

**IMMEDIATE**  
**Tuesday 22 February 2005**

**NASUWT BLAMES SERCO FOR ESCALATING DISPUTE AT BARR  
BEACON LANGUAGE COLLEGE, WALSALL**

Last-minute attempts by teachers' trade union NASUWT have failed to resolve the escalating dispute at Barr Beacon Language College, Walsall. NASUWT blames intervention by the company employed to manage the Walsall Education Authority (SERCO) for the worsening situation. The long-running dispute relates to concerns about management issues at Barr Beacon which have resulted in the worsening of working conditions for teachers employed at the Language College and have led to the unwarranted suspension of the NASUWT representative on the spurious grounds of alleged gross misconduct.

**Chris Keates, General Secretary of NASUWT**, the largest union representing teachers and headteachers throughout the UK, said:

"Had it not been for the intervention of SERCO representatives NASUWT believes that the new Headteacher and the Chair of Governors at Barr Beacon would have settled this damaging dispute on a mutually satisfactory basis."

**Chris Keates** added:

"It is now apparent that the agenda of the management company SERCO is a determination to break teacher trade union organisation in Walsall. I regret very much having to confirm that NASUWT members employed at Barr Beacon will be taking strike action on Wednesday 23 and Thursday 24 February. Unless SERCO changes its hostile and unhelpful approach I fear that further industrial action will be necessary."