# Violence & Aggression Branch Survey Report and Campaigning Recommendations:
# Executive Summary

**Background**

The EIS is the largest teacher trade union in Scotland, representing over 80% of all teachers across nursery, primary and secondary education.

The EIS launched its Stand Up for Quality Education (SU4QE) campaign at its AGM in June 2023. The SU4QE campaign has 3 key priority areas the campaign will call for:

- Build the skills, resources and school culture to address distressed, violent and aggressive pupil behaviour

- An increase in funding and support for pupils with additional support needs

- A significant reduction in teacher workload

The focus in the initial months of the campaign is to explore and tackle instances of violence and aggression in schools. The EIS defines 'violence and aggression' as; "any incident in which a person is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work." This definition includes:

- verbal abuse or threats, including face-to-face, online and via telephone
- physical attacks

It should be understood that the term 'violence and aggression' goes beyond violence and includes aggression which may be exhibited verbally, in writing, by gesture as well as by physical means.

Part of the SU4QE campaign on 'violence and aggression' is a survey of branches to:

- Determine the nature and extent of the 'violence and aggression' faced by teachers
- Determine the nature and extent of the 'violence and aggression' faced by pupils
- Identify challenges around 'violence & aggression and good practice to address or mitigate violence & aggression in schools
- Recommend SU4QE campaigning objectives to address or mitigate 'violence and aggression' in schools

The branch survey was open for six weeks from mid-August and this is the output report.

A separate survey on 'abuse directed at teachers' has been issued to EIS members by April Steffeck of the University of Edinburgh. The survey is independent of the EIS, although the EIS did assist by disseminating it to members.

The methodology of this report may be found at the end of this report.

There are 2,461 schools in Scotland according to the 2022 Scottish Government Pupil Census dataset; 1,994 primary, 358 secondary and 109 special schools. Responses were received from 875 EIS branches – i.e. schools. This is a high rate of return.

All the information in this report has been considered and used to inform the EIS 'Stand Up for Quality Education' Campaign's next steps on addressing 'violence and aggression' in Scotland's schools to the benefit of staff, pupils and wider society.

**Executive Summary of Branch Survey Findings**

The findings for each survey question are identified and discussed in the 'Survey Data, Responses and Findings' section of the report and then summarised in the 'Summary of Survey Findings' section. This 'Executive Summary of the Branch Survey Findings' is an abridged version of the 'Summary of Survey Findings' section. For more information regarding the findings, including data, context and issues please read the 'Survey Data, Responses and Findings' and 'Summary of Survey Findings' sections.

i.      There is a significant amount of violence and aggression within Scotland's schools with 82.7% of branches responding that there are incidents of 'violence and aggression' every week. Over 72% of branches stated that the amount of 'violence and aggression' had grown in the last four years – from levels before the Covid pandemic. Almost 40% of branches stated that prejudice-based violence had increased over the same period. In Primary and Special Education, "physical violence towards a teacher" was the most common type of 'violence and aggression', whilst, in secondary schools, "Intimidatory, obscene or derogatory verbal comments towards a teacher" was the most common form of 'violence and aggression'.

ii.     A majority of school branches responded that boys were more likely to exhibit 'violent and aggressive' behaviours towards teachers, as 51% of branches responded that boys were more likely to exhibit 'violent and aggressive' behaviour towards women teachers than men teachers.

iii.    Many schools/local authorities do not effectively disseminate policies and procedures to address 'violence and aggression' as fewer than half (47.9%) of branch responses collected stated that everyone in their branch was aware of the policies and procedures in place for dealing with pupil-on-teacher 'violence and aggression'. Many individual responses stated that no such policy existed in their school.

iv.     Fewer than 11% of branches felt that teachers were "always" supported after a pupil-on-teacher 'violent and aggressive' incident had been reported. A further 63% of branches stated that teachers were "sometimes" supported after a 'violence and aggression' incident. Over a quarter of branches (26.1%) stated that teachers were never supported after a 'violent and aggressive' incident. A majority of branches therefore reported that the support given to teachers was inconsistent after a 'violent and aggression' incident was reported.

