

**A Report on Early School Leaving 2014/2015: Dublin City South Children and Young
People's Service Committee**

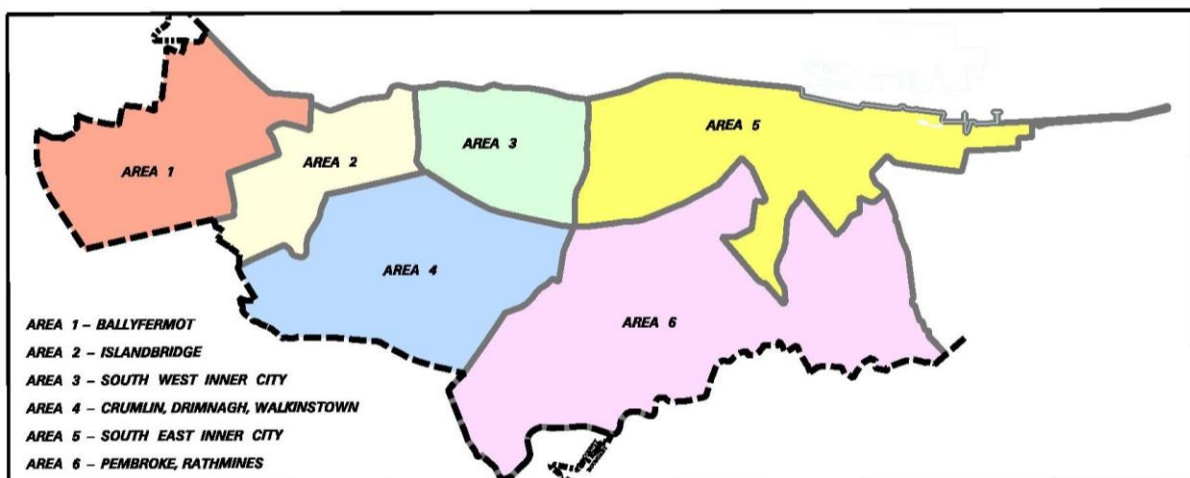
By Glenn Perry

October 2016

INTRODUCTION

Dublin City South Children and Young People's Service Committee (DCS CYPSC) is tasked with improving outcomes for children and young people within its area through better coordination in the planning and delivery of services. Early school leaving was identified by committee members as a key priority area. One of the issues that emerged is that data was not readily available about the number and profile of young people in the county who do not complete the Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate or what their destination was on leaving school. The absence of this data makes it difficult to make the case for increased resources to support young people to stay in school and resources for those who are out of school. With this in mind, the Committee's Education Subgroup decided to develop a data collection tool that could be used to gather the information required.

Dublin City South Children and Young People's Service Committee Area



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The data received from individual schools were grouped together so that no individual school can be identified. It is hoped that the data gathered will be used to assist in identifying the level of need in relation to young people out of school and the type of service required to meet this need. The data should also inform discussions that have been taking place at the Children and Young Peoples Services Committee in relation to education supports for young people out-of-school and for those students for whom retention in mainstream education is a challenge.

