SGPC
South Glos Parent Carers

Attendance Survey
September 2023

What parent carers told us about their child's attendance at their educational setting

Introduction

South Glos Parent Carers (SGPC) CIC asked the members of their forum to complete a survey detailing their child's attendance at their educational setting and their experiences of the support they received if needed. This information was gathered to enable SGPC to represent the lived experiences of their community at meetings they attend.

The survey ran from 20 July - 6 September 2023 and this report details the qualitative and quantitative feedback received, compared to the data previously collected from an attendance survey SGPC conducted in August 2019, before Covid-19. Any information that may identify a child, parent carer, professional or educational setting has been removed from comments to retain confidentiality.

SGPC is the local parent carer forum in South Gloucestershire as recognised by the Department for Education. Our community are parent carers of children aged 0-25 who have a Special Educational Need and/or Disability (SEND). We work co-productively with service providers and stakeholders, to help shape services. Details of our full range of services can be found on our website.

We are grateful to all the parent carers who responded to this survey. We appreciate you finding the time to tell us about your lived experiences and allowing us to share them.

Thank you.

Executive Summary

Overview:

- 115 parent carers responded to our survey in 2023 and 77 in 2019. Responses have been compared for both years, where possible, to ascertain if attendance in settings has changed significantly.

- 50% of children were of primary school age, 42% of secondary school age with the remainder being in early years or of post-16 age. There was a similar age range in 2019 with a small increase in post-16 responses this year.

- 25% of children transitioned to another school with 2% starting primary school, 10% starting secondary school, 3% starting post-16 settings and 11% moving to a different setting for another reason.

- 83% attend a mainstream setting, 6% a resource base, 6% a specialist setting and 2% Pathways Learning Centre/Pupil Referral Unit. The remaining children attended an independent setting, were Elective Home Educated (EHE), Education Otherwise Than At School (EOTAS) or Not in Education, Training or Employment (NEET).

- 17% of children access alternative provision for some or all of their learning.

- Parents reported a broad range of needs/disabilities, identifying the top three needs as Autism, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder/Attention Deficit Disorder and Social Emotional Mental Health (SEMH) – together accounting for 46% of the responses.

Key Findings:

- Using the school attendance ladder, 36% of children's attendance was at least 96% during the academic year 2022-23 which is similar to 2018-19 when it was 35%. However, there are big differences when comparing the individual categories within the attendance ladder for both years. There is a 10% decrease in those with outstanding or very good attendance and a 10% increase in good attendance. There is a 12% decrease in those with concerning attendance but an 11% increase in those with very concerned, extremely concerned or attended none of the year. Therefore, school attendance has significantly decreased since Covid with an increasing number of children attending for less than 85% of the academic year.

- 55% of parent carers were concerned about their child's attendance during the last academic year.

- 42% of respondents said that the setting supported them and their child to try to improve their attendance, which has almost doubled from 22% in 2019.

- Less children had an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and less respondents considered applying for one, with a decrease from 44% to 38%.

- One third of children were on a part time timetable, this was a decrease from 33% to 30%.

- Permanent exclusions and managed moves have reduced. Fixed term exclusions have more than halved. Lunchtime exclusions, however, have increased from 10% to 13%. For some children exclusions occurred on more than four occasions.

- Between 15% and 20% of children were either sent home, sent to isolation, or not allowed to take part in an activity or trip. For some, this occurred on more than four occasions. The number of children experiencing these outcomes has reduced, and in some cases, figures have almost halved.

- Just under a third of respondents have considered, or started, elective home education (EHE) for their children during the last year, this was a decrease from 31% to 27%.
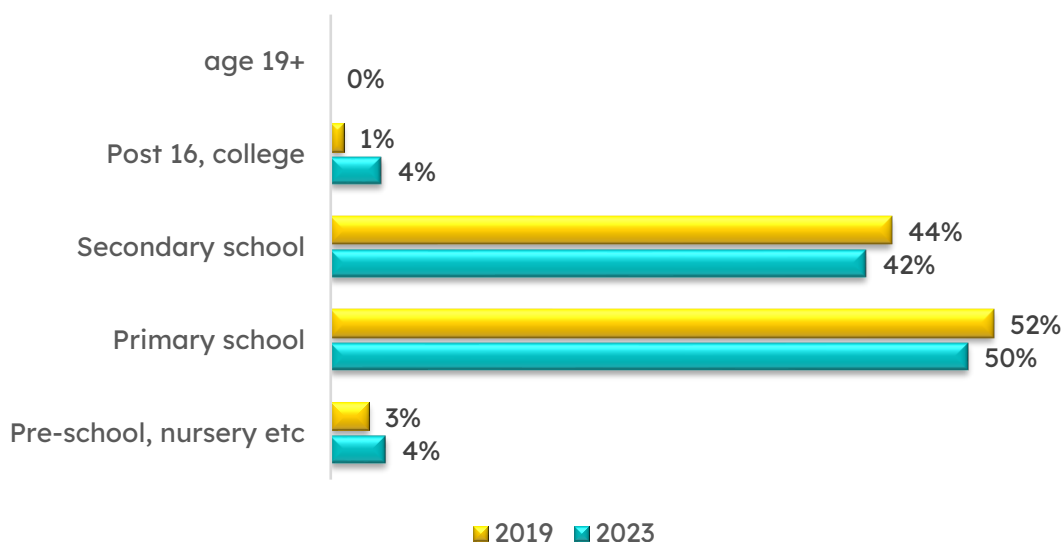
About the respondents

