

Lives at risk' as 11% of school nurses lost in just four years



Staff are being placed in unacceptable situations warns schools union

The number of nurses based in publicly funded English schools has fallen by **11 per cent since 2015, new figures reveal.**

The statistics were obtained from the Department for Education by the GMB Union, which represents school support staff, under the Freedom of Information Act.

The union warned today that some children with complex and potentially life-threatening needs were at greater risk due to cuts in specialist support.



Separate figures published by the NHS show that 762 school nursing posts have been cut since 2010, a reduction of over a quarter. The NHS figures include school nurses based in GP practices and health centres, in addition to schools.

The number of pupils in state schools has increased by around 10 per cent since 2010, placing additional pressure on staff.



A recent investigation by Schools Week found medical interventions in special schools were being delegated to support workers 'without appropriate governance arrangements and no additional funding.'

And a multi-agency report, published earlier this month, warned that 'a lack of school nursing' was leading to the signs of child abuse being missed.

GMB said that, in some schools, its teaching assistant members are being asked to administer sometimes complex medical interventions – such as injections – without adequate training or support.

The union said that the reasons for the reduction in nursing employment included cuts to NHS and schools' budgets, and increased wage competition for medically qualified staff.



Karen Leonard, GMB National Schools Officer, said:

"The uncomfortable truth is that in too many schools children are not getting the medical support they need.



“School staff should not administer medicine unless they feel fully confident in their training and lines of accountability, but often they are placed in uncomfortable situations.

“This is a highly stressful state of affairs for children, parents, and staff, who fear they will be blamed if something goes wrong. It is not alarmist to say that lives are at risk.

“We are calling for the Department for Education to conduct an urgent investigation into the effects of these job cuts, and for additional funding to be brought forward to fund training and for replacing posts that have been lost.”ENDS

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