Senedd Cymru	Welsh Parliament
Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg	Children, Young People and Education Committee
Absenoldeb Disgyblion	**Pupil absence**
Ymateb gan Unigolyn	Evidence from Individual

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

1. Reasons

In my experience, persistent absenteeism is often down to anxiety and low self-esteem. Those on the autistic spectrum are particularly vulnerable to this as they can find school overwhelming and exhausting. Many if these children would benefit from smaller schools with more designated safe spaces and kind, supportive adults.

Covid seems to have exacerbated struggles that many were managing. Once they have fallen behind with work, catching up can deter many from trying to get back. Graded, personalised catch up programs should be part of planning to get these children back to school effectively.

2. Risks and consequences

Become socially isolated, feelings of failure and low self worth. Lower grades, but this could be overcome by a more agile and immediate approach to alternative education for these children.

3. Impact

Those who can't make it into school often want to access their education but cannot do so on the terms offered. Often families feel like their only alternative to being fined and the pressure that comes with that, is to deregister.

4. Effectiveness of policies

Schools vary in their effectiveness in supporting families. Those who have the best outcomes put pupil wellbeing first, and genuinely care about the pupil rather than their attendance figures. Schools that damage relationships and trust with families by using fear and force rather than letting the young person lead the process, have less success over the long term. Schools need to be released from attendance pressure in order to do this. In my experience, the EWS has little to actually add to this process and are seen as threats by families rather than as offering practical help.

5. Other

We need more smaller schools for socially anxious pupils, more safe spaces for these pupils in school - not one that gets used for managing those with behavioural issues, and more staff who are trained in supporting vulnerable young people. Access to an alternative education provision when pupils aren't attending their school needs to be a much quicker process that schools find quick and easy to put into motion and parents can find out about rather than feeling they are fighting on their own.

Young people need to be respected and listened to so that they do not become detached from their learning and stop progressing altogether.