

OFSTED annual report: NUT view

Commenting on OFSTED's annual report published today (Wednesday 4 February) Doug McAvoy, NUT General Secretary, said:

"The Ofsted report paints a picture of hard won progress and there is much to celebrate.

"But David Bell should have commented more sharply on some of the Government's own goals which are sapping the confidence of teachers. It is only possible to assert that there has been a leveling off in improvement in standards if the success of schools is measured against the Government's absurd targets that have been plucked out of the air.

"Primary schools deserve better recognition for their achievements than that.

"Sharper criticism is needed of the malign effects of the testing regime in primary schools on the curriculum beyond English, maths and science. Subjects such as history, geography and the arts are suffering because of the Government's obsession with tests, targets and tables. A two-tier curriculum is not good enough for our children.

"An increase in the number of schools going into and a decline in the numbers coming out of special measures can hardly come as a surprise. Last year, schools were hit by a twin crisis. Government funding was inadequate and recruitment and retention of staff in the toughest areas became ever more difficult. I suspect these lie at the root of the increase in numbers of schools going in to special measures and the decline in the numbers coming out.

"With teacher turnover and funding difficulties, the designation of 'failing school' is hardly an attraction to teachers wanting to further their careers. The damage such a punitive approach causes must be recognized.

"It is too early to quantify the impact of the new inspection framework on inspectors' judgements. David Bell has moved the goal posts to the detriment of teachers' motivation and morale. He has created a situation where words mean exactly what he says they mean. Now 'satisfactory' is no longer satisfactory."

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PR.7/04