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Turnaround schools must not become 'boot camps' says NASUWT

Commenting on emerging reports of the proposals on school discipline to be announced today by Conservative Party Leader Michael Howard, **Chris Keates** General Secretary of NASUWT, the largest union representing teachers and headteachers throughout the UK, said:

"NASUWT has campaigned for many years for the abolition of independent appeals panels, which have a history of inappropriately reinstating pupils who have been excluded permanently from schools, for anonymity for teachers accused of child abuse up to a decision of the court and for better provision for violent and disruptive pupils excluded from schools.

"There is, therefore, much in the package of measures proposed by the Conservatives that NASUWT welcomes in principle.

"The key proposal is the establishment of 'turnaround schools'.

"Although increasing the number of places in off-site provision for disaffected pupils would be a welcome development, the nature and purpose of such provision requires careful consideration.

"It needs to be of a high quality, provide educational continuity and be staffed by skilled and experienced teachers. Access should be against clear criteria and without recourse to burdensome bureaucracy.

"It should be an integral part of the state school system and provide the opportunity for pupils to be reintegrated into mainstream school.

"If the Conservative Party's proposals delivered such provision it would be warmly welcomed by teachers.

"However, the proposal that turnaround schools should be run by private companies seems to indicate this provision is in danger of becoming a national network of boot camps for the disaffected.

"This would be highly regrettable. Private provision is driven invariably by consideration of profitability and minimising financial risk. This would not be in the educational interests of vulnerable children. There is no logic or reason for taking the administration of such establishments out of the control of LEAs. It is another example of a potentially good idea being distorted by slavish adherence to the dogma of privatisation."