![Addysg Cymru Education Wales - cenhadaeth ein cenedl | our national mission](logo)

Investigating the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the education of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners in Wales

Research

Investigating the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the education of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners in Wales.

Audience	The current report is for Welsh Government policymakers, school leaders, teachers and education practitioners responsible for supporting the education of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Community learners; organisations in Wales responsible for promoting and supporting the educational progress of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners.
Overview	The report explores the education of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Community learners. The report explores the experiences of primary schoolteachers in Wales who have been supporting Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners in their classrooms during the school closures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, the report explores the educational experiences of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Community learners. Recommendations are made in response to the study findings.
Action required	The report findings have been shared with Welsh Government for their consideration.
Further information	Enquiries about this document should be directed to: Professor J. Carl Hughes School of Education Bangor University @WG_Education Facebook/EducationWales
Additional copies	This document can be accessed from the Welsh Government's website at: https://hwb.gov.wales/professional-learning/leading-professional-learning/research-and-enquiry/national-strategy-for-educational-research-and-enquiry-nsere/collaborative-evidence-network

List of abbreviations

ALN	Additional Learning Needs
CEN	Collaborative Evidence Network
CIEREI	Collaborative Institute for Education Research, Evidence and Impact
EAL	English as an Additional Language
EOTAS	Educated Other Than At School
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
ISCI	International Society of Child Indicators
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
LA	Local Authority
NSERE	National Strategy for Educational Research and Enquiry
PLASC	Pupil Level Annual Schools Census
RSE	Relationship, and Sexuality Education
SEN	Special Educational Needs
WAL	Welsh as an Additional Language
WISERD	Wales Institute of Social and Economic Research and Data

Executive summary

In 2021, the Welsh Government commissioned the Collaborative Institute for Education Research, Evidence and Impact (CIEREI) at Bangor University to undertake a research study to understand and explore the influence of the pandemic on the educational progress of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners in primary schools in Wales. The current project was undertaken in collaboration with Cardiff Metropolitan University. In the current report, we use the term Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Community learners.

We explored schoolteachers' experiences of teaching and supporting Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners during the COVID-19 pandemic in Wales. In addition, we explored the training, resources and external agencies that are required in schools to support the wellbeing of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners both during the pandemic and in this period of post-pandemic recovery.

We conducted eight online semi-structured interviews with class teachers in schools in North Wales. The focus of the interviews was on the impact of the pandemic on these groups of learners. The teachers also discussed wider contextual issues that were exacerbated by the pandemic and the future needs of these learners in the education system.

In addition, we explored the experiences of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Community learners during the school closures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. We conducted seven in person interviews with learners in a primary school in North Wales. The focus of the interviews with learners was on their experiences of the school closures, home learning during the school closures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the educational experience of these vulnerable group of learners. This report did not explore the experiences of the families of learners; this is a limitation of this report and an area of need for future research.

The small sample size of schoolteachers responsible for teaching Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners as well as the small sample size of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners limits the generalisability of the current study findings. In addition, the focus of the current study on primary schoolteachers and primary school learners in one region (i.e., county) in Wales limits the generalisability. Nonetheless, the current study provides an important start to understand the experiences of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners during the school closures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in Wales.

Summary of main interview findings

The interviews with teachers identified four main themes on the educational experiences of these learners. The four themes are:

Attendance: Teachers indicated that attendance of these groups of learners was lower than learners from other groups before the school closures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, the attendance of some of these learners remained low even after the COVID-19 restrictions, and at the time of this study had not returned to the pre-COVID attendance rates.

Engagement: Engagement with learning was a key theme and a challenge raised through the interviews, engaging learners in blended learning, engaging parents and engaging the community were identified as key challenges in supporting the education of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners.

Traveller community support: The interviews with teachers showed that local authority-funded support workers were instrumental in supporting schools with the education of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners. Moreover, the support workers were seen as a protective factor for teachers to support not only skill development but the bridge to building trust within the community.

Wider challenges: The interviews with teaches indicated wider challenges that are important to understand and consider when discussing the education of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners. These include low literacy in the adult Gypsy, Roma and Traveller population; learners leaving school early and concerns about Relationship and Sexuality Education.

The interviews with learners identified four main themes on the general and educational experiences during the pandemic. The four themes are:

Knowledge of COVID-19: The interviews with the learners revealed that learners were aware of the pandemic, understood the effects of the pandemic and were anxious about the coronavirus.

Feelings about lockdown: The interviews with learners revealed mixed feelings about the school closures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, including feeling 'sad' and 'happy' about the school closures. Some learners mentioned feeling happy about the additional time they had at home to spend with their families and pets. Some of the learners also expressed feeling unhappy about being unable to attend school and missing out on schoolwork/activities and the social interactions with their friends.

Schoolwork and activities during lockdown: The interviews with learners indicated mixed responses on schoolwork these learners completed during the lockdown. Some of the learners mentioned engaging in learning. Given these were primary school aged learners, several learners mentioned the increased time they had to engage in play and leisure activities. In addition, the findings indicated that the learners also engaged in some schoolwork and using school. Overall, findings suggested that there was limited motivation to engage with learning during the school closures.

Information technology: The interviews with learners indicated that most learners had access to IT equipment during lockdown, including laptops, tablets and phones. Several learners discussed the issue of distractions with IT equipment, including using devices to play games, communicate with their friends or searching for information on COVID-19.

Recommendations for Welsh Government

1) Provide additional funding to help identify the specific support needs of learners in the school and home environment in accessing the curriculum, to effectively support learners from the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.

2) Provide focused professional learning for teachers, teaching assistants, school leaders and education officers around the needs of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners to equip them with the knowledge and skills to support learners. This professional learning needs to also highlight the specific needs of the distinct Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.

3) Develop specific policies for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners so that there is a unified approach to supporting and engagement these learners and families, whilst recognising the distinct needs of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.

Recommendations for middle tier organisations (i.e., Local Authorities)

4) In the current climate of cuts to government funding, efforts should be made to retain Traveller Education Advisors and the Travelling support funds to enable travel to the communities to support engagement and partnership working. They are an invaluable resource and can develop and maintain strong links between Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families and schools.

Recommendations for school leaders and practitioners

5) Schools should continue to engage with the Traveller Education Advisors and Travelling support currently offered by the local authority because this is a valued source of support for schools and the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community.

6) Efforts should be made to ensure that educational practitioners understand the challenges faced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities in accessing formal education, and how their lifestyles sometimes do not fit in with the demands of the curriculum.

7) In terms of curriculum content, it would be helpful in terms of inclusive practice if there were more resources for learners which include positive representations of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.

8) In terms of 'catching up' after COVID19, the focus should be on curriculum and attainment. However, there needs to be a recognition that the impact of the pandemic has been much wider than missed learning. Fear and anxiety were expressed by some of the learners when they were discussing the pandemic and whilst the crisis has now passed, the impact of this anxiety should be taken seriously and addressed.

Recommendations for future research

9) More research needs to be undertaken on effective ways to support parental engagement, particularly around reducing the barriers of limited literacy and low digital understanding within the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community.

10) Further participative research with learners and young people on the impact of COVID-19, to compare experiences of learning during lockdown, and the extent to which 'settled' children's experiences were similar to their Gypsy, Roma and Traveller peers.

1.   Introduction

The purpose of the current research[1] was to understand and explore the influence of the pandemic on the education of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners. There are many misconceptions as to the definition of Travelling Community families. Within certain parts of Wales and the rest of the United Kingdom, the Travelling community families are widely considered to be Romani Gypsies or Irish Travellers. However, nomadic lifestyle changes within the general population has meant that within this "Travelling community families and children" there are a number of these "domestic" and "international" transient families that also fit into this vulnerable category. In the Welsh Government report on guidance for supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged learners, nine different categories of vulnerable and disadvantaged learner groups are described[2], including Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children. Importantly, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities are made up of several ethnic and cultural groups as outlined in a Welsh Government guidance document, [Education guidance to support Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and young people](2023).🖈In this study we focused on the influence of the pandemic on the education of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners in Wales. Therefore, we have used the term Gypsy, Roma and Traveller instead of Travelling community learners for the following reasons (1) no data was collected on the ethnicity of the participants (i.e., Gypsy, Roma, Traveller); and (2) we do not know whether schoolteachers and other educational practitioners understand the cultures and identities of the learners they teach. Whilst we have used the umbrella term Gypsy, Roma and Traveller to describe a diverse population, we recognise each community has its own shared cultural beliefs, norms, and traditions (for a further discussion defining complexities see (Hamilton, 2018; Tammi and Cadger, 2017; Welsh Government, 2023). Understanding the specific needs of these distinct communities represents an area of future research in Wales.

In Wales, there is currently an absence of research exploring the educational experiences of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners during the pandemic. The current study was the first undertaken to start to understand the experiences of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners during the school closures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in Wales, and the teachers who support them. The findings provide an insight into the educational experiences of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners from the perspectives and voices of schoolteachers and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners themselves. In the current study, we asked schoolteachers about their experiences of teaching Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners during the pandemic as well as Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners experiences of home learning during the school closures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The voice of schoolteachers supporting these vulnerable learners in their classrooms can provide authenticity in communicating concerns on the education frontline and in assisting in planning ahead for this disadvantaged group of learners. In the current report we outline the research findings with teachers supporting Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners and

---

[1] As part of the Welsh Government National Strategy for Educational Research and Enquiry (NSERE), the Collaborative Evidence Network (CEN) programme of research was established in 2020 to share evidence on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Welsh education system. Researchers in CIEREI, School of Education, Bangor University, were commissioned by Welsh Government to undertake a research study investigating the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the education of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners in Wales.

[2] (1) learners with additional learning needs (ALN); (2) learners from ethnic minority groups who have English and Welsh as an additional language (EAL/WAL); (3) care-experienced children, including looked after children; (4) learners educated other than at school (EOTAS); (5) children of refugees and asylum seekers; (6) Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children; (7) learners eligible for free school meals (eFSM); (8) young carers; and (9) children at risk of harm, abuse or neglect.

learners themselves according to the guidance developed by the Welsh Government (2023) as well as the resource guide written by Tammi and Cadger (2017) on the culture and traditions of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.

1.1   Research aims

The main aim of the study was to investigate the influence of the pandemic on the educational progress of Gypsy, Roma and Travellers learners in primary schools[3] in Wales. The secondary aim was to gain an understanding of the training, resources and external agencies that are required to support the well-being of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners both during and after the pandemic, and to summarise the research evidence and share this with the Welsh Government, key stakeholders and schools to improve the quality of provision.

1.2   Research questions

1.2.1   How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted on the educational progress of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners in schools in Wales?

1.2.2   What training, resources and external agencies are needed to support the wellbeing of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners in Wales during the period of the pandemic recovery?

1.2.3   How can the teaching and learning of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners in schools be further improved moving forward from the COVID-19 pandemic?

1.3   Structure of this report

In Section 2 we provide a review of the existing research on the education of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners.

In Section 3 we describe the research methodology we used in this study. This includes the online interviews we conducted with teachers of learners from the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Community to understand the influence of the pandemic on the educational progress of these learners. In addition, we present the interviews undertaken with primary school learners from the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Community to understand the educational experiences of these learners during the pandemic.

In Section 4 we present the findings of our interviews with primary schoolteachers and primary school learners.

In Section 5 we present the discussion of our interviews with teachers and primary school learners and provide recommendations for the Welsh Government and key stakeholders including school practitioners.

---

[3] In the current study, we focused on Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners in primary schools. Attitudes to education among learners are varied in the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community and are influenced by their culture (Tammi & Cadger, 2017; Welsh Government, 2023). Tammi and Cadger (2017) discuss the culture of Traveller communities, including family life, traditional roles and responsibilities, which may influence learners' ability to engage with the education system beyond primary school. For this reason, in the current study, we focused on primary school learners.

