

Rise of violent primary pupils: 40 teachers attacked every day - more than at secondary schools

By Daniel Martin

Forty primary school pupils are expelled every day for attacks on staff, shocking figures revealed yesterday. The violence is so endemic that exclusions for assaulting teachers are now more common in primaries than in secondary schools.

Official statistics show that 8,030 pupils aged five to 11 received the sanction in 2010/11 – a 15 per cent rise over four years.



For the first time, the number of exclusions at primary schools has overtaken those in secondary schools, which are for those aged 11 to 18 (posed)

Teaching unions say the figure could be an underestimate because staffs are discouraged from reporting assaults for fear of damaging their school's reputation.

The level of violence has soared most in the South East – rising 41 per cent in the period from 2006/7 to 2010/11. Last night MPs said the figures were a depressing insight into a decline in pupil behaviour at schools.

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'These figures are extraordinary. It shows an utter lack of discipline for children at a very young age,' said Philip Davies, Tory MP for Shipley. 'It is a sad indictment on the state of our society, the lack of discipline, the lack of respect for authority, and some pretty bad parenting.'

'We've got to make sure parents take more responsibility for the actions of the children. And we need a zero-tolerance approach on any assaults on teachers by children or their parents.'

Chris Skidmore, a Tory member of the education select committee, said: 'It seems shocking that more primary pupils are now being excluded than secondary pupils for attacks against teachers.'



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'Nevertheless teachers must have the power to exclude pupils from the classroom for violent behaviour. 'It is right that exclusions should rise if that means discipline can be effectively restored.' The figures on exclusions, compiled by the Department for Education, have been placed in the House of Commons library.

They show that in 2006/07, there were 6,970 exclusions in state-funded primary schools – 260 of them permanent and 6,710 for a fixed period.

By 2010/11, there were 8,030 exclusions at primaries – 200 permanent and 7,830 fixed. Over the 195 school days in a year, this works out at 41 expulsions a day.

For the first time, the number of exclusions at primary schools, which cater for children aged between five and 11, has overtaken those in secondary schools, which are for those aged 11 to 18.

Back in 2006/07, there were 9,230 exclusions at state secondaries – 8,560 fixed and 670 permanent. But by 2010/11, this had declined by more than a third, to 6,060 – 5,730 fixed and 330 permanent. In addition, there are more than 3,000 expulsions a year from special schools.

PROTEST TEACHERS FACE PAY CUT

TEACHERS who work to rule could see their pay docked by 15 per cent under hard-line proposals unveiled by the Education Secretary yesterday.

Michael Gove wants to get tougher on those who disrupt classrooms by taking industrial action.

Hundreds of schools are being affected by the protests over pay, pensions and working conditions.

The action involves teachers refusing to carry out 25 basic tasks such as providing cover for other teachers and invigilating at exams.

It is being carried out by members of the NASUWT and the NUT, which is threatening to ramp up its campaign, with possible national strikes.

Yesterday head teachers were told the wages of staff taking industrial action could be docked.

The Department for Education published a document to help heads identify when those participating in the

'work to rule' action are likely to be in breach of contract.

The document includes templates of legal letters that could be sent to staff who are refusing to carry out certain duties – including one which warns of 'pay deductions of 15 per cent on an ongoing basis.'

Mr Gove will also provide headteachers with cut-price advice from solicitors to deal with staff working to rule.

The DfE paper advises heads to assess over what period of time a member of staff is not undertaking contractually required duties.

It adds: 'For example, a school might decide to deduct an hour's pay from an employee who refused to attend an hour-long meeting that they were contractually required to attend.'

The DfE also published research which shows that 9 per cent of teachers believe the industrial action is having an impact in their schools.

Chris Keates, general secretary of the NASUWT teaching union, said: 'Where violence occurs schools should operate a zero tolerance approach, sending a strong message to pupils and local communities that such behaviour has no place in schools and will not be tolerated.'

'Far too often violence against staff is seen as a secondary school issue, but these figures show that primary school staff are also vulnerable to assault.'

'However, in too many schools there is still unacceptable pressure on staff not to report assaults to the police or even to their union so that they can receive help. This is a frequent concern raised by primary school teachers. 'Concealing and failing to deal appropriately with violence will only make matters worse. Regrettably, there is a potential for violence in primary schools to increase as Government cuts remove specialist external provision to enable primary schools to access early intervention support for pupils with serious behavioural problems.' The highest number of expulsions was seen in the south east of England, excluding London. There were 1,680 exclusions in 2010/11 – up 41 per cent on the 1,190 total from 2006/07.

The next highest rises were seen in the east of England – up 21 per cent to 870; and the West Midlands, up 17 per cent to 890. In only one part of the country – London – has the total fallen, from 1,100 to 1,040. In total, the number of expulsions in state-funded schools has fallen from 18,590 to 16,790 – down 10 per cent. In an example of the problems that schools face, McKenzie Dunkley, then four, became one of the youngest ever pupils to be expelled for attacking teachers. He lashed out at one after he had to be dragged away from a light switch he was repeatedly flicking on and off.

Another teacher claimed McKenzie kicked her after he got into an argument with a pupil over a jigsaw. He was sent home from his reception class on four separate occasions by the head at the Sacred Heart Primary School in Ashton-on-Ribble, Lancashire, before finally being thrown out in November 2009. His parents had refused to agree to a special action plan to deal with his behaviour. At the time, they said he was a lively and lovable little boy who never caused any problems before starting school. His mother, Shelley Dunkley, 30, said in 2009: 'They are making him out to be a thug and I think they are treating him far too old. They are saying he won't listen, is disruptive and is just doing what he wants but he's still only four and getting used to school.

The headmistress, Carol Seagraves, said: 'It is only on very rare occasions that a school would consider permanently excluding a child as young as four.'