our aim: one union for all teachers

www.teachers.org.uk  January-February 08

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Prevention is better than cure

Safeguarding Children Week, 28 January - 3 February

Sky 880, Virgin TV 240, Tiscali TV 845 and Freeview 88 (4-5pm)
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January is when many people feel the pinch financially, but this year teachers are feeling it harder than most. Three years of below-inflation pay rises have already left the typical teacher out of pocket by around £2 a day, while the costs of essentials – including energy, housing, food and fuel – are rising steeply.

The government’s pay award to teachers of 2.45 per cent for 2008 was announced just hours before this edition of The Teacher went to press. Compare this meagre amount with the real increases in your costs of living on page 5, where you’ll also find a message from NUT general secretary Steve Sinnott explaining why the NUT is determined to fight for fair pay for teachers.

There’s more news from the NUT’s pay campaign on page 7, and of course the latest updates are always online at www.teachers.org.uk. Please keep yourself and your colleagues up to date, and show that you value your profession and the future of education by supporting the campaign in any way you can.

Elyssa Campbell-Barr
Editor

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HIGH EXPECTATIONS

The Government wants to make all schools centres of creativity, innovation and enjoyment, “ready to challenge and inspire”.

The Prime Minister wants to attract and retain more of the most inspirational graduates from the best universities into our schools. “Excellent standards require excellent teachers and hence greater status and respect for the difficult job they do.”

The teaching profession supports such high expectations of teachers and the children in our care.

Yet from 2005, teachers’ pay rises have been less than inflation: in real terms a pay cut. While Government initiatives make ever greater the demands of them, the value of teachers’ pay is diminished year on year.

Teachers too have high expectations: for levels of salary commensurate with the high levels of professionalism expected of them.

That’s why Britain’s largest teachers’ organisation, the NUT, is campaigning for teachers to be paid properly.

FAIR PAY FOR TEACHERS

For more information about teachers and their pay go to www.teachers.org.uk

NATIONAL UNION OF TEACHERS
HAMILTON HOUSE, MABLEDON PLACE, LONDON WC1H 9BD
Out of pocket
The daily cost of below-inflation pay rises

Fair pay for teachers

As this edition of The Teacher went to press, the government announced a pay award for teachers of just 2.45 per cent for 2008 and 2.3 per cent for 2009 and 2010. Yet overall inflation – and pay rises in the private sector – are 4 per cent or more, and every week brings new headlines about inflation-busting price rises on essentials such as energy, petrol, public transport and food.

Public sector workers, including teachers, are the victims of inflation, not the cause of it. The NUT is taking this message to the public, media and government through adverts, such as the one opposite which appeared in the Daily Mail and the Guardian in January, and by playing an active part in the TUC’s ‘Speak up for public services’ campaign (see page 7).

Below-inflation pay rises in 2005, 2006 and 2007 have already reduced teachers’ living standards. More below-inflation pay awards are not acceptable. Teachers’ pay must not be cut further in real terms.

The Prime Minister’s New Year speech emphasised the importance of education for the future of our society. The remuneration offered to professional teachers should reflect this importance. Instead, teachers are worse off.

I call upon all teachers to join together to protect our living standards.

Best wishes,

Steve Sinnott, NUT general secretary

Going up

Energy: In January energy supplier NPower announced double-digit price rises for both electricity and gas, with some customers facing increases of over 20 per cent. Other energy providers are expected to follow suit.

Petrol: The average price of a litre of petrol rose to over £1 in November. Filling up the car now costs around 19 per cent more than in January 2007.

Housing: The housing market may be slowing, but UK property prices still rose by 7.9 per cent during 2007.

Going down

Teachers’ standard of living: Three years of below-inflation pay increases are already costing teachers dear. Newly qualified teachers would be receiving around £700 a year (that’s £1.78 a day) more if their pay had kept pace with inflation. The annual salaries of experienced teachers at the top of the upper pay scale would be around £1,000 (or £2.74 a day) higher.

A further three years of below-inflation pay rises will reduce teachers’ standard of living still further, especially when the costs of essentials such as housing, fuel and food are rising at levels far higher than inflation (see left). Teachers need to be determined not to let this happen.

Stop press:

As The Teacher went to press, a special meeting of the NUT’s Executive was being called to consider the union’s response to the pay announcement. Details of the pay award and its implications, and the NUT’s response and campaign plan, will be sent to all members’ homes. Visit the NUT website at www.teachers.org.uk for the latest information on the campaign.
UK in international league tables controversy

November and December saw the publication of two international studies which appeared to show the UK slipping down the international education league tables.

The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) looks at reading standards among 10 to 11 year olds and is conducted every five years. In 2001 England came third, but in the study conducted during 2006 it was placed 15th. Although the decline was partly due to an increase in the number of countries taking part, England’s overall reading score also dropped by 14 points.

The study showed that English schoolchildren were more likely than most to have a negative attitude to reading, lack confidence in their reading skills and not read for pleasure. NUT general secretary Steve Sinnott said bookless homes and computer games were depriving children of opportunities to read. He added that the “prescribed and overloaded curriculum and testing system” were sapping young people’s enthusiasm for reading for pleasure.

He said that while the literacy strategy had helped many of the lowest-achieving children, the message from PIRLS was that “we must find a smarter way of combining the mechanics of reading with a love of literature”.

A week later the Programme of International Student Assessment (PISA), a three-yearly study of 15-year-olds’ educational performance in reading, maths and science, published the results of its 2006 study. The UK achieved an above-average world ranking of 14th out of 57 countries in science, but was placed in the ‘average’ band for reading and maths, coming in 17th and 28th place respectively. In 2000 (the last time UK-wide data was included in the study), the UK was ranked fourth for both reading and maths, and eighth for science.

Education experts warned that the 2006 results should not be compared directly with those of 2000, as the nature of the tests has changed and the emphasis of the most recent study was on science. Commenting on the UK’s science ranking, Steve Sinnott said it represented “good news for schools” but questioned whether “the over-prescribed national curriculum has led to youngsters saying that they find science less fun than their peers in other countries”.

Living in a material world

The NUT officially launched its anti-commercialisation charter at Portcullis House, Westminster, on 11 December. The charter, Growing Up in a Material World, which examines the growing impact of advertising and marketing on children and young people, was initially put out for consultation in April. Since then the NUT, with support from School Councils UK and the English Secondary Students’ Association, has consulted with 8 to 15 year olds on commercialisation, including issues such as self-image, healthy eating, TV advertising and internet marketing.

The updated 24-page charter, including comments from young people themselves, can be downloaded from the NUT website at www.teachers.org.uk.

In the picture: speakers and guests at the launch of Growing Up in a Material World included (from left to right): Annette Brooke MP, shadow minister for children; Kathy Evans, policy director of the Children’s Society; Rob Williams, chief executive of 11 Million (Office of the Children’s Commissioner); Nehwash Ahmad, a student from City of Norwich school; Steve Sinnott, NUT general secretary; Charlotte Mooney, City of Norwich school; Helen Goodman MP, Deputy Leader of the House of Commons (event chair and host); Henry Brock-Brown, City of Norwich school; Paul Clark MP, Parliamentary Private Secretary to Ed Balls MP; Sue Palmer, author of Toxic Childhood; and David Willetts MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Innovation Universities and Skills.
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UPFRONT

On 18 December NUT general secretary Steve Sinnott and deputy general secretary Christine Blower gathered with leaders of other public service unions to help launch the campaign in Westminster. The event marked the publication of a TUC statement, signed by 26 public sector unions, calling on the government to accept the recommendations of the various public sector pay review bodies and so avoid strike ballots and damage to the public sector ethos.

The same day the TUC issued a report, Six million pay cuts, its title a reference to the number of public sector workers who face having their living standards reduced by government policy on pay. The report says the government’s plans for a three-year uniform public sector pay increase of just 2 per cent – well below the current retail price index inflation rate of around 4 per cent – will damage morale and reduce recruitment and retention in teaching and other public service professions. It argues that this pay target will do nothing to fight inflation and risks damaging the industrial relations mechanisms that have helped to minimise pay disputes in recent years.

The NUT’s campaign for fair pay for teachers in England and Wales will be gathering pace in the coming months. For the latest news consult the NUT website at www.teachers.org.uk, keep in contact with your NUT rep, and look out for NUT mailings in the post.

In the picture – above: The first NUT education pay rally took place in London on 6 December. Pictured, left to right, are UCU president Linda Newman, Steve Sinnott, NUT president Baljeet Ghale, PCS general secretary Mark Serwotka and Christine Blower.

Left: Steve Sinnott (right) joins other trade union leaders to launch the TUC’s statement on public sector pay.

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In brief

NUT launches NUTv

The NUT has launched NUTv, an ‘online TV station’ broadcasting union news, guidance, and speeches from NUT conferences and seminars. The first event to be broadcast is the NUT Leadership Conference held in late 2007. View speeches, interviews and panel discussions at www.youtube.com – simply search for ‘NUTeasers’.

Legal victory for Ugandan teacher

The NUT is celebrating a successful outcome to the case of a Ugandan maths teacher who was recruited by an agency in 2002. The agency, Teaching Personnel, promised that he would be able to gain qualified teacher status (QTS) in the UK, but secured him only supply work which did not enable him to get onto a training programme.

He eventually obtained a four-year full-time contract but this was reduced to one year after a change of headteacher. Another school enrolled him on a teacher training programme, but his mentor failed to carry out all the necessary observations. After securing a new job in January 2007, his work permit application was rejected. As a result he was unable to gain QTS within the required four-year period and the Home Office refused to allow him to remain in the country.

With the NUT’s help, the teacher appealed against the decision and secured a limited extension to obtain teaching work that would enable him to enrol on a course and gain QTS.

Summing up, the judge criticised government practice in recruiting teachers from abroad. He said the teacher’s failure to gain QTS was “not his fault but the fault of the various authorities who had made promises to him”.

Unfortunately the Home Office has been slow to return the teacher’s passport, so he still has not been able to take up a post and complete his training. The union is taking further action.

Teaching or preaching?

The union’s first conference on faith schools was well attended on 23 November at NUT headquarters. Speakers for and against explained their position, and group sessions led by members of the union’s task group on faith schools discussed some potentially contentious issues. The NUT’s interim paper on faith schools was also discussed, in advance of a union report on faith schools being presented at the NUT annual conference this Easter.

Opening the talks, Oona Stannard, chief executive of the Catholic Education Service, defended faith schools. “To those who say ‘why should we ratepayers pay for faith schools?’ I reply; what do you think Catholic people are if not taxpayers themselves?” Oona argued that the provision of faith-based education is “a human rights issue and an equality issue,” and urged the NUT not to “be the union that campaigns against faith”.

Andrew Copson of the British Humanist Association argued for the phasing out of religious schools and Keith Porteous Wood of the National Secular Society said that the non-religious section of the population was finding it less easy to access choice and diversity. “Twenty per cent of the population is finding it less easy to access choice and diversity.”

Bill Moore of the National Association Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education talked about the importance of spiritual, moral and cultural arguments and said the citizenship curriculum was a poor substitute for these debates.

Pragna Patel, of Women Against Fundamentalism, said: “All state schools must reflect the secular and plural character – privileging no one religion but defending the rights of expression of all, including those of no religion, and we demand that state schools must be subject to race and gender duties. Religion and culture must not be used to deny access to equality of education as set out in the Every Child Matters agenda.”

NUT assistant secretary John Bangs talked about a C of E survey on church schools’ popularity. “I’m not going to make a judgement either way about the survey or its outcomes, but the questions are important and illuminating,” he said. The survey found that 80 per cent of people believe church schools help children develop a sense of right and wrong, 76 per cent that the church will help young people grow into responsible members of society and 78 per cent that they promote good behaviour and positive attitudes.

John concluded: “A full range of opinions have been valued today and will be taken into account in the union’s paper on faith schools.”

