

Cyflwynwyd yr ymateb hwn i'r [Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg](#) ar gyfer yr ymchwiliad: [A oes gan blant a phobl ifanc anabl fynediad cyfartal at addysg a gofal plant?](#)

This response was submitted to the [Children, Young People and Education Committee](#) for the inquiry: [Do disabled children and young people have equal access to education and childcare?](#)

AEC 76

Ymateb gan: Coleg Brenhinol Meddygon Teulu

Response from: Royal College of General Practitioners

Further to our evidence of the CYPE Committee on 16th November, please also see the below background information which may be of assistance.

Disability and ability to be in school:

- RCGP Cymru Wales Chair acknowledges that disability itself may be a barrier to school attendance whether that is because of being too unwell to attend, having to undergo medical treatment that cannot be administered while a child attends school, or appointments which take place during the school day.
- Estyn notes: 'In his report for Welsh Government, Attendance review – implications of the COVID-19 pandemic for school attendance the former Chief Inspector of schools in Wales noted that "...schools with the lowest attendance rates during the pandemic and its aftermath have been special schools..."

This could be attributed to families not wishing to send their children to school, perhaps because of their healthcare needs or due to the additional health threats that COVID-19 posed, although it is difficult to generalise based on the available evidence. Attendance of pupils in special schools has been improving but is generally lower than pre-pandemic levels'.¹

¹Estyn annual report 2022: https://annual-report.estyn.gov.wales/annual_report/sector-report-maintained-special-2021-2022/#:~:text=There%20are%2040%20maintained%20special,education%20for%20almost%205%2C500%20pupils.

Specialist schools in Wales

Across Wales there are 40 specialist schools, with 5,500 children attending these schools (under 10% of disabled children in Wales have a place in a specialist school)

- These cater for a wide range of disabilities with varying needs which mainstream schools do not have the capacity to meet.
- According to Welsh Government: 'Three schools provide education through the medium of Welsh. There are no special schools in Ceredigion or Monmouthshire.

Many special schools provide education for children from 3-19 years. Increasingly special schools are educating children with more complex needs. Typically, special schools provide education for pupils with cognition and learning difficulties that can be classed as profound, severe or moderate.

In addition, our special schools cater for pupils with autistic spectrum condition; speech, communication and language difficulties; or physical and/or medical including sensory conditions such as hearing and/or visual impairments. A few schools have residential respite provision, and a very few schools cater almost exclusively for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.¹²

Undiagnosed neurodivergent children

- According to a twenty-year study by the Association for Child and Adolescent Mental Health, the mean age for autism diagnosis is 12 for boys (year 7) and 14 for girls (year 9), in the UK, meaning that many children will have all spent of primary school, without a diagnosis.³
- There is an increasing attitude in Welsh schools to meet the need not the diagnosis, but diagnosis of what that need is can be the difference between a child being perceived as disruptive or as disabled.

² https://annual-report.estyn.gov.wales/annual_report/sector-report-maintained-special-2021-2022/#:~:text=There%20are%2040%20maintained%20special,education%20for%20almost%205%2C500%20pupils.

³ <https://acamh.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/jcpp.13505>

- According to the National Autistic society's UK wide survey, 7 out of 10 Autistic pupils stated their teachers did not understand enough about autism. ⁴
- The same survey stating that only 26% of autistic children reported being happy at school, while 74% their child's school place did not fully meet their needs.

Prejudice, exclusionary attitudes, and bullying

- According to survey by Mencap 82% of children in the UK with a learning disability report experiencing bullying at school. ⁵
- The Anti-Bullying Alliance states that while 25% of all children report bullying, 36% of children Identified as SEND report these experiences. ⁶
- The difference in the above statistics suggest that across the whole of the UK, while a clear message is sent that it is unacceptable to bully someone who may be In a wheelchair, for example, it seems that children with so called 'invisible disabilities', are still othered by their fellow pupils.
- This is confirmed by the below also from the Anti-Bullying Alliance: '82% of young people who are disfluent (those with a stammer), 59% of them at least once a week, and 91% by namecalling have experienced bullying (Mooney and Smith 1995)

70% of children with autistic spectrum disorders combined with other characteristics (for example, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) have experienced bullying (Bejerot and Mortberg 2009)

Young people with speech difficulties are three times more likely to be bullied than their peers (Savage 2005)

30 per cent of children with reading difficulties (Sweeting and West 2001)56% of children with a learning disability said they cried because of bullying, and 33% hid away in their bedroom. Nearly half of children with a learning disability had been bullied for over a year, and many were bullied for even longer.'

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https://dy55nndrxke1w.cloudfront.net/file/24/asDKIN9asAvgMtEas6glatOcB5H/NAS_Education%20Report%202023.pdf

⁵ <https://www.mencap.org.uk/sites/default/files/2016-07/Bullying%20wrecks%20lives.pdf>

⁶ <https://anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/tools-information/all-about-bullying/at-risk-groups/sen-disability/do-children-send-experience-more>

Social Model of Disability:

Wales has adopted the social model of disability. The charity, Scope, explains the social model as such:

'The model says that people are disabled by barriers in society, not by their impairment or difference. Barriers can be physical, like buildings not having accessible toilets. Or they can be caused by people's attitudes to difference, like assuming disabled people can't do certain things.'

Scope goes to say that this contrasts with the medical model of disability which 'The medical model looks at what is 'wrong' with the person, not what the person needs. We believe it creates low expectations and leads to people losing independence, choice and control in their lives.'

Scope offer that moving our understanding of disability towards the social model could help to combat ableism or disablism which can be understood as ' Negative attitudes based on prejudice or stereotype can stop disabled people from having equal opportunities.