# Survey reveals sharp rise in pupil violence and abuse towards teachers



A recent survey conducted by the NASUWT teaching union has highlighted a significant rise in violent and abusive behaviour towards teachers by pupils over the past year. The findings, released on the opening day of the union’s annual conference in Liverpool, reveal that more than four in five teachers (81%) believe that incidents of pupil violence and abuse have increased.

The poll, which gathered responses from over 5,800 NASUWT members across the UK in January, indicates that 40% of teachers experienced physical abuse or violence from pupils during the previous 12 months. Specific incidents reported include 20% of respondents being hit or punched, 38% shoved or barged, 16% kicked, and 9% spat at by students.

Several teachers shared distressing accounts as part of the survey. One teacher described, “I have had two children use a fire hydrant as a weapon. One at my head, another to my foot.” Another recounted a verbal abuse incident, saying, “This morning I was told to, ‘go die, I hope you die.’”

Patrick Roach, general secretary of the NASUWT, spoke to The Irish News (Belfast) about the findings: “Pupil behaviour has long been an issue for teachers, but recent years have seen an unprecedented surge in levels of violence and abuse in the classroom. Based on our latest data, we estimate as many as 30,000 violent incidents against teachers involving pupils with a weapon in the last 12 months.”

Roach emphasised the broader impact of these incidents, stating, “Many teachers are having to think about how they can survive in the classroom before they can begin to focus on their teaching and pupils’ learning.” He further called for governmental action, proposing, “We are calling for the establishment of a national inter-agency forum on school safety and security that is led and chaired by ministers. We are also calling on the Government to invest in properly funded services to identify and tackle the root causes of pupil violence and aggression.”

During the NASUWT conference in Liverpool, delegates are set to debate a motion addressing the rise in “extreme pupil indiscipline,” including the use of knives and other weapons. The motion urges the union’s executive to collaborate with the Government to provide teachers with unequivocal ministerial support in promoting positive learner behaviour. It also advocates for enhancing behaviour management guidance to ensure that “no exclusion” policies do not become legitimised across the education sector. In addition, the motion proposes mandatory time allocations for teachers to participate in nationally recognised continuing professional development (CPD) focused on behaviour management strategies.

Meanwhile, the National Education Union (NEU) held its conference in Harrogate, where a motion on violence was passed. The NEU motion described the situation as “a crisis” in schools, noting that some pupils exhibit behaviour dangerous to staff. It highlighted increasing violence levels while calling for continued inclusion of pupils with challenging behaviour within the education system, emphasising that they should not be excluded.

The survey's revelations and the discussions at these union conferences bring heightened attention to the growing issue of pupil violence and its implications for both teacher welfare and school safety across the UK.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.nasuwt.org.uk/static/847bdd11-256f-4aec-8ee7cc0201f2bf9f/33ff67f1-358b-4ec7-9ec50e1f602dca88/Big-Question-Survey-Report-2023.pdf> - This official NASUWT report presents detailed survey data showing that a large majority of teachers perceive increases in pupil violence and abusive behavior, with specific statistics on physical abuse incidents such as being hit, shoved, kicked, or spat at, corroborating the article's claims about the rise in violent and abusive pupil behavior towards teachers.
* <https://www.nasuwt.org.uk/static/357990da-90f7-4ca4-b63fc3f781c4d851/Behaviour-in-Schools-Full-Report-September-2023.pdf> - This NASUWT Behaviour in Schools full report provides additional evidence on the increase of physical and verbal abuse against teachers by pupils, highlighting that over a third of teachers experienced physical abuse or violence, along with descriptions of specific types of abuse and their impact, supporting the article's survey results and teacher testimonies.
* <https://www.perspectivemedia.com/teachers-are-being-punched-kicked-shoved-or-spat-at-by-pupils-survey/> - This article reports on the NASUWT survey of over 5,800 members confirming that 40% of teachers experienced physical abuse or violence from pupils in the preceding year, directly verifying the reported statistics and reinforcing the article's statement about the extent of physical violence teachers face.
* <https://www.nasuwt.org.uk/news/campaigns/better-deal-on-behaviour.html> - The NASUWT campaign page on behaviour offers data that 89% of teachers feel the number of pupils exhibiting violent and abusive behaviours has increased, and 90% report verbal abuse or violence, underpinning the article's claims about growing teacher concerns and detailing the union’s calls for governmental and policy changes.
* <https://www.publicnow.com/view/6CBF2A52174D3C13859875E64E4473B33E614B0E?1742640436> - This press release highlights NASUWT data on the deepening behaviour crisis in Welsh schools, including statistics on physical abuse and verbal abuse experienced by teachers, supporting the article’s mention of increasing violence and its impact on teacher wellbeing and morale, as well as Patrick Roach’s quoted concerns.