

PE1709/A

UNISON Scotland submission of 17 December 2018

Introduction

UNISON is Scotland's largest trade union with members across the public, private and voluntary sectors, including the staff who support children with a range of additional support needs in schools and early years settings as well as social workers and educational psychologists. UNISON therefore welcomes the opportunity to give evidence on Petition PE01709 Install CCTV cameras and provide full-time social work in all additional support needs schools

Evidence

There is no doubt that the needs of children and young people with additional support needs (ASN) are not being fully met in our schools and early years settings. UNISON believes that there is an urgent need take action to ensure that we are Getting It Right For Every Child. Rather than CCTV there should be a substantial investment in staff who can identify pupils' additional support needs. After these have been identified staff need to be put in place to deliver the support identified. Funding is required for staff training and ongoing professional development. The aim should be to avoid restraint and improve practice rather than catch and punish staff or pupils.

Children with additional support needs now attend mainstream schools but many are far from being mainstreamed into school life. The policy has not been supported with adequate funding for the learning support, healthcare needs and behavioural support that children need in either mainstream or specialist schools. There is also widespread misunderstanding about who is actually providing support for children on a day-to-day basis. Classroom assistants provide the majority of their support and staff do not get adequate training, support or pay for the work they undertake. School nurses are not part of a school's staff complement: pupils' healthcare needs are taken care of by support staff. Pupils with challenging behaviour are also most often supported by school staff not teachers. Schools need appropriate funding for both the day-to-day delivery of specialist support and for training and professional development for all the staff.

UNISON does not believe that CCTV cameras in our schools would be a particularly helpful strategy. It suggests that staff or pupils need to be watched to ensure appropriate behaviour. It is a culture of blame/punishment rather than building an ethos of clarity on acceptable behaviour and good relationships. On a practical level CCTV cannot "watch" everywhere: camera angles mean that there are often blind spots particular under furniture etc. How many cameras would it take to provide blanket coverage? What atmosphere would hundreds of cameras create? If behaviour has broken down to such a serious extent the perpetrators will also be able to use the limitations of camera's scope to avoid detection. UNISON believes that better staffing ratios, including chaperones during intimate care and toileting,

alongside individualised training are a much more effective way to protect children and staff.

School support staff are very concerned about the violence they experience in schools and the lack of support they receive from employers after an incident has taken place. Many report that they are told that it is just “part of their job”. UNISON believes that reporting systems are inadequate and many incidents go unreported. Even when reported there is little if any assessment of what happened or action taken to avoid a repeat. No one should be expected to be the victim of violence as part of their job.

The following are the incidents recorded by local authorities in the 2017/18. (not all authorities give separate figures for education)

- **Aberdeen City** – Education Services - 244 physical assaults, 188 Staff Verbal
- **Aberdeenshire** Education & Children’s Service 544(employee) 70 (non employee) Violent Incident
- **South Ayrshire** – Education –56 verbal, 77 physical, 65 verbal & physical, 9 threatening behaviour
- **Renfrewshire** –68 Classroom assistant, 21 nursery officer, 166 Teacher - physical/verbal
- **West Dunbartonshire** – 95 education physical assaults
- **West Lothian** - Education, Pupil support worker 709 incidents, Education, Teacher 402 incidents
- **Dumfries &Galloway** – 463 violent incidents
- **Clackmannanshire** - Teaching Staff 53/32physical 21 verbal, school Staff 78 physical /21 verbal
- **Stirling** – Schools & Learning - 194 physical assaults on employees
- **City of Edinburgh** :Early Years Officer 3 violence with injury 1 violence with no injury Early Years Practitioner 28 violence with injury 16 violence with no injury
 - Learning Assistant 26 violence with injury 8 violence with no injury
 - Nursery Nurse 125 violence with injury 47 violence with no injury
 - Teacher-Nursery 2 violence with injury 2 violence with no injury
 - Teacher-Primary78 violence with injury 43 violence with no injury
 - Teacher-Secondary 4 violence with injury 7 violence with no injury
 - Teacher-Special 122 violence with injury24 violence no with injury

Violence is not a minor issue. Action needs to be taken to ensure that incidents are reviewed, that staff are given adequate ongoing support including counselling and adequate time out to recover. Incidents must be properly investigated. There needs

to be action in terms of appropriate staffing going forward and specific support for the child. Other children also need to be protected from unacceptable behaviour. Accepting violence in schools fails the children who exhibit violent behaviour as much as it fails everyone else involved. They need support to express themselves in a more appropriate manner. It is those pupils who have most to gain from school leaders reacting properly to violent incidents with full risk assessments and then taking action to deal with the issues identified.

