From ATM’s Professional Officer

As ATM’s Professional Officer I am often asked to represent ATM at meetings; sometimes I get a phone call from the press and am asked ATM’s views about some issue; and I also write, after consultation, ATM’s response to government proposals – you can read ATM’s response to Smith and Tomlinson on our website. When I do these things I am speaking on behalf of you as ATM members. So what do I know about a typical ATM member?

One thing that has particularly struck me about ATM members when I have met them at conference and elsewhere is that they all appear to embrace ATM’s aims and guiding principles – see inside the front cover of this MT. If only all the teachers in the schools I have worked in had embraced the guiding principles of their schools so whole-heartedly, what amazing places those schools would have been. So in my picture of a typical ATM member, acting in accordance with ATM’s guiding principles would be what strikes me most strongly. What else do I know about a typical ATM member? Let me see.

A typical ATM member votes Labour.

You can’t be serious. After all that the government has done to stifle initiative and foster uniformity in our classrooms? Quite apart from the members who are lifelong Liberal Democrats and Conservatives!

OK, it is just an impression. Perhaps we still vote Old Labour in hope. Moving rapidly on, I think the typical ATM member reads The Guardian.

Now you really can’t be serious. Why The Guardian?

... And drinks a lot of beer and red wine.

Real ale, I suppose. What about all the ATM members who don’t drink at all but prefer to make models in the workshop at conferences? They seem to believe that ‘teaching and learning are co-operative activities’!

Well, I was coming to that. ATM members are teachers who like sticking MATs together.

I hate doing that. As you know, whenever I want a solid model I get you to make it for me.

And ATM members prefer to dress casually.

Well, I suppose I quite like that, but I don’t see why you can’t be ‘seeking out ways to engage the power of the learner’ while dressed in a tie or a smart skirt.

That makes me think of private education. The typical ATM member is against that.

Is this another prejudice? Don’t we want to spread the word to schools in the private sector, then?

... And enjoys doing mathematics.

I’ve certainly noticed that.

... And is not sure what to think about the MA.

Why not? I am sure many members of the MA enjoy doing mathematics. And don’t say ‘Not our sort of mathematics’, whatever that means.

... And does not like being told how to teach by the government or anyone else in authority.

I can’t argue with that. Just as some learners might be happier not being told how to learn.

And enjoys solving mathematical problems.

And does not watch much TV.

And is not normal.

And laughs a lot.

And is supportive of other teachers.

And is challenging to other teachers and to learners.

And thinks about how they teach.

Apart from having met the odd TV addict, I would go along with all of that.

If readers have any thoughts about the typical ATM member, perhaps they could let me know. It might enliven ATM’s response to the next government initiative!

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ATM’s guiding principles

1 The ability to operate mathematically is an aspect of human functioning which is as universal as language itself. Attention needs constantly to be drawn to this fact. Any possibility of intimidating with mathematical expertise is to be avoided.

2 The power to learn rests with the learner. Teaching has a subordinate role. The teacher has a duty to seek out ways to engage the power of the learner.

3 It is important to examine critically approaches to teaching and to explore new possibilities, whether deriving from research, from technological developments or from the imaginative and insightful ideas of others.

4 Teaching and learning are co-operative activities. Encouraging a questioning approach and giving due attention to the ideas of others are attitudes to be encouraged. Influence is best sought by building networks of contacts in professional circles.
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Membership of the ATM will help you through:

- Six issues per year of a professional journal, which focus on the learning and teaching of maths. Ideas for the classroom, personal experiences and shared thoughts about developing learners’ understanding.
- Professional development courses tailored to your needs. Agree the content with us and we do the rest.
- Easter conference, which brings together teachers interested in learning and teaching mathematics, with excellent speakers and workshops and seminars led by experienced facilitators.
- Regular e-newsletters keeping you up to date with developments in the learning and teaching of mathematics.
- Generous discounts on a wide range of publications and software.
- A network of mathematics educators around the United Kingdom to share good practice or ask advice.
- Active campaigning. The ATM campaigns at all levels towards: encouraging increased understanding and enjoyment of mathematics; encouraging increased understanding of how people learn mathematics; encouraging the sharing and evaluation of teaching and learning strategies and practices; promoting the exploration of new ideas and possibilities and initiating and contributing to discussion of and developments in mathematics education at all levels.
- Representation on national bodies helping to formulate policy in mathematics education.
- Software demonstrations by arrangement.

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- Access to a members only part of the popular ATM website giving you access to sample materials and up to date information.
- Advice on resources, curriculum development and current research relating to mathematics education.
- Optional membership of a working group being inspired by working with other colleagues on a specific project.
- Special rates at the annual conference
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Additional benefits

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