



## Affording parity of esteem: redressing the balance in moral, philosophical and religious education

Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2012

The Royal Terrace Hotel, Edinburgh



### OVERVIEW

Following on from our 2010 Keeping Faith in Schools event, this one-day national conference will seek to provide a platform to all senior-level stakeholders across Scotland's education system to discuss the future of moral, philosophical and religious guidance in schools.

The programme will explore how teachers, pupils and parents can get the balance right for young people of all faiths and none and will feature discussions around the right to religious observance and the right to opt out; the role and potential of school assemblies; and the benefits of including philosophy teaching within any religious and moral education.

### FEATURING SPEAKER CONTRIBUTION FROM

**Patrick Harvie MSP**, Co-convenor of the Scottish Green Party

**Professor Brian Boyd**, Director, The Tapestry Partnership

**Bente Sandvig**, Manager, Lifestance/Political Issues, Norwegian Humanist Association

**Ewan Aitken**, Church of Scotland and former CoSLA spokesperson on education and Convener of Education in Edinburgh

**Dr Claire Cassidy**, Lecturer, University of Strathclyde

**Alex Wood**, Education Consultant (Conference Chair)

**Rory MacKenzie**, former Head Teacher, Balerno High School

**Dr Andrew Downie** and **Ian Scott**, Parent and Pupil experiences

**Clare Marsh**, Education Officer, Humanist Society Scotland

### BENEFITS OF ATTENDING THIS CONFERENCE

- **Examine** how well Scottish schools are fulfilling the Curriculum for Excellence's goal to promote independence of thought in religious and moral education and religious observance.
- **Discuss** how schools are responding to society's changing attitudes to religion
- **Examine** to what extent schools are currently meeting the legal requirement to make parents aware that they have the option to opt out and that the school must offer a suitable alternative
- **Examine** best practice in offering a balance in moral, philosophical and religious education
- **Hear** the results of the recent survey on the provision of religious observance in Scotland's schools: what pupils and parents think

### CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

**09:00-09:45**      **Registration and arrival refreshments**

**09:45-10:00**     **Chair's Introduction**  
Alex Wood, Education Consultant

#### Affording parity of esteem

**10:00-10:25**     **Welcome Address**  
**Do current RO and RME guidelines meet the educational requirements of today's children?**  
Professor Brian Boyd, Director of the Tapestry Partnership

**10:25-10:35**     **Question and Answer**



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### Seizing the benefits

- 10:35-11:00**     **The potential of good school assemblies**  
Rory MacKenzie, former Head Teacher, Balerno High School
- 11:00-11:10**     **Question and Answer**
- 11:10-11:30**     **Morning Refreshments**
- 11:30-11:55**     **Philosophy for primary pupils: developing our thinkers and creators of tomorrow**  
Dr Claire Cassidy, Lecturer, University of Strathclyde
- 11:55-12:10**     **Question and Answer**

### Moral guidance and religious observance

- 12:10-12:35**     **Maximising the potential of RO: what we hope to achieve with religious observance in schools**  
Ewan Aitken, Church of Scotland and former CoSLA spokesperson on Education and Convener of Education in Edinburgh
- 12:35-13:15**     **Discussion – Is the status quo working for Scotland’s children and young people?**
- Survey results: The provision of religious observance in Scotland’s schools – what pupils and parents think**
- Parent and pupil experiences**  
Dr Andrew Downie and Ian Scott
- Followed by a panel and audience discussion**

**13:15-14:00**     **Lunch**

**14:00**             **Chair’s Welcome Back**

### Keynote Address

- 14:00-14:25**     **Keynote Address**  
Patrick Harvie MSP, Co-convener of the Scottish Green Party
- 14:25-14:35**     **Question and Answer**

### International case study

- 14:35-15:00**     **Religious Observance – learning from the Norwegian model**  
Bente Sandvig, Manager, Lifestance/Political Issues, Norwegian Humanist Association
- 15:00-15:10**     **Question and Answer Session**

### The way ahead

- 15:10-15:35**     **Discussion – The way ahead**  
Panel and audience discussion
- 15:35-15:45**     **Closing Address**  
Clare Marsh, Education Officer, Humanist Society Scotland



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### FEATURING SPEAKER CONTRIBUTIONS FROM



**Patrick Harvie MSP**, Co-convenor, Scottish Green Party

Patrick Harvie was elected as a regional MSP for Glasgow in May 2003. He was a member of the Communities Committee dealing with housing, planning, charity law, and social issues, and more recently Convenor of Parliament's Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee.

Patrick has also been involved with issues from asylum and civil liberties to sexual health and food policy. He is also the joint Convenor of the Scottish Green Party.

Before Parliament Patrick worked in the sexual health field, for an organisation called PHACE Scotland which is now part of the Terrence Higgins Trust.



