

NUT at Bichard Inquiry: balance of protection for children and teachers.

A new method of dealing with allegations of abuse made against teachers but which never come to court has been called for by the National Union of Teachers, representing 267,000 teachers throughout England and Wales.

The Union wants the General Teaching Council to take responsibility for discussing with prospective employers allegations which lie on file in police records but which have never led to a prosecution.

Some 75 allegations against NUT members have been made so far this year compared with approximately 200 a year in recent times. Following investigation by the police only around 10 per cent ever make it into court and only 5 per cent result in a conviction.

Yet teachers who have been accused of abuse can have their employment prospects damaged even though there may be no substance to the allegation as they will remain on police files and can be revealed to potential employers.

“There has to be a balance between the protection of children and the protection of teachers from the damage that can be done by false allegations, which are only too common,” said Doug McAvoy, NUT General Secretary.

“The protection of children from those who would physically or sexually abuse them has to take priority but teachers too are vulnerable. Their careers can be ruined by a malicious allegation which has no substance.

“I believe that it is essential that the matter be dealt with by an independent body that is knowledgeable and informed about teaching and education.

“The existence of the allegation on file would still be conveyed to a prospective employer but the employer would then be required to refer to the GTC to discuss the issue. This would help insure that the mere fact of an allegation would not lead to the destruction of a career by a false and malicious allegation.”

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