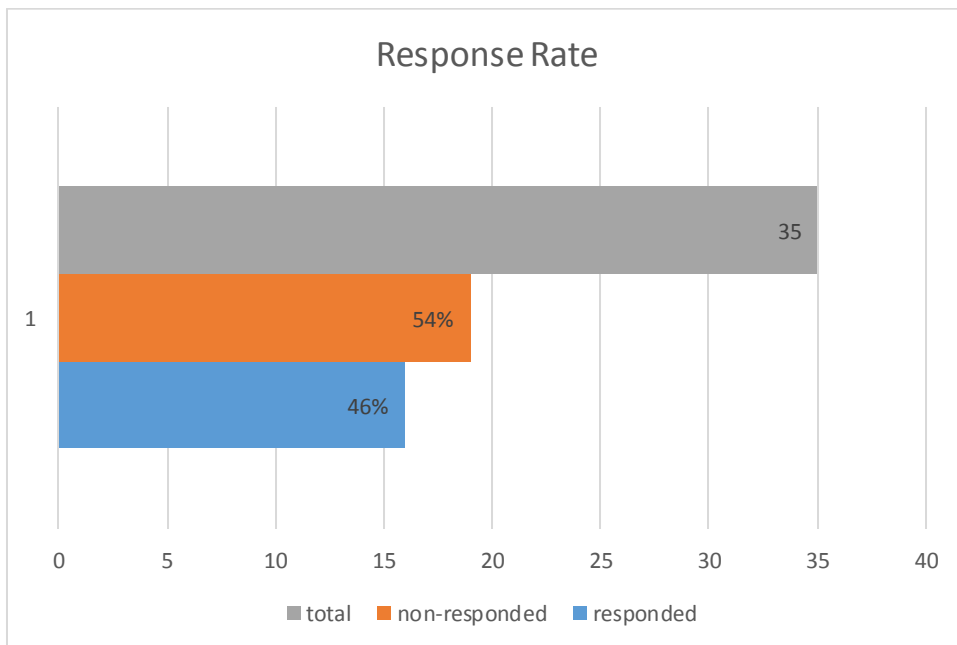
METHODOLOGY

This piece of research used a Quantitative approach to answering the research questions. A questionnaire was developed and sent to all post-primary schools in the Dublin City South Children and Young Peoples Service Committee area. One of the questions on the questionnaire had a Qualitative element and asked the respondents to make recommendations in relation to students who leave school early. It is extremely important to be cautious when analysing this question as the views presented are individual views and are therefore not generalisable. It is also important to note that these views do not include the views of those that are directly affected by the issue of early school leaving namely children and parents.

THE ANALYSIS

1. Response Rate

School questionnaires were sent to 35 post-primary schools within the Dublin City South Children and Young People's Service Committee area. The questionnaires were followed up with a number of telephone calls and school visits by the local SEWO and EWO within the area. In total 16 (46%) schools responded and 19 (54%) did not. In addition a further 2 schools responded after the cut of date and are therefore not included in the analysis.

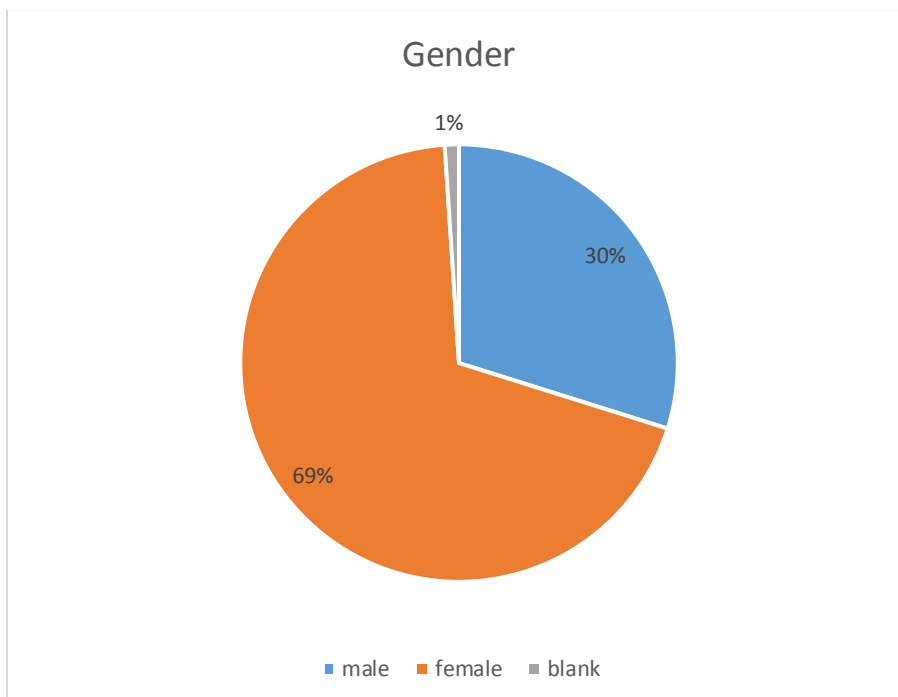


2. The % of children that left school in 2014/2015

Of the schools that responded there was a total enrolment of 6,199 students for the academic school year 2014/2015. In total 191 students left school at some point during the year which accounts for 3% of the student population. (n=191)

