



Irish National Teachers' Organisation
Cumann Múinteoirí Éireann

Primary Teachers' Exposure to Physical Aggression

Report of a Survey of INTO members

Final Report: May, 2024

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Abbreviations

CPD	Continuous Professional Development
DE	Department of Education
DEIS	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools
EERL	Education, Equality, Research and Learning
HSA	Health and Safety Authority
HSE	Health Service Executive
INTO	Irish National Teachers' Organisation
NCSE	National Council for Special Education
OT	Occupational Therapist
ROI	Republic of Ireland
SET	Special Education Teacher
SLT	Speech and Language Therapist
SNA	Special Needs Assistant
UK	United Kingdom

Introduction

In Irish education, the issue of physical aggression towards primary school teachers has emerged as a critical concern. This INTO survey report highlights the levels of physical aggression experienced by teachers across mainstream, mainstream with special class, and special school settings, revealing its impact on teachers and the broader education system.

In our society, schools and teachers often find themselves as the sole consistent social, emotional and behavioural support for pupils outside of the family. The experiences documented by teachers in this report illustrate the pivotal role schools and teachers play in providing a stable environment for some of our most in need children and families. This position, however, is now under threat due to the challenges posed by the increasing incidences of aggression towards teachers. There is a need to highlight the rise of aggression towards teachers and recognise the complexity of the roles schools and teachers now navigate.

The issue is compounded by the longstanding neglect of therapeutic services in Ireland. Successive governments' failure to adequately invest in mental health and other support services for children and families has contributed to the current crisis. Schools and teachers have been tasked with the day-to-day support of children and families and do so irrespective of the Department of Education's (DE) inadequate resourcing of teacher training and funding to cater to the needs of all learners.

Holt and Birchall's (2022)¹ study on violence towards teaching and classroom assistants in UK schools reveals how inadequate support mechanisms and financial constraints exacerbate the risks faced by school staff. This INTO survey indicates that the lack of systemic support is particularly evident in schools' management of aggressive incidents, the dearth of referrals to the HSA and the underutilisation of teacher assault leave. This points to the need for a comprehensive set of guidelines to ensure a consistent approach to workplace safety in our schools.

In the context of teacher training, there is a significant gap in supporting teachers to effectively manage and support children's diverse social, emotional and behavioural needs. The lack of comprehensive training for dealing with aggression and providing appropriate interventions for children with additional needs places teachers at a disadvantage and leaves them ill-equipped to address these issues when they arise within the classroom or school setting. This not only impacts the well-being and safety of teachers but also compromises the learning outcomes of all pupils.

These systemic failures and the current overreliance on schools and teachers to bridge the resultant gaps point to critical flaws in our current education system. The expectation that schools can support the needs of all children, without adequate training and resources being provided, is not only unsustainable but also detrimental to the educational and emotional well-being of pupils. Addressing these serious shortfalls requires a multifaceted approach that goes beyond short-term fixes. The urgent implementation of measures to safeguard both pupils and teachers is of utmost importance. These measures must encompass both preventive actions and systemic reforms aimed at providing comprehensive support to teachers and schools to ensure safe teaching and learning environments for all who work in and attend our schools.

¹ Holt, A., & Birchall, J. (2022). *Violence towards teaching/classroom assistants in mainstream UK schools: Research findings and recommendations*.

Survey Report

Primary Teachers' Exposure to Physical Aggression

I. Overview of Physical Aggression Survey

I.1 Outline of Project

Managing physical aggression in primary classrooms has become a significant challenge for schools, highlighting the need for effective strategies to ensure the safety and well-being of teachers and pupils. In response to an INTO Congress resolution in 2023, the INTO Education, Equality, Research and Learning (EERL) section was tasked with carrying out research which aimed to gather the experiences of teachers around physical aggression in mainstream primary classrooms, mainstream schools with special classes and special school settings.

To gather this data, EERL designed a short survey (detailed in Appendix A). To capture as wide an array of experiences and perspectives as possible, 3,000 INTO members were randomly selected to complete the survey.

The analysis of the survey responses used both quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative data provided insight into the prevalence and patterns of physical aggression, while qualitative content was coded using a grounded theory style content analysis, offering a good understanding of the challenges faced by schools and teachers and the contextual factors influencing their ability to manage aggression effectively.

