



Dr Sue Peters ★ · 11 minutes ago · 5 min read

# How Does Long Covid Impact Attendance and Educational Experiences?

Despite the current focus on attendance, little is spoken about the many children with Long Covid who have been unable to return to full-time education since becoming ill.

We have many children and young people using our support services who have been chronically unwell for more than 3 years. Many of these children tell us that they are unable to attend school full time or to attend at all. Many of them are unable to access alternative provision. These children are often not mentioned in reports and articles focusing on attendance and instead the focus is often on emotionally based school avoidance or non-attendance.



In February 2023 Long Covid Kids launched our Attendance and Education Experiences Survey on SurveyMonkey in collaboration with the University of Derby. The aim was to collect detailed information about the educational experiences and patterns of attendance for children and young people (CYP) with Long Covid in England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and Ireland by surveying their parents or the CYP themselves if they were over 16 years old. We received 317 responses in relation to children and young people aged from 5 to 19 years.

The survey aimed to collect data on:

- the impact of CYP's symptoms on accessing education
- the impact of Long Covid on their school attendance
- whether and how they had been able to access support with their learning
- the impact upon public exams (if appropriate to their age)
- their overall educational experience.

Participants were recruited from the Long Covid Kids Support Services and through requests for involvement on Long Covid Kids' social media pages. Whilst data from the survey cannot be extrapolated to the general population, the survey provides an in-depth view of the impact of Long Covid on school attendance and educational experiences for children and young people in the UK and Ireland living with this condition who

may have used or come into contact with the charity's support services and may be indicative of the educational experiences encountered by other children with Long Covid.

The full results are currently being written up for publication in an academic journal. However, the preliminary results presented here reveal a shocking picture of how Long Covid impacts children's attendance and education experiences.

### **The Impact of Long Covid Symptoms on Accessing Education**

#### **Areas of Education Most Impacted by Long Covid**

#### **The Impact of Long Covid on School Attendance**

#### **Impact of Long Covid on Levels of Support Needed in School**

#### **Impact of Long Covid on Social and Extra-Curricular Activities**

#### **Impact of Long Covid on Exams**

#### **Overall Experiences**

#### **Summary and Next Steps**

#### **Resources**

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# **The Impact of Long Covid Symptoms on Accessing Education**

Fatigue, PESE (Post Exertional Symptom Exacerbation) and cognitive dysfunction are three of the most common symptoms that continue to impact engagement with education.

The symptom profile is broad for all CYP with Long Covid, and the different symptoms affect engagement with education and attainment in a multitude of different ways. This suggests that a flexible approach and highly individualised support plans are needed.



# Areas of Education Most Impacted by Long Covid:

Respondents described that the areas of Education Most Impacted by Long Covid were:

- Attendance 75%
- Progress 55%
- Sense of belonging and feeling included 52%
- Friendships 49%
- Emotional wellbeing 46%
- Self-esteem and confidence 27%



## The Impact of Long Covid on School Attendance

Results from the survey show that:

Attendance is being greatly impacted for 75% of respondents, with only 7% of CYP being able to attend school for five full days in a typical week.

- A child with Long Covid is reported to lose an average of 20.6 learning hours per week.
- 29% of respondents would estimate that their children's education has been disrupted (defined as missing more than 0.5 days per week) for 1-1.5 years and 18% estimate disruption for 1.5-2 years.
- Since their covid-19 infection, 69% report that their education status has changed (Changes in education status include a significant reduction in hours, leaving education entirely and the implementation of a new provision of hybrid or home learning by the Local Authority).

In terms of a change in education status:

- 96% were at school/college full time (plus 2% were home educated to the equivalent of full time) before their Covid-19 infection.
- Since Covid-19 infection, 1.5% are attending school / college full time.
- 6% are now home educated (which is 3-fold increase on pre-covid figures).
- 9% are now receiving home or hybrid education provided by the Local Authority.
- 10% are currently temporarily away from school/ college ill and 10% are too unwell to access any education.



## Impact of Long Covid on Levels of Support Needed in School

40.2% of respondents thought that the school lacked an understanding of the impact that Long Covid has had on their child or young person's education and a further 25.9% have experienced pressure from schools to send their child or young person to school when they have been unwell.

81% of CYP did not require support with their learning before covid, since covid 59% need support most or all of the time

For children unable to physically attend school, respondents stated receiving the following support:

- Check-ins and communication from school staff 34%
- Able to access learning at school remotely, such as through Microsoft Teams, Google Classrooms or equivalents 27%
- Work sent home 23%
- Online Learning provided by the school or Local Authority 11%
- Home tuition provided by the school or Local Authority 11%



## Impact of Long Covid on Social and Extra-Curricular Activities

68% were doing between 3 and 5+ social and extra-curricular activities before their covid infection. Since their covid infection only 1.47% are doing 3-5+ social and extra-curricular activities a week and 70% are doing none.



## Impact of Long Covid on Exams

For parents of CYP in exam years, 90% felt that their grades did not show their true potential and 90% said that they would have to or be likely to modify their future subject choices due to their Long Covid.



## Overall Experiences

Respondents were asked to describe their overall Long Covid education experience:

The most commonly used words were frustrated, stressful, supported, difficult, hard, disappointing, exhausting, poor and appalling as represented by this word cloud.





Long Covid Kids Attendance and Educational Experiences Survey: Overall Long Covid education experience

## Summary and Next Steps

This research presents a powerful picture of just how much Long Covid impacts children's attendance, access to education, academic progress, inclusion, friendships, emotional wellbeing and overall educational experiences. The findings clearly demonstrate the staggering amount of lost learning hours and changes to education status as a result of Long Covid. It also reveals that academic progress, a sense of school belonging, friendships and emotional wellbeing are also impacted with fatigue, PESE and cognitive dysfunction being the symptoms that most impact children's ability to access their education.

In addition to the support for education professionals ([link](#)), Long Covid Kids are developing an Education Tool Kit series of training videos which aim to further support education professions in their understanding of Long Covid so that they can support children and young people with the condition and their families. Please watch this space.

We hope that this research will lead to increased awareness of the impact of Long Covid on children's attendance and educational experiences and lead to a shift in the way schools think about attendance and support for those with Long Covid or other chronic illnesses. Until then, children will continue to miss out on the education that they are entitled to and deserve.



## Resources

Resources and support materials for education professionals and school staff can be found on the Long Covid Kids website: [Schools | Long Covid Kids](#)

Blog written by:



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## Support Our Work

While children are living with life-changing symptoms and families struggle to seek appropriate support, we need to be here.

Your donation will be used directly to support families living with Long Covid.

Find out more about our [Impact](#).

We are fundraising

