

Policy Statement on Tackling Violence and Abusive Behaviour against Teachers

1. Aim of Policy Statement

The aim of this policy statement, which has been agreed by the Employers and Teachers' Side of the Teachers' Salaries and Conditions of Service Committee, is to affirm that violence and abusive behaviour against teachers is totally unacceptable. It clarifies the roles and responsibilities of the Employing Authority, the Board of Governors, the Principal and teachers when dealing with issues of violence or abusive behaviour against teachers in schools.

2. Statement of Intent

- a. The Board of Governors has statutory obligations to provide a safe working environment and safe working practices for all their staff.
- b. The Board of Governors will not accept or condone violence or abusive behaviour against staff and acknowledges that no teacher should work in fear of violence or abuse.

3. Definition of Work Related Violence

The Health and Safety Executive of Northern Ireland's definition of work related violence is '*any incident in which a person is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work.*'

4. Responsibilities

(i) The Employing Authority is responsible for:

- a. Advising Boards of Governors on matters of health, safety and welfare;
- b. Ensuring that Boards of Governors are aware of their legal obligations with regard to the reporting of violent or abusive incidents;
- c. Advising Boards of Governors on matters relating to exclusion of individuals from schools;
- d. Advising Boards of Governors and teachers on the Employing Authority's welfare facilities and counselling service.

(ii) The Board of Governors is responsible for:

- a. Introducing reasonable and appropriate procedures to protect teachers from violence or abusive behaviour in the school;
- b. Providing systems of welfare and support to teachers who experience violence or abusive behaviour at work;
- c. Ensuring that all teachers are aware of their responsibility to report all incidents and encouraging them to do so;
- d. Reporting to the Employing Authority, on an annual basis, on the number of incidents of violence or abusive behaviour against teachers in the school.

(iii) The Principal is responsible for:

- a. Ensuring that teachers are made aware of this Policy Statement;

- b. Ensuring that all teachers are aware of their responsibility to report incidents of violence or abusive behaviour;
- c. Encouraging teachers to report incidents and to co-operate with investigations;
- d. Recording reported incidents of violence or abusive behaviour against staff;
- e. Reporting to the Board of Governors when incidents of violence or abusive behaviour against teachers occur in school;
- f. Encouraging all visitors to the school to be courteous to all teachers and to comply with the school's rules, policies and procedures;
- g. Consulting with trade union health and safety representatives.

Where the Principal is the subject of, or involved in, an incident of violence or abusive behaviour, the Chair of the Board of Governors (or a delegated Governor) will assume the role of the Principal in the operation of this Policy.

(iv) Each teacher is responsible for:

- a. Ensuring, as far as is practicable, that they do not put themselves or their colleagues at risk of violence or abuse;
- b. Ensuring they take reasonable steps to minimise confrontation;
- c. Ensuring they promote and maintain effective and harmonious working relationships within the school;
- d. Reporting incidents when they occur to the Principal;
- e. Co-operating with any investigation following an incident;
- f. Co-operating with any measures to improve safety in the school.

(v) Union and safety representatives can assist in:

- a. Encouraging teachers to report incidents as appropriate;
- b. Supporting victims of violence or abusive behaviour in liaison with management;
- c. Working with management and teachers to monitor and assess risk and identify effective countermeasures.

5. Health and Safety

The Board of Governors should review the school's Health and Safety Policy to ensure it includes reference to incidents of violence or abusive behaviour against teachers. The policy should also state how such incidents should be managed. The Board of Governors should seek the advice and guidance of the Employing Authority in developing appropriate procedures.

6. Reporting and Recording Incidents of Violence or Abusive Behaviour

Incidents of violence or abusive behaviour should be reported by the teacher to the principal, or other designated teacher, who shall record the report and forward a copy to the Employing Authority promptly.

The Employing Authority should assess the incident and determine if it is reportable under the provisions of the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations NI, 1997.

The Employing Authority should also collate all information received on incidents of violence or abusive behaviour against teachers and submit an annual report to the Teachers' Negotiating Committee, for information.

7. Dealing with Incidents of Violence or Abusive Behaviour

Incidents of violence or abusive behaviour will be dealt with under the school's internal policies and procedures. The following exemplar list of such policies and procedures is not exhaustive:

- School rules;
- School Health & Safety Policy;
- Security and Personal Safety in Schools;
- Use of Reasonable Force (DE 2004);
- Suspension and Expulsion Regulations DE Circular 1995/09;
- Pupil discipline policy;
- School's Pastoral Care Policy;
- Promoting Positive Behaviour in Schools;
- School's I.T. policy, including advice on dealing with cyberbullying;
- TNC 2009/11 Policy and Procedure to Combat Bullying and Harassment of Teachers including Principals and Vice Principals in Grant-Aided Schools;
- TNC 2007/5 Disciplinary Procedure for Teachers, including Principals and Vice Principals, in Grant-Aided Schools with Fully Delegated Budgets;
- TNC 2008/3 Grievance procedure for Teachers, including Principals and Vice Principals in Grant-Aided Schools;
- Strategy on Teachers' Health and Wellbeing in Northern Ireland;
- TNC 1999/3 Indemnification for Teachers;
- Parental Complaints Procedure.

8. Risk Assessment

Following a violent assault, the Principal should undertake an investigation and a risk assessment review and take appropriate advice from the Employing Authority.

9. Teachers' Welfare

Staff who are the victims of violence should be encouraged to seek advice from the Employing Authority's Welfare Service or counselling service.