



**SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE**

# Statistics Publication Notice

Education Series

ISSN 1479-7569

INCIDENTS OF VIOLENCE AND ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR  
AGAINST LOCAL AUTHORITY SCHOOL STAFF IN 2002/03  
January 27, 2004 (revised version 2.00 p.m.)

## **A Scottish Executive National Statistics Publication**

The results of the survey on incidents of violence and anti-social behaviour against local authority school staff in 2002/03 are published today by the Scottish Executive Education Department.

An incident, in this context, is categorised as *'any incident in which any employee of a school is seriously abused, is threatened or is assaulted by a pupil, parent, member of the public or any other persons in circumstances arising out of the course of his/her employment. This includes physical attack and threatening behaviour with or without a weapon, and intentional damage to personal property'*.

School staff may have different views on what constitutes an incident, and what one member of staff may report as an incident, another may choose not to report. In some cases incidents were not the result of malicious intent on the part of the perpetrator. There were four incidents reported by schools to the Health and Safety Executive.

Each local authority has established its own system for collecting information about incidents, based on guidelines issued by the Scottish Executive. These different systems have led to a clear difference between authorities in the level of reporting of incidents, and at some stage since this collection started most authorities have experienced a large increase which they attribute to improvements in practice. In 2002/03, a third of authorities showed a decrease in reported incidents, and those authorities with the largest increases indicated that this was largely due to improved reporting.

The information collected refers to the number of separate incidents reported, rather than the number of individual members of staff involved in incidents.

The main findings in 2002/03 are:-

- The total number of reported incidents against local authority school staff (both teaching and non-teaching) was 6,899. This equates to an average of one incident per school or pre-school centre per year.

- Thirty-five per cent of these incidents occurred within the primary sector (on average one incident per school per year), 27 per cent in the secondary sector (five per school), 36 per cent in the special sector (14 per school) and two per cent in pre-school centres of education (0.05 per school).
- Four per cent of incidents (301) were reported to the police.
- Just over 4,400 of the incidents reported involved teaching staff. There were 75 incidents against teaching staff per 1,000 teachers.
- Ninety-eight per cent of incidents were recorded as occurring in school hours. Fifty-one per cent of incidents took place in the classroom.
- Twenty-five per cent of the incidents reported involved verbal abuse alone. Forty-five per cent involved physical violence alone and 29 per cent involved both physical violence and verbal abuse.
- One per cent of incidents (81) were reported as sexually motivated (including gender issues), 0.4 per cent (29) by race, 0.3 per cent (23) by disability and 0.1 per cent (7) by homophobia. One per cent of incidents were reported to involve a weapon and four per cent to involve an improvised object.
- In 95 per cent of all incidents reported (6,567), the alleged perpetrator was a pupil at the school. This equates to a rate of eight incidents per 1,000 pupils. In three per cent of all incidents, the alleged perpetrator was recorded as a parent.
- Of the incidents involving pupils (and where this information was available), 65 per cent involved pupils with special educational needs (SEN).
- Forty-two incidents (0.7 per cent) resulted in the member of staff taking time off (where known).
- Eighty-three per cent of alleged perpetrators of incidents were male (where known).

## BACKGROUND NOTES

1. In June 1997, the then Scottish Office issued a circular (No 5/97) to local authorities in Scotland, informing them of a formal requirement to report, record and monitor incidents of violence against school staff. In circular 5/97, an incident of violence was defined as:

'any incident in which any employee of a school is seriously abused, is threatened or is assaulted by a pupil, parent, member of the public or any other persons in circumstances arising out of the course of his/her employment. This includes physical attack and threatening behaviour with or without a weapon, and intentional damage to personal property'.

This reflects the fact that violence is not restricted to acts of aggression that may result in physical harm but incorporates behaviour, including the use of gestures and language, that may cause the victim to become afraid or feel threatened or abused.

The advice has since been updated by Circular 6/03 which will take effect for 2003/04.

The Scottish Office collected and collated information from local authorities for the first time in 1998, and subsequently as the Scottish Executive again in each August since.

2. It should be noted that:

- This is the fifth year that the survey has been completed by all authorities. The numbers of incidents reported in the past five years have been:

1998/1999	1,898
1999/2000	3,083
2000/2001	4,501
2001/2002	5,412
2002/2003	6,899

It must be stressed that this is the number of incidents *reported*: it is not necessarily valid therefore to draw the inference that the actual number of incidents has increased by the amount shown between these annual totals. As reporting procedures improve, training is given, and increased emphasis is placed by authorities and unions on the importance of reporting incidents, more incidents are recorded. Several local authorities have indicated that they view increases in 2002/03 as largely due to these factors, rather than representing 'real' increases. The following gives some information about changes in the number of incidents in local authorities in recent years:

- Eleven authorities have had a reduction in the number of incidents since 2001/02
  - Eleven authorities have shown an increase of incidents of more than 50% since 2001/02
  - Four authorities accounted for 75% of the total increase of incidents since 2001/02. There was a similar pattern in previous years.
- In reporting the summary information for 2002/03, there was no requirement for local authorities to record separately those incidents that involved multiple acts of violence by the same perpetrator, or where more than one member of staff was involved. Similarly, incidents perpetrated by more than one person are not necessarily recorded separately.
  - Where an incident was notified to the police, this does not imply that this incident was recorded as a crime by them.
  - It is to be expected that the figures for special schools would be higher than for the other sectors, since many of the pupils will have been admitted to special schools because of behavioural difficulties and other medical conditions. Special schools have small classes and staff trained to deal with pupils with behavioural difficulties.
  - A pupil with SEN is any pupil with special educational needs who has a Record of Needs, or any other identified special educational needs (including undergoing assessment for possible recording). Note that this categorisation, for the purposes of this survey, is made largely at the discretion of the school.

