

# Who reads 'Education and Health'?

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A questionnaire study within the Wigan Education Authority aimed at finding out the use made of *Education and Health* and the personnel within the different schools who have a chance to read it. The conclusion is that primary-school staff are more likely to have general access to the journal, although the contents appear to have a 'secondary' bias.

There are an increasing number of journals concerned with health education, and it seemed important to discover how some of these were being received and used in schools. In Wigan, copies of *Education and Health* are sent through the internal system, and every educational establishment receives at least one copy, with extra copies going to the larger schools. Additional copies may be sent to named teachers who have a specific function as health education co-ordinators.

These copies originate from either the education department or from the Health Education Unit of the District Health Authority. It is hoped that this type of circulation allows all interested teachers in the Authority to be aware of and have access to the journal.

Wigan's schools were asked to complete a questionnaire on the journals they received, and on their impressions and use of *Education and Health* in particular. The questionnaires were sent to head-teachers of the Authority's primary and secondary schools.

### Comments from primary schools

Sixty of our 128 primary schools returned the questionnaire, although this 50% response needed a second request before

it was realised. The material had been sent to schools fairly close to a holiday, and it is worth commenting that the timing of these missives does need careful consideration. Only one of the schools said that they did not receive a copy of *Education and Health*. Ten of the schools did say that they also received *Health at School*, but some may well have been commenting on the complimentary copy which the publishers sent to all schools.

**Readership** In response to Question (a) in Fig. 1, 34 of the 60 schools said that the journal was interesting, and many of the others commented that it was either relevant or useful. Only seven schools said that the journal was inappropriate to their needs. This does seem to indicate that there is a wide prospective readership amongst the staff in primary schools, all of whom will teach some aspect of health education without necessarily always realising it! It is important to tap the opportunities for the subject at primary level; making healthy decisions at an early stage will, hopefully, avoid the need to modify or change behaviour in later years.

The copies of the journal experienced various treatments in schools (Question (b)): well over half were left in the staff-

"Education and Health"

a) Do you find this journal:-

Interesting	<input type="checkbox"/>	Please tick any words which are applicable
Relevant	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Useful	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Inappropriate	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Unhelpful	<input type="checkbox"/>	

b) Could you indicate, by ticking the relevant statement, what happens to the journal in school.

Stays with the Headteacher	<input type="checkbox"/>
Goes to the staffroom	<input type="checkbox"/>
Goes to a named member of staff	<input type="checkbox"/>
Goes to a particular area of resources area	<input type="checkbox"/>
Please give area .....	<input type="checkbox"/>
Goes to several staff in sequence	<input type="checkbox"/>

c) Have there been any articles in recent copies of this journal which you have found of special interest?

Yes/No

If 'Yes', please give examples of the topics

.....

.....

.....

d) The November 1985 issue was devoted almost entirely to the subject of diet. Did you feel that any of the ideas expressed were of help to you in school?

Yes/No

If 'Yes' can you please give an example

.....

.....

e) The January 1986 issue contained three articles on the H.E.C. Primary Schools Project. Do you feel that the "Just a Tick" questionnaires discussed in the articles would be of help in school in the development of health education?

Yes/No

Would you elect to use them if they were available? Yes/No

f) Have you any other comments on this journal?

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Fig. 1. Part of the questionnaire used in the Wigan Education Authority's survey of schools' use of 'Education and Health'.

rooms for general use, while 30% went to a named member of staff or to a resource area, or for filing within the staff-room. Only two headteachers retained the copy themselves, and two gave no comment. It would appear that there is a greater potential chance for all members of staff to see the journal in primary schools than at secondary level – see below.

**Special interest** In answer to Question (c), 23 primary schools mentioned articles of special interest such as *Health Education in West Sussex Schools* (September 1985). Some of these schools who gave a negative response to that query were nursery or special schools who felt that the journal was of less direct relevance to them. General interest was expressed again in those articles that could help in the development of the curriculum and in articles such as *What did you have for lunch yesterday?* (November 1985).

With reference to Question (d), that particular issue was also mentioned as being directly useful for topic or project work, and, as with secondary schools (see below), as a valuable link with the School Meals Service.

Half the primary schools felt that the *Just A Tick* curriculum-planning materials (January 1986) would be helpful and would wish to use them, or said 'Yes' to one or other part of Question (e). Only seven schools said 'No' to both questions, and two of these were an infant school and a nursery school.

