



Backchat

August 2010

Issue 116

In this issue

- **Join Parents' Voice**
- **Important info on children at work**
- **Hopscotch Theatre**
- **SNPICL**
- **Small charities fundraiser**
- **Participants, not Pawns**

Welcome to a new academic year! It's hard to believe the summer is nearly over and schools are once again settling in the new intake and shifting existing students up a year, plus Curriculum for Excellence is now officially with us.

Plans for our 2010 conference on 6 November in Dundee are now well advanced and you'll be receiving a mailing on both the conference and the SPTC AGM very shortly. Our speakers come from a variety of backgrounds and we'll be debating both the new legislation around disclosures and the need to strike a balance between safety and over protection. Hope to see you there!

We'd like to remind Parent Council members not insured through their local authority that their membership/ insurance cover ended on 31 July so please return your membership renewal paperwork NOW as your insurance cover has now lapsed!

As I made my way through Edinburgh one evening last week on the way home from hearing the inspirational Annie Lennox talk about her SING campaign, I drew some strange looks - probably because I had forgotten that I was still wearing the T-shirt everyone was given after the presentation (for a photo of course) with HIV POSITIVE emblazoned across the front.

A major thrust of Annie's presentation - part of the Festival of Politics and supported by the General Teaching Council Scotland - was about the stigma associated with HIV and Aids. Annie's SING campaign works with

African women and children with HIV/Aids to give information, medical treatment and practical support. She says she's not interested in charity but in human rights and social justice. It's a strong message and one most of us can identify with.

Annie asked the teachers and educational decision makers present to make a commitment to raise awareness of this condition which is the world's Number 1 killer of women of reproductive age. Hopefully that message will filter back through schools and lead to both fundraising and information exchange among our global citizens.

If you would like to get involved as an individual or a parent group, check out the SING website: <http://www.annielennoxsing.com>

Small charities Fundraiser

SPTC has been approached by a business which is keen to set up a fundraising scheme for parent organisations.

We've agreed to ask you – SPTC members – if you would be interested in the approach. You'll find a flier in this issue of Backchat with a questionnaire. The response will dictate whether we work with Small Charities Fundraiser, so let us know what you think!

Participants, Not Pawns!

Participants, Not Pawns is a great new publication from Children in Scotland and Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People, who have joined forces to produce what we believe to be outstanding guidance on best practice in consulting with children and young people.

Although it is – on the face of it – about consultation on school closures, in fact it's great guidance on consulting with anyone about anything. Parent Councils and PTAs could use it as a guide to prompt their local authority. You can find a link to Participants Not Pawns on the SPTC website or you can go to: http://www.childreninScotland.org.uk/docs/Participantsnotpawnsguidance20100315_000.pdf

LifeGym – a new programme for P7s

LifeGym is a new enterprise programme designed for P7 pupils as they prepare to move to secondary school: it aims to help parents engage in conversations with their children about a range of subjects affecting them. The materials tap into Self Science/Emotional Intelligence teaching, focusing on children's self esteem and the knock-on benefits to the school of better behaviour and happier children. LifeGym has been designed with the aims of Curriculum for Excellence in mind and should be completed at home with the help of parents over four terms. To find out more information about LifeGym get in touch with Lynn Mackenzie of Young Citizens by e-mail mail@young-citizens.com or log on to the Young Citizens website www.young-citizens.com

Join Parent's Voice!

Interested in telling us your views on educational topics? Then Parent's Voice is the thing for you!

Parent's Voice is a new scheme for members to share their views and experiences with SPTC. We're looking for parents willing to respond to approximately one email a month from us on a variety of topics. We then use these responses to inform our discussions at committees and when we answer media enquiries.

All the information you give us is confidential: we gather all the information together and never use individuals' details. If you would like to join then send your name, email address and the name of your school to Eleanor Coner on eleanor@sptc.info

It would also be useful if you could indicate if you are particularly interested in one or more of these areas; curriculum, qualifications, local authority matters, learning and teaching, child welfare, parental involvement.

Have you heard about SNPICL?

SNPICL – the Scottish Network for Parental Involvement in Children's Learning – is an organisation which brings together local authority workers such as those in family learning, community learning and development and home-school workers.

SNPICL runs workshops and meetings in all areas of Scotland which are also attended by parents.

At SPTC we work closely with SNPICL: both organisations are committed to parental involvement and in improving educational outcomes for children. If you work with professionals who may be interested in hearing more about SNPICL, don't hesitate to pass on details of SNPICL's website and contact details: Tel: 0131 225 9600 or email: office@snpicl.info

SNPICL's Annual Lecture is due to take place on 25 November in Edinburgh and the speaker is John Carnochan from the Violence Reduction Unit in Glasgow. Watch this space for more information.

Curriculum for Excellence Communication Update

Here we are in the first weeks of term and we wonder how the reality of Curriculum for Excellence is being played out in schools across the country. We hope to hear from you about your experience. Probably the greatest concern SPTC and our members have had over the last few years has been the quality and quantity of information available to parents – and young people – about the way in which CfE is going to impact on them. We know a lot of work has been going on over recent months to improve this situation and we thought you'd like to hear more.