2. Background and literature review

In 2018, Welsh Government identified Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children as a disadvantaged group of learners in our society experiencing discrimination, inequality and a lack of opportunities (Welsh Government, 2018). The Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community culture are distinct, which may influence the education of learners from these communities, particularly the educational experiences during the pandemic. Attitudes to education among learners are varied in this community and are influenced by their culture (Tammi & Cadger, 2017; Welsh Government, 2023). Tammi and Cadger (2017) discuss the culture of Traveller communities, including family life, traditional roles and responsibilities, which may influence learners' ability to engage with the education system beyond primary school. The attendance of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners typically decreases in secondary school education and there is a significant underrepresentation of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners in higher education (Hamilton, 2018; Morgan, McDonagh & Acton, 2023). It is therefore important to explore the education of these learners to gain a better understanding of the influence of the pandemic on the learning and how to best support these learners. As outlined in a recent Welsh Government (2023) report: "...Every effort must be made to understand the cultural influences which may affect these attitudes. This will require working with children, young people and their families, to encourage them to see the value of education" (p.10).

National data on school attendance showed that learners from disadvantaged backgrounds were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, and this was highest amongst Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners (Rowlands, 2022). A statistical summary of national data gathered from September 2014 to August 2022 on absenteeism at schools before and during the COVID-19 pandemic revealed that existing patterns of higher rates of school absence among Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners continued during the pandemic, and was also the highest amongst these learners compared with learners from other ethnic groups in Wales (Welsh Government, 2022). Moreover, PLASC data for September 2021 to August 2022 on attainment in examinations showed that the percentage of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners achieving the A*-A and A*-C grade ranges were lower compared to their peers from other ethnic backgrounds. In addition, there were no entries by learners from a Gypsy, Roma and Traveller background achieving A*-A (Welsh Government, 2022). These data on school attendance as well attainment in examinations further highlight that more needs to be done for better educational outcomes for these learners in Wales. When considering the data on attendance and attainment, it is important to understand the cultural differences among these learners (Welsh Government, 2023; Tammi & Cadger, 2017). Before providing guidance and professional learning opportunities for schools and practitioners on the most effective available approaches to support the learning progress of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners, an important first step is to identify the experiences and any challenges in education faced by these learners before, during and following the pandemic. In addition, when exploring the experiences and any challenges faced by learners from these communities it is important that we also consider key wider contextual issues, including the cultural influences and attitudes towards learning and education (Welsh Government, 2023). To date, there have been limited studies that have investigated the influence of the pandemic on the education of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners in the UK.

Recently, the Welsh Government published guidelines on supporting Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners ([Welsh Government, 2023](#)). This study used a child-centred approach to obtain an insight into the views of children and young people from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities on their experiences and challenges in education. The study found that attitudes to education among these learners varied widely, there was a mixture of responses from learners towards education, some learners discussed that they were eager to continue with their education whilst some learners discussed the importance of traditional roles and responsibilities in the home setting. When interpreting these findings, it is important to consider that the study also found that almost every participant discussed their family and culture as essential for them. These two themes were discussed by almost every participant. These findings highlight that Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners are very family oriented and this is also recognised in the resource developed by Tammi and Cadger (2017). These findings suggest that to help these learners, it is important to understand the cultural influence which may affect these learners' attitudes, experiences towards education. Further the identified among these learners additional learning needs; admission to school; attendance at school; bullying on the grounds of race; communication between schools, families, and communities; cultural awareness and celebrating culture; Curriculum for Wales, including Relationship, and Sexuality Education (RSE); and, the provision of a dedicated person or trusted adult at school (Welsh Government 2023, Tammi &Cadger, 2017).

2.1 What are the barriers to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners accessing education?

The Welsh Government plan[4] published in 2018, demonstrates that Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community families were considered to have been one of the most disadvantaged groups that faced discrimination, inequality and lack of opportunities before the pandemic (Welsh Government, 2018). This is echoed by the studies conducted by Nazroo et al. (2020) and Tammi (2020) who identified that dealing with financial and digital inequalities and poor educational outcomes were common barriers experienced by the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities in London and in Scotland prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In terms of experiencing financial difficulties, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families are more likely to live in conditions of higher poverty and poor quality housing with lower employment rates. One factor that contributed to this situation is typically lower levels of academic qualifications, skills, and training within these communities (Cemlyn et al., 2009). However, Friel (2021) also points out that in addition to typically lower levels of educational attainment, factors such as poor health, discrimination, and government policies contribute to the high unemployment rates among these minority groups. These complex sociological challenges have been recognised by the Welsh Government (2018) and actions to address them have been developed. For example, to mitigate the effects of poverty and poor living conditions, the Welsh Government aimed to provide debt advice and money guidance and to work with LA site managers via the All-Wales Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Forum to identify barriers and share solutions. To mitigate the low employment rates, the Welsh Government aimed to ensure that the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities have access to and can benefit from the services provided by funded employability schemes. Furthermore, the Welsh Government aimed to work with Business Wales and provide in-person workshops to support these minority groups in establishing their own businesses and ensure access to information and business advice (Welsh Government, 2018).

---

[4] ['Enabling Gypsies, Roma and Travellers'](#)

Preliminary research by Renedo et al. (2023), Pavee Point (2014) and Condon et al. (2019) have already identified some challenges including lower literacy and numeracy skills and the lack of exposure to formal education in the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities. Achieving successful educational outcomes can improve learners' ability to obtain future employment which, in turn, can improve their quality of life and physical and mental health (Friel, 2021).

Regarding digital inequalities, the findings in Scadding and Sweeney (2018) show that, when compared to the general population, there are twice as many individuals from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities that have never used the internet and, the use of the internet on a daily basis is twice as prevalent amongst the general population than amongst the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities. In addition, Scadding and Sweeney (2018) reported that more than half of their sample of participants from the Gypsy and Traveller communities lacked digital skills and confidence in using digital technology independently. This demonstrates that there is a stronger need on supporting families to enhance digital skills and particularly as schools move towards more digital based platforms communication.

COVID-19 related disturbances have affected some learners causing major educational gaps and interference. Concerns were raised that a very recent arrival in Wales may have resulted in an unfinished process of school registration thus families may not have received access to learning material and support (Pokhrel and Chhetri, 2021). Challenges were faced by families due to past disruptions and a lack of awareness about the education system (Sime & Fox, 2015). Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic emphasised the need to address the digital inequalities amongst the vulnerable and minority groups, including the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller groups, because learners did not have the same opportunities to engage with their education (Tammi, 2020).

As previously stated, during the lockdown periods, learners were taught remotely yet, Iivari, Sharma and Ventä-Olkkonen (2020) emphasised that "not all children are in an equal position to engage in their digitalised basic education" (p.5). Learners' access to education was dependent upon the resources that could be provided by their own families. There are families who lacked digital skills and competences and they were unable to provide access to technology. Furthermore, many families had negative experiences with the education system, in addition to challenges such as literacy levels and finance, being in a financial crisis and illiteracy, added to the difficulties for parents in supporting their children's digital learning process (Iivari, Sharma & Ventä-Olkkonen, 2020; Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021).

According to Villani et al. (2021) and the Welsh Government (2023, 2020), common barriers to access education and attend distance learning faced by these minority groups were the inability to access the internet, and lack of access to suitable digital devices (e.g., mobile phones, laptops, or tablets) and the nature of the learning materials available to them. Moreover, not all learners within these communities had a dedicated space in which they could study and undertake schoolwork. As a result, they relied on schools and LAs to provide access to internet, hardware and working spaces to engage in distance learning (Welsh Government, 2023, 2020).

However, it is important to note that this was not the case for all learners from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities. For example, Townsend, Salemink and Wallance (2020) stated that the scarcity in accessing the internet was not necessarily due to a lack of owning digital devices. These authors discovered that the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities in the UK do not generally access the internet via fixed broadbands as they travel to different sites during the year thus paying for a broadband contract is not a viable option for them. As a

result, they primarily use the internet through mobile devices using mobile data (Scadding & Sweeney, 2018). Some Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities generally encamp in rural areas (Townsend, Salemink & Wallance, 2020) where problems with 3G and 4G signals are prevalent hence the inability to access the internet at their convenience (Townsend, Wallace & Fairhurst, 2015; Scadding & Sweeney, 2018). Equally, another factor that impeded Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners to access education was the financial challenge of having a mobile broadband connection (Welsh Government, 2023). Although LAs worked hard to ensure that learners from minority groups were supplied with digital devices and internet access, factors such as the quality of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) equipment, internet access and low technical competency of some learners and their family members continued to be reported as barriers to learning.

2.2   COVID-19 pandemic

During the COVID-19 pandemic, schools in Wales were required to close for two periods between March and June 2020 and December 2020 and April 2021. Apart from vulnerable learners and the children of key workers, all other learners remained at home and were taught remotely (Welsh Government Policy and Strategy, 2021), there were also localised school closures enforced by the Local Authority (LA). In Wales, there have been studies that examined the influence of the pandemic on the experiences and challenges as well as the wellbeing of school learners in primary, secondary and further education settings (Woodward, 2023; Welsh Government, 2021; Welsh Government, 2021; WISERD, 2020; Hampton & McAuley, 2023).

A study commissioned by Welsh Government (2021) on the educational experiences of disadvantaged learners during the school closures, and when schools re-opened after the pandemic, identified both positive and negative impacts on children's learning experiences. Two key challenges for learners included accessing technology and learning in the home environment. In addition, a lack of parental/carer support was reported to be a key factor in the educational wellbeing of learners in the home environment. However, for some learners, the conditions created by the pandemic were reported to be more conducive to enhancing their learning. The Welsh Government report (2021) focused on disadvantaged learners in a sample of primary, middle and secondary schools as well as ALN settings, however, no additional information on the ethnic background/demographics and/or definition of the vulnerable and disadvantaged group of the learners was reported except for learners with additional learning needs. It was therefore unclear whether the report findings might have included the learning experiences of other disadvantaged learner groups including Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners in Wales.

To investigate the impact of the pandemic and lockdown restrictions on school aged learners' wellbeing, the International Society of Child Indicators (ISCI) developed the Childrens Worlds: COVID-19 Supplement survey. The survey asked school learners about their circumstances and wellbeing across a range of domains, and how these have changed during the pandemic. In 2021 schools in Wales participated in the survey. In Wales, 727 learners from 18 primary and secondary schools completed the survey. The preliminary findings from the COVID-19 Supplement survey revealed that secondary learners were more dissatisfied with schools and learning compared to primary school learners and this was exacerbated during the pandemic (Hampton & McAuley, 2023). Although earlier studies undertaken in Wales provide valuable insight into school learners' engagement, experiences, and challenges with learning schoolwork at home as well as their study practice during the school closures, it is not clear whether any of these previous studies also

investigated and specifically focused on the remote learning experiences of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners in Wales. There was no data reported by the ethnic group of learners, indicating whether the earlier research studies explored the impact on the education of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners in Wales. This study aims to provide an important start in addressing this gap.

In Wales, there have been studies that have explored the influence of the pandemic among other vulnerable and disadvantaged learner groups including refugee learners and learners with additional learning needs (ALN) (Woodward, 2023; Noone et al., 2023). A qualitative study in Wales investigating the influence of the pandemic on refugee learners showed that many refugee families were unfamiliar with the use of digital technologies and online study resources, therefore were not equipped to support their children to access online lessons and resources at home during periods of school closure (Woodward, 2023; Sibieta & Cottell, 2020). Although some schools and local authorities were able to provide wi-fi and digital devices to support learners access to online learning during the school closures and schools in Wales were able to swiftly switch to online provision as a result of its effective digital school infrastructure (Sibieta & Cottell, 2020). Importantly, these studies have provided recommendations on how to further support these learners and parents/carers during this period of pandemic recovery. However, to date, in Wales, as in other parts of the UK, there remains limited research on the influence of the pandemic on learners from other disadvantaged backgrounds, and specifically, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners.

In Scotland, preliminary analysis of testimonial data from Learning and Development Workers supporting Gypsy, Roma and Traveller parents and young people during the pandemic indicated that a key challenge for these communities in Scotland included accessing internet data and technological devices (Tammi, 2020). In addition, the study found low-level digital skills, knowledge and confidence among Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and young people which had affected their ability and motivation to engage in both formal and non-formal education (Tammi & Cadger, 2017). Importantly, the one-to-one digital skills support provided led to an increase in confidence and willingness to learn using the newly developed skills. Given the change in the delivery of schoolwork, as well as the additional responsibility on learners and parents to support learners with schoolwork, it is important to investigate any similar educational challenges of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners in Wales. This research aims to close this gap by gathering evidence on the engagement, experiences and challenges of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners during the pandemic in Wales.

