

**Module Code:** ECIE4001

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**Portfolio:** 3 Components

**Element 1:** PowerPoint- What challenges do learners face in Welsh educational settings? (page 2-13)

**Element 2:** Presentation link (page 14)

**Element 3:** Presentation notes (page 15-19)

**PowerPoint-** What challenges do learners face in Welsh educational settings?



# Introduction

## Challenges in Welsh education settings

- Systemic pressures and learner level barriers
  - Government data, Policy links and personal classroom experience
  - Aim: To build understanding and explore solutions

# What challenges do learners face in Welsh Educational settings?

- Teacher and Support staff shortages
- Lack of Resources
- Disruptive Behaviours
- Low Attendance

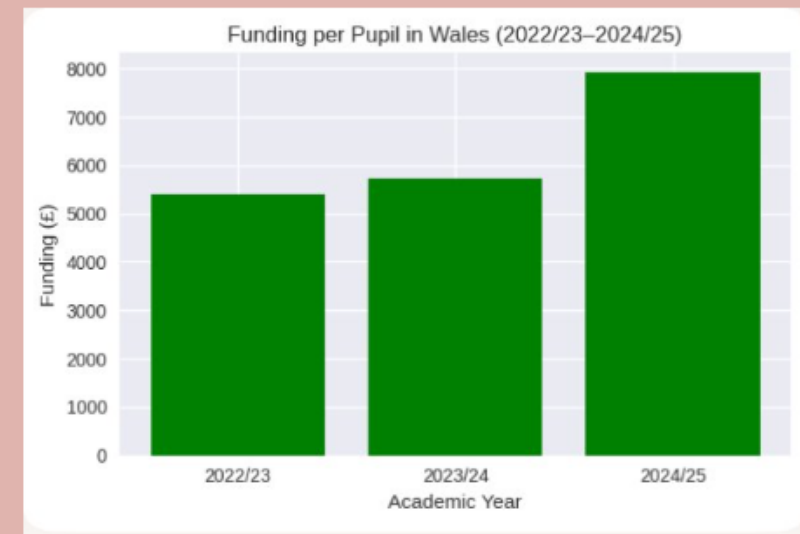
# Systemic Challenges in Welsh Education Settings

## Lack of Resources

- Funding Pressures
- Digital inequality persists in rural areas

## Staff Shortages

- Secondary teacher recruitment has halved since 2014
- Retention stable, but shortages in key subjects

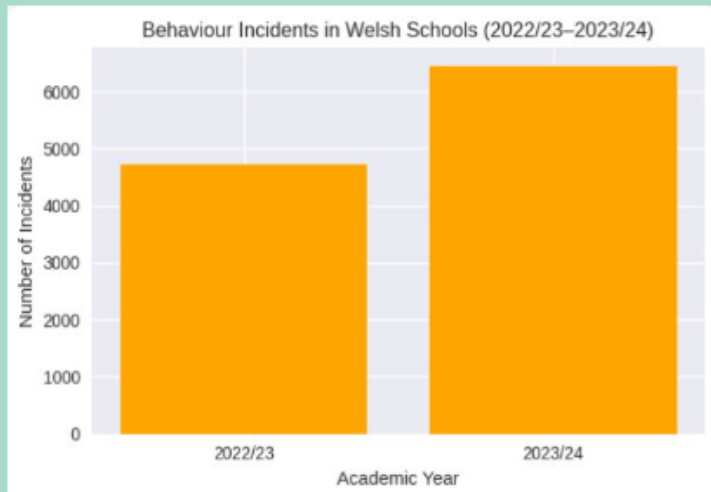


Data source: Welsh Government (2024). Local authority budgeted expenditure on schools.