### Comments from secondary schools

Twenty-five mainstream secondary schools received the questionnaire, and 15 of these returned it. A surprise result was that only one of the Authority's six Roman Catholic secondary schools replied.

Eight of the 15 schools felt that the journal was interesting, relevant, and useful; six other schools gave various combinations of these three attributes. Only one school left the question unanswered. Every school in this group gave the journal to a named member or members of staff, with three of the schools having a resource area for the

Personal and Social Education curriculum. It seems likely, then, that many members of staff never see the journal, unless it forms part of a staff library within the staff-room.

Articles of special interest in secondary schools were frequently those on alcohol, drugs, solvent abuse, sex education, pollution, and nutrition. There seems to be no doubt that teachers feel they need help with the sensitive areas of teaching in health education. Having been asked specifically whether or not the issue of the journal devoted exclusively to diet and nutrition (November 1985) had been of help, several schools commented on its use as a resource in updating curricula, its help in creating links between the School Meals Service and the Home Economics Department, and the value of the colour-coding principle. All the schools except three specified at least one article of particular relevance, and a wide spread of interest was created by that particular issue.

Whilst commenting that the primary version of the *Just A Tick* materials, described in the January 1986 issue, were not directly relevant to secondary schools, half of the replies mentioned their value in the development of health education in schools. The use of the materials as a source of information from feeder primaries to secondary school was also mentioned.

Other comments from secondary schools include appreciation of *Forum*, the value of the journal in updating curricular material and in the provision of information, and the help which is given in developing programmes. Less favourable was the suggestion that the format of Edsall's *Health at School* is more attractive!

**How representative?** It must be stressed that, in nearly every case, the questionnaire was completed by the headteacher of the school, which raises the issue of how representative the views were of the staff as a whole. However, if statements are consistently made by a majority of respondents, then it would seem that they have some validity.

Three schools commented on the secondary bias of the journal. Other less favourable comments included a response that the format and presentation were less eye-catching than those of other publications; perhaps the use of colour and photographs are something we have come to accept. The clear index received approbation, as did the values of the journal as a teacher resource. Suggestions included wanting more depth in the articles, and a request for an article on food additives. Regret has been expressed at the information given in the recent articles on *The use of fitness testing in primary schools* (September 1986), which seemed to have echoes of the 1933 syllabus for Physical Education! Such stereotyped tests seem inappropriate to the quality of work which is taking place in many primary schools, with its emphasis on methods promoting the graduated experience of a wide range of skills and activities.

### Conclusions

What conclusions may be drawn from this survey? It does seem that in secondary schools the journal may be seen only by a small section of the staff, unless it is used as a resource in some form of in-service. Promoting a wider readership would appear to be a valuable aim. The journal is found to be a much-appreciated resource in primary schools, where a smaller staff size makes universal reading theoretically easier. It might be appropriate to be continually aware of the needs of these teachers and their pupils. Future editions with a common thread running through the articles, like the November 1985 issue on diet, might be highly appreciated by teachers.

In terms of reaching the schools, the use of the 'black bag' system, as it is known in Wigan, has been shown to be effective for those schools replying to the questionnaire. However, the volume of material going to schools in that way is increasing all the time. It would be useful to know of methods used by other Authorities to distribute the journal, and ways by which as wide a readership as possible could be promoted.

TOPICS	
23.	Family life
24.	How to cope with being separated from your parents
25.	Death and bereavement
26.	Why people worry
27.	How boys and girls behave
28.	Differences in growth and development
29.	Getting on with boys and girls the same age as yourself
30.	Understanding people with different coloured skins or different religions
31.	Feelings (love, hate, anger, jealousy)
32.	Bullying
33.	Feeling good about yourself
34.	Making up our minds
35.	Being honest
36.	Being responsible
37.	Spare time activities
38.	Being bored
39.	Caring for pets
40.	Vandalism
41.	Stealing
42.	Pollution
43.	Conservation
Which do you consider to be the 3 most important?	

On page 17 of the January issue it was stated that the second half of the 'Just A Tick' topics list would be shown on the cover. Due to an editorial error, this did not happen. Instead, the list as it appears in the pupils' questionnaire is shown above. I apologise for this mistake. – Ed.