**Professor Brian Boyd**, Director, The Tapestry Partnership

Brian worked in the Faculty of Education at the University of Strathclyde for fifteen years after a career in secondary education which began in a Junior Secondary in 1970 and saw him hold two posts of headteacher as well as education officer and chief adviser. He was a member of the Ministerial Review Group on the curriculum 3-18 which produced the report 'A Curriculum for Excellence' in 2004. Brian is a co-founder with Katrina Bowes of Tapestry.

Brian is in demand as a speaker at conferences, as a staff developer, as a tutor in management courses and as a consultant to local authorities and schools. He writes frequently, and challengingly, for the educational press in Scotland and has published widely in educational journals and books. He is the author of three books published by Hodder Gibson, Primary-Secondary Transition (2005), Improving Professional Practice (2005) and The Learning Classroom (2008) as part of a Continuing Professional Development series (of which he is also series editor).



**Bente Sandvig**, Manager, Lifestance/Political Issues, Norwegian Humanist Association

Bente Sandvig is trained as a teacher and has also studied sociology, school development, religion and ethics. Since 1993 she has been working as a manager of lifestance and political matters at the head office of the Norwegian Humanist Association and in this capacity she was in charge of the association's work against the new religious education that was introduced in the school system autumn 1997. This process ended with Norway being sentenced in The European Court of Human Rights for violating parent's right to decide the nature of their children's religious education. She has also been the elected chairperson of The Council for Religious and Lifestance Communities from 2008 - 2011. Furthermore she has been a member of the state commission to look into the relation between state and church. Currently she is the wise chair of the commission appointed by the government to revise the policy on religious and lifestance matters.



**Ewan Aitken**, Church of Scotland

Ewan Aitken is the Council Secretary for the Church of Scotland's Church and Society Council which has the remit of facilitating the Church's engagement with social, political and ethical issues. He is a member of the Iona Community, ordained in the Church of Scotland and is an honorary research fellow of the University of Glasgow. Ewan is also a Labour member and former leader of the City of Edinburgh Council and was Education Spokesperson for CoSLA from 2003 -2006. He was a member of the Ministerial Group on looked after children, the Ministerial Excellence group on RME and the Ministerial stakeholders group for Curriculum for Excellence. He has been a columnist for the TESS and written for many other publications on education matters and is a director of the Edinburgh International Science Festival.



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**Dr Claire Cassidy**, Lecturer, University of Strathclyde

Dr Cassidy is a lecturer in the Department of Educational and Professional Studies. She is the B.Ed. Programme Coordinator for Educational Studies and the Major Project. She is the Course Director for the Postgraduate Certificate in Philosophy with Children - the only course of its kind in the UK.

Claire trained as a primary teacher and taught in Glasgow primary schools for several years until joining the Glasgow Asylum Seeker Support Programme as an English as an Additional Language teacher.

In 1995 she graduated with an M.Phil. from the Centre for Philosophical Inquiry at the University of Glasgow, having trained to facilitate Community of Philosophical Inquiry (COPI) with children and adults. This led to her Ph.D. thesis, completed in 2004, on the philosophical concept of 'child'. She has worked with a range of children and adult groups using practical philosophy in a variety of settings such as universities, community groups, schools and pubs.

Claire is a founding member of the Philosophy with Children and Communities group in Scotland that aims to promote practical philosophy across the country. She has developed the Postgraduate Certificate in Philosophy with Children to train those who also wish to practise Philosophy with Children. She is also a member of the Applied Educational Research Scheme, Learners, Learning and Teaching, Network Project on Communities of Enquiry in Educational Research.



**Alex Wood**, Education Consultant

Alex Wood is an educational consultant, now working freelance for the Scottish Centre for Studies in School Administration and for the Scottish Educational Leadership, Management and Administration Society, and writing regular columns on educational issues in the Times Educational Supplement Scotland, SecEd and Holyrood Magazine as well as occasional pieces, on education and on broader social and cultural issues, for The Herald, Scottish Review and other publications.

His professional experience includes 15 years in Craigmoynton Community High School (initially as an English teacher, latterly as Principal Teacher, Learning Support), coordinating a community education supported project in Pilton and leading an inter-agency youth strategy support unit in West Lothian. In 1996 he became headteacher of Kaimes School, a school then in transition to becoming a specialist resource for children with communications difficulties, followed by two years as Special Schools and Social Inclusion Manager for the City of Edinburgh. He became headteacher of Wester Hailes Education Centre in 2000. He was seconded to act as headteacher at Tynecastle High School for 13 months in 2008-09, returned to WHEC and retired from there in 2011.

He also has experience of local government as an elected member, having served on Edinburgh District Council from 1980 to 1987.

He is a skilled presenter and communicator, committed to the continuing development of professional skills among all those supporting young people.



**Rory MacKenzie**, former Head Teacher, Balerno High School



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**Dr Andrew Downie**, Parent (providing experience of a parent)



**Ian Scott**, Pupil (providing experience of a pupil)



**Clare Marsh**, Education Officer, Humanist Society Scotland

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Schools, education officials, faith groups

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### CONTACT DETAILS

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