

## HMCI FAILS TO GRASP REALITY OF PROBLEMS SCHOOLS FACE SAYS NASUWT

Commenting on the OFSTED Report on Outdoor Education, **Chris Keates**, Acting General Secretary of NASUWT, the largest union representing teachers throughout the UK, said:

"The Report highlights the benefits pupils gain from participation in outdoor education activities. NASUWT endorses this view.

"NASUWT also shares the concern highlighted by OFSTED that the cost of these activities can deny some children access to them. Sadly, it is often the children who would most benefit whose parents are least able to make the necessary financial contribution. A review of schools' charging policies is long overdue.

"Unfortunately, although there is much in the Report that NASUWT welcomes, there are two major areas of concern.

"Firstly, the Report appears unsympathetic and dismissive of schools' fear of litigation if an accident occurs on an educational visit.

"The comment made by HMCI David Bell that *'if teachers follow the recognised safety procedures and guidance they have nothing to fear from the law'* indicates that he has failed to grasp the reality of what actually happens when accidents occur.

"As NASUWT casework has demonstrated time and time again, following the procedures and guidance is no protection against litigation.

"Fortunately, the Government is now taking our concerns seriously, having recognised that the demise of the concept of the genuine accident and the rise of the blame culture has left teachers and schools vulnerable.

"DfES officials now are working with NASUWT to analyse the problems in detail and to identify possible solutions to protect teachers and other staff who accompany educational visits."

**Chris Keates** continued:

"My second concern is that the remodelling of the school workforce appears to have passed OFSTED by as the Report implies that only teachers are able to organise, accompany and take responsibility for outdoor activities.

"Many of the highly qualified support staff that schools are now employing are perfectly capable of successfully undertaking these activities.

"OFSTED needs to embrace rapidly the concept of the remodelling agenda to ensure that schools see its reports as relevant and take the findings seriously."