

Editorial

The roots of the Royal Society of Arts go back to the mid-1700s, while those of the College of Teachers only to the mid-1800s, so the RSA (originally named the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures & Commerce) is very much a big brother to the College. The RSA works to remove the barriers to social progress. Building on its 250-year history as a beacon for enlightenment values, it undertakes influential and varied research projects including the school curriculum needed for the 21st Century. Some years ago, RSA Education began work with eight schools on its 'Opening Minds' project. The response was to create the 'Opening Minds' framework for a competence-led curriculum, which has since been used in hundreds of schools and has broadly changed thinking in the education system. To continue this work the RSA is due to open a new Academy School, the Tipton Academy, in September 2008 in a seriously disadvantaged area of the West Midlands which is a focus for major regeneration.

The last research project the College undertook was into the needs of Teaching Assistants, a worthy endeavour but on a very much smaller scale. So the RSA is also the big brother on this count. But with the appointment of four new Professors of Education, the College will be able to re-generate a research programme. One of the College's professors is Anthony Seldon, Master of Wellington College. He writes in this edition on 'Happiness Lessons at Wellington College', offering something of a foil to the national curriculum as has 'Opening Minds'.

Returning to the big brother analogy, the RSA has ten times as many Fellows as the College has members supporting its work. It also hosts the UK's most ambitious free lecture series and this is where in recent years the paths of the RSA and the College have crossed. In October 2000, Professor Tim Brighouse (one of the College's patrons) gave a joint RSA/CoT lecture entitled 'The new teachers' and named the Caldecote Lecture in honour of Lord Caldecote who had done much to rejuvenate the College in the mid-90s. He had suggested with Lord Butterfield (ex-Vice Chancellor of Cambridge University) the change of name from Preceptors to Teachers. In 2002 Baroness Professor Susan Greenfield CBE gave another joint lecture, the Butterfield Memorial Lecture, entitled 'Brain of the Future'. The third lecture in the series was by Sir Trevor McDonald OBE in 2003, on 'Education and the Media'.

We are therefore very pleased that the current Chief Executive of the RSA with Ian McGimpsey has found time to write the lead article for this edition on 'Learning to love ideas'.

'Adolescent gambling in Great Britain' changes the tone of the first two articles and reminds us of the social problems being encountered by teachers in schools. It is written by Professor Mark Griffiths, a leading expert in this field, who reminds us that adolescent gambling in the UK is of great concern because problem gambling amongst adolescents is four to five times more prevalent than among adults.

Opening minds is about stepping away from just acquiring knowledge and skills while at school; Dr Mike Carroll in his article 'Primary science and communities of collaborative enquiry' looks at how primary science can move pupils from such a situation into collaborative enquiry that helps their cognitive development and includes developing their ability to apply knowledge and solve problems. In 'Nurturing principles: effective early years pedagogy', Kim Insley looks at how the principles of nurturing developed in the 70s can lead to an effective teaching strategy in primary schools for particular children and how these can be identified using a diagnostic tool developed by Marjorie Boxall, an Inner London Authority educational psychologist.

I well remember as a General Adviser for Science, Maths and Technology coming across an experienced primary school teacher who believed that children worked better at their mathematics if there was a background of classical music. I never tried to dissuade her from this practice although her Headteacher hoped I would. Although I could not discover any research evidence to back this belief, I always enjoyed visiting her class while they were engaged in mathematics. We conclude the articles for this edition with Julie Cogill, Chair of the College's Publications Committee writing in collaboration with Alan Parr on 'Football – a motivator for mathematics?'

School governors can be associate members of the College so it is appropriate that the book review section this time looks at a book written by Stephen Adamson, a well known writer and tutor in the field of governor training.

Professor Ray Page
January 2008

Contents

Articles

Learning to love ideas <i>Matthew Taylor and Ian McGimpsey</i>	2	Adolescent gambling in Great Britain 7 <i>Professor Mark Griffiths</i>	Football – a motivator for mathematics? <i>Julie Cogill and Alan Parr</i>	26
Happiness lessons at Wellington College <i>Professor Anthony Seldon</i>	5	Primary science and 'communities of collaborative enquiry' <i>Dr Mike Carroll</i>	Book review: Accountability: a practical guide for school governors <i>Reviewed by Christine Frederick</i>	31
		Nurturing principles: effective early years pedagogy <i>Kim Insley</i>		

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