

IMMEDIATE

Tuesday 9 November 2004

TEACHERS ON CALL, ONLINE COULD LEAD TO HARASSMENT AND ABUSE, SAYS NASUWT

Commenting on PA reports on statements from the Minister for School Standards, David Miliband, encouraging schools to abandon traditional study leave for pupils taking GCSEs, **Chris Keates, General Secretary of NASUWT**, the largest union representing teachers and headteachers throughout the UK, said:

“The Minister makes some very valid points.

“Some pupils do not have the maturity and self-discipline to utilise fully and effectively unsupervised study at home. It is for these reasons that many schools do review and evaluate regularly their study leave arrangements and revision strategies. A number of schools already have abandoned the more traditional approach.

“I am, however, extremely concerned by the suggestion from the DfES that one of the new approaches could be for school staff to answer revision queries by e-mail outside school hours.

“This proposal appears to conflict with the reasonable work/life balance contractual change the Government has introduced to bring downward pressure on teachers’ overall working hours.

“It is completely unreasonable to expect teachers to be on call, online out of hours.

“However, the most serious aspect of this proposal is its potential to leave teachers vulnerable to e-mail harassment and abuse.

“NASUWT will be seeking an urgent meeting with the DfES to discuss these issues before the trials on this proposal begin next year.

“We will also take the opportunity to raise the issues at the NASUWT e-Learning Conference to be held this week (11 November 2004) in Birmingham, to which the DfES is sending a representative.”

ENDS

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