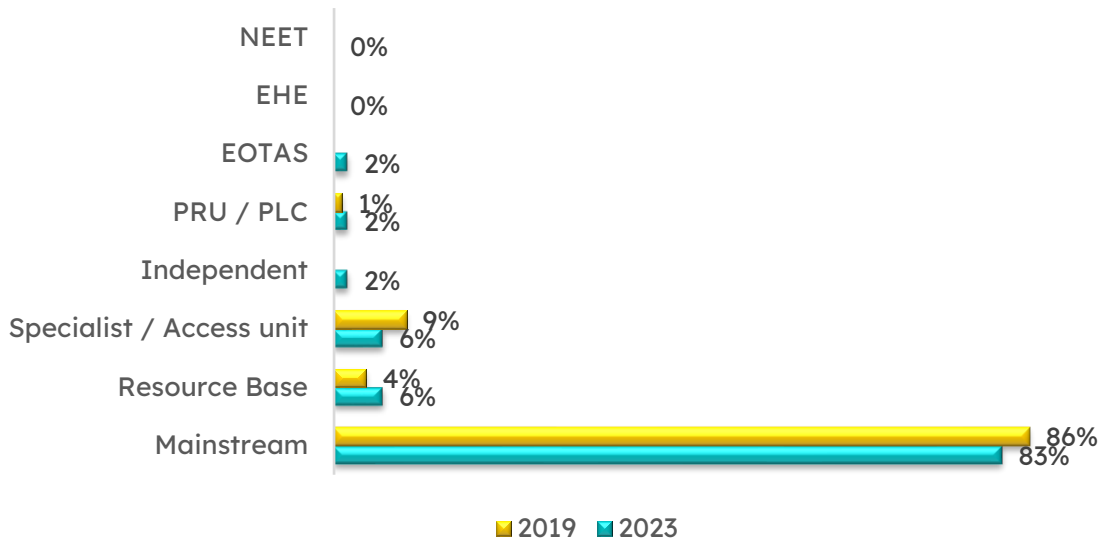## What are your child's additional needs/disability?
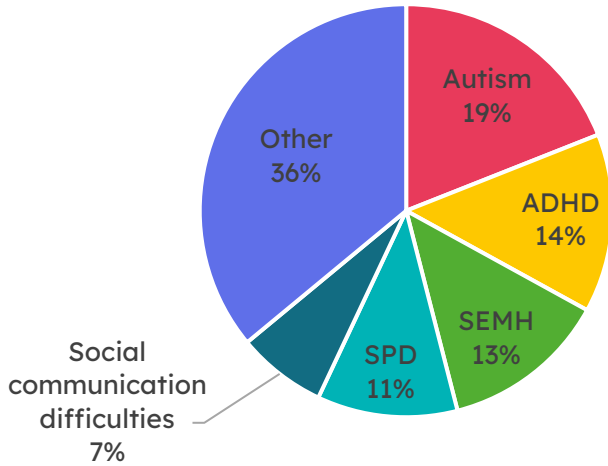
Parents reported a broad range of needs/disabilities, identifying the top five needs as: Autism, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder/Attention Deficit Disorder, Social Emotional Mental Health (SEMH), Sensory Processing Difficulties (SPD) and Social Communication difficulties.

Others included: undiagnosed, speech and language difficulties, Dyslexia, Dyspraxia/coordination difficulties/hypermobility, physical disability, Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD), neurological disorder (e.g. Cerebral Palsy, Epilepsy, Hydrocephalus, brain injury), medical/health needs, Global Development Delay, Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD), genetic/chromosome disorder, multi-sensory impairment, Chronic Fatigue Syndrome/ME, hearing impairment, visual impairment, Learning Difficulty Profound Multiple (PMLD), syndrome without a name, Down Syndrome and many others.

What year was your child in?

What type of setting does your child attend?

NEET — 0%
EHE — 0%
EOTAS — 2% (2023)
PRU / PLC — 1% (2019), 2% (2023)
Independent — 2% (2023)
Specialist / Access unit — 9% (2019), 6% (2023)
Resource Base — 4% (2019), 6% (2023)
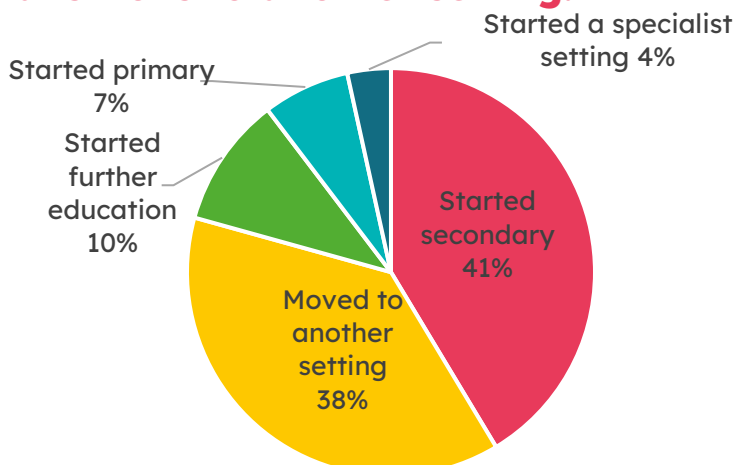Mainstream — 86% (2019), 83% (2023)

