

**Call for Evidence: Persistent absence and support for disadvantaged pupils by Fiona Fearon, Policy and Projects Manager, National Governance Association**

1. The National Governance Association (NGA) exist to improve the well-being of children and young people by promoting high standards in all our schools, and improving the effectiveness of their governing bodies. The NGA is the only independent body representing school governors at national level across England. We2.6 (e)i1.1 nftil rifs i in both local authority maintained schools and academies.
2. This submission includes evidence from a range of NGA sources including interactive online events and our most recent annual governance survey (2022). NGA has been running a survey of school governors and trustees since 2011. The aim of the survey is to gather

working on absence rates in our MILD school as they are above average and could be a safeguarding issue”.

“Lower attendance of disadvantaged children”

“Disadvantaged pupils not attending school as regularly as before Covid”

“Reduced attendance for vulnerable pupils”

“Attendance of vulnerable groups has decreased significantly particularlyupil premium students which has led to safeguarding concerns”

**4. COVID-19 and the impact of the partial school closures were identified as a factor impacting on pupil attendance:**

- 4.1 Within open text responses to the same question, respondents shared their experiences of how the COVID-19 pandemic had impacted on attendance:

*“Increase in persistent absenteeism. Parental anxiety affecting children and their attendance”.*

*“Fear of COVID-19”*

*“We have seen a deterioration in pupil behaviour compared to pre-covid times. Some students found it hard to re-adjust to the routine of attending school on a daily basis and interacting with a wider range of staff and students.”*

*"Pupils or parents scared to return to school re covid concerns. Loss of routine after 2 disrupted school years, some pupils less engaged & low level behaviour issues around school."*

**5. How schools and families can be better supported to improve attendance, and how this affects pupils and families who are clinically vulnerable to covid-19.**

5.1. While we didn't explicitly ask about how schools and their boards could be better supported in relation to attendance, boards shared their views on what the

6. We recently hosted a series of Leadership Forums for Chairs and Vice Chairs of governing boards on the subject of 'disadvantage'. We presented the attendees with two interactive polls:
  - 6.1. To what extent do you think breakfast clubs and free school meals have a positive impact on attendance?
  - 6.2. To what extent do you think holiday activities and food programmes and other after school and holiday clubs, such as sports have in improving attendance and school engagement?