v.      A minority of branches (42.9%) thought that pupil victims were "well supported" after a 'violent and aggressive' incident was reported. A majority of branches (51.7%) thought that pupils exhibiting 'violence and aggression' were "well supported" after a 'violent and aggressive' incident was reported.

vi.     Around 2/3 of branches (59.1%) felt that teachers were not well supported or received inconsistent support following pupil-on-pupil 'violence and aggression'. A further 13.2% reported that even where some actions were taken, or there was a will to do so, there was a lack of follow-up or support available due to resource constraints. The nature and extent of teacher support very much depended on the availability of colleagues to cover classes, work with and support the pupils involved, or overall resource capacity within the school.

vii.     A number of responses alluded to staffing pressures that led to insufficient time to deal with incidents, decompress, report the incident and properly engage with restorative practices. A lack of resources, training, local authority support and access to associated professionals were also cited as factors that did not help to address 'violence and aggression' in schools. Senior management responses were mixed, and local authority support was much criticised.

viii.    Over half of branches (53.3%) reported parent/carer incidents of violence and aggression on teachers happened termly, monthly or weekly. Just over half of branches (50.5%) responded that parent/carer-on-teacher 'violence and aggression' was becoming more frequent.  The most common violent and aggressive behaviour that teachers are exposed to from parents is 'derogatory comments or gossiping about a teacher'.

ix.      Almost all branches, 99% agreed that "violent, aggressive or disruptive behaviour, including persistent low-level disruption, in your school" has an effect on pupils' learning.  Almost every branch (99.8%) indicated that 'teaching and learning' was disrupted, followed by 'difficult to maintain or regain pupils' attention' (96.9%) and then followed closely by 'other pupils' behaviour is adversely affected' (96.8%) then 'it disrupts certain types of pedagogies' (94.9%).

x.       Almost all of the branches surveyed said that pupils are less focussed (98.2%), more agitated or nervous (96.5%), withdrawn (94.0%), less happy (94.8%), more likely to be disruptive themselves (95.9%) or become angry or upset (92.9%) as impacts of violence, disruption or aggressive behaviour on pupils. Additional comments by branches outline the scale and nature of the problems caused by violence and aggression to pupils, and the adverse impact on pupils' wellbeing, school attendance and learning.

xi.      Almost all branches reported an increase in stress anxiety and depression for some teachers in their school. More than three-quarters of branches (78.5%) said that some of their teachers are afraid of certain pupils.  Three-quarters of branches (75.4%) said some of their teachers have sustained physical injuries and 61% said some of the teachers in their school had been on sick leave following a 'violent and aggressive' incident.

xii.     Almost 80% of branches reported (79%) that "members of the branch" considered leaving teaching as a result of the violence and aggression.

xiii.    Well over half of branches responded that they felt that reporting a 'violent and aggressive' incident did not generate a better outcome for pupils (59.9%).  Most branches responded that they felt that reporting a 'violent and aggressive' incident did not generate a better outcome for teachers (66.9%).

xiv.     Qualitative responses from branches outlined a need for more ASN, de-escalation and CLPL training.

xv.      The survey included (state) nurseries and early years centres and the outcomes of this report therefore apply to those bodies too.

xvi.     Several challenges and examples of good practice were identified by branches. These are captured in the recommendations section of this report.

**Stand Up for Quality Education Campaign Aims Arising from the Branch Survey Responses**

The recommendations in this report are drawn from the responses and findings of the branch survey, and they constitute the SU4QE campaign aims to deliver improved outcomes concerning 'violence and aggression' in schools. This aspect of the SU4QE campaign has short-term and long-term campaign aims, and some aims will requires campaigning to create the necessary political will at national and local levels.

The aims have been split into national, local authority and school branch levels. The EIS will provide support and guidance for LAs, branches, reps and members to help deliver these aims at all levels.

1. **National: For the EIS Nationally**

   1) For the Scottish Government, COSLA (and EIS) to make a public statement that schools should be places free of and protected from 'violence and aggression', and to develop a national plan with stakeholders to deliver that aim.

