

## PA20 Individual

Senedd Cymru

Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg

Absenoldeb Disgyblion

Ymateb gan Unigolyn

Welsh Parliament

Children, Young People and Education Committee

Pupil absence

Evidence from Individual

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Record your views against the inquiry's terms of reference, which have been grouped into 5 themes.

### 1. Reasons

Reason for absenteeism - couldn't cope with school; school made her feel so stressed she ended up having a panic attack in front of me and a member of staff. Underlying the stress, we now believe is a neurodiversity (as such undiagnosed due to lengthy waiting list to be assessed) which she had been masking successfully (school were clueless and subsequently unhelpful when we tried to start addressing the stress she was experiencing at school) until she could cope no longer.

The stress became most noticeable in 2019 and she stopped going into school at all in Jan 2020.

Prior to this her attendance was dropping (had previously been very good).

From Jan 2020 to Dec 2020 she did not attend school nor did she participate in the on-line learning set up during the first lockdown.

For us, COVID had no impact on the level of absenteeism.

She did not return to school until she felt ready to do so and it was on the condition that she move to another school that would, hopefully, be more supportive than the first. Since returning to a new school her attendance has been mixed. In 2020/2021 she was in year 10 and experiencing a mix of on-line and in-school learning, which she coped with well with the support of the ALNCO. In 2021/22 she is in year 11, which brings its own stresses along with a change in ALNCO so we no longer have such good support. Her attendance has decreased but we have managed to keep her attending enough to enable her to take her GCSEs.

### 2. Risks and consequences

Short term consequences - With no support from the school (which was our experience - they refused to send work home for her to do while she wasn't attending), the child/YP falls behind the rest of their school year.

Longer term consequences - the obvious, less chance of getting qualifications to enable them to move onto further education or work. But also a heavy toll on their mental health, which, as a parent, I worry they will take forward with them into their adult life.

### 3. Impact

Personally the absenteeism did not lead to de-registration. We have chosen to home educate in the past (at primary school age). I did not want to de-register as I knew she stood a better chance of getting GCSEs if she stayed as the responsibility of the local education authority. I was deeply disappointed by the lack of practical support we had from the school to keep her learning. We had to find resources (on-line, books, tutors) to try to keep her learning so if/when she decided to re-enter school she wouldn't be too far behind

to be able to pick up and carry on with her qualifications. I felt unable to access help beyond the school too, I didn't know who I could approach at a higher level or how.

#### 4. Effectiveness of policies

In my experience, we were not adequately supported by the first school as they seemed unable to recognise that there was a problem so obviously offered no options on how we could work together to support her.

The second school, initially, gave her and us lots of support but with the change in ALNCO it diminished and was harder for me to communicate with them. I feel it is only because she has such a short time left in education that we have managed to avoid more absenteeism. The amount of time and effort I have had to make in supporting her and getting her into school is taking a toll on my mental health (stress levels).

If there was support available at the local government level, I was not aware of it.

I cannot comment on the effectiveness of WG policies etc as I don't know what they are.

#### 5. Other

N/A