# Behaviour Decline & Attendance Issues

## Behavioural Challenges in Welsh Schools

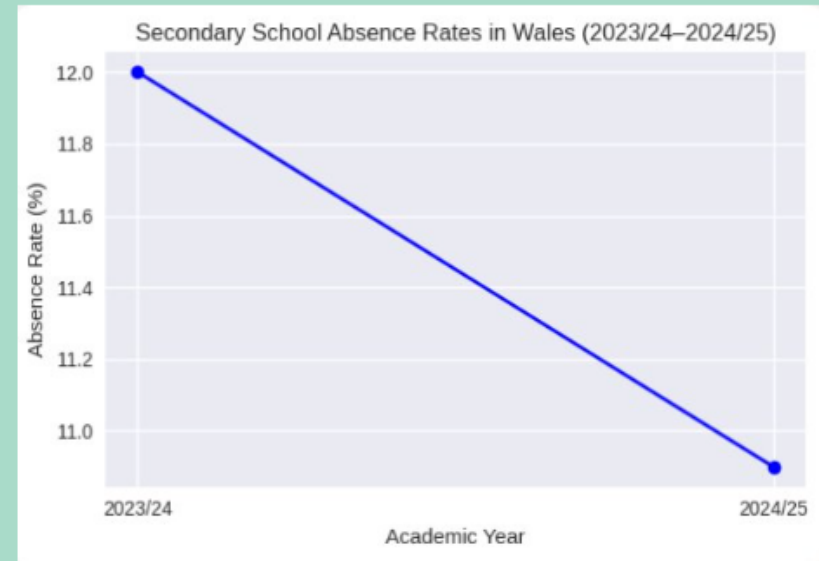
- Increasing levels of disruptive behaviour
- Rising concerns about physical incidents, verbal abuse and class disruptions
- Effects teaching time as well as staff & learner wellbeing.



Data source: Estyn (2024). Annual Report 2023–2024.

## Low Attendance

- Absence improving but still below post pandemic levels
- Persistent absence is significant barrier to learner engagement and progress.



Data source: Welsh Government (2025). Attendance of pupils in maintained schools.

# Learner Challenges: Personal Barriers

## **Mental Health & Wellbeing**

- Anxiety
- Trauma
- Dysregulation that affects learning
- **ALN Needs**
- Delays in assessment
- Inconsistent support

## **Poverty**

- Impacts on attendance and behaviour
- Limited home learning resources

# Policy Links

- Curriculum for Wales (CFW)
  - ALN Act 2018
- Attendance Guidance

# Theoretical Frameworks

- **Maslow's Hierocracy of needs**- Learners struggle to meet cognitive engagement when basic needs unmet (Maslow 1943)
- **Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System Theory**- Learners shaped by family, community, school and Society (Bronfenbrenner 1979)
- **Trauma Informed Practice**- Behaviour understood as communication (Perry & Szalavitz 2006)

# Classroom Experience

- Regulating Learners
- Behaviour incidents
- Difficulty accessing support for ALN and Wellbeing

# Improvements

- Invest in staff retention and wellbeing
- Identify Learners for early intervention and pastoral support
  - Improve digital access for learners
  - Strengthen School clusters

# Conclusion

- Education in Wales face complex challenges
- Learners experience Systemic and Personal Barriers
  - Policy and Theory help explain the landscape
- Effective practice requires resources, commitment and consistency

# References

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- Maslow, A.(1943) 'A theory of human motivation' Psychological review, 50(4), pp. 370-396
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## **Presentation**

Presentation Link- [Challenges in Welsh Education Settings Presentation.pptx](#)

## **Presentation Notes**

### **Presentation Cover** (slide 1)

### **Introduction** (Slide 2)

Hello, my name is Abigail Wharton. Today, we are going to explore the key Challenges currently affecting education settings across Wales. We will look at both systemic pressure and learner level barriers. We will do this by using real Welsh government data, policy links and personal classroom experience.

The Aim of this is to build our understanding and explore possible solutions for improvements.

### **What challenges do learners face in Welsh Educational settings?** (Slide 3)

- **Teacher and Support staff shortages-** Schools do not have the funds to employ enough teachers or support staff. With the lack of funding to employ crucial staff that help deliver and support the education of our learners, the outcome of the learner's education will be impacted dramatically. Teachers are stretched to teach multiple subjects in schools, mostly in subjects they do not specialise in, which can result in the learners not getting pure knowledge in those subjects, so their understanding is limited. Support staff such as LSA's are massively limited in schools today, they are mainly only supplied in classes with key pupils who have IDP's. Again, this is due to lack of funding. ALN needs are rising and without support staff to help the teachers with pupils in the classroom setting, many learners go unnoticed, especially in the average class of around 28-34 pupils. This disadvantage then sets up the learners to fail, as they have no crucial support in lessons, which can result in a decline in their self-esteem, their knowledge and understanding on subjects and behaviour.
- **Lack of Resources-** Schools unfortunately do not have the funding to cover consistent resources. With inadequate resources and equipment, the learners will struggle with the quality of instruction, that could lead to lower academic performance. Limited resources could result in staff not having the full or correct training. Lack of resources creates educational inequality and limits access to quality education.

