

Flintshire Teachers and School Employees to Take Oath to Work with Children

Council acknowledges that, even with Safeguarding Training and the Code of Professional Conduct and Practice established by the Education Workforce Council (EWC) in Wales, there are still cases of child abuse by teaching professionals and cases of teachers forming inappropriate relationships with pupils and students for whom they are responsible.

This has been highlighted by the recent prosecution and imprisonment of a former Gwynedd Head Teacher who had also previously served as an executive member of the National Education Association.

Council deplores the formation of such relationships and actions which abuse children and bring about a loss of their childhood innocence.

Council recommends that, in line with practice in some other non-educational professions, Cabinet formulates an oath which must be taken by all who are engaged in education in Flintshire recognise the need for individuals to make a specific commitment not to engage in inappropriate relationships with those in their charge. The oath is to be taken before an appropriate line manager within the education setting.

Council recommends that the Flintshire Education Workforce Oath should be taken by all currently engaged in working in Flintshire educational settings and all future employees in those settings.

Response

Thank you, Cllr Healey, for submitting your Notice of Motion calling for Cabinet to formulate an oath for teachers and other school employees working in Flintshire to take, committing that they will not form inappropriate relationships with pupils.

The Cabinet deplores any kind of abusive behaviour between trusted educational professionals and the learners in their care and has strong processes in place to prevent inappropriate behaviour in our schools.

Flintshire County Council has a very robust approach to the safe recruitment of its educational workforce, ensuring that all pre-employment checks are appropriately completed before an individual is allowed to work in its schools.

This is then regularly reinforced by mandatory safeguarding training for all school staff and governors, which is undertaken in line with the National Safeguarding Standards. All schools have a detailed safeguarding policy, which is reviewed and refreshed by the Governing Body on an annual basis. The Education Portfolio audits and monitors these policies and staff training across all of its schools and reports back to both the

Education and Youth Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Joint Education & Youth and Social & Health Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

There are very clear procedures for reporting safeguarding concerns about any educational professional. These are followed diligently by Headteachers and also involve senior Education managers in the Education Portfolio and Children's Services.

All Educational professionals working in Wales are required to register with the Education Workforce Council and the Code of Professional Conduct and Practice for registrants stipulates the standards expected of persons registered with the EWC and this specifically references the expectation of professional boundaries and not inflicting any form of harm on learners.

Committing acts of this nature is a criminal offence and we are entitled to end a person's employment if they engage in such activity. There are also deregistration processes undertaken by the Education Workforce Council, to prevent future employment with children.

A religious oath or a secular affirmation adds nothing to the already very strong, pre-existing legal framework and would also be unenforceable contractually. In light of this, whilst I cannot support the Notice of Motion as written, I would like to provide some reassurance to members and commit to ensuring our robust recruitment procedures are followed, that safeguarding training is delivered at all our schools, that we continue to develop a culture where the formation of inappropriate relationships and abuse is deplored and all safeguarding concerns are reported for action at the earliest opportunity.

I therefore propose the following amendment:

- That Council deplores any abuse of our children and young people, including the formation of inappropriate relationships between teaching staff and the pupils and students for whom they are responsible.**
- That Council continues its robust approach to recruitment, to monitor and provide guidance on safeguarding policies, provide safeguarding training and develop a culture within our schools where abuse of any kind is not condoned in any circumstances and all safeguarding concerns are reported immediately for appropriate action.**