In the picture: (left to right) Pragna Patel, Oona Stannard, Keith Porteous Wood and John Bangs.

A good local school...

The NUT’s new education manifesto, A Good Local School for Every Child and for Every Community, received its parliamentary launch on 3 December. Opening the event, NUT general secretary Steve Sinnott said the union’s new policy document included progressive ideas that presented an alternative to market values being introduced into schools. He added that it linked the global with the local and promoted the case for equality in education.

In the picture: Steve Sinnott launches A Good Local School for Every Child and for Every Community, flanked by fellow speakers journalist and campaigner Fiona Millar (see page 50), Labour MP John Trickett and Professor Peter Mortimore.

Read more about A Good Local School for Every Child and for Every Community on page 22.

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Cool CATS in Wakefield

Teachers and parents in Wakefield are campaigning together against a number of schools in the district becoming trust schools. Their Campaign Against Trust Schools (CATS) has enjoyed a number of victories.

One of the original Wakefield trust school partners was a company called Bearing Point. Doing a Google search, CATS discovered that this was not an ordinary IT company. It was one of the biggest contributors to both George W Bush election campaigns and had been awarded major reconstruction projects in both Iraq and Afghanistan. With a bit of national and local publicity this company was very quickly dropped from the trust as a partner.

CATS launched a petition, getting signatures from national trade union figures such as the NUT’s Steve Sinnott and Baljeet Ghale, as well as local parents, councillors and teachers. They found this an effective way of organising people locally.

Local councillors were split over what to do about the trusts, and the split was not on party lines. After a public meeting, a debate was organised last term as people did not feel they had been consulted properly. Potential trust partners were invited, but only one turned up. CATS campaigners pointed out at the meeting that schools can and do already work successfully with other organisations, and there is no need to become a trust to develop relationships with other schools or external organisations.

CATS campaigners also travelled down to London to give evidence at the Committee of Enquiry into Academies and Trusts at the House of Commons in June 2007. This provided an opportunity to link up with the Anti Academies Alliance as we believe both government initiatives remove democratic accountability of schools.

The Wakefield Aspire Trust was due to be in place in September 2007. The activities of CATS have managed to delay this.

Contact Wakefield CATS at wakefieldCATS@gmail.com

By Sally Kincaid, division secretary, Wakefield and District NUT, and Catherine Boothman, local parent

In the picture:

CATS conduct a ballot on the streets of Wakefield in June 2007. Ninety-eight per cent of respondents were in favour of local community schools rather than trust schools.

New NUT student society in Winchester

At the University of Winchester, students on the BA primary teaching course have historically been under-represented in the student union, despite being the largest group of students in what was once a teacher-training college. We hope to rectify this with the launch of the Winchester NUT Student Society.

This year’s fresher’s fair saw 150 first-year students sign up to the new society. However, the core of active membership is a group of second-year students who came together after a meeting with the university’s NUT rep.

The aims of the new society include organising social and educational events, running courses for student teachers, and establishing ‘clinics’ to provide additional support. We hope to motivate student and young teachers to join a society – and a union – that can help their ongoing studies, professional development and social networking.

On 20 November we were delighted to welcome NUT president Baljeet Ghale to our launch event, with over 90 students braving the wintry weather to hear her talk. Baljeet’s speech was motivating, thought-provoking and sometimes shocking, covering important issues such as academies and teachers’ pay. The evening culminated with a party in the student union bar.

We have been greatly supported by the Hampshire division of the NUT, and hope to continue our close liaison with them. Thanks also go to members of the society’s committee who have helped in all aspects of the society, including promotion, organisation and financial matters.

We are one of just a handful of NUT student societies, but we hope that many universities will follow our lead and soon we can be talking and organising with our colleagues in NUT student societies up and down the country.

By Jessica May, NUT liaison, Winchester NUT Student Society

In the picture: Baljeet Ghale (centre) with members of the new society.

Anti academies in Colchester

NUT Executive members Hank Roberts and Jerry Glazier, along with Alasdair Smith from the Anti-Academies Alliance, addressed the second anti-academy meeting organised recently by Colchester and NE Essex NUT. The meeting was chaired by David Evans, Colchester NUT president.

Essex County Council proposes to close two schools in Colchester and open an academy on the site of one of them. Colchester NUT is campaigning actively alongside the parents’ group also opposing the academy.
Manchester’s march against academies

Despite the cold, hundreds of teachers met in Manchester on Saturday 1 December to show their opposition to the introduction of academies in the north west. NUT teachers and staff were joined by colleagues from the NASUWT and ATL, support staff unions and parents, as they marched through Manchester to a rally in the Peace Gardens. Teachers had travelled from across England and Wales to support the protest and show the strength of feeling against academies.

They were addressed by a range of speakers, including Steve Sinnott, NUT general secretary, who told them: “The National Audit Office report indicated that other government programmes produced better results for youngsters from the toughest backgrounds.” He added: “We are not just against academies – we are for a good local school for every child and every community.”

There have been a number of campaigns and demonstrations in local authorities in the north west where academies have been proposed, and the NUT has had some success in changing decisions or getting them deferred for further investigation. However this was the first region-wide event and gave extensive publicity to the NUT campaign. The rally, and interviews with Steve Sinnott, were shown on both ITV and BBC North West news. Steve was also interviewed on Channel M (Manchester TV) and regional radio stations.

“We were thrilled to get so much support from across the country – it helped to make the march and rally a newsworthy event,” said NUT regional secretary Avis Gilmore. “The coverage we got in the media has promoted the NUT campaign and enabled us to get our message out to the public, and especially to parents and grandparents.”

In the picture: Steve Sinnott addresses the crowds at the rally, alongside fellow speaker Jerry Bartlett, deputy general secretary of the NASUWT.

Collective action produces results in Liverpool

NUT members at New Heys community school in Liverpool voted for strike action in the summer after months of trying to get the headteacher to discuss problems with pupil behaviour and performance management. They achieved a resolution by taking just one hour of strike action.

Teachers were not being supported in working through the pupil behaviour policy and this was leading to deterioration in pupil behaviour generally. The performance management policy included observations, more observations and re-observations! Rather than tackle the pupil behaviour issues on a case-by-case basis, the local NUT division decided to look at collective action based around the additional workload that the disruptive behaviour and lack of senior management support caused.

Once the ballot result was announced the school’s management were keen to meet with NUT representatives. By the final week of the summer term negotiations were well under way on both the Behaviour for Learning policy and the Performance Management policy. Members supported the call from the union to take one hour of strike action during the last week of the summer term to keep the ballot live in case no further progress could be made in talks.

By mid-September a new behaviour policy was in place, with a commitment to review this with all staff and unions at Christmas. At the beginning of December the final remaining concerns about the performance management policy were resolved. The agreement will be of benefit to pupils and staff at New Heys, and the regular meetings should help prevent further disputes.

Collective action in the school not only produced new policies, but the school has set up half-termly union/management meetings with all unions, and two NUT members have come forward as additional school representatives.

John Dixon, NUT assistant secretary, said: “Our members at New Heys are to be congratulated for the stand they have taken, and their success is a fine example to us all of what can be achieved when acting together.”

End child poverty

NUT members and staff were among the hundreds of campaigners who marched on the Treasury on 7 November to urge the government to honour its pledge to end child poverty by 2020. The event took place during the Campaign to End Child Poverty’s Month of Action. The organisation is calling for £4 billion of investment to halve child poverty in the UK by 2010, with a significant amount of this total to be committed in the Chancellor’s 2008 budget.

Photo credits: The photo to accompany the article ‘Staying safe’ on page 20 of the December edition of The Teacher should have been credited to Paul Box/reportdigital.co.uk. The Burston Strike School Rally photo on page 9 of the November magazine was taken by Peter Everard Smith.
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Leisuretime Discount holidays for teachers
Ethiopia: Renewed attempt to destroy ETA

The NUT is affiliated to the Cuba Solidarity Campaign. Associations and individuals can join at: www.cuba-solidarity.org.uk.

Left to right: Berhanu Aba-Debisa, Wolde Dana and his wife Wibit Legamo, pictured with Anteneh Getnet, sent a message of thanks to the NUT for sending bail money via the Ethiopian Teachers’ Association which “enabled us to breathe fresh air, see natural light and join our people” after being held in detention. They had suffered torture, poor sanitation and overcrowding. Wibit was beaten heavily in front of her husband and three and a half year old son. She had been five months pregnant, and miscarried while in detention.

Cuban connection

Bethina St Valle-Smith, deputy head of Cardinal Wiseman school, writes about her school’s experience of making education global.

Cardinal Wiseman is a mixed Roman Catholic arts, humanities and technology college in Ealing, west London, with 1,800 students from many parts of the world. Our head insists: “Our students will get up in the morning and not merely observe what is happening around them but will be actively engaged in life.”

In 2003 we began to work with the Ministry of Education in Cuba, where education is free from nursery to university and illiteracy has been eradicated. Many staff and sixth formers have visited the island and we have hosted several reciprocal visits.

We are twinned with the Enrique Galarraga school, Havana. The Year 8 students write to each other. Our sixth form art students are involved in a project with the Cuban Ministry of Culture. We have links with Havana’s San Alejandro fine arts academy.

Music is vital to the Cuban curriculum and all students receive instrumental lessons and coaching. Our link with Escuela Nacional de Musica enables our students to attend Sol-fa, orchestra and choral classes.

We collaborated with the Jose Marti school to write Friendly Cuba: a geography of a country and its people, based on our geography department’s requirement for KS3.

We are involved in many important areas with our Cuban colleagues, in a relationship based on four years of mutual trust, respect and hard work.

The NUT is affiliated to the Cuba Solidarity Campaign. Associations and individuals can join at: www.cuba-solidarity.org.uk.

Iran clamps down on teachers

On 14 December nine teachers charged with “disturbing social order, issuing announcements and holding illegal gatherings” were sentenced to 91 days’ imprisonment by a criminal court in Hamadan in Iran.

The teachers had taken part in rallies calling for improved living conditions and respect for their right to form a labour association.

The Iranian government has responded with threats, beatings, arrests, dismissals and suspensions. Education International (EI) reports that over 700 teachers have had pay cuts, 86 are suspended and 39 banned from teaching altogether.

A delegate at the EI world congress last year was arrested on return to Tehran and has since been abducted twice.
An innovative project in Greater Manchester encourages disadvantaged pupils to think about higher education and future employment while they’re still at primary school.

College, university, work – three topics that aren’t likely to crop up too often for Key Stage 2 pupils. Yet one project in Greater Manchester is looking to change exactly that, encouraging school children to start thinking about what their future might hold from a much earlier age – and matching this to the strong future employment opportunities in the city.

The project is called Higher Futures 4 U and is funded by Aimhigher, a national programme that aims to increase participation in higher education among under-represented groups, particularly young people from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Higher Futures 4 U began as a pilot project in 2005 and is led by Stuart Herrington, an ex-primary school headteacher. Stuart recognised through his own experience that children needed to be aware of higher education and what their future might hold from a much younger age.

The focus of many participation-widening and aspiration-raising programmes is on secondary school children and young adults. Yet leaving interventions to this stage could mean the ‘boat is missed’ for influencing people and giving them the information they need to make an informed decision about life after compulsory education. Higher Futures 4 U addresses this, focusing particularly on children aged seven to 11.

Herrington brings a strong personal philosophy to the programme: “From my experience, the subject of life after school is just not something that enters the minds of primary school pupils. Often children lack the life experience and positive role models they need to see any benefit in improving their skills and seeking education beyond GCSEs. And if they don’t know people in more highly-skilled jobs, their job projections are often based around fantasy – popstars, footballers and celebrities. If we can start to address these issues, children can realise their intrinsic motivation to learn.”

Higher Futures 4 U is focused on areas of Greater Manchester where there is a tradition of low participation in higher education. The challenges for Herrington and his team are formidable, and are often woven into the social fabric of the areas they target.

