

CHALLENGES FACED BY SCHOOL SUPPORT STAFF SINCE COVID19

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WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES SUPPORT STAFF IN SCHOOL FACE SINCE COVID19?

- Since the beginning of 2020, the world suffered from a world-wide pandemic called Covid-19.
- Schools were forced to shut down, with the exception of a few students who were allowed to attend due to parents being key-workers.
- Regulations were implemented by the government forcing people to social distance and take precautions to minimize spreading the virus to those most vulnerable.
- We are going to look at four main challenges support staff in schools faced since the Covid-19 pandemic, how this has impacted on LSA's and TA's and look for a way forward.



FIRST MAIN CHALLENGE

- **72%** of teachers have seen a reduction in support staff in their work place
- **62%** of teaching assistants have seen a reduction in support staff Harries (2023)

The National Education Union's finding shows that support staff are more likely to **"quit"** working in education than teachers- with TA's citing **pay** as the main reason and teachers citing **workload**. The NEU (2024)

"many TA's have left for various reasons and it is a challenge to find people with the appropriate qualifications willing to do the job for the pay offered"

"we have so few staff we need someone with confidence to be able to step in with minimal input and get on with the job"

"Even though we have a job, we are poverty stricken. Some of us have to choose between heat or eat, especially if we have families to care for"

"when we advertise a position, it often takes two or three attempts to appoint as there's just nobody applying or the applicants aren't up to a standard now required to actually be in the role of a TA"

"the turnover of staff is fast-paced"
"experienced TAs are leaving for less stressful and better-paid jobs elsewhere"



SECOND MAIN CHALLENGE

- **Funding** has been a major problem for schools even before Covid, but since the pandemic, this problem has been magnified.
- A number of schools were in deficit before Covid-19.
- Schools have lost a significant amount of income and incurred substantial additional expenditures.
- Deprived schools are receiving the smallest average budget increases due to Government's "Levelling-Up" policy.
- Funding increases have not been sufficient to help all schools meet the costs of Covid-19
- 1500 schools are particularly at risk of great financial hardship due to Covid-19.
Julius (2020)
- Schools are laying off staff, cutting staff hours, cutting behaviour support and delaying building repairs due to a crisis in school budgets
- Staff feel stretched, with less staff wanting to do extra-curricular activities and things after school as they are much more tired, leading to wellbeing suffering
- A survey done by the National Association of Headteachers Cymru found they did not have enough funding to fully meet the needs of pupils. *Lewis BBC News (2024)*

"a generation of children is being affected by school budget cuts"

"We feel our schools are being failed by lack on investment"

*"Failure to invest in the learners of Wales will have a detrimental impact on their future."
Jones (2024)*



THIRD MAIN CHALLENGE

- ***“While secondary schools are reporting an increase in reading difficulties among Year 7 pupils, poor personal organisations and challenging patterns of interaction, staff in primary schools are reporting very serious problems of arrested language development, lack of toilet training, anxiety in being in social spaces and depressed executive function.” Oates (2024)***

A few challenges providers are concerned about include:

- i. The pandemic has continued to affect young children’s communication and language development, with many providers noticing delays in speech and language. Others said babies have struggled to respond to basic facial expressions, which may be due to reduced social interaction during the pandemic.
- ii. Pupils are behind on their curriculum learning in relation to teachers’ normal expectations for the end of the school year. *Sharp (2020)*
- iii. Babies are facing delays in crawling and walking. It was reported that children had regressed in their independence and self-care skills.
- iv. Fewer children have learned to use the toilet independently, which means more children might not be ready for school by age 4. *OFSTED (2022)*
- v. Many providers reported an increased wait for external services for children needing additional support, such as speech and language therapists. *OFSTED (2022)*
- vi. Students not completing their work was a greater challenge for staff working in secondary sector (64%) compared to staff working in the sixth form sector (50%), in the primary sector (36%) and in further education (31%) *Education Support PDF (2020)*

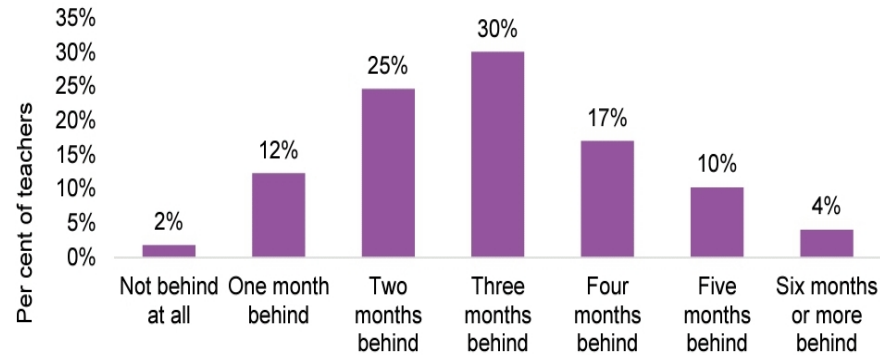
- ***“Schools continue to see high rates of pupil absence and they have many pupils with complex needs. At the same time, they are struggling with severe budget pressures, staff shortages and a special educational needs system on the brink of collapse.” Di’Lasio (2024)***

- ***“The after effects of Covid restrictions on children could be felt by schools for the next decade” Simpson (2024)***



THIRD MAIN CHALLENGE CONTINUED

Figure 1: Pupils' curriculum learning compared to normal expectations in July 2020