Based on the findings of the survey, the INTO drew up a set of recommendations aimed at influencing educational policy to better support schools, teachers and pupils. These recommendations seek to support our individual members but also propose systemic changes to improve safety in schools for all members of the school community.

This survey is just one of the steps being taken by the INTO to address the increasing incidences of physical aggression in Irish primary and special schools. It is hoped that the findings and recommendations in this report will be taken on board by the DE and the NCSE and that we see urgent action being taken to ensure safer, more supportive school environments for teachers and pupils.

2. INTO Survey on Physical Aggression in Primary Education

2.1 Introduction

This section of the report explores the rate of teachers' exposure to physical aggressions and its impact on teachers. The data also presents the incidence rate of injuries resulting from such aggression, the subsequent medical attention required, along with the broader repercussions for the teaching profession. Through an analysis of the experiences reported by participants, this report also aims to shed light on the prevalence of physical aggression in primary schools, the immediate and extended support needed by affected teachers, and the extent to which these incidents are formally recognised and addressed by schools, the DE and the HSA. By providing these findings on physical aggression in schools, we seek to highlight the urgent need for policy interventions and support mechanisms to ensure the safety and well-being of teachers, leading to more secure teaching and learning environments for all pupils.

2.1.1 Profile of Respondents

In total, 500 participants began the survey, with 440 completing it in full.

The participants represented a diverse range of schools, with representation from 196 mainstream schools, 176 mainstream schools with a special class and 68 special schools.

The roles of the participants within their respective schools are as follows:

Role	No. of teachers
Mainstream class teachers	162
Teacher of a special class	51
Teacher in a special school	54
Principal – Admin	57
Principal - Teaching	6
Special education teacher (SET)	104
Other	6

Mainstream class teachers numbered 162. 51 identified as class teachers in special classes and 54 as class teachers in special schools; 63 principal teachers took part, of whom six were identified as teaching principals; 104 identified as Special Education Teachers (SET), with 90 in mainstream settings and 14 in schools with special classes. Other roles were represented by six participants but are not considered statistically significant in the context of this survey.

Teachers' experience within the profession was represented as follows:

Teaching experience	No. of teachers
0-5 years	30
6-15 years	160
16-30 years	196
Over 31 years	54

Those with 0-5 years of experience, numbered 30; 6-15 years numbered 160; 16-30 years numbered 196 and 54 participants had over 31 years' experience in education.

The location of schools within the sample was well balanced with city-based participants accounting for 89 responses, 109 were from rural schools. 111 from suburban schools with 131 schools located in towns.

The socioeconomic status of schools was considered with 312 participants working in non-DEIS and 128 participants working in DEIS schools.

2.1.2 Limitations of Survey

In the context of this survey and its use of simple random sampling, teachers who have been exposed to physical aggression may feel a stronger motivation to share their experiences, seeking to highlight the issue. The impact of this self-selection bias on the findings of the study may be significant as the data may overestimate the prevalence of physical aggression in educational settings. This should be considered when reading this report.

2.2 Levels of Aggression Across Primary Education

Within this survey, a physical aggression, was defined as, but not limited to, scratching, pushing, kicking, punching, biting, spitting, throwing objects, using weapons, and sexual aggression. Out of the 440 participants who completed the survey, 255 reported being exposed to physical aggression, indicating that approximately 58% of respondents have encountered such incidents.

From the 196 mainstream class teachers who participated in this survey, 42% indicated they had been subjected to physical aggressions within the past 12 months. The proportion of teachers reporting aggression in mainstream schools with a special class was considerably higher, with 61% of 176 teachers confirming physical incidents. The data is most alarming for special schools, where 96% of the 68 respondents reported physical aggression.

When looking at the role of class teacher within the different school settings, the likelihood of being the subject of physical aggression varies markedly. Class teachers in mainstream schools without a special class reported a 57% aggression rate, whereas this probability soared for teachers in mainstream schools with a special class, with 88% encountering physical aggression. Special schools had 94% of class teachers reporting physical aggressions.

Special Education Teachers (SET) in mainstream schools also face considerable risks, with 50% of SETs in schools without special classes and 50% in schools with special classes reporting physical aggression. The data here points to the considerable likelihood of physical aggression faced by teachers in this role, irrespective of the presence of a special class within their schools.

When looking at the socio-economic status of schools, we see 57% of the 312 participants working in non DEIS schools indicating that they had been victims of physical aggression. In contrast, within DEIS schools, 61% of 128 teachers reported aggression.

This data shows that teachers in special schools are most susceptible to aggressions, followed closely by those in mainstream schools with special classes. The data suggests that the presence of a special class within a mainstream school substantially increases the likelihood of physical aggressions on teachers. Teachers in DEIS schools also face a heightened risk compared to those in non-DEIS schools, although the difference is relatively marginal.

2.3 Impact & Outcomes of Physical Aggressions

In examining the impact and outcomes of physical aggression in Irish primary and special schools, our study draws on the responses from the 255 participants who reported exposure to such incidents. Among these teachers, 50% (129 out of 255) reported that the aggression resulted in physical injury, highlighting the significant risk of harm associated with these encounters.

When looking more closely at those injured, we see that 74% (95 out of 129) of the injured teachers required first aid treatment. These treatments applied to injuries categorised as minor, such as small wounds or scratches, allowing the teachers to resume their duties immediately after receiving care. This indicates that while a large portion of injuries sustained from physical aggression were of a less severe nature, they nonetheless required immediate medical attention.

A more concerning statistic emerges from the 41% (53 out of 129 injured) who needed more intensive medical treatment by registered medical practitioners. These cases may involve injuries that not only require immediate attention but also ongoing observation which points to the severity and potential long-term implications of physical aggression towards teachers.

Despite the prevalence of physical aggression and its consequent injuries, only a small fraction, specifically 6% (16 out of 255), of teachers availed of assault leave, highlighting the underuse of this provision. Further, the data reveals that 11% (27 out of 255) of teachers missed more than three days of school, indicating significant disruptions to their teaching responsibilities.

Alarming, only 4.7% (12 out of 255) instances of physical aggression were reported to the HSA, suggesting a notable gap in the formal documenting and referral of these incidents. This low reporting rate may reflect a lack of awareness on the part of school management and staff regarding reporting procedures.

The data as presented in this section again highlights the critical need for improved support systems, reporting mechanisms, and preventive measures to safeguard teachers' health, safety and wellbeing in their schools.

2.4 Experiences with Physical Aggressions

2.4.1 Physical Aggressions

Many teachers told us they encounter a range of physical aggressions or assaults, living a daily reality far removed from the wider public's concept of what happens in our children's classrooms. Despite the alarming frequency of these incidents, the consensus from this survey's respondents was that these actions, often carried out by children with additional needs, stemmed not from a desire to harm but from an inability to communicate or regulate emotions effectively in a system that is currently failing to meet their needs.

Despite these clear challenges, the responses from teachers and principals are marked by resilience, empathy, and a deep commitment to their pupils' well-being. *"Assault is a very strong word as the children don't intend to hurt"* captures the understanding that permeates our schools.

Special schools emerge as environments where physical aggression is not the exception but part of the daily experience. As one teacher noted, *"In special schools biting, scratching, pinching and hitting happen on a daily basis."* This regularity of aggression points to a need for targeted interventions and support mechanisms to protect both teachers and pupils in special school settings.

Injuries sustained by staff are varied and often serious, with reports of *"broken fingers, severe bites, concussion, damage to back and hips."* Such injuries not only require immediate medical attention but also highlight the inadequate protection and support for teachers facing these risks. The emotional toll on teachers is repeated throughout the feedback, with one teacher sharing, *"This has been extremely difficult for me, particularly when I had to seek medical treatment for a fractured finger as a result of an assault."*

The feedback under this theme paints a stark picture of the prevalence and impact of physical aggressions in schools, particularly special education settings. The experiences of teachers here highlights the urgent need for a multi-faceted approach to address these challenges. Better training, more resources, enhanced support systems, and a re-evaluation of current practices need to be prioritised to ensure the safety and wellbeing of both teachers and pupils in all our schools.

2.4.2 Mental Health Impact

The narratives shared by teachers here shines a light on the profound mental health ramifications stemming from exposure to physical aggressions in schools. Their accounts illustrate the emotional toll and professional challenges of the role. The mental wellbeing of teachers should be an area of high priority for all education stakeholders.

