

ACTION

'The voice of joy, the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the voice of those who say: Praise the Lord of hosts, For the Lord is good, His mercy endures for ever.'

Jeremiah 33:11

Editorial: The Lord is Good

Praise Him indeed! As we come to the end of another year, we are all thankful to Him for getting us through. There have been highs and inevitably, there have been many lows, but He has been there and He has kept His promise to be with us in every situation.

Transfer Latest

For some of you, the summer may mean changes, whether a new school, promotion or retirement. Whatever the reason, we pray that God will go before you and prepare the way so that you can face whatever is thrown at you in the year to come.

VQ Hero Awards

The autumn term will see changes to NIACT and how we keep in touch with you. Further details will come with the autumn posting and we hope that you will welcome the changes and help us to remain a Christian voice in education.

PC RE

From the committee of NIACT, may we wish you a very relaxed but inspiring holiday, wherever you happen to end up and may you find time to get closer to our Father and enjoy fellowship with Him.

Fred Corscadden,
Chairman,
fredcorscadden@yahoo.co.uk

What is NIACT?

News in brief

Despite the name, NIACT is not just for teachers but for anyone involved in education: technicians, classroom assistants, even board officers! NIACT aims to provide support and be a forum for Christian thinking on education in Northern Ireland.

We are not a lobby group and the views of members differ on many subjects. However, we do care enough to want to offer a reasoned and professional Christian perspective when responses are invited.

In Brief

Opportunities to serve abroad:

www.hebronooty.org/staffing.htm

<http://www.sim.org/index.php/opportunity/countries>

Students ... !

A 6ft snake and a life-size skeleton are among the bizarre items left behind as students leave university halls for the summer.

They'll have your eye out!

A Devon school has banned pupils from wearing swimming goggles - because they get slippery when wet .

NIACT

Chairman: Fred Corscadden
4 Bolea Park
Limavady
Co. Londonderry
BT49 0SH

Phone: 028 777 68339
E-mail: fredcorscadden@yahoo.co.uk

The Northern Ireland Association of Christian Teachers

The Northern Ireland Association of Christian Teachers aims to advance and apply the Christian faith in schools and colleges by supporting, uniting, equipping, and representing Christians employed in education.

We're on the
web:
www.niact.org.uk

Jesus got up and went with him, and so did his disciples.

Matt 9:19

Then he took the seven loaves and the fish, and when he had given thanks, he broke them and gave them to the disciples, and they in turn to the people.

Matt 15:36

Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it.

Mark 16:20

Action evolves

This edition of Action has been put together for New Horizon 2009 as a preview of some of the ideas we intend to try out in forthcoming editions and contains some items from summer and winter editions.

We are particularly keen to have input from members (and even non-members!): stories, news, anything you think might be interesting to readers in fact. Some suggestions are made elsewhere in the newsletter.

Teachers get a Plato

Actually on June 15th at the Waterfront not just teachers but governors and teaching assistants were recognised for their contribution to education. The Teaching Awards were founded in 1998 by Lord Puttnam to encourage inspirational teaching.

Categories included: Sustainable Schools, Teaching Assistant of the Year, Governor of the Year, Teacher of the Year (primary, secondary and special needs school awards as well as Outstanding New Teacher).

Headteacher of the Year in a Secondary School award was won by Dr Michael Dobbins, from Foyle View Special School in Londonderry which caters for children with severe learning difficulties. He is known as Mickey, or Mr Sunshine, by the pupils because he is always smiling. The school's accolades include the UNICEF Rights Respecting School Award 2008 and the Silver Health Promotion Award 2008.

The full list of winners can be viewed on: www.teachingawards.com where nominations for the Teaching Award 2010 are now open.

Principals under pressure

Primary school principals are finding themselves under pressure on the one hand from the Department of Education to teach the Revised Curriculum and on the other from parents and boards of governors to teach for the new grammar school entry tests. Even schools in the Dixon plan are caught in the confusion.

Unions have reminded members of their contractual obligation to deliver the Revised Curriculum.

OCR Pilot Includes Druids and Moonies

With questions like: "What problems can wearing religious symbols cause?" and "describe the positive outcomes of interfaith marriage" it is hardly surprising the Religious Studies GCSE OCR is piloting in September this year has been described as "populist".

However, it is the inclusion of "new religions" including Rastafarianism, Unification Church (popularly known as Moonies) and Druids that has attracted most criticism.

The unit Religion and Belief in the Modern World, looks at the impact religion, secularisation and Humanism have on society in terms of business, politics and personal freedoms and offers the opportunity to explore two "new" religious movements.

"This new GCSE pilot allows us take a fresh look at how religious studies is taught," according to Clara Kenyon, OCR's qualifications director. "It addresses a range of issues relevant to students today, who often see religious issues in the news without necessarily having an understanding of the background."

40 Different Languages in NI Schools

According to Chief Inspector Stanley Goudie the last school census carried out showed there are "around 7,000 newcomer children speaking 40 different languages" in Northern Ireland schools.

Inspectors visited 25 schools to assess support for newcomer children. They concluded that overall the provision of support is good.

The services and resources provided by the Inclusion and Diversity Service (IDS) were singled out for particular praise.