3.   Methodology

3.1   Research design

We designed a qualitative research study involving semi-structured interviews with teachers responsible for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners. We used interviews to allow for a richer understanding of the context, experiences, and the perceptions of the primary schoolteachers and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learner interviewees. We used a semi-structured interview approach to cover specific themes on the educational experiences of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners whilst allowing space and time for the interviewees to discuss additional elements and/or to explore any experiences, topics that might not have been included in the interview schedule.

3.2   Sample description

The study population for the current study was defined as Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners in mainstream primary schools in Wales. The target population for the current study was defined as schoolteachers responsible for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners in primary schools. The inclusion criteria for the study were (1) schoolteachers with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners in their class; and (2) learners from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.

3.3   Interview procedure

We obtained ethical approval for the current study from the School of Education Research Ethics Committee at Bangor University[5]. Using information obtained from Statistics for Wales, we identified schools with Traveller learners in Wales in December 2021. The invitation to take part in the interview was sent to the headteachers in selected schools identified to have Traveller learners (see Appendix A, B, C and D) in the six regional consortia and partnerships in Wales in March 2022 (these are GwE, EAS, Mid Wales Partnership, CSC, Neath Port Talbot, Partneriaeth). Schools were invited to attend information sessions in March and April 2022 to explain the purpose of the study in more detail. Schools in the six regional consortia attended these sessions. Finally, a follow-up reminder email was sent to schools in May 2022 by the regional consortia and partnerships and emphasised that the CEN research officers would be contacting schools with a courtesy follow-up reminder phone call. Between May and June 2022, a final follow-up phone call was made to the schools to encourage headteachers to engage with the study.

The school invitation letters and reminders were undertaken as part of other Bangor University CEN school projects where the headteachers of the selected schools identified to have Traveller learners were invited to other CEN projects. We received no responses from schools with Traveller learners to take part in interviews for the current study. In total, an initial email invitation letter followed by two reminder emails were sent to the CEN sample of schools for the current study. In addition, a final follow-up phone call was made to the schools to encourage headteachers to engage with the study. Despite these attempts, we had no positive responses. One possible reason for this could be the additional pressures that schools were under during the period of pandemic recovery. Given the smaller population size of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners compared with their peers from other

---

[5] Ethical approval number: 17022022-1628

ethnic backgrounds, an alternative sampling method might have helped with study recruitment. One approach for using with small samples is a non-probability technique called purposive sampling. Subsequently, we used contacts in the Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programme in the School of Education at Bangor University to recruit schools in North Wales identified to have Traveller learners. The study invitation was sent directly to the headteachers by a member of the research team and all expressions of interest were followed up and proceeded to the interview. The online interviews were completed with primary schoolteachers responsible for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners. In the current study no data was collected from schoolteachers on the ethnicity of the learners (i.e., Gypsy, Roma, Traveller). Although the term Traveller was used for learners, we cannot infer from the current study whether teachers were aware of the ethnicity of the learners in their class and understood the distinction between the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities. For this reason, we cannot confirm which community of learners was included in the current study (i.e., Gypsy, Roma, Traveller).

Prior to the interview, study information was emailed to the schoolteachers. This informed teacher participants about the aims and purpose of the research study and the interview. We also provided a verbal introduction that explained the purpose of the research study and the interview procedure. We emphasised that participants' responses would be treated confidentially and that they could withdraw from the interview at any point. The semi-structured interviews were conducted online using a secure online communication platform Microsoft Teams, which only the research offers conducting the interviews and the participating interviewee could join. Although, the interviews were undertaken when schools started to open, we conducted the semi-structured interviews online due to the COVID-19 restrictions that were still in place. Moreover, the offer to conduct the interviews using an online platform facilitated school engagement due to the COVID-19 restrictions that were still in place.

The interviews with learner participants were conducted in person on school premises. The school visited to undertake research activities was in an area of Wales where there are significant numbers of Gypsy and Traveller communities. However, no data was collected on the ethnicity of the learners (i.e., Gypsy, Roma, Traveller). Although the research activities with learners was undertaken in an area of Wales where there are significant numbers of Gypsy and Traveller communities, we cannot confirm learners were only from the Gypsy and Traveller communities. The visit was welcomed by staff and senior management who have significant experience of working with this group. During the day spent at the school, the researcher was able to observe learners and parents arriving and they all appeared to have strong relationships with teachers and the headteacher. Some issues were raised by parents which were addressed quickly and sympathetically. Conversations with the staff team, including teachers, teaching assistants, early years professionals and management demonstrated a commitment to engaging, understanding and working with the of Gypsy and Traveller communities.

3.4   Interview schedule

We co-developed the interview questions for teachers internally in conjunction with our project collaborators in Cardiff Metropolitan University. Teachers were asked about their experiences and perceptions on the COVID pandemic concerning Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners. Interviews were conducted online at a time and place that was convenient with the teachers. The focus of the interviews was on the impact of the

pandemic, however, teachers wanted to discuss the wider contextual issues that were exacerbated by the pandemic, and the future needs within the education system.

The teachers showed great respect for the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities and an understanding of the needs with regards to their cultural, values and beliefs. The teachers also recognised that some of the themes discussed in the results section below were not just evident in the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community and were issues faced by other disadvantaged learners.

3.5   Interview data analysis

The data generated via the interview was analysed manually by a member of the research team using a thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To conduct thematic analysis, the six step process to develop final themes outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) was employed. This included the following steps: (1) familiarisation/immersion, (2) generating initial codes, (3) generate initial themes, (4) review themes, (5) name and define themes, and (6) produce the report. This approach allows themes to emerge organically from the data and offers a flexible method for research.

4.   Results

In this section we present the findings from interviews with eight schoolteachers responsible for teaching Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners in primary schools and the findings from the interviews with seven Gypsy, Roman and Traveller learners.

4.1   Response rate

Four primary schools with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners in North Wales accepted an invitation to take part in an online interview. Table 1 presents contextual information on these four primary schools. Eight teachers from these four schools accepted an invitation to take part in an online interview focused around Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners in their classroom. Despite extensive attempts to invite schools identified to have Gypsy, Roma and Travellers learners from other local authorities across Wales, there were no responses. All eight participants were classroom teachers with responsibility for teaching Foundation Phase and/or key stage 2 learners and had recent experience of teaching Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners in their schools. In addition, interviews were undertaken with seven primary school learners. All seven learners attended one of the four participating schools.

Below we present the findings from the interviews with teachers responsible for teaching Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners followed by interviews with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners themselves in Wales.

Table 1. *Characteristics of the participating schools*

School	1	2	3	4
School(s) location (i.e., local authority)	Flintshire	Flintshire	Flintshire	Flintshire
Type of school	Primary (nursery, infants and juniors)	Primary (nursery, infants and juniors)	Primary (nursery, infants and juniors)	Primary (nursery, infants and juniors)
School governance	Community	Community	Community	Community
Language category of school	English medium	English medium	English medium	English medium

4.2 Key findings from interviews with teachers

In this section, we explore the key themes emerging from the thematic analysis of the interviews with teachers and learners. Following the thematic analysis of the interviews with teachers we identified four key themes relating to the influence of the pandemic on the education of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners[6] in Wales (before and during the pandemic, as well as in this period of post pandemic recovery). These are: (1) attendance; (2) engagement; (3) Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community support; and (4) wider challenges. These are detailed in the paragraphs below.

Theme 1: Attendance

All eight schoolteachers interviewed discussed the attendance of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners within their school. In total six of the teachers discussed that attendance among Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners was low and this was both before and after the school's closures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Three teachers mentioned that learners were absent from school from January 2020 before restrictions were implemented.

  "But *as soon as the first case was announced in the UK, so before we even went into lockdown, they - they stopped attending school. And some of them were only just returning this month now, so yeah…"* (Participant, 5)

Moreover, the attendance of some learners had not returned to pre-COVID levels of attendance, even once all restrictions had been lifted.

---

[6] Teachers used the term Travellers. However, we cannot infer from our interview findings whether teachers were aware of the distinction between Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities and were therefore referring exclusively to Traveller learners.

"the Travellers didn't come in to start with at all. So, when we went—they decided that they weren't going to access schools. I mean, quite recent—well, no, this year, really. This year, they've come back in in dribs and drabs sort of thing, but they've stayed off. They wouldn't come in." (Participant 1)

Most teachers discussed that attendance was low outside of the pandemic and described how they had employed different strategies to raise attendance. These strategies included working with family liaison officers within the school or the council-funded traveller support service to communicate with the parents about the learners coming into school. All the teachers discussed forming good relationships with the Traveller community and supported parents to trust the teachers could provide an education that was in line with the values of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities and that the school was a safe environment. For example, one school discussed how their headteacher had met with Traveller families on a Traveller site to try to develop a trusting relationship with the community. This was also seen with the work done by the local authority-funded Traveller support services, who were an integral link to support the learners attending school and delivering work packs to learners during the school closure periods. Conversely, two teachers did not have attendance issues with the learners in their schools and praised the family engagement and good relationships as a benefit to attendance, but this was limited to outside of the COVID restrictions.

"And all of the Traveller community that I've taught, they took a lot of siblings that's why a lot of the families have come through. They've all been really consistent, and their attendance has been fairly good to be honest." (Participant 8)

Overall, attendance was typically low and there was often little engagement with any provision provided by the schools.

Theme 2: Engagement

There was a consensus among the participants that engagement with education during the school closures was generally poor. None of the learners discussed by the teachers accessed any online learning resources, this was despite digital equipment being offered. Most of the teachers were able to adapt provision and send out physical work packs for the learners. However, there was little evidence of engagement with this provision. Four of the teachers discussed developing physical learning packs and utilising the local authority-funded Traveller service to deliver learning packs out to learners and, in some cases, digital equipment was offered.

 "For example, during the pandemic, we were sending work home. Nothing was coming back. And there was little to no engagement. The only engagement we actually did was, as a school, we would ring just to touch base really, because we knew we weren't getting anything back. We offered them devices to access. None were taken". (Participant 7)

*"So, for example, during Covid when we were obviously…schools were closed, they weren't necessarily engaging in tasks that were set by teachers or, you know, logging into Zoom or just generally, the engagement was quite minimal, if any." (*Participant 6)

"They didn't access any digital access really over COVID. The Travellers didn't participate in any of it, really. We have got the parents on Seesaw, but it does take an awful lot of time to get them onto Seesaw. I know we have two support workers who come in from the Traveller authority and they used to come into school, get some packs of work, and then they would take them down to the site, and give them to the families for them to do. We

didn't really see them back, but we did try that way because they didn't access it digitally." (Participant 1)

Most of the teachers discussed every effort was made to maintain contact with the parents during the school closures. However, the engagement was generally poor. One important aspect to consider was that teachers identified how parental literacy and lack of digital skills were challenges to navigate, and the schools and teachers were able to adapt and support parents to be integrated into the learner's school life. While the engagement strategies employed by the teachers span pre- and post-pandemic, during the school closures schools used phone calls to check in with parents and offer support. Teachers discussed meeting parents to provide a range of support, for example, completing forms for various trips and activities. Teachers adapted the communication styles to accommodate parents. For example, where schools used online platforms for contacting parents/carers to share information about activities and payment platforms, the teachers made sure that paper copies were delivered, and payments could be made without using an online automated system.

"Everything is sent out but we know that there are some families - that we'll give them a day or two. If we still haven't heard anything, we'll just go and catch them on the gate because they might be chasing up a little bit and maybe mum has seen it, she hasn't done it and we might just need to go and give them a bit of help with that or we know, you know if we know mum or dad's reading skills aren't great and we need to go and have a chat with them then we will - but that again is individual so depending on what family we have within our class at the time." (Participant 8)

All the teachers were aware of the challenge of working with parents with lower literacy skills and in some cases would meet with parents to read through documents. This support was also offered by the local authority-funded traveller service. Adapting the school practices to suit the needs of the community was seen to increase engagement with education. Again, developing a trusting relationship was the key for teachers to support engagement:

"But we are very open-door and very, you know, lots of pastoral care for all of our families. And I do think that's a real strength and hence the community is quite a settled and has a lot of faith and trust in the school". (Participant 8)

This was facilitated by the council-funded Traveller service and two teachers discussed that this service was the key to engaging especially while the school develop relationships:

"And they will sort of meet…they'll come in and—or if we've got any issues or anything like that, we can fill them up and say, "Oh, could you see if you can get..." Especially at the beginning, when we're trying to develop relationships, they sort of have relationships with the people on the site. So, they start it off for us, you know what I mean, and then we can build on that then." (Participant 1).

