Feedback for the Equalities and Human Rights Committee, Children (Equal Protection from Assault) (Scotland) Bill

Group name: 44 S3 Modern Studies pupils

Do you support the Bill’s aim to end the physical punishment of children by parents or carers? What are the reasons for your answer?

Pupils considered the context cards and six of the topic cards provided in the ‘meeting in a box’ resource pack (excluding the cards about positive parenting and keeping children safe from immediate danger). The cards were used in a carousel group task where pupils visited three information stations (with two context cards and two topic cards at each station). Pupils were instructed to read the information, discuss in groups, and note down their thoughts about the issue and how it affected their views on the ‘smacking ban’. The task focused on pupils using the information to reach an informed view through discussion and the exchange of ideas. Pupils voted on the Bill and were asked to provide two reasons to explain their choice. The results of the vote and pupils’ reasons for their choice are detailed below. The numbers in brackets indicate the number of pupils who gave that reason (note that not all pupils provided two reasons therefore the total number of reasons is fewer than 88).

Out of a total of 44 pupils, 32 were in favour of the Bill and 12 were against.

Pupils’ reasons were as follows:

Reasons for supporting the Bill:
- It will protect children from physical harm. (10)
- It will reduce child deaths due to assault, like in Sweden. (10)
- Children should have the same rights as adults in being protected from assault. (7)
- Smacking doesn’t discipline children, it teaches children the wrong lesson – i.e. violence; it’s ok to hit/hurt other people. (5)
- Smacking can have a long-term negative impact including depressive symptoms or anxiety. (6)
- It would give children equal protection from assault as adults. (5)
- Smacking can be used excessively. (3)
- It will help protect vulnerable children and make them feel safe. (2)
- There is no need to hit children. (1)
• No child should be hurt. (1)
• Parents will have less power over kids. (1)
• Parents should never hit their children because it can have a negative impact on the child. (1)
• There is evidence that children who are smacked become angrier than children who are not. (1)
• Smacking does not achieve anything. (1)

Reasons for not supporting the Bill:
• The government should not interfere in family life/tell people how to parent their child. (7)
• It will criminalise parents for disciplining their children. (6)
• Parents have less power over kids. (2)
• There is no harm in smacking. (2)
• It is ok as long as it is not excessive hitting. (1)
• The generation before mine was brought up with smacking and they seem ok. (1)
• Smacking shows children wrong from right. (2)
• It keeps children disciplined. (1)
• If a child has done something dangerous, smacking can stop them from doing something that could harm themselves or other people. (1)