



## POLITEIA

Politeia, 22 Queen Anne's Gate, London, SW1H 9AA, E mail: secretary@politeia.co.uk Telephone: 0207 799 5034

PRESS RELEASE PRESS RELEASE PRESS RELEASE PRESS RELEASE

**July 2007**

**Teaching profession in crisis, says Politeia's next report. Government policy causing shortages, wastage and low standards.** Independent report demands shake up of recruitment and employment structure

Thousands of teachers leave their jobs each year; and schools across the country are facing shortages, says Politeia's next study, *Teaching Matters: The Recruitment, Employment and Retention of Teachers*. The detailed evidence, analysed by Professor Bob Moon, suggests that the true position is masked by the official figures. Most schools suffer, and some quite badly, e.g. those in the inner cities or for 11-16s; many subjects have shortages, e.g. physics and modern languages; heads are leaving and their posts can remain unfilled. And a number of teachers in the job may not be competent to teach the subjects they do. Things will get worse: the profession is an ageing one with half the profession over 45. (\*Some of the conclusions are highlighted overleaf). The crisis, say the authors, is of the Government's making.

Why is this?

Politeia's distinguished education commissioners\* leave little doubt as to the reasons. They warn that the policies of the Government, are largely to blame. At each stage regulations and targets undermine the recruitment of good teachers and their retention. The emphasis at recruitment is on numbers not quality; as a result many trainees may not be up to the job. The assessment system fails to act as a check and allows even the weakest candidates through. The employment system rests on a myriad of regulations and different books of rules which bind both teacher and school. But they do not allow for what really matters to the able and dedicated teachers: the freedom to teach their subject their way and inspire their pupils. The upshot is a generation of heads whose hands are tied – even down to morning break and (lavish) sick leave – and of teachers alienated by the ever tightening grip of senseless regulation, lacking basic freedom to teach and discipline their pupils. Meanwhile the numbers of non-teaching staff are rising and the Government appears determined to use these in the classroom.

**The study concludes with a series of recommendations by Politeia's Director, Dr Sheila Lawlor, which aim to encourage the recruitment and retention of good teachers by setting schools and teachers free. In particular:**

- Standards at entry to training and teaching should be raised. The Government should take no part in the process.
- Schools should be set free as employers under general employment law and no longer be bound by restrictive (and expensive) national rules governing teachers' employment.
- Schools should attract a greater share of public funding. The amounts wasted on non-'frontline services' and the burden of expensive employment regulation should be cut.
- For the long term schools should become freestanding, publicly funded institutions. All public funds for education should be devolved to schools who should also be free under general employment law to determine the terms and conditions of employment for teachers and non-teachers. **(Ends)**

## **Some of the Report's Findings ... (Part I)**

**There is a crisis of recruitment which the official figures mask. Not enough of the right candidates apply to teach, or if they do, remain in the profession.**

**The terms and conditions of employment are driving teachers and heads away from the profession.**

**Vacancies and shortages are extremely serious** and are set to worsen given the age profile of the profession (half the teaching profession is over 45). In particular:

- 9 per cent of teachers leave each year of whom only 2.3 per cent retire.
- 11 per cent of headships are vacant
- Some schools are very badly hit e.g. those in the inner cities or for 11-16s, many of which have no teachers who studied physics

**Standards at entry are too low and not made up.**

### *For primary teachers*

Minimum standards for entry – GCSE pass in English and maths are too low.

- 65% of primary entrants have two A-levels
- Only 45 % of primary entrants have two good A levels
- Courses may fail to make up the ground and assessment does not act as an effective check on the weak.
- Standards needed here are lower than in other similar countries

### *For Secondary Teachers*

- Fewer than half (41%) train to teach in their degree subject
- 37% train to teach in a 'related' subject. Science for example is mainly taught by biologists.

**The numbers of non-teaching staff proportionate to teachers are high and growing**

- In schools there are 2 non teachers (287,000) to every 3 (432,000) teachers. The numbers of support staff are growing and there are now 150,000 teaching assistants who are trained to take over from teachers.
- Outside of schools the numbers on the education budget officials in central and local government and the quangos, is very high, but no accurate official figures are readily available.