Engagement was a key theme running through the interviews with teachers, including engaging learners in blended learning, engaging parents and engaging the community. Two of the schools did have good engagement, and good attendance and positive outcomes for learners. Effective engagement was seen as key to supporting learners.

Theme 3: Traveller community support

All the teachers interviewed discussed how the local authority-funded Traveller community support worker was a pivotal link through the pandemic and in general. During the pandemic, the workers would liaise with the schools and deliver work to learners. The traveller local authority-liaison worker also fostered the relationship with the community and the school and could act as a way of relaying information to parents where the teachers had not been able to:

"So there's certain things that they struggle with like paying for trips and things like that because it's all online now so, again, if something like that has to be done, it's our traveller liaison officer who will go and set that up and she's in school a lot, there's a—well, we'd have three different adults who come in and do activities and work with them so we are very lucky, so that's how we go about it really". (Participant 3)

"The support we've had from the local authority had been absolutely fantastic, you know, to really try and support each other and get children learning… The connections, I think it helps". (Participant 7)

The additional support that the council worker was able to offer could be tailored to suit the needs of the learners but also the needs within the school on skill development, or social and emotional learning that supported school readiness.

"So, because we've got a high level of Travellers in our, in our school, we get a person from the local authority who comes in. And she takes girl from my class and a girl from one of the other classes at the same time. And we'll do literacy work with them. So, to help them with their reading, their writing. Again, not so much with their oracy, because their oracy is very good." (Participant 7)

The council-funded Traveller support worker was mentioned by all participants, they were able to offer the schools an array of support, from training to tailored support around the school needs in North Wales. One teacher discussed that post-COVID there was no council worker in place and that this would impact the learners

Theme 4: Wider challenges

The main focus of this study was on the impact of school closures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, there were important contextual issues that all the teachers discussed that were experienced by the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community. Given the typically low attainment rates of learners most of the teachers felt more support was needed to improve these foundational skills. Two teachers identified that Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners sometimes lack school readiness skills and that this detracts from supporting academic learning. A typically low literacy rate in the adult population means that parents are not always able to support learners in this way. While there is some intervention run with the council-funded traveller service, more support is needed so learners have the basic skills to learn how to read and write.

"We have got children from Travellers who come in with literally no language, no English, they can't write their name, and they can be Year 5 or 6… The support, like I say, we have the support from the Traveller service, but we sort of put our own little—and we do like a bespoke curriculum really with them. So, if they've come in with no literacy, we'd sort of try

and go back and do some—like a Reception class but in a higher, so we do our own little bespoke thing…" (Participant 1)

"He doesn't like to be in the classroom a lot so we do try to do a lot of outdoor activities, so he has, well, I've got hammers and nails, saws, screwdrivers and things like that that he can go to build a bird box and he does things like that. The travelling community liaison officer has arranged for sessions with them, they go down to the river, and they have those sort of activities where they do them buildings, so he goes out once a week to do that. So that's him really. Ability wise, academically, he can read, and he's fairly capable, but he's probably about two to three years behind where he should be. But he manages okay in a younger class, he's okay. Now, the other little boy…. his academic ability is very, very low. So he can't read, he can do very simple maths, and he's at the point where he's getting a bit frustrated because of lack of understanding of what we're doing. (Participant 3)

Half of the teachers discussed that many learners leave school at the end of primary education and do not continue to secondary education. While the teachers understood this could be the norms and values within this community, not having learners access the entire education offer was a concern, some learners were leaving school once they could read and write.

All the teachers understood why some families would not allow the learners to have relationship education but were concerned about the implications of this in the context and of the requirements for Relationship and Sexuality Education, and the potential for conflict with the values and beliefs within their community. For some learners, relationship education meant being withdrawn from the particular lesson, so that it does not affect attainment levels, however, two teachers discussed that learners would not attend school if there were lessons around relationships.

"I think with cultural is RSE. So, sex and relationships. They will not come to school if we are doing sex and relationships. There's a difficulty there because the RSE scheme of work is now compulsory, and it is now across curricular so we should be doing it through authentic context when it's relevant and not just plan lessons." (Participant 4).

Most of the teachers had extensive experience working in schools with a traveller population that discussed having to develop the skills to support traveller learners over time. Four teachers discussed attending training and that this was beneficial they identified that more training is needed:

"I could say, yes, we would need training…" (Participant 2)

"I think, like I said, by that training, I think every year kind of, maybe as a refresher, I think that would be quite useful. And especially for our new staff, joining school that perhaps not worked in a school with travellers before, I think that would be quite useful. Because I think there's a lot of stigma around travellers and their behaviour and their attitudes. And I think, I know that I've experienced it when I sort of said that I work in a school where there are travellers. They think…people think that they're going to be the naughty children. So, there's a lot of stigma and there's a lot of false representations as well. So, I think it'd be quite useful to have, you know, like regular training for maybe new staff or for a refresher for existing members of staff, to kind of just make sure everyone's aware of the differences of their culture and to respect that as well. But yeah, I think that would be run as a county thing. I think that generally, as a nation, would be quite useful. So, if there is that sort of thing, I think that would be incredibly useful." (Participant 4)

Some of the teachers were able to discuss sharing good practices and supporting new members of staff to develop strategies to support the needs of the traveller community. However, they were also concerned that additional professional learning should be provided focused on the needs of the traveller community as part of both initial teacher training and throughout a teacher's career.

4.3   Key findings from interviews with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners

Following the thematic analysis of the interviews with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners we identified four key themes relating to the influence of the pandemic on the education of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners in Wales (before and during the pandemic, as well as in this period of post pandemic recovery). These are: (1) knowledge of COVID-19; (2) feelings about lockdown; (3) schoolwork/activities during lockdown; and (4) information technology. These are detailed in the paragraphs below.

Theme 1: Knowledge of COVID-19

The seven learners interviewed were all aware of the pandemic and the subsequent lockdowns and they all remembered learning from home for long periods and why this was the case. Several learners had been frightened by the virus.

"Covid got on everybody and you could die by it."

"It was scary when you were outside because it was everywhere, and you couldn't see it."

Learners also spoke of their understanding of the need to take precautions to prevent the spread of the virus including handwashing and wearing masks.

During a general conversation about COVID-19 some of the learners appeared to be confused about viruses in general and began discussing computer viruses. One 7 year old learner told a story he had heard about a boy dying from a virus in his laptop which had caused it to explode and the boy to disappear. It might be that the learners had heard the word 'virus' in terms of illness and death and they had then linked it with IT viruses imagining that they caused physical harm.

Theme 2: Feelings about lockdown

The learners had mixed feelings about being away from school for long periods of time. All of them spoke of being happy that they had more time to play and spend time with their families and pets.

Some of them missed being at school but this was generally the social aspect and seeing and playing with friends.

"I hated that in COVID you couldn't see friends or anything."

Two of the learners spoke of missing schoolwork:

"I like stories. I like school. We learn sounds."

"I missed writing."

When asked to choose a card which best summed up their feelings. Some learners initially chose the 'Sad' card and some the 'Happy' card.   When one of the learners asked if they could choose more than one card, three of them picked both a happy and sad cards. When asked why they had selected both, the learners agreed that they were happy not to be at school but that the circumstances of this were scary and that they missed their friends. The pictures that they drew also reinforced this with one learner drawing a portrait of themselves with a PlayStation with friends on the right of the picture who were crossed out (Figure 1).

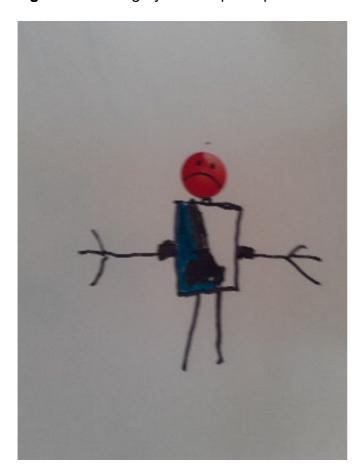**Figure 1** Drawing by learner participant

Several of the drawings depicted learners on their own (Figures 2 and 3) with the drawing in figure 2 with the face covered with a 'sad' sticker and figure 3 a blank face with only eyes and no expression but with one 'happy' and one 'sad' sticker at the top of the page.

Figure 2 Drawing by learner participant

Figure 3 Drawing by learner participant

The youngest learner in the group chose the 'calm' card and when asked why she had selected it she said that she had chosen it because that's how she felt when she returned to school after lockdown.

"I felt calm because I like school. School makes me calm."

Theme 3: Schoolwork and activities during lockdown

When asked about their experiences of schoolwork during lockdown there were mixed responses. The learners were keen to talk about the fact that they had more opportunities for play and leisure. Several learners spoke of playing computer games and others sports or simply playing outside.

"just chilled out played a bit outside in the back yard and played some games."

"When there was no class I got to go skateboarding."

"I had some days off at school and what I done I played Fortnite all day."

In terms of schoolwork, the responses suggest that learners did engage in some learning during lockdown:

"I did some learning"

"I did some stuff on Seesaw, I had it on my iPad."[7]

Theme 4: Information technology

Most of the learners seemed to have had access to the necessary IT equipment during lockdown; they talked about tablets and phones and two spoke about using a laptop.

"A laptop is the most helpful thing – it has the biggest screen – it is pretty hard but when you get used to it it's the best."

"I have a laptop I got it for Christmas – we waited years for it."

"Sometimes I let my brother on it but now I don't know where it is"

Some learners spoke of their use of information technology and how they accessed learning.

*"I got work on my mum's phone. Mrs *** sent me work on my mums' phone and gave it to me."*

"Yeah, school sent us emails."

Two learners spoke about the games that they played online.

"I played Fortnite all day"

---

[7] (SeeSaw is a interactive learning platform used by schools).

"I played Roblox"[8]

"I didn't do work on it I played lots of games on it."

This final quote demonstrates that there was a reluctance to engage in online learning during lockdown; two of the learners explained that they had 'forgotten' about schoolwork, they repeated this twice during the session.

"You just forget about schoolwork."

"Yeah, you forget about work."

---

[8] Fortnite and Roblox are both online platform games

5.   Discussion

This report is the first qualitative study to explore the influence of the pandemic on the education of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community learners in Wales. We report on the experiences of schoolteachers responsible for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners, as well as learners themselves. Our study starts to provide an insight into primary schoolteachers' experiences of teaching Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners before and during the pandemic as well in the period of post-pandemic recovery, as well as the educational experiences of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners.

The interviews with schoolteachers revealed four key themes relating to the influence of the pandemic on the education of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners in Wales, including (1) attendance; (2) engagement; (3) Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community support; and (4) wider challenges. In the following section we discuss each of these themes.

5.1   Attendance

The data from the participants in this study suggest that attendance rates among Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners was low before and during the pandemic. These findings are consistent with national data obtained on attendance and absenteeism at schools before and during the pandemic for September 2014 to August 2022 in Wales which found higher rates of school absence among Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners before the pandemic also continued during the pandemic (Welsh Government, 2022). When interpreting these findings on attendance among these learners it is important to understand cultural influences which may affect school attendance. In a recent study with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners on their experiences of education, findings showed learners reported mixed attitudes towards education with some learners keen to continue with their education, whilst some learners reported being more focused on their traditional roles and responsibilities in the home setting. This study also found that learners reported the two most important things for them included their family and culture. In addition, there are often cultural expectations that a young person will take on the responsibilities of caring for the family or engaging in the family business. There are also several other factors which could influence attendance, including distrust within the community of the education system, and bullying and harassment. Importantly, when considering interventions to improve school attendance among this cohort of learners it is important to understand the distinct cultures. Welsh Government's recent publication[9], provides schools with guidance and examples of effective approaches to improve attendance among Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners (Welsh Government, 2023).

