

OFSTED REPORT ON THE IMPACT OF UNIONS WIDE OF THE MARK

The Ofsted Report published in the New Year on so-called 'stuck' schools, 'Fight or Flight', contains many observations that reflect the NASUWT's experience of the barriers that schools can encounter in their improvement journeys.



Amanda Spielman
Ofsted Chief Inspector

In particular, as the report notes, schools continue to report that the advice they receive comes from too many quarters; is often contradictory and fails to address the reality of the challenges that they face.

It is, therefore, disappointing that these important messages are distracted from by the inclusion in the report of unverified assertions by two schools that 'antagonistic union voice' had been an obstacle to their progress. Unfortunately, it is sometimes the case that poor employers persist in not seeing the work of trade unions in legitimately representing the concerns of their members as part of the solution to the challenges they face.

Ofsted itself is a part of the problem because it is hard for a school to improve once they have been judged to be in the lowest categories. They become inundated with improvement notices, few of which have proved to be successful and they become dumping grounds for low-performing pupils from other schools.

All employers need to recognise the tried and tested principle that providing high quality educational experiences for pupils and securing fair and equitable working conditions for teachers are mutually inclusive goals. Working constructively with trade unions is the best way for all schools to secure working conditions for teachers that will help to transform the learning outcomes for all pupils.



PLANS TO LIFT THE INSPECTION EXEMPTION FOR 'OUTSTANDING' SCHOOLS

Ofsted is also proposing to scrap the exemption of schools rated as outstanding from routine Ofsted inspections. Some of these schools have not been inspected for over ten years now and much has changed in that time and there



was always a danger that these schools could become complacent if exempted from routine inspections. The NASUWT has always been clear that all schools should be subject to a common inspection system. For this reason, the Union has continued to call for the ending of the exemption given to outstanding schools from inspection, not least because long periods without inspection have the potential to undermine public confidence in those schools. Ofsted's announcement is therefore welcome if somewhat overdue. The NASUWT welcomed the greater emphasis placed in the current Ofsted framework on assessing schools' performance in tackling excessive and un-

necessary workload burdens on staff and it is important that those schools which have previously been rated as outstanding are subject to scrutiny on this important matter. The NASUWT would argue that for a school to be rated as outstanding it should continue to demonstrate publicly that it promotes the wellbeing of its staff, which is vital to ensuring the provision of high standards of education for pupils.

SATs MALADMINISTRATION OUT OF CONTROL

The number of cases of SATs maladministration has increased by 32% in 2018, figures from the Standards and Testing Agency have revealed. The Agency, which presides over tests at age 7 and 11, investigated 524 cases at both stages in 2016 which increased to 599 cases in 2017 and there was a large jump in 2018 when 793 cases were investigated. There was a sharp rise in the number of investigations in the higher-stakes tests for 11-year-olds which rose from 461 in 2017 to 644 in 2018. There was a 56% rise in the number of schools that had their results annulled or amended as a result of an investigation, from 78 to 122.



"Maladministration" refers to any act that could jeopardise the 'integrity, security or confidentiality' of the tests and lead to results that 'do not reflect the unaided abilities and achievements of pupils'. It includes schools incorrectly opening test papers, pupils cheating and teachers offering too much help to children and even changing pupils' responses to test questions. Is there any wonder that more and more primary schools are being investigated over dubious SAT results?

SATs are a test of the school's performance, not pupils, and some primary schools spend almost the entire last year of school to getting pupils to practice for the tests and send home messages to parents asking them to help their children prepare. Teachers are being judged on their pupils' marks in reading, writing and maths and schools are competing to come top of the league tables based on the results. The pressure being put on pupils led to the pledge to scrap the tests for 7-year-olds from 2023, with a baseline test at reception being introduced instead to allow progress to be measured.



The Ofsted Chief Inspector, Amanda Spielman, has been very busy recently and has thrown her spanner in the works and said that primary school pupils should not be told that they are taking exams to prevent feelings of anxiety. She said even saying "good luck" brings unnecessary pressure upon primary school pupils. She has also said "Good primary schools manage to run key stage tests often with children not knowing they were being tested."

The SATs results from last year found that one in every three 11-year-olds failed to reach the expected levels in all three core subjects. It really is unacceptable that over a third of 11-year-olds arrive in their secondary school knowing that they have been labelled as 'below the expected standard'. It is also unacceptable that far too many secondary schools are receiving pupils from feeder primary schools with this amount of misinformation about the true levels of ability and achievements of the children.

REQUESTS FOR FLEXIBLE WORKING

Flexible working improves employees' work-life balance and well-being, helps to attract and retain staff, particularly those with caring responsibilities, increases productivity and reduces costs. Alongside job sharing it forms a key element in many employers' overall talent strategy. Flexible working is a way of working that suits the needs of the employee. It is a way of sharing, stag-gering or breaking up the normal working day or week in order to improve work/life balance. It could also be helpful in schools with budget problems. All employees (not just parents or carers) have the legal right to request flexible working if they have worked for the same employer for at least 26 weeks. The law does not give an automatic right to flexible working, but employers must respond to requests. A teacher can only make a request under the legislation once in any 12-month period. If you are thinking about applying for flexible working for next Academic Year now is the time to talk to your Headteacher about while they are planning for it.

