

Backchat



SPTC Newsletter

May 2005
Issue 85

In this issue

- What is SCQF?
- PPP Adventures
- Farewell to SSEN
- Events in June
- Meet the costs of learning

SPTC SURVEY ON PARENTS FORUMS

Don't forget to send in your response to our survey on the Scottish Executive proposal to change the way in which parents are involved in schools. Some schools have already photocopied it and sent it to all their parents – well done Craigievar, for example! Remember, you don't have to reach an agreement – we just want you to discuss this at your PTA/PA meeting or on a wider basis. If you've lost your copy of the survey, then you can either download/complete it online from our website on www.sptc.info or phone the office (0131 226 4378) and we'll post you another one. It's really important that you get involved; **these changes will affect ALL parents.**

Stop Press: Lara Croft joins the PTA



Angelina Jolie, the pouting star of the Tomb Raider films and allegedly "close friend" of Brad Pitt recently told an interviewer that her ambition was to be a stay-at-home mum to her son, Maddox and to join the local Parent Teacher Association. Well, I suppose that's one way of getting more dads to come along to the bingo night!

Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)

All the Scottish qualifications that people can take (whether at school, college, university or the workplace) have been drawn together into a single framework that indicates the **level** of the qualification, whatever it is called, whatever it's nature and wherever it is done. This is the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework or SCQF (see table below). This is not just a paper exercise – a question of filling in the boxes; a lot of care has been taken to ensure, for example, that the vocational qualification, SVQ level 3 really is at the same level as a Higher, although the nature of the course and the way that it is assessed are quite different.

For parents of school pupils one of the most helpful aspects of the SCQF is that it shows how Standard Grades (SG) and national courses fit together; so, for example, a SG Credit is at the same level as Intermediate 2. It then makes more sense to be told that a youngster who has got a General pass at SG could move on to the Intermediate 2 course, as this is the next level up. It also means that when youngsters are doing a mix of SG and Intermediate courses, it will be clear that they are working at level 4 and/or 5.

From this summer, the SQA certificate will show the SCQF level for the qualifications youngsters have achieved, as well as giving the normal information on grade and unit passes.

Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework

SCQF Level	School	School & College	College and University	Workplace
12			Doctorate	
11			Masters degree	SVQ 5
10			Honours degree	
9			Ordinary degree	
8			HND	SVQ 4
7		Advanced Higher	HNC	
6		Higher		SVQ 3
5	SG - Credit	Intermediate 2		SVQ 2
4	SG – General	Intermediate 1		SVQ 1
3	SG - Foundation	Access 3		
2		Access 2		
1		Access 1		

There is one important caveat to all this. The SCQF shows the **level** of each qualification; it does **not** show **the volume** of work that is required. For example, a unit may be at the same level as a course, but the course obviously involves a lot more work and is bigger in volume than the unit. Also, the steps between levels are not all the same size; so moving from a Intermediate 1 to Intermediate 2 is not quite as large a step as moving from a Masters Degree to a Doctorate. For more information go to www.parentzonescotland.gov.uk From the menu on the home page pick “Topics” and then select “Curriculum”.

Life used to be so simple ...

Here’s a reminder to all those parents out there who are old hands at this PTA business. Remember those heady days when you organised an event and all you had to do was round up your volunteers (willing or otherwise), arrange jobs for everyone, make up posters and apply for your school let. How things have changed.

My son’s school has just been re-furnished as part of a PPP project and the building itself no longer belongs to the local authority. Our masters are now a certain letting agency, I won’t divulge their name.. oh, alright, it’s Forth Electrical Services (FES).

They are in charge of maintenance, cleaning, janitorial services and school lets. Fair enough, you may be thinking, so what’s the problem?

The first hint that things were never going to be the same again came when the PTA were asked to provide the refreshments at a parents evening – a job we do at least two or three times a term. In order to get a table and the urn set up I had to phone the school, who would then fax FES, who

would then ask the janitors to move said table and urn into the foyer of the school. Sledgehammers and nuts come to mind!

Things have just got worse since then. A couple of months ago my PTA decided to organise a family ceilidh; an event designed to involve everyone at the school – we didn't even have to hire a band as students were going to perform this task. As PTA Secretary I was given the job of taking out the let and duly sent off a letter with all the details. As I had heard nothing after a couple of weeks, I phoned the FES office in Stirling who had no trace of my letter. So I had to go through the whole story again – the conversation went something like this.....