One teacher recounted, *"It is very distressing to be subjected to violent behaviour and assaults. Teaching and learning are being hugely affected by these violent, aggressive incidents in the classroom."* This sentiment is echoed across the survey feedback, pointing to the adverse effects physical aggression is having on the ability of teachers to conduct their primary roles alongside impacting the wellbeing of both staff and pupils.

Another teacher stated, *"I was assaulted 2 years ago when I worked in the special class in my school. It was an extremely distressing situation and I felt my school was not equipped to deal with it or the effects it had on me."* The lack of adequate support structures for schools dealing with such incidents and their aftermath is another recurring theme in the feedback.

Teachers also highlighted the daily fear of going into environments where assaults were likely. One teacher shared, *"Although first aid or medical care wasn't necessary, it was very traumatic going into school every day knowing that physical assault was likely to happen"*, capturing the anxiety that can creep into the psyche of teachers who are exposed to physical aggressions.

The compounding stress of verbal and physical aggressions is particularly affecting, as one teacher noted, *"Constant verbal abuse can also be bad for a teacher's mental health and stress levels ... this affected my mental health, my mood at home, my sleep and a lack of action from school management exacerbates the negative effect on a teacher's health."*

Another account highlighted the lasting nature of psychological impacts compared to physical injuries: *"Physical injuries heal. Psychological injury is far more challenging, long lasting and detrimental to my health. Feelings of blame, anxiety, self-worth, and anger are hard to shift and hard to talk about."*

Worryingly, the survey revealed that it is common practice for teachers to rationalise these incidents as a part of their job, a coping mechanism that points to the resilience required to navigate such challenges. *"I believed the worst assault was related to him communicating him being unwell ... I didn't follow it up, because in my head at the time, I felt it was 'part of my job',"* one teacher revealed, highlighting the justifications that accompany these experiences.

The psychological impact of physical aggressions extends far beyond the immediate aftermath of the incidents themselves, with several incidents impacting teachers long-term emotional and mental health. Support systems must be reviewed and strengthened to ensure teachers are equipped to handle the demands of their roles without compromising their mental health and wellbeing.

2.4.3 Inadequate Supports

The feedback from teachers regarding supports points to significant gaps and deficiencies in the systems currently in place for dealing with physical aggressions within schools. This section of the report captures the collective sentiment of teachers navigating these challenges, often without adequate resources, training, or institutional/system wide support.

One teacher shared, *"Some assaults were due to a child's special needs. We do not have the necessary space, resources, and staff to meet the needs that are growing exponentially."* This highlights the mismatch between the increasing needs of our pupils and the resources available to teachers and schools. The necessity for specialised training is highlighted by another teacher: *"Training in Crisis Prevention Intervention should be given by the DE. There is little guidance or support for staff. This reality needs to be addressed."*

The lack of sufficient resources not only places staff and pupils at risk but also leads to a sense of the role of the teacher being undervalued by education stakeholders. As one teacher noted, *"I strongly feel that these issues are overlooked and completely under-resourced. I have questioned whether this lack of support leads to the reluctance to teach in special classes."* This sentiment of feeling unsupported is a common thread, with another teacher pointing to the scarcity of support services, *"Very little support from HSE, Túsla, Medmark or NCSE... Assaults happen because of lack of support."*, with another lamenting that, *"The support services such as psychology and occupational therapy are simply not available in a realistic time frame to support the children in a meaningful way."*

The call for increased support and training is clear within the survey feedback, with one response stating, *"All incidents were as a result of pupil dysregulation...increased availability of supports for pupils and access to staff training would have helped considerably."* This is further emphasised by the urgent calls for more in-class personnel support: *"We need more support. There is a strength in numbers."*

Teachers also expressed concerns about the future of teaching, fearing an increase in physical assaults if current trends persist. *"I fear that physical assaults will become more prevalent in teaching if supports for vulnerable learners continue to be diluted,"* one teacher warned.

The survey feedback also shows that teachers continue to make personal sacrifices, personally investing in their own training to better manage challenging behaviours: *"I have had to retrain and spend €650 of my own money to retrain in therapeutic play skills in order to help the child that has been assaulting me."*

This feedback indicates that there is a critical need for a systemic overhaul around support, resources, and training for teachers to safeguard their wellbeing and ensure a happy and safe learning environment for all pupils.

