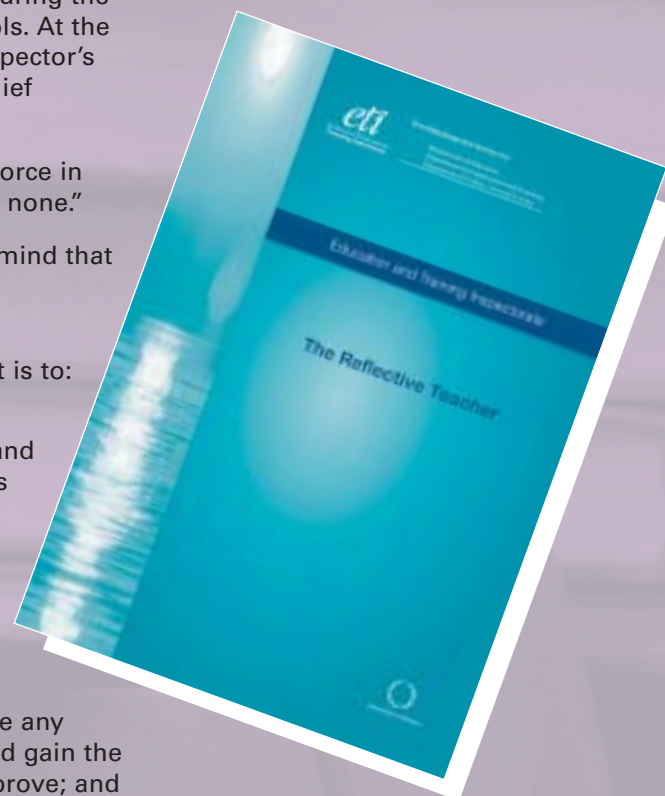
**Inspection Services Branch:**

**Tel: 02891279726**

**Fax: 02891279721**

**Address: Rathgael House,  
Balloo Road  
Bangor  
BT19 7PR**

**or from the Department of Education  
website: [www.deni.gov.uk](http://www.deni.gov.uk)**



# Online

## - the way to go



**Newly qualified teachers (NQTs) looking for work as substitute/temporary teachers in Northern Ireland can now avail of a new online service that allows all schools to book substitute cover quickly and easily. The Northern Ireland Substitute Teacher Register (NISTR) provides a range of opportunities and benefits for teachers:**

- a free service – there is no fee to join or leave NISTR;
- standard teacher terms and conditions;
- full pay with pensionable service;
- choice about when and where you wish to work;
- ability to limit your work to nominated schools; and
- your availability automatically updated on booking confirmation.

Des Rainey, Regional Manager of “etech”, the company powering the new system, spoke to **termtalk**. He believes the development of the electronic booking system, along with a substantial database of teachers, is very good news for schools, who can find teachers online within minutes.

“Profiles of NQTs and other teachers seeking substitute work are made available. Schools have round the clock access to the system and are able to view contact details, availability, experience, areas of expertise, and information on where and when ‘NISTR’ teachers want to work.

The system automatically updates the teacher’s individual calendar once a school has confirmed a booking. This ensures that all other schools using the service can quickly check availability”

Supported by the Department of Education, NISTR has been developed in partnership with all five education and library boards, CCMS, NICIE, voluntary grammar schools, Irish Medium schools and teacher unions. All the employers are recommending NISTR as the way for schools to book their substitute teachers. The General



Teaching Council for Northern Ireland also endorses the new service and works closely with NISTR.

Des continues, “If you have already joined NISTR, your contact details and other relevant information will be made available to schools as soon as all the appropriate checks have been completed. In order to ensure the accuracy of calendars, it is important that you request schools who employ you to record all your bookings on the system once your name has been released to the ‘live’ pool.”

To join NISTR you do not need to have access to the Internet or a computer. While online applications are preferable, forms can be downloaded from the site, [www.nistr.org.uk](http://www.nistr.org.uk), or can be obtained from the Administration Unit at Belfast Education and Library Board for completion offline. (Tel: 028 9056 4000 Ext: 4427)