

NASUWT Leeds

The Teachers' Union



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Leeds Nasuwt Office

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INQUEST FINDINGS MUST DRIVE URGENT REFORM OF SCHOOL INSPECTION

An inquest has ruled that an Ofsted inspection "contributed" to the death of the headteacher, Ruth Perry. Ms Perry took her own life whilst waiting for the report to be published. The coroner, Ms Connor, stated that the inspection "lacked fairness, respect and sensitivity" and was at times "rude and intimidating."

In her concluding remarks, Ms Connor said: "The evidence is clear in this respect, and I find that Ruth's mental health deterioration and death was likely contributed to by the Ofsted inspection."

At 2:15 on Christmas morning 2022, Ruth Perry woke and wrote down her thoughts while her two teenage daughters and husband slept.

"I.N.A.D.E.Q.U.A.T.E keeps flashing behind my eyes."

Her sister Julia Waters said "urgent lessons must be learnt from Ruth's death" She said her sister's death "laid bare the imbalance of power that exists" within the education system.

"The inquest has shown the brutal inhumanity of the system of Ofsted inspections," she said, "Ofsted likes to judge people with single word labels. We could judge the current Ofsted system with our own labels: callous, perverse and inhumane."

Responding to the coroner's conclusion that an Ofsted inspection "likely contributed" to the death of headteacher Ruth Perry, Dr Patrick Roach, General Secretary of the **NASUWT** said:

"Our sincerest condolences go to Ms Perry's family and the staff, pupils and parents of Caversham Primary School on their loss of a much loved and respected member of their community.

The inquest has underlined the pressing need for reform of school inspection. In its current form, inspection simply isn't working in the interests of supporting those working in our schools who are doing their utmost to provide the best opportunities for children and young people.

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The fact that many staff in schools do not feel able to challenge behaviour of inspectors that is intimidating and insensitive highlights a need for a properly independent complaints process and for greater accountability of Ofsted in the way they undertake inspection and over the judgements they make.

The reality is that the Government could move immediately to build confidence by insisting on abandoning the current 'one word' grading system which has had such a damaging impact on the health and welfare of school leaders, teachers and support staff. This issue must now be reconsidered by the Secretary of State. The Government could also take immediate steps to address the high-stakes consequences of inspection by immediately ending the system of forced academisation and rebrokering of schools and academies under its current schools causing concern guidance.

In light of today's Coroner's report, it should be anticipated and would be wholly understandable for calls on the Government to pause all inspections to intensify. The Secretary of State must now work urgently with the teaching profession to ensure that we can have an inspection and accountability system in which parents and the workforce in our schools can have trust and confidence."

Sir Martyn Oliver, Ofsted's new Chief Inspector said that he "understands the extent of change needed," and that school inspections would be paused until 22nd January to allow for all lead inspectors to complete mental health awareness training. He also said there would be a minute's silence on the first day of training, which would be exactly one year since Ms Parry's death.

Social Media Reminder

Online social networking is now a part of everyday life for many teachers. Various social networking sites are also valuable tools used by many teachers, and are encouraged by some employers and professional development bodies. However, using social networking sites carries a degree of risk to privacy and security.

Regardless of how secure we have our own settings on Social Media platforms, our posts may only be as secure as the settings of those who we interact with/have as friends/follow or are followed by.

A brief summary of the Guidelines from the [NASUWT](#) –

- If in doubt, don't put it up!
- Do not post anything that could be construed as defamatory or discriminatory against others.
- Employers increasingly use social media to look at candidates before or after a job interview. If you would not want your employer to see something, take it down!
- Any post can be potentially quoted by the media.
- Do not get involved in online arguments - they can escalate quickly!

The [NASUWT](#) undertakes a high level of casework involving incidents of social media usage that have compromised the professional position of teachers, we would urge all members to think carefully about posts that may be perceived, were they to be seen by our employees or anyone else related to our professional life. For more information, click [here](#).

First General Meeting of 2024

Tuesday 30th January 2024 at 7pm at Leeds City College, Printworks Campus (LS10 1JY) and via Zoom. Refreshments provided!

Please contact us at casework.LEEDS@nasuwt.org.uk to reserve your place. Expenses for travel to the venue will be reimbursed.