   2) For the Scottish Government, COSLA and EIS to have a nationally agreed definition of 'violence and aggression'. Furthermore, for Scottish Government and COSLA to ensure that local 'violence and aggression' incident reporting procedures are aligned with each other in order to allow for national data collection and scrutiny.

   3) For the Scottish Government, COSLA, and Education Scotland to accept that 'violence and aggression' has an adverse impact on pupil wellbeing, school attendance rates, learning and attainment.

   4) For the Scottish Government, COSLA, and Education Scotland to accept that 'violence and aggression' has an adverse impact on teacher wellbeing, sickness rates, recruitment and retention.

   5) For the Scottish Government, COSLA, and Education Scotland to accept the scale of 'violence and aggression' as evidenced by this Branch Survey and to reach out to parents' organisations Connect and the NPFS.

   6) To work at the SNCT Support Group to review and amend SNCT Sections 6.23 and 6.25 to include a definition of 'violence and aggression' and improved support for teachers who are subjected to 'violence and aggression' incidents at work.

   7) For the Scottish Government to publish a clear national policy as to the escalation of consequences for pupils exhibiting 'violence and aggression', up to and including exclusion (permanent or temporary) from a school. For these to be established as national good practice. Furthermore, to publish clear national policy as to the consequences to parents/carers exhibiting 'violence and aggression' to school staff.

   8) For the Scottish Government to provide resources sufficient to enable teacher staffing levels to adequately deal with 'violence and aggression' including the proper and meaningful implementation of restorative practice in schools and to properly meet ASN needs.

9) To improve the recruitment and training pipeline of specialist teachers, educational psychologists and other specialist roles to help reduce 'violence and aggression' and to assist appropriate responses.

10) For Education Scotland to include reviewing 'violence and aggression' procedures, incident reports and follow-up actions as a normal part of inspections.

11) That prejudice-based 'violence and aggression' is monitored with a national approach that is integrated with Local Authorities' work.

12) To continue to campaign for smaller class sizes, fewer weekly contact hours, improved ASN support and other SU4QE aims.

2. **Local Authority: For Local Associations**

1) To adopt a definition of 'violence and aggression' (if the Scottish Government/COSLA does not facilitate the agreement of a national definition) and to make a public statement that schools should be places free of and protected from 'violence and aggression' and to develop a local plan with stakeholders to deliver that aim.

2) Schools should have local authority-produced signs and notices communicating to all who use school buildings that 'violence and aggression' will not be tolerated as in other council buildings that are workplaces for Council staff.

3) The Local Authority and EIS LA carry out a review of the 'violence and aggression' reported and non-reported incidents over the last two years to determine the most common incidents within the LA and produce a short-term plan to address these incidents. The plan should draw on the points set out in this report.

4) The LNCT should develop policies and procedures locally, until a national template is available, to deal with: Pupil-on-Pupil, Pupil-on-Teacher (& Pupil-on-Staff) and Parent/Carer– on-Teacher 'violence and aggression'.

5) The local violence and aggression policies and procedures shall include but not be limited to:

   a. Definition of 'violence and aggression'.

   b. Positive pupil behaviour policy with plans for restorative practice embedded and clear boundaries for and expectations of pupil behaviour laid out.

   c. Agreed response plans to incidents of 'violence and aggression'.

   d. The local authority implements staffing levels and resources that allow the production of a timetable at each school of the duty officer available at each school or special unit workplace during school hours. Local authority support should be given to headteacher, depute or appropriate Principal Teachers as "duty officer" in order to facilitate this recommendation without detriment to the duty officers.

e. There should be sufficient staffing levels that every teacher that is a victim of 'violence and aggression' is given a reasonable amount of 'recovery time' to decompress after an incident and is then encouraged to report the 'violence and aggression' incident with sufficient time to do so.

f. Resources and staffing should be implemented that allow for the child who has exhibited violence and aggression to remain out of the class until a revised pupil behaviour plan and/ or updated risk assessment and/or completion of meaningful restorative practices have been undertaken, with the class teacher fully involved in the decision-making around the young person's readmission to the class.

