

# Welcome to the May issue of *Education in Science*

# Editorial

■ Shaun Reason

Writing this on the day of the London Marathon got me thinking about the comparison with our education system from the perspective of young people and the teaching force. Education isn't a series of short 'sprints', although increasingly the education system seems to look that way – teachers and students sprinting from one assessment target to the next, rather than being given the incentive to pace themselves and concentrate on the overall goals. The pressure of accountability measures often results in this 'sprint' mentality; it's no wonder that teachers and students are complaining about the pressures and being worn out.

I run the occasional marathon – for me and the vast majority of runners, it's not about winning but completing the course in the best possible personal time. Starting the run is daunting, knowing the sheer amount of distance I have ahead of me to cover. It takes a few miles to get warmed up and to settle into the run. I've learned to not jump to a judgement on the run in the first few miles. Starting my training runs, the thought always crosses my mind that I'm not sure I'm going to be able to make it to my goal that day. I have to remind myself that I feel like that every time and, so far, I've always got past it, felt good, and finished my run just fine. However, that training is important, just like the practice runs through revision and past papers for students. I'm also competing against myself, rather than against those around me. If students can be encouraged to think more in this way, instead of always comparing themselves with their peers, then it surely will be for the better.

Teaching is an incredibly challenging profession. It's a job where you could work 24 hours a day and still not accomplish everything that needs to be done. It is therefore best to approach teaching as a marathon, not a sprint, but that's easier said than done given the current education environment.

The past year has seen a very worrying trend of dedicated, experienced and competent classroom teachers of science contacting ASE for support as they contemplate leaving teaching. For those feeling that way, or if you know colleagues in that position, then I encourage you to look at our SOS resources – see [www.ase.org.uk/sos](http://www.ase.org.uk/sos) or our February edition of *Education in Science* for more information. Teaching is a great profession and we need to retain our teachers.

This year in England, students will be completing the new GCSEs in science. In my meetings with teachers and Heads of Science, many of them stated that there appears to be too much content, which is made even more challenging by the need for more mathematical awareness and a deeper understanding of the science concepts. Tougher questions are expected, with a change from remembering content to using the knowledge gained in new contexts. I hope that this does not result in a reduction in those studying A-level science next year. Some colleagues are reporting that their students feel that the sciences are now more difficult than other GCSE subjects. This has not been helped by the fact that some schools have been squeezing the amount of curriculum time given to science, particularly for those studying triple science.

At the time of writing this article, the new ASE website is almost complete, with a new resource area, news and events area and, later this year, a new member's account portal. The new site will incorporate the resources of *Primary UPD8* and schoolscience and will be compatible with mobile technology. With new General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) coming into force in May, we will launch just in time to address these demands. Members will be able to elect for the mode and type of communications that they wish to



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receive, and to opt out should they wish. On launch, everyone will be asked to confirm the use of their data via e-mail. ASE's aim is to have a progressive and transparent policy in place for all our users, so that you know we handle your data respectfully and are fully compliant with GDPR.

In this edition there are our usual regular items, as well as updates on what our committees have been up to during the busy spring term. This might be the last time that you see *Education in Science* (*EiS*) in this format. We are currently reviewing all our journals; *EiS* is likely to be the one we address first. More about this in September!

Finally, as this is the last issue of this academic year, I would like to wish you all a restful and enjoyable summer.

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