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2007 MiSAC Competition *Salmonella: from farm to fork*

The Microbiology in Schools Advisory Committee runs a competition every year for school students. This year, the brief was to 'produce an eye-catching leaflet to inform the public about the risks of Salmonella food poisoning and how to avoid it'. It was sponsored by the Society for Applied Microbiology and the topic was chosen to tie in with the National Curriculum so competition entries could be produced in the classroom as assessments or teaching aids. Entries were judged in two age categories: Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4/GCSE. Cash prizes for students and schools went to the top three entries in both categories.

129 schools entered the competition, with 634 KS3 entries and 314 GCSE entries – a record for the competition! The brief gave instructions about format, which had to be adhered to in the judging process. Every year many entries are disqualified because they do not conform to the required format; this year saw a pleasing decline in ineligible entries. It was a shame to see such imaginative pieces of work being taken out of the competition – there were some wonderful shapes, pop-up and stick-on pieces, with the occasional book and poster.

After the first round of screening, the 562 KS3 and 285 GCSE leaflets were taken to London for the final judging. The panel, consisting of

committee members, Anthony Hilton, SfAM Honorary Secretary, and Lucy Harper, SfAM communications officer, tackled the KS3 entries first and were astounded at the high standard of work. After lengthy deliberation, the winners were chosen: first prize went to Hugo Fleming, Feltonfleet School, second prize to James Fryatt, St Aidans RC School, who designed his leaflet around a delicatessen, and third prize to Katie Wensley, Sheffield High School. Such was the standard this year, two entries were commended: that of Emily Barnes, The Grange School, and Harry Hitchens, Prior Park College, for his hilarious 'Don't be a sick chicken' idea.

It was a hard act to follow, but GCSE entries did not disappoint. First prize went to Daniel Tolley, St Anselms College, second prize to Christopher Lewis, Bedford School, whose 'Wanted' entry was very original, and third prize to Camille Raoult, The Abbey School, for her imaginative cartoon. Yet again, the panel commended two outstanding leaflets: Jawad Safdar, Bedford School, and Emily Kirkham, The Abbey School.

The professional standard of computer designed entries was equally matched by the skill shown in the hand-made leaflets. Great imagination was evident in the work. A trend was visible in terms of layout and graphics, but



▲ KS3 1st
▼ GCSE 1st
KS3 2nd ▲
GCSE 2nd ▼

the stars of the competition stepped outside the norm and produced some inspired entries. The standard of competition entries seems to get better each year. This is a good indication that students like to get involved in topical issues and to communicate their ideas.

Lucy Goodchild,
SGM External Relations Office

Teacher Scientist Network – TSN

Are teachers and scientists a match made in heaven?

Claire Willis (TSN North East Co-ordinator) certainly hopes so.

TSN is one of several organizations that puts the scientific community in universities and industries into contact with science teachers in one-to-one partnerships. The partnerships support and encourage teachers, helping them to deliver up-to-date and relevant science through exciting and innovative workshops or through longer term relationships. The partnership is between the teacher and the scientist rather than the school and is an excellent way of delivering CPD (Continued Professional Development) to teachers without leaving the classroom and one in which the teacher is in the driving seat.

The main purposes of the network are:

- To support and encourage teachers in helping them to deliver up-to-date and relevant science;
- To help counteract the negative stereotype of scientists;
- To encourage scientists to interact with teachers and children.

Many teachers encourage classroom visits from the scientist so that their pupils can talk to a 'real' scientist and get to know him or her as an ordinary person. The scientist may help in the development of new investigations and other activities, perhaps by suggesting different contexts or procedures. Occasionally, they may make a more direct contribution by describing their work. As well as offering advice and expertise, some scientists are able to help with resources and materials for a particular section of school science work. One case study from TSN North East involved a visit by children and teachers from Bowburn Junior School and St Godric's Primary School to Science Learning Centre North East

during National Science and Engineering Week.

Dr Paula Martin (a physicist) led a workshop on rocks which used chocolate as a teaching tool to identify different rock types. A second workshop, led by Dr Jane Entwistle (a soil scientist) explored the ways in which soil science is useful to industry and farming and, in particular, how soil identification can be used in forensic investigations to catch criminals.

The partnerships are very flexible and open-ended; the amount of contact varies as do the subjects tackled.

So if you live outside the North East is there some way in which you can get involved with school science? There are other local partnership initiatives around the UK, including TSN Norfolk established in 1994. The North East experience has been inspired by best practice promoted by Norfolk's TSN. In Wales, there is TSN Cymru, and Clifton Scientific forms partnerships in the Bristol area (www.clifton-scientific.org).

The UK Researchers in Residence scheme (which has a very similar

Table 1. Contact details for various TSN schemes

TSN North East	TSN Norfolk
Coordinator Claire Willis t 0191 3706215 e claire.willis@durham.ac.uk w www.slcs.ac.uk/ne	Coordinator Dr Phil Smith t 01603 450304 e phil.smith@bbsrc.ac.uk w www.tsn.org.uk
<i>TSN North East is supported by One North East, the regional development agency.</i>	<i>TSN was supported by the Gatsby Charitable Trust for 12 yrs, and is currently funded by the Science in Society programme of the Biotechnology and Biological Science Research Council (BBSRC).</i>
Wales: TSN Cymru	Researchers in Residence
Contact John O'Hare-Price t 02920 475475 ext. 281 e johnohp@techniquest.org w www.techniquest.org	Contact Nicola Cuthbert t 0131 650 5384 e researchersinresidence@ed.ac.uk w www.researchersinresidence.ac.uk
<i>TSN (Wales) is supported by the Gatsby Charitable Foundation.</i>	<i>Researchers in Residence is delivered by a consortium led by the University of Edinburgh and funded by Research Councils UK and the Wellcome Trust.</i>



▲ TSN North East working with a pupil from a local school. Claire Willis

ethos to the TSN) is in its first year under the management of Edinburgh University and is run by eight regional co-ordinators.

The scheme aims to enrich the classroom experience of secondary school students by placing a cutting-edge researcher in their school (see also Gradline, p. 134).

Microbiology is often a difficult topic to teach in schools, and it would be great if SGM members would be prepared to give up some time to support teachers and inspire pupils through one of the schemes in Table 1. Teachers wishing to become involved should contact their local co-ordinator.