5.2   Engagement

The interviews with teachers also suggested that engagement with learning during the school closures caused by the pandemic was concerning. Teachers discussed offering both online and offline provisions (i.e., physical work packs) support to learners, nonetheless the uptake and engagement with both types of provisions offered by teachers was low. Although the teachers mentioned they made every effort to support learners to continue with their schoolwork by sending out physical work packs. One possible reason could be that learners were engaged in activities other than schoolwork.

---

[9] Celebrate and participate: Education guidance to support Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and young people'

During interviews, several learners mentioned the increased time they had to engage in play and leisure activities during lockdown. Further information on learners' engagement with schoolwork is discussed below. The findings suggested that there was limited motivation to engage with learning during the school closures. Overall, engagement was a key theme running through the interviews, engaging learners in blended learning, engaging parents and engaging the community. Effective engagement is key to supporting traveller learners. These findings are consistent with the examples of effective practice for engaging Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities and learners with education outlined in Welsh Government's recent publication[10].

5.3   Traveller community support

The interviews with teachers indicated that local authority-funded support workers were instrumental in supporting schools with the education of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners. The local authority-funded traveller worker was seen as a protective factor for teachers to support not only skill development but the bridge to building trust within the community. The support worker was vital in delivering physical packs to learners during the pandemic and needed digital equipment. All the teachers felt this was a valuable resource to support academic development through interventions making sure that the learners had the skills to be fully included in the class and access the curriculum. Our data suggest a strong opinion on how vital that this support was likely to be in sustaining engagement in a post COIVD landscape and where financial pressures take their toll on the education system. Without this pivotal role, trust, communication and skills could be lost, furthering the gap between this already marginalised community.

5.4   Wider challenges

The interviews with teaches indicated the following wider challenges that are important to understand and consider when discussing the education of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners. These include typically low literacy levels in the adult Gypsy, Roma and Traveller population; learners leaving school early and concerns about RSE. A low literacy rate in the adult population means that parents are not always able to support learners with their education. When considering why Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners leave school early at the end of primary education, it is important to understand the cultural influences which may affect this. Effective approaches and support through transition from primary to secondary education should be explored because transition can be the biggest challenge to school attendance, for example, concerns about the curriculum at secondary school, or concerns about bullying.

5.5   Discussion of findings with learners

The interviews with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners revealed the following four key themes relating to the influence of the pandemic on the education of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners in Wales, including (1) knowledge of COVID-19; (2) feelings about lockdown; (3) schoolwork and activities during lockdown; and (4) information technology. In

---

[10] Celebrate and participate: Education guidance to support Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and young people'

the following section we discuss each of these themes relating to the education of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners.

The learners were aware of the pandemic and why school had been closed, meaning that they had to learn from home. There was obviously some fear of COVID-19, particularly around serious illness, hospitalisation and death and the fact that learners are still discussing this two years later, further demonstrates the levels of anxiety it caused.

In terms of the impact on their education the learners have obviously missed out on some learning, however many of them did speak about receiving emails and other communications from school and did engage in some level of learning. Learners talked about using laptops, however, several admitted that they had used IT equipment to play games or communicate with their friends. Without a comparison, it is difficult to assess whether learners in the settled/mainstream community did the same.

The limited literature available on digital inequality reveals that the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community would have faced significant challenges in accessing online content. Earlier sections have identified that teachers discussed that even when IT equipment was given to the learners, set work was not being completed. In 2018 the Office for National Statistics[11] conducted research on digital inclusion in the Gypsy and Traveller community and found that there were several issues faced in terms of internet access. The research found that only 33% of housed Gypsy, Roma and Travellers had a household internet connection as opposed to 86% of the general population. The majority of those who accessed the internet did so through mobile data and only one out of the 50 adults interviewed owned a PC or laptop. In addition to limited access, home learning environments can be far from ideal; the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community is known for having larger families with small homes and living spaces, with much time spent outdoors; *"This"*, the report argues*, " can create an environment where it is difficult to home-school children due to the increased risk of distraction and lack of (indoor) space."* This would certainly bear out what the learners shared in terms of their activities during lockdown.

The learner participants discussed the issue of distractions; the equipment given to them for schoolwork was often used for gaming or, as one learner said, searching for information on COVID-19. The learners felt freer to play and learn new or improve sports or leisure skills, and returning to school was seen by some as an end to their play with the transition being challenging for them. When asked what it was like to come back to school one of the boys said, "*School is too long*," another added, *"It's way too long it should be like (..long pause..) it should be like, like 2 hours."* There is no real surprise that the on returning to school the children felt that their freedom had been somewhat curtailed.

The literature identifies the literacy difficulties experienced by adults in the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community and when asked whether they had been supported with their learning by parents or wider family, the learners were largely quiet. It was inappropriate to probe further, and importantly, care should be taken not to make assumptions, and although support from adults was not discussed, it may well have occurred to some extent, as demonstrated by the learner who talked about his mother receiving information from school and passing it on to him.

---

[11] https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/ethnicity/datasets/2011censusanalysiswhatdoesthe2011censustellusaboutthecharacteristicsofgypsyoririshtravellersinenglandandwales
33 https://www.gypsy-traveller.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Digital-Inclusion-in-Gypsy-and-Travellercommunities-FINAL-1.pdf

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought the difficulties that Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners experience with formal education into sharp relief and issues that have been long discussed are being addressed again. Historically, Gypsy and Traveller learners have the lowest attainment levels compared to their settled peers; attendance can be sporadic due to travel and work commitments; digital inequality is widespread in the community and there is a fear of exposing children to the bullying and discrimination that parents have experienced and to the perceived negative influences in the 'settled' world.

In terms of addressing the impact of the pandemic, this report has specifically highlighted the issues faced by teachers and senior leadership teams in school. The researchers wanted very much to include the views of parents and more learners in the current research study however, as previous studies have highlighted, the community is traditionally difficult to access (Condon et al; Brown & Scullion 2010; Freitas & Martin 2015). However, based on the literature and the responses of the learners, there are some tentative recommendations that can be made.

5.6   Limitations

There are several limitations to this study. Some of the interviews took place sometime after school closures and schools had returned to relative normality, however the teachers in this study did identify that the majority of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners did not return at the same rate as other leaners. Furthermore, the interviews also took place when there were changes in the education system, particularly around the relationship education; most teachers mentioned this and while not the focus of this research, this needs to be investigated further, particularly concerning the Gypsy, Roma and Traveling community. The sample size was relatively small and cannot be generalised to the entire Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community, and given the diversity within the Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller communities, the results in this report can only provide a general overview of the teacher's experiences. Within the range of learners, the teachers discussed, the context, beliefs, and values ranged making drawing definitive conclusions on a diverse population difficult. Further research now needs to focus on understanding the specific needs of these distinct communities in Wales.

In addition, we anticipated that schools from other regions in Wales would participate in the study, despite several reminders to schools the present study received responses from schools in North Wales only following a more purposive sampling approach. There might be differences between the schools and local authority provided services in other regions across Wales. Schools and local authorities in other regions across Wales might employ different strategies for supporting Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners. Due to the focus on North Wales the findings from the current study might not generalise to other regions in Wales. Nonetheless, the current study provides an important start to understand the experiences of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners during the school closures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in Wales.

In addition, there were several methodological limitations. In the current study, no data was collected on the ethnicity of the Traveller learners primary schoolteachers were responsible for. Although, teachers refer to learners as Travellers, we cannot infer from our data whether teachers were aware of the distinction between the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities and were therefore referring exclusively to Traveller community learners. Furthermore, in Wales the term Traveller Education service (TES) is used to refer to the

service supporting learners from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities. It is not clear from the name of the service that it supports learners from all three (i.e., Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities and not just one (i.e., Traveller). Importantly, further work is required to ensure the distinct cultures of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities they support is clearly highlighted. Moreover, the current study was undertaken when several other Welsh Government Collaborative Evidence Network projects were underway by the six HEI's in Wales. Schools in Wales were invited to participate in several Welsh Government projects. Although the other Bangor CEN projects involved different study populations, schools nonetheless were invited to several projects at the same time. In addition to the number of projects schools were invited to there were additional pressures that schools were under during the period of pandemic recovery. Given the smaller population size of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners compared with their peers from other ethnic backgrounds, future studies should consider employing a different sampling method (i.e., purposive sampling).

5.7   Conclusions

The impact of the COVID pandemic has shone a light on the already documented issues with the education system around Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners. For the teachers that were part of this research, there was very little engagement in online, or physical learning for the Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller learners. Similarly, findings from the interviews with learners indicated limited engagement with schoolwork. Limited parental engagement and communication only worked to heighten the broader issues within the system. Learners from Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller communities have had low attainment rates historically and lack of engagement in online or physical education in the schools will impact attainment levels even further. Additional support and funding should be focused on this population so that the basic skills are improved. Wider consideration is needed to support more learners staying in education and accessing all of the Welsh education offer. Attainment is important but making sure that the basic school readiness and social and emotional skills are developed to allow for learning to take place is a crucial first step. As mentioned, the local authority-funded traveller worker in North Wales provided support in this area. However, with pressures in the sector and with teacher workloads a more focused approach to improving basic skills for Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller learners should be sought and funded appropriately. A better understanding is needed of why there are lower rates of secondary education take-up and possible ways to encourage uptake. There is a need to refocus on the issues that were and have been illuminated by the pandemic, not only highlighted in this report but in other research as well (Tagliaventi, 2021).

As discussed above, the issues and barriers faced by the teachers concerning the Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller community were also found in other marginalised and disadvantaged groups. Although some barriers are specific to the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community should an interruption to education happen again on the same scale, all marginalised and disadvantaged learners should be supported.

More broadly the strategies employed by the schoolteachers to support and engage learners and their families could be valuable to others working in the system. Research shows there is a strong correlation between what the teachers have experienced in this research and a more systemized way of supporting teachers is needed. The need for

teachers to be trained around the values, cultural identities, and traditions is important, as the strategies and way of working with the Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller community need to be disseminated widely and all stages of teachers profession.

Recommendations for Welsh Government

1) Provide additional funding to help identify the specific support needs of learners in the school and home environment in accessing the curriculum to effectively support learners from the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.

2) Provide focused professional learning for teachers, teaching assistants, school leaders and education officers around the needs of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners to equip them with the knowledge and skills to support learners. This professional learning needs to also highlight the specific needs of the distinct Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.

3) Develop specific policies for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners so that there is a unified approach to supporting and engagement these learners and families, whilst recognising the distinct needs of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.

Recommendations for middle tier organisations (i.e., Local Authorities)

4) In the current climate of cuts to government funding, efforts should be made to retain Traveller Education Advisors and the Travelling support funds to enable travel to the communities to support engagement and partnership working. They are an invaluable resource and can develop and maintain strong links between Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families and schools.

Recommendations for school leaders and practitioners

5) Schools should continue to engage with the Traveller Education Advisors and Travelling support currently offered by the local authority because this is a valued source of support for schools and the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community.

6) Efforts should be made to ensure that educational practitioners understand the challenges faced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities in accessing formal education, and how their lifestyles sometimes do not fit in with the demands of the curriculum.

7) In terms of curriculum content, it would be helpful in terms of inclusive practice if there were more resources for learners which include positive representations of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.

9) In terms of 'catching up' after COVID19, the focus should be on curriculum and attainment. However, there needs to be a recognition that the impact of the pandemic has been much wider than missed learning. Fear and anxiety were expressed by

some of the learners when they were discussing the pandemic and whilst the crisis has now passed, the impact of this anxiety should be taken seriously and addressed.

Recommendations for future research

9) More research needs to be undertaken on effective ways to support parental engagement, particularly around reducing the barriers of limited literacy and low digital understanding within the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community.

10) Further participative research with learners and young people on the impact of COVID-19 to compare experiences of learning during lockdown and the extent to which 'settled' children's experiences were similar to their Gypsy, Roma and Traveller peers.

