

CYPE(6)-16-22 - Papur i'w nodi 8

Learner absence snap poll

On 9th June 2022 NAHT Cymru asked members to respond to a survey on levels of learner absence in schools.

By type, 59% of respondents were from LA maintained schools, 1% from Special schools, 23% from community schools and 11% from voluntary aided schools.

By phase, 91% of respondents were from primary schools and 6% were from secondary schools.

Key points:

- The top three reasons for persistent absenteeism were reported as illness (47%), mental health concerns (35%) and anxiety about coming to school because of coronavirus (24%)
- Non-covid related absenteeism had increased for a majority of respondents (60%)
- An increase in absenteeism has increased school leader workload, with 85% of respondents reporting this (61% increased, 24% greatly increased)
- The main reasons for an increase in workload as a result of pupil absence were a lack of external support (61%) and lack of capacity (54%)
- Persistent absenteeism was reported as more prevalent among students eligible for free school meals (48%)
- The majority of respondents had not experienced an increase in either levels of pupil deregistration or elective home education. However, 22% had experienced higher levels of pupil deregistration and 29% had experienced higher levels of elective home education.

Breakdown of questions:

Q1: Which of the following, if any, are the main reasons for persistent absenteeism in your school?

- Nearly half, 47%, of respondents said illness
- 35% of respondents said Mental health concerns
- 24% of respondents said anxiety about coming to school because of coronavirus
- 13% said pupil concern about being in school due to living with someone who is at greater risk from coronavirus
- 7% said family bereavement
- 4% said long covid
- 1% said exam pressure
- 39% of respondents said 'other' issues were causing persistent absenteeism in their schools. Happy to provide a list of responses.
 - Themes covered in these responses include (not verbatim answers):
 - Children and parents have got out of the habit of going in to school, with the assumption that children can learn from home
 - Children do not want to come back to school after having been accustomed to learning at home.
 - The pandemic has exacerbated poor attendance of those with previously poor attendance

- Parents booking family holidays either since lockdown or going on holidays that were booked pre-lockdown

Q2: To what extent, if any, has non-covid related absenteeism for pupils changed in your school since the covid-19 pandemic?

- The majority of respondents said that non-covid related absenteeism had either increased, or greatly increased. 60% of respondents said that it had increased, 22% said that it had greatly increased.
- 16% said that it had neither increased nor decreased
- Just 2% of respondents said that non-covid related absenteeism had decreased (0.7%) or greatly decreased (1.4%)

Q3: Why do you think non-covid related absenteeism has increased in your school since the covid-19 pandemic?

- 97 respondents answered this question, I can give a full list of responses on request
- Some common answers included::
 - Parents being used to children being at home, less worry about keeping them off school
 - The lockdowns have left a legacy of understanding in parents that a child can just be set online work
 - No repercussions for absence
 - Holiday requests have increased
 - Absence for minor illnesses has increased
 - Mental health issues, increased anxiety and increased behaviours associated with ASD

Q4: [those who reported that absenteeism has increased] What impact, if any, has increased pupil absence in your school had on your workload?

- 85% of respondents said that their workload had either increased (61%) or greatly increased (24%)
- 15% of respondents said that their workload had neither increased nor decreased
- No respondents said that their workload had decreased

Q5: Which, if any, are the main reasons for an increased workload in relation to pupil absence?

- 61% of respondents said lack of external support (e.g. from social and health services)
- 54% of respondents said lack of capacity
- 43% said there is nobody else to help tackle this issue
- 41% said lack of resources
- 17% of respondents gave 'other' reasons for an increase in workload, available on request.

Q6: Please add any further comments below:

- Comments listed on Excel sheet. A lot of comments focused on the impact of coronavirus lockdowns and school closures on parents and pupil attitudes to school

Q7: Are levels of persistent absenteeism more prevalent in your school among any of the following groups of pupils?

- 48% of respondents said that persistent absenteeism was more prevalent among pupils eligible for free school meals
- 43% said that there are no groups of pupils where persistent absenteeism is more prevalent
- 23% said pupils with additional learning needs
- 7% said Pupils with English as an additional language

Q8: Compared to before the pandemic, what change, if any, has your school experienced in levels of pupil de-registration?

- The majority of respondents (69%) had not experienced any change in the levels of pupil de-registration
- 22% of respondents had experienced higher levels of pupil de-registration. This was 19% higher and 3% much higher.
- No respondents had experienced lower levels of pupil-de-registration, the remaining 8% were unsure

Q9: Compared to before the pandemic, what change, if any, has your school experienced in levels of elective home education?

- 69% had not experienced any change in rates of elective home education
- 29% of pupils had experienced higher levels of elective home education. This was 26.45% higher and 2.48% much higher.
- No respondents had experienced lower levels of elective home education, the remaining 2% were unsure.