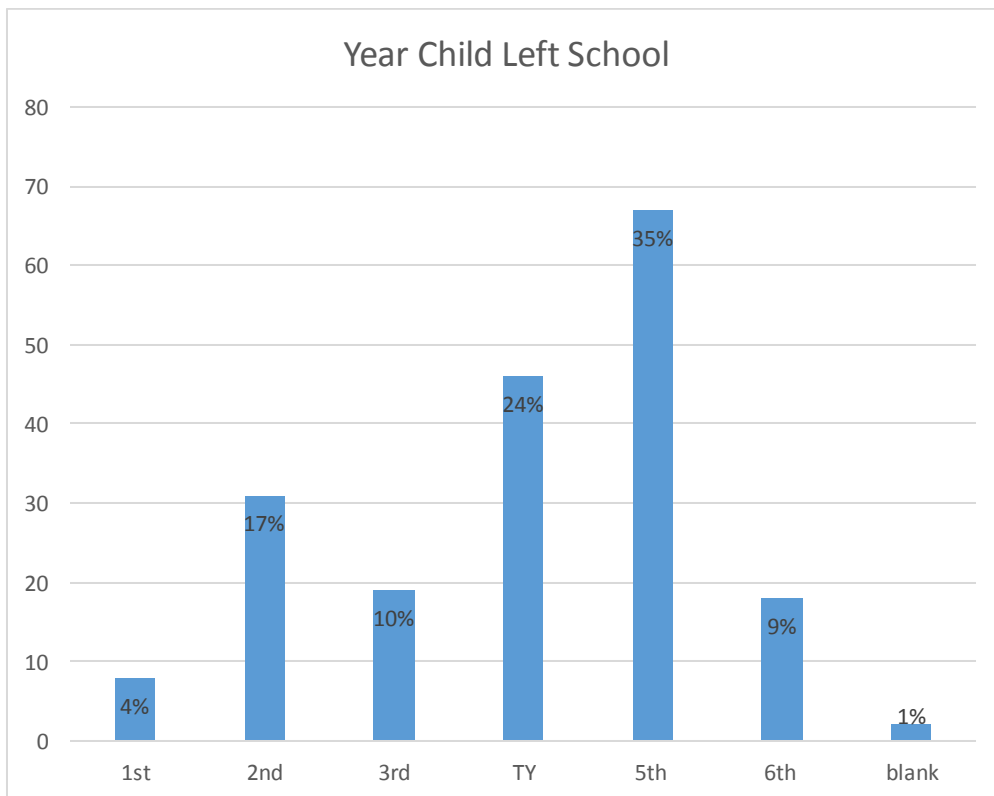
3. Gender

The analysis shows that female students were over twice as likely to leave school. The figures confirm that 69% of female students and 30% of male students left school in 2014/2015. In addition, 1% of students were not identified in the questionnaires as male or female.



