

ADVICE NOTE

Information & advice for members of the
Scottish Secondary Teachers' Association



VIOLENT INCIDENTS

The following represents our general advice in the matter of school security and violent incidents. It should be noted that the Health and Safety Executive's definition of violence at work includes verbal abuse or threats as well as physical attacks.

School Security

The matter of general school security (access, fencing etc) can be dealt with by the SSTA Health and Safety rep who is entitled to ask that the school security arrangements are examined with a view to establishing whether the guidelines of the Cullen report are met. The blue report form (form A) can be used for this. Copies are available from the SSTA office although many local authorities now have copies for completion online.

General Safety Advice

1. No teacher should ever feel in a situation of physical danger. If this happens (it is stressed, the teacher no more than fears an incident), the head teacher should be informed and the matter addressed to remove the fears.
2. Where staff patrol school areas during breaks, it is useful that this is carried out by staff in pairs and not alone. If a member of staff might be alone in such circumstances, an appropriate method of communicating with assistance should be provided.

Violent Incidents

Should you be the victim of violence, attempted violence or threatened violence:

1. a) Report the incident to the senior school management as soon as possible to enable the matter to be investigated and addressed as a matter of urgency. Schools should have a system for reporting such incidents.
b) Where a teacher complains of or reports any violent incident, it is never a prerequisite that there are witnesses identified to the event before an investigation is set in place. The matter must be investigated forthwith.
c) The Association regards it as being totally unacceptable that there is any suggestion or implication (prior to full investigation) that the teacher might have been in any way culpable.
2. Complete a Violent Incident Form and submit it in accordance with Authority/ employer procedure.
3. a) Decide whether you wish to formally report the incident to the police by phoning 101 – if you decide to do it, ask for a note of the incident number before ending your call as you may have need of this number later.

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VIOLENT INCIDENTS

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3. b) The SSTA advises that the police are always informed in case of actual physical assault – it is not necessary to seek permission from an employer/line-manager and any attempt to prevent a Member from approaching the police should be noted and referred to the Association.

4. Direct abusive/swearing at a teacher is also within the definition of violence at work and should be reported to senior school management as a serious incident. The SSTA advice is that a Violent Incident Form should be completed and submitted.

5. a) School Managements are expected to deal with violence, attempted violence and threats of violence against a teacher as extremely serious and to take appropriate action in response.

b) Appropriate actions are likely to involve a Short Term Exclusion from School, an 'Alternative to Exclusion' that also involves the pupil not returning to class for a period of time, or timetable change to ensure that the pupil does not have to return to the same class with the same teacher – perhaps more than one of the above.

c) A Pupil Behaviour Risk Assessment is likely to be required following an incident of physical violence, attempted violence or threat of violence against a member of staff. This should be completed by a competently trained person and details of the mitigations that may be required to ensure the safety of staff from the pupils repeating similar behaviour must be shared with all staff who may encounter that pupil in future.

d) If a pupil will be returning to a teacher's class after a violent incident towards a teacher, a restorative meeting should be arranged by pastoral or senior Management to help repair the relationship and help prevent any recurrence.

6. An absence of more than three days or any serious injury arising from a violent incident should be recorded and reported to the authority under the terms of the RIDDOR arrangements.

7. Absence from duty as a result of a violent incident should not count against a teacher's personal sickness allowance.

In addition to this general advice, detailed procedures are in the SSTA's Handbook for Health and Safety representatives which should be available for reference in school. Copies are also available for H&S reps from our office in Edinburgh via info@ssta.org.uk