- A weapon is defined in this case as an implement brought into the school with the premeditated intent of threatening or causing harm or injury. An improvised object is any object that does not fall into the category of 'weapon' which is used to threaten or cause harm or injury (for example a book picked up in the classroom and thrown at the teacher would be an 'improvised object').
- This survey covers local authority primary, secondary and special schools, local authority pre-school centres of education and pre-school centres of education which are provided in partnership with local authorities. There was one self-governing primary school in 2002/03 which was not covered by this survey.

3. Each local authority has established its own system for collecting information about incidents from its schools, based on guidelines issued by the Scottish Executive. While work is ongoing to increase consistency in reporting, these different systems have led to a clear difference between authorities in the level of reporting of incidents. We therefore do not make available figures relating to individual local authorities.

4. Information on, and definitions of incidents reported to the Health & Safety Executive (RIDDOR) due to violence against staff is available from [www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/causacc/technical.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/causacc/technical.htm).

5. **This is a National Statistics publication.** National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the National Statistics Code of Practice. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs. They are produced free from any political interference.

6. All tables are available on the Scottish Executive website <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/stats/bulletins/00318-00.asp>

### Enquiries

7. Public enquiries (non-media) about the information contained in this Publication Notice should be addressed to Mal Cooke, Statistician, The Scottish Executive Education Department, 1-A Victoria Quay, Edinburgh EH6 6QQ.

Telephone 0131 244 1689 or email [school.stats@scotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:school.stats@scotland.gsi.gov.uk)

8. Media enquiries about the information in this Publication Notice should be addressed to John Booth, 0131 244 4001.

**January 27 2004**

**Table 1: Incidents against local authority school staff, by sector, 2002/03**

	Total	Average number of incidents per 1,000 pupils <sup>1</sup>	Average number of incidents per school	Number which were reported to the Police
Pre-school centres of education	135	1.3	0.05	5
Primary schools	2,426	5.9	1.1	85
Secondary schools	1,834	5.8	4.8	160
Special schools	2,504	330.6	13.8	51
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,899</b>	<b>8.2</b>	<b>1.2</b>	<b>301</b>

(1) includes incidents perpetrated by non-pupils

**Table 2: Incidents against local authority school staff, by category of staff and sector, 2002/03**

	Total	Number against teaching staff only	Number against non-teaching staff only	Number against both teaching and non-teaching staff
Pre-school centres of education	135	33	102	0
Primary schools	2,426	1,133	996	297
Secondary schools	1,834	1,616	214	4
Special schools	2,504	1,263	1,177	64
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,899</b>	<b>4,045</b>	<b>2,489</b>	<b>365</b>

**Table 3: Incidents against local authority school staff, by location and time, 2002/03**

	Total	Number of incidents	
		during school hours	outwith school hours
Pre-school centres	135	133	2
Classroom	3,462	3,454	8
Elsewhere in school buildings	2,116	2,083	33
School grounds	781	725	56
Outwith school grounds	355	290	65
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,849</b>	<b>6,685</b>	<b>164</b>

\*This information was not available for all incidents

**Table 4: Incidents against education authority school staff, by type of incident and motivation, 2002/03**

	Number which were motivated by					
	Total	racial	sexual	homophobia / sexual orientation	disability	religion
Verbal abuse only	1,733	23	44	6	1	0
Physical violence only	3,078	2	24	0	19	0
Both verbal abuse and physical violence	2,027	3	12	1	3	0
Damage to personal property	61	1	1	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,899</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>0</b>

**Table 5: Incidents against education authority school staff, by type of incident and whether involving weapon or improvised object, 2002/03**

	Total	Number involving	
		weapon	improvised object
Verbal abuse only	1,733	5	7
Physical violence only	3,078	19	131
Both verbal abuse and physical violence	2,027	12	125
Damage to personal property	61	3	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,899</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>274</b>

**Table 6: Incidents against education authority school staff, by type of alleged perpetrator and sector, 2002/03**

	Current				
	Total	pupil	Ex-pupil	Parent	Other person
Pre-school centres of education	135	126	0	5	4
Primary schools	2,425	2,267	5	136	17
Secondary schools	1,835	1,678	37	67	53
Special schools	2,504	2,496	0	4	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,899</b>	<b>6,567</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>212</b>	<b>78</b>

**Table 7: Incidents against education authority school staff, where alleged perpetrator was current pupil, by sector, 2002/03**

	Total incidents involving current pupils	With SEN	Without SEN	Not known if with or without SEN
Pre-school centres of education	126	17	69	40
Primary schools	2,267	973	885	409
Secondary schools	1,678	175	1,046	457
Special schools	2,496	2,496	*	*
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,567</b>	<b>3,661</b>	<b>2,000</b>	<b>906</b>

\* Not applicable

**Table 8: Consequences of incidents against education authority school staff, 2002/03**

	Number of incidents
Incidents that resulted in no time off	5,774
Incidents that resulted in time off (no treatment)	19
Incidents that resulted in time off (treatment for emotional)	6
Incidents that resulted in time off (treatment for physical)	17
Incidents where consequences are not known/ not recorded	1,083
<i>Number of days lost<sup>1</sup></i>	<i>301</i>

(1) Information on the number of days lost was not available for 11 per cent of incidents

**Table 9: Incidents against education authority school staff, by alleged perpetrator gender and ethnicity, 2002/03**

	Percentage
Male	82.9
Female	17.1
White	47.1
Minority ethnic group	1.1
Not known/ not disclosed	51.8

\*This information was not available for all incidents