

Impact of the Lockdown on Children and Families — Parent Questionnaire



Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board

Introduction

The Covid-19 Pandemic had a wide-reaching impact on the children and families of Sandwell. Coming out of the Pandemic it was a desire of the Children's Scrutiny Board to understand some of the initial impact of the Pandemic on a wide variety of challenges and issues. The Board had identified eight areas for wider consideration and review which covered Children's Centres and Early Years, The Children's Trust and Virtual School, Key Stage 1, Key Stage 2, Secondary Education, Connexions, Health and CAMHS and Vulnerable Children's Groups.

On the 29 November 2021 the Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board agreed to establish a Working Group to investigate the 'impact of lockdown on children and families' which would look in detail at the eight areas identified.

Through the Working Group the Board received updates from across the Children's service and Trust. Updates allowed the Group to expand on their understanding and develop recommendations that could benefit the people of Sandwell. Once compiled recommendations along with a report would be put before the Board.

As part of this process Democratic Services undertook a questionnaire of Sandwell residents to gauge the impact of the lockdown on their children's education and attainment. Through the Education/Schools Service e-bulletin, the Council consultation page, social media and directly to schools and social groups, the survey was communicated with a range of media to reach as large proportion of Sandwell residents and understand their experience.

The survey was primary aimed at parents and was created to understand what they believed the impact of the Pandemic was on their child's education and attainment.

There were 578 responses to the survey which was open to submissions from 21 January 2021 to 25 February 2022.

The questions asked aimed to understand a response to a statement followed by the option of adding any extra thoughts.

Summery

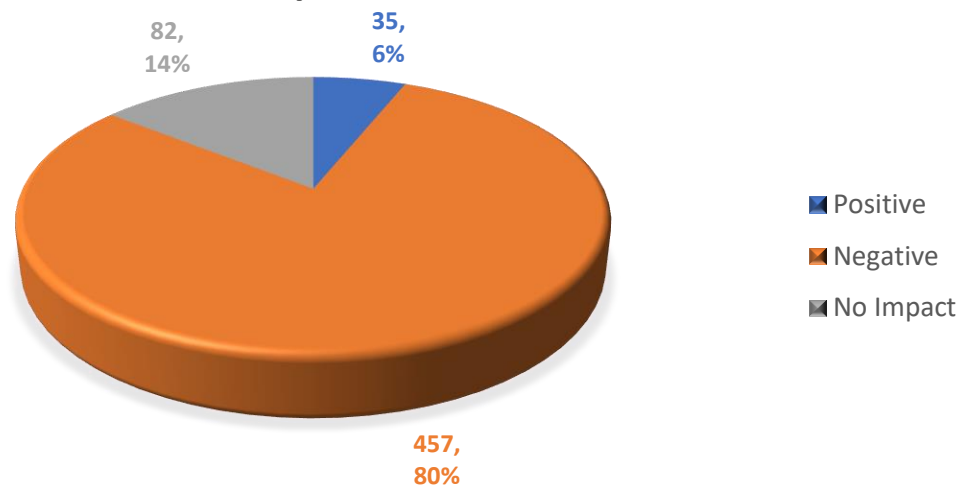
The majority of parents (80%) indicated that their children had had a negative experience in education over the course of the pandemic. While the other 20% had had a positive or no impact. In terms of education while 236 indicated that 236 education had been poor, 146 had indicated that it was good. There were 55 who stated that it had been very good, while 69 had said it was very poor, 50 stated that there was no difference. On whether the Pandemic had disadvantaged their child 73% believed that it had done while 22% did not. In terms of positively or negatively impacting their child's exam preparation 45% indicated their child required additional support to meet their expected grade while 48% did not.

Whether their child had Special Educational Needs (SEND) 20% indicated that they did, of this 20%, 78% stated that their child's needs had not been met during the Pandemic.

The impact of emotional health was considered, for children, 64% of parents indicated that the Pandemic had impacted their child's mental health, similarly 68% of parents stated the Pandemic had impacted their own mental health.