■ 2019 ■ 2023

The types of settings we asked respondents to specify if their children attended, or were on roll at, were mainstream, resource base attached to a mainstream setting, specialist/access unit, independent, Pupil Referral Unit (PRU)/Pathways Learning Centre (PLC), Education Other Than At School (EOTAS), Elective Home Education (EHE) or Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET). In 2019 slightly different categories were given so responses are best fit for comparison.

Alternative provision (AP) attended:

Online 10%
PLC 10%
In person AP such as mentoring, forest school 80%
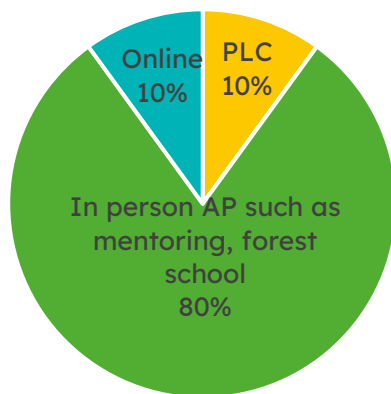
17% of children attended another educational setting as well as their main setting for some, or all, of their learning. Most of this alternative provision is provided in person, with a small percentage being provided online such as online tutoring. 10% of these children attend Pathways Learning Centre (PLC). No children attended hospital education.

Transitions to another setting:

Started a specialist setting 4%
Started primary 7%
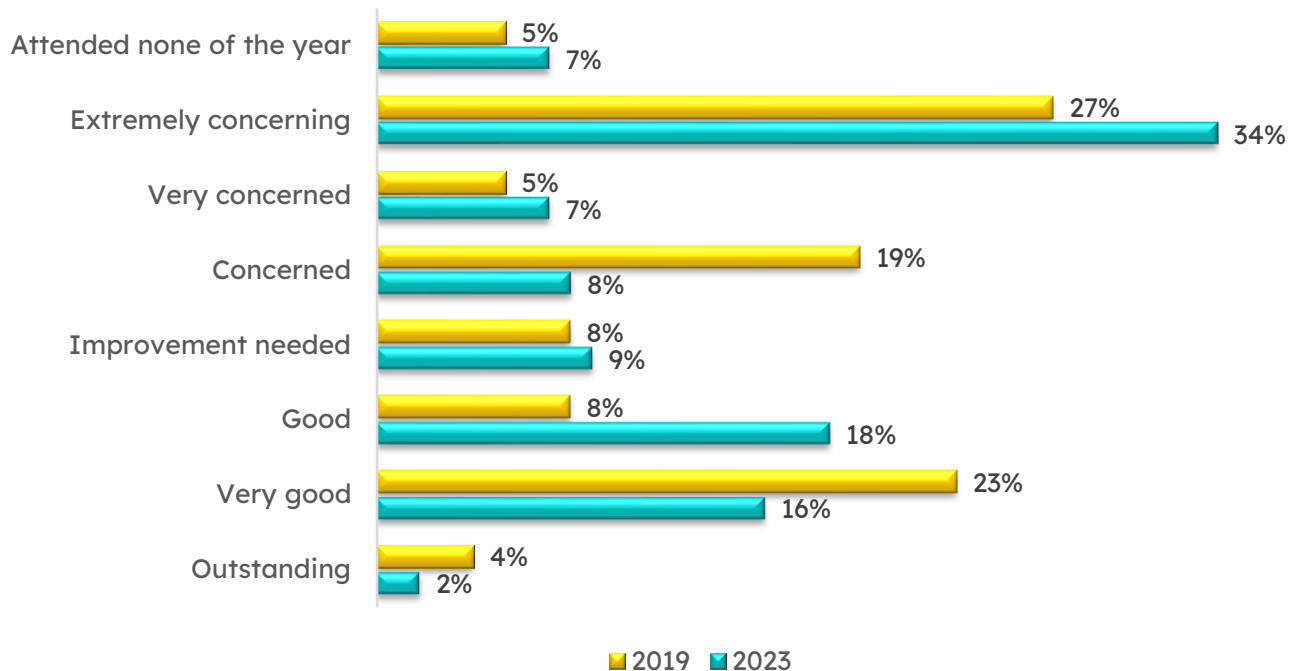Started further education 10%
Started secondary 41%
Moved to another setting 38%

25% of children transitioned from one setting to another during the academic year. The above chart shows the breakdown of where they transitioned to. The majority started at secondary school or a different setting that was not for a stage transition. No children started at an early years setting or at higher education.

Attendance information

What was your child's attendance last year?