g. A trade union rep from the school should be available to support the process of writing a 'violence and aggression' incident report if requested. If there is no rep, the LA Secretary should be contacted.

h. There is specific, defined support for teachers who have been subject to 'violence and aggression' from parents/carers.

i. Every 'violence and aggression' report is acknowledged by the local authority.

j. Every 'violence and aggression' report is followed up by the local authority or school with an outcome report given to the complainant. The School's SMT should regularly 'check-in' with teachers submitting reports.

k. Whilst the authority uses restorative practices, it also makes pupils understand that persistent or serious misbehaviour leads to consequences. The local authority has a clear escalatory set of consequences for pupils who exhibit 'violence and aggression', up to and including exclusion from their school.

l. The local authority has a clear escalatory set of consequences for parents/carers who exhibit 'violence and aggression'.

6) The local authority ensures that every teacher is regularly trained in the 'violence and aggression' policies & procedures, de-escalation procedures and restorative practices.

7) The local authority provides general strategies to assist teachers in mitigating and responding to 'violence and aggression', including bespoke support for individual teachers requesting such support.

8) There is a joint review at the LNCT of staffing standards and formulae to ensure sufficient staffing levels and resources to prevent violent behaviour from occurring and, where it does, to implement proper support to teachers after 'violence and aggression' incidents and for the proper implementation of restorative practice. These staffing levels should include sufficient support staff within classes and meet the ASN needs of pupils.

9) Support for teacher and pupil victims of violence and aggression is reviewed at LNCT with stakeholders and improved.

10) The local authority ensures that schools have effective information sharing systems in place for sharing information to teachers regarding background information and risks associated with specific pupils.

11) The local authority implements a system of risk assessments for classrooms and other workplace areas to identify risk and control measures for both pupils and staff. These risk assessments are properly implemented, reviewed regularly and updated after each incidence of violence and aggression.

12) The local authority has sufficient 'competent persons' to carry out risk assessments and to resource their control measures.

13) The local authority has the appropriate and sufficient employee support programme for employees who are injured or suffer harm at work.

14) The local authority seeks to ensure that 'violence and aggression' policies and procedures will be applied consistently within schools and between schools.

15) The local authority ensures that parents/carers are informed of their child's misbehaviour and the school's response/plan.

16) Prejudice based 'violence and aggression' is monitored by the local authority and fed into national work in this area.

17) The local authority seeks to change and embed a culture within schools that does not blame teachers or pupil victims for pupils' behaviours and encourages all teachers (and young people) to report 'violent and aggressive' incidents.

18) The Local Association should advise members absent due to 'violence and aggression' to claim special leave as set out in SNCT Section 6.23 and to seek EIS support regarding making a personal injury claim.

19) The Local Association should advise members to report serious instances of 'violence and aggression' to the police, especially if it causes injury or absence from work.

20) The Local Association should campaign and act to make the local authority "accountable" for the level of 'violence and aggression' in its schools and be accountable to the extent to which the local authority exercises its duty of care to its teacher employees.

**School: For Branches**

**There needs to be coordinated work at the Local Association/Local Authority level with the school reps to deliver maximum progress with the school-level campaign aims.**

1) To adopt the local authority or national definition of 'violence and aggression' and to make a public statement that the school should be a place free and protected from 'violence and aggression'. The school should have local authority produced signs on walls saying that 'violence and aggression' will not be tolerated.

2) That each school SMT and EIS branch carry out a joint review of the 'violence and aggression' reported and non-reported incidents over the last two years to determine the most common incidents within the school and a produce short-term plan to address these incidents. The plan should draw on the points set out in this report.

3) The school has local authority LNCT agreed policies to deal with: Pupil-on-Pupil, Pupil-on-Teacher (& Pupil-on-Staff) and Parent/Carer– on-Teacher incidents.

4) These 'violence and aggression 'policies be known, explained and encouraged to be used among and by teachers.

