

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

1 November 2004

NUT evidence to the House of Commons Education and Skills Select Committee Inquiry, "Education outside the classroom"

The NUT has submitted evidence to the Select Committee on "education outside the classroom". It includes the following main points:

- Activity-based fieldwork and residential trips are an immensely valuable part of young people's educational experience. They encourage personal, social and physical skills and cross-curricular learning.
- Visits to museums, art galleries, concerts and theatres are a vital contribution to developing creative learning.
- Safety on school visits and trips is paramount. A safety audit must be conducted by the school before any school trip. DFES guidance on staffing ratios should be seen as an absolute minimum. In addition to DFES guidance the NUT advises that there should be a minimum of 2 teachers on every trip irrespective of the other adults needed. At least one member of staff should be a qualified first-aider. New qualified teachers should not lead school parties. The DFES must issue specific guidance for outside activities involving children with special needs.
- Teacher involvement in residential activities should be voluntary.
- Teachers should not experience excessive workload as a result of ongoing school trips.

Steve Sinnott, General Secretary of the National Union of Teachers, said:

"All youngsters should be guaranteed an entitlement to the best possible educational experiences both inside and outside school. It is essential, however, that the entitlement of young people to a creative curriculum should be accompanied by the highest possible health and safety standards and levels of support for teachers.

"If there is a full commitment to these standards on the part of all stakeholders and if teachers follow NUT and Government guidelines in organising outside visits, all our members will be able to undertake these activities confidentially without fear of litigation.

"I call on the Government to convene a meeting of all teacher organisations to agree a joint statement which will reassure all teachers on the issue of outside education."

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For further information contact the NUT press office on 020 7380 4706