Attended none of the year — 2019: 5%, 2023: 7%
Extremely concerning — 2019: 27%, 2023: 34%
Very concerned — 2019: 5%, 2023: 7%
Concerned — 2019: 19%, 2023: 8%
Improvement needed — 2019: 8%, 2023: 9%
Good — 2019: 8%, 2023: 18%
Very good — 2019: 23%, 2023: 16%
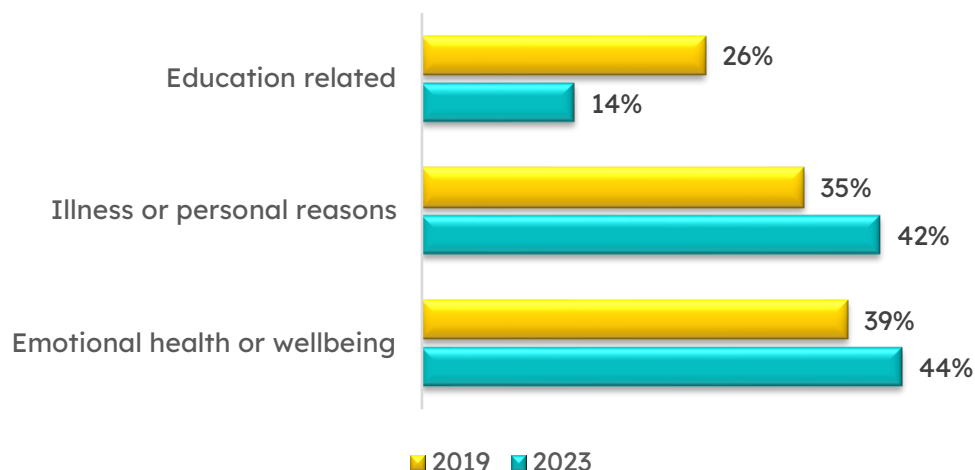Outstanding — 2019: 4%, 2023: 2%

Legend: ■ 2019 ■ 2023

The school attendance ladder is defined as follows:

Outstanding = 100%
Very good = 98% (4 days absent)
Good = 96% (7 days absent)
Improvement needed = 94% (11 days absent)
Concerned = 90% (20 days absent)
Very concerned = 85% (29 days absent)
Extremely concerning = 84% or less (30 days or more absent)
Attended none of the year

55% of parent carers were worried about their child's attendance.

Overall, the number of children having attendance of 96% or above has remained similar, however there is a large increase in the lower categories of attendance, indicating children are finding attendance more difficult.

Reasons for children not attending:

- Education related: 2019 — 26%, 2023 — 14%
- Illness or personal reasons: 2019 — 35%, 2023 — 42%
- Emotional health or wellbeing: 2019 — 39%, 2023 — 44%
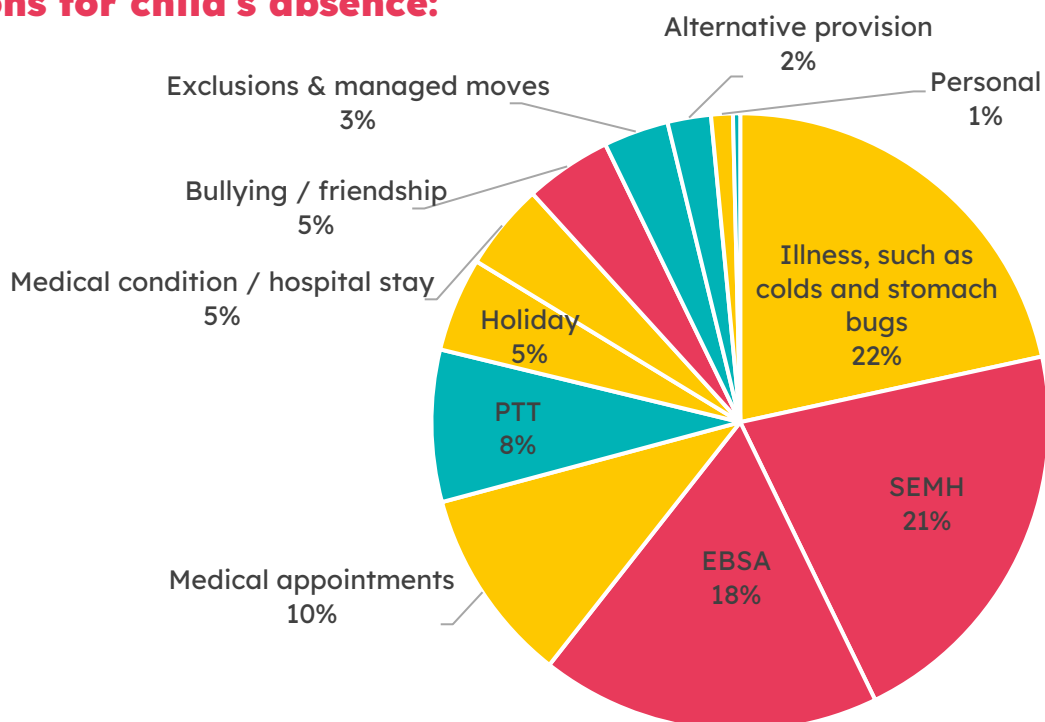
■ 2019 ■ 2023

The reasons given by respondents for their children not attending their educational setting were grouped into three categories:

- Education related – included: exclusions, part time timetables (PTT), alternative provision, elective home education and education other than at school.
- Illness or personal reasons – included: illness, medical appointments/conditions/hospital stays, holidays and personal reasons such as moving house etc.
- Emotional health or wellbeing – included: Social Emotional Mental Health (SEMH), Emotional Based School Avoidance (EBSA), bullying or friendship issues.

