

IMMEDIATE
9 March 2005

'The time is right for a new relationship with schools to emerge' says NASUWT

Commenting on the launch of the DfES/Ofsted New Relationship with Schools: Next Steps initiative, **Chris Keates, General Secretary of NASUWT**, the largest Union representing teachers and headteachers, said:

"The principles underpinning the New Relationship with Schools initiative are welcomed by NASUWT.

"The shorter notice inspection process should remove the months and months of anxiety and onerous preparation endured by teachers and headteachers under the previous system.

"The establishment of School Improvement Partners to provide support and challenge to schools has merit and is well intentioned.

"The school profile has the potential to make parental access to relevant information about the school more straightforward.

"Streamlining data collection and management and simplifying information exchange mechanisms should make an enormous contribution to reducing the bureaucratic burdens on schools.

"Measures to stem the tide of guidance, information and other material which regularly flood schools are long overdue.

"The pilot LEAs and schools have provided positive feedback but there is a great deal of work still to be done if the New Relationship with Schools is to fulfil its promise and potential.

"Rigorous evaluation of the phased roll-out of all of the strands of the initiative will be required in conjunction with social partners.

"Agreed checks and guidance need to be introduced to ensure that the self-evaluation process underpinning the new inspection regime does not develop into a workload intensive additional task, leading to the replacement of one damaging form of bureaucracy with another.

"The feasibility and appropriateness of School Improvement Partners being in the main serving headteachers has yet to be tested.

"The important drive to reduce the mailings to schools must be balanced by ensuring that they receive automatically information which is required to discharge statutory responsibilities.

"The time is right for a new relationship with schools to emerge.

"It must be characterised by the investment of greater professional trust in teachers and their engagement in developing solutions to improve teaching and learning.

"The real test of its effectiveness, therefore, will be whether the improved working practices and support for school management impacts positively on teaching and learning, particularly the extent to which teachers are able to focus on the crucially important task of teaching."