Below is a detailed breakdown of the questionnaire results and a selection of parental responses.

DO YOU FEEL THAT THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC HAS HAD A POSITIVE, NEGATIVE OR NO IMPACT ON YOUR CHILD'S/CHILDREN'S EDUCATION?



Responses

"The pandemic, though tragic, forced us into working from home and providing our daughter with a home education. She was 1 1/2 when lockdown first happened and I was so grateful for the extra time it gave us as a family, and the time it gave me to focus on her development."

"The pandemic has stopped my child from learning the basics of outdoor life, going to the local shop looking at people's face expressions learning and imitating others have been difficult because we are not allowed to mix with others and people are scared, activities places and community places have been shut due to this, I feel that has delayed my child's development a lot."

"My children seem to have missed out on so much positive things that happen in the classroom when with peers, they now seem more distracted and less likely to want to do any home based learning or homework. Parents are not qualified teachers we do not have the necessary skills to provide the learning basis that teachers provide at home therefore the quality of learning decreases."

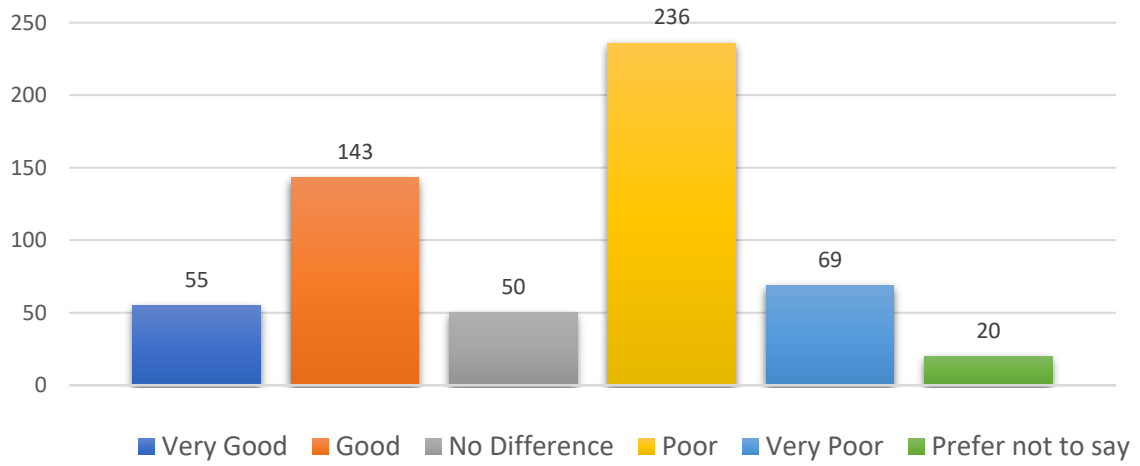
"My child has fell so behind with having so much time away from school and struggles so much with her work."

"For my daughter who was in yr6 when first lockdown happened, her transition into secondary was very difficult. She still struggles with the concept of secondary even though she is now in yr8. The academic side is now back on track but the social and process of being in secondary side is very difficult."

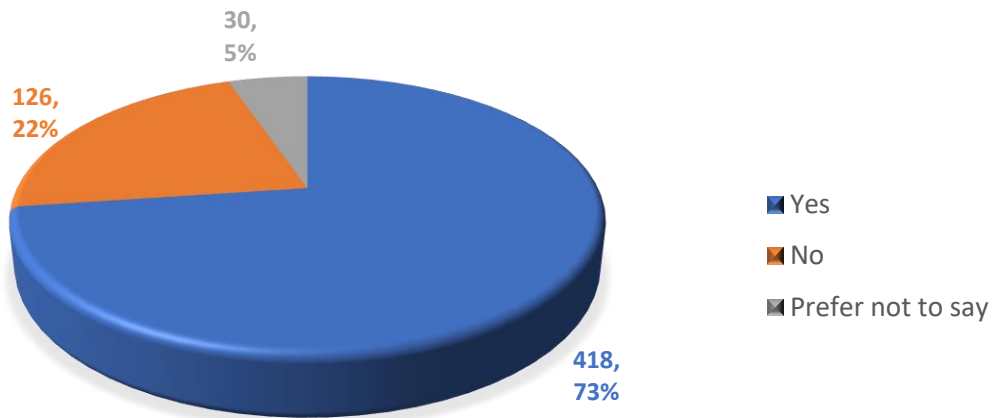
"My daughter started high school, had no transition days and even though she is now in year 8 it feels like she still hasn't settled and hasn't really made any proper friends."