Higher Futures 4 U was designed to work against the notion many young people have that college and university aren’t for them – often because the areas in which they live do not have a culture of such progression. Their families and communities often lack general knowledge about what further and higher education entail, and how study can fit into broader plans for later in life.

The project brings together graduate employers and higher education institutions to work with primary-age children in an extended period of activities, comprising more than 25 hours of project-based learning. In 2005 it began working with 12 primary classes across Greater Manchester. It was extended to a further 44 in 2006, thanks to a variety of funding streams, including funding from Manchester city council. A total of 1,500 pupils have so far taken part.

Capturing students’ interest

Higher Futures 4 U involves young people in a range of fun, motivating activities: interactive workshops, visits to employers and educational institutions. These are all closely aligned to form an integrated learning package.
Initial teacher-training sessions help to develop teachers’ own knowledge of the progression routes available post-16. These sessions also improve their understanding of the economic opportunities in Greater Manchester, and the skill sets local employers are looking for.

Each school then embarks on a series of workshops, delivered by teachers for their students. The first explores with the students the concepts of optimism and self-belief, to try to break down the barriers that might be raised when talking about learning beyond school. This is followed up by a further two sessions: one that looks specifically at the world of work and what influences people to pursue specific career paths, and another that that aims to demonstrate how post-compulsory education and training fit into ‘the bigger picture’.

As Herrington comments: “Simple paper and pen activities are not going to change the mindsets of our young people. Their aspirations will only be changed if they are involved in fun, confidence-building activities that give them exposure to new experiences.”

As well as having teachers on board, Higher Futures 4 U also brings parents and carers into the mix. A separate workshop for them is held by the pupils, who feed back on what they have learned in their earlier workshops.

The in-school workshops are supplemented by visits to Manchester university and Manchester Metropolitan university, plus graduate employers. These demystify these environments for the young people and place post-compulsory education into the wider landscape of ‘life after school’.

The university visits see the young people interacting with undergraduates, some of whom act as role models, having come from similar backgrounds themselves. The opportunity to talk one-to-one with high-achieving student ambassadors has been proven to have a significant impact on young people’s aspirations, bringing to life the possibilities that higher education offers to all, regardless of background.

Pupils then get the chance to visit a graduate employer, to get a first-hand insight into how a professional workplace operates and, crucially, what skills and attributes they look for in potential employees. This allows the young people to see for themselves what the opportunities for work are in their local area.

The culmination of the programme is a mock graduation event, which brings together all the young people involved in the project for a celebration. The aim is to give each of them a positive memory to draw on when the time comes for them to choose their own options for post-compulsory education.

As Herrington says: “The programme is not just about taking them into universities, it is more about revealing the opportunities in Greater Manchester and helping the young people to make informed decisions.”

Looking to the future

The Higher Futures 4 U project is continuing to expand and is adapting to the changing needs of schools in Greater Manchester.

Sustainability is important, ensuring the project continues to have an impact on people in the area.

Teachers who take part are used in training for the school workshops in future years. This is in addition to more partnerships being forged with local employers and education institutions – Salford university is already on board for 2007/08.

“It’s all about ensuring that young people today see a purpose for their learning,” says Stuart.

Relying on a simple set of qualifications is not enough these days. But empowering young people to have a set of transferable skills and strong personal attributes could really open up lots of opportunities in their adult lives.”

A positive impact

Teachers have been very positive and have particularly welcomed the fact that the project has been tailored for a younger audience. They say it has a definite impact on their pupils.

This is mirrored by the feelings of the young people involved, with enjoyment of the scheme coupled with a clear increase in their awareness and understanding of university. At the outset of the project, less than a third of participants recognised that going to university was necessary to obtain a degree. This rose to 85 per cent after the first year of the project.

A critical success factor is the collaborative approach that Higher Futures 4 U aims to foster. With employers, higher education institutions, schools and families all on board, pupils are given a holistic view of their post-16 choices – with the seed sown in plenty of time for them to make an informed decision.

The Teacher / January-February 2008

Above: primary pupils examine the DNA of an onion at Manchester university.
Left: the programme culminates in a mock graduation ceremony.

How can Aimhigher help teachers?

The Aimhigher programme is funded nationally by the Higher Education Funding Council for England and the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills. It is delivered by local area partnerships which are able to tailor activities to meet the needs of their communities.

Teachers at both primary and secondary level can find out more about their local Aimhigher partnership and the activities it offers by visiting www.aimhigher.ac.uk/practitioner and looking through the ‘Who’s Who’ section.

A range of materials is available to help teachers bring the higher education experience to life for their students, including printed guides aimed at pre- and post-16 pupils, DVDs and lesson planning materials.

To order free copies of any of these resources, visit www.aimhigher.ac.uk/practitioner/communications/resource_materials.cfm.

For more information about the Higher Futures 4 U project, contact Stuart Herrington at sherrington@eicmanchester.gov.uk.

January-February 08 / The Teacher
Come to the NUT’s National Education Conference

The NUT’s annual National Education Conference (NEC) will take place over the weekend of 5-6 July 2008 at Stoke Rochford Hall in Lincolnshire. This year’s theme is ‘A Good Local School for Every Child and for Every Community’.

The NEC is the union’s flagship education event, with a full programme of speakers and discussion groups on the key education topics facing teachers. Participants praise the NEC for the productive discussions it triggers and information it provides, as well as the opportunity to relax with teacher colleagues in the beautiful surroundings of the union’s training and conference centre near Grantham.

Make sure you get full details of the programme, price and booking information on 2008 NEC by emailing your contact details to Jan Pitt in the Education and Equal Opportunities Department (j.pitt@nut.org.uk).

Special offer to young teachers (35 and under) – attend the National Education Conference and the Young Teachers’ Conference (6-8 June) for the price of one conference!

My role in the union

The student officer

Carly Doyle is the NUT’s first student officer. She took up her one-year pilot post in the NUT’s north west office in September.

How did you become student officer?

I am a TUC academy organiser. Each year the TUC selects a handful of trade unionists who will train in various unions around the country, while working towards their TUC organising diploma. I was lucky to be selected to work on the NUT’s Student Pilot Project, which is operating in the north west region.

What does the role involve?

My role is to encourage student teachers to become more involved in their union, and to identify collective issues that they face during their course.

What have you been doing so far?

I started my academy year in September, attending freshers’ fairs and chatting to student teachers about their studies. From their feedback, I have written an NUT student e-newsletter, which will be distributed each half term, to keep students aware of upcoming events and campaigns, and give them an opportunity to share comments with other student members. There is also a new NUT student members’ group on Facebook. It was intended to help student teachers in the north west to communicate, but there are already student members from across the country joining in!

What are your plans for the rest of the year?

In the coming months I hope more students will use the newsletter and Facebook group as resources to support themselves and each other during their course. I also hope to organise more events on campuses and contribute to new student policies.

How can student teachers get involved in the union?

1. Join the Facebook group for advice and links to online resources (go to www.facebook.com, click on ‘groups’ and search for ‘NUT student members’).
2. If you and your classmates are all concerned about the same aspect of your course – for example stress management or classroom behaviour – ask your local NUT office to provide a speaker on the subject.
3. Contact your local NUT association to ask for funding to throw an NUT members’ social event on campus.
4. Join your NUT society, or if your university doesn’t have one contact your local office for information on how to set one up.
5. Book a place on the NUT student members’ course at Stoke Rochford, from 29 February to 2 March.
6. If you have any comments, suggestions, issues or ideas, contact me at c.doyle@nut.org.uk.

The Muff of the Season

Until recently a lady would use a muff far more for effect than for real use. Now, however, its powers of warmth and comfort are so highly appreciated as to make it quite a necessary part of a lady’s winter outfit. Sometimes it is put to even greater practical use than the warming of hands. For the large muff, or ‘manchon sac’, as it is called, contains a receptacle for holding a handkerchief, purse or other small articles and in some cases even contains a resting place for ‘darling Fido’ who nestles cosily whilst his mistress does her shopping.

Want to be part of a project on the Magna Carta?

The US National Education Association (NEA) and the NUT are planning a joint seminar for teachers, focusing on civil liberties, human rights and freedom. Both organisations are keen to draw on the expertise and experience of their successful professional development programmes and want to work together to build on this.

The aim of the programme is to focus on the Magna Carta, which encompasses values now seen as the embodiment of freedom, justice, fairness and human rights. Key elements of the seminar will include:

• developing knowledge and understanding of the Magna Carta
• analysing aspects of the Magna Carta related to human rights, freedom and democracy
• developing strategies and materials for teaching and learning about the Magna Carta.

The programme will include workshops, with the aim of developing a publication for dissemination to members of the NUT and NEA. There will also be a trip to Lincoln to learn about the Magna Carta.

The seminar will be for members of the NUT and NEA, with a format based on the NUT Teachers Together programme for individuals or pairs of teachers. Participants work together during a two-day seminar and are encouraged to follow-up the work through further communication with a partner teacher. After the seminar, teachers will link up using email and phone calls to support one another as they try out teaching and learning strategies in their classrooms. Participants may be teachers of any subject.

The initial event will be held between 14 and 18 April 2008 at the union’s training centre, Stoke Rochford Hall near Grantham. If you would like to be considered as a participant please email a 200-word statement to the NUT’s international relations office: international@nut.org.uk.

Win £2,000 cash in the president’s raffle!

You could help other teachers – and be in with a chance of winning £2,000 cash and some other great prizes – if you enter this year’s NUT president’s raffle, organised by the Teacher Support Network (TSN) in collaboration with the NUT.

You’ll find your raffle tickets, and a reply-paid envelope, inside this edition of The Teacher if you are an in-service or retired NUT member. To enter, simply write your name and address on the ticket(s), then tear off and return the stubs, with a cheque made payable to ‘Teacher Support Network’, in the envelope provided.

This year’s prizes are:

£2,000 cash, courtesy of Norwich Union and Teachers Provident Society
Digital camera, courtesy of Teachers Building Society
Fortnum and Mason hamper, courtesy of Britannia Rescue
12 bottles of wine, courtesy of Countdown

Please enter, and encourage colleagues and friends to buy tickets too. You will be making a great difference to the thousands of teachers who contact TSN every year for information, counselling and financial assistance. To find out more about TSN’s work, visit www.teachersupport.info.

Return your ticket stubs and payment by 27 May 2008. The winning tickets will be drawn at Hamilton House on 30 May 2008. Good luck!

The Teacher Support Network is the national independent charity (1072583) dedicated to teachers’ wellbeing. Visit www.teachersupport.info or call 020 7554 5214 for more information.

The Fred and Anne Jarvis Award:

a chance to recognise education campaigners

The NUT has introduced an annual award to recognise the contribution of individuals, external to the union, who have campaigned tirelessly on educational issues.

The Fred and Anne Jarvis Award recognises the example and commitment to education shown by former NUT general secretary Fred Jarvis and his late wife Anne (pictured together). Anne was a lifelong NUT member and former chair of the education committee for Barnet Council.

NUT members are asked to nominate a non-NUT member for the award. That person will have been involved in campaigning on a national or local educational issue. The award will be presented at the NUT annual conference at Easter.

For further details contact Janet Theakston in the NUT’s Education and Equal Opportunities Department (email j.theakston@nut.org.uk). The deadline for nominations is 25 February 2008.

