

## **IMMEDIATE**

Thursday 7 October 2004

### **ALL-OUT STRIKE COMMENCES AT LAURELHILL COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

Announcing the start of continuous strike action at Laurelhill Community College in Lisburn near Belfast, **Chris Keates**, Acting General Secretary of NASUWT, the largest union representing teachers throughout the UK, said:

“Due to the lack of progress by the South Eastern Education and Library Board (SEELB) in addressing the concerns of NASUWT members in Laurelhill Community College, the continuous strike action commenced today.

“A picket was mounted at the College and all members have responded to the action. All pupils have been sent home, although the school building remains open.

“It is of great regret that we have been given no alternative but to embark upon this action.

“A male teacher at the school, an NASUWT member, was accused of sexual assault, suspended for over two years, investigated, exonerated by the court and is now too ill to attend work due to the stress and trauma he has suffered.

“Yet the pupil remains in school apparently with the full support of the SEELB and has had no sanctions taken against her.

“For many years NASUWT has highlighted the vulnerability of teachers to false, malicious and exaggerated allegations by pupils and called for the introduction of measures to protect them.

“The case at Laurelhill Community College is a textbook illustration of the issues about which we have been campaigning. It is for this reason NASUWT has decided to call the first all-out strike of our members on this issue.

“NASUWT believes that the situation at the school could be easily resolved by a more constructive approach by the SEELB.

“No right-minded person would consider it unreasonable for an employer to acknowledge that a teacher who has been exonerated of an allegation of sexual abuse was the victim of a false allegation and to take appropriate action to protect him and other teachers.

“Employers have a responsibility for the health and welfare of employees. NASUWT will continue to press the SEELB to exercise its legal duty of care for the teachers at Laurelhill.

“NASUWT believes the situation at Laurelhill to be one of the worst cases of gross mismanagement of a false allegation the Union has encountered.”

**ENDS**

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## **National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers**