

CYPE(6)-13-23 - Paper to note 16

Jeremy Miles AS/MS
Gweinidog y Gymraeg ac Addysg
Minister for Education and Welsh Language



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Jayne Bryant MS
Chair Children and Young People Education Committee
SeneddChildren@senedd.wales

12 April 2023

Dear Jayne,

Thank you for your letter of 28 February regarding violence, abuse and harassment towards school staff.

I am concerned to hear of the experiences reported by some of our school staff. It is vitally important that all staff are made to feel safe in the work environment.

All schools are required to have a behaviour policy which promotes good behaviour on the part of its pupils. School behaviour and attendance policies shape the school ethos and they make a statement about how the school values and includes all the people in it. Positive behaviour and attendance are essential foundations for effective learning environments in which all members of the school community can feel respected, safe and secure. A well-implemented policy is an important factor in gaining the confidence of the school community and in attracting good quality, well-motivated staff. Consultation and engagement with the unions in development of behaviour policies is also important, to help ensure that any concerns around health and safety are appropriately taken into account.

Staff wellbeing is a key priority for me. I have increased the funding available to expand the reach and capacity of support the Welsh Government already provides in this area and we continue to work with stakeholders to ensure wellbeing support is available for the education workforce in Wales.

You will be aware that our Whole School Approach to Mental Health and Wellbeing statutory guidance (March 2021), places the wellbeing of the whole school community at the centre of our education system. It is important that schools both address the root causes of poor behaviour and meet the wellbeing needs of school staff affected by any incidents. In 2022-23 we have provided £12.2m to support implementation the statutory guidance. Funding has been used to deliver universal and targeted wellbeing interventions for learners and train staff on their own and children's wellbeing issues. We have also grant funded the charity Education Support since 2020/21, with total funding now at £608k, an increase from £350k in 2021/22. Education Support provide a tailored package of support to the education workforce across Wales, including training, telephone and peer support,

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

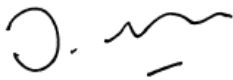
We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

wellbeing events, webinars and e-learning modules, along with the Taking Care of Teachers hub, specifically for the education workforce in Wales, which provides a wide range of resources and downloadable content, much of which is available in Welsh. The link to the hub is [here](#).

Education Support set up their School Wellbeing Advisory Service in Wales in 2020 and it has been very well received by schools and the education workforce. The Wellbeing Advisors engage directly with schools, developing bespoke mental health and wellbeing support for those schools and continue to support them, as required over a period of time. At the end of January this year Education Support, in conjunction with Welsh Government, launched an expanded Wellbeing Advisory Service. The new service, with 4 new Advisors based around Wales, has moved to a regional delivery model, linking to the Whole School Approach delivery. It has increased capacity to reach significantly more schools, an estimated 45% of schools across Wales over the 3-year programme.

Your letter states that though much of the evidence in this space is anecdotal both unions and the WLGA have signalled a worrying increase in verbal and physical aggression from pupils towards school staff. This hasn't been raised yet with me as an issue for discussion at the Schools Social Partnership Forum (SSPF) which consists of Local Authorities as employers, the teaching workforce unions and Welsh Government. The SSPF meets on a regular basis to discuss amongst other things national issues and concerns which affect the workforce and I will therefore ensure this is discussed at a future SSPF so we can get a better sense of the scale of the issue.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'J' followed by a wavy line and a short horizontal stroke.

Jeremy Miles AS/MS
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Minister for Education and Welsh