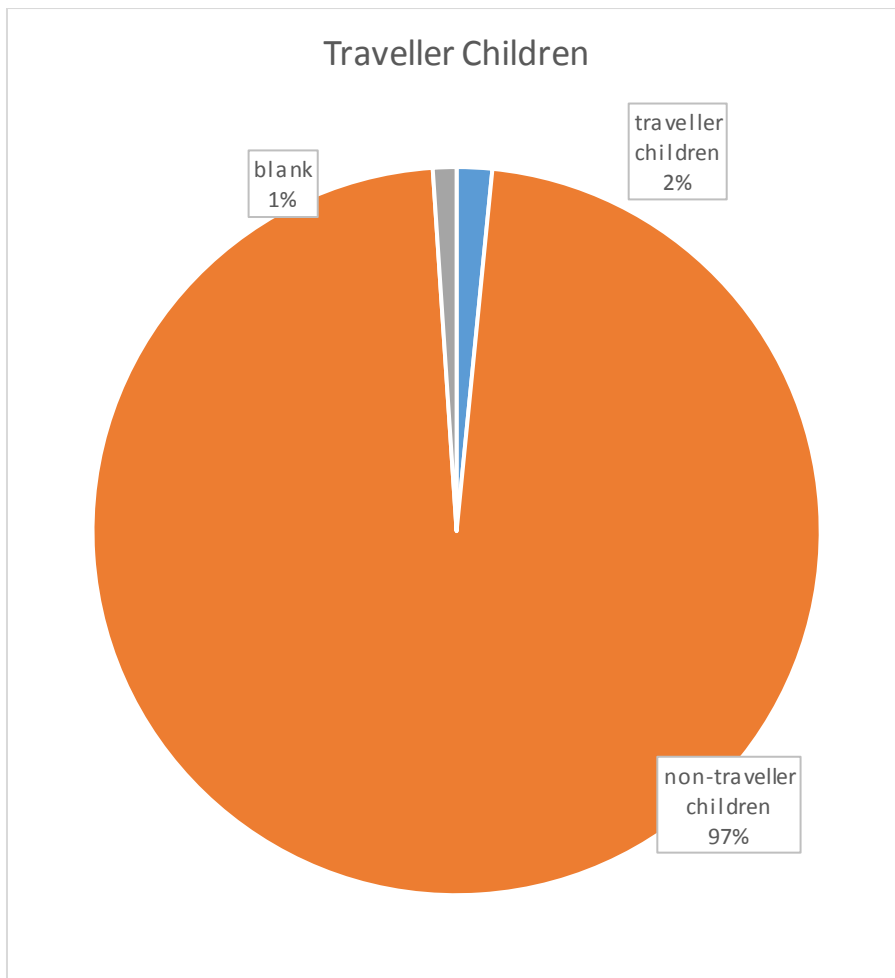
4. The Year Child Left School

The data confirms that the vast majority of children left school in either Transition Year or 5th year and accounted for 59% of students. The analysis indicates that 5th year had the highest percentage of students leaving school which accounted for 35%. The data also reveals that 31% of children left school between 1st year and 3rd year. A further 9% of students left school in 6th year and 1% was left blank.



