

Editorial

Teaching Thinking and Creativity has always encouraged staff in schools to strive to make the curriculum as interesting as possible and to listen carefully to children and young people. We have been against dogma of all kinds and we have cheered schools who, against the odds, have retained a sense of being educationally adventurous. This often means deciding what to accept and reject from government guidelines. New research, reported in the news section of this issue tells us several things we should already know.

Professor Cedric Cullingford has talked to many children in his research and reports that most of them would like to share their ideas with teachers but have learned that it is better to guess what teachers want. They learn not to expect their ideas to be listened to.

The child-unfriendly curriculum, reports Professor Cullingford, together with hidden playground bullying and lack of power, means that too many children feel insecure and lack self-belief. They lose motivation and become cynical about school.

We also learn from Dr Rosemary Webb, of York University, that most heads and some literacy and numeracy co-ordinators she interviewed were critical of themselves for not being more selective about what aspects of National Strategies they adopted in their schools.

In this edition we have plenty of articles suggesting ways for teachers to do stimulating work and make time to listen to children's ideas. Philosophical enquiry is one excellent strategy for encouraging children to retain their curiosity while talking with each other and with the teacher. Julie Buck's article describes her own delight at what young children in her group could achieve. Joanna Haynes believes that pupils can thrive even when discussions turn to controversial and sensitive topics. From Solihull, Collette Higgins reports on a programme to make lessons more exciting and effective by using dance, drama, music and visual arts across the curriculum.

Steve Williams argues that the Literacy Strategy concentrates too much on getting pupils to re-create surface features of writing and not enough on encouraging them to make their own meanings. One of the most inspiring articles in this issue is by Jason Cauchi who shows what pupils can achieve if they are helped to help themselves. He demonstrates that many young people have healthy appetites for thinking, science and the arts.

Teaching Thinking and Creativity is an antidote to the boredom and the repression caused by too many exams and too many official policies on how and what to teach. Those schools that have made time and space to listen to children and cultivate their curiosity often find that SAT results come out well and that pupils are happier and more motivated than in schools that 'toe the line'.