

# COLIN NOBLE

## The health-promoting school and the market place

Schools have never wanted 'bums-on-seats' so much as they do now. The forehead of every child is stamped with a price-tag, and every headteacher wants to encourage as many as possible into the school in order to maintain—and possibly even increase—the amount of money the LEAs are obliged to cede to schools (see box).

Schools are out to attract children (usually via their parents) often in a much more aggressive marketing fashion than has previously been the case. Hence, we find an increasing number of glossy prospectuses advertising the merits of schools—many of which could compete with Universities or holiday brochures in terms of the thought and presentational skills that have been invested in them.

### *Market forces*

Schools are chasing after a diminishing market: the demographic shift and the wider parental choice means that many (although by no means all,

*In Kirklees, the money following pupils at the beginning of the financial year is as follows:*

Nursery .....	£1313
Reception .....	£976
5-10 year olds .....	£831
11-13 year olds .....	£1150
14-16 year olds .....	£1533
6th formers .....	£2103

due to geography or reputation) are competing with each other in order to flourish, and even survive.

Parents have the difficult task—often unwanted and misunderstood—of choosing schools for their children. For many, the local primary/middle school and the high school are the obvious choices to which they give little further thought.

But many others are interested in finding the right school for their particular child. They will be swayed by geography, reputation, the location of older children in the family and

what they can learn about the school and what it offers. It is not a system designed for egalitarian progress but it is a system with which we have to live. Moreover this new, market-orientated culture has also presented Kirklees LEA and the Yorkshire Regional Health Authority with an opportunity to press schools to take health promotion seriously in what I believe is an egalitarian scheme both in principle and practice.

The Yorkshire Regional Health Authority has supported the initiative from the beginning and has given a grant to finance the design and printing of promotional materials.

### The Healthy School Award

In return for adhering to ten health-promoting criteria — see box — schools are given the Healthy School Award. This means that they receive:

- A framed certificate which is displayed in the entrance to the school reminding students, staff, governors, and visitors what sort of school they are entering.
- A tree, donated free by a local garden centre, which makes the link between health and the environment.
- Most importantly, their school letterheading overprinted with the Healthy School Award logo.

This logo means that everybody with whom the school corresponds learns immediately that the school is different, that it takes health — in the holistic sense of the word — very seriously.

There is literature available which can inform parents, students, governors and teachers about the purpose of the Award (see opposite).

The hope is that as more schools begin to display the letterheading then teachers, pupils, parents and governors will begin to ask why their school does not hold the Award as well.

There is no limit on the number which could win the Award; it is not competitive, but some schools start

### The ten criteria

1. The school must have *in place* a health education curriculum which is comprehensive and progressive and which should be reflected in the School Development Plan. The school must have a designated and recognised health education co-ordinator.
2. The school must have a health promotion policy which is accessible to all and displayed in a prominent position(s). Parents and governors must be consulted in the drafting of this policy.
- 3a. The school must have a smoking policy or
- 3b. The school must be totally non-smoking.
4. The school — if running a Tuck Shop — must promote healthier snacks, whole-meal biscuits, fresh fruit etc., by placing these in a prominent position whilst the less healthy crisps and chocolates are in a less prominent position.
5. The school meals must offer a well-balanced, nutritious option and give guidance to students about what that constitutes.
6. School toilets must be kept clean with washing facilities, properly stocked with papers, electric hand-drier or towels; and cubicles must be secure.
7. The school must be generally clean and tidy, with no litter and an obvious care taken with the fabric of the building. Graffiti and dirt should not be tolerated. There should be evidence of promoting a generally stimulating, clean and tidy environment.
8. The school grounds must be well-kept with an absence of litter, graffiti and broken fences and gates. There should be evidence that the school has adopted policies and practices to achieve this.
9. In secondary/high schools hot showers must be available after games/P.E. and schools should be looking at ways to encourage students to have showers.
10. The school must have an equal opportunities policy which applies to all who teach, learn, and work in it.

from a much more favourable position than others, mainly due to policies and interest already shown in health.

### The ten criteria

Whether a school merits the Award is decided not by the LEA but by Health Promotion Officers from Dewsbury and Huddersfield Health Promotion Units, or an officer from the Yorkshire Regional Health Authority who have undergone training to perform this task.

There is not room on this paper to cover the merits and intentions which lie behind all ten criteria, but I would like to discuss a few of them.

In order to check a comprehensive and progressive health education curriculum the inspecting officers use the National Curriculum Council's *Curriculum Guidance 5: Health Education*, and the suggestions it makes for each key stage. Although in many ways we would have

preferred to use our own Kirklees Health Education Handbook for Teachers, we had to recognise that if the scheme is to be spread to other LEAs within the Yorkshire Region then it would be fairer and easier to use CG5. The Inspecting Officer will also ask to see teaching resources to back up the school assertion that they do teach a comprehensive curriculum.

### Loo lore

The issue of toilets in schools is far more widespread, and of far more importance, than I had first suspected. There is plenty of anecdotal and research evidence which suggests that school toilets — often unsupervised in high schools — are where bullying, and even school pupil protection and extortion, are most likely to occur.

Unlockable cubicles and a general dislike of the toilet area can — *in extremis* — lead to children deciding not to use them and consequently

either spending uncomfortable days at school or denying themselves food and drink. Neither scenario is likely to produce an enthusiastic learner. Hence, schools have to show clean, secure and well-stocked loos. Already, schools in Kirklees are spending money to improve these.