A request for flexible working should:

- be in writing;
- make clear that this is a statutory request;
- state the date of the application;
- make clear the change being requested to working arrangements;
- state how this change might impact upon the school/college and how any such effect might be dealt with;
- include a statement saying if, and when, any previous application was made.

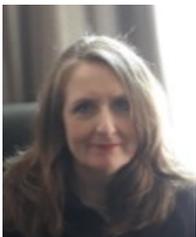
Check your school's flexible working policy before making a request. The employer has to consider seriously a request for flexible working and must consider a request in a 'reasonable manner', which involves weighing up the benefits for the employee and the school against any potential adverse business impact. Call the union if you need help.



Does your School have a Workplace Representative?

Many people see the Union as something they only need when they are in trouble. It is so much more than that. **You and your colleagues are the Union.** By supporting each other in school you can maintain and/or improve good working relationships with school leadership and ensure that we provide a quality education to those in our care whilst ensuring teachers have a healthy work life balance. There are free CPD opportunities throughout the year and information about these can be found on the NASUWT website. Many of our members are Senior Leaders in school and by being members of NASUWT they can access a wealth of resources and free CPD in relation to their roles. **Workplace Reps** play a huge part in the organisation of the Union. Without Reps keeping us informed of what is happening in schools the Local Executive is unable to challenge bad practices and support members through difficult times. We are also unable to celebrate, and share knowledge of, the good work and practices that exist in many of our Wirral Schools.

There is a mis-conception that being a Rep is a lot of additional work. If there is a dispute in school there may be busy periods helping us organise meetings and checking membership lists but in the main there is not a huge workload attached and myself, our National Executive Members, the Regional Centre and other members of the Wirral casework team are always there to support. Many of our Reps support each other through meetings and social media, you are never alone! Increasingly schools are recognising the need for a good relationship with NASUWT and see the addition of a school Rep as a benefit.



Anne Rycroft
Wirral Secretary

If you would like to be school Rep, or have a colleague you think could fulfil the role, get in touch. If your school has a Rep remember they are subject to an annual election and you can still put yourself forward! A number of schools have a Rep team. As your Local Secretary I am happy to talk to you informally about these roles.

If being a Rep is not for you, you can still be involved. **Come along to our AGM on Thursday 6th February at 4pm** (meeting starts at 4:15pm) at the Chimneys, Hooton. A bar meal and 1st drink is provided. This is an opportunity to see how the Local Association works and you will be made most welcome. Bring a colleague who is a member, we will have membership forms for anyone wanting to join on the night! It is important that these meetings are well attended. As well as an opportunity to discuss issues you will also get a say in how the Union is run.

AGM Agenda includes Election of Local Officers and Conference Delegates, Officers' Reports, Budget Allocations and National Executive Nominations.

PARENTS' EVENINGS and TRAPPED TIME

It's the time of the year for those Parental Consultation Evenings!

Trapped Time is the time between the end of the school day and the start of the consultations where it is too short to leave the premises to go home so you can attend to domestic matters or perhaps get something to eat and drink and return in time for your first appointment.

This time should be included in your directed time. You need to check the Directed Time Budget you should have been given at the start of the current academic year in September and make sure it has been included. Are refreshments being provided for you in school if there isn't enough time to go home?



Spring Term Meetings

Annual General Meeting

Thursday 6th February 2020

4.00 p.m. for 4.15-5.30 p.m.

The Chimneys, Hooton Green,
CH66 5ND. (off M53 J5 on A41)

Bar Meal, Travel & Carer Expenses will be paid by the Local Association.

Local Executive Committee and School Reps Meeting

Thursday 5th March 2020

4.15-5.30 p.m.

Gilbrook Special School,
Glebe Hey Road, Woodchurch,
CH49 8HE. Refreshments provided.

NASUWT Annual Conference

Friday 10th - Monday 13th April

Birmingham ICC

Wirral NASUWT can send up to 16 Delegates.
Travel, Hotel and Subsistence Expenses will be paid.

NASUWT

The Teachers' Union

**MEMBER SUPPORT
ADVICE TEAM**

The dedicated number for all members to access help and advice. Calls are free from all landlines and mobile phone networks:

03330 145550

Members can also e-mail to:
advice@mail.nasuwt.org.uk

NASUWT
The Teachers' Union

If any member would like to contribute to the **Wirral Association NASUWT NEWSLETTER**, please contact Mick Robinson. Mob: 07739422181 or E-mail: mickrobinson@nasuwt.net. Members are asked to share the **NEWSLETTER** with colleagues on your NASUWT Noticeboard.

Visit the Wirral NASUWT website
www.wirralassociationnasuwt.org