

PA29 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

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

1. Reasons

It's my belief that after spending so much time off school, parents are sending children to school with 'minor' illnesses, which then spread around school like wildfire. I personally know of several parents breaking the 24/48 hour rule after vomiting or diarrhoea in their child, which then results in the illness spreading to multiple children, and that in turn keeps more off school. It also then spreads through sibling groups and into other classes, and the cycle continues. By the time one illness has cleared, another is followed. Parents are also far more relaxed sending children in with flu like symptoms than they were during COVID.

2. Risks and consequences

Short term risks result in missing key point of work in the school year, important time out of the house and interacting with other peers, and for some, the chance to have a structured day and a hot meal. Longer term impacts more as the child gets older, as the work learned in school can be lost and then needed in exams or coursework, and often reading notes on a subject missed will not give enough understanding of the subject to use in a meaningful way.

3. Impact

Support for ALN is seriously lacking in primary school especially, due to extensive waiting lists for diagnosis and lack of support staff. Several ALN pupils are being taken out of school in favour for either full time or part time home learning because that's the only suitable option for them. I have a two children under 5 with ALN, and one is currently attending school, the other flying start. My school aged child often misses school due to lateness or being complete absent, as she struggles with the journey to and from school often. At infants school level, the impact is a set up of bad habits for later in school life.

4. Effectiveness of policies

As a parent, I received a home school agreement at the start of the year and no further information on Welsh Government polices or guidance, so I can't possibly comment on the effectiveness and I am unaware of the majority of policies.

5. Other

As a teen attending school myself, I had abysmal attendance records, and was often late or absent. This was due to three reasons. Bullying in school is a massive deterrent and with the impact of social

media sending the bullying home and to a wide audience, it is far easier on a teen to just stay away from their peers at school rather than deal with the bullies. I left school in 2013, at the rise of social media and if one thing happened in school, there was surely going to be a Facebook post or video shared, and the whole school and wider community knew about everyone's business, which made things very difficult. My second reasoning for being late was a lack of incentive to go to school itself. Those with bad attendance are belittled by staff and teachers into being told they are going to make nothing of themselves because they are unable to learn the work unless they are at school. Pupils are told that their bad attendance is their own fault and that it will prevent them from working as an adult, or getting into university due to a 'permeant record' that would haunt them forever. Instead, staff should make provisions for pupils struggling to attend for whatever reasons, which has been proved possible due to distance learning through the pandemic. If a pupil is absent from school but still produces the work they needed to that day, then it shows that there is an issue in the school life and not with the child itself. My personal third reason was due to being a young carer, my absences were often out of my control, yet I was still made to feel like it was my own fault if I was late or absent, when I was exhausted and punished like any other truanting child. Personal circumstances need to be taken in consideration with the treatment of children missing school, as often it is not their fault they aren't in attendance, but it's due to difficult home lives. Likewise to that, it shouldn't be met with threats of fines, prison time or children's services either because that attacks parents who are trying their hardest against strong willed teens who refuse to attend school.