

IMMEDIATE

8 July 2004

NASUWT'S RESPONSE TO THE GOVERNMENT'S FIVE-YEAR PLAN FOR EDUCATION

Commenting on the statement made by the Secretary of State in the House of Commons this afternoon and the publication of the Government's five-year strategy for Education, **Chris Keates**, Acting General Secretary of NASUWT, (the teachers' union with 223,500 members), said:

"At the heart of the strategy are many of the policies the Government is already pursuing. There are a number of new initiatives but essentially the proposals amount to evolution rather than revolution. Teachers and schools will welcome the emphasis on consolidating and enhancing work already in progress.

"The decisive rejection of expanding selection and subsidising private education gives credibility to the claim that the Government's ambition is to achieve excellence for all.

"The commitment to enabling more secondary schools to achieve specialist status and, therefore, to access the additional financial benefits brings greater equity of provision.

"I warmly welcome the fact that the Secretary of State has given an undertaking that greater independence and the acquisition of foundation status will not enable schools to opt out of the national pay and conditions framework. I am very pleased that he has accepted the NASUWT's argument that such a move would have been totally inconsistent with the recent national agreements on pay and conditions.

"The proposal to introduce three-year budgets for schools will be controversial. However, it is a nettle which has to be grasped. Once the Government made a commitment to bring 'predictability and stability' to school budgets by introducing multi-year pay awards, such a move was a logical and inevitable consequence.

"The ability to plan expenditure over a longer period should improve all aspects of financial management. Every year members of the school workforce suffer immense anxiety while an assessment is made about whether budget fluctuations will mean job loss. This annual ritual should no longer be necessary.

"It is clear within the strategy that the Government is continuing its drive to put additional funding directly into schools. Whilst this policy has considerable advantages, vigilance will be essential to ensure that it is used for its intended purpose and does not sit in unproductive reserves.

"NASUWT will wish to continue to engage constructively and positively with the Government on all elements of the strategy. In this context we will seek to persuade the Secretary of State that his proposal to expand the number of City Academies is fundamentally flawed and will make no significant contribution."

Press office: 020 7420 9670

Chris Keates Acting GS
Jerry Bartlett Acting DGS

Office: 0121 453 6150 Home: 0121 475 4016 Mobile: 07966 202403
Office: 0121 453 6150 Home: 01562 742498 Mobile: 07966 202407