

1 February 2005

SHA press release on school discipline

SHA strongly welcomes the support of both the government and the Conservative party for head teachers in dealing with disruptive behaviour in schools. The Association has argued vigorously for such support since David Blunkett's disastrous 1999 targets and regulations to limit exclusions.

Commenting on today's speeches by the Secretary of State, Ruth Kelly, and Conservative shadow, Tim Collins, SHA General Secretary, Dr John Dunford, said:

I welcome the strong support for head teachers from both political parties.

This emphasis on behaviour should not be taken to mean that schools are dens of disruption. On the contrary, the vast majority of schools are well ordered communities in which learning takes place in an atmosphere of calm.

Schools need more support from parents who too often accept their child's side of the story and complain when the head takes strong action.

I welcome the Secretary of State's support for heads and her recognition of the responsibilities of parents, but I do not see how the threat of repeat Ofsted visits fits with the new inspection framework, currently going through Parliament. Where inspectors find discipline problems, the emphasis should be on the support that she mentions, not on more inspection.

Schools are prepared to work collaboratively in dealing with difficult pupils, provided that the government and local authorities delegate adequate funding to do the job properly.

SHA remains opposed to the abolition of appeals panels, as advocated by the Conservative Party, on the grounds that some parents will take their grievances to the courts, using valuable time and resources from the schools.

I am also concerned that the Conservative proposals for "turnaround schools", which would be likely to place too many disruptive pupils in one institution, to the benefit of none of them.