Educational related reasons for non-attendance has reduced by almost half from 26% to 14%, but illness and personal reasons has increased from 35% to 42% and emotional health and wellbeing reasons have increased from 39% to 44%.

Reasons for child's absence:

- Alternative provision 2%
- Personal 1%
- Exclusions & managed moves 3%
- Bullying / friendship 5%
- Medical condition / hospital stay 5%
- Illness, such as colds and stomach bugs 22%
- Holiday 5%
- PTT 8%
- SEMH 21%
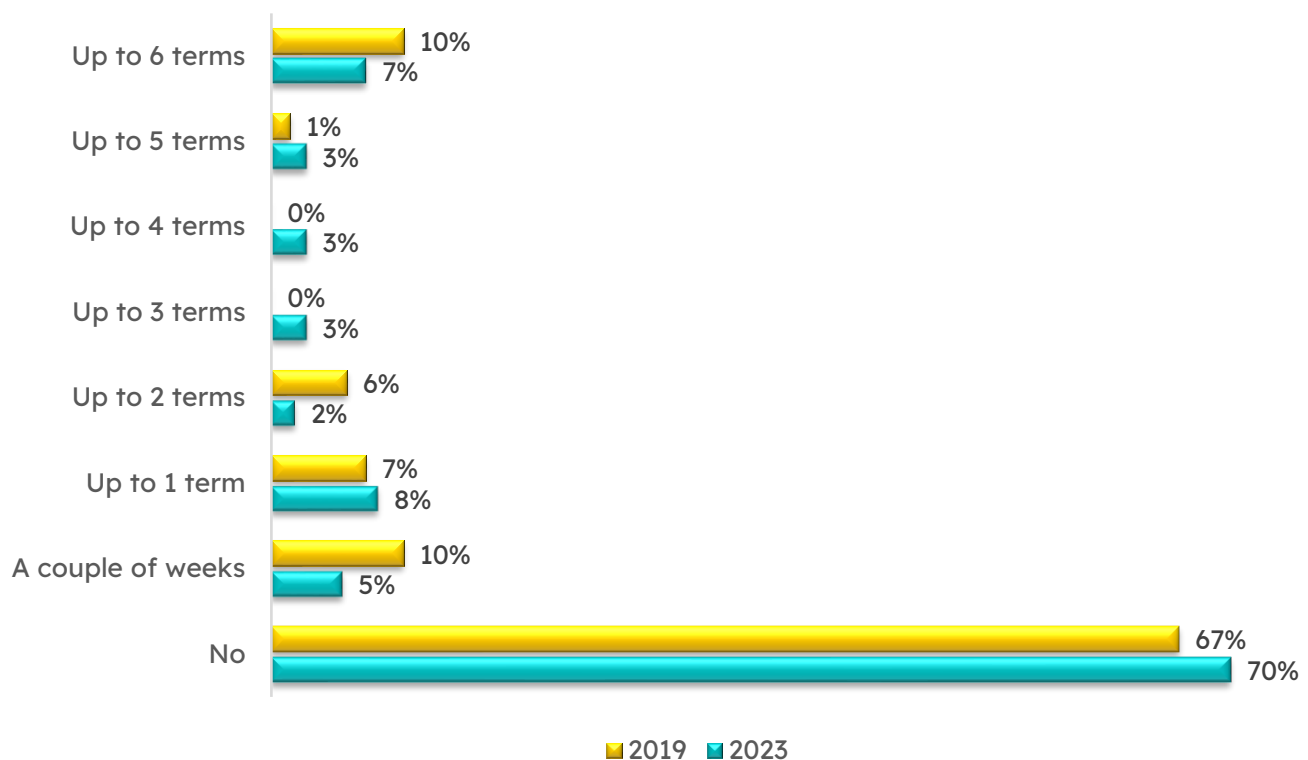- EBSA 18%
- Medical appointments 10%

The breakdown for the 2022-23 academic year is shown above. Elective home education and education other than at school were less than 1% so not shown.

Did the setting support you and your child to try to improve their attendance?

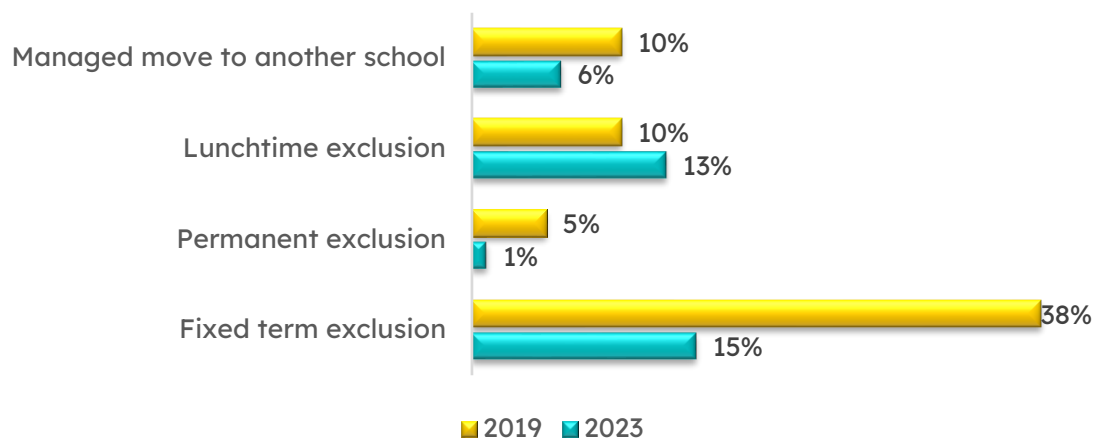|	2019	2023
Yes	22%	42%
No	43%	30%
Not applicable	35%	29%

■2019 ■2023
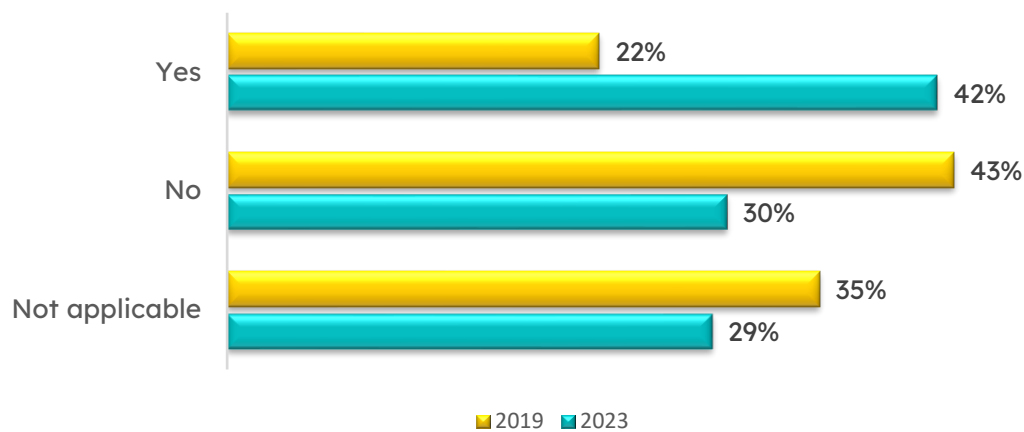
Support offered by settings to try and help children improve their attendance almost doubled from 22% to 42%.

Was your child on a part time timetable?

	2019	2023
Up to 6 terms	10%	7%
Up to 5 terms	1%	3%
Up to 4 terms	0%	3%
Up to 3 terms	0%	3%
Up to 2 terms	6%	2%
Up to 1 term	7%	8%
A couple of weeks	10%	5%
No	67%	70%

■2019 ■2023

One third of children were on a part time timetable (PTT), this was a decrease from 33% to 30%. Children are on PTT for varying periods of time, with higher numbers of children in the shorter- or longer-term ranges, which occurred in both years.
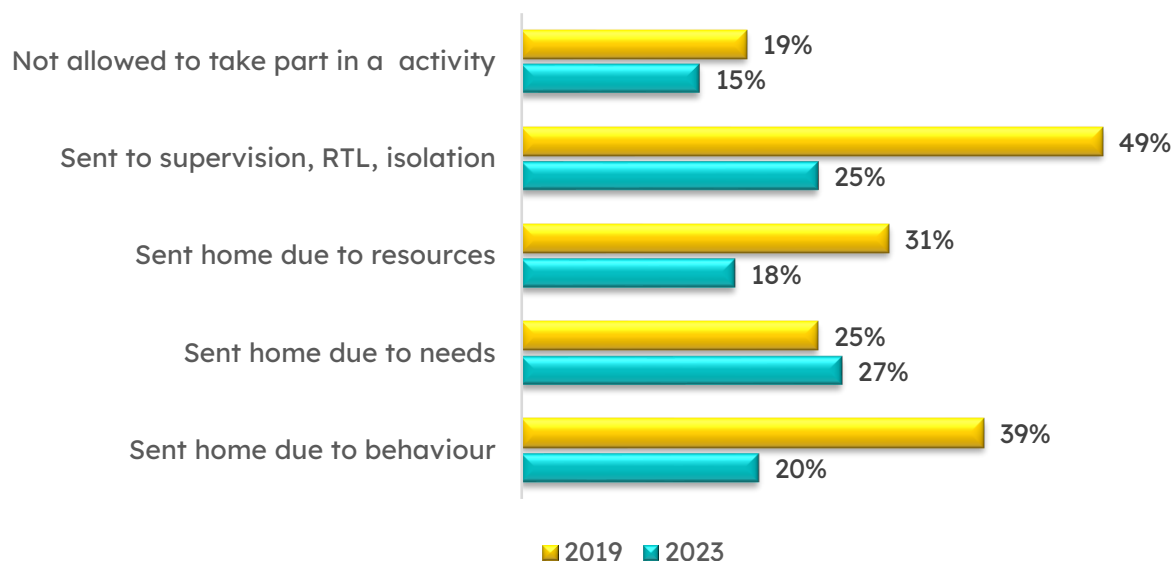
Has your child experienced any of the following exclusions?

Managed move to another school — 2019: 10%, 2023: 6%
Lunchtime exclusion — 2019: 10%, 2023: 13%
Permanent exclusion — 2019: 5%, 2023: 1%
Fixed term exclusion — 2019: 38%, 2023: 15%

■ 2019 ■ 2023

Permanent exclusions and managed moves have reduced. Fixed term exclusions have more than halved. Lunchtime exclusions however have increased from 10% to 13%. Of these exclusions during the last academic year the children experienced:

- Fixed period exclusions – 7% were experienced on 1-3 occasions and 8% for 4 times or more.
- Lunchtime exclusions - 6% were experienced on 1-3 occasions and 6% for 4 times or more.
- Permanent exclusions and managed moves were experienced for between 1 and 3 occasions.

Has your child experienced any of the following?

Not allowed to take part in a activity — 2019: 19%, 2023: 15%
Sent to supervision, RTL, isolation — 2019: 49%, 2023: 25%
Sent home due to resources — 2019: 31%, 2023: 18%
Sent home due to needs — 2019: 25%, 2023: 27%
Sent home due to behaviour — 2019: 39%, 2023: 20%

■ 2019 ■ 2023

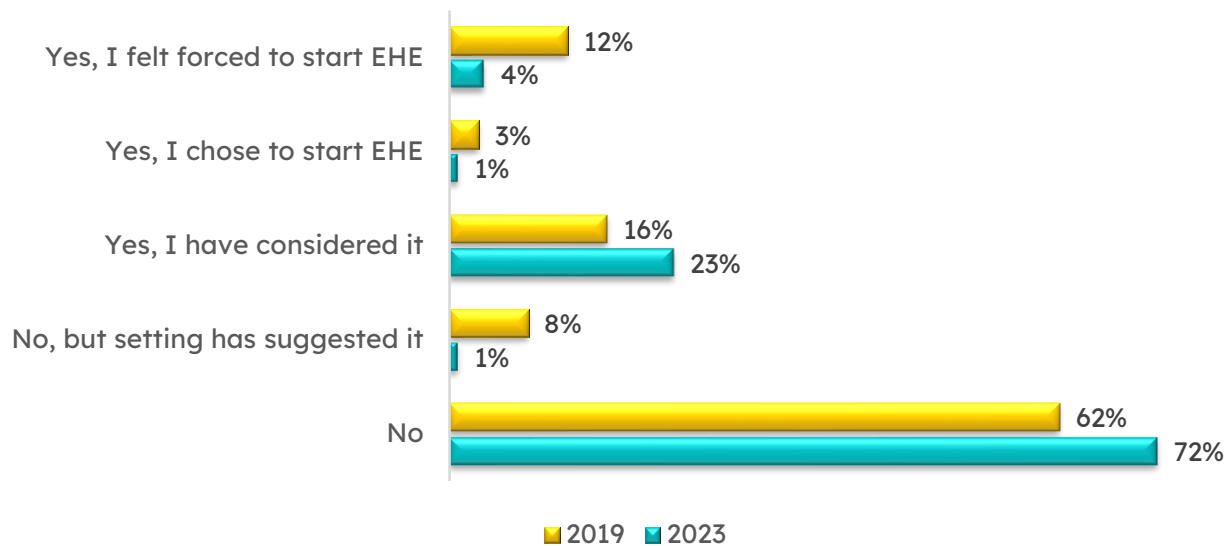During the last academic year some children experienced being:

- Sent home as the setting was unable to manage their behaviour – 10% experienced this on 1-3 occasions and 11% for 4 times or more.
- Sent home as the setting was unable to support their needs – 10% experienced this on 1-3 occasions and 17% for 4 times or more.
- Sent home as the setting did not have sufficient staff resources to support them - 6% experienced this on 1-3 occasions and 12% for 4 times or more.
- Sent to a supervision/ready to learn room/ internal isolation room - 11% experienced this on 1-3 occasions and 14% for 4 times or more.
- Not allowed to take part in a trip/activity - 11% experienced this on 1-3 occasions and 4% for 4 times or more.

Have you considered applying for an EHCP?

