



CSA CHAIRMAN ON EDUCATION FOOTBALL

Education has become a political football, ever in motion without reaching its goal says the Chairman of the Choir Schools' Association (CSA).

Tim Cannell, Headmaster of The Prebendal School in Chichester spoke to heads of choir schools today (Tuesday) at CSA's annual conference in Wells Somerset. He said: "Fiascos seem to be the norm - with such headlines as 'examinations thrown into chaos' and 'not enough places in our schools'.

"For me, the state of education today has moved from one led by teachers, measured by respect, without too frequent public examinations and inspections, to that of a political football, ever in motion without reaching the goal because the goal posts are constantly changing.

"As we enter a period of uncertainty with the General Election on Thursday, I find parents are just as confused as the teachers over the direction of education today. Before long there will no doubt be a flurry of government proposals, directives, laws and pronouncements of intent that are launched upon us.

"More is being added to what most teachers see as an over examined educational system. One professor of Education wrote, 'Parents are caught up in panic and fear fanned by the media reports of failures....parents are loath to see their offspring 'wasting time' painting, dancing, or singing when there are important tests looming'.

"Education should be about exciting the mind, developing the body and feeding the soul. Governments appear to believe that by putting syllabuses and systems in place, and if followed meticulously, all will be well. How little they know about education and most importantly the child!

"Choir schools and cathedral choirs go a long way towards feeding the soul. Not only the soul of the choristers but others in our schools who also get caught up in the rhythm of worship, which often sits alongside and shapes many of the underlying core values and the spiritual life of our institutions. It also feeds the soul of all those that attend Choral Evensong - which as we know is the best daily free concert in the world - and can be so therapeutic and restorative, acting as a release from the stress of daily life.

"Choir school heads are proud of the extra dimension that choristers bring to our schools and to the lives of all those that hear them. We should shout about the immensely rewarding life that a chorister has, of all the soft skills that they absorb along the way - the skills of teamwork, organisation, an unbelievable work ethic, listening, resilience, self-esteem and confidence through performance. We understand the benefits of being a chorister and being immersed in music as we see it on a daily basis, but does the Government?

"Mr Cannell urged heads to shout louder about the role of music in education and that of choral music as a means of feeding the soul of those who sing and those who hear.