2.4.4 Response to Aggression Incidents

The feedback from survey participants under this theme sheds light on the varied and often inadequate responses teachers receive following incidents of physical aggression. This section captures the experiences of those on the frontline, dealing with the aftermath of these distressing events, and highlights the critical need for more robust support and clearer procedures within schools.

One teacher's experience points to a lack of systemic response: *"Teacher told to take a couple of days off. I am not sure if it was reported to the HSA when I took assault leave."* This reflects a broader issue of underreporting of incidents.

The absence of critical incident policies in schools is a notable concern. One recount indicated that, *"The management in the school did not have a critical incident policy and seemed unsure what the right procedure to follow was. I had no support from in-school leadership."* This uncertainty and lack of support is likely to compound the stress teachers feel in the wake of an aggression incident.

Teachers often face dilemmas regarding the taking of assault leave, with one sharing, *"V difficult to take assault leave when often the assault is as a result of a pupil (special class) trying to communicate...assaults occur daily but as a staff we just accept that because we care so much about our pupils & put them first before our own needs."* This highlights the emotional conflicts teachers navigate, often prioritising their pupils' needs over their own well-being.

The potential stigma attached to reporting assaults or taking leave is a significant barrier also, as highlighted by one teacher's comment: *"I'd be too embarrassed to report assault or to take leave. I would be shunned by management and colleagues."* This fear of judgment, unfortunately, might deter teachers from seeking the support they require.

Further, poor communication around supports for those experiencing assault is illustrated by one teacher's statement: *"Unaware assault leave was an option and this wasn't communicated to me."* This points to the critical need for better communication from the DE to better inform and support schools and teachers.

The responses to incidents of physical aggression within schools varies widely, often characterised by a lack of support, unclear policies, and a significant emotional toll on teachers. The feedback highlights the urgent need for comprehensive guidelines, enhanced communication, and a culture of support to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all teachers and pupils.

2.4.5 System Issues

The feedback collected from teachers under this theme details the structural and systemic shortcomings impacting primary schools, particularly concerning the management and support for children with additional needs and the safety of staff. This section of the report presents the broader, systemic challenges that exacerbate the risk of physical aggressions and highlights the urgency for comprehensive reforms.

One teacher expressed frustration over systemic failures in allocating timely support, stating, *"Prior to the most serious assault, I had asked for an additional SNA for one particular child and I was told there was no point applying for one as we wouldn't be successful."* This points to the ongoing systemic incapacity to provide essential resources, even when the need is clearly articulated by schools.

The impact of aggressive behaviour on teaching and learning is evident, with one teacher lamenting the allocation of resources to 'watch' a child, detracting from in-class support for other pupils. *"It is very frustrating and other children in the school are missing out on in-class support every morning. The system is deplorable and it's a ticking timebomb."*

The lack of specialised training for teachers working in special classes and special schools is a significant concern. As one teacher highlighted, *“Teachers are not trained/qualified under the normal primary degree to teach in a special school or unit ... It's not good enough for the children as they are not being taught appropriately but rather by a dedicated teacher's best guess.”*

The feedback also reveals a profound sense of professional inadequacy in addressing the complex needs of pupils. *“I rang Middletown for advice as often as I could but really, when it came down to it, the system let those children down because I am a teacher, I am not an OT, I am not an SLT, I am not an educational psychologist, I am not a doctor and I am not a behaviour specialist.”*

Additionally, the existing guidelines and training on managing physical aggressions and restraint are deemed insufficient. *“We need specific guidelines to support staff around physical restraint/next steps.”*, pointing to the ongoing gap in supporting teachers to safely and effectively manage challenging behaviours.

This feedback paints a worrying reality where, despite the dedication and efforts of teachers, principals and parents, the systemic failures - ranging from inadequate support, training, and resources to an overwhelmed and under-resourced mental health and special educational needs infrastructure - compromise the safety, well-being, and learning outcomes for our most vulnerable children. These systemic issues require urgent attention and action from our education authorities, health services, and policymakers to ensure a safe, supportive, and inclusive learning environment for all.