	2019	2023
Yes	45%	38%
My child already has an EHCP	44%	36%
No	10%	26%
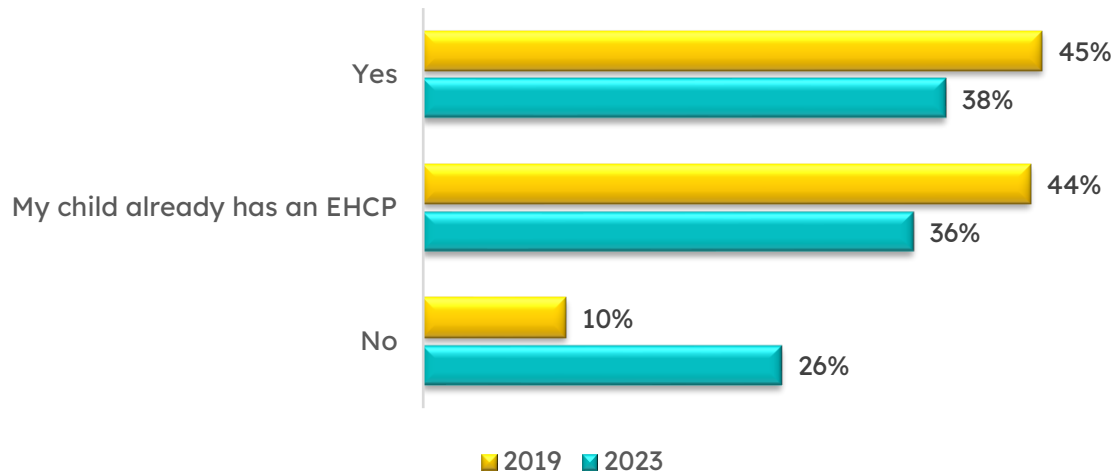
The number of respondents considering applying for an EHCP has reduced, with less families whose children have an EHCP responding to the survey.

Have you considered elective home education during the last year?

	2019	2023
Yes, I felt forced to start EHE	12%	4%
Yes, I chose to start EHE	3%	1%
Yes, I have considered it	16%	23%
No, but setting has suggested it	8%	1%
No	62%	72%

The number of respondents considering, or starting, elective home education (EHE) for their children during the last year has decreased overall from 31% to 27%.

Comments from parent carers

Positive:

⇒ The school have been very supportive. They have made adjustments to my child's timetable and they no longer do homework.

⇒ Head of House has set up an EHAP.

⇒ The school has a behaviour support plan, as well as sensory support plan for my child, we also have regular meetings called 'All Around the Child Meetings' with the headteacher and professionals to discuss any issues related to my son's behaviour.

⇒ School are amazing. Supportive, proactive in trying to adapt and making changes in the hope to improve my child's mental health and autistic burnout. The school has done everything they possibly can and have gone above and beyond with their help and support for my child and me, as their Mum.

⇒ I feel that we have a good working relationship with our SENDCO and school are doing all that they reasonably can.

⇒ SGPC have been an absolutely amazing resource during our journey and really given us the confidence and knowledge to help advocate for our son and access the support that he needs. Thank you!

⇒ The school team have been hugely supportive.

⇒ My child is often unsettled in the morning before going to school but the team have always been available for me to speak to and ask them to check in with them throughout the day.

⇒ My child has been supported with Lego therapy and other sessions with the family link worker which have all lead to his excellent attendance. He has felt safe and welcome in the school at all times.

⇒ The SEND support staff are excellent. It made a big difference to my child knowing they could go to learning support and had someone he could trust to turn to. Knowing their person of trust would communicate with the teachers if there was an issue and change would happen made a huge difference. I don't think they would have managed to continue with their learning nearly as well without this confidence and support.

Negative:

⇒ School did not understand that it was the school environment that caused so much trauma/prevented my child from attending. Their anxiety was a symptom of their autism. School just wanted them "in school" no matter where that was in the school or what mental state they were in or what damage it was doing to them. They now have PTSD/school trauma.

⇒ My child was out for many months and not once did the school reach out to them!

⇒ School did share concerns and tried to involve other professionals, but my child engaging was the problem.

⇒ My child has struggled with the transition to secondary school and despite professional reports clearly outlining what support they need, and several meetings with school in advance of them starting last September, appropriate transition support was not put in place.

⇒ They noted her as having unauthorised absence with the code reflecting that either school did not receive a reason for the absence or that they didn't believe the reason given. We felt the school

could have used 'illness' code and noted the absence as due to mental health. The threat of fines due to miscoding of attendance is a huge issue.

⇒ There needs to be so much more listening and understanding when children are struggling with being able to access school. Parents need to be believed when they say their child is finding school difficult - the environment needs to change in order for them to feel safe and able to access learning there.

⇒ My child is unable to attend at all. School support was inconsistent and unreliable. No alternative education or appropriate support was put in place despite being recommended by professionals.

⇒ We are on waiting list to see a paediatrician about our child's sleep which is affecting their attendance, but the waiting list is very long.

⇒ If they are changing something so lessons are not normal my child needs to know so they can prepare (routines need to be kept). Recently they weren't expecting a change and I had to get them from school as they couldn't cope - the school don't help and only see it as a small change. To them it is, but to my child it seems huge.

⇒ It was really frightening when our child just refused to go to school anymore, it felt like we were isolated and unsure who to ask for support. The process to get support was long and drawn out, it felt like we had to fight for everything, then inevitably we felt guilty for asking and pushing for things that we knew our son needed and was entitled to, but hadn't been mentioned to us as a possibility.

Email: parent.voice@sglospc.org.uk
Visit: www.sgpc.org.uk

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