The Fred and Anne Jarvis Award:

100 years ago

The Schoolmaster, January 11 1908

Echoes from the Women’s World

The Muff of the Season

Until recently a lady would use a muff far more for effect than for real use. Now, however, its powers of warmth and comfort are so highly appreciated as to make it quite a necessary part of a lady’s winter outfit. Sometimes it is put to even greater practical use than the warming of hands. For the large muff, or ‘manchon sac’, as it is called, contains a receptacle for holding a handkerchief, purse or other small articles and in some cases even contains a resting place for ‘darling Fido’ who nestles cosily whilst his mistress does her shopping.
**Best books**

Many thanks to all who voted in the NUT/Teachers’ TV poll to find the most inspirational education books ever written. The top ten covered fact, fiction, self-help and psychology:

1. *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee
2. *The Curious Incident of the Dog In the Night-time* by Mark Haddon
3. *How Children Fail* by John Holt
4. *Getting the Buggers to Behave* by Sue Cowley
5. *Children’s Minds* by Margaret Donaldson
6. *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* by JK Rowling
7. *Hard Times* by Charles Dickens
8. *Thought and Language* by Lev Vygotsky
9. *Summerhill* by A.S. Neill
10. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* by Paulo Freire

The results were broadcast in December. Selina Scott counted down the top ten and education writer John Richmond presented potted biographies. View the programme on www.teachers.tv/video/23912.

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**Staffroom Monologues competition 2008**

Calling all budding scriptwriters in education!

Following the success of Staffroom Monologues 2007, Teachers TV has again joined forces with the NUT to run this scriptwriting competition.

Entrants must write an original, unpublished, fictional monologue of 800-1000 words. The character must work in a school and the story must be inspired by life in school today. Winners will have their scripts turned into professional dramas.

Full details will be available on the website www.teachers.tv/monologues from 18 February. You can also see the films made from the last year’s winning scripts at this site.

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*NUT member Steve Eddison (left), one of the 2007 Staffroom Monologues winners, saw his script *Locked Stockroom and Two Smoking Gerbils* made into a short film starring Bill Paterson.*
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CALL 0800 032 7030 CLICK www.endsleigh.co.uk
Ask the union

NUT experts answer your questions on legal, professional, and health and safety matters.

Q I successfully applied for a job with a local school recently. However, the school received a reference from my former head and the offer was withdrawn three days before I was meant to start my new job. By that time, I had already resigned from my former position. I have asked my former head for a copy of the reference, but she has refused, saying the reference is confidential.

I am very concerned that if I continue to provide her as a referee, which I would need to do, this will continue to have a detrimental effect on my chances of getting a new job. Can you advise me what to do?

A Get union help and act quickly. The job offer was probably made ‘subject to references’ and, if it was, it won’t have been legally binding until confirmed. It is always safer not to resign an existing post before that confirmation. If your resignation date is approaching and you don’t have confirmation, make polite enquiries.

You can’t insist that the referee gives you a copy of the reference, but if it has been retained you might well have a right, under data protection legislation, to a copy of it from the person to whom it was sent.

Q I would be grateful for advice on the NUT’s position concerning non-teachers being appointed as special educational needs co-ordinators (Sencos). Our county council says this is fine, but I thought the government wanted all Sencos to be fully qualified teachers and on the school’s senior management team. This, at the moment, is not the case in my school.

A The NUT’s position is that Sencos should most certainly hold qualified teacher status and ideally should be on the school’s senior leadership team in order to have input into how budgets are spent.

The NUT commissioned research from Cambridge university, The costs of Inclusion, which highlighted the dangers of not appointing qualified teachers as Sencos. Following its publication the union gave its views to the House of Commons Education and Skills Select Committee.

Referees are legally obliged to take reasonable care over the content of references.

If this is refused, we can assist you with a complaint to the information commissioner, who enforces data protection law and could ensure that you be given access to the reference.

Referees are legally obliged to take reasonable care over the content of references and to respond to requests for references within a reasonable time. The lateness of the withdrawal here suggests that someone may well have been at fault, and you should be compensated.

Whether or not you have clear legal remedies, the union insists that referencing must be fair so as to avoid precisely this kind of damaging problem. The union will want to take this up both for you and to protect other members in future.
In January this year the Special Educational Needs and Disability Division of the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) sent a letter to all chief education officers and directors of children’s services, so your county council should have received it.

The relevant sections of the letter say “Section 173 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 was introduced in response to concerns expressed by the House of Commons Education and Skills Select Committee (report on SEN, published 6 July 2006) about the status and training of Sencos…

“The SEN Code of Practice operates on the basis that a Senco will be in post and section 173 is designed to regularise the position and give a firm legal basis to the expectation voiced in the Code and elsewhere.”

The government is currently consulting on the draft regulations.

The Children’s Plan published by the DCSF in December 2007 committed the government to continue “to strengthen the position of the SEN co-ordinator in schools, including consulting on regulations requiring them to be teachers and working towards nationally accredited training arrangements for all those new to the role”.

- Read the SEN code of practice at www.teachernet.gov.uk/docbank/index.cfm?id=3724.

I’ve read that the government hopes to considerably reduce the amount of time teachers spend covering classes for absent colleagues, so that it becomes a rarity by 2009. In my school, the number of hours we spend providing cover for other teachers’ classes has dropped over the last few years, but most of us still provide about 20 to 30 hours of cover each year.

Is the government serious about teacher cover being virtually phased out and, if so, what can schools do to achieve this?

A

In 2004 a 38-hour annual cover limit came into force. Since then, the School Teachers’ Pay and Conditions Document (STPCD) has consistently made it clear that the cover burden should continue to fall, to the point at which teachers and headteachers should only rarely provide cover for absent colleagues. The 2007 STPCD states that schools should expect to implement this objective – that teachers only rarely cover – from 1 September 2009.

Among other things, this survey reports the average amount of cover provided by different types of teacher across educational sectors, so schools can judge their progress in reducing the amount of time teachers spend covering classes with reference to national benchmarks. Schools have been advised to set their own interim targets for the reduction of cover, based on the latest OME data, to ensure they are ready to meet the objective of teachers rarely covering from September 2009.

As an example, say the staff in a secondary school typically spent a little under 24 hours providing cover last year – round about the national average for secondary classroom teachers. This school might plan for teachers to cover for no more than 16 hours in 2007-8, and no more than eight hours in 2008-9, in order to reach the target of zero from 2009 onwards.

Schools should not ignore this guidance. The government is consulting on the introduction of statutory provisions that would mean teachers and headteachers rarely providing cover from 1 September 2009.

Q

Send your questions for the NUT’s experts on legal, professional, and health and safety matters to Ask the union, The Teacher, NUT, Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, London WC1H 9BD or email teacher@nut.org.uk.

Please note that questions relating to personal problems or specific workplace situations should be directed to your school NUT rep or NUT regional office – see page 47 for contact details.

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The NUT believes that every child and every community deserves a good school, and that a good school is more than simply an institution that aims to meet national targets. Each school has the potential to be at the heart of its community, providing high quality education, supporting social and economic regeneration and helping community cohesion.

When Gordon Brown established his government last summer, his creation of the new Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) indicated a more integrated approach to education and social and family policy. The new department, appointment of new ministers and shadow ministers, and subsequent government announcements (regarding the ten-year Children’s Plan and revamped secondary curriculum, for example), have given everyone with an interest in education new opportunities to debate the future of Britain’s schools.

The NUT is determined to be at the forefront of this debate. In November the union published its new 44-page education manifesto.

Among the aims and ideas explored in A Good Local School for Every Child and for Every Community are:

**A globalised world**
- Encourage the growth of education in developing countries, and devote expertise and resources to support this.
- Give teachers opportunities to work in developing countries, and expand the exchange of knowledge, research and skills between schools worldwide.
- Ensure schools receive advice on teaching about the environment, climate change and sustainable development.

**Evidence, structures and policy**
- Review the Education and Inspections Act 2006.
- Develop a timetable for matching funding per pupil in state schools with that in private schools.
- Increase financial support for schools with high incidences of child poverty and social disadvantage.
- Explore the possibility of establishing a UK Council for Education.

**Good local schools for every community**
- Investigate whether current education legislation supports or inhibits the concept of a good local school for every child and every community.
- Create a grant to cover all groups of young people in need of intensive support.
- Abolish the requirement of local authorities to promote choice and diversity.
- Establish a new, coherent structure for admissions of pupils to schools.
- Ensure all schools have independent, democratically accountable, governing bodies.

**The future of the teaching profession**
- Offer every teacher at least £1,200 annually for professional development, and a one-term sabbatical every seven years.
- Explore whether PGCEs should become two-year courses, and ensure all teacher training students receive sufficient grant aid.
- Establish a collective bank of teaching practice, created by the teaching organisations with funding from government.
- Develop a professional charter for teachers.
- Ensure professional support for heads and teachers when a school is given notice to improve or placed in special measures.
- Reassess the role of School Improvement Partners.

**The voices of children and young people**
- Review the primary National Curriculum and assessment arrangements for Key Stages 1 to 3.
- Make child development studies the centre of teacher training.
- Increase children’s opportunities for play.
- Ensure all schools have trained counsellors available for pupils.
- Ban TV advertising of unhealthy food and drinks, and explore how children can be protected from commercialisation.
- Make one-to-one tuition from qualified teachers available to all young people who need extra support.
- Ensure all children have access to outdoor learning.

This is a very brief overview. For more information and further proposals please read the full manifesto.
A Good Local School for Every Child and for Every Community is packed with common sense proposals and innovative ideas for developing state education in the 21st century.

A Good Local School for Every Child and for Every Community builds on the NUT’s 2004 statement Bringing Down the Barriers, which sought to create a new understanding of the impact of poverty on educational achievement. The new manifesto draws on responses received from teachers and others after the publication of Bringing Down the Barriers.

A Good Local School for Every Child and for Every Community focuses on:

• the role of the school in relation to the community
• the impact of poverty and social deprivation in education
• the voices of young people in their learning
• the future of the teaching profession.

Above all it’s about children and young people and the power of education to enhance their learning and wellbeing.

The NUT hopes that teachers will want to read A Good Local School for Every Child and for Every Community, share it with colleagues, parents and young people, and use it to spark debate in the staffroom and beyond. Copies can be downloaded from the union’s website at www.teachers.org.uk/story.php?id=4121 or ordered by writing to Dispatch dept (A Good Local School for Every Child and for Every Community), NUT, Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, London WC1H 9BD.

NUT general secretary Steve Sinnott says: “I look forward to responses not only from parliamentary parties, but also from parents, teachers, support staff and young people… I look forward to a healthy debate on our statement’s proposals.”

LEADERSHIP LIBRARY

Imagine having a source of genuinely useful knowledge and support, in the format you want, when ever you need it. NCSL’s Leadership Library is a new and unique online resource bringing together some of the best leadership and management thinking in the world, from the best leaders, the most successful organisations and the greatest names in research, including Harvard and Ashridge Business Schools. It provides you with all the information and inspiration you need to do your job more effectively and become the leader, and the school, you know you can be.

To find out more or to register visit www.ncsl.org.uk/leadershiplibrary
Free education teaching resources from Battersea Dogs & Cats Home.

Battersea Dogs & Cats Home has recently updated its schools ‘3R’s for 4R’s’ education teaching resources for KS1/2 and Foundation Stages to include some whole school activities and interactive whiteboard exercises.

The pack is available on CD ROM with lots of extra activities, including downloadable posters, safety advice, films and a photo resource library.

**Coming soon – our brand new KS 3/4 ‘Enterprise Challenge’ pack for secondary schools.**

Any teacher wishing to receive one of our free packs or any of our education resources, should contact the Education Officer at Battersea Dogs & Cats Home via education@dogshome.org or 020 7627 7875 quoting NUT/08.

Further details can be found at [www.dogshome.org/rescue/school_pack](http://www.dogshome.org/rescue/school_pack)
GTC elections 2008

Elections for members of the General Teaching Councils in both England and Wales take place this term. The candidates on the following two pages are standing in England, and on page 28 are the candidates standing in Wales. Please vote for these NUT candidates – the candidates most likely to share your perspective in education.

Message from the general secretary

The NUT-supported candidates on these four pages have the commitment, credibility and judgement to represent teachers. Their election will be a major step forward for the GTC and the profession in both England and Wales.