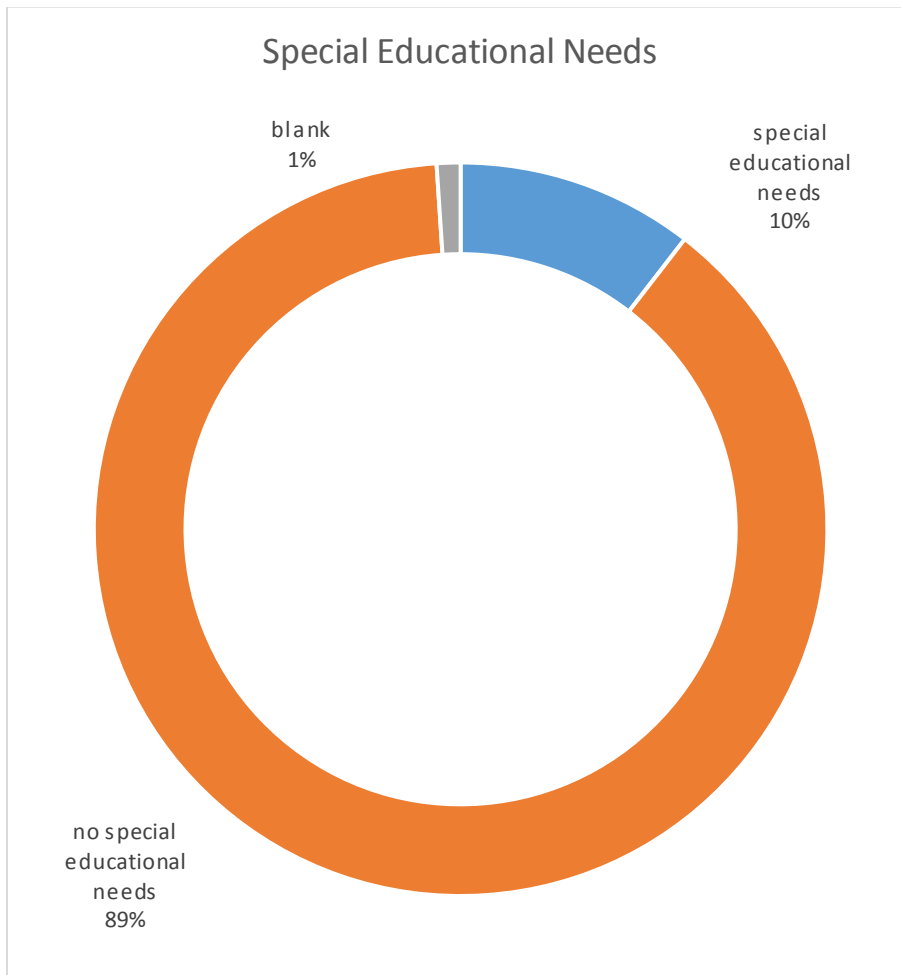
5. Traveller Children

The data confirms that 2% of children were identified as members of the Travelling Community and 97% were not. A further 1% of cases were left blank.



