

Over 1,000 assaults on council staff reported in twelve months

Council staff were attacked at work more than 1,000 times last year – with a 22 per cent increase in assaults in special schools in the space of 12 months.

Last year there was an 18 per cent decrease in the number of reportable injuries from 2017 – despite three injuries sustained from “slipping on fruit” and another four due to winter weather.

But in 2018, there were 1,755 employee injuries, of which 1,007 were assaults on staff – while the injury rate has increased from 2017 by 12 per cent.

Violence and assaults accounted for 57 per cent of all injuries to workers last year. A total of 93 per cent of injuries were in schools and “mostly in relation to learners with additional support needs”. In 2018, there was a 22 per cent increase in injuries due to violence and aggression in special schools.

A council spokeswoman said: “We have actually seen an 18 per cent drop in the most serious employee injuries being reported by council staff. This is a welcome improvement and builds on reductions in recent years, but there has been a rise in the total number of employee injuries and ‘near misses’ being reported, including those resulting from behavioural concerns in schools.

“We consider this increase to be largely attributable to

promotional campaigns with our employees to encourage incident reporting.”

The annual report also revealed that three injuries reported to the Health and Safety Executive resulted from people slipping on fruit.

At Gracemount Primary School, a person slipped on orange peel in the school corridor after fruit fell from a trolley or lunch box, resulting in a fractured knee. A person sustained ligament damage from an unknown type of fruit at Cowgate Under 5s. At Longstone Primary School, someone suffered a fractured elbow when they slipped on orange peel in the dining hall.

Last year, staff walked out of Kaimes School following assaults, with unions demanding more to be done to protect workers at special schools. A total of 958 assaults took place in schools last year, 38 were suffered by Health and Social Care staff and 10 in the Place department – which could have included bin workers or parking attendants.



Green Group Cllr Mary Campbell

Green education spokeswoman, Cllr Mary Campbell, said: “The report does not give any indication of the nature of the incidents but clearly over a thousand assaults on staff is a cause for concern. No-one deserves to face violence or aggression in their day to day job.

“The report highlights a rise in incidents in special schools. Staff there are specially trained but it is vital that the

schools have the number of staff needed – both teaching and support staff – and that they have the best training and guidance to deal with issues, alongside cool-off spaces to avoid confrontations.”

The union that led the walkout at Kaimes School has claimed that not enough is being done to tackle indiscipline in schools. The teachers’ union, NASUWT, said there were nearly 6,000 assaults on teachers in schools in Scotland in 2016-17, with the figure rising by around 500 in 2017-18.

Jane Peckham NASUWT national official for Scotland, said: “Diligent, hard-working people are going to work every day to do a job, to educate our young people and every single day they face the threat of assault. It’s something that is simply unacceptable and we need to find a way to resolve that issue.

“If we look in addition to that at the stubbornly high level of temporary school exclusions, it could be argued that education in this country is at a crisis because of the level of indiscipline in schools.”