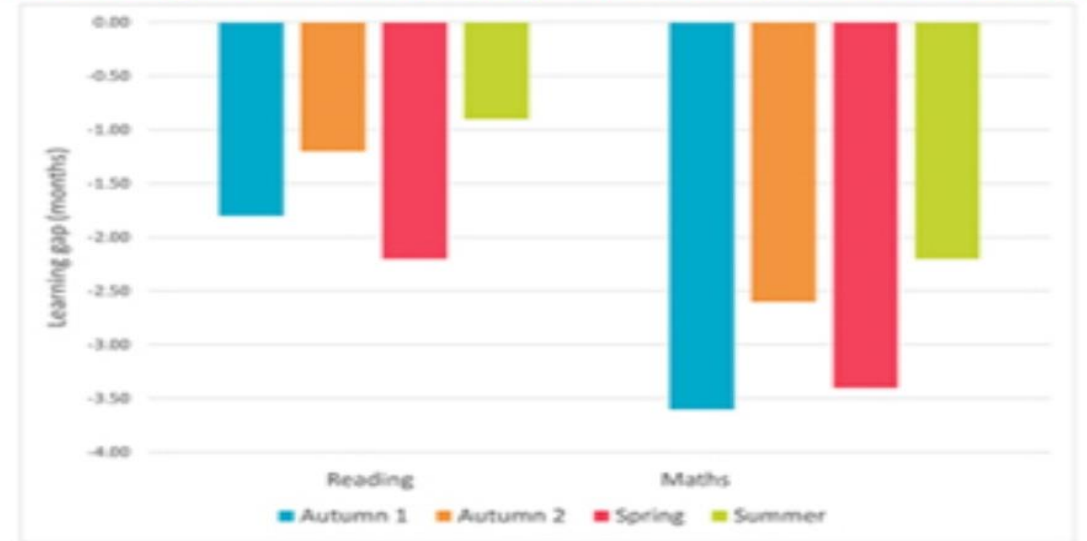


Source: NFER survey of 1782 classroom teachers: 1489 teachers gave at least one response.

Sharp (2020)

“ The pandemic has had a huge effect on the provision of education. We need to learn from what has happened, plan for the future, and grasp how the crisis has affected the mental health and wellbeing of education staff working across the sector” McBrearty, CEO Education Support (2024)

Average learning gap in 2020/21 for KS2 pupils



Source: Department for Education

Sawyer (2023)



FOURTH MAIN CHALLENGE



74% of teachers and school staff agreed that schools being closed to most students over the period of lockdown has had a negative impact on mental health of young people.”
YoungMinds (2020)



Foster (2021)



HOW THE ABOVE CHALLENGES IMPACTS ON TA'S & LSA'S

LSA's & TA's feel overworked, with not enough hours to help each pupil.

Colleagues leaving due to pay or sickness due to mental health is putting a strain on school support staff.

**Post Covid-19 Impact
on LSA's & TA's**

TAs are expected to work at lunchtimes as cannot get welfare staff, and asked to run extra-curricular clubs and activities with no extra pay offered.

TAs are often being asked to cover classes alone as there are no TAs to support them.

Harries (2023)



A WAY MOVING FORWARD



To help address the issues outlined above, schools and organisations can:

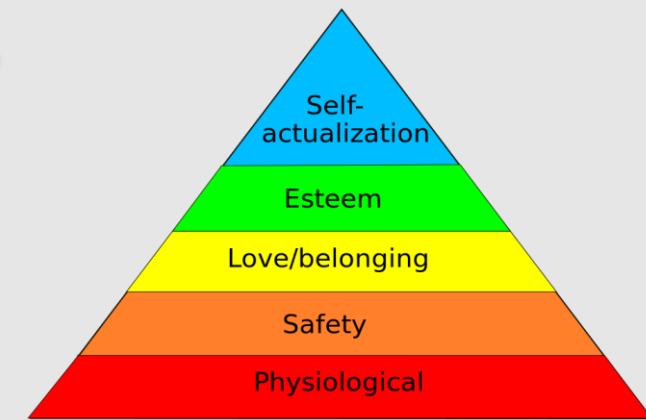
- I. Improve workload and wellbeing for school staff
- II. Support trainee teachers *Department of Education (2023)*
- III. Better funding for schools
- IV. Competitive pay for TA's & LSA's
- V. Staff and pupils feeling safe at school *Hunzicker (2022)*
- VI. Antisocial behaviour to be addressed so pupils respect those in authority
- VII. At the foundational physiological level, organizations should provide wages that sustain a decent standard of living and comprehensive benefits, ensuring employees can comfortably cater to necessities such as food, shelter, and medical care. *McLeod (2024)*

❖ ***Offer Comprehensive Healthcare Benefits***

❖ ***Subsidised Gym Memberships***

❖ ***Make the space ergonomic***

❖ ***Pay for wellness services***



Maslow (1943)

“School leaders have no choice but to view post-Covid as an opportunity for schools to redouble their work efforts to support students. Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, a pyramid-shaped model that represents human motivation from a students most basic needs to their greatest potential, offers a useful framework”
Wahome (2022)



CONCLUSION

In conclusion, funding, recruitment, attainment and mental wellbeing needs to be improved all around to help school support staff ensure the pupils needs are being met to the best of their potential.

Staff feeling appreciated for their hard work goes a long way to ensuring a happier workplace as well as staff retention.

These effects are still very much present, and with budgets being very tight, budget cuts occurring and supplies and goods going up in price, now more than ever, support staff need to stand together, speak out and campaign for the money schools so desperately need. *NAHT (2024)*



"The educational landscape in Wales is currently facing a harrowing funding crisis, casting shadows over the quality and accessibility of education for its youth."
NAHT (2024)



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Say it with your chest (2022)



Link to PowerPoint



<file:///C:/Users/fredm/AppData/Roaming/Microsoft/Windows/Network%20Shortcuts/Challenges%20SSS%20since%20Covid19pdf.pdf>

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