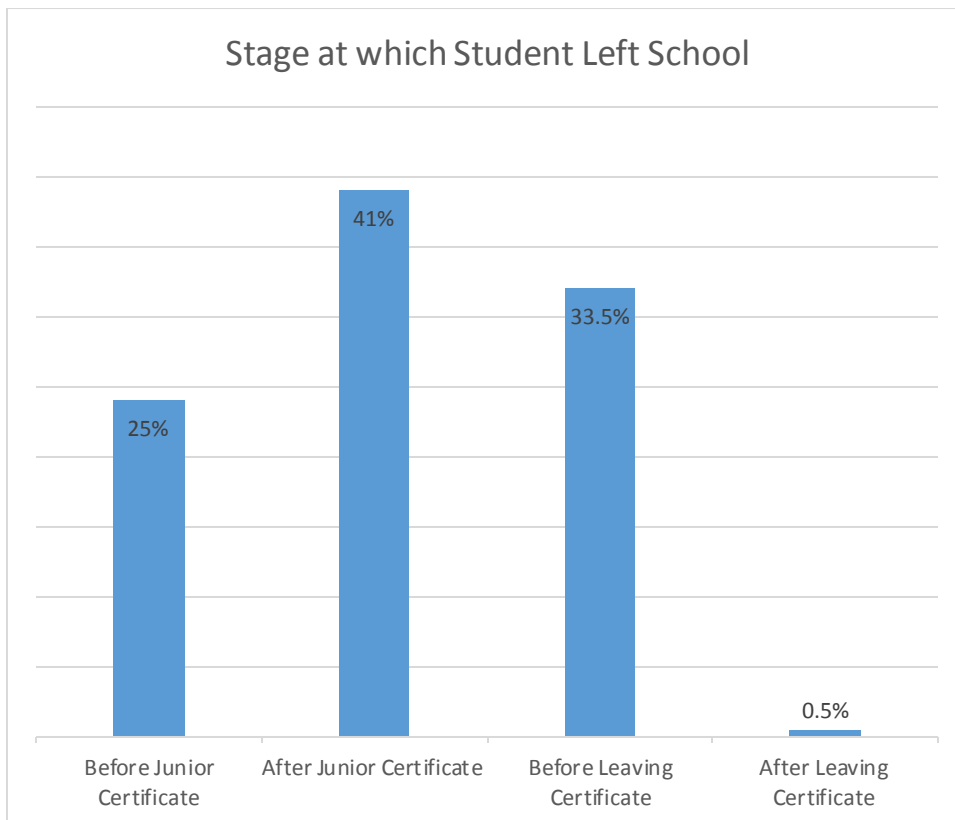
6. Special Educational Needs

The analysis shows that 10% of children who left school in 2014/2015 were identified as having a special educational need while 89% of children were identified as having no special educational need. A further 1% was left blank.



