

## NETWORKS

An early support staff network has been the **Secondary Teaching Assistants** Good Practice Network which has continued to meet regularly and address a wide range of topics. The most recent of these, Supporting Design Technology recognises the broadening role of the Teaching Assistant in schools across the curriculum and the need for increased subject knowledge to support effectively. Much of this knowledge is gained with the children in the classroom but it is important for the Teaching Assistant to be aware of the framework and context in which they are offering support.

The South Gloucestershire **School Librarians** have continued to meet regularly for sharing ideas and innovations. The group offers support to colleagues who are often operating alone in a school and can feel quite isolated in some of their challenges.

At the beginning of the year we had an away day together to look at the impact of the Key Stage 3 curriculum on their work. The day was led by Marion Hobbs English Consultant and was an excellent opportunity to consider some of the issues in depth.



**Science Technicians** have met regularly at annual conferences arranged through the old Avon arrangements. We have now established a group in South Gloucestershire which plans to meet three times a year and held their first meeting at Patchway Community College. Curriculum change has a direct impact on the role of the technician and it is valuable to have support from colleagues to find the best ways forward

**School Bursars and Heads' PAs** hold regular meetings and find these particularly supportive in their roles in school. Many of them are taking on new and extended roles with greater management responsibilities. They benefit from the enrichment of sharing processes and systems and learning from each others' experiences.



The role of the **Learning Mentor** is a fairly new and developing role in our schools. Their work is with vulnerable young people often dealing with sensitive issues and in stressful situations. A high level of interpersonal skills is vital but they also benefit from the support they gain from meeting together. We held an inset day on Friday 18<sup>th</sup> November 2005 to consider their roles, the similarities and differences to achieve their common purpose. Bernard Fairhurst supported this day and we are planning to develop this further through CPD next year.

**Cover Supervisors** are working in schools to provide cover for planned absence. They are not qualified teachers and, therefore, should only be supervising work that has been prepared by teachers when it is appropriate and offers the best alternative for the pupils. We have met for our first network meeting and look forward to further opportunities to meet.