Teachers in England to face 5 year checks

Children's secretary Ed Balls has said he will introduce a "licence to teach" to place teachers on a par with doctors and solicitors to ensure they are fit to teach. Those not up to scratch could be banned from the classroom. The renewable licence was outlined in the Schools White Paper as a way of weeding out poor teachers: education experts suggest thousands are under-performing.

Union response is divided; being on a par with doctors and solicitors is attractive but there is plenty of accountability already.

VQ Hero Awards

At the inaugural VQ Hero Awards ceremony in June Sir Reg Empey, minister for Employment and Learning announced the Young Learner of the Year and Learner of the Year.

The 24 years and under category was won by Alex Greene. A former student of the Southern

Regional College, Alex is now working at Gordon Ramsey's restaurant Claridges London having excelled in his placement there.

Geraldine Byrne, also a former student of the Southern Regional College who now runs her own hairdressing salon won the 25

years and over category. Speaking at the ceremony Sir Reg Empey said: "Vocational qualifications underpin everything my department is doing to raise the skills levels of the local population. This is why we are recognising vocational achievement through the celebration of VQ Day".

Send Them to the Head's Office for a Tongue Lashing

An old fashioned bawling out rather than suspension would be a better way of dealing with many pupils according to former headteacher and government behaviour advisor Sir Alan Steer.

In an interview in The Independent Sir Alan also discussed his plan to back measures such as detention and confiscating mobile phones by enshrining them in law. He believes this is necessary as some schools have become reluctant to use traditional methods of discipline because parents are often inclined to challenge rather than support them.

Exam students can 'phone a friend'

Inspired by Who Wants to be a Millionaire, Reinhard Peter allows his students to call a series of experts if they're stumped by questions at his high school in Bregenz, Austria. He said: "They can call doctors, teachers and other people to ask their help." However it turns out that the experts are often more nervous about the exams and getting the right answers than the students.

Contributing to Action

While the plan is to increase the content of Action we also want to make items short and snappy, we're all in a hurry these days. The result is we need help! Suggested items include "It Worked For Me" - we want to offer practical tips, things you wish you'd known sooner; book or resource reviews (short) or just web links; items of news (doesn't need to be earth shattering); information on mission work with an education connection including jobs available; funny stories—we'd love cartoons if you're talented that way; in fact anything you think might appeal to an audience that comprises Northern Irish educators based locally and across the world.

Is Barney part of a Creationist conspiracy?

In a talk given to the British Humanist Association in July, James Williams, a lecturer in education, claimed creationists deliberately feed children scientific misconceptions. This forms the scaffolding for all new knowledge making it difficult for them to accept aspects of evolution.

To counteract this he advocated that all pupils should be taught evolution from in primary school so they do not mistake Barney the dinosaur for scientific fact.

In his talk he said: "Because most children love dinosaurs, creationists tempt them with books, toys and museums featuring assorted prehistoric wildlife. Their literature targets primary pupils, presenting pseudoscientific explanations alongside images of dinosaurs in the Garden of Eden or descriptions of dinosaurs dying out during the great flood. Popular culture unwittingly reinforces this, with images of Fred Flintstone riding a dinosaur to work or Raquel Welch fending off a giant tortoise."

If you have any of the literature Williams is concerned about Action would be keen to know about it, particularly if there are pictures of Adam and Eve on dinosaurs.

I always end up raising my voice in class ... (part 1)

Let's not start with the obvious. What is your room like? Are there lots of soft furnishings or is it full of hard surfaces?

Think of school canteens. They tend to be noisy places and the main reason is the acoustics. Every voice booms around the room and the next person to speak has to raise their voice to be heard over the din.

Think of airport lounges. They too used to be big echoey barns but now they tend to be much quieter. Soft surfaces have been introduced. Ceilings are lower and may have sculpted tiles. Big empty areas have been broken up into smaller zones.

My first classroom (after the mobile) had carpet, curtains, a suspended ceiling and sofas(!). I rarely, if ever had to raise my voice to be heard. OK, so asking for sofas might not be on the agenda but if your room has lots of hard surfaces simple things might help. Any soft material is good.

Bear in mind you're looking for absorbency so thin curtain material stretched tight will absorb little whereas soft, thick fabric with lots of folds works well. Even hard furniture can help. An empty room echoes; breaking up the sound path with bits and pieces of furniture around the room will improve the situation. Bookcases full of books are brilliant, think how quiet the local library is!

Government initiative counterproductive

The Young People's Development Programme (YPDP), offered education and support for 13 to 15 -year-olds considered at risk of exclusion from school, drug abuse and teenage pregnancy. Between 2004 and 2007 the programme ran in 27 parts of England.

2,371 teenagers were involved in at least part of the programme over the three years, at a total cost of £5.9 million, but the Department of Health commissioned evaluation using a comparison group indicates that young women who attended the programme were "significantly" more likely to become pregnant (16% compared to 6%).

Worryingly the report suggests the programme was actually counterproductive in other ways: "Young women in the intervention group also more commonly reported early heterosexual experience (58% v 33%) and expectation of teenage parenthood (34% v 24%),".

On the plus side, the researchers said The YPDP was rated highly by most young people, staff, parents and other stakeholders!