

Six school staff reported being assaulted every day in Midlothian last year

Six school staff reported being assaulted every day in Midlothian last year, according to figures released by the council.

More than 1250 attacks were recorded in Midlothian schools during 190 school days over 2023, ranging from assaults with weapons to biting, physical assaults and things being thrown at them.

The shocking figures, revealed by workers union the GMB, are feared to be just the 'tip of the iceberg' by their local representative.

Midlothian Council said it was committed to tackling the issue and supporting staff and pupils on a daily basis.

Figures released by the local authority to the GMB revealed a total of 1,254 assaults were reported last year with 90 per cent taking place in the classrooms themselves.

They included 964 physical assaults, six involving a weapon, and 107 involving biting. In 75 cases the staff member was hit with an object while a further 22 were struck by objects thrown at them while 62 reported verbal assaults and the rest were described as 'other injuries'.

John McCartney, the GMB organiser in Midlothian Council, said the figures were 'shocking; but not surprising.

He said: "Violence against staff in our schools is clearly at crisis levels but official records are still underestimating the scale of that crisis. These reports are the tip of the iceberg.

"From what our members tell us, the incidents of violence and abuse that are not being reported, recorded or investigated could far outstrip those that are.

"No worker should go to their work in fear and feel relief if they arrive home unhurt. No one should be asked to go to their work to be punched, kicked, bit, spat on, and expecting to suffer verbal or physical abuse.

"Our members do not feel the authorities are tackling or even recognising the violence in schools but are instead glossing over it and allowing it become normalised."

A Midlothian Council spokesman said the council was committed to supporting its school community.

He said: "Policies, processes and training are in place to help staff to prevent incidents from occurring and to de-escalate pupils in distress. When an incident does occur, staff are encouraged to report it to their line manager and record it on the health and safety management system. Incident data is used to review the support packages in place for individual children and across schools."

A national survey of GMB members has revealed two thirds of incidents are never recorded while three out of four victims said they receive no feedback if they do report an incident.

The union is piloting a poster campaign to bolster reporting systems with trial in schools in five local authority areas initially and plans to roll it out across the country if successful.

By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter