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NASUWT

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Helen Hayes MP
Chair of Education Select Committee
House of Commons
London
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Dear Helen,

Inspection of Caversham Primary School

Further to the evidence given to the Education Select Committee on 7 January by Sir Martyn Oliver during its non-inquiry session on the work of Ofsted, I wish to draw your attention to remarks made by Sir Martyn in response to your questions on the inspection of Caversham Primary School in November 2022.

You asked Sir Martyn about the lessons that had been learned by Ofsted from the conduct of the inspection of this school. As you are aware, the headteacher of the school at the time of this inspection, Ruth Perry, tragically took her own life in January 2023. The coroner who conducted the inquest into Ruth's death recorded a narrative conclusion of suicide contributed to by the inspection. In response to your question, Sir Martyn remarked that the inspector leading the inspection "carried out an inspection against the framework in the way that the framework was written.

There was no suggestion that they did a bad job or did anything wrong whatsoever. It was the framework that they delivered and it is for Ofsted to respond."

While I recognise, as Sir Martyn observed, that the corporate responsibility for the implications of the inspection of Caversham Primary School must rest with Ofsted, his statement is not consistent with the findings of the coroner. The coroner concluded that the inspection was at times "rude and intimidating". In her Regulation 28 Report to Prevent Future Deaths, she found that "[p]arts of the Ofsted inspection were conducted in a manner which lacked fairness, respect and sensitivity (these are the terms used in Ofsted's Code of Conduct)." It would, therefore, not be accurate to assert that the inspection was conducted in the way in which Sir Martyn describes. I know that his comments have caused considerable concern among teachers and school leaders as well as deep distress to Ruth's family.

As you will know, work is currently in train to reform current arrangements for Ofsted's inspection of schools and that a consultation on draft proposals is expected soon. The impetus for reform has been derived in very large part from the concern about the inspection of schools highlighted by the circumstances of Ruth's death and the contribution that the inspection of her school made to it.

It is imperative that if effective lessons are to be learned from the inspection of Caversham Primary School, then the facts of that inspection and its consequences must be fully recognised and accepted, particularly by those with overall responsibility for the school accountability and inspection system.

In addition to noting the inaccuracy of the evidence given to the Committee in this respect, I am sure that in any public response Committee makes to this session, it will want to confirm its understanding of the facts of Ruth's case. I am also sure that the Committee in its scrutiny of the government and Ofsted on inspection reform will insist that meaningful action is being taken to ensure that no teacher or leader is ever again subjected to the conduct that Ruth endured during the inspection of her school.

I look forward to your reply.

Kind regards.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Patrick Roach', written in a cursive style.

Dr Patrick Roach
General Secretary