

# What is TISCA?

The educational scene in the UK is varied and complex. There are schools of all shapes and sizes, catering for the needs of a huge diversity of children. Around 7% of these schools are independent, that is to say they receive no funding from Government, central or local. If you visit almost any UK school, whether maintained or independent, you will find Christians working there. These Christians all need — and most of them want — fellowship with those of like mind.

In 1988, a group of Christian Headteachers in independent schools started to meet informally in London every other term. Their main purpose in getting together was to share news of their schools and to pray for each other. In addition to the Headteachers, others joined the group, among them Robin Vickers, who was Bursar of Wadhurst College, a Christian school in Kent, which closed about that time. When the group felt the need for a slightly more formal structure, Robin was appointed the first Treasurer, and the name Wadhurst Fellowship was adopted.

By 1994, more and more were coming along to the London meetings, many of them personally invited by Christopher Bacon, Headmaster of Dean Close School. In that year, an invitation was extended to Michael Coates to write a report on the situation of Christians working in independent schools. Michael had at that time recently retired after a career which had included teaching at Rugby, being Headmaster of Monkton Combe Junior School, and serving as the General Secretary of IAPS, the organisation which links the Heads of preparatory schools in this country and overseas. Michael's report ran to 80 pages. It recommended the establishment of a nationwide organisation with a Board of Trustees and a General Secretary. This organisation was established as a charity in 1995 with the name of TISCA – The Independent Schools Christian Alliance. Its first General Secretary was Ken Barnes, previously Head of Eversfield School in Solihull.

From the start, membership of TISCA was open to all those connected with independent schools – heads, teachers, chaplains, bursars, governors, parents and others who were interested in the cause of Christian education in the independent sector. From the start, some of the aims of TISCA were as follows:

- **To encourage and arrange regional meetings** for fellowship and for the exchange of ideas. These meetings are normally held in the evening on a school day, starting at around 6pm, with supper together following a talk, discussion and prayer.
- **To hold plenary sessions.** In recent years, the practice has been to arrange a meeting in London in the first part of June, to which members will be able to come from many parts of the country. One of the best of the early meetings was one addressed by Mark Greene and the late Lord Dearing. Speakers at recent meetings have included Lord Adonis, Baroness Cox, Jonathan Aitken, Prof. John Lennox, Fiona Castle, Bishop Pete Broadbent and Prof. John Wyatt. There have also been residential conferences for Headteachers and Chaplains. The next Chaplains' Conference is scheduled to be held at Glenfall House, Cheltenham, 4–6 October 2010.



- **To produce a regular bulletin.** This is published three times a year with the title *TISCA News and Views* or *TNV*. Issue No 51 of *TNV* is due for publication and mailing out to some 620 members in May 2010. Each issue includes edited versions of talks which have provoked particular interest at recent TISCA meetings. There are also book reviews, news items and articles of topical relevance, as well as a regular feature entitled *Slow Food* which consists of studies on particular books of the Bible intended to help busy teachers in their personal Bible reading. A list of prayer topics for schools is also compiled each term and sent out in hard copy or via email to all those requesting it.

- **To tackle specific subjects of Christian concern** within the independent sector, in collaboration with the independent school associations and other Christian educational organisations. Some of the issues addressed recently have included the GTC draft Code of Conduct for Teachers and the Charity

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Commission's guidelines on Public Benefit. Information is conveyed to members via the TISCA website [www.tisca.info](http://www.tisca.info) or by direct letters or emails.

From the start, TISCA has had close links with ACT. Both my predecessors, Michael Hepworth and Mark Greenstock, have been ACT Trustees, and I am currently Vice Chairman of ACT. TISCA is a member of the Evangelical Alliance, and works closely with a number of other like-minded organisations, including the Stapleford Centre and Scripture Union. TISCA also seeks to support Christian teachers working overseas. We publicise on our website staff vacancies in a number of international schools, including Hebron School in India and St Andrew's Turi in Kenya.

TISCA has tried to adhere to the principles which prompted its establishment fifteen years ago. We are anxious to remain true to our evangelical Christian heritage, to provide information and encouragement to Christians working in schools, and to co-operate with other organisations which share our aims. If you would like to know more about TISCA, please go to our website or contact the TISCA office.

■ Hugh Bradby, TISCA General Secretary and Vice Chairman of ACT.

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