

Petitioner submission of 19 March 2024

PE1953/H: Review Education Support staff roles

I look forward to reading the report by the Bute House Agreement

I would appreciate any update via correspondence by email when this report is available.

I have been looking at the research carried out during the Pupil Support Engagement Programme 2022/23.

Education Scotland

Education Scotland has published on its website a three-tier basis through which additional support needs assistance, officers, support for learning workers, pupil support assistants, pupil support officers and otherwise known as classroom assistants can progress their professional learning, development and skills throughout their career in education.

Referred to as the *Pupil Support Staff Framework* it encompasses 3 tiers through which staff can progress. This is similar to the framework for the provisional accreditation of teachers when they are going through either a PGDE or PGCE.

Informed

When working with children who have learning disabilities alternative and augmented communication is key. There have been many different forms of British sign language developed over the decades for children who have various disabilities this can range from children with non-verbal autism, global learning difficulties, down syndrome, cerebral palsy, mosaic down syndrome, muscular dystrophy aphasia, Learning and language and speech developmental delay, social emotional and behavioural needs.

Many ASNA/O in schools are trained in Augmented and Alternative Communication. Support for learning teachers are often training teachers on how to use, implement and understand this form of communication in order to help support children with disabilities in the classroom.

Skilled

Language and Communication Development

Education Scotland has designed a programme through which ASNA/O in schools can help continually learn and upgrade their professional knowledge on communicating, understanding and supporting educating children with disabilities.

Literacy

Education Scotland has designed various programmes through which ASNA/O can help children overcome and manage diagnosis such as dyslexia.

Numeracy

They have also designed various programmes to help children with learning disabilities manage, control and overcome dyscalculia.

In conclusion

Across the 32 councils in Scotland, various titles are given and advertised as promoted posts for experienced teachers. These roles can be advertised such as The Faculty Head of Additional Learning Needs Unit or Principal Teacher of Inclusion. Such roles are remunerated at approximately £62,000 per annum. Experienced teachers in these positions often come from subject specialisms such as Geography, Physics and Maths. With little or no training and virtually no specialism in Additional Support Needs.

This has to change; continually teachers are coming into managerial roles with little to no knowledge of Well-being Assessment Plans, Risk Assessments, SQA AAA, Behaviour Management Plans, Dyslexia, Dyscalculia, Makaton, British Sign Language, Nurture, ESOL or Signalong training. Moreover little to no training in the varying diagnosis and disabilities that may affect children and young people in their care; physically, mentally and medically.

According to the Behaviour in Scottish Schools Research Report 2023 (BISSRR), violence in Scottish schools is at epidemic levels with Support Staff more than any other staff member to be on the receiving end of violence. Despite this support staff between 2006–2023 have reported violent incidents much less.

This is due to varying reasons, support staff do not have access to:

SEEMIS: To view additional support needs, pupil profiles, make a referral, view who is on the child protection register, access to deescalation tactics and restorative approaches, check medical needs and any medicines required. Including access to vital information such as young people with stoma bags, catheters, oxygen tanks, hearing aids, diabetes and much more.

Reflection and Planning Periods: pupil support staff are constantly working with support teachers to run targeted intervention groups, medical needs, dyslexia, well-being and nurture groups in the BGE and senior phase and throughout different primary year groups. This is done in the passing and without proper or effective discussion due to no time share agreement or access to planning periods.

Departmental Meetings: Despite pupil support staff working with children who have learning, physical, emotional, mental and behavioural difficulties they are not given time in their terms and conditions of service for departmental meetings with their managerial colleagues. This becomes an issue particularly, when a child has a medical condition which needs monitored and maintained throughout the school day. Pupils in complex needs, Enhanced Nurture Provisions, Language and Communication Resource Units or ASL schools often have difficulties through which are complex in nature.

It is unfathomable to me that such a significant workforce working with such vulnerable groups of children and young people is not regulated by any Care Inspectorate or Teaching Council.

There has to be mandatory training for this workforce and a career progression or pathway. Similarly, faculty head and principal teachers who should also be specialists in their subject. Without this, Inclusion will continually face problems with being implemented. It would be ideal for ASNA/O to have an accredited qualification that is recognised by the GTCS. Such courses are already available and part of the workforce has been trained however, there is no recognition or regulation of this by any public body in Scotland

Additional Support Needs Assistants and Officers

By way of regulating this workforce we can ensure the needs of the child and policies, legislation and training brought forth by the Scottish Government are actually implemented. In what other job would you be asked to use medical equipment and carry out maintenance with the only requirement being a high school education? In what job would any employee be asked to deal with a deeply vulnerable cohort with both

physical, medical and special needs without sufficient mandatory training?

Qualifications are already set up as in previous correspondence I have mentioned HND in Additional Support Needs, SVQ 2/3 in Social Services. Why is it that any staff member working with children in a nursery setting is monitored and regulated by the Scottish Social Services Council yet, in schools those who work with the most vulnerable disabled children are not required to have training or ongoing regulation in their job role? GTCS recognising this invaluable workforce is necessary.

In conclusion

The Education Children and Young People Committee held in Holyrood on 22/02/24 Unison representative stated, “27.5 contracts...don’t work...support staff are not appropriately trained...” Whilst other members of the panel representing different Unions stated there is a significant need for, ‘specialist training for specialist schools.’”