3. Conclusions and Recommendations

3.1 Conclusions

The worrying insights revealed by the INTO survey on physical aggression towards primary school teachers point to a disturbing trend building in our education system. This trend is not just a reflection of the challenges faced by teachers within their classrooms but also speaks to a more profound crisis in therapeutic and mental health services for children and families across the nation. The narratives and data presented in this report bring to light the dire state of a system now stretched beyond its limits. Teachers are being asked to fill roles far exceeding their professional responsibilities and training, managing not only the education outcomes of pupils but their social, emotional and behavioural wellbeing also.

The frightening reality is that our schools have become the de facto mental health and therapeutic service providers for children, a role for which they are neither designed, equipped nor funded. This situation has arisen from years of systemic neglect and underinvestment in mental health and therapeutic services for our youth. The consequences of this are now manifesting in our classrooms, with teachers bearing the brunt of challenges they feel powerless to address. The expectation that schools can compensate for the void in our healthcare system is not only unrealistic but fundamentally unfair to both teachers and the children they serve.

It is unacceptable that the health and safety of our teachers is compromised, and the educational experience of our pupils is diminished, due to failures far beyond the school gates. The physical and psychological toll on teachers, as detailed in this report, is unsustainable and serves as a distressing warning of the potential long-term implications for teacher retention and the quality of education on this island.

The recommendations in this report are not just a call to action for the Department of Education but a call to all stakeholders involved in the welfare of our children. The findings demand a concerted, multi-agency response to address not only the symptoms of this crisis but its root causes. The INTO demands a radical overhaul of how we provide for the mental health, wellbeing and care of all our children.

The findings of this report should serve as a catalyst for change. The well-being of our children, the safety of our teachers, and the future of quality education for all pupils depends on it. It is time for a comprehensive strategy which includes significant investment in mental health services, a restructuring of support systems within schools, and a society-wide commitment to valuing and supporting the physical and mental health of our teachers. Anything less is a disservice to our school staff and the children they teach.

3.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations represent the INTO's response to addressing the serious shortfalls within children's educational, therapeutic and mental health support services, which we believe are the leading causes of physical aggressions towards our members. These recommendations have the potential to create safer, more inclusive, and supportive school environments that meet the needs of all pupils and teachers.

The INTO demands that:

1. Funding by the Department of Education be significantly enhanced to ensure all children receive the support they require to enable them to thrive at school. This includes investing in school-based mental health services, therapeutic interventions, and education support services.
2. Schools be well-resourced with access to necessary supports for pupils and staff. This includes CPD for teachers, access to sufficient and timely SNA support, early intervention initiatives, and the necessary infrastructure to cater to the needs of all learners.
3. Training be provided for school leaders and staff, focusing on managing aggression, supporting children with additional needs, and crisis intervention policy development.
4. The waiting times for access to early intervention and primary care teams must be addressed and significantly reduced.
5. There be a guarantee that all physical modifications and the creation of specialised rooms (sensory rooms, therapy rooms), as well as comprehensive staff training, is completed before the opening of new special classes.
6. The provision of mental health supports within schools must be enhanced, including access to counselling and behavioural/emotional supports for all schools.
7. Comprehensive guidelines on managing behaviours of concern and crisis situations to provide schools and teachers with the necessary frameworks and supports to address incidents safely and effectively, must be developed and disseminated immediately.
8. The Department of Education publish the long-awaited circular on an occupational injury scheme for teachers. This should be accompanied by clear and consistent communication of the terms of the circular to schools to ensure that teachers avail of the leave most appropriate to their needs.
9. An easy-to-use incident reporting system for all schools must be established. This system should ensure confidentiality, prompt support, and follow-up for affected teachers and pupils.
10. Every school be given access to a school-based multidisciplinary team, including educational psychologists, behavioural specialists, and mental health professionals, who can provide immediate and consistent support, assessments, and interventions for pupils demonstrating challenging behaviours.
11. The immediate formation of a national task force to address the crisis in children's health services, focusing on reducing waiting times for assessments and increasing the availability of therapeutic services.
12. The initial teacher education programmes are revised to include comprehensive content on social, emotional and behaviour management.
13. The School Inclusion Model, which has been piloted for five years, be rolled out nationally to all primary schools.

Appendix A

INTO Survey on Physical Aggression in Primary Education

Physical Assaults Survey

There are 3 sections in this Survey.