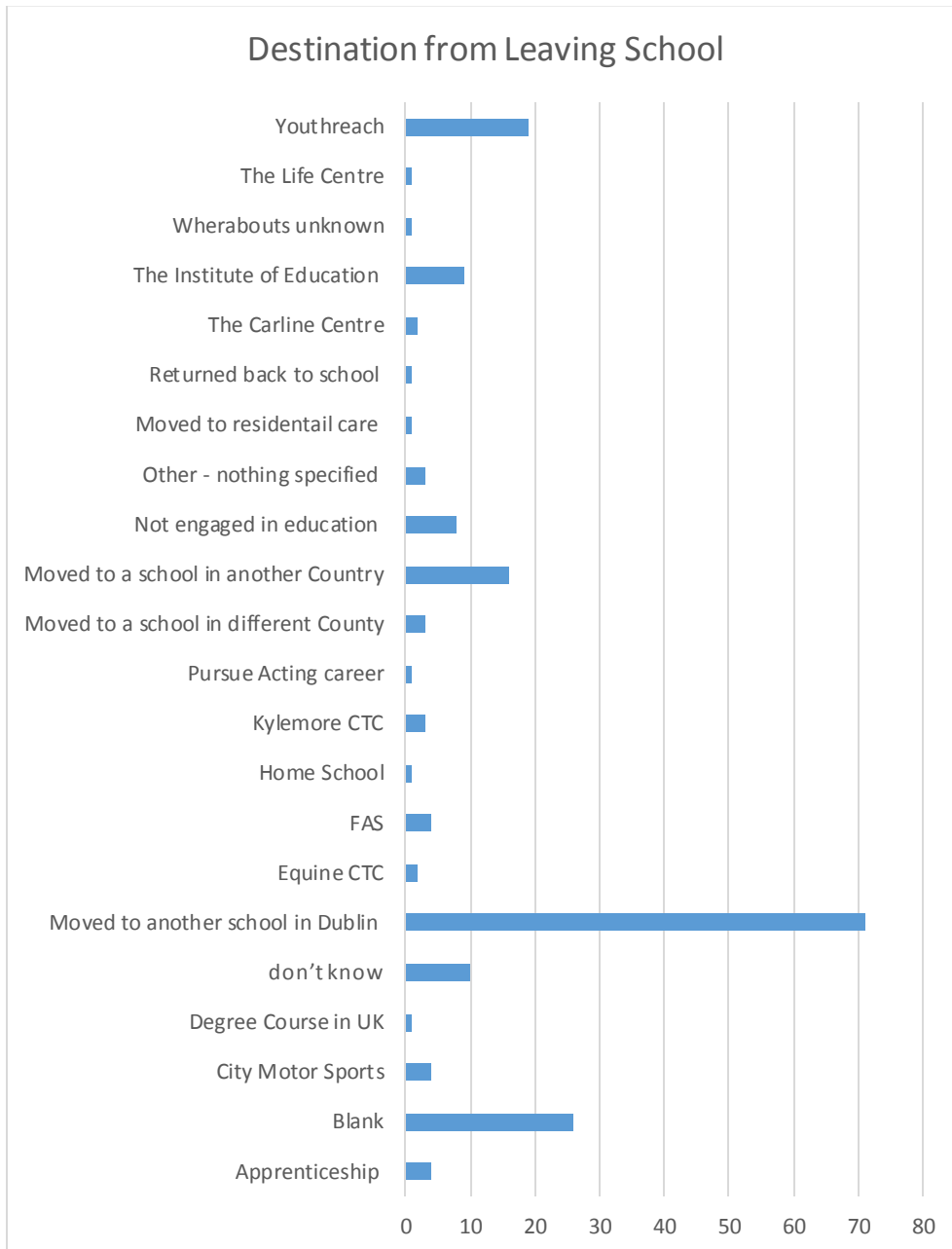
7. Stage at which Student left School

The analysis confirms that in 2014/2015, 25% of students left school before sitting or competing the Junior Certificate/Junior Certificate Schools Programme. The analysis also reveals that the highest percentage of children left school after sitting or completing the Junior Certificate/Junior Certificate Schools Programme which accounted for 41% of students. A further 33.5% of students left school before sitting the Leaving Certificate/Leaving Certificate Applied Programme/Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme.



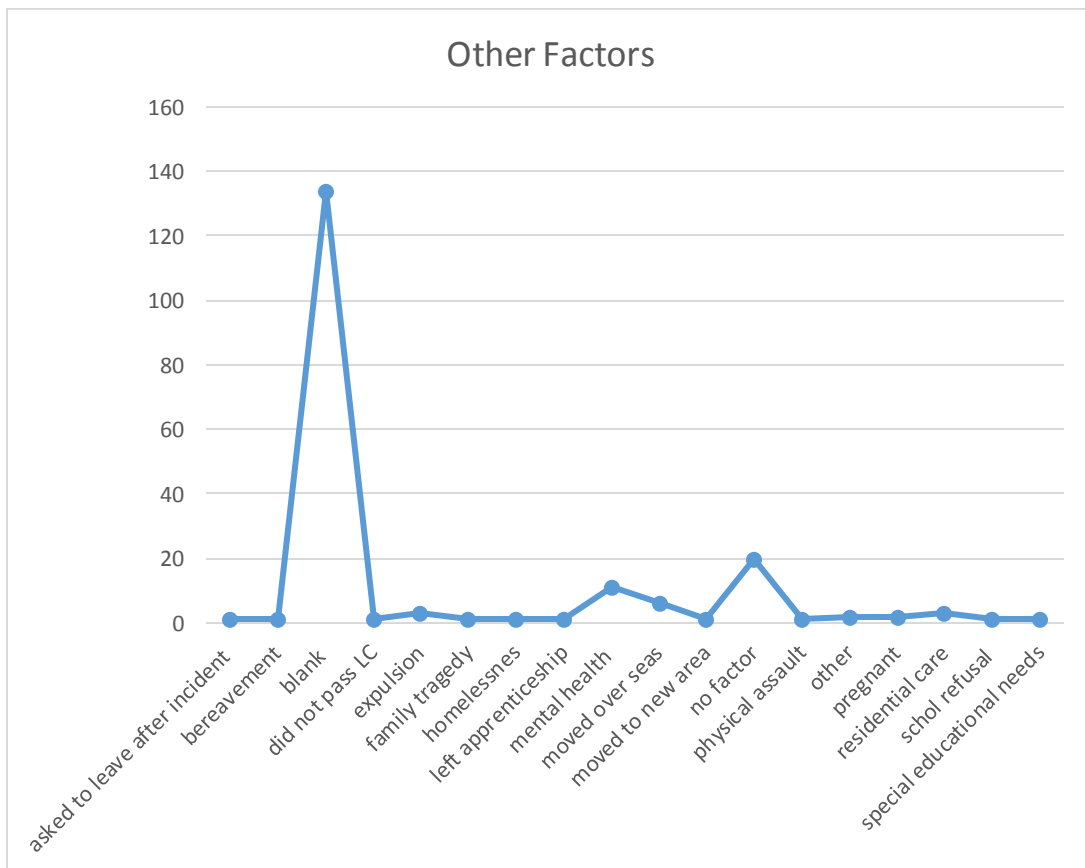
8. Destination on Leaving School

The graph below indicates the destination that students went to after leaving school.



