

# Association of Teachers and Lecturers

## Press Release



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### **ATL Annual Conference, Liverpool 25-27 March 2013**

Direct line while at annual conference: 0151 239 6051

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### **Disruptive behaviour in schools and colleges rises alongside increase in children with behavioural and mental health problems - ATL**

The majority of education staff say there has been a rise in the number of children with emotional, behavioural or mental health problems over the past five years coupled with worsening student behaviour in schools and colleges.

Staff believe lack of boundaries at home is the main reason for students behaving badly (cited by 79%), followed by behavioural problems (69%), emotional problems (68%), wanting attention from other students (64%), a lack of positive role models at home (61%) and family breakdowns (61%). Also significant were low self-esteem (53%) and not valuing education (51%), and a third (34%) cited mental health problems.

In an Association of Teachers and Lecturers' (ATL) survey of 844 education staff, 62% said there are more children with emotional, behavioural and mental health problems than two years ago, and 56% said there are more than five years ago.

Fifty-four per cent said student behaviour has got worse in schools and colleges over the past five years. However, they are split over whether it has got any worse over the past two years with 45% saying it had and 45% saying it has stayed the same.

Nearly 90% of support staff, teachers, lecturers, school heads and college leaders said they have dealt with a challenging or disruptive student during this school year. The main targets of challenging behaviour were other students (cited by 72%), followed by teaching staff (46%), and then support staff (43%).

Between students the most prevalent challenging behaviour was verbal aggression (cited by 77%), followed by physical aggression (57%), bullying in person (41%), and breaking or ruining other students' belongings (23%).

Thankfully, most of the disruptive and challenging behaviour facing education staff was fairly low level with 79% of staff complaining that students talked in class, did not pay attention and mucked around. Sixty-eight per cent said students were disrespectful and ignored their instructions, 55% said they had had to deal with verbally aggressive students, and a fifth (21%) had had to deal with a physically aggressive student.

When challenging behaviour was not directed at anyone it mainly took the form of crying (cited by 35%), followed by students becoming withdrawn (30%), and truanting (24%). Among secondary (31%) and sixth form students (24%) smoking was also a significant problem.

Among students of all ages the most common form of violence was pushing and shoving, followed by punching and hitting among students up to age 16 and throwing objects among those over 16.

Most of the time the challenging behaviour was an irritation which disrupted class work according to 74% of staff, but 42% have suffered stress, 32% anxiety, and 24% have lost confidence at work. In addition, 40 members (5%) said they have been physically hurt by a student, 67 (8%) have been to the doctor, and 38 (5%) have taken time off work.

Over 60% of education staff said a student has been given a fixed term exclusion in this school year, and over a quarter (27%) said a student has been expelled. Unsurprisingly a higher percentage of secondary and sixth form students have had both fixed term and permanent exclusions: in secondary 78% said a student had a fixed term exclusion, 38% permanent; in sixth form 71% said a student had a fixed term exclusion and 37% permanent.

While 76% of staff said their school or college has a policy to identify and help students suffering from mental health, emotional or behavioural problems, a quarter (26%) said they don't get any training to deal with these students and only a fifth (21%) get regular training which they rate as good or adequate. Nearly 40% (39%) said they didn't get any relevant training in their initial teacher training.

In addition, over a third of staff (35%) said they don't get any training in how to deal with challenging, disruptive or violent students, with only 18% saying they get regular training which is good or adequate. And 42% said they didn't get any relevant training during teacher training.

While 49% of staff felt their school or college gives staff adequate support if they report problem behaviour, 39% do not. And only 31% were happy with their school or college's response to incidents they reported.

More positively, 51% of staff said their school or college has a satisfactory and clear behaviour policy and 51% think they have adequate forms of discipline for dealing with difficult students.

Dr Mary Bousted, general secretary of the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL), said: "Regrettably teachers and support staff are suffering the backlash from deteriorating standards of behaviour. They are frequently on the receiving end of children's frustration and unhappiness, and have to deal with the fall-out from parents failing to set boundaries and family breakdowns. And the huge funding cuts to local services mean that schools often have to deal with children's problems without any help.

"Schools with firm, clear and consistently enforced behaviour policies create safe learning environments for children and staff, but problems occur when schools fail to enforce good discipline policies and when children know there are weak or non-existent sanctions.

