

Young Carers and attendance

An England briefing analysing the results of the 2023 school census in relation to young carers and attendance/absence.

About Carers Trust

Carers Trust works to transform the lives of unpaid carers. It partners with its UK-wide network of local carer organisations to provide funding and support, deliver innovative and evidence-based programmes, raise awareness, and influence policy. Carers Trust hosts the Young Carers Alliance, a network of over 200 organisations and 500 individuals committed to improving identification and support for young carers and young adult carers. Carers Trust’s vision is that unpaid carers are heard and valued, with access to support, advice and resources to enable them to live fulfilled lives.

Young carers and the school census

As a result of campaigning by Carers Trust, The Children’s Society and other charities, the Government added young carers to the school census from January 2023.

In the January 2023 school census, 38,983 pupils were recorded as young carers. This is a significant under-estimation because 79% of schools recorded having no young carers in their school census return. The latest research suggests that around 10% of young people are young carers – which would equate to at least one million young carers across the UK and at least two young carers in each class.

Young carers and absence

In March 2024, the Department for Education published ‘[Pupil absence in schools in England – 2022/23](#)’ which provides insights into pupil absence for the 2022/23 academic year. For the first time, this release included information about attendance and absence for young carers.

Attendance for young carers was five per cent lower than for pupils without caring responsibilities. This means young carers missed on average around 23 days of school a year, compared to 14 days for other pupils. The persistent absence (missing 10 per cent or more of school) rate for young carers was 39% - nearly twice as high as for other pupils.

	Declared as a young carer	Not declared as a young carer
Overall absence rate	12.3%	7.3%
Percentage of persistent absentees	39.0%	21.1%

What else do we know about young carers and education?

Research consistently shows the significant impact that caring responsibilities can have on the educational experience and outcomes of children.

Carers Trust's report into the experiences of young carers and young adult carers, *'Being a young carer is not a choice; it's just what we do'* found that 40% of young carers do not get the help they need to balance caring and their education. As a result, 1 in 3 young carers and young adult carers said they struggle to balance caring with education. A cross-European study of young carers also found that 37% of young carers said their performance had suffered as a result of caring responsibilities, and 36% reported being bullied specifically about caring.

In terms of longer-term educational outcomes, a UCL-Carers Trust research collaboration found that young carers are 38% less likely to obtain a university degree; with those caring for more than 35 hours per week being 86% less likely. Young carers are also less likely to enter employment than their peers.¹

Carers Trust's recommendations

The figures in relation to young carers and education are stark, and so in response, Carers Trust makes the following recommendations:

- The Government should require all schools to have a Young Carers Lead with strategic responsibility and oversight for identifying and implementing appropriate support for young carers.
- Schools should also be required to have a young carers policy setting out what support is available within school and locally.
- The Government should provide targeted funding to improve the identification and support for young carers in schools across England, through initiatives such as the [Young Carers in Schools programme](#). They should also ensure young carers are a priority group within the Attendance Hubs and Attendance Mentors initiatives.
- There should be funding for schools to support the educational outcomes of young carers by making young carers eligible for additional pupil premium funding.
- Ofsted should ensure that identification and support for young carers is specifically considered within their inspection of education providers.
- The needs of young carers should be included within the initial teacher training curriculum for all teachers.
- Young carers should be added to the daily attendance reporting so that additional real-time insights around young carer attendance is available to inform appropriate policy responses and interventions by schools.

To find out more

Carers Trust will be publishing more detailed analysis later this year. If you have further questions, you can contact Andy McGowan, Policy and Practice Manager at Carers Trust – amcgowan@carers.org.

¹ Xue, B., Lacey, R.E., Di Gessa, G. and McMunn, A., (2023)