

**IMMEDIATE**

**21 February 2005**

**'PUPIL QUESTIONNAIRES UNDERMINE TEACHERS' AUTHORITY AND PROFESSIONALISM' SAYS NASUWT**

Commenting on reports that Ofsted intends to press ahead this week with issuing questionnaires to pupils as young as 4 years old, as part of the school inspection process, **Chris Keates General Secretary of NASUWT** the largest Union representing teachers and headteachers throughout the UK said

"Pupils' views on their learning experiences are of course important. They are entitled to be provided with opportunities to express them and have them considered seriously. Schools already facilitate this through their routine working practices including individual pupil reviews, mentoring sessions and parental consultations.

"Ofsted's role should be to check that schools do engage pupils in this way not to issue simplistic, anonymous and totally inappropriate questionnaires which are open to misuse and abuse.

"They will serve only to undermine further the authority and professionalism of teachers.

"Although the questions do not ask pupils to name teachers, it is inevitable that some will. Even if they do not, identifying individual teachers will be relatively easy, particularly in primary schools.

"The vulnerability of teachers to false, malicious and exaggerated allegations is now widely recognised and accepted.

"The Government is developing procedures to protect staff from such allegations. It is, therefore, ironic that, at the same time, Ofsted is introducing a process which not only potentially legitimises false allegations but also provides a cloak of anonymity to the accusers. An option denied to the victims.

"Schools are rife with pupils who know their rights but not their responsibilities. All too frequently pupils threaten to report teachers who challenge their inappropriate behaviour.

"These questionnaires will tilt even further the balance from teacher to pupil.

"Disruptive pupils undoubtedly will be grateful to Ofsted for providing them with yet another means of pressurising already beleaguered teachers.

"All right minded people will regard these questionnaires as a step too far in the inspection of schools."