

ACT Now Readership Survey Results

Part 2 Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and Ongoing Spiritual Refreshment (OSR)

A more detailed version of this article can be found on the News and Comments section of the ACT website: www.christian-teachers.org.uk

The Survey

The Summer 2004 edition of ACT Now carried a four-page readership survey. The questionnaire was divided in to two sections:

- Part 1 – ACT Now magazine
- Part 2 – Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and Ongoing Spiritual Refreshment (OSR).

This article aims to analyse feedback on Part 2 – CPD and OSR. A similar article focusing on Part 1 was published in the Autumn 2004 issue of ACT Now.

Interestingly, shortly after the magazine was published the ACT Office received another 20 questionnaires. Hence, this time around analysis is based on 110 responses and not, as last time, 90.

I would like to begin by offering my sincere thanks to everyone who took the time and trouble to answer Part 2 of the questionnaire and return it to the ACT Office.

Before any serious analysis can be offered we ought to remind ourselves that the response rate was just 7%. This sample (just 110 people) may or may not reflect the views of the 93% of ACT Now readers who did not respond to this survey.

Who responded?

Questionnaire responses by phase:

- 50 teachers of pupils aged 3–11
- 35 teachers of pupils aged 11–19
- 25 others (eg advisors, chaplains, inspectors, middle school teachers, retired teachers)

Questionnaire responses by ACT:

- 2 ACTW members (both primary)
- 2 ACT Scotland members (both secondary)
- 2 NIACT members (both secondary)
- 104 ACT England members (48 primary; 31 secondary; 25 other)

Which of the following topics would you like ACT to address through its CPD/OSR programme? And, more importantly, which would you attend?

The readership questionnaire asked respondents to rank sixteen topics in order of preference. The following list shows the percentage of readers who ranked each item first, second, third, fourth or fifth:

- 1 Developing Christian perspectives on developments in learning and teaching (69%)
- 2 The Christian teacher: making a difference (67%)
- 3 Work/life balance (53%)
- 4 Classroom management/dealing with behavioural issues (46%)
- 5 The power of prayer in educational settings (41%)
- 6 Led retreats/opportunities for personal and spiritual refreshment (38%)
- 7 Developing Christian perspectives on a specific curriculum subject (35%)
- 8 Coping with stress (29%)
Workplace witness and evangelism (29%)
- 10 How to set up a Christian Union (25%)

11 The role of the Christian headteacher/college principal: prophet, priest or shepherd (24%)

12 Middle/senior management skills/issues and/or preparing for promotion (23%)

13 Helping children to come to terms with bereavement and loss (22%)

14 Preparing for inspection (21%)

15 Specific events for newly qualified/probationary teachers who are Christians (15%)

16 Specific events for student teachers who are Christians (14%)

Which of these timings would make events easier for you to attend during term time?

The readership questionnaire asked respondents to rank eight options in order of preference. Here are the top four options – as shown by the percentage of readers who ranked each item first, second or third:

- 1 One day events – Saturdays only eg 10:30am – 4:30pm (76%)
- 2 Weekend events: 10:30am Sat – 2pm Sun (41%)
- 3 Weekend events: 7pm Fri – 2pm Sun (40%)
- 4 One day events – weekdays eg 10:30am – 4:30pm (35%)

Interestingly, the two most popular options (in terms of first preferences) were the only two non-residential options.

Of the six residential options only the two weekend choices (ie Friday–Sunday and Saturday–Sunday) found favour and, even then, they tended to be chosen as third, fourth and fifth preferences.

One conclusion might be that teachers simply don't want residential courses

during term time. Why? Well, several questionnaires were returned with comments like: 'I don't see my family enough during term time so a residential course is out of the question' and 'I would prefer a one day course – so I can hurry home to finish my planning and marking!'

When asked to state times of the year which were not conducive for attending conferences during term time primary school teachers wanted to avoid: (a) September; (b) November/December; and (c) May/June.

Secondary teachers recorded the fact that September and December were probably the least helpful times for conferences or training days to be held, favouring October and November or 'any time later on in the summer term' instead.

Which of these timings would make events easier for you to attend during holiday time?

As per the term time options, the two most popular holiday time options (in terms of first preferences) also turned out to be the two non-residential options. But this time the One day... weekday option beat the One day... Saturday only option, 49% of secondary teachers and 60% of primary teachers preferred the former, whilst 17% of secondary teachers and 12% of primary teachers preferred the latter.

We might conclude that teachers want residential courses even less during holiday time than they do during term time! Why? One teacher wrote: 'I wouldn't attend a residential course during holiday time as I need to put my family first. After all they don't see enough of me during term time.'

When asked to state times of the year which were not conducive for attending conferences in holiday time all teachers wanted to avoid: (a) Christmas holidays; (b) Easter holidays; and (c) Summer holidays.

Some teachers favoured the autumn half-term holiday; others thought the spring half-term break was better. No-one said they wanted to attend a course during the summer half-term holiday.

Would you prefer courses to be residential?

- 10% of those surveyed preferred residential courses to non-residential courses
- 40% did not mind whether courses were residential or not
- 50% preferred non-residential courses.

Which of these areas of the country would you be prepared to travel to for an ACT course?

The readership questionnaire asked respondents to rank eight options in order of preference. The following list shows the percentage of readers who ranked each item first, second or third:

- 1 South East (eg London) (53%)
- 2 East Anglia (eg Cambridge) (31%)
West Midlands (eg Birmingham) (31%)
- 4 South West (eg Bristol) (28%)
- 5 East Midlands (eg Nottingham) (26%)
- 6 North West (eg Manchester) (7%)
Yorkshire (eg Leeds) (7%)
- 8 North East (eg Newcastle) (6%)

East Anglia was the most popular choice for a second preference venue: 10% of primary teachers ranked it second, as did 23% of secondary teachers.

What sort of venue would you prefer?

- 12% of those surveyed preferred a city centre venue (especially if this offered excellent, inexpensive all-day parking

together with a good rail link to absolutely everywhere else in the country)

- 7% wanted a rural venue
- 4% thought a suburban setting would be best
- 77% didn't mind.

Which amenities matter most to you?

The readership questionnaire asked respondents to rank nine options in order of preference. The following list shows the percentage of readers who ranked each item first, second or third:

- 1 Good car parking facilities (55%)
- 2 Attractive, well-maintained conference rooms (51%)
Good public transport connections (51%)
- 4 Good quality catering (48%)
- 5 Pleasant grounds and gardens (44%)
- 6 En suite bedrooms (33%)
- 7 Bookshop (9%)
- 8 Library (6%)
- 9 Bar serving drinks in the evening (1%)

So... what happens next?

The ACT Board of Directors will discuss these results, and their possible implications for the Association's ministry, at the next Board Meeting towards the end of January 2005.

■ Rupert Kaye