"They became disengaged from the fun activities and school work that they used to love. They have since struggled immensely getting back into school life."

How effective do you believe your child's/children's education was during the Covid-19 Pandemic?



DO YOU BELIEVE YOUR CHILD/CHILDREN HAVE BEEN DISADVANTAGED BECAUSE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC?



“I think the disruption to the routine has made children feel unsettled.”

“Social skills, doing the work through lockdown but then finding out most of the other children did not and then having to recap when actually back in the classroom.”

“Again, the education and progress in school has slowed down due to covid. Things I taught him at home are being re-taught at school and my son is bored as he's not learning anything new.”

“The delivery of my child’s learning was fantastic from the school and parents involved with the learning too. The work completed was submitted to the school to demonstrate the learning which was carried out.”

“My son missed the last half of year 6 and all the celebrations of leaving primary school. This was very upsetting, and we will never get that back. These social interactions and celebrations are very important. His first year at secondary school was extremely disruptive and being confined to one area of school meant that starting year 8 was almost like starting in year 7 again in terms of getting to know the school as a place.”

“Both the primary and secondary school did all that they could and my children did attend all remote learning which was to a good standard. They are both performing above ARE/achieving good grades but the loss in terms of social interaction, school trips, assembly celebrations, choir, music and school plays, sporting opportunities etc was significant. I am aware that for more disadvantaged pupils the impact of that loss will have been greater.”

“Negatively due to no social interaction with children her age and also dropping sets which deflated her confidence.”

“My daughter is in year 11 so having year 9 and 10 interrupted has made mastering the curriculum difficult for her particularly in maths and science.”

“Moving from primary to secondary, my child lost out on vital primary school help that she needed she wasn't ready for secondary think they needed more time to prepare them.”

“Slower progress has resulted on average a whole level below where my child should be. Hoping to catch up and improve grades with the use of private tutors. The inconsistency of teachers and having to use agency/substitute teachers due to self isolation had disrupted learning progress (obviously unavoidable).”

“My son has exams at the end of the year, and has so much anxiety that he won't do well due to the teacher stressing the importance of a high test score. The children have missed so much, it is natural that they may be behind, and by giving tests that would've usually been given if we were not in a pandemic, it hasn't been adjusted for how children may be behind. My son is now in CAHMS, due to the massive stress the school are putting on him to achieve a high test score.”

“After a recent spelling test my child scored very low from words that were meant to learn in 1 so now in year 3 my child is trying to catch up from things they should of already know to new year 3 work.”

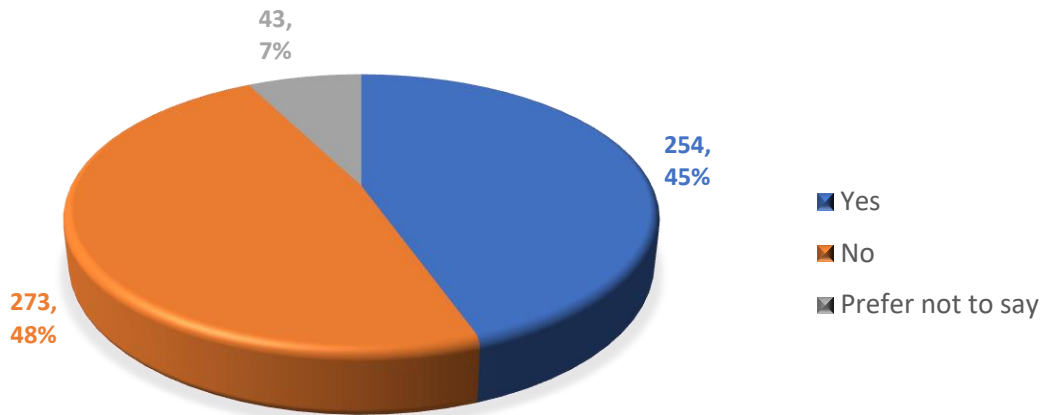
“They have gone back to school and are being told they are behind. Not taking how much missed education that have had into account.”

“He is now years behind in his academic ability. He had last confidence in the subject he once in enjoyed. But now finds extremely difficult and hard to catch up. The government catch up programme against is not being used affectively at schools.”

“My daughter has always been a very high achiever and this year has decreased her motivation for school and her grades due to not enjoying school anymore due to the situation all students have had to go through and adhere too.”

“Again due to a lack of face-to-face teaching because it has been remote learning I feel my child is somewhat behind and underprepared.”

DOES YOUR CHILD/CHILDREN REQUIRE ADDITIONAL SUPPORT IN ORDER TO CATCH UP WITH THEIR EXPECTED SUBJECT LEVEL OR GRADE?



“I feel all children need to have catch up as previously stated parents are not classroom teachers and the level of teaching at home does not compare to what they gain in a classroom with a qualified teacher.”

“My younger child need massive of help and support to catch up. I dint feel that when schools reopened fully that my child was helped the focus was on the children who were doing well and not on the hidden in the lower 20% who needed the extra support.”

“Extra effort was needed to teach and learn phonics. My education background not from Uk. We learn reading & writing differently. It was tough to teach.”

“My child is now doing better than before covid. Before the lockdown he was very much an average student.”

“Below expected levels in reading, writing & maths. Additional support is required however little feedback is given from the school on whether all children that are below expectation are receiving support.”

“I’m sure she would be more advanced if she had had a normal school experience. We taught her ourselves as well as the online learning as it didn’t fill the normal school learning hours.”

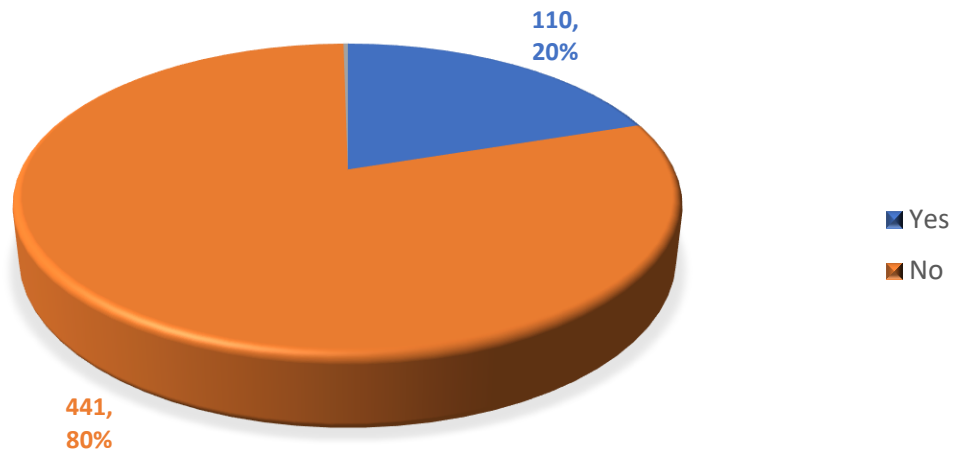
“Of course! Restrictions have meant they've unnecessarily missed out on the best part of 2 years of education and socialisation. How can it not? Lots of catch up needed.”

“We are fortunate that we have had access to educational resources of our own and used this with our children to do extra learning with them outside of school.”

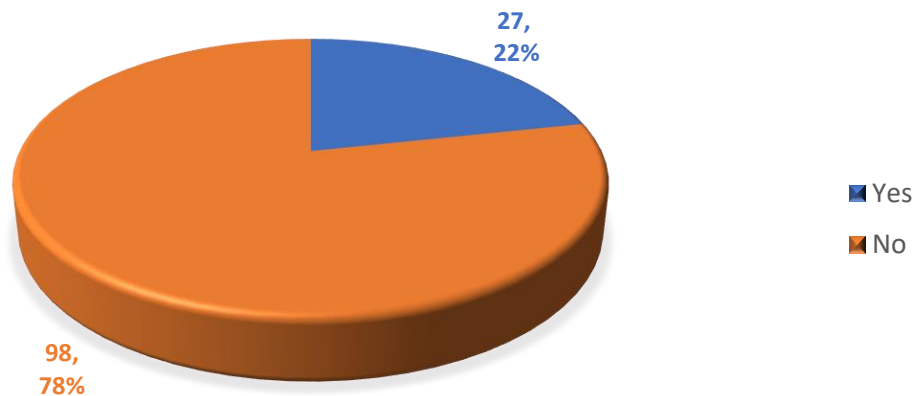
“Yes my son received a lot of support during lockdown from his local school I will praise his school at very highly and they really help me my son and my family and my daughter I really appreciate that their support was amazing.”

“I believe there is a lot of pressure on myself and parents as a whole to support their children with catching up. There’s always so much to do and reading, spelling and homework is sometimes a big load in top of home life without catching up activities etc too!”

DOES YOUR CHILD/CHILDREN HAVE ANY SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS (SEND)?



IF YES, HAS YOUR CHILD/CHILDREN'S SEND REQUIREMENTS BEEN MET THROUGHOUT THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC?



“General online school work. Was. Not tailored to her needs and was too hard. Her teacher during 1st lockdown did. Her a. Paper pack to help with this but otherwise she didn't really get any support not understanding the work.”

“At the start of the process to look at possible dyslexia which will take months to complete due to reluctance from both school and council plus long waiting lists. Schools fail dyslexic children and often decline to assess/diagnose as too costly/time consuming and don't follow recommendations when a diagnosis is made. This can have a negative impact lifelong on a child both socially and emotionally. It should be taken serious and each school have specialist dyslexic trained staff as this could be picked up much earlier and support given rather than parents being told that their child will catch up...yet this is never the case nor will be without the right support.”

“Support is sporadic, inconsistent. Access to programs etc suspended or long waitlist.”

“The school did try and support my child in every way possible in this difficult situation”.

“It was hard on everyone teachers including no one was prepared for covid so as a result kids education suffer on a hold by time they got on line school up and running it was presented with a lot of problems.”

“Eldest had speech and language help pre covid for stammer. This was getting better however has slipped again. She is no longer "in the system" as far as I know. However because we have very little information from the high school I have no idea if they are even aware of this! We also believe to be autistic, however have had no chance to even discuss with anyone because there is no information on how to deal with this.”

“No support from the Local Authority. We never received any communication to check how our children were doing or feeling, or even to offer advice and support. My youngest son could not attend school due the EHCP process being long and arduous for no apparent reason other than waiting for different departments to act in a time appropriate manor, which they did not.”

“No groups sessions no one to one sessions no access to all area of the school. My son moved to his school during the pandemic and difficult to settle I an environment that was not normal school life. As a result he become withdrawn and depressed. Needing intervention from mental health services.”

“During the pandemic we were waiting for the panel meeting for a possible autism diagnosis. This was then given over the phone and very much felt like as soon as the diagnosis was given that was it, didnt really have much support or advice after.”