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Privacy and Consent: This will provide information on why the INTO is conducting this survey and why we are asking you to take part. You will be asked if you agree to participate in this survey.

-

Background information / School profile: This section consists of a set of seven multiple choice questions. This section is intended to help build an understanding of the profile of members participating in the study and their school setting.

-

Survey Questions: This section consists of eight questions, derived from a motion passed at Congress 2023, that seek to elicit information around in-school physical assaults on teachers.

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Privacy and Consent

Why are we conducting this study?

This study is being carried out by the Education, Equality, Research and Learning (EERL) Section of the INTO. The purpose of this study is to determine the level of physical assaults on INTO members in the past 12 months. This survey is being sent to a random selection of INTO members in the Republic of Ireland.

Why have you been asked to take part in this survey?

We are inviting you to take part in this study because we want to ascertain the actual levels of physical assaults to which primary teachers are exposed, in special schools, special classes in mainstream schools, and in mainstream classes.

Do I have to take part?

No. Participation in this survey is voluntary. You can withdraw up until the point you submit your response. ***After submission, the option to withdraw will no longer be possible.***

Will my information be kept confidential?

All information you provide, and the answers you give in the survey, will be kept confidential and protected, and all data will be anonymised in any outputs. The data gathered will be securely stored on password protected computers and documents and will only be available to the EERL team. On completion of the study, your responses will be deleted and destroyed. Only summary data will be retained for INTO records.

What will happen with the answers I provide in this survey?

The information you provide may contribute to INTO publications and/or conference presentations/seminars. However, no names or identifying information will be included in any publications or presentations/seminars based on the data gathered, and your responses to this survey will remain confidential.

Questions or concerns

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, you can contact Máirín Ní Chéileachair, Assistant General Secretary/Director EERL at mnice@into.ie.

* 1. By clicking "Agree" you are saying, I have read the above statement. I understand that my participation in this survey is voluntary to the point of submission.

Agree

Background Information / School Profile

* 2. Type of School

- Mainstream
- Mainstream with Special Classes
- Special School

* 3. Your role in your school (select multiple answers if required)

- Class Teacher (Mainstream)
- Class Teacher (Special Class attached to Mainstream)
- Class Teacher (Special School)
- Principal
- HSCL
- SET (Mainstream)
- SET (Mainstream with Special Classes)
- Supply Teacher
- Substitute Teacher
- Early Years Teacher
- Other (please specify)

* 4. Please indicate how many years' experience you have working in primary schools

- 0-5
- 6-15
- 16-30
- 31+

* 5. Where is your school located?

- City
- Suburban
- Town
- Rural

* 6. Is your school teaching through the medium of Gaeilge?

- Yes, Gaeltacht
- Yes, Gaelscoil
- No

* 7. DEIS Status

- No
- DEIS Primary Urban 1
- DEIS Primary Urban 2
- DEIS Rural

* 8. School Demographic

- Single Sex (Girls)
- Single Sex (Boys)
- Mixed

Physical Assaults

For the purpose of this study:

-

Physical Assaults can include scratching, pushing, kicking, punching, biting, spitting, throwing things, using weapons and sexual assaults which may or may not cause physical injury

First Aid Treatment for injuries that require a single medical treatment qualify under the category of first aid injuries. These injuries often include minor wounds, burns, or scratches and the individual can return to their normal activities immediately after the treatment.

Medical Treatment by a registered medical practitioner is required for more serious injuries. Such injuries require constant observations or repeat visits to identify any unusual changes in their health conditions.

* 9. In the past 12 months, have you been subjected to a physical assault (see definition) during the course of your work?

- Yes
 No

10. If Yes, how many physical assaults have you been subject to? (if more than 10 please indicate with "10+")

11. Did the assault/s lead to a physical injury?

- Yes
 No

12. If you answered Yes to Q11, did you require first aid treatment (see definition) as a result of an assault?

- Yes
 No

13. If you answered Yes to Q11, did you require medical treatment (see definition) as a result of an assault?

- Yes
 No

14. Did you avail of assault leave ([Circular 0061/2017](#)) as a result of an assault?

- Yes
 No

15. Were you absent from school for 3 or more days as a result of an assault?

- Yes
 No

16. If you answered Yes to Q15, was the absence reported to the HSA?

- Yes
 No

17. Please share any additional details or comments.