9. Other Factors

For the majority of cases the respondents left this question blank. However other factors were outlined such as mental health difficulties, pregnancy, homelessness, family tragedy, bereavement, moved to new area, moved overseas, school refusal, expulsion, physical assault, asked to leave after an incident, residential care. Some of the respondents also expressed that there were no other factors that contributed to the student leaving school.



10. Suggestions and Recommendations made by Respondents

The following comments and suggestions were made by the respondents in relation to students who leave school early or students that are at risk of dropping out of school. These views are the views held by individual respondents and it is therefore extremely important to be cautious of making any generalisations when reviewing these comments.

- ‘There is a need for greater flexibility in relation to teacher allocation as timetables are fixed at the start of the year and it might be difficult to introduce reduced timetables for those children that need them’
- ‘A full time teacher/student support person in DEIS schools is needed to be free to offer interventions to students that require them’
- ‘There is a need for more specialised help and extra resources to assist children (especially boys) that have emotional psychological and behavioural issues’
- ‘Schools need access to specially trained staff such as psychologists and psychotherapists on site for children and families. Off-site services are not as effective because children and families miss their appointments’

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- ‘There is a need for immediate support from a psychologist when a young person becomes troubled’
- ‘There is a need for investment in psychological support and the re-instatement of the guidance counsellor posts in schools’
- ‘More training and a greater understanding around ADHD is needed for teaching staff’
- ‘Schools need more autonomy in designing the curriculum for students in their catchment areas’
- ‘Schools need more resources for practical subjects as boys cope better in practical classes’
- ‘We find in general that when students leave our school they are going to another school or to a training course. We are more concerned about school attendance especially in the senior years. (In our school 1st, 2nd, 3rd years had 25% non-attendance compared to 4th and 5th years where it was 40% non-attendance and for

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6th years it was 47% non-attendance). The high level of non-attendance in the senior years could be a focus for the committee’

- ‘There is a need for more resources for senior cycle as they are not available. We have a special educational unit up to 3rd year which is very effective at keeping students in school’
- ‘Chronic absenteeism and severe anxiety can seriously impact on student retention in school’
- ‘The provision of additional EWOs to tackle school attendance in the senior cycle’
- ‘A more holistic and joined up support to tackle early school leaving among all services is needed’
- ‘There should be provision within the community and schools to encourage positive health and wellbeing’
- ‘It is important to celebrate those schools that retain their students against all odds’

- ‘In DEIS schools the home school Liaison Person should not be shared between primary and secondary school’
- ‘Early intervention is vital’
- ‘A ladder of intervention should be designed that states the responsibility of each person’ (Home School, School Completion and Education Welfare)
- ‘FAS takes in students that already have a place on leaving certificate programme and this should not be allowed’
- ‘Some students are not suited to mainstream and could benefit from a more specialised setting with smaller teaching groups and a facility with therapeutic resources’
- ‘It is important that students who leave school do not feel abandoned and every effort should be made to ensure that the student and parents have the support to find alternative routes on their educational journey’

CONCLUSION

Early school leaving was identified by the Dublin City South Children and Young People's Service Committee as a key priority area. One of the issues that emerged was that data was not readily available about the number and profile of young people who do not complete the Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate. With this in mind, the Committee's Education Subgroup decided to develop a data collection tool that could be used to gather the information required. While less than half of the schools responded (46%) the analysis indicates that 3% of the student population in the schools concerned left school at some point throughout 2014/2015. Female students were more than twice as likely to leave school. The majority of students (68%) left school after completing the Junior Certificate/Junior Certificate Schools Programme. Taking a further look at the analysis, most students that left school in 2014/2015 in the schools concerned went back into some form of education. However for 19 students this was not the case as they were either disengaged or the school did not know where the student followed onto.