

Editorial

John Eggleston

Events have continued to move fast since the last issue of *Design and Technology Teaching*. The most striking has been the Government announcement, on January 6th, specifying the Key Stage 3 tests for National Curriculum Technology. It may be useful to report the Design and Technology requirement in full. It is for a '1½ hour written test of Design and Technology capability, supplemented by a statutory practical test of manufacturing skills lasting between 10 and 12 hours and conducted during ordinary lessons.'

The specification does indeed require the short written test now espoused so keenly by Government but the reinstitution of the long SAT represents another remarkable change in direction. Only a few months ago the contracts of the teams developing long SATs for Key Stage 3 were cancelled and a new contract for developing short sharp SATs was awarded. So its back to the drawing board for a third time. Meanwhile the publication of Teacher Assessments for Key Stages 1 and 2 developed by the Goldsmiths Team and confirmed by the Government at the end of January has enjoyed a positive response from teachers who see them as reinforcing rather than distorting the full and proper development of the subject in primary schools. It is too early yet to claim that wiser counsels are prevailing but they are certainly not dead. The increasingly powerful influence of the Design and Technology Association is certainly playing part in this, and the many statements of its leaders attract growing attention. Typical is the assertion of the Chairman of the Primary Group John Coe, responding to suggestions for a return to traditional skill based learning. He writes

The least successful work in design and technology is found when teachers identify the problem and then prescribe the route to a possible solution and end product. It should be noted that since Design and Technology brings together a number of long established curriculum areas; art, craft, mathematics, science and of course, English, it is appropriate that much of the work should be undertaken through projects. The flexibility in the use of time which is characteristic of traditional primary practice ensures that there are opportunities for a sustained approach to construction, problem-solving and designing. Once children are fully engaged they exhibit persistence in overcoming problems and arriving at solutions satisfying to themselves.

There is absolutely no justification for seeking a return to formal methods of instruction with the children passively in receipt of direction by the teacher within closely defined periods of time. The

national curriculum could not be delivered in such a way.

There are many other examples of the burgeoning influence of DATA; its successful launch of a sister journal *Primary DATA*, its move to impressive new premises, its growing membership and, of course the growing strength of *Design and Technology Teaching*.

This issue of *Design and Technology Teaching* provides impressive evidence of the strength and confidence of the subject area itself. In this issue we focus on the context of design and technology and of the pupils who receive it. A report on work at Wyedean Secondary School, Chepstow shows how Technology uses the context of the pupils lives and experiences to develop its curriculum — and in so doing links Technology effectively with a range of other curriculum subjects. Much the same effect is achieved at Handsworth Secondary School, Birmingham — though here it is through the production and presentation of an original musical *Along Came Man* — based on a range of social and environmental issues. The emphasis on human factors is picked up by Garner of Loughborough who emphasises the crucial psychological and physiological factors of design and technology. Liddament addresses the same issues from a value perspective in an article which suggests a wide range of starting points for teaching design, and this is followed by Cross's brief but relevant article on the place of design in the curriculum.

A highly important article by Claire, formerly of the Ealing Gender Equality Team examines the interaction between girls and boys using construction kits in the first school classroom — and offers a range of evidence that will be illuminating to all technology teachers. She shows how the predominantly co-operative approach adopted when girls work with girls contrast with the competitive approaches which prevail when boys work with boys or with girls. She argues the case for a 'protected environment' for girls if they are to achieve equality of opportunity in technology. Claire's article is reinforced by a contribution from Bishop and Simpson who identify similar emergent differences in the nursery classroom and, most interestingly by Hall and Whitworth working in higher education.

As always *Design and Technology Teaching* concludes with its section on book reviews, notes and news — these have still further expanded as the pace of development becomes ever more rapid.