

NUT Wrekin News

A Newsletter from The Wrekin Division of the National Union of Teachers summer 2010

**NUT School Representatives Training Friday 2nd July
Prostar Stadium Shrewsbury 1.00pm – 4.00pm
Cost – Free Including Lunch
See flyer for more details**

Academies

We already have experience of Academies in the Wrekin and we know what it can do to conditions of service for teachers and what it can mean for neighbouring schools this is MUCH WORSE.

The NUT, NAS/UWT and ATL are working together to fight this rushed through policy.

For schools currently rated 'outstanding' by Ofsted, the Government is suggesting that they could become academies by September 2010.

The process put forward by Government will be alarmingly simple – a head in an outstanding school registers an interest and a governing body simply passes a resolution. **You need to do everything you can to let your governing body know that your school is not in favour of becoming an Academy.**

Outrageously, the Government is saying that there is no requirement on the head or governors to consult with parents, staff, pupils, the local authority or other local schools before the governing body passes a resolution. We think there should be full consultation.

All sorts of changes can be proposed for example:

- In some existing academies there is Saturday working, others have longer school days and longer school years
- Some academies pay less maternity pay than their neighbouring schools.

The FT put it like this:

"The government intends to attack national pay bargaining. It wants to "reform the existing rigid national pay and conditions rules... for schools"

Excessive observations

We have been dealing with a great deal of casework from members complaining about the excessive use of classroom observations. Some are being carried out under the name of "learning walks" or "drop ins". Whatever they are called or whatever pressures your school is under for example National Challenge or ISP if you feel that you and your colleagues are being put under an intolerable amount of stress and your workload has increased because of it then Union Policy is clear.

NUT policy states that

- There should be a reasonable amount of time between classroom observations irrespective of the purpose of those observations
- Guidance on workload and classroom observation can be actioned whether or not they are called "learning walks" when they lead to excessive workload and stress
- Teachers should be observed on an equitable basis, that is, all teachers should have a comparable number of observations per teacher per year.
- If a teacher believes that the observation has been carried out in an intimidating, intrusive way, this could constitute bullying or harassment.
- Observations should not be punitive or invasive.
- Teachers should be made aware of the purpose or purposes of any proposed observation before it takes place

Learning Walks

NUT GUIDANCE

'Roving Observations' or 'Learning Walks' have arisen as a particular feature of ISPs which members feel to be stressful.

Described in the National Strategies document as a "possible activity" – there is no element of compulsion. .

The NUT will press local authorities to advise head teachers correctly about the use of 'Learning Walks' as a method of observing teachers. It should be emphasised that their usage is to be agreed by individual schools in consultation with staff. We are also drawing to the attention of local authorities that fact that 'Learning Walks' are not compulsory.

We can refer to the Union's guidance on workload and classroom observation in supporting individuals and schools where the Intensifying Support Programme and 'Learning Walks' lead to excessive workload or observation.

Too much planning?

Are you expected to produce especially detailed lesson plans during OFSTED inspections?

Does your school insist on a standard form of presentation?

Neither of these things are necessary.

Who says so? OFSTED!

OFSTED does not require a particular format for written lesson plans and it does not require lesson plans, or any other kind of documentation, to be produced specifically for an inspection.

Joint guidance from Ofsted, DCSF and QCA (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority) states that:

- Spending excessive amounts of time on long, detailed plans does not necessarily lead to better teaching and learning.
- There is no prescribed format or length. A standard form of presentation is not a necessity and can cause unnecessary work for teachers
- Teachers' time should be used for aspects of planning that are going to be useful for their own purposes, and which have a direct impact upon the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers should not spend time producing documentation that does not meet these two purposes.

Inspectors will of course not ignore planning, but will look for evidence of good practice as part of their evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning. This is deduced from a range of evidence, including observing lessons and from pupil outcomes, rather than from scrutiny of an individual teacher's lesson plans.

SATS

Thank you to all those head teacher and leadership members who took action to frustrate the administration of SATs and the many other members who backed the action to show the strength of support for the boycott in the Wrekin Division. We had a really good response in our area. We now need to do everything we can to convince the new coalition government that SATs and league tables have to go.

Act now! Go to www.teachers.org.uk/assessment and email your new MP to seek their support for an alternative to SATs and league tables.

Data

We have had some enquiries from members recently about entering various types of data onto school data bases. The School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document lists 21 tasks which are not part of a teacher's duties. Entering data is one of them. You have a contractual right not to do it.

The Wrekin Division has agreed to participate in research being conducted by Durham University regarding union members' attitudes to their work, their organization, and their trade union. The aim of the research is to provide a better understanding of union members' attitudes by comparing several different teaching unions in the UK and overseas. We understand that you are very busy, but would very much appreciate your participation in this by completing the questionnaire that will be arriving shortly.

Aly Langford
Wrekin N.U.T. Secretary,
Telephone/Fax: 01694 723103
Email secretary@the-wrekin.nut.org.uk

Next meeting
Tuesday July 13th
Cock Hotel Wellington
7.00pm

WEBSITE
www.wrekin-nut.org.uk