There may be a role for body cameras: they can record incidents which can be used for analysis which can support training either through demonstrating good practice and/or reflection/discussion round how different approaches earlier on could have led to different outcomes. These cameras are more effective at recording incidents and also avoid turning schools into Orwellian nightmares of constant surveillance. The culture in which recording takes place is the key to successfully changing behaviours. It will not succeed as part of a blame culture. A focus on improving services, protecting staff and Getting it Right for Every Child will be much more effective. This will require careful management and negotiation with appropriate trade unions.

The Education and Skills Committee report¹ into Additional Support Needs (ASN) supports UNISON's belief that Scotland is a long way from meeting its aspirations for children with additional support needs. There are some good strategic and policy papers around supporting children but these have not been matched with adequate funding to enable their implementation or recruitment, training and support for the staff in order to ensure they can deliver the correct support. Parents often have to fight to get the additional support their child needs. When parents (who are able to fight) "win" that fight there is no additional funding attached to implement the decision. Schools have to provide support from their existing budget. This has an impact on provision of services for other children relying on that budget. So a child with ASN may get a classroom assistant working directly with them but other pupils in the group now cannot access to the support she could provide. Parents who feel their child is better suited to a specialist school often find that mainstream education is the only option available.

Schools are struggling to meet the needs of pupils because of budget cuts and CCTV will not change that. On top of cuts to resources demand is rising, adding additional pressure. The number of pupils with additional support needs has doubled since 2010 but there are 1841 fewer support staff in local authorities. UNISON's survey of support staff in schools and government's own research into behaviour in schools² indicates that the cuts in support staff are affecting behaviour in schools. While this is not the only reason cited, it is clear that cuts to support staff in schools and to "expert advice" services such as educational psychologists who could support staff and pupils directly is having an impact on the whole school not just children with identified support needs.

¹ http://www.parliament.scot/S5_Education/Reports/ASN_6th_Report_2017.pdf

² Behaviour in Scottish School Research 2016 Dec 2017 <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0052/00526338.pdf>

Staff do not get the training they need to deal with the wide range of complex additional support needs that children have. These range from physical disabilities, learning difficulties, mental health problems, short-term ill-health, chronic health problems and family crises. Some only need support for a short time others for their whole school career. Staff working with children with additional support needs must have appropriate training to enable them to undertake those roles. This requires an ongoing programme of individualised training and professional development. ASN is a wide term. Each child is an individual with a complex set of needs. These often are medical and behavioural. Training for staff needs to focus on the children involved: not generic training, not e-learning programmes or watching short videos. Initial and ongoing training for staff will need to be part of their working day. It is not enough to “encourage” staff to engage in learning. Twilight and weekend training is not the answer. It is hard to concentrate after a full day or week of work. Many staff also have caring responsibilities that make attendance impossible. Given the rates of pay on offer for many roles staff also have other jobs in order to make ends meet and also cannot attend out of hours training. This will require substantial resources for training and to ensure that there are enough staff to cover for those on training/development activities.

Many staff in schools, early years centres are poorly paid for the skills required to undertake their current roles. All public sector staff have experienced a prolonged pay freeze which means in real terms their pay has been cut. Pay and wider terms and conditions which reflect the skills required for the job are the best way to ensure a highly skilled workforce focused on continually improving their skills.

UNISON would fully support the introduction of not just social work but also educational psychologists and nursing staff into all schools. This would require substantial additional funding.

Conclusion

UNISON is Scotland's largest trade union with members across the public, private and voluntary sectors, including social workers and the staff who support children with a range of additional support needs in schools and early years settings. UNISON therefore welcomes the opportunity to give evidence on Petition PE01709. Install CCTV cameras and provide full-time social work in all ASN schools. There is no doubt that the needs of children and young people with additional support needs are not being fully met in our schools or early years settings. UNISON believes that there are more effective routes to meeting the petitioner's aims than installing CCTV cameras. UNISON would fully support the introduction of not just social work but also educational psychologists and nursing staff into all schools. This would require substantial additional funding.