

Parentkind's evidence

Parentkind is well-suited to provide evidence to the Children, Young People and Education Committee's inquiry into the impact of coronavirus (Covid-19) on children and young people from a parent perspective in the following areas:

- The physical and mental health of children and young people.
- Statutory school education, including arrangements for remote learning, continuity of learning, the impact on educational outcomes and the implementation of the critical workers policy.
- Parents and carers.

Parentkind is a national charity (number 1072833) based in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. For over sixty years we have championed all the ways parents can participate in their child's school life and education. We are the largest membership body for Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) - our 13,500 members are represented in around 50% of schools nationwide. We have set up an APG for Parental Participation in Education and we work with the Welsh Government to further its aims. Our work ensures that we enable parents to support education at home and at school, and provide them with a voice among education stakeholders and policymakers.

With the school closures made necessary by the Covid-19 pandemic, it has never been more vital to listen to parents about their concerns for their children's education, and ensure that parent voice is heard by policymakers.

Parentkind survey receives over quarter of a million responses

We have conducted two parent surveys to understand more about their fears and experiences when it comes to coronavirus and school closures. The first was released in March as soon as it was announced that schools were closing, and a second helped us to gain insight into how parents were coping under the adjustments to family life. It was active between 23rd April and 4th May. 257,392 parents, representing 427,500 pupils, completed the survey. 8,575 respondents were based in Wales.

What parents in Wales told us

We have [published a news story and infographics](#) to our website, where you can see more details for the UK as a whole. However, we have split the data into regions, so we can report specifically about the experiences of parents in Wales.

Parents' confidence in supporting their child's learning at home. 67% of parents of primary aged children said they were 'very' or 'quite confident' in supporting their child's home learning, but almost a third (32%) said they were 'not very' or 'not at all confident'. At secondary level, those 'very' or 'quite confident' dropped to under two thirds (65%) and those 'not very' or 'not at all confident' rose to a third (33%). For most parents at primary and secondary levels, their confidence was about the same compared to the start of the school closures, but 16% of parents of primary school children were 'less confident' several weeks in, and 12% at secondary level were 'less confident'. Many more parents had grown in confidence (32% at primary level and 25% at secondary said they were 'more confident').

Most parents are satisfied with the home learning support given by their child's school. Overall, 84% of parents responding from Wales were 'very' or 'quite satisfied' with the home learning support given by their child's school. 15% were 'not very' or 'not at all satisfied'. Breaking this down to the level of schooling, this meant 86% said they were 'very' or 'quite satisfied' at primary level (13% were 'not very' or 'not at all' satisfied). At secondary level, 77% were 'very' or 'quite satisfied', and 21% were 'not very' or 'not at all' satisfied.

Parents view their role in their child's education whilst schools are closed differently, depending on the stage. More than half (51%) of parents of primary school children identified "I am teaching my child a combination of work set by school and other skills not set by school" as their role. At secondary level, that option was selected by only 19% of parents. The most popular choice was "I am supporting my child's learning by making sure they have what they need and are working through the work set, answering questions if required", selected by 45% (but only selected by 19% of primary parents).

Some parents need additional support. Although more than 2/3 parents (70%) said that they were coping 'very' or 'quite well' with their child being off school, nearly a quarter (22%) were coping 'so-so', and 8% 'not at all' or 'not very well'. This means three out of ten (30%) of parents are, to some extent, struggling to cope with the impact of school closures.

What additional resources do parents favour?

The top five most popular responses were:

- Live online classes (40%)

- Direct communication between your child and their teachers (40%)
- Video clips to explain the subject matter (39%)
- Feedback from teachers on work completed (38%)
- Reassurances about learning expectations during school closures (38%)

In Wales, 43% said that they had used the resources available on the Education Wales Hwb (which represented 47% of primary school parents), which was second only to BBC Bitesize (52%). This indicates that a large proportion of parents valued the additional resources made available by Welsh Government.

What's the biggest concern as a parent about the coronavirus pandemic?

Parents' top 6 responses were:

- My child not seeing their friends and socialising (47%)
- One or more of my family members catching Covid-19 (38%)
- My child's mental health (36%)
- My child missing out on learning from teachers (33%)
- My ability to juggle working and support my child's learning (32%)
- How my child will cope going back when schools do reopen (25%)

When would parents be happy for their child to return to school?

Out of a set list of options, parents told us:

- I'd feel comfortable with a September return date, but I'd like it to be confirmed now (26%)
- Only when the government says it is safe to do so (21%)
- Only when school leaders/teachers say it is safe to do so (19%)
- Only when staff and pupils at my child's school have been vaccinated against Covid-19 even if this in 12-18 months' time (13%)
- As soon as the lockdown ends (7%)
- Other (7%)
- I'd feel comfortable with a July return date, but I'd like it to be confirmed now (6%)

These proportions were broadly similar to parents in England, for whom we had a much larger sample size.

Mental health and wellbeing

As outlined above, parents' primary concern, which was picked ahead of "One or more of my family members catching Covid-19", was "my child not seeing their friends and socialising", selected by almost half (47%) of parents. This was also the top option for parents in England (50%) and Northern Ireland (48%), demonstrating that this is of paramount concern to parents across the UK. A quarter of parents in Wales were more worried now (25%) about the impact of

the coronavirus pandemic on their child's education than they were at the start of lockdown. 40% were just as worried, and only one in three (33%) were less worried, demonstrating a very high level of concern that parents have for their child's education and learning in the short- and long-term. We hope that all policymakers give due consideration to the long-term management of parental concerns about their child's well-being, and additional support for the mental health and wellbeing of pupils once schools re-open.

Parentkind supporting the Commission

Please also see an [infographic](#) depicting the key headlines from our survey findings from parents in Wales.