If you are registered with the GTC, you should already have received a ballot paper. It is vital to cast your votes in favour of the candidates supported by the NUT. The election is by single transferable vote.

Because of this we are asking you to cast your votes for these candidates only, and no others.

What the GTCW means in school

Anna Hickson Baker is a drama teacher in her induction year. Before qualifying, she taught at the school but with no training budget. She appreciates the opportunities the induction funding brings: “Having funding has enabled me to attend a course with the head of drama, which has benefited us both. We have been able to discuss what we have learnt. Having two people at such a course would have been impossible without the funding.

“The funding also gives new teachers a chance within the timetable to observe experienced colleagues teaching.”

Heidi Jenkins, an English teacher in her second year, used part of her £1,000 EPD funding for a workshop on assessment for learning, a Wales joint education committee inset day on GCSE English language and English literature, and a course on assertive discipline.

She comments: “I am now far more confident in my teaching. I hear this funding is only available in Wales. I think it gives new teachers an excellent start.”

PE teacher Catriona Barker is in her second year of teaching. As outdoor adventure activities are now compulsory in schools in Wales, she attended a course to develop her ability to lead pupils outdoors, as well as one on classroom management strategies.

She says: “The support has made me determined to challenge myself and my teaching where it needs to be developed.”

Rachel Hanney, in her third year of teaching, agrees that funding has had a major impact on her practice: “I have been lucky to attend numerous courses which have equipped me with the skills to flourish in the classroom. I now teach English language, English literature and law, and have used the funding to develop my knowledge and teaching skills across each of these subjects.”

Heidi Jenkins believes the induction funding, which is only available in Wales, gives new teachers a head start.

Ysgol Friars, Bangor, with over 1,300 pupils and 90 staff, is currently supporting three NQTs through the induction year. A further six, in their second and third years, are enjoying early professional development (EPD), funded by the GTC in Wales.

As an assistant head, Emyr Hughes is responsible for NQTs. He meets each teacher at the start of the school year and formulates an action plan which is reviewed every term. “The great thing about induction and EPD funding is that it has a whole-school effect. Teachers who attend training share their findings with other teachers in the school,” Emyr says.
Barbara Hibbert

I am head of history and an elected GTCE member. My main concern is that regulation should be carried out in the interests of teachers as well as maintaining public confidence in the profession.

I want more classroom teachers on the GTCE and their voice heard by government. Government should value teachers’ expertise, trust our professionalism and understand that the interests of young people are central to all.

My recent PhD was about transition between sixth form and higher education.

Kathy Thompson

I am an English teacher in Newcastle upon Tyne, and an active NUT member. I passionately believe in advancing education from within, and have taken a lead in training, induction and professional development.

My current activities include running an NQT drop-in, lecturing at Newcastle university, and working for the GTCE teaching and learning academy.

On the GTCE I would work to influence the government, speak out for our profession, and uphold the highest professional standards.

Pete McAleer

I am the only teacher from the south west on the GTCE. I joined in September 2007 and am on the policy and resources committee.

I have taught for over 30 years and am an active trade unionist fighting for the recognition of teachers’ views. I have negotiated with the local authority and been an executive member of North Somerset NUT for 20 years, as well as serving on the South West NUT.

I need your vote to continue this work.

Ewa Theresa Lucas-Gardiner

I have held the post of deputy head of the maths department at three schools or colleges and am currently working as a mathematics teacher.

As Polish liaison ambassador for Hull I helped negotiate a twinning agreement between the city and Gdansk, which involved addressing many delicate issues between two different cultures. As a Justice of the Peace and bench chairperson of the family and youth court I have to employ similar skills.

My experiences are an integral part of my ability to teach and mentor colleagues, to identify issues which would benefit the profession and to negotiate new approaches to education.

Lee Ryder

I have three years’ teaching experience and currently work as an English teacher. I’m keen to work to improve conditions for teachers and feel that the GTCE would be a positive and constructive way to do this.

Before joining teaching I worked in the media for a number of years and still have what could be useful contacts in newspapers, drama and documentary making.

Dominic Coughlin

I am a science teacher, deputy director of Isle of Wight Partnership EBIT (employment based initial teacher training), and professional mentor at my school. I have run ITT courses with the Isle of Wight EBIT, which has given me considerable experience of ITT needs.

On the GTCE I would campaign for enhanced professional development for new teachers and a charter, developed by the teaching profession, defining teachers’ professional autonomy.

Andy Brown

Since joining the NUT I have been enthused by its aims, which not only support members but also promote a publicly provided education service in England and Wales.

I am active in the union and have supported colleagues and members throughout my career. I am used to negotiating educational issues with senior officers and politicians and I feel that my contribution to the work of the GTC would be positive and reflect the policies and objectives of the NUT.

Paul Miller

I have over ten years’ teaching experience at various levels, having been recruited in Jamaica and teaching in London for the last four years. I offer my skills and

Gail Mortimer

I have taught for 31 years in comprehensive schools. Although my role and its demands have changed dramatically over the years, my respect and admiration for teachers and the vital job we do remain constant.

I was a founder member of the GTCE and re-elected in 2004. As chair of the audit committee and member of the accountability policy group, I provide a strong, supportive voice for teachers, and am committed to raising our status.

Elizabeth Purnell

I have taught science to 11 to 18 year olds for 12 years, been head of year for eight years, and am NUT division secretary. My experience has given me insight into whole school curriculum and pastoral issues. My NUT work allows me to see how education policy impacts on pupils and teachers.

I have a strong commitment to state education. My aims for
experience in mediation and negotiations, and an analytical approach to problem solving, underpinned by international teaching experience.

Among my aims for the GTCE are greater awareness of its role among overseas trained teachers and how the GTCE might be useful to them, and strengthening the work of networks to make them more appealing to teachers.

Lisa Copeland

I am subject leader for PE and ICT, a governor, year group leader, NUT school representative, West Sussex schools’ forum representative and member of the leadership team. My experience and opinions as a practising teacher would be my most valuable asset on the GTCE.

The GTCE should further support teachers, enabling them to access high quality professional development. This would strengthen the central role the teacher must continue to play in ensuring high quality education.

Anna Jordan

I have worked with children in the USA and UK, have experience of assessment in KS1 and 2 and am an Edexcel marker.

On the GTCE I would work to bring assessment into line with teaching methods, address the implications for schools of the failure of effective pastoral care, and continue to develop home-school partnerships.

Annette Pateman

My 15 years of teaching includes science, EMAP and supply teaching in London and Lincolnshire. I have advised schools on improving the attainment of ethnic minority pupils and delivered Inset.

The GTCE should give more support to teachers and improve the status and CPD opportunities of supply teachers. The UK’s increased diversity should be reflected on GTCE panels.

Debra Bailey

I have five years’ experience of headship, initially in a small, rural school with a 0.6 teaching commitment and now in a large, multicultural community infant school in an area of high deprivation.

I am standing for the GTCE as I would like to contribute to new policy, to minimise the impact on our already hectic timetables. I want more consultation before new initiatives are introduced and would like better communication from the GTCE, highlighting their achievements and explaining where our fees are spent.

Sarah Bowie

I am a founder member of the GTCE and have worked with the communications team, serving as chair of the communications group for six years. I have also worked on the registration and regulation, audit, and finance and general purposes committees. I was elected to the executive, have joined the Every Child Matters policy group and sit on the conduct committee.

I am impressed by the positive relationship between the NUT and GTCE and would work to continue this.

Janis Butler

I am a Y3 teacher, KS1 transition leader and assistant head, responsible for literacy, CPD and teaching and learning. As a teacher governor I am responsible for looked-after children, health and safety and racial awareness. I am the NUT school and health & safety rep and branch president.

I joined the GTCE in 2005 and serve on the Every Child Matters and accountability policy groups. My interests include teacher recruitment, CPD, ending league tables and tests for primary pupils, and promoting Every Child Matters.
Teachers standing in Wales

Angela Jardine

I teach at Gabalfa primary in Cardiff and have been a member of the GTCW since its inception in 1999. I have worked hard on a number of its committees.

I fully support an education system that reflects the needs of Wales rather than being a carbon copy of England's, and have scripted educational programmes on teaching Welsh as a second language.

Jenny Cottrell

A teacher for ten years, my PGCE specialism was science. For the past five years I have worked at Pembroke Dock community school, within the foundation phase. I am the school NUT representative.

I am married to a dairy farmer and have a year old daughter. Working mothers within the profession need a clear voice. Having successfully applied to the GTCW for a professional network grant, I fully support the GTCW’s role in professional development.

Cleo Sollars

I graduated from Warwick university with a law degree before completing my PGCE in 1999. I have taught in Stoke-on-Trent and Bristol, and teach in St Therese’s primary school, Port Talbot. I currently teach a Reception/Year 1 mixed class.

I am president of my local branch of the NUT, Tawe Afan Nedd. I understand the challenges facing the profession and would relish the opportunity to act on behalf of primary teachers, representing them on the council.

Robert De Benedictis

I have been a classroom teacher for 25 years, actively involved in representing and supporting teachers and their conditions of service for 13 years in various forums and committees including the Wales TUC, Trade Union Academy, and Schools’ Forum.

My main areas of concern will be: using only qualified teachers in the classroom; teachers’ work/life balance; reduction of bureaucracy; and malicious allegations against teachers.

Steffan ap Dafydd

A classroom teacher at Cefn Hengoed community school, Swansea, I was a member of the GTCW for its first four years. I am Swansea NUT division secretary and fluent in Welsh and in English.

There are many talented teachers, but they are up against a tide of negative change. Low-paid services in schools are booming and work-life balance is threatened.

I would encourage the GTCW to promote a high-quality, recognised, confident and well-paid teaching service.

Stuart Williams

A teacher at ysgol Ardudwy, Harlech, I have taught PE for seven years. Before that I worked in the financial sector, including dealing with people to ensure they fulfilled their potential. I demand the best from those I come into contact with.

I am an active NUT member, hard-working, enthusiastic and interested in ensuring that teachers have the opportunity to develop their skills and so improve the learning experiences of every pupil.

Beth Davies

I am headteacher of Alltwen primary, and have been in teaching for over 30 years. I have been in management for over 19 years and I am a Welsh speaker.

My philosophy is to promote the highest standards of practice. The profession faces many challenges and it is important to maintain a partnership with professional bodies and the communities we serve to ensure a better future for our children.

Neil Hendry

I have taught in Wales for 27 years, and as head of mathematics at Radyr comprehensive in Cardiff for over 25. I am an active NUT member and believe NUT values should be represented on the GTCW. I particularly believe the coming years will bring opportunities to develop a Welsh agenda in education.

My previous experience on the GTCW and involvement in developing the CPD framework mean I will be able to serve the interests of teachers well.
This year there are massive changes to the curriculum, plus we have our own goals to improve standards.

This show is where I get to learn.

Register for free at: www.education-show.com

Find 1,000s of resources, CPD Seminars and much more at The Education Show
What do you get when you mix teachers starting out in their careers with the National Union of Teachers? The answer – plenty of free support!

As well as a network of local associations and regional/Wales offices offering advice and casework support, the NUT provides high quality professional learning opportunities for teachers as they finish their initial training and throughout their NQT induction year. This support continues as new entrants to the profession become ‘early career’ teachers.

During July, all teachers finishing their initial training and preparing for their first classes in September are invited to two events for just-qualified teachers.

They can attend one of the free one-day Start Right continuing professional development (CPD) seminars organised in each of the NUT’s nine regions and in Wales. These focus on behaviour and classroom organisation. Experienced tutors reinforce the many lessons that participants have already learned during initial teacher education and suggest tried and tested strategies for running learning-centred classrooms.

They also provide an up-to-date legal briefing and insights into teaching pupils with special educational needs.

