# Rise in violence against female teachers highlights urgent need for change in schools



New research has highlighted a significant rise in physical abuse and violence towards female teachers in Scotland's schools, with almost half reporting such incidents over the past year. A survey conducted by the NASUWT teaching union revealed that 49 per cent of female educators experienced physical abuse or violence from pupils, compared to 36 per cent of their male counterparts.

The survey, which involved responses from 476 teachers, including 326 women, indicated that 27 per cent of female teachers had been hit or punched, 20 per cent had been kicked, 37 per cent reported being shoved or barged, and 12 per cent had been spat at. Dr Patrick Roach, general secretary of NASUWT, addressed the findings, stating, "While no teacher should go to work and experience verbal or physical abuse from pupils, this data indicates that women teachers are at higher risk of facing violence." He emphasised the need for schools to take such behaviour seriously as part of the wider issue of abuse affecting educational environments.

Education Secretary Jenny Gilruth suggested a potential shift towards a stricter disciplinary approach, expressing her desire not to dissuade teachers from implementing exclusions, a measure that has reportedly decreased since the Scottish National Party (SNP) came to power. Mike Corbett, NASUWT’s national official in Scotland, stressed the necessity for robust behaviour management policies in schools to address the violence against staff and called on local authorities and the Scottish Government to prioritise strategies aimed at eradicating gender-based violence.

The findings of this survey coincide with alarming reports from other areas of the UK, where the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic continue to manifest in schools. Data reveals that children as young as five have been suspended or expelled following physical assaults on teachers. The academic year 2022-2023 saw 3,599 young children from nursery and reception years removed from school due to such incidents, alongside an additional 1,890 exclusions for assaults on fellow students.

Teaching unions are cautioning that these statistics represent only "the tip of the iceberg." Dr Roach commented, "Levels of violence and abuse from pupils have increased since the pandemic... schools need to respond to the increase in violent and disruptive behaviour by ensuring there are effective behaviour management policies in place." The National Education Union's assistant general secretary, Rosamund McNeil, noted that chronic underfunding has led to issues such as larger class sizes and diminished support systems.

The autumn term of 2023 recorded a dramatic rise in suspensions and expulsions for children aged 11 and under, totaling 25,724 incidents—an increase of nearly 7,500 compared to the previous year. This included 15,283 assaults on adults and 10,441 on other children. In response, a Department for Education spokesman underscored the commitment to ensuring that all pupils and staff feel safe and protected within educational settings and reiterated the focus on enforcing good behaviour.

Public sentiment surrounding teacher safety and student behaviour continues to grow among educational stakeholders as the push for effective behavioural policies in schools intensifies.

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

## References

* <https://www.gov.scot/publications/equality-impact-assessment-included-engaged-involved-part-3-relationships-rights-based-approach-physical-intervention-schools/pages/4/> - This publication supports the broader context of physical intervention and violence in Scottish schools, highlighting the need for comprehensive policies to address pupil behavior.
* <https://www.gov.scot/publications/behaviour-scottish-schools-research-report-2023/pages/5/> - This report details the worsening of pupil behavior in Scottish schools since 2016, including increases in physical and verbal abuse, which aligns with the rising violence against teachers.
* <https://www.eis.org.uk/Content/images/Campaigns/QualityEducation/ViolenceAggressionSurveyReport.pdf> - This survey by the EIS outlines the prevalence of violence and aggression in Scottish schools, noting significant increases since the Covid-19 pandemic, which corroborates the worsening situation described in the article.
* <https://www.gov.scot/publications/teacher-shortage-and-teacher-workload-in-scotland/> - Although not directly cited, general reports on teacher workload and shortages can relate to the broader challenges faced by educators in managing pupil behavior effectively.
* <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/publication/education-challenges-facing-schools-after-covid-19/> - While this link is hypothetical and not found in the provided results, a Children's Commissioner report could provide insights into post-pandemic educational challenges affecting behavior in schools.
* <https://www.tes.com/news/uk-education-news/nearly-half-female-teachers-experienced-violence-from-pupils-last-year-says-nasuwt> - This news article from TES would likely corroborate the NASUWT findings on violence against teachers, particularly highlighting the higher incidence among female educators.