6.   References

Breslin, T. (2021) *Lessons from Lockdown: The Educational Legacy of COVID-19*, Oxfordshire: Taylor & Francis Group

Brown, P and Scullion, L. (2010) 'Doing research' with gypsy-travellers in England: reflections on experience and practice. *Community Development Journal* Volume 45, Issue 2, April 2010, Pages 169–185

Cemlyn, S., Greenfields, M., Burnett, S., Matthews, Z. and Whitwell, C. (2009). Inequalities experienced by Gypsy and Traveller communities: A review. In Equality and Human Rights Commission Research Report Series. Available at: Link to Inequalities experienced by Gypsy and Traveller communities: A review. In Equality and Human Rights Commission Research Report Series.

Condon, L., Bedford, H., Ireland, L., Kerr, S., Mytton, J., Richardson, Z. and Jackson, C. (2019). Engaging Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller Communities in Research: Maximizing Opportunities and Overcoming Challenges, *Qualitative Health Research*, *29*(9), pp. 1324–1333. DOI: Link to Engaging Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller Communities in Research: Maximizing Opportunities and Overcoming Challenges.

Freitas, C., & Martin, G. (2015). Inclusive public participation in health: Policy, practice and theoretical contributions to promote the involvement of marginalised groups in healthcare. *Social Science & Medicine*, 135, 31–39. doi:10.1016/j.socscimed.2015.04.019

Friel, D. (2021). Life on the Margins: An Exploration on the impact of COVID-19 on Irish Travellers' lives in the North West Ireland, *IT Sligo*. DOI: Link to Life on the Margins: An Exploration on the impact of COVID-19 on Irish Travellers' lives in the North West Ireland.

Hamilton, P. (2018). Engaging Gypsy and Traveller pupils in secondary education in Wales: Tensions and dilemmas of addressing difference. *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, *27*(1), pp.4-22. DOI: Link to Engaging Gypsy and Traveller pupils in secondary education in Wales: Tensions and dilemmas of addressing difference.

Hampton, J. and McAuley, C. (2023). The Impact of COVID-19 on Well-Being: Welsh Children's Perspectives, *International Journal on Child Maltreatment: Research, Policy and Practice*, pp.1-12. DOI: Link to The Impact of COVID-19 on Well-Being: Welsh Children's Perspectives.

Iivari, N., Sharma, S. and Ventä-Olkkonen, L. (2020). Digital transformation of everyday life – How COVID-19 pandemic transformed the basic education of the young generation and why information management research should care?, *International Journal of Information Management*, *55*, pp. 102183. DOI: Link to Digital transformation of everyday life – How COVID-19 pandemic transformed the basic education of the young generation and why information management research should care?.

Katikireddi, S.V., Hainey, K.J. and Beale, S. (2021). The impact of COVID-19 on different population subgroups: Ethnic, gender and age-related disadvantage, *Journal of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh*, *51*(1), pp. 40–46. DOI: Link to The impact of COVID-19 on different population subgroups: Ethnic, gender and age-related disadvantage.

Morgan, J., McDonagh, C. and Acton, T. (2023). Outsider status, and racialised habitus: the experiences of Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller students in higher education. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, *44*(3), pp. 485-503. DOI: [Link to Outsider status, and racialised habitus: the experiences of Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller students in higher education](#).

Nazroo, J., Murray. K., Taylor, H., Bécares, L., Field, Y., Kapadia, D. and Rolston, Y. (2020). Rapid Evidence Review: Inequalities in relation to COVID-19 and their effects on London. Available at: [Link to Rapid Evidence Review: Inequalities in relation to COVID-19 and their effects on London](#).

O'Neil, G Why are schools still such hostile places for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children? The Guardina (online) 4th October 2020 https://www.proquest.com/docview/2448225365?OpenUrlRefId=info:xri/sid:primo&accountid=15588&parentSessionId=e%2B2fcCRA03ntoaysee0w%2BwWlBERgrcSjfDZ2pht8l84%3D Accessed 19/08/22

Pavee Point (2014). Roma and Education. Available at: [Link to Roma and Education](#).

Pokhrel, S. and Chhetri, R. (2021). A Literature Review on Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Teaching and Learning, *Higher Education for the Future*, *8*(1), pp. 133–141. DOI: [Link to A Literature Review on Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Teaching and Learning](#).

Renedo, A., Stuart, R., Kühlbrandt, C., Grenfell, P., McGowan, Catherine R., Miles, S., Farrow, S. and Marston, C. (2023). Community-led responses to COVID-19 within Gypsy and Traveller communities in England: A participatory qualitative research study, *SSM - Qualitative Research in Health*, *3*, pp. 100280. DOI: [Link to Community-led responses to COVID-19 within Gypsy and Traveller communities in England: A participatory qualitative research study](#).

Rowlands, M. (2022). Attendance review – implications of the COVID-19 pandemic for school attendance. Available at: [Link to Attendance review – implications of the COVID-19 pandemic for school attendance](#).

Scadding, J. and Sweeney, S. (2018). Friends Families and Travellers: Report on Digital Inclusion in Gypsy and Traveller Communities Digital Exclusion in Gypsy and Traveller communities in the United Kingdom. Available at: [Link to Friends Families and Travellers: Report on Digital Inclusion in Gypsy and Traveller Communities Digital Exclusion in Gypsy and Traveller communities in the United Kingdom](#).

Sibieta, L. and Cottell, J. (2020). Education policy responses across the UK to the pandemic. Available at: [Link to Education policy responses across the UK to the pandemic](#).

Sime, D. and Fox, R. (2015). Migrant Children, Social Capital and Access to Services Post-Migration: Transitions, Negotiations and Complex Agencies, *Children and Society*, *29*(6), pp. 524–534. DOI: [Link to Migrant Children, Social Capital and Access to Services Post-Migration: Transitions, Negotiations and Complex Agencies](#).

Tammi, L. (2020). Across the great divide: The impact of digital inequality on Scotland's Gypsy/Traveller children and young people during the COVID-19 emergency, *International Journal of Roma Studies*, *2*(2), pp. 52-65. DOI: [Link to Across the great divide: The impact](#)

of digital inequality on Scotland's Gypsy/Traveller children and young people during the COVID-19 emergency.

Tammi, L. and Cadger, B. (2017). Till doomsday in the afternoon: Gypsy/Travellers in Scotland. Stirling: Article 12 in Scotland. Available at: Link to Till doomsday in the afternoon: Gypsy/Travellers in Scotland.

Townsend, L., Salemink, K. and Wallance, C.D. (2020). Gypsy – Traveller communities in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands: socially and digitally excluded?, *Media, Culture & Society*, *42*(5), pp. 637–653. DOI: Link to Gypsy – Traveller communities in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands: socially and digitally excluded?.

Townsend, L., Wallace, C. and Fairhurst, G. (2015). "Stuck Out Here": The Critical Role of Broadband for Remote Rural Places, *Scottish Geographical Journal*, *131*(3–4), pp. 171–180. DOI: Link to "Stuck Out Here": The Critical Role of Broadband for Remote Rural Places.

Villani, J., Daly, P., Fay, R., Kavanagh, L., McDonagh, S. and Amin, N (2021). A community-health partnership response to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Travellers and Roma in Ireland, *Global Health Promotion*, 28(2), pp. 46–55. DOI: Link to A community-health partnership response to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Travellers and Roma in Ireland.

Waters-Davies, J., Davies, P., Underwood, C., Lloyd-Williams, S., Jones, S., James, S., Thomas-Walters, J., Morgan, C., Southern, A., Ward, A. and Evans., R. A. (2021). Exploring the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on learners in Wales: A collaboration between the University of Wales Trinity Saint David/Aberystwyth/Bangor universities. Available at: Link to Welsh Government report on the impact of the pandemic on learners in Wales.

Welsh Government (2018). Enabling Gypsies, Roma and Travellers. Available at: Link to Enabling Gypsies, Roma and Travellers.

Welsh Government (2021). Survey of effect of Covid-19 on learners (2020) - Results summary. Cardiff: Welsh Government. Available at: Link to Welsh Government report on the effect of COVID-19 on learners in Wales.

Welsh Government (2020). Guidance for supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged learners. Available at: Link to Guidance for supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged learners.

Welsh Government (2022). Summary of absenteeism at school before and during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic: September 2014 to August 2022. Available at: Link to Summary of absenteeism at school before and during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic: September 2014 to August 2022.

Welsh Government (2023). Celebrate and participate: Education guidance to support Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and young people. Available at: Link to Celebrate and participate: Education guidance to support Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and young people.

WISERD (2020). The impact of COVID-19 on children's learning in Wales. Available at: The impact of COVID-19 on children's learning in Wales.

Woodward, S. (2023). Impact of Covid-19 on refugee learners in Wales. Available at: [Link to Impact of Covid-19 on refugee learners in Wales](#).

7.   Appendices

Appendix A: School invitation email letter for Bangor University CEN sample of schools

Annwyl Bennaeth,

Mae eich cyfranogiad yn amhrisiadwy

Hoffem wahodd eich ysgol i gyfrannu at raglen ymchwil Rhwydwaith Tystiolaeth Gydweithredol (CEN) Llywodraeth Cymru drwy gwblhau ambell holiadur byr. Sefydlwyd y rhwydwaith gan Lywodraeth Cymru i gasglu a rhannu tystiolaeth ar effaith pandemig COVID-19 ar system addysg Cymru.

Nod rhaglen ymchwil CEN yw archwilio dylanwad y pandemig ar ysgolion Cymru o ran cwricwlwm ac addysgeg, tegwch a chynhwysiant, y Gymraeg a dwyieithrwydd ac arweinyddiaeth a dysgu proffesiynol. Hoffai ymchwilwyr yn Ysgol Gwyddorau Addysgol, Prifysgol Bangor, wahodd eich ysgol i gyfrannu at yr ymchwil bwysig hon drwy gymryd rhan mewn ambell arolwg byr a fydd yn darparu tystiolaeth werthfawr a fydd yn helpu i lywio rhaglenni adferiad COVID-19 Llywodraeth Cymru.

Mae'r arolygon hyn yn gyfle i chi leisio'ch barn, cyfrannu'n uniongyrchol at ein dealltwriaeth o effaith y pandemig ar ysgolion a disgyblion, a bwydo i mewn i sut y gellir cefnogi eich ysgol a'ch disgyblion yn effeithiol dros y blynyddoedd nesaf.

Ar hyn o bryd rydym yn cynnal ymchwil ar draws amrywiol themâu, ac mae eich ysgol wedi'i nodi i'n helpu i adeiladu sylfaen dystiolaeth ar gyfer y pedwar phroject a ddisgrifir isod (**CEN 1, 3, 8 ac 13**).

Gellir llenwi yr arolygon byr yma naill ai ar-lein neu ar bapur, a gwneud hynny yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg. Nid ydynt yn casglu unrhyw wybodaeth bersonol, ac maent wedi

Dear Headteacher,

Your participation is invaluable

We would like to invite your school to contribute to the Welsh Government's Collaborative Evidence Network (CEN) research programme by completing some short surveys. The network was established by Welsh Government to gather and share evidence on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Welsh education system.

The CEN research programme aims to explore the influence of the pandemic in Welsh schools in terms of curriculum and pedagogy, equity and inclusion, Cymraeg and bilingualism and leadership and professional learning. Researchers at the School of Educational Sciences, Bangor University, would like to invite your school to contribute to this important research by completing some short surveys that will provide valuable evidence to help inform Welsh Government's COVID-19 recovery programmes.

These short surveys present an opportunity to have your voice heard, directly contribute to our understanding of the impact of the pandemic on schools and learners, and feed in to how your school and your learners can be supported effectively over the coming years.

We are currently undertaking research across a range of themes, and your school has been identified to help us build an evidence base for the four projects described below (**CEN 1, 3, 8 and 13**).

These short surveys can be accessed either online or on paper, and in English or Welsh. The surveys do not collect any personal information and have been approved by the Bangor

cael eu cymeradwyo gan Bwyllgor Moeseg Ymchwil Ysgol Gwyddorau Addysgol Prifysgol Bangor.

Rhestrir y projectau yr ydych yn cael eich gwahodd i helpu gyda nhw yma:

CEN 1 - Mae'r prosiect hwn yn ymchwilio i effaith y pandemig ar Lais y Disgybl a chyfleoedd i gynnwys disgyblion mewn penderfyniadau am eu haddysg. Prif ymchwilwyr y project hwn yw Arwyn Roberts a Dr Nia Young, Prifysgol Bangor. Mae CEN 1 yn golygu bod yr aelod o staff sy'n gyfrifol am lais y disgybl yn yr ysgol yn llenwi holiadur yr arolwg.

