

# News Release

## Association of Teachers and Lecturers

Annual Conference • 21 - 24 March 2005 • Torquay

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*For education correspondents /newsdesks*

### **ATL wins sexual harassment settlement for young teacher**

The Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL) has won a substantial financial settlement from Flintshire County Council and the governing body of Ysgol Merllyn, for a young primary school teacher, on the grounds of sexual harassment and bullying by her head teacher.

Vicky Williams was 28, in 2003, when she started her one-year contract as a confident, enthusiastic and happy classroom teacher at Ysgol Merllyn in Flintshire, Wales.

But this soon changed. She found herself subjected to sexual harassment by head teacher, Closs Parry.

When Ms. Williams objected she was bullied and reduced to tears. Her confidence was gradually eroded and by February 2004 she was signed off sick.

Ms. Williams decided to fight back. She started a formal grievance procedure, along with another female colleague, citing the head's unacceptable behaviour.

Flintshire County Council appointed an investigating officer on behalf of the governing body, but after four months Ms. Williams still did not know whether any action would be taken, or whether she would be able to return to her job.

At her wits end, and backed by ATL, she put in a claim to an employment tribunal on grounds of sex discrimination, victimisation and less favourable treatment as a fixed term employee.

Weeks later, the head was suspended. He then resigned. Ms. Williams returned to work, but her contract was not renewed when it expired. ATL consequently added claims of unfair dismissal and victimisation to the grievance.

On 2 March 2005 a hearing of the General Teaching Council Wales (GTCW) concluded that Mr Parry was guilty of seven counts of unacceptable professional behaviour, including:

- behaving in an intimidating manner and aggressively shouting
- using inappropriate language, including comments on staff's physical appearance
- using sexually offensive language, which was unwanted
- physically touching a female colleague.

The GTCW imposed a prohibition order on the head teacher. Shortly after the GTCW hearing, the school and Flintshire Council agreed a settlement of Ms. Williams's claim together with a statement of regret that she had suffered sexual harassment and bullying in the course of her employment.

Mary Bousted, general secretary of the ATL, said: "This was a substantial award for our member. I hope it will go some way towards compensating Ms. Williams for her, long and lonely ordeal when she felt abandoned by her employer.

"She was a young teacher, full of optimism and she had that confidence and self esteem eroded by someone who was in a position of power and should have known better."

Ms. Williams said: "I am immensely relieved that it's all over and I can get back to my normal life. It was a horrible experience and I felt very isolated until ATL gave me the support I needed."

Ms. Williams, now 30, has a new job, is recovering her health and enjoying doing what she does best – helping her pupils to learn.

Ends

For further information please contact the ATL Conference press office on 01803 299 910.

### **Notes to Editors**

1. The Association of Teachers and Lecturers' Annual Conference is taking place at the Riviera International Conference Centre, in Torquay, from Monday 21 March to Thursday 24 March 2005.
2. The ATL Annual Conference will be broadcast live on the internet at: [www.atl.org.uk](http://www.atl.org.uk)
3. The Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL) is an independent, registered trade union and professional association, representing approximately 160,000 teachers, lecturers and support staff in maintained and independent schools, sixth form, tertiary and further education colleges in the United Kingdom.

4. ATL exists to protect and improve the status of teachers, lecturers and other professionals involved in delivering education and to further their legitimate professional interests.
5. ATL is affiliated to the Trades Union Congress (TUC). It is unaffiliated to any political party and seeks to work constructively with all the main political parties.
6. ATL members receive a regular magazine *Report* reflecting ATL policy and other issues affecting the education sector. If you would like to receive a copy please call 020 7782 1589.
7. Further information and all press releases are available on ATL's website: [www.atl.org.uk](http://www.atl.org.uk)