FES: "What time will you start and finish? **Me:** "6.30pm until 11pm" (if we can get rid of everyone!)

FES: "Will you be bringing electrical equipment onto the site?" **Me:** "WHAT?! Eh...no."

FES: "Will you require any tables?" **Me:** "Eh... yes?!"

FES: "How do you want them set out?" **Me (slowly losing the will to live):** "Well... we'll be dancing in the middle of the hall with people sitting at the tables around the outside."

FES: "Will that be in an oval shape or square?" (*Here follows a slight pause while I bash my head against the nearest wall*) **Me:** "Have you ever been to a ceilidh?"

FES: "No." **Me:** "Have you ever been to the school in question?"

FES: "No." **Me:** "Well, I'll tell you what, why don't we leave that to the jannies."

He reluctantly agreed to that and we were then left with the thorny subject of whether we would need round or square tables and where we were going to serve the refreshments.

FES: "Are you placing the refreshment tables in a safe place?"

Me: (*I was tempted to say that we were going to serve them at the top of some scaffolding, but I stopped myself just in time and said politely*) "Of course."

FES: "We will require a risk assessment of the evening and to make it easier (easier?!) for you, you can fax or email this."

So it now turns out that not only am I an expert on fundraising, running committee meetings, police checks, insurance *and* the art of diplomacy when dealing with school staff and other parents, I am also expected to write out a risk assessment every time we want to have an event in the school. Who said the PTA was a soft option?

GENERAL NEWS

Farewell to the Scottish Schools Ethos Network

The Scottish Schools Ethos Network was established in 1995. Ethos is about people and relationships in a school and a good ethos helps to create a positive working atmosphere. Since it was established the SSEN has illustrated good practice in newsletters, case studies and research, has produced a database of members' activities, as well as organising conferences. The Scottish Executive now feels that as ethos is such an integral part of school life and is now really embedded in our schools that the time has come to disband the Ethos Network as from July 2005.

Free access to an online adventure

GridClub is one of the most popular primary school websites in the UK with its fun approach to learning. The site is linked to the school curriculum and has over 500 games and activities for 7-12 year olds as well as a mediated discussion forum and a protected environment to learn all about internet safety. Thanks to funding from the

Scottish Executive all primary schools and libraries can now get free access to this site for 2005-06 using their own UserID and password. All pupils and parents can access the service either from home, school or library. Ask at your school for more details or go to www.gridclub.com

“Your Guide to Funding” – book review

Anyone who has tackled the huge amount of information available on funding for further and higher education will know how complicated it is. Well, help is now at hand in the form of a brilliant booklet produced by the Scottish Executive called: “Helping you meet the costs of learning – Your Guide to Funding”. I really didn’t know there was so much funding available and I think this is essential reading for any parent whose child is leaving school. The booklet contains everything you need to know about grants and loans for full, part time or distance learning; educational maintenance allowances; whether your youngster is entitled to help with living costs and travel, and much more. If you would like a copy of this booklet it is available from Blackwell’s Bookshop in Edinburgh. Phone 0131 622 8283 or email: business.edinburgh@blackwell.co.uk or alternatively you can download/look at the information on the Scottish Executive website on www.scotland.gov.uk

Things to do in June

(If you are a parent and would like to go to any of these events then contact us and the SPTC Support Fund will pay your delegate fee.)

Learning Disability Today

Scotland 2005
Wednesday 15th June
SECC, Glasgow

This event includes an exhibition from over 60 organisations; seminars covering a wide range of topics such as employment, families and carers and transitions to adult services; and a chance to see the very best in learning disability art, theatre and dance.

Childhood Obesity

A conference in Edinburgh on Monday 20th June

Sorry, but this conference will NOT include a guest appearance by Jamie Oliver! However, there will be presentations on topics like active schools; the effect of a change in diet on behaviour; healthy menus and healthy uptake and advertising to children.

How Good is our Ethos?

Ethos Network and ABN
Tuesday 7th June
University of Edinburgh

As well as a selection of presentations you will also be able to see a wide range of displays from schools and organisations and take part in workshops.