CEN 3 - Mae'r project hwn yn ymchwilio i effaith y pandemig ar agweddau o'r ddarpariaeth llythrennedd mewn ysgolion cynradd, ysgolion canol, ac ysgolion anghenion addysgol arbennig (AAA) yng Nghymru. Prif ymchwilwyr y project hwn yw Dr Amy Hulson-Jones a Dr Emily Roberts-Tyler, Prifysgol Bangor. Mae CEN 3 yn golygu bod athrawon yn llenwi holiadur yr arolwg.

CEN 8 - Mae'r project hwn yn ymchwilio i ddylanwad y pandemig ar anghenion dysgu proffesiynol athrawon ysgol, fel rhan o fodel Ysgolion fel Sefydliadau sy'n Dysgu. Prif ymchwilwyr y project hwn yw Mr Rhys Coetmor Jones a Fatema Sultana, Prifysgol Bangor. Mae CEN 8 yn golygu bod athrawon yn llenwi holiadur yr arolwg.

CEN 13 - Mae'r project hwn yn ymchwilio i effaith y pandemig ar addysgu disgyblion o'r gymuned teithwyr yng Nghymru. Prif ymchwilwyr y project hwn yw Mrs Abigail Owen a Ms Alison Butler, Prifysgol Bangor. Mae CEN 13 yn golygu cynnal cyfweliadau lled-strwythuredig gydag athrawon.

Sut bydd yr arolygon yn gweithio

Unwaith y bydd eich ysgol yn derbyn y gwahoddiad, byddwn yn cysylltu ag aelod o staff penodedig i anfon dolenni electronig yr arolygon at yr athrawon perthnasol yn eich ysgol. Mae copïau papur o'r arolwg gydag

University School of Educational Sciences Research Ethics Committee.

The projects you are invited to help with are listed here:

CEN 1 – This project is investigating the impact of the pandemic on Pupil Voice and opportunities for involving pupils in decisions about their education. The principal investigators for this project are Arwyn Roberts and Dr Nia Young, Bangor University. CEN 1 involves a survey questionnaire with the member of staff responsible for pupil voice in schools.

CEN 3 – This project is investigating the impact of the pandemic on aspects of literacy provision in primary, middle, and special educational needs (SEN) schools in Wales. The principal investigators for this project are Dr Amy Hulson-Jones and Dr Emily Roberts-Tyler, Bangor University. CEN 3 involves a survey questionnaire with teachers.

CEN 8 – This project is investigating the influence of the pandemic on the professional learning needs of schoolteachers, as part of the Schools as Learning Organisations model. The principal investigators for this project are Mr Rhys Coetmor Jones and Fatema Sultana, Bangor University. CEN 8 involves a survey questionnaire with teachers.

CEN 13 - This project is investigating the impact of the pandemic on educating travelling community pupils in Wales. The principal investigators for this project are Mrs Abigail Owen and Ms Alison Butler, Bangor University. CEN 13 involves semi-structured interviews with teachers.

How the surveys will work

Once your school accepts the invitation, we will liaise with an appointed member of staff to forward electronic survey links to the relevant teachers in your school. Paper copies of the survey with prepaid (stamped)

amlenni parod [wedi'u stampio] ar gael hefyd. **Nodwch a oes arnoch angen copïau papur** o unrhyw un o holiaduron yr arolwg.

Camau nesaf i ysgolion

1. Os ydych yn hapus i gymryd rhan yn yr ymchwil hwn, a fyddech cystal ag ymateb i **bangorcenprojects@bangor.ac.uk** cyn gynted â phosibl gydag **enw aelod o staff** yn eich ysgol y gallwn gysylltu ag ef i ddosbarthu'r arolygon. Bydd tîm ymchwil Prifysgol Bangor wedyn yn anfon y dolenni i'r arolygon atoch mewn e-bost dilynol.
2. Mae tîm ymchwil Prifysgol Bangor hefyd wedi trefnu sesiynau **byr ar-lein** lle gallwch gwrdd â rhai o'r tîm ymchwil a dysgu mwy am raglen ymchwil CEN yn ogystal â'r projectau y mae eich ysgol yn cael gwahoddiad i gymryd rhan ynddynt. Gallwch ymuno a gamenwir eich rhanbarth drwy **glicio ar y ddolen ar waelod y llythyr hwn.**

Gobeithiwn y byddwch yn croesawu'r cyfle hwn i gyfrannu'n uniongyrchol at yr ymchwil bwysig hon wrth i ni weithio gydag ysgolion a Llywodraeth Cymru i adeiladu ymateb ar sail tystiolaeth ar gyfer yr adferiad yn dilyn COVID-19.

Os oes gennych unrhyw gwestiynau, neu os oes angen rhagor o wybodaeth arnoch am unrhyw agwedd ar raglen ymchwil CEN, mae croeso i chi gysylltu â ni.

Yn gywir,

---

envelopes are also available. **Please indicate if you require paper copies** of any of the survey questionnaires.

Next steps for schools

1. If you are happy to participate in this research, please respond to **bangorcenprojects@bangor.ac.uk** at your earliest convenience with **the name of a member of staff** in your school who we can liaise with to distribute the surveys. The Bangor University research team will then send you the links to the surveys in a follow-up email.
2. The Bangor University research team have also arranged **short webinar** where you can meet some of the research team and learn more about the CEN research programme as well the projects your school is being invited to. You can join the webinar for your region by **clicking the link at the bottom of this letter.**

We hope you will welcome this opportunity to contribute directly to this important research as we work with schools and Welsh Government to build a more evidence-based response to the COVID-19 recovery.

If you have any questions, or if you require any further information about any aspect of the CEN research programme, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours faithfully,

Appendix B: School email invitation letter for CEN 13 schools

Annwyl Bennaeth,

Mae eich cyfranogiad yn amhrisiadwy

Hoffem wahodd eich ysgol i gyfrannu at raglen ymchwil Rhwydwaith Tystiolaeth Gydweithredol (CEN) Llywodraeth Cymru drwy gwblhau ambell holiadur byr. Sefydlwyd y rhwydwaith gan Lywodraeth Cymru i gasglu a rhannu tystiolaeth ar effaith pandemig COVID-19 ar system addysg Cymru.

Nod rhaglen ymchwil CEN yw archwilio dylanwad y pandemig ar ysgolion Cymru o ran cwricwlwm ac addysgeg, tegwch a chynhwysiant, y Gymraeg a dwyieithrwydd ac arweinyddiaeth a dysgu proffesiynol. Hoffai ymchwilwyr yn Ysgol Gwyddorau Addysgol, Prifysgol Bangor, wahodd eich ysgol i gyfrannu at yr ymchwil bwysig hon drwy gymryd rhan mewn ambell arolwg byr a fydd yn darparu tystiolaeth werthfawr a fydd yn helpu i lywio rhaglenni adferiad COVID-19 Llywodraeth Cymru.

Mae'r cyfweliadau'n gyfle i chi leisio'ch barn, cyfrannu'n uniongyrchol at ein dealltwriaeth o effaith y pandemig ar ysgolion a disgyblion, a bwydo i mewn i sut y gellir cefnogi eich ysgol a'ch disgyblion yn effeithiol dros y blynyddoedd nesaf.

Ar hyn o bryd rydym yn cynnal ymchwil ar draws amrywiol themâu, ac mae eich ysgol wedi'i nodi i'n helpu i adeiladu sylfaen dystiolaeth ar gyfer y phroject a ddisgrifir isod (**CEN 13**).

Gellir cwblhau'r cyfweliad ar-lein, ac yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg. Nid yw'r cyfweliadau yn casglu unrhyw wybodaeth bersonol, ac maent wedi cael eu cymeradwyo gan Bwyllgor Moeseg

Dear Headteacher,

Your participation is invaluable

We would like to invite your school to contribute to the Welsh Government's Collaborative Evidence Network (CEN) research programme by completing some short surveys. The network was established by Welsh Government to gather and share evidence on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Welsh education system.

The CEN research programme aims to explore the influence of the pandemic in Welsh schools in terms of curriculum and pedagogy, equity and inclusion, Cymraeg and bilingualism and leadership and professional learning. Researchers at the School of Educational Sciences, Bangor University, would like to invite your school to contribute to this important research by completing some short surveys that will provide valuable evidence to help inform Welsh Government's COVID-19 recovery programmes.

The interviews present an opportunity to have your voice heard, directly contribute to our understanding of the impact of the pandemic on schools and learners, and feed in to how your school and your learners can be supported effectively over the coming years.

We are currently undertaking research across a range of themes, and your school has been identified to help us build an evidence base for the project described below (**CEN 13**).

The interview can be completed online, and in English or Welsh. The interviews do not collect any personal information and have been approved by the Bangor University School of

Ymchwil Ysgol Gwyddorau Addysgol Prifysgol Bangor.

Rhestrir y project yr ydych yn cael eich gwahodd i helpu gyda nhw yma:

CEN 13 - Mae'r project hwn yn ymchwilio i effaith y pandemig ar addysgu disgyblion o'r gymuned teithwyr yng Nghymru. Prif ymchwilwyr y project hwn yw Mrs Abigail Owen a Ms Alison Butler, Prifysgol Bangor. Mae CEN 13 yn golygu cynnal cyfweliadau lled-strwythuredig gydag athrawon.

Sut bydd y cyfweliadau yn gweithio

Unwaith y bydd eich ysgol yn derbyn y gwahoddiad, byddwn yn cysylltu ag aelod o staff penodedig i drefnu amser cyfleus ar gyfer cynnal y cyfweliad gyda'r athrawon perthnasol yn eich ysgol.

Camau nesaf i ysgolion

3. Os ydych yn hapus i gymryd rhan yn yr ymchwil hwn, a fyddech cystal ag ymateb i **bangorcenprojects@bangor.ac.uk** cyn gynted â phosibl gydag **enw aelod o staff** yn eich ysgol y gallwn gysylltu ag ef i drefnu cyfweliad. Bydd tîm ymchwil Prifysgol Bangor wedyn yn anfon y dolenni i'r arolygon atoch mewn e-bost dilynol.
4. Mae tîm ymchwil Prifysgol Bangor hefyd wedi trefnu sesiynau **byr ar-lein** lle gallwch gwrdd â rhai o'r tîm ymchwil a dysgu mwy am raglen ymchwil CEN yn ogystal â'r project y mae eich ysgol yn cael gwahoddiad i gymryd rhan ynddynt. Gallwch ymuno a gamenwir eich rhanbarth drwy **glicio ar y ddolen ar waelod y llythyr hwn.**

Gobeithiwn y byddwch yn croesawu'r cyfle hwn i gyfrannu'n uniongyrchol at yr ymchwil bwysig hon wrth i ni weithio gydag ysgolion a Llywodraeth Cymru i adeiladu ymateb ar sail tystiolaeth ar gyfer yr adferiad yn dilyn COVID-19.

Educational Sciences Research Ethics Committee.

The project you are invited to help with is listed here:

CEN 13 - This project is investigating the impact of the pandemic on educating travelling community pupils in Wales. The principal investigators for this project are Mrs Abigail Owen and Ms Alison Butler, Bangor University. CEN 13 involves semi-structured interviews with teachers.

How the interviews will work

Once your school accepts the invitation, we will liaise with an appointed member of staff to arrange a convenient time for conducting the interview with the relevant teachers in your school.

Next steps for schools

3. If you are happy to participate in this research, please respond to **bangorcenprojects@bangor.ac.uk** at your earliest convenience with **the name of a member of staff** in your school who we can liaise with to arrange the interview. The Bangor University research team will then send you the links to the surveys in a follow-up email.
4. The Bangor University research team have also arranged **short webinar** where you can meet some of the research team and learn more about the CEN research programme as well the project your school is being invited to. You can join the webinar for your region by **clicking the link at the bottom of this letter.**

We hope you will welcome this opportunity to contribute directly to this important research as we work with schools and Welsh Government to build a more evidence-based response to the COVID-19 recovery.