Just-qualified teachers who join the NUT can also go to an all-expenses-paid three-day Summer workshop at Stoke Rochford Hall, the union’s residential education centre in the Lincolnshire countryside. This offers you the chance to meet colleagues from all over England and Wales and learn more about everything from conditions of service and induction regulations to time management and voice care.

Are you starting teaching in September, or have you been teaching for less than five years? The NUT has courses and resources to help you get the most from your teaching career. Richard Stainton and Ruth Blunt explain the options.

For further details or to make an application visit www.teachers.org.uk and select ‘Training’ and/or ‘CPD Programme’.

NUT professional learning for teachers in the early stages of their career

Improving behaviour in the classroom – GRTP (TF/30)

For teachers on, or who have recently completed, Graduate, Registered or Teach First initial training.

Friday 15 and Saturday 16 February at Stoke Rochford Hall

Tutors: Paul Howard & Pete Hrekow

NQTs – Getting behaviour right (TF/31)

Friday 14 and Saturday 15 March at Stoke Rochford Hall

Tutors: Liz Floyer & Pete Hrekow

Just qualified ‘start right’

One-day seminar in each NUT region and in Wales

7 to 18 July. Dates/venues TBC.

Just qualified summer workshop

Monday 21 to Wednesday 23 July at Stoke Rochford Hall

And look out for Young Teachers’ weekends in Dorset and Poole, 1 to 2 February, Cheshire and Merseyside, 22 to 24 February, West Yorkshire, 7 to 9 March, and Lancashire, 7 to 9 March.

Contact your regional office (see p 47) for details.
NQTs

For the first time, during the autumn term 2007 all NQTs were invited with their induction tutors to a seminar entitled **Getting the ******s to behave** at NUT headquarters in London. This was led by Sue Cowley, the author and behaviour guru, and Julie Temperley, an expert in mentoring and coaching.

The success of this pioneering seminar – providing professional learning for both NQTs and their mentors – means similar events will be organised around England and Wales for the next batch of new entrants and their mentors this autumn.

Every year, NUT NQTs can also attend a three-day **Support and development** residential training course at Stoke Rochford Hall. They learn about the union services and back-up available to them, and how they can get involved in campaigning and other NUT activities.

During their second term of teaching, NQTs are invited to a professional development course including an overnight stay at Stoke Rochford Hall. **NQTs – Getting behaviour right** allows new teachers to strengthen their behaviour management and classroom organisation skills and strategies.

As with all the union’s CPD, this is open to members and non-members. Its ‘no threat, no blame’ ethos allows participants to learn effectively from other teachers at a similar career stage, as well as from independent expert tutors.

**Graduate, registered or Teach First**

For the increasing number of teachers following the graduate, registered or Teach First (GRT) routes into teaching,

**Improving behaviour in the classroom**

a seminar with an overnight stay, has proved particularly popular.

**Early career teachers**

There are further behaviour management courses for teachers in the first years after their induction year. **Improving behaviour for learning** offers collaborative learning to all early career teachers (second to fifth year). This includes a two-day seminar with a one-day follow-up about eight weeks later.

The follow-up allows participants to share what they have learned from applying their learning in their classrooms between the seminars. They can swap successful strategies trialled with pupils.

Another feature of the teach ‘n’ chat approach is that participants join a bulletin-board chatroom between the seminars. This allows them to continue a learning conversation with the tutors and other teachers they meet at the initial seminar. It’s a powerful learning experience.

**Career-long support**

Of course, all teachers have access to the full range of NUT CPD throughout their careers. And members have a wide range of NUT courses to choose from.

Building on the foundations of NUT support, teachers can become career-long learners. The union aims to meet early career needs, and contribute to an integrated process of teaching and continuing professional learning.

New to teaching?

**Are you a newly qualified teacher, or currently training to teach?** You can get a head start with the NUT’s **Really Useful Pack** for new teachers or our free student pack.

The NQT pack contains **A Really Useful Diary** and booklet of Countdown discount offers you can’t afford to miss. The NUT student pack includes facts and figures on finances, a student diary and guide and an NUT/ NUS charter for initial teacher training.

**If you are a new member and have not received your 2007/8 copy, call our 24-hour answering service on 020 7380 4844, state your name and address and quote Really Useful Pack or student pack.**

January-February 08 / The Teacher
ICT Excellence Awards encourage teachers to use technology in new and exciting ways. Ann Logan urges schools to get involved.

Get ready for Excellence

Becta, the British Educational Communications and Technology Agency, has announced the winners of the ICT Excellence Awards 2007 and is inviting schools to register for 2008. The awards are an opportunity to develop your own ICT work and receive recognition for good practice.

For instance, Clunbury C of E primary, Shropshire, was a joint winner in the Best Whole School category in 2007.

How did they do it? Clunbury is small, but it innovates to enhance learning and collaboration. This helps ward off isolation, making pupils feel a part of the broader community.

The school's action plan includes investing in equipment and developing staff skills. Pupils use podcasting, blogging and games technology. They use the school's website blog for peer assessment and review. The site also has parent and staff forums.

An online video highlights the school's success. It shows how pupils use hand-held Nintendos. "I first came across the Nintendos last year. Whenever we ask pupils about getting these out, they say, 'Yes – let's do mental maths,'" says Andrew Davis, headteacher.

Andrew adds: "There is little cost involved with Web 2.0 technologies, podcasting, blogging and videoconferencing, once you've got the hardware to run it."

Wildern school, Southampton, won in the Best Whole School for Secondary. Teachers use the technology to offer pupils more freedom in their learning. The school has a website, Wildern TV, where students show their work online.

It also has a virtual learning environment (VLE), which offers a personalised area for staff and students. Teachers upload lessons, and there is a secure place where pupils work together. They also share resources with partner schools.

Parents have access to the VLE and can track their children's classwork. Find out more about last year's winners. Visit http://awards.becta.org.uk/display.cfm?page=1744

Register now for Excellence 2008

The ICT Excellence Awards reward schools that have used technology in outstanding or innovative ways, benefiting their whole community. This year, winners in the Best Whole School category received £6,000 each, with runners-up receiving £2,000. Other category winners received £2,000 each, with runners-up receiving £1,000 each. Register now for any of the eight categories in the 2008 awards.

http://awards.becta.org.uk/display.cfm?page=1941

My ICT favourites

Kate Sowter, Year 6 teacher and maths co-ordinator at St John and St James’ school, Hackney, north London, shares her favourite ICT resources.

Favourite software

RM maths tutorials (buy from www.rm.com) enable children to work on improving their maths skills on a more one-to-one basis.

Favourite gadget

A visualiser feeds into a laptop that operates the interactive whiteboard. It works pretty much like a overhead projector – you can place anything under it and project it on to the whiteboard, enabling the whole class to see an object or piece of text at the same time. It is small – no bigger than a desk lamp – and sits perfectly on a desktop.

The children can watch you edit a piece of work. They can also come out and edit their own work and the class can see the changes they are making. You don't have to set up bulky equipment or scan in documents as the visualiser is ready in a second.

Favourite websites

www.rainforestmaths.com

Jenny Eather’s maths games site is excellent. Suitable for primary school children from all key stages, it covers a huge range of topics in maths. Highly recommended.

www.nrich.maths.org.uk

This site offers puzzles at different levels which really challenge children of all abilities.

www.primaryresources.co.uk

Offers useful resources for maths, ranging from worksheets to PowerPoint slides. Well worth a look so you're not reinventing the wheel.

Which websites, software and gadgets help you most in your professional life? Email your favourites to teacher@nut.org.uk by Monday 4 February. If we publish them you'll receive a £10 shopping voucher courtesy of Countdown – see page 44 for details.
Choose any 4 sparkling sticker packs and we'll **deduct £3.85** (the price of a single sort sparkling pack) **from your order**. Use the order form below or order at [www.superstickers.com](http://www.superstickers.com) using code **PCNUTJ8**.

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Post to: SuperStickers, PO Box 55, 4 Balloon Avenue, Bangor, Co. Down, BT19 7PJ or freephone 0800 318192 or freephone 0800 0272833
The NUT is inviting 20 schools to take part in an e-collaborative professional learning project – **Developing critical thinking skills** (for all key stages).

For £100, participating schools will get an excellent CD usually priced at £235. This underpins six one-hour in-school staff development sessions to enhance the teaching of critical thinking. Each school will nominate a teacher to take part in a learning conversation on NUT’s CPD bulletin-board.

If you’re interested, email nutcpd@nut.org.uk (put ‘Critical thinking’ in the subject box).

**Smart thinking!**
NUT divisional health and safety advisers gathered for their annual briefing at Stoke Rochford in November, when their important work was put under the spotlight.

A wealth of workshops covered topics ranging from stress and bullying to school safety organisation. Speakers from the Health Protection Agency, the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment and the School Travel Forum made excellent presentations on wi-fi in schools, building design and school trips respectively.

The union’s asbestos campaign was highlighted by Michael Lees, whose wife, an NUT member, died from mesothelioma.

NUT Executive member for South Yorkshire, Pete Bevis, welcomed this showcase for the union’s health and safety work. “Health and safety is too frequently dismissed as an irritant by school management, and this is reinforced by the tabloid obsession with myths such as schools banning conker games,” he told The Teacher.

He said the annual briefing highlighted the important work union advisers do to maintain healthy schools.

NUT health and safety advisers confer at the annual briefing at Stoke Rochford Hall in November.

NUT learning reps have a rewarding role, inspiring teachers to develop their skills and expertise.

Lifelong learning is a key issue for the 21st century. The promotion of learning, whether for professional or personal development, has become core union work.

By supporting and encouraging their colleagues, NUT learning representatives are having a major impact. Their role includes a variety of activities, from promoting union learning to encouraging work/life balance.

Train to be a learning rep at Stoke Rochford Hall

You will receive training at the union’s national training centre, Stoke Rochford Hall, in the Lincolnshire countryside.

All expenses are met by the union. At the end of the course, you will be an accredited NUT learning representative.

Courses are scheduled for:

- Monday 4 to Friday 7 February
- Monday 1 to Friday 5 December

For more information contact the NUT Learning Reps Unit on 020 7380 4780/4800 or email learning.reps@nut.org.uk. We look forward to hearing from you!
Secure IT Desks

Desk8’s unique space saving design offers numerous layouts that can be rearranged as classroom needs change.

**Quality Design Solution**
Desk8 is imaginative in design and attractive in appearance, it is based on Rectangular and Trapezoidal desks. Desk8 is designed for strength and durability using epoxy coated steel and 25mm MDF.

**Value for Money**
Desk8 is modular and re-useable and can be easily re-configured to meet new demands ensuring a future proof investment. Economically priced non-IT desks can be upgraded later.

**Multi Purpose Classroom**
With Desk8 your work space is kept free, so it is easy to switch between IT and other lessons. Numerous layouts are possible using Straight Runs, Octagons, Hexagons, Squares and other shapes.

**Security & Safety**
Desk8 provides secure storage for PC and Monitor, plus a lockable Notebook holder keeps the desk top free. Integrated cable management keeps the desk tidy and minimises risk.

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For a Desk8 brochure, advice, site survey or a quotation – contact us

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Holocaust memorial day, 27 January, commemorates the liberation of the largest Nazi extermination camp, Auschwitz-Birkenau, in 1945. This year’s theme is Imagine… remember, reflect, react. www.hmd.org.uk/about/
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- Get a free pack with everything you need to organise an event. Call 01460 238047, email coffee@actionaid.org or visit www.coffeebreak.org.uk.

Win a Lafta (KS3+)
Enter a competition to develop film clips of two minutes’ duration or less to demonstrate the importance of language.
Lafta (Language and Film Talent Awards) is run by CILT and Routes into Languages. Closing date for entries is 31 March 2008.
- Full rules are available at: www.languageswork.org.uk.