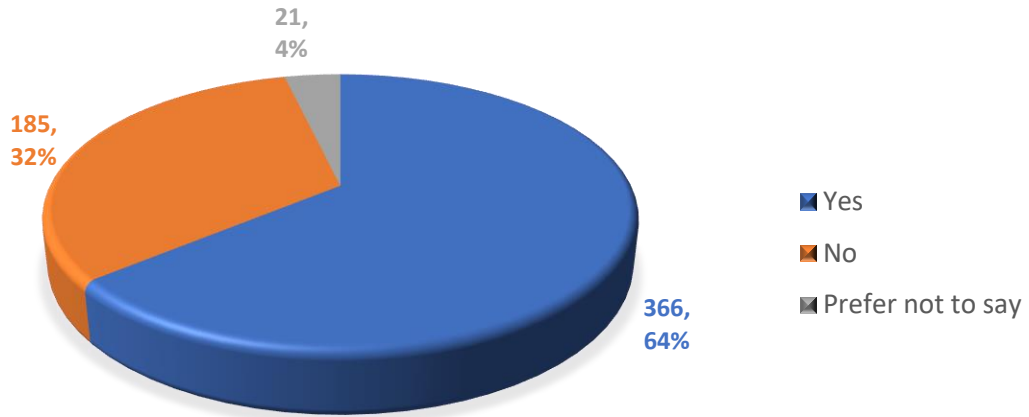
“His EHCP has swimming and regular physio reviews on it. Neither of these could happen. Even when school re-opened, because Archie was not the most vulnerable at home, and not all children could be safely in, [child] remained at home.”

“Yes they were keeping an eye on my son all through lockdown and making sure that they could help him and I can honestly say the school were amazing for that too.”

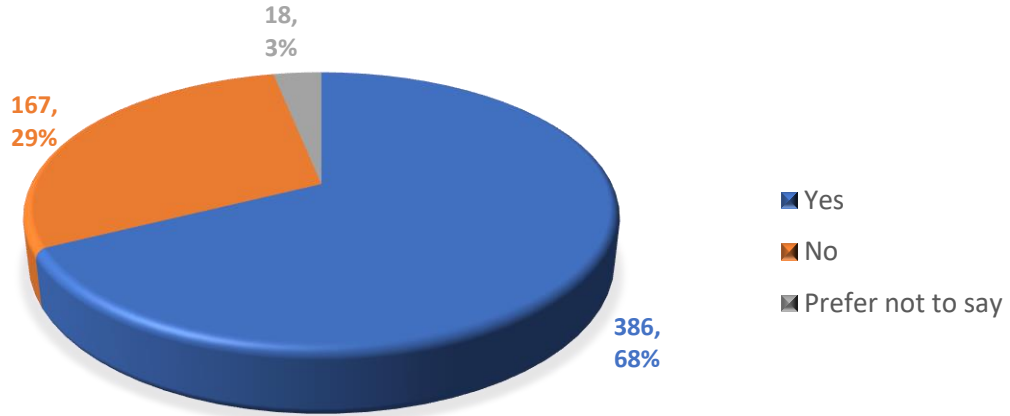
“They have not been able to attend school for significant periods of time. They have also not been able to take part in their usual SEN activities. Earlier on in the pandemic I had no respite which had a negative effect on them. Their needs were not met in many ways.”

“I have a child with SEN and for a long time through first lockdown he was not provided with learning for his level. I also worked in a sandwell school at the time that were providing their children with a fantastic education throughout. The contrast between the two schools was massive. This did lead me to consider changing schools as one of my children was not provided with an effective education.”

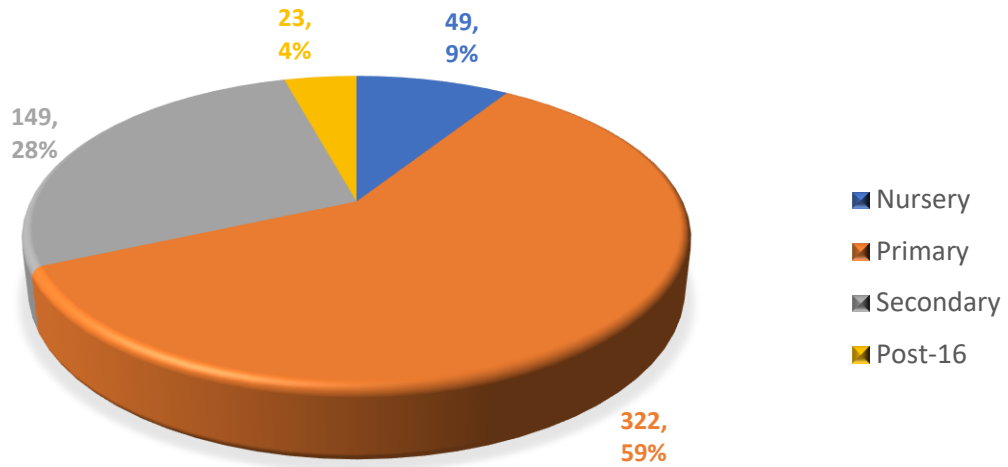
HAS THE PRESSURE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IMPACTED THE EMOTIONAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF YOUR CHILD/CHILDREN?



