

Brief Observations on Letter From NUT Representatives at Hay Lane School 9/11/03

Purpose : To Assist tabling at meeting of the Executive 12/11/03 and eventual response to NUT representatives

1. Risk Assessment

- The Headteacher was aware of the recommendation for specific assessments but it is reasonable to wait for the publication of the full report before planning action that does not lend itself to “overnight” solutions. The issue of timescales for publishing audit reports is addressed in the recommendations.

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2. Content of the catalogue of evidence

- The catalogue of evidence contains the evidence I judged to be most significant in arriving at the recommendations of the report. It is not practicable nor do I have permission to publish all the evidence. However, as I have done in this case, much of it can be copied on request.

3. Parental consent and visit approval

- The educational visit policy envisaged an “up the line” approval process. In practice this visit was given top-down approval on the basis that it was a regular if not timetabled event that the school participated in and could be “covered” by the generic RA. The weaknesses in this practice are addressed in the recommendations.

4. Staffing Ratio

- The criticism of “underlapping” responsibilities is addressed in the recommendations made to the school and the suggestions made to Special Connection.
- The extrapolation of ratios from mainstream to special I find inappropriate. The fact remains that there were nearly as many adults as pupils on this workshop. I judge their deployment and briefing rather than their numbers to be more significant in identifying opportunities to improve.

5. Previous Abscondments

- Accident reporting by Hay Lane School was not a substantive issue in this investigation
- One other previous abscondment in a decade with no details provided during the investigation is unlikely to significantly influence the findings
- Abscondments by Patrick from his parents need not have substantively affected the school’s own assessment of risk which clearly took this tendency into account. The school did take action therefore the standard was not met.

6. Training – findings are agreed

7. Matters Not Addressed

- Communication in the school clearly suffered difficulties not just in terms of health and safety matters. This problem inevitably impacted on the implementation of policies. The school has a new management team and arrangements that are intended to reverse these difficulties. The recommendation addresses the need for additional arrangements to ensure that Health and Safety communication is safeguarded.
- HASPEV incorporates the duties of the H&S at Work etc Act and the Management of H&S at Work etc Act and applies them to educational visits. The Government has, I think, identified the need to supplement HASPEV with additional guidance on “management” hence the publication of the August 2002 guidance on Teachernet.
- The wrist strap would have interfered substantially with Patrick’s participation in the workshop and was judged to be not appropriate.
- The Director of Education has undertaken to review the emergency procedure and a review of counselling could be included in this review.

8. Whistleblowing

- Only one member of staff requested the “Confidential Reporting Procedure” and none used it.

9. Further Questions

- Brent originally wished to review and republish its own guidance on educational visits before concluding that it should issue HASPEV to all schools as an interim measure. This is in the context of a national debate about the appropriate standards and relationship between LEA and schools in relation to educational visits.