Little voices (early years-KS1)
Join the singalong and raise your voices from 4 to 10 February at events across the UK for ICAN’s Chatterbox Challenge. Young vocalists will perform rhymes and songs to help children with communication difficulties.
- For further information and a fundraising pack visit: www.chatterboxchallenge.org.uk.

Indian Himalayas Trek (teachers)
VSO is looking for teachers to take part in a ten day trek to Little Tibet in the Indian Himalayas from 10 to 21 August. Money raised will go to VSO’s work.
- Get information and register at www.vso.org.uk/challenge or call 020 8780 7289.

RESOURCES

Who cares? Teens do! (KS3-4)
Under-18s taking part in a Hansard Society online debate on animal cruelty supported animal testing to find cures for disease but condemned battery farming. A new parliamentary resource provides a secure student discussion platform.
- Register a class/school/year group online at: www.headsup.org.uk/content/register.asp?page=s7_4.

Moving tales (KS2-3)
National Archives offers free access to first-hand experiences of migrants. Moving Here – schools will encourage pupils to explore Britain’s multicultural society. Ideal for KS2/3 history, geography, citizenship and ICT.
- www.movinghere.org.uk/schools
- Act to protect (teachers)
Safety in learning from the NSPCC trains teachers to know what to do if they suspect a child is being abused.
- £85 inc p&p from NSPCC, Weston House, 42 Curtain Road, London EC2A 3NH.

Veggies galore (KS4)
Two new resources from the Vegetarian Society. The project book for schools and Why it's green to go vegetarian, are free and suitable for GCSE.
- email: Jamie@vegsoc.org or post: Vegetarian Society, Parkdale, Dunham Road, Altrincham WA14 4QG.

Say cheese (KS3-4)
Help teenagers develop their knowledge of nutrition with the British Cheese Board’s Choose Cheese food technology pack. It has background information, activity ideas, recipes and a DVD.
- Download at www.britishcheese.com (go to Teachers, then Teaching – BCB Education Packs.) Some packs are available free from magenta@edist.co.uk.

SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING

Science in the real world (KS3+)
A secondary science programme is showing that natural history museums play an invaluable role in supporting the new science curriculum. Up to 40 per cent of students asked said they were more positive about science after a museum visit. ‘Real world science’ links the Natural History and Manchester museums, Oxford University Museum of Natural History and Tyne & Wear museums to support this focus, which is being extended into the KS3-4 and A level curriculum in 2008.
- Workshops and activities are free for pre-booked schools at the museums. Enquire by calling: 020 7942 5555 or visit www.nhm.ac.uk/education.

Big things at Smallpeice (KS3-A level)
To combat the shortage of engineers the Smallpeice Trust has facilities for 1,500 13 to 17 year olds to attend subsidised, occasionally free, residential courses in more than 25 subjects including aerospace and marine technology, biomedical and motorsport engineering, robotics, supercomputing and nanotechnology.
- Find out more from www.smallpeicetrust.org.uk.

Little book of civilisation 2 (KS3-4)
Three in four young people don’t know what civil engineers do, according to a recent study. The Institution of Civil Engineers has published this illustrated book and film clip to help teachers boost understanding of civil engineers’ contribution to society.
- The book and accompanying film clip are online at www.ice.org.uk/civilisation. For hard copies, or to find out more, email civilisation@ice.org.uk.

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June 2007
Celebrating LGBT History Month

LGBT History Month takes place each February. Elly Barnes (right), an NUT member at Stoke Newington media arts college, discusses her school’s celebrations.

"W

ith new legislation to combat discrimination relating to sexual orientation, I couldn’t wait to mark LGBT History Month in my school. The misuse of the word ‘gay’ to mean stupid was beginning to grate. I was head of year and a music teacher, and this gave me the freedom to celebrate with my new Year 7s and in my subject area in 2006.

With the help of Joy Kahumbu from the Hackney Learning Trust and Geoff Huckle from Staying Out, I devised a short assembly for my year group. It included music by LGBT artists and a presentation to open up discussion about our school code, Stonewall, LGBT symbols, gay pride, gay culture and more.

I built on this in 2007 to implement a whole-school LGBT History Month. This included year assemblies, a display, subject-specific projects (see right), and a final assembly with presentations from each department.

The initial assemblies challenged students’ thinking with humour, visuals and music. They entered happily singing along to a Scissor Sisters song and then saw the words ‘Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Month’ on a big screen. They discussed what these words meant, with much hilarity. There was confusion as to what a lesbian was, and a transvestite! It is this ignorance that causes homophobia – once educated, attitudes change.

The main comment I hear from colleagues who want to tackle homophobia in their schools is that they are too scared to talk about LGBT issues with their students. Remember, as teachers we are giving information, not making a judgement. We do this every day in our jobs.

Teachers also say they are scared of not being supported by colleagues and managers. But it only takes one person to start the process. Once everyone sees the difference it makes to school culture, other staff feel able to deal with homophobic and students feel able to report homophobic incidents.

Students’ misconceptions need to be eradicated before they can respect and remember the achievements of LGBT people. A first step is to get them to acknowledge that there are gay people all around them. Curiously, some say “I don’t believe in gays.” I say this is like not believing in baked beans. I explain that 15 per cent of people in the room are likely to be LGBT and we must respect those people.

The final assembly was a culmination of everybody’s work. It began with me asking: “What does ‘L’ stand for?” A resounding “lesbian” was shouted by 1300 students. We had Year 7s singing Ghetto Gospel by TuPac and Elton John, with Year 11s accompanying. Year 8 did a maths talk on LGBT statistics and Year 7 did a PE talk about Justin Fashanu. Students read out their own poetry, and the Keith Haring artwork was on display.

The highlight was a gay but not ‘out’ student who sang a George Michael song, An easier affair, about coming out. This was met with huge cheers from the students. LGBT month has changed his life – he has received nothing but support and respect.

After the celebrations a Year 10 boy told me he wasn’t going to call his friends “gay” any more when they got on his nerves. Instead he would just called them “idiots!” What a result!

After the assembly my class took the rainbow flag and hung it on the school gates, along with students’ posters. Comments from members of the community were all positive. The Hackney Gazette, Hackney Today and Socialist Worker newspapers ran our story, which helped spread the positive message into the community.

Hackney Free and Haggerston schools will be joining us in February 2008 for LGBT celebrations. My aim is to encourage all schools in my borough – and then throughout London – to mark LGBT History Month.

Elly Barnes

Resources:
- www.lgbthistorymonth.org.uk
- www.schools-out.org.uk
- www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/equality/
- sexualorientation
- http://new.wales.gov.uk/ (search for ‘homophobia’)

Every subject celebrated with a project. For example:
- Music: songs by Elton John and George Michael.
- Art: artist Keith Haring (students’ artwork was submitted to the LGBT exhibition at Hackney Museum).
- Science: the gay gene.
- Humanities: treatment of gay people in concentration camps.
- Modern foreign languages: fashion by Jean Paul Gaultier.
- Maths: LGBT statistics.
- PE: treatment by fans of gay footballer Justin Fashanu.
- English: poetry by LGBT writers.
- Design and technology: students made the rainbow flag and explored its meanings.
- ICT: pupils made posters to hang on the school gates.

Elly barnes@sns.hackney.sch.uk

January-February 08 / The Teacher
a funny thing happened...

... meeting pupils’ parents

In the seventies I was a reception teacher. My school had a rule that no child could enter a classroom before 8.50am.

I had one or two troubled children in my class, and reasoned that any child can feel upset occasionally, so I told my children that if they ever felt upset they could come into the classroom to be with me from 8.30am, where, with a mug of coffee, I’d be preparing lessons.

One day the father of a pupil came into the classroom at 8.30am. I asked him: “Is it about Shane?”

“No, Mrs Pope. It’s not Shane. It’s me. I came out of prison this morning and my wife won’t let me in. Shane says if ever you’re unhappy you can come into the classroom to you. So I’ve come.”

We sat together at a low table on two of those tiny chairs and I gave him my coffee. When the whistle went I looked at him apologetically but he understood and said: “I know, Mrs Pope and that’s all right. I’ll go. I feel better now, thank you.”

Dorothy, Middlesex

In my second year of teaching, the dad of one of my Year 1 pupils was a Premiership footballer with West Ham – the team my whole family supports. He was also good looking and extremely fit. I was completely in awe and developed a bit of a crush on him. Whenever he came into school to discuss his son’s progress I found myself going bright red and becoming totally tongue tied!

Claire, Surrey

A girl in my nursery often talked about the fact that her mum was a pianist. With little musical talent among the staff, I eventually approached this mum to ask if she might be willing to play the piano at our Christmas sing-along. Her eyes filled with fear. “All I can play is chopsticks,” she said.

Turns out she was a secretary, and not a pianist at all!

Sue, West Sussex

A Year 6 boy said to me at home-time: “My dad says he’s looking forward to parents’ evening tonight as he really fancies you.” I don’t think I’ve ever felt so awkward about meeting a parent!

Anon

In preparation for a visit to our school by a children’s author, I showed a Year 2 class a photograph of the author and asked who they thought it might be. After several interesting ideas ranging from TV presenters to “the Queen’s niece”, one child asked me: “Is it you when you were older?” I felt very flattered!

Jo, Northamptonshire

I had just begun talking to the mother and stepfather of one of my GCSE pupils at parents’ evening, when the girl’s real dad walked in. She had invited him without the knowledge of her mum and stepdad, and the situation was tense to say the least. Then the real dad saw that the girl was using the stepdad’s surname on her coursework. The two dads began a slanging match which developed into a fist-fight.

Needless to say the incident has been the subject of much discussion in the staffroom since!

John, London

Next issue: A funny thing happened in our history lesson. Send us your anecdotes by 4 February.
Teachers’ tips

Last issue Tess asked for advice on teaching in a developing country.

Go for the long haul

I am currently teaching in an international school in Nairobi. I applied for my post through an advert in the Times Educational Supplement.

My school has linked with several orphanage schools and works with them providing resources and teacher training. This Christmas I spent a couple of days with the Year 7 and 8 pupils (primary goes up to Year 8) wrapping hundreds of presents for the orphans to open on Christmas day.

I have previously done volunteer work in Ghana. My advice is to find an organisation where you can provide skills that local teachers won’t be able to provide, such as up-to-date teaching practices. You don’t want to put anyone else out of a job.

The best placements are those where you are in the country for more than a year, as you will make a much bigger difference and the charity you work with will get the best value for money. I checked out lots of information on the countries I’ve taught in before I left home and brought with me any essentials I needed – although most major cities have almost anything you need these days.

Follow the locals and you won’t go wrong. Good luck and enjoy yourself wherever you go!

Felicity, by email

Be flexible

In general VSO placements are three months or longer, but we do have an increasing need for senior teachers who are available to work on discrete projects with ministries of education, educational charities or local offices of education.

Our advice is to be flexible. We ask our volunteers to think about where their skills are needed most, rather than where they’d like to be. Check the fine print – VSO volunteers don’t have to pay towards their placement but other organisations may charge you. And get a clear description of your role, so you can hit the ground running.

Theresa Mellon, Education Goal Leader, VSO (www.vso.org.uk)

Next issue...

Do other teachers let their current and former pupils become their ‘friends’ on Facebook [the social networking website]? I don’t see anything wrong with it and particularly enjoy keeping up with my former students this way, but my husband (who, like me, is a secondary teacher) completely disagrees. He says it’s a mistake to mix my work life with my social and family life through Facebook. What do others think?

TN, by email

Reader’s rant

Have faith in religious schools

Faith schools have had a terrible battering over the last few months and I am annoyed with all the negative press. If a pupil won a scholarship to a specialist music or drama school no one would bat an eyelid. Yet mention faith schools and it sends the hackles rising.

Why? Parents have the right to choose a private, grammar or local community school for their children, so the opportunity to attend a faith school shouldn’t be taken away. In response to the backstabbing these schools are often given, it seems only fair to attack some of the myths.