"Schools need to give their staff good and regular training so that they know how to work with students with behavioural or mental health problems and have confidence in handling pupils with challenging behaviour. Behaviour training also needs to be an integral part of teacher training."

ENDS

Member quotes:

A member of staff in a Barnsley academy said: "We have a child in the foundation class who regularly has to be held as he spits, kicks, bites and punches adults and other children when he becomes angry."

A teacher in a primary school in Cheshire said: "I have been kicked in the head, spat at, called disgusting names, told to f\*\*\* off, had the classroom trashed regularly and items thrown - we accept children who are excluded from other schools so they come to us with extreme behaviour issues."

A teacher in a secondary school in Dudley said: "I've been sworn at, argued with, shouted at, had books thrown at me, threatened with physical abuse and had things stolen and broken!"

A manager in an academy in Kent said: "This year we had the most challenging reception pupil I have encountered in 20 years of teaching. He did not comply with a single instruction, even to sit on the mat for a story. His mum would not accept that his behaviour was different to the other children's and took him to another school after two terms."

A primary teacher in West Sussex said: "I have a five-year old boy in the reception class who has recently been taken into care. His behaviour ranges from being very caring and wanting a lot of attention to swearing at staff, punching, kicking, hitting staff and other children, smashing up furniture and equipment."

A teacher in a rural primary school in Worcestershire said: "We have a child age seven who has disrupted the class by hurting other children physically, tearing down displays, running out of the classroom and disturbing other classes. She has also been violent and rude towards staff in school."

A primary teacher in Cumbria said: "I have a Year 6 child with behavioural problems and a statement. In two violent outbursts furniture was thrown, work screwed up, and when he removed himself to another room, he barricaded himself in and bashed on the wall for up to one hour."

A teacher at a school in Waltham Forest said: "A student turned up to a practical lab session late, drunk and belligerent, put his foot in the door so I couldn't shut it, argued with the lab technician who tried to get him to leave, and attempted to hit security when they came to remove him."

A teacher in a secondary school in the West Midlands said: "One colleague had a Twitter account set up in front of him on a mobile called Paedo \*\*\*\*\* (name) which invited others to comment on him and his sexual orientation."

A male secondary teacher in Staffordshire said: "I was cyberbullied - pupils created a pornographic Photoshop image of me."

A manager working with sixth formers in East Sussex said: "This year I have been involved with roughly 11 instances of serious misconduct – six alcohol or cannabis related, three involving threatening or violent behaviour, one for stealing, and one for verbal abuse directed at a member of staff."

A secondary teacher in a large comprehensive in Rhondda Cynon Taf, Wales said: "I am extremely concerned by the increase in mental health issues such as depression and self-harm. I am alarmed by the lack of expert support and health care available for adolescents."

A teacher in an academy in Bolton said: "A pupil has suffered from mental health issues which resulted in emotional outbursts and self-harming. He would throw objects and kick furniture in a rage or despair. It was only when the boy said he wanted to die that I got an appointment with an education psychologist."

A primary teacher in Salford said: "I faced challenging behaviour from a three-year-old child in the first weeks of him entering the school. Being in our nursery has changed this child completely; he knows what is expected of him and where the limits are."

A manager in a secondary school in Rotherham said: "Although my school has a lot of very challenging students from very difficult home backgrounds, it is the best school I have worked in for how it deals with behavioural issues. Students fully understand there is zero tolerance of poor behaviour and that if it does happen there will be serious consequences that they have to accept."

A teacher in a Nottinghamshire academy said: "I have seen a failing school improve with the introduction of a strict behaviour policy and initially zero tolerance to both students and parents. The result is enjoyable teaching again."

A member of support staff at an academy in Dudley said: "Not all teaching staff apply behaviour management policies consistently, which leads to blurred boundaries for children so they don't know where they stand."

Sue, a primary teacher in Cheshire, said: "You can have all sorts of behaviour policies on paper to please Ofsted, but if the head is weak, you may as well not bother having them."

**Note to editors:**

- The Association of Teachers and Lecturers' (ATL) annual conference runs from 25 to 27 March 2013 at the Liverpool BT Convention Centre. Press Office direct line in Liverpool will be: 0151 239 6051.
- ATL is an independent, registered trade union and professional association, representing approximately 170,000 teachers, headteachers, lecturers and support staff in maintained and independent nurseries, schools, sixth form, tertiary and further education colleges in the United Kingdom.
- ATL exists to help members, as their careers develop, through first rate research, advice, information and legal advice.
- ATL is affiliated to the Trades Union Congress (TUC), Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU), European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) and Education International (EI). ATL is not affiliated to any political party and seeks to work constructively with all the main political parties.

