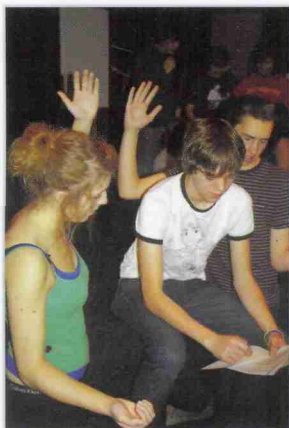


# The Visit of Firebird Theatre Company

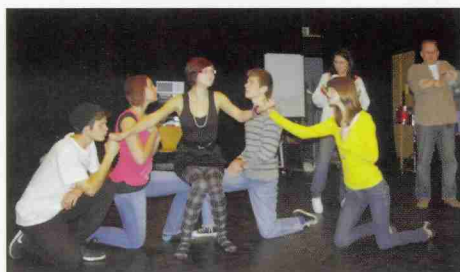
The Drama Department welcomed Firebird Theatre, a distinguished local disabled theatre company, to run a workshop for AS and A2 Drama and Theatre Studies students, who were themselves beginning to



devise plays for their exams. Firebird, through looking at their exploration of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, led students in how to incorporate theatrical techniques and conventions into their work.

It was a pleasure to see disabled actors supporting and guiding College students, deconstructing exactly how to communicate meaning on stage. As students had to perform to a deaf adult and to people with learning difficulties, they had to break away from complex layers of meaning, and go down to the simplest forms of expression. From here, they were given tips on how to build up understanding through props, music, tableaux and other performance techniques.

Naomi Newell said, 'For me, working with disabled actors was a moving and thought-provoking experience. I am used to working at



a fast pace to deliver a performance. However, the members of Firebird showed me that stepping back and looking at every detail of the picture is just as, if not more, important. It fascinated me as they watched,

analysed and identified every relationship between the characters they witnessed on stage – I often take a piece of drama as it is.

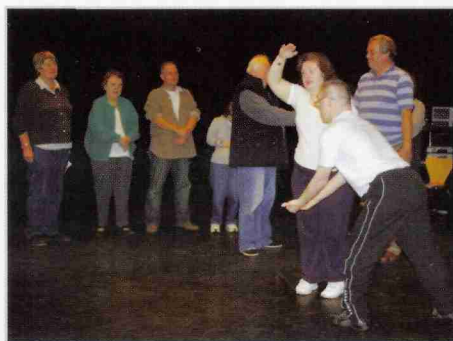
I loved their objective 'to make theatre accessible to everyone', because I believe this is what is grossly lacking in theatre. An art form as creative as theatre SHOULD appeal to everyone. With their deaf performers they are able to widen their audiences to include those with hearing impairments.

I am grateful to Kevin Brice for arranging this visit as it really opened our eyes to what our drama pieces are lacking.'

The students learnt many useful tips in communicating meaning. Charlie Hodgkins said, 'I learnt several new acting styles.' Other students expressed their feelings: AJ Denning found the whole experience enlightening: 'It was really thought provoking, and made me have a new way of seeing.'

All the students and the Firebird actors got on really well, and made a great connection, forged through theatre. Vicky Bartram stated, 'It gave me real insight into what audiences actually see when I perform and completely expanded my horizons of what theatre could and should be.'

In the afternoon, Firebird showed some of their past work, and there was a question and answer



session about how they work as an Independent Theatre company. This was attended by over 100 students, from courses ranging from Health and Social Care to Drama to Media to Business. As a whole event, it really helped to create positive links and understanding between disabled performers and college students. Firebird were delighted with the opportunity to come into a busy working College, and share their experiences,



and for many students it was as an illuminating and inspiring event. St Brendan's is totally committed to widening student understanding of issues of diversity and equality, and Firebird will now become a regular part of the College calendar, and will hopefully continue to challenge and broaden the attitude of young people for years to come.

*Naomi Newell & Kevin Brice.*

## Chemistry Essay Winners



Two Chemistry students were invited to enter a science essay competition based on the 'Historic Structure of the Atom'. This may not make for good bedtime reading for many of us, but Head of Science at St Brendan's, Judith Green, found it fascinating. Judith judged the competition, she said, 'As a non-chemist I read the essays as one who has some knowledge of chemistry but needed to be taken a little further in my understanding.'

This the students did, particularly the winner, Joe Perry, and the runner-up Anna Ratcliffe. Both received prizes of chocolate. All students will benefit as the essays will all be used for Key Skills.