



March 2010

Dear Chair of Governors

## Boycott of Key Stage 2 English and Mathematics Tests in 2010

I am writing to let you know that the National Union of Teachers (NUT) and the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT), who represent the vast majority of school leaders in the primary sector, have decided to ballot for a boycott of the above tests.

### Why have the NUT and NAHT taken this decision?

This decision has not been taken lightly. We have taken it because of the overwhelming evidence that school leaders have come under intolerable pressure because of the use of these tests by the Government, OFSTED and local authorities to evaluate schools.

In December 2009 the Secretary of State, Ed Balls, announced that every primary school had to reach a minimum floor target of 55 per cent of pupils gaining both English and mathematics at Level 4 with the expectation that each school remain on a 'secure trajectory afterwards'. This has further intensified the pressure on school leaders, particularly those serving the most disadvantaged communities.

Both the NUT and the NAHT have consistently sought to discuss possible alternatives to the current testing regime with the Secretary of State. Time and again he has refused to engage constructively with our proposals. We have therefore decided that there is no alternative to balloting for industrial action. It is our collective professional opinion that 'enough is enough' and that the current discredited system has to go. This action is categorically not strike action. Children will be taught as usual during the week commencing 10 May 2010.

### How can the dispute be resolved?

This dispute could be resolved by the Secretary of State lifting the statutory requirement for tests in English and mathematics at Key Stage 2 and introducing a national sampling system for those subjects, which the Government has already introduced for Key Stage 2 science and the Key Stage 3 core subjects.

We would ask for your support for the joint action to be carried out by our organisations. Go to the NUT website [www.teachers.org.uk](http://www.teachers.org.uk) or the NAHT website [www.naht.org.uk](http://www.naht.org.uk) to find out more.

Yours sincerely

Christine Blower – NUT General Secretary

Mick Brookes – NAHT General Secretary

A recent report from the House of Commons' Children, Schools and Families Select Committee on school accountability, which drew on overwhelming evidence from schools and research bodies, was extremely critical of the SATs regime. It concluded that, "Schools feel so constrained by the fear of failure according to the narrow criteria of the performance tables that they resort to measures such as teaching to the test, narrowing the curriculum and an inappropriate focusing of resources on borderline candidates ..."