Os oes gennych unrhyw gwestiynau, neu os oes angen rhagor o wybodaeth arnoch am unrhyw agwedd ar raglen ymchwil CEN, mae croeso i chi gysylltu â ni.	If you have any questions, or if you require any further information about any aspect of the CEN research programme, please do not hesitate to contact us.
Yn gywir,	Yours faithfully,

Appendix C: School reminder email letter for CEN sample of schools

Annwyl Bennaeth,

Dyma neges i ddilyn yr e-bost anfonwyd atoch yn nhymor y gwanwyn yn eich gwahodd i gymryd rhan yn ymchwil y *Rhwydwaith Tystiolaeth Gydweithredol* (ThTG) a ariennir gan Lywodraeth Cymru. Mae eich ysgol wedi'i dewis i gymryd rhan yn yr ymchwil hwn gan ei bod yn rhan o sampl gynrychiadol ar draws Cymru.

Os ydych eisoes wedi ymateb?

Os ydych chi eisoes wedi ymateb i'r e-bost ac wedi cael y dolenni arolwg, a fyddech cystal â sicrhau bod y sawl a enwebwyd yn dosbarthu'r arolygon cyn gynted ag y bo modd. **Dim ond tan 30 Mehefin y mae dolenni arolwg y RhTG ar gael i ysgolion.** Diolch yn fawr iawn os ydych chi wedi medru cwblhau'r arolygon – gwerthfawrogir eich cymorth yn fawr iawn.

Byddwn yn cysylltu ag ysgolion arolwg y RhTG ar ôl hanner tymor mis Mai i ateb unrhyw gwestiynau am yr arolygon.

Os nad ydych eto wedi ymateb?

Mae ymatebion eich ysgol yn hanfodol i helpu Llywodraeth Cymru i ddeall effaith y pandemig ar system addysg Cymru a byddant yn darparu tystiolaeth werthfawr i helpu i lywio rhaglenni adferiad COVID-19 Llywodraeth Cymru. **Mae'r consortia rhanbarthol yn awyddus i'r ysgolion sampl gyfrannu i'r ymchwil hwn.**

Holiaduron byr ar-lein yw arolygon y RhTG a gellir eu cwblhau mewn 20 munud neu lai, yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg. Nid yw'r arolygon yn casglu unrhyw wybodaeth bersonol, ac maent wedi cael eu cymeradwyo gan Bwyllgor Moeseg Ymchwil Ysgol Gwyddorau Addysgol Prifysgol Bangor.

Dyma restru'r arolygon byr y cafodd eich ysgol ei gwahodd i'w llenwi:

Dear Headteacher,

This is a follow up to the email we sent you in the spring term inviting you to participate in our Welsh Government funded *Collaborative Evidence Network* (CEN) research. Your school has been chosen to participate in this research as it forms part of a representative sample across Wales.

If you have already responded?

If you have already responded to the email and have received the survey links, could you please ensure the nominated person distributes the surveys as soon as possible. **The CEN survey links are only available for schools to complete until June 30th.** Thank you very much if you have been able to complete the surveys - your help is very much appreciated.

We will be contacting CEN survey schools after the May half term to answer any questions that you might have about the surveys.

If you have not yet responded?

Your school's responses are vital in helping Welsh Government understand the impact of the pandemic on the Welsh education system and will provide valuable evidence to help inform Welsh Government's COVID-19 recovery programmes. **The regional consortia are keen for the sampled schools to contribute their voice to this research.**

The CEN surveys are short online questionnaires and can be completed in 20 minutes or less, and in English or Welsh. The surveys do not collect any personal information and have been approved by the Bangor University School of Educational Sciences Research Ethics Committee.

The short surveys your school is invited to help with are listed here:

CEN 1 - Mae'r arolwg hwn yn ymchwilio i effaith y pandemig ar lais y disgybl a chyfleoedd i gynnwys disgyblion mewn penderfyniadau am eu haddysg.

CEN 3 - Mae'r arolwg hwn yn ymchwilio i effaith y pandemig ar agweddau ar ddarpariaeth lythrennedd mewn ysgolion cynradd, ysgolion canol ac ysgolion anghenion addysgol arbennig (AAA) yng Nghymru.

CEN 8 - Mae'r arolwg hwn yn ymchwilio i ddylanwad y pandemig ar anghenion dysgu proffesiynol athrawon ysgol, fel rhan o'r model Ysgolion fel Sefydliadau sy'n Dysgu.

CEN 13 - Mae'r project hwn yn ymchwilio i effaith y pandemig ar addysgu disgyblion o'r gymuned teithwyr yng Nghymru.

Y camau nesaf er mwyn cwblhau'r arolygon:
1. Os ydych yn hapus i gwblhau'r arolygon, ymatebwch i bangorcenprojects@bangor.ac.uk cyn gynted ag y bo modd gan nodi enw aelod staff y gallwn gysylltu ag ef/hi i ddosbarthu'r arolygon. Bydd tîm ymchwil Prifysgol Bangor wedyn yn anfon dolenni at yr arolygon atoch mewn e-bost dilynol.

2. **Dim ond tan 30 Mehefin y mae'r arolygon ar gael i ysgolion eu cwblhau**.

Gobeithiwn y byddwch yn gallu ein cynorthwyo i gasglu'r wybodaeth bwysig hon ac y byddwch yn manteisio ar y cyfle i gyfrannu at ein dealltwriaeth o effaith y pandemig ar ysgolion a dysgwyr yng Nghymru.

Os oes gennych unrhyw gwestiynau, neu os oes angen rhagor o wybodaeth arnoch am unrhyw agwedd ar raglen ymchwil y RhTG, mae croeso i chi gysylltu â ni.

CEN 1 – This survey is investigating the impact of the pandemic on Pupil Voice and opportunities for involving pupils in decisions about their education.

CEN 3 – This survey is investigating the impact of the pandemic on aspects of literacy provision in primary, middle, and special educational needs (SEN) schools in Wales.

CEN 8 – This survey is investigating the influence of the pandemic on the professional learning needs of schoolteachers, as part of the Schools as Learning Organisations model.

CEN 13 - This project is investigating the impact of the pandemic on educating travelling community pupils in Wales.

Next steps to complete the surveys:
1. If you are happy to complete the surveys, please respond to bangorcenprojects@bangor.ac.uk at your earliest convenience with the name of a member of staff who we can liaise with to distribute the surveys. The Bangor University research team will then send you the links to the surveys in a follow-up email.

2. **The CEN surveys are only available for schools to complete until June 30th**.

We hope that you will be able to assist us in gathering this important information and take the opportunity to contribute to our understanding of the impact of the pandemic on schools and learners in Wales.

If you have any questions, or if you require any further information about any aspect of the CEN research programme, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Bydd cyfranogiad eich ysgol yn yr arolygon hyn yn amhrisiadwy ac rydym yn gobeithio clywed gennych yn fuan.	Your school's participation in these surveys will be invaluable and we hope to hear from you soon.
Yn gywir,	Yours faithfully,

Appendix D: School reminder email letter for CEN 13 schools

Annwyl Bennaeth,

Dyma neges i ddilyn yr e-bost anfonwyd atoch yn nhymor y gwanwyn yn eich gwahodd i gymryd rhan yn ymchwil y *Rhwydwaith Tystiolaeth Gydweithredol* (ThTG) a ariennir gan Lywodraeth Cymru. Mae eich ysgol wedi'i dewis i gymryd rhan yn yr ymchwil hwn gan ei bod yn rhan o sampl gynrychiadol ar draws Cymru.

Os ydych eisoes wedi ymateb?

Os ydych chi eisoes wedi ymateb i'r e-bost ac wedi cael y dolenni arolwg, a fyddech cystal â sicrhau bod y sawl a enwebwyd yn dosbarthu'r arolygon cyn gynted ag y bo modd. **Dim ond tan 30 Mehefin y mae dolenni arolwg y RhTG ar gael i ysgolion.** Diolch yn fawr iawn os ydych chi wedi medru cwblhau'r arolygon – gwerthfawrogir eich cymorth yn fawr iawn.

Byddwn yn cysylltu ag ysgolion arolwg y RhTG ar ôl hanner tymor mis Mai i ateb unrhyw gwestiynau am yr arolygon.

Os nad ydych eto wedi ymateb?

Mae ymatebion eich ysgol yn hanfodol i helpu Llywodraeth Cymru i ddeall effaith y pandemig ar system addysg Cymru a byddant yn darparu tystiolaeth werthfawr i helpu i lywio rhaglenni adferiad COVID-19 Llywodraeth Cymru. **Mae'r consortia rhanbarthol yn awyddus i'r ysgolion sampl gyfrannu i'r ymchwil hwn.**

Holiaduron byr ar-lein yw arolygon y RhTG a gellir eu cwblhau mewn 20 munud neu lai, yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg. Nid yw'r arolygon yn casglu unrhyw wybodaeth bersonol, ac maent wedi cael eu cymeradwyo gan Bwyllgor Moeseg Ymchwil Ysgol Gwyddorau Addysgol Prifysgol Bangor.

Rhestrir y project yr ydych yn cael eich gwahodd i helpu gyda nhw yma:

Dear Headteacher,

This is a follow up to the email we sent you in the spring term inviting you to participate in our Welsh Government funded *Collaborative Evidence Network* (CEN) research. Your school has been chosen to participate in this research as it forms part of a representative sample across Wales.

If you have already responded?

If you have already responded to the email and have received the survey links, could you please ensure the nominated person distributes the surveys as soon as possible. **The CEN survey links are only available for schools to complete until June 30th.** Thank you very much if you have been able to complete the surveys - your help is very much appreciated.

We will be contacting CEN survey schools after the May half term to answer any questions that you might have about the surveys.

If you have not yet responded?

Your school's responses are vital in helping Welsh Government understand the impact of the pandemic on the Welsh education system and will provide valuable evidence to help inform Welsh Government's COVID-19 recovery programmes. **The regional consortia are keen for the sampled schools to contribute their voice to this research.**

The CEN surveys are short online questionnaires and can be completed in 20 minutes or less, and in English or Welsh. The surveys do not collect any personal information and have been approved by the Bangor University School of Educational Sciences Research Ethics Committee.

The project you are invited to help with is listed here:

CEN 13 - Mae'r project hwn yn ymchwilio i effaith y pandemig ar addysgu disgyblion o'r gymuned teithwyr yng Nghymru.

Y camau nesaf er mwyn cwblhau'r arolygon:
3. Os ydych yn hapus i gwblhau'r arolygon, ymatebwch i bangorcenprojects@bangor.ac.uk cyn gynted ag y bo modd gan nodi enw aelod staff y gallwn gysylltu ag ef/hi i ddosbarthu'r arolygon. Bydd tîm ymchwil Prifysgol Bangor wedyn yn anfon dolenni at yr arolygon atoch mewn e-bost dilynol.

4. **Dim ond tan 30 Mehefin y mae'r arolygon ar gael i ysgolion eu cwblhau**.

Gobeithiwn y byddwch yn gallu ein cynorthwyo i gasglu'r wybodaeth bwysig hon ac y byddwch yn manteisio ar y cyfle i gyfrannu at ein dealltwriaeth o effaith y pandemig ar ysgolion a dysgwyr yng Nghymru.

Os oes gennych unrhyw gwestiynau, neu os oes angen rhagor o wybodaeth arnoch am unrhyw agwedd ar raglen ymchwil y RhTG, mae croeso i chi gysylltu â ni.

Bydd cyfranogiad eich ysgol yn yr arolygon hyn yn amhrisiadwy ac rydym yn gobeithio clywed gennych yn fuan.

Yn gywir,

CEN 13 - This project is investigating the impact of the pandemic on educating travelling community pupils in Wales.

Next steps to complete the surveys:
3. If you are happy to complete the surveys, please respond to bangorcenprojects@bangor.ac.uk at your earliest convenience with the name of a member of staff who we can liaise with to distribute the surveys. The Bangor University research team will then send you the links to the surveys in a follow-up email.

4. **The CEN surveys are only available for schools to complete until June 30th**.

We hope that you will be able to assist us in gathering this important information and take the opportunity to contribute to our understanding of the impact of the pandemic on schools and learners in Wales.

If you have any questions, or if you require any further information about any aspect of the CEN research programme, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Your school's participation in these surveys will be invaluable and we hope to hear from you soon.

Yours faithfully,