

## PA22 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

School is a hard and uncompromising place for those who are not neurotypical. Teachers and other staff in schools are not trained sufficiently to understand how challenging it is and this causes more stress. The lock-downs highlighted the negative impacts of school by its absence.

There is very little support for families struggling with attendance and this move to criminalize and fine already stressed families is counterproductive. The lack of opportunity to really work with a school (they are generally overstretched and are trained to generalize) makes it a combative situation which does not support anyone. There really needs to be much more open thinking about ways of tackling the issue. School should be nurturing and engaging not just a means to an end.

There also needs to be more varied opportunities for those who do not tick the academic boxes. This push to just pass exams is also counterproductive is not good for many nor society at large.

### 2. Risks and consequences

Poor mental health is the biggest short and long term consequence of the current approach. I can not express adequately how hard it is to be constantly having to battle to get help and support. The push for attendance as an outcome is such a small part of a wider issue.

Being able to offer alternatives learning opportunities or accept a more flexible approach to schooling would potentially engage learners more and encourage them positively re future aspirations. Forest schools, alternative education, support for home schooling, apprenticeships - there is a whole raft of ways to provide a better more suitable option other than the huge inflexible schools we currently have.

### 3. Impact

In our case not attending regularly has enable us to focus on and support exam attendance. This is positive.

### 4. Effectiveness of policies

The lack of support is shocking. School policies which punish children for poor attendance are counterproductive.

The patronizing of parents who are seeking support is counterproductive.

The feeling of being completely on your own is exhausting.

Neither policy or practice of schools, local authorities or Welsh Gov are conducive to helping or supporting change either for the individual in the short term or wider society in the long term.

## 5. Other

N/A

