

Low level disruption destroys learning and teacher motivation says NUT

Commenting on the announcements from Ruth Kelly, Education Secretary, and Tim Collins, Shadow Education Secretary, Steve Sinnott, NUT General Secretary, said:

“The Government and the Opposition are competing with each other over the issue of pupil behaviour. This demonstrates that at last both recognize that unacceptable pupil behaviour destroys the learning of others and the motivation of teachers.

“So called zero tolerance offers pupils clear guidance on what is unacceptable and what they can expect if they break the rules. Young people like to know what is and what is not acceptable: they know where they stand and their parents know what will and will not be tolerated. All rules must be applied consistently but, for example, if a child is to be withdrawn from a class to a quiet area, the space and the staff support must be there to ensure that time is used constructively.

“Parents have a crucial role in overcoming poor behaviour. They must ensure that their children abide by the rules and that they understand why those rules exist. Parents cannot opt out of their responsibilities and assume that their children’s 190 days a year at school can counter what happens in the home and elsewhere.

“There is much in Ruth Kelly’s announcement that the Union can welcome. But I would like to see a requirement on all local authorities to have a wide range of alternative provision, with the money to back it up. This must include access to behaviour support services, special schools and pupil referral units. In schools there also needs to be smaller class sizes and where necessary one to one teaching.

“Ms Kelly needs to focus on overcoming bad behaviour rather than threatening schools with continual OFSTED visits. She must ensure they have the back-up from local authorities and the resources to deal with problem behaviour if she is not to undermine teacher confidence.

“Removing independent appeals panels entirely is not the answer. But it must be made clear to the panels that where a pupil has been permanently excluded because of violent behaviour, that pupil cannot be returned to the original school.

“It may be possible in other cases for conciliation to be considered. But this must be with the agreement of the school and if conciliation is to go ahead there must be a guarantee of additional resources to help the school deal with the problem behaviour of the excluded child.”

For further information contact: Olive Forsythe tel: 020 7380 4706 (office) 020 8313 1692 (evenings) or if all else fails 07879 480061.