

IMMEDIATE
Tuesday, 14 December 2004

**HMCI CASTS SLUR ON TEACHERS' PROFESSIONALISM SAYS
NASUWT**

Responding to HMCI David Bell's latest attack on teachers, **Chris Keates, General Secretary of NASUWT**, the largest union representing teachers and headteachers throughout the UK, said:

"To suggest that teachers 'celebrate' when difficult pupils truant from schools is a slur on their professionalism.

"If HMCI had to face the pressure and challenges that some teachers face day in and day out from disaffected pupils he might not be so quick to condemn and judge those who on occasions have some temporary relief when they are able to teach and other pupils are able to learn in an environment free from disruption.

"To apparently suggest that this leads to a teacher, headteacher or school abdicating responsibility for taking appropriate action to alert the relevant services to a youngster's unauthorised absence is unacceptable.

"Missing children are everyone's concern. Schools take this responsibility seriously and do an excellent job of seeking to keep track of all pupils on their registers. However, once a child has been referred to an outside agency or removed from the school register for whatever reason, schools should not then be condemned for focusing their attention on the pupils who remain in their care and for expecting the LEA and other local authority services to fulfil their obligations."

ENDS

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