### 'Equal opportunities'

The other issue which I would like to highlight is that of equal opportunities. We were keenly aware that schools' 'healthiness' cannot be ascertained merely by the physical surroundings and curricula. At least as

**Fig. 1. The governors' Healthy School Award leaflet. Corresponding leaflets have been produced for pupils, parents and teachers.**

important are the culture, the ethos and the relationships which exist in the school and which interact with the built environment and educational programme.

It is, in theory, perfectly possible to have a superbly-equipped school, a comprehensive taught curriculum, but a depressing, intimidating or stressful atmosphere. How does one measure or judge the health of relationships — and the source of any bad relationships — in an institution? It is difficult enough to do by those who work in it; impossible for the Health Promotion Officer who is passing through.

Therefore, we look upon 'equal opportunities' as something which is not just essential in its own right, but also — if meaningfully implemented


— likely to produce healthy and happy staff and student relationships. In an attempt to ensure it is meaningful, schools winning the Award are obliged to display their equal opportunities policy in a dominant position, and to invite pupils, staff, governors and visitors — who should all be covered by the policy — to challenge any breach which they observe.

### Consultation


Before the scheme was launched a number of teachers and heads, from a variety of schools, were consulted for their views. All were in favour, some intensely so.


Some made the very valuable point that to them the Award was not nearly so important as the process

"The Award can be placed anywhere on your school letterhead"



BASH STREET SCHOOL  
Bash Street, Bash Town.





Yorkshire Regional  
Health Authority

The Healthy School Award is a Collaborative Scheme between the Yorkshire Regional Health Authority, Dewsbury and Huddersfield District Health Authorities, and Kirklees Local Education Authority.


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Dear Parent/Guardian, June 4 1993.

This is a short note to let you know that Bash Street School is now officially a health promoting school. We have won the much coveted Healthy School Award and hence you can see the logo incorporated onto our letterhead.

You can come to school to examine the Award and what it means for your child, as well as looking at our newly planted tree.

Yours sincerely,  
Lee Green,  
Head Teacher



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**Governors and the  
Healthy School Award**


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The general level of confidence and well-being of pupils is very much affected by the informal and pastoral curriculum in every individual school. Governors will be aware that learning and academic achievement is immeasurably improved in an atmosphere where children feel safe, secure and confident. Thus, health-promoting experiences at school - using 'health' in its widest sense - are not only valuable in themselves but also make more likely the reaching of that tantalising goal, creating an environment where children fulfil their potential.

Governors will also be aware that an increasing number of parents are putting greater value on health and health promotion. Parents in general will applaud the adherence by the School of the 10 criteria and the promotion of the school in the community by the use of the logo in the letterhead.

For Informal enquiries about the Award please contact Colin Noble at Oldgate House on Huddersfield 422133. Extension 3284.





the school would have to go through in order to tackle the ten health-promoting criteria.

### *Involvement of pupils*

The Award will not mean much to a school unless it gets the full involvement, participation and co-operation of the pupils. The older the pupils are, the more they could be expected to contribute to changing and reinforcing health policies and practice. The head of one of the first two schools to receive the Award (Scholes First School and Netherthong Junior & Infant School) made the point that the pupils had done all the hard work to achieve the Award for the school.

### *Quality, not quantity*

We have had to confront the problem of how easily schools should be able to win the Award. There is always a tension between making it too easy and therefore devaluing the Award, or making it too hard and leading schools to think there's no point in trying. We hope that we have struck the right balance. High standards are expected and some schools have already been told that, although they are interested, they have plenty of work to do first.

At the same time, the inspecting officers are acting as consultants to the schools. They can help ease the schools in the right direction, suggest how to plug gaps in their policy or practice, and act as a conduit for help from other agencies. The role of the HPO is far from being a mere tester of whether schools will pass or fail.

### *Problems*

We are still in our teething period. The HPOs often have to consult to ensure that similar standards are being applied across the Authority, and this all takes up valuable officer time. There is a problem — which we anticipated — about how much easier it is for the schools in the wealthier suburbs or rural villages to win the Award, compared with those serving areas of relative deprivation.

These differences have to be taken into account and some allowances made.

The School Meals Service, over which we have no control, has undergone financial problems with a consequent change in its diet. Some secondary schools are showing reluctance to change their lucrative tuck shops from heavily promoting crisps, chocolates and sugary drinks. These — and other problems — we foresaw.

What I feel we shall have to accept is that some schools are some way from embracing the philosophy and practices of the healthy school, and that one of the aims of the Award is gradually to guide all schools in the right direction.

### *The Future*

As the Award begins to get more well known, and the fruits of it are appreciated, I feel that more schools will become interested in it and will be prepared to take steps to make the appropriate changes.

When the Award was launched in May this year I said I did not anticipate, nor really want, more than half-a-dozen schools receiving the Award by the end of the financial year. Policy-writing, consultations, change of practices, introduction of new curricula all take time to do properly. A wholesale granting of the Award would undermine it and compromise its value.

The Award will be reviewed by the Authority and the Yorkshire Regional Health Authority at the end of March, when improvements and refinements may be adopted.

It looks as if my prediction will be slightly exceeded — but not by a great deal. I would anticipate a greater number of schools in the following year.

*Contact* Colin Noble, Kirklees Metropolitan Council, Health Education Co-ordinator, Curriculum Development Centre, Temple Road, Dewsbury, West Yorkshire WF13 3QD (0924 465633).

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