

SEN TEACHERS FACE VIOLENCE FROM PUPILS

More than half of Special Educational Needs (SEN) teachers and those who work in special schools and Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) have been physically assaulted by their pupils.

NASUWT - The Teachers' Union found that of the SEN teachers responding to its survey, 59% said they had been attacked in the last year and 74% said they had experienced verbal abuse.

Teachers revealed they were head-butted, punched, kicked, bitten and spat on, sometimes on a daily basis, leaving them bruised and injured. One teacher said they received more abuse than friends who were police and prison officers.

Nearly six in ten teachers (59%) said they had been threatened with assault and almost all SEN teachers (95%) said they experienced low-level disruption.

Some teachers said the attitude from their school leaders was that being attacked was "part of the job" when dealing with children with complex needs.

The survey also raises alarming questions about the attitudes of some schools towards reporting incidents with one in five (21%) teachers saying they were only encouraged to report some incidents and (7%) saying they were not encouraged to report incidents to their school.

The survey also painted a picture of a lack of support with three in ten (30%) teachers saying they rarely or never got the support they needed to teach children with SEN effectively.

And in terms of the support for pupils themselves, almost two thirds (62%) of teachers said support for children with SEN had decreased in the last five years while 83% of teachers said the workload of teachers and school leaders had increased as a result of cuts to specialist services for SEN.

The NASUWT's Annual Conference in Birmingham is due to debate a motion on funding for pupils with SEN which will call for reforms to ensure those funds are spent appropriately to meet the needs of the pupils for whom they are intended.

Chris Keates, NASUWT General Secretary, said: "No one should go to work expecting to be assaulted, yet all too often teachers who are attacked are told it's all part of the job.

"There is simply no excuse for violence to go unchallenged and teachers are put at risk by employers who fail to make clear to pupils and parents that violence will not be tolerated.

"But it's not only the teachers who are being let down. Pupils with special needs who exhibit violent and disruptive behaviour need more help and support and all too often their needs are not being met."

Teachers' comments

"It is believed that because we work in a special school, the abuse, physical and verbal assaults come with the job, so it has to be a serious assault with injuries and medical attention [and] sick leave to be taken as serious'."

"Physical violence against staff is commonplace...staff are frequently injured – bites, bruising, back injuries and so on. We don't see any changes in response to reporting these incidents. It seems to be accepted as 'part of the job.'"

"We are being verbally abused, sometimes on an hourly basis."

"Staff being hit, spat on, and verbally abused on a daily basis."

"I receive more abuse as a teacher than friends of mine who are in the police force and prison service."

"I recently got head butted, but LMT couldn't care less. I requested a risk assessment before returning to class...I was told to write it myself. There is no discipline policy; events are responded to on an ad-hoc basis."

"The school wants all incidents reported but only acts on some incidents. The staff hierarchy is obvious to staff and pupils and pupils know that there will only be serious consequences for very specific behaviours or if they misbehave for management."

"All staff are expected to be able to safe hold, yet some LSA's are not built to physically manage the larger/stronger kids. This can lead to situations where you don't have appropriate staff to support you in challenging situations. Kids that need 1:1 support or even 2:1 are just not being funded for these. I believe they are less likely to be moved to a more appropriate setting because of the money that would be taken from the school's budget if a child leaves."

NASUWT

The Teachers' Union