**Key survey findings:**

The survey was completed in February and March by 842 ATL members working as teachers, lecturers, support staff and school and college heads in state-funded and independent schools, sixth form colleges and further education colleges in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. There were 842 respondents to all questions except those marked up otherwise.

**How do you think student behaviour has changed over time?**

	Better	The same	Worse	Don't know
past two years	8.7%	<b>44.9%</b>	44.7%	1.8%
past five years	7.1%	29.7%	<b>53.2%</b>	10%
past ten years	8.2%	15.4%	<b>53%</b>	23.4%

Has there been any change in the number of students with emotional, behavioural or mental health problems over time?

	More	Fewer	No change	Don't know
Past two years	<b>62.1%</b>	1.8%	18.8%	17.3%
Past five years	<b>55.5%</b>	3.4%	15.7%	25.4%
Past ten years	<b>47.9%</b>	3.7%	13.2%	35.3%

Have you dealt with challenging or disruptive behaviour from a student in this academic year?

Yes – **88.7%**

No – 11.3%

If you have dealt with challenging or disruptive behaviour from a student in this academic year to whom was it directed? (Mark all that apply)

You	<b>68.4%</b>
Member of the teaching staff	45.7%
Member of support staff	43.3%
Member of the management team	19.6%
Head/college leader	9.3%
Another pupil	<b>72.4%</b>
Parent/carer	4.6%
Not directed at anyone	20.8%
Not dealt with challenging or disruptive behaviour	9.5%
Other	1.7%

If the challenging or disruptive behaviour was directed at another student, what form did it take? (Mark all that apply)

Verbal – insults, threat, derogatory comments, swearing, shouting, making accusations, being rude	<b>77.2%</b>
Physical aggression	57%
Bullying in person	40.7%
Cyber bullying	19.6%
Sexual harassment	3.9%
Racial harassment	10.5%
Homophobic/biphobic/transphobic bullying	8%
Stealing from	12.7%
Breaking or ruining belongings	23.4%
Not dealt with challenging or disruptive behaviour	14.1%
Other	2.1%

If the challenging or disruptive behaviour was directed at you or another member of staff, what form did it take? (Mark all that apply) 765 respondents overall. Figures in brackets are number of responses.

	You	Teaching staff	Support staff	Management team	Head	Hasn't occurred
Low level disruption – talking, not paying attention, mucking around	<b>(603)</b> 78.8%	<b>(382)</b> <b>49.9%</b>	<b>(315)</b> <b>41.1%</b>	(122) 14.6%	(70) 9.1%	(31) 4.0%
Disrespect – use of mobile, ignoring teacher requests, refusing to comply	(518) 67.7%	(363) 47.4%	(302) 39.4%	<b>(142)</b> <b>18.5%</b>	<b>(75)</b> <b>9.8%</b>	(69) 9.0%

with school rules						
Verbal – insults, threat, derogatory comments, swearing, shouting, making accusations, being rude	(420) 54.9%	(320) 41.8%	(288) 37.6 %	(136) 17.7%	(71) 9.2%	(128) 16.7%
Physical aggression	(159) 20.7%	(172) 22.4%	(156) 20.3 %	(67) 8.7%	(39) 5.0%	(272) 35.5%
Bullying in person	(45) 5.8%	(42) 5.4%	(41) 5.3%	(14) 1.8%	(5) 0.6%	(347) 43.3%
Cyber bullying	(20) 2.6%	(40) 5.2%	(9) 1.1%	(7) 0.9%	(4) 0.5%	(358) 46.7%
Sexual harassment	(10) 1.3%	(14) 1.8%	(10) 1.3%	(3) 0.3%	(1) 0.1%	(379) 49.5%
Racial harassment	(11) 1.4%	(29) 3.7%	(15) 1.9%	(5) 6.5%	(2) 0.2%	(370) 48.3%
Homophobic/biphobic/transphobic bullying	(15) 1.9%	(22) 28.9%	(14) 1.8%	(3) 0.3%	(2) 0.2%	(370) 48.3%
Stealing from	(35) 4.5%	(44) 5.7%	(17) 2.2%	(6) 0.7%	(1) 0.1%	(344) 44.9%
Destroying or ruining property or belongings	(111) 14.5%	(85) 11.1%	(53) 6.9%	(21) 2.7%	(15) 1.9%	(307) 40.1%