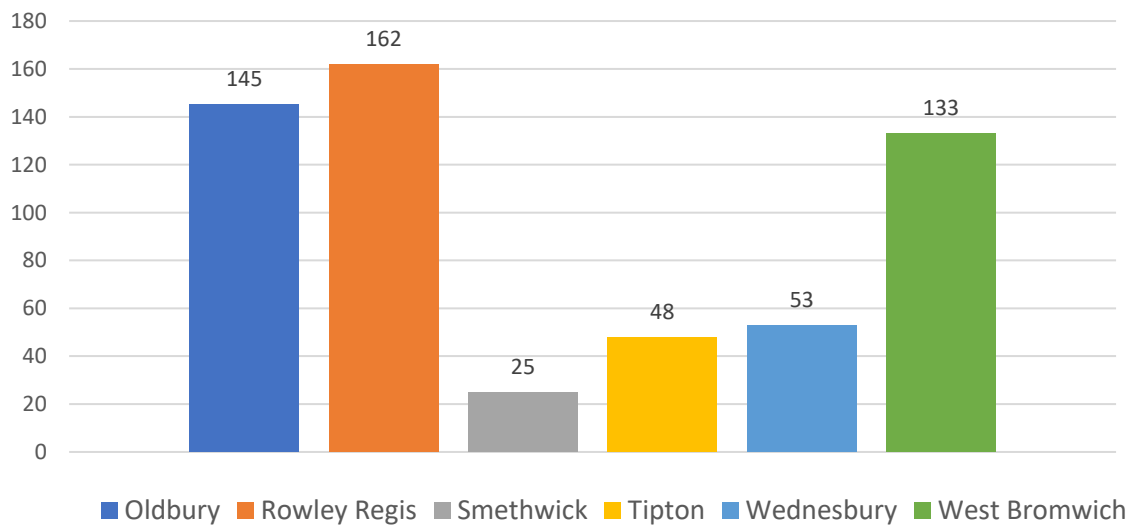
HAS THE PRESSURE ON YOUR CHILD/CHILDREN IMPACTED YOUR EMOTIONAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC?



WHAT SCHOOL STAGE DOES YOUR CHILD/CHILDREN ATTEND?



Please indicate in what town your child/children attend school?



Please detail any information you believe would help the Children's Scrutiny Board in its review of the impact of the lockdown on children and families.

"It is emotionally stressful even with parent trying to help sometimes subjects are not understood by the parent which makes parent feel useless and a failure. Also having time to help as much as possible can be difficult when having other children/work as well as running a home."

"My primary school child is confused - after being home schooled and now back at school in a bubble, she can't eat with other children or play with them, however the whole school has the same start and finish time and other year groups are mixing with my daughters class at these times. The children are confused and they're is no consistency with the rules in our primary school at all."

"Children need stability and routine and not knowing what they was doing from one day to the next being cut off from their friends made it so difficult and emotionally draining upon the return of the schools opening due to anxiety , they are only just starting to settle in ."

"There needs to be help with extra learning for the children who need it, children who have done well in school don't need the extra support, it's the children who are struggling and who have fallen behind who need to be focused on."

"Our children are lucky and actually enjoyed the lockdown. I feel we made the most of a bad situation. However I feel for the countless number of children who are not so lucky. I hope they get the help and support they need."