- **Disruptive Behaviours-** There is a rising increase in negative behaviour throughout schools in Wales. Learners are becoming much more disruptive than they have been in previous years. This is making a massive decline in their education. This disruptive behaviour will have lasting effects and impact the outcome of their educational journey and future.
- **Low attendance-** Attendance is at an all-time low throughout schools in Wales. With learners' attendance declining, their education is not consistent and leaves gaps in their educational journey resulting in minimum academic success. If attendance does not improve, the future of education is at risk. Grades will be at an all-time low, leaving learners without the qualifications to get on a professional career path. This could leave learners limited to non-professional jobs. To name a few- waiter/waitressing, bar work, Cleaners, care home Carers, receptionists and shop workers.

## **Systemic challenges in Welsh education settings** (Slide 4)

Funding has increased recently, but schools report that rising needs outpace budgets. Funding pressures have put a massive strain on all educational staff to fulfil other roles in the school settings. Digital inequality is another concern, such as prices of broadband and Phone access. This causes a lack of reliable digital infrastructure, low digital skills and confidence in staff and learners.

Recruitment remains a major challenge, especially in secondary school subjects like Sciences, Mathematics, Welsh and Computer Science. Not enough new teachers are entering into these professions.

## **Behaviour Decline and Attendance issues** (Slide 5)

Behaviour incidents have increasingly risen, which then places pressure on staff capacity, it lowers the teaching time, learners' education these verbal and physical incidents are causing staff and learner strain on their wellbeing.

Attendance is improving slowly, but persistent absence maintains a concern. Without steady attendance, learners will not have the full impact of what education can provide.

### **Learner Challenges: Personal Barriers** (Slide 6)

Many Learners face personal barriers that affect their education. These challenges can intersect with systemic barriers.

**Mental Health & Wellbeing** has a massive impact on learners' engagement within school. This could be linked to Trauma, Anxiety or dysregulation. This has a negative effect on their learning outcomes.

**Poverty** can cause a lot of stress to pupils who are in lower income households. They would lack the resources needed for home learning; they may miss out on educational trips that have a cost to attend. Barriers like this impact a learner's engagement, can cause withdrawal and isolation.

**ALN** needs are a rising concern in Wales. There are many learners who have not yet been identified to have an ALN need. Delays in assessments are rising, due to the demand of learners needing support. These pupils are lacking support from Teachers and support staff due to funding as the capacity for ALN needs are rising. Pupils who have been identified with an ALN need still lack consistent support. This again is due to funding; staff absence can cause a massive strain on those with ALN needs.

### **Policy Links** (slide 7)

Curriculum for Wales- Four purposes require strong wellbeing foundations

ALN- Aims for inclusive learner centred support

Attendance- Emphasis on early intervention and multi-agency working

### **Theoretical Frameworks** (Slide 8)

Maslow's Hierocracy of needs- Learners struggle to meet cognitive engagement when basic needs unmet

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System Theory- Learners shaped by family, community, school and Society

Trauma Informed Practice- Behaviour understood as communication

### **Classroom Experience** (Slide 9)

Classroom settings are difficult when first entering the lesson. Pupils arrive within a short amount of time to each lesson. They first need to find their seats, get their book and stationery out, then proceed to get the date, heading and lesson aim down. This can take up to 15 minutes of the lesson. Some pupils do not regulate as fast as others and can take longer; this then slows the other pupils learning time as the teacher is waiting for all pupils to be at the same stage. This is where LSA support comes in. They will help prompt the learners who are lacking pace with the others.

When there is a behaviour incident, it automatically puts a hold on learning. All pupils stop and observe while the teacher is sorting the disruption out, these disruptions can vary based on the incident, however, you then need to get the other learners to regulate and start their lesson again. Unfortunately accessing ALN support or Wellbeing needs during a lesson can be tricky. There is not enough support to be 1-1, so unfortunately pupils get missed., behaviour escalates and learning halts again. Disruptions are unavoidable.

### **Improvements** (Slide 10)

To maintain staff and support wellbeing, having a great SLT is important. SLT need to communicate effectively, support all staff in complex situations and regard them equally. To help identify learners who need interventions and pastoral support, there needs to be effective communication between teachers and support staff, regular term testing and check in with already identified vulnerable pupils often. Digital access is limited in schools, they don't have the resources to have the most up to date equipment or software, sometimes even the quantity to support all learners. To improve challenges in schools, all cluster schools need to maintain communication regarding pupils, curriculum and any additional support in place. This will help all schools communicate effectively and bring a much more supported network with staff in education settings.

**Conclusion** (Slide 11)

Education settings in Wales face multiple challenges, However, solutions and improvements are possible with coordinated effort.