1. Faith schools are racist.

The whole rationale behind faith schools is providing a caring environment in the ethos of that particular faith. In Christianity the teachings of Jesus Christ are used as an example. Being racist wouldn’t be following Christ’s teaching. While faith schools have a preference for that particular faith, they do not set out to exclude other religions completely.

2. Faith schools segregate children from a multicultural society.

School isn’t the whole person’s life. They are outside, shopping, travelling meeting neighbours. In some of the schools I’ve taught in, for example in Greater Manchester, there are many diverse cultures that children from all schools will encounter in their daily lives. Some asylum seekers from different cultures and backgrounds go to faith schools.

3. Faith schools are bigoted.

Are they really? All schools have positive and negative qualities. Isn’t it bigoted of the government to say a person cannot be taught in a school that practises their faith?

4. Faith schools are filling pupils with nonsense.

It could easily be argued that children continually revising SATS, following a very rigid National Curriculum that is not always relevant to the particular children you are teaching is filling pupils with nonsense.

5. All children should be offered equal opportunities.

Is it equal opportunities if a person of a particular faith group cannot feel at ease believing in something because it isn’t seen to be trendy or supporting the beliefs of others?

There are good and bad schools throughout the country. It is not a question of faith, it is more a question of attitude. There is a common focus on the particular school’s beliefs but, contrary to what the media may have you think, pupils in faith schools do learn about other religions.

Faith schools should be an option. Some of the faith schools I have experienced have been a pure joy to work in. Without them I think society would lack an extra dimension.

Cindy, by email

Editor’s note: Read a report of the NUT’s recent faith schools conference and find out about the work of the union’s faith schools working party on page 6.

Send your contributions for A funny thing happened, The things pupils say, Teachers’ tips and Reader’s rant to: The Teacher, NUT, Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, London WC1H 9BD or email them to teacher@nut.org.uk.

Deadline for next issue: Monday 4 February.

Apology: Page 44 of the November/December edition of The Teacher carried a cartoon which some members found offensive. The cartoon did not pass through our usual system of editorial approval and was inappropriate for publication in the magazine. We apologise sincerely for having included it.
The costs of inclusion
I wish to add support to the nameless teacher’s contribution about inclusion in the ‘Reader’s Rant’ column last issue.

I am from an African country, where the budget for a single child at a special school in the UK would run a clinic for a year, and yet I fully support the expensive funding of special schools and the need to separate children with special needs from the mainstream.

My opinion is based on the needs of the majority of ‘normal’ pupils who have the right to a focused learning environment. These pupils will need to be far more numerate and literate than those of a generation ago – there are few jobs on assembly lines and they need to be equipped for healthy competition with highly motivated immigrants.

My experience of supply teaching in mainstream schools, and then spending several years as a teacher in a very good school for children with autism, is enough to convince me that money spent on separating special needs pupils benefits all.

Now, as the owner of a tutoring business, I find that the majority of teachers who become tutors do so because they cannot work productively in their schools, owing to the activities of challenging pupils.

I might be accused of biting the hand that feeds me, but I can’t help wondering how much inclusion really costs.

Ross Metcalfe
by email

I totally agree with the teacher who wrote the last ‘Reader’s rant’. Twelve days into my Christmas break, I am still exhausted by the effects of the constant disruption I endure in my classroom. The thought of returning to the high-pitched screaming and outbursts of violence and aggression of the included child makes me feel drained before I even start.

The child concerned has a full-time support assistant who was on her knees by the end of term. It regularly takes both of us to deal with his behaviour; each episode takes time away from the other 28 children in my Key Stage 1 class.

As teachers, we know that children need to feel secure in their classroom in order to learn, but my pupils are in a state of anxiety when this child is present. A disproportionate amount of my breaks and PPA time are spent dealing with him: managing his behaviour (and those of others who now mimic him); monitoring him when he runs out of the classroom; filling in forms; phoning various authorities; discussing his targets with him and filling out his behaviour card; and so on. Add to this the time spent meeting with the Senco and other agencies, plus the continual disruption to the head’s day when called on to support the staff concerned. How wonderful it would be if every child in my class could have this amount of my time!

Inclusion is not only failing the children in my class and their teacher but the child who is being included!

Name and address withheld

Super support
I recently decided to change unions and would like to thank the NUT for being such a bulwark in my career. Like most teachers I ran the gamut of difficulties of our profession, and always received prompt, competent advice and help from empathic professionals.

Not only has the NUT been a source of tremendous support, it also provided great CPD. One of my watershed moments was my experience during the ‘Equal access to promotion’ residential course, hosted by the NUT and the NCCL. It acted as a catalyst to my career and enabled me to learn from charismatic leaders like Jan McKenley.

The NUT is truly a union that has the interests of its members at the forefront.

Sudhana Moodley
Berkshire

More details about Equal access to promotion courses at www.ncsl.org.uk/eap.

Unnatural selection?
“It’s what we call ‘hitting the wall’,” I was informed by my tutor, as several coursemates and I commiserated over the first casualty of our PGCE year.

“We are alone in competing against NQTs,” I was told by my department mentor who was an experienced staff member.

“The relentless drive of the NUT is nothing compared to that of the NUT,” I thought, as I was made redundant in August 2006 and have been surrounded by lively children ever since.

Several seemed to be developing health problems, from trainee teachers’ flu to severe allergies to children. As a science trainee I mused that this was natural selection.

As someone who came to my PGCE not knowing whether I wanted to teach, I find myself in a singular position. I have got fellow trainees and tutors, a welcoming school, and am surrounded by lively children and a supportive department.

On Fridays when we return to university to discuss the past week I find myself quietly, almost sheepishly, saying how much I enjoyed it. Marking my Year 7’s work was “a real pleasure” I gush, my Year 9 class were “smiling and polite”, my department mentor is always on hand with some helpful advice.

I try to keep my smugness quiet, for fear ‘the wall’ is just around the corner. Until then, I am quietly (unless this email is printed!) a trainee teacher and loving it!

Mike Lamb
by email

Can you help?
Many cover lessons are now ‘taught’ by unqualified staff. This is unacceptable and is compromising pupils’ education. All lessons should be taught by qualified, registered teachers.

Visit the 10 Downing Street petition website and ensure that all pupils benefit from having qualified teachers in classrooms: http://petitions.pm.gov.uk/qualifiedteacher.

Philip Barton
by email

Unhealthy competition
I have just read the letter ‘Crossing the threshold’ (November 2007). It has reassured me that I am not alone in competing against NQTs for posts after I have crossed the first threshold.

Cheap and cheerful always seem to prevail. Schools do not say that, but when you are told after an interview you said all the right things, and the head has doubts about the NQT they did appoint, they might as well.

I was made redundant in August 2006 and have been doing supply ever since. I enjoy it, but miss having my own class and developing a relationship with children.

Surely schools will run out of experienced staff? NQTs require mentoring, monitoring, training and time out of the classroom. Experienced staff need far less input.

J Grayling
by email
I will vote yes

I was very pleased to see in the December issue Steve Sinnott and Graham Clayton urging members to vote yes for an NUT political fund.

Being a lifelong opponent of the BNP (and the old National Front) I will vote yes.

However I am unclear as to how much extra I would have to pay. The proposed additional payment will be calculated as 1 per cent of the full annual sub (£1.42). I am a retired member and my annual sub is £4.10. Will I pay 1 per cent of this (4p) or will I pay £1.42, which would be 34 per cent on top of my sub?

Martin Kirby
Nottingham

• All members are invited to pay the same fee, 1 per cent of the full subscription, £1.42 a year.

Nasty one Cyril!

Sir Cyril Taylor GBE, chair of the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust, has advised the government that there are 17,000 bad teachers who ought to be sacked. It is surprising that Chris Woodhead isn’t suing him for identity theft, as he made the same spurious claim ten years ago.

The figure is based on Ofsted assessments of schools, not individual teachers. The real figure is closer to 8,000, but even this is based on a ten-minute glance at the work of a teacher who may have been teaching for ten or 20 years. Moreover Ofsted inspectors define lessons as ‘satisfactory’ and unelected individuals like Cyril translate that as ‘bad’. A few lessons in maths, statistics and the English language would do him no harm.

Half the time the source of stressed teachers’ difficulties is senior management, who are themselves bullied by ‘advisers’ and politicians like Cyril demanding impossible targets.

His solution is to sack bad teachers and “go out and recruit fantastic teachers.” I think this shows what a fantasy world he lives in. Spend a couple of hundred thousand pounds on training a teacher and as soon as he or she has difficulties throw them on the scrapheap. Then replace them with “fantastic” (ie fantasy) teachers… from Hogwarts, presumably.

All teachers will encounter difficulties at some stage, and if they get help and support they can overcome them. They get that help from other teachers as a rule – certainly not from people like Cyril. What are they for?

Derek McMillan
West Sussex

• Editor’s note: Sir Cyril Taylor has been replaced in his role at the SSAT following a unanimous vote of its governing council in December.

Moved or changed your job?

Please let the NUT know.

Ring 0845 300 1666, visit www.teachers.org.uk and click ‘Update Your Membership’, or write to Records and Subscription Services, NUT, Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, London WC1H 9BD.

Please let the union know if you:
• change your home or school address
• change your employment contract (to permanent, fixed-term, supply, full-time or part-time teacher)
• are about to change to reduced subscription membership (maternity leave, retired/left profession membership)
• are appointed to a new post such as deputy head, headteacher, or Emtag teacher.

Need help or advice?
If you’ve got a problem at work, or want to know more about NUT services, contact:
• your school representative, or
• your local association, or
• your regional office, or NUT Cymru in Wales.

Please write

The editor welcomes your letters but reserves the right to edit them. Write to Your letters, The Teacher, NUT, Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, London WC1H 9BD or email teacher@nut.org.uk.

Letters for the March edition should reach us no later than Monday 4 February.

Please note that we cannot print letters sent to us without name and postal address (or NUT membership number), although we can withhold these details from publication if you wish.

The Teacher on Tape is free on cassette for the visually impaired. Call 020 7380 4708 for details.

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BackBeat

And now for the good news

The media love a bad school story. Education journalist and campaigner Fiona Millar says the truth is different – and it’s about time we heard it.

Are our state secondary schools succeeding or failing? There must be many days when the average citizen would struggle to answer that question.

There are those of us whose personal experience is of local schools that do an excellent job, often in difficult circumstances. We know there are many inspired, committed teachers who, in the face of challenging social problems, manage to create a respectful, tolerant atmosphere in which children learn to be good citizens as well as pass exams.

Most objective research backs this up and suggests that the majority of parents are satisfied with their children's schools.

The past half century has witnessed slow but steady improvements in standards, teaching and leadership. In 1959, an era when society was arguably more stable, around 9 per cent of 16 year olds got five or more O levels. Today the figure is around 60 per cent.

Some schools do fail. It would be unrealistic to ignore the extreme and intractable behaviour of a minority of young people or the gaps in achievement between the least and most well off children.

Yet even ministers in the Brown government can’t get out of that old habit of focusing on failure rather than success – four of the last major ministerial speeches on schools have done this.

But giving the ravenous press beast the food it craves doesn’t help schools, not least when it is done to justify more, often unnecessary, reform.

We need politicians to think about the 93 per cent of parents who want someone to stand up for their schools and their children, deplore the pessimism of the British media and use the successes of the past half century as the launch pad for future reform – the first of which could be a clearer definition of what we mean by a ‘good school’.

“The new Children’s Plan takes a more optimistic view of young people than we are used to from politicians.”

NUT general secretary Steve Sinnott and Fiona Millar address the NUT fringe meeting at the 2007 Labour Party conference.

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The new Children’s Plan takes a more optimistic view of young people than we have been used to from politicians. However well meaning, the ‘respect’ agenda reinforced the idea that British youth were going to hell in a hand cart.

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