If you have dealt with challenging or disruptive behaviour from a student in this academic year which was not directed at anyone, what form did it take? (Mark all that apply)

Taking drugs	9.1%
Drinking alcohol	5.8%
Smoking	19.2%
Truancy	23.9%
Vandalism	17.6%
Arson	1.1%
Prank behaviour – setting off fire alarms, making hoax calls	11.9%
Crying	<b>35%</b>
Becoming withdrawn	29.9%
Self-harming	19.1%
Not dealt with challenging or disruptive behaviour	33.3%
Other	6.7%

If you have dealt with a violent student in this academic year, what form did it take and how old was the student? (Mark all that apply) 729 overall respondents. Figures in brackets are number of responses.

	under five	5 to 11	12 to 16	over 16
Pushing/shoving	(56) 7.6%	(205) 28.1%	(240) 32.9%	(34) 4.6%
Scratching	(43) 5.8%	(87) 11.9%	(27) 3.7%	(8) 1.0%
Biting	(44) 6.0%	(83) 11.3%	(16) 2.1%	(3) 0.4%
Spitting	(34) 0.04%	(81) 11.1%	(64) 8.7%	(9) 1.2%
Punching/hitting	(47)	(182)	(162)	(22)

	6.4%	24.9%	22.2%	3.0%
Kicking	(42) 5.7%	(155) 21.2%	(106) 14.5%	(15) 2.0%
Stabbing/attempting to stab	(3) 0.4%	(12) 1.6%	(16) 2.1%	(4) 0.5%
Throwing an object	(39) 5.3%	(146) 20.2%	(188) 25.7%	(24) 3.2%
Smashing up equipment or furniture	(20) 2.7%	(67) 9.1%	(89) 12.2%	(17) 2.3%
Ruining belongings of student or staff	(22) 3.0%	(86) 11.7%	(115) 15.7%	(11) 1.5%
Not dealt with violent student	(111) 15.2%	(112) 15.3%	(128) 17.5%	(123) 16.8%

Has dealing with challenging, disruptive or violent behaviour from a student in this academic year caused you any of the following? (Mark all that apply)

		number of responses
Not had any effect	11.8%	99
Disruption of work or class	<b>73.8%</b>	621
Loss of confidence at school/college	24%	202
Refusing to teach a student	8.7%	73
Insomnia	12.9%	109
Stress	41.9%	353
Anxiety	32.2%	271
Depression	9.1%	77
Mental health problems	2.3%	19
Detrimental effect on relationships at home	9.4%	79
Detrimental effect on relationships at school/college	12%	101
Consideration of change of school/college	23.2%	195
Consideration of change of profession	27.7%	233
Physical harm	4.8%	40
Taking leave from work	4.5%	38
Visit to doctor	8%	67
Not relevant as not dealt with disruptive, challenging or violent student	9.6%	81
Other	5%	42

What do you think are the reasons, if any, for challenging, disruptive or violent behaviour by students in your school/college? Mark all that apply

		number of responses
Relationship breakdown between friends	42.9%	361
Relationship breakdown within family	60.8%	512
Emotional problems	68.3%	575
Behavioural problems	68.3%	580
Mental health problems	33.7%	284
Puberty	27.3%	230
Effects of poverty	19%	160
Bravado	36%	303
To get attention from other students	63.9%	538
To get attention from staff	47.3%	398
Poor role models at home	61.2%	515

Rebelling against gender stereotypes	3.8%	32
Physical or verbal bullying	18.8%	158
Cyber bullying	13.3%	112
Peer pressure	31.9%	277
Neglect at home	48.5%	408
Lack of boundaries set at home	<b>78.7%</b>	663
Exam pressure	12.1%	102
Not interested in lessons	41.2%	347
Struggling to understand lessons	32.2%	271
Do not see the value of education	50.8%	428
Physical medical condition	9.9%	83
Special educational needs/additional support needs	37.5%	316
Low self-esteem	53.2%	448
Racism	5.8%	49
Sexism	2.9%	24
Homophobic/biphobic/transphobic bullying	4.2%	35
Drugs	12.9%	109
Alcohol	8%	67
No challenging, disruptive or violent students	3.1%	26

Have any students received a fixed term or permanent exclusion for poor behaviour in this academic year?

