

News Release

Association of Teachers and Lecturers

Annual Conference • 21 - 24 March 2005 • Torquay



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For education correspondents / newsdesks

ATL delegates up in arms at ‘text a teacher’ schemes

Articles in the education press reporting proposals that teachers be available by email and text message in the evenings and at weekends to help pupils with homework have appalled some members of the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL).

It started with an article in November 2004 profiling a teacher sitting at his computer each evening dealing with his pupils’ email requests. The feature said: “Growing numbers of schools are being encouraged to do this.”

A motion today on teaching and ICT will attempt to nip any such move in the bud on educational, security and work/life balance grounds. Sue Poole, who teaches IT and sociology at a secondary comprehensive in Gloucestershire, will lead the debate. “Every teacher I have spoken to says the idea is horrendous,” she said. “First there is security. Who would monitor these one-to-one emails, calls and text messages for the protection of pupils and teachers? In school we don’t have private one-to-one contact with no witnesses.”

Secondly, ‘text a teacher’ schemes would undermine the agreement to improve teachers’ work/life balance. “This will add to teachers’ workloads,” said Ms Poole. “If I set four groups of 30 pupils homework, I could potentially get 120 emails or texts to deal with on top of preparation and marking.”

The move would also invade teachers’ privacy and reduce the quality of their home and family lives. “I don’t want an email account at home” said Ms Poole. “I don’t want to be on tap 24 hours a day. In addition I would like to know how the governors as my employers would be able to exercise their duty of care to me if my personal contact information is out there for my pupils and their parents.”

“From an educational point of view, this could be divisive – between pupils with access to IT at home and those without, and between those with pushier parents and those with less so.” She argues that the point of setting homework is to assess how

pupils have processed what they have learnt in the day and how they are developing as independent learners.

Ms Poole insists, however, that she is not opposed to planned, supervised e-mentoring or pupils who are on study leave emailing school during school hours about revision.

Ends

Notes to Editors

1. The Association of Teachers and Lecturers' Annual Conference is taking place at the Riviera International Conference, in Torquay, from Monday 21 March to Thursday 24 March 2005.
2. The ATL Annual Conference will be broadcast live on the internet at: www.atl.org.uk
3. The Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL) is an independent, registered trade union and professional association, representing approximately 160,000 teachers, lecturers and support staff in maintained and independent schools, sixth form, tertiary and further education colleges in the United Kingdom.
4. ATL exists to protect and improve the status of teachers, lecturers and other professionals involved in delivering education to further their legitimate professional interests.
5. ATL is affiliated to the Trades Union Congress (TUC). It is unaffiliated to any political party and seeks to work constructively with all the main political parties.
6. ATL members receive a regular magazine (*Report*) reflecting ATL policy and other issues affecting the education sector. If you would like to receive a copy of this please call 020 7782 1589.
7. Further information and all press releases are available on ATL's website: www.atl.org.uk