5) The local authority (via LNCT) policy and procedures of 'violence and aggression' by pupils shall be adopted and will include the following points::

   a. Positive pupil behaviour policy with plans with restorative practice embedded and clear boundaries for and expectations of pupil behaviour laid out.

   b. Agreed response plans to incidents of 'violence and aggression'.

   c. Timetable of 'duty officer' available for teachers and staff at the school during school hours to immediately support with 'violent and aggressive' incidents. Sufficient support is given by the school and local authority to those staff that act as duty officers, including specified management time.

   d. Every teacher that is a victim of 'violence and aggression' is given a reasonable amount of 'recovery time' to decompress after an incident and is then encouraged to report the 'violence and aggression' incident with sufficient time to do so.

   e. The child who has exhibited violence and aggression to remain out of the class until a revised pupil behaviour plan and/or updated risk assessment and completion of meaningful restorative practices have been undertaken, with the class teacher fully involved in the decision-making around the young person's readmission to the class.

   f. Consideration be given as to how the school implements de-escalation in order to avoid any perception that 'violent and aggressive' behaviour is rewarded.

   g. A trade union rep from the school should be available to support the process of writing a 'violence and aggression' incident report if requested.

   h. There is specific, defined support for teachers at the school who have been subject to 'violence and aggression' from parents/carers.

   i. That every 'violence and aggression' report is acknowledged by the school SMT.

   j. The School's SMT should regularly 'check-in' with teachers submitting reports and use their 'best offices' to ensure the local authority follows up on the incident report.

   k. Whilst the school uses restorative practices, it also makes pupils understand that persistent or serious misbehaviour leads to consequences. The school has a clear escalatory set of

consequences for pupils who exhibit violence and aggression, up to and including exclusion from their school.

    l. The school has a clear escalatory set of consequences for parents/carers who exhibit 'violence and aggression'

6) Every teacher in the school is regularly trained in the 'violence and aggression' policies & procedures, de-escalation procedures and restorative practices. The school's SMT provides general strategies to assist teachers in mitigating and responding to 'violence and aggression', including bespoke support for individual teachers requesting such support. This range of training should include the August (or first) in-service training.

7) Support for teacher and pupil victims of violence and aggression is reviewed and discussed by teachers in the EIS branch and views are fed back to the headteacher.

8) The school has effective information sharing systems in place for sharing information to teachers regarding background information and risks associated with specific pupils.

9) The school has risk assessments for classrooms and other workplace areas to identify risk and control measures for both pupils and staff. These risk assessments are properly implemented, reviewed regularly and updated after each incidence of violence and aggression.

10) The school seeks to have risk assessments completed timeously and to fully resource their control measures.

11) The Branch will advise all members to have risk assessments completed for their workplaces and duties. Risk assessments are the employer's responsibility and must be carried out by a "competent person" in health & safety matters. Larger branches (more than 10 members) are advised to nominate a Health & Safety Representative to assist with health, safety and welfare issues within the school – including members' wellbeing and mental health.

12) The school provides access to the local authority's employee support programme for employees who are injured or suffer harm at work.

13) The Branch and Local Association should advise members absent due to 'violence and aggression' to claim special leave as set out in SNCT Section 6.23 and to seek EIS support regarding making a personal injury claim.

14) The Branch and Local Association should advise members to report serious instances of 'violence and aggression' to the police, especially if it causes injury or absence from work.

15) The school will apply policies, procedures and support to those affected by 'violence and aggression' consistently for all staff and pupils.

16) Parents/carers need to be informed of their child's misbehaviour and the school's response/plan. Parental support should be sought by the SMT or pastoral care team.

17) The Branch should encourage all members to submit 'violent and aggressive' incident reports after each incident.

18) A culture needs to be impressed within the school that does not blame teachers or pupil victims for pupils' behaviours.

19) A culture needs to be impressed with the school that has zero tolerance for 'violence and aggression' and in no way normalises 'violence and aggression' within schools.

Where a branch is unable to make progress over time in implementing the recommendations above then it should seek support from the Local Association, Organiser or Area Officer to break the deadlock. This may ultimately involve initiating a collective grievance and then a dispute against the local authority (as the employer) for failing to properly exercise their duty of care to staff.

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