"Understand that several child are fighting for support for their child and that the ASD pathway is a lengthy process. Because my son wasn't statemented I believe he was failed as all his years at school confirm his difficulties but because he didn't have the correct diagnosis/statement he was left to struggle."

"The vast majority of parents in my son's class lacked even a level 1 qualification. Those children were taught by older siblings. It is patently obvious that the parents education has been the main factor affecting their child (children's) achievement."

"Lockdown had a huge impact on children and families. All normal routine was suddenly pulled from families and we were thrown into working from home - something we had never done. The expectation for full curriculum at home became a lot for working parents and anxious children who had lost contact with their school teachers and peers. Families were forced to accommodate multiple children all learning from home with multiple devices and areas to study - whilst trying to balance home life which had never been so intense!"

"The closure of schools were the worst thing the government did. It has affected all children of all ages. They are all behind and working towards. My child in particular found it hard to interact with other children when she went back to school. She was given after school clubs and other interventions which she feels punished for and has now knocked her confidence. The schools was not equipped enough to teach online, we couldn't access all of the work."

"I was on the edge of a breakdown with stress of schooling and working. I called the school I asked for help, they could not offer me any. They would not accept her in to school as I was not an essential worker."

“My daughter's school handled the pandemic very well. She was given so much support while doing online lessons. Spoke to teacher on a daily basis. She has not fallen behind on any lessons. What a wonderful job in such difficult times.”

“This was not education's fault and dealt with best they could at time, just feel my daughters transition from primary to senior school during pandemic was dreadful and now in year 8 has still not settled, no confidence, struggling with her work, finds it hard to make friends and in hindsight could have been dealt with better. Primary to senior school is a big step as it is without a lockdown.”

“My daughter suffered with significant anxiety when returning back to school. The school were amazing and she is now fully back in all her lessons but it has taken a full school year. Unfortunately other services CAHMS were not helpful. I think this service needs to be looked at more as lots of children have suffered through lockdowns mentally and need some help and support for them.”

“Streamline the EHCP process. Have better communication with parents and other departments. Staff need to know their job and have a good working knowledge of SEN policy and law. We had an out of date data protection law stated on both EHCPs which did not cover GDPR. Spelling was atrocious from plan writers and assessors alike. Terminology was used incorrectly. Statutory requirements were not met. Deadlines were not met. Termination the LAs legal responsibility to SEN children and their EHCPs during lockdown was appalling. The LA washed its hands of responsibility while being paid to work from home on tax payers money. We saw no assistance.”

“I worry that the impact of two years missed will affect my child's ability to socially develop and also her grades will be lower than what she could of potentially achieved. She is constantly saying that she isn't good enough, mostly average and is not noticed for her achievements as she is an average pupil. She also hates being in social situations and finds school very hard.”

“I would do anything for my child to resit all of year 9 & 10 . I am personally worried of the outcome for the future . I really do feel they have not received the best education compared to students pre pandemic.”

“Children missed out on a lot of social interaction, missed out on so events that had to be cancelled. Huge stress within the home with 2 children in separate years both needing support. Anxiety from all the family not knowing what the future holds and worries about family members.”

“It's important to realise the time has gone. They lost all that education but you can't expect the gaps to be magically filled, especially with the huge expectations in the national curriculum in primary. My daughter missed half of year 1 and a chunk of year 2. She's in year 3 and the leap is massive. But the school's expectations of her by the end of year 3 are the same. How is that fair?”

“More communication was needed. I understand it took us all by suprise and there was no way to prepare for it. But I have friends around the country who's school dealt with it much better. No online classrooms, no phone calls / video calls, very basic work set via Facebook and later by other websites which was slightly better. My daughter is like a different child post lockdown. The stress of homeschooling her with no support has impacted our relationship and her relationship towards learning as a whole. It was the worst year of our lives and she still cries when it is bought up in conversation, to the point that she now avoids anything that reminds her of that time, including songs, foods she ate and games she played.”