	Yes	No	Don't know
Fixed term exclusion	<b>63.3% (533)</b>	24.8% (209)	11.9% (100)
Permanent exclusion	26.6% (224)	<b>52.7% (444)</b>	20.7% (174)

Does your school have a policy to identify and help students suffering from mental health, emotional and behavioural problems?

Yes – **78.5%**

No – 7.1%

Don't know – 14.4%

Do you get regular training now in how to deal with students with mental health, emotional and behavioural problems and, if so, is it adequate?

Yes, we get good and regular training	7.7%
Yes, we get regular training which is adequate	13.3%
Yes, we get regular training, but it is not adequate	2.3%
Yes, we occasionally get training and it is good	10.6%
Yes, we occasionally get training and it is adequate	21%
Yes, we occasionally get training and it is not adequate	16.6%
No, we don't get any training	<b>26.2%</b>
Don't know	2.3%

Did you receive any training in how to deal with students with emotional, behavioural or mental health problems in your initial teacher training and, if so, was it adequate?

Yes, we get good training	6.5%
Yes, we had adequate training	14.8%
Yes, but the training was not adequate	18.6%
No, we didn't get any training	<b>38.7%</b>
Don't remember	11.4%
Didn't do teacher training	9.9%



Did you get regular training now in how to deal with challenging, disruptive or violent students and, if so, is it adequate?

Yes, we get good and regular training	6.5%
Yes, we get regular training which is adequate	11%
Yes, we get regular training, but it is not adequate	2.3%
Yes, we occasionally get training and it is good	8.9%
Yes, we occasionally get training and it is adequate	17.3%
Yes, we occasionally get training and it is not adequate	16.9%
No, we don't get any training	<b>34.6%</b>
Don't know	2.5%

Did you receive any training in how to deal with challenging, disruptive or violent students in your initial teacher training and, if so, was it adequate?

Yes, we get good training	3.4%
Yes, we had adequate training	11.9%
Yes, but the training was not adequate	16.9%
No, we didn't get any training	<b>41.9%</b>
Don't remember	13.7%
Didn't do teacher training	12.2%

Do you feel your school or college provides adequate support to staff when they report incidences of poor behaviour by students?

Yes	<b>48.6%</b>
No	38.6%
Don't know	11.4%
There aren't any incidents of poor behaviour	1.4%

Have you ever reported any serious incident(s) of challenging, disruptive or violent behaviour by students to your school or college and, if so, how satisfied were you with the response?

Yes, and totally satisfied with the response	<b>32.1%</b>
Yes, but only partially satisfied with the response	31.8%
Yes, but unhappy with the response	16.6%
No, not reported any incidents	11.3%
Haven't dealt with any challenging, disruptive or violent students	8.2%

Does your school or college have a clear behaviour policy and, if so, are you satisfied with it?

Yes, and I am satisfied with the policy	<b>51%</b>
Yes, but I am not satisfied with the policy	32.2%
Yes, and I've not got any particular views about the policy	13.5%
No policy	1%
Don't know	2.4%

Do you think your school or college has adequate forms of discipline available to staff for dealing with challenging, disruptive or violent behaviour by students?

Yes – **50.6%**

No – 44.1%

Don't know – 5.3%

What forms of discipline does your school or college currently use if students misbehave? Mark all that apply.

Fixed term exclusion	71.5%
Permanent exclusion	41.1%
Detention	61%
Removal from lesson	78.3%
Missing playtime/break	67.1%
Summoned to head/senior teacher	58.6%
Parents summoned or called	<b>83%</b>
Warnings	81.7%
Writing lines	8.7%
Other	8.6%
None of our students misbehave	0.7%

What policies does your school or college use to manage student behaviour? Mark all that apply.

Whole school/college behaviour policy	92.5%
Whole school/college bullying policy	79.2%
Risk assessment	55.2%
Support from management group/leaders	53.7%
Support from non-educational professionals	54%
Continuous professional development	35.6%
Nurture groups	25.5%
Working with parents/carers/the community	40.6%
Behaviour partnerships with other schools/colleges	7.4%
Student mentors	31.9%
Behaviour log	59.7%
Stepped behaviour system – behaviour tree	30.6%
Externally sourced behaviour system	5.3%
My school/college doesn't have any behaviour strategies	0.6%
Don't know	2.3%
Other	3.6%

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