For young people

The Insight project involving a group of 20 pupils has given young people the chance to have their views on CfE heard. The research project ran over a number of days and comprised a series of workshops where young people had their say on the new curriculum and what more can be done to communicate the changes to pupils.

Generally, young people felt confused about CfE and in some ways excluded from what was going on:

- “It’s hard trying to piece the story together”
- “Now we know it will affect us, we want to know more”
- “We have a suggestion box at school but it’s for parents; it should be for us”
- “It sounds like something you are going to dread”
- “If teachers can be positive, we can be positive”

What learners want to know is simply how it will affect them and the benefits.

Examples of the comments made by the young people about CfE:

"We're lucky to be moving into secondary just as it's changing." a P7 pupil at New Stevenson Primary School.

"I'm excited and looking forward to going deeper in subjects than we can at primary." P7 girl at New Stevenson Primary School.

"People talk to you like you're a young child or an adult - we need something in between." an S2 pupil at Brannock High School.

"We want to hear about Curriculum for Excellence from other young people and through school... like a video at Assembly." an S2 pupil at Brannock High School.

"We want choice in what we learn and how, have an element of control" an S2 boy Brannock High School.

For Parents

Parents have also been taking part in events where their understanding and ambitions relating to CfE have been explored. While most were found to be aware of the change, there was mixed understanding.

The sessions showed that what parents want are the key facts: what; why; when and how! They want to know about the new qualifications, ongoing assessment and the benefits. In short, what it means for their child.

Louise Murray is a SPTC member who went to one session along with SPTC board member Neil Smith. Louise comments:

“There does seem to be a big difference between the issues in primary and secondary schools: primary schools have perhaps been working in the way of CfE for some time, with secondary schools lagging behind. Most parents at the meeting had the impression that teachers knew very little about it.

“I found that every parent seems to have a different point of view, although by the end of the meeting everyone had a better understanding of CfE. The big issue still seems to be how ALL parents are informed about this change.

“Any schools with an imaginative head teacher will undoubtedly be able to provide a better education for all students.”

Hopscotch Theatre Company

Included with this edition of Backchat is a flier about the latest production from the Hopscotch Theatre Company, "Scotland during the Blitz". Why not use some of your fundraising money to bring the theatre to your school?

Counselling Directory

Some parents may find a new website useful: www.counselling-directory.org.uk has lots of helpful information for those considering counselling. It covers different techniques a counsellor may use, as well as information on areas of distress. The search facility means you can find counsellors in your area and the advanced search allows you to narrow down the result to suit the sort of support you need.

Welcome to Midlothian Parent Councils

All Parent Councils in Midlothian are now SPTC members. A very warm welcome and we look forward to providing you with the information and support you need over the coming years.

The SPTC helpline is available during working hours and you can email us at any time with your queries. We aim to provide a fast, friendly and efficient service and we promise to keep in contact with you till your particular issue is resolved.

Of course, membership of SPTC includes a tailored insurance package – don't hesitate to contact us with any questions on this too!

Children at Work – Understand the Facts

Did you know that approximately 773,000 of 10 – 15 year olds in the UK are working part-time and that the estimated amount they earn is £426 million? (*Figures from Santander Bank*).

Part-time work is a great way for children to earn some extra pocket money and to learn about the world of work, however it's not always a good experience. We were recently contacted by a parent who was concerned about the long shifts her teenage daughter was being asked to work in a local hotel and this prompted us to look closer at the rules governing the employment of children.

We contacted the Scottish Child Law Centre who told us the following:

"Children are allowed to work for their parents from the age of 13 (although there are restrictions on what they can do). In most parts of Scotland they can work for other people from the age of 14, although some Local Authorities allow thirteen year olds to work. You do need to check with your Local Authority. They can also provide you with information about what their regulations about working children are.

There are restrictions on the sort of work children can do, and when they can do it. This varies by their age so you need to check it out. They can only do light work and cannot work in some places such as: kitchens, bars, betting shops, or do any heavy lifting. Employers *must* get a permit from the Council, and parents have to confirm that children are fit to work and that they agree to the child working.

Children do have rights at work, but do not have the right to a minimum wage. They even have rights if their work is unpaid! Your local council can give you a lot of information, and you can get more from the Scottish Child Law Centre. Call 0131 667 6333 Mon – Fri from 9.30 to 4pm; children and young people can call free on 0800 328 8970. You can email enquiries@sclc.org.uk or go to the website and submit a question from either the adult section or the KidZone. (www.sclc.org.uk) You may also be interested in the following leaflet: “A Quick Guide to Employment Rights for People under 16”.

Emails Needed Now!

SPTC is moving with the times and away from paper, so, if you want to keep receiving Backchat and other communication from us **we need your email address.**

The environmental and economic cost of sending out everything in paper copy is enormous and we want to make SPTC’s carbon footprint as small as possible.

Please support us by contacting us now with your email details.

This newsletter is published by the Scottish Parent Teacher Council, 53 George Street, Edinburgh, EH2 2HT.

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