

SCHOOL GOVERNANCE AND TEACHER ACCOUNTABILITY DEFICITS: FINDINGS FROM BASIC SCHOOL MONITORING IN KARAGA DISTRICT (2025)



**COMPILED BY: SIMBA GHANA AND SUPPORTED BY THE
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents findings from a school monitoring exercise conducted in selected basic schools in the Karaga District of the Northern Region, Ghana. The monitoring was carried out by the Social Action Group (SAG) under the I Am Aware project implemented by **Simba Ghana** and supported by **CDD Ghana** with funding from **William and Flora Hewlett Foundation**. The purpose of the monitoring was to assess critical indicators of basic education service delivery, including accountability structures such as the presence and functionality of Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) and School Management Committees (SMCs), as well as Teacher attendance, absenteeism, and Pupil enrollment. These findings are crucial for the education policymakers, district education officials, civil society organizations, and school administrators, as they provide a comprehensive understanding of the current state of education in the Karaga District.

The comprehensive monitoring exercise conducted in the Karaga District sought to assess the state of basic education delivery in selected schools, with a focus on enrollment, teacher attendance, and the effectiveness of governance structures such as Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) and School Management Committees (SMCs). The findings present a nuanced picture of progress and persistent challenges affecting education outcomes across the district.

Overall, enrollment levels were encouraging in larger, more accessible schools such as Karaga M/A Primary and Nuri-Islam Primary, demonstrating notable gender balance and sustained pupil numbers. However, smaller and remote schools continued to experience critically low enrollment, particularly among girls. This trend could highlight ongoing socio-cultural and economic barriers hindering equitable education access in rural communities.

Teacher absenteeism emerged as a major challenge undermining instructional quality. Several schools recorded significant teacher absenteeism, directly affecting contact hours and learning outcomes. The lack of consistent record-keeping and supervision mechanisms further weakened accountability, allowing absenteeism to persist and remain unaddressed in some schools.

Though governance structures (PTAs/SMCs) are present in nearly all schools, they remain inconsistently functional. Many PTAs and SMCs hold irregular meetings, have limited membership, and display weak documentation practices. These deficiencies constrained their ability to provide oversight and community support for school operations, reducing their impact as accountability mechanisms.

The findings underscore the need for stronger institutional coordination, enhanced supervision, and more community-driven engagement in education management. However, they also highlight the potential for improvement through targeted interventions. Strengthening teacher accountability systems, improving PTA and SMC functionality, and implementing targeted interventions to increase girls' enrollment in rural areas will be critical to advancing inclusive and equitable quality education in the Karaga District, in alignment with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4).

The Social Action Groups (SAGs), who were part of the observation team, further documented key systemic challenges:

- Schools frequently operated with dilapidated or inadequate physical structures.

- A lack of qualified teaching staff meant existing teachers were often overburdened.
- A scarcity of textbooks, stationery, and pedagogical resources hampered effective teaching and learning.
- Many students lacked suitable seating desks, creating uncomfortable and non-conducive learning environments.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

The *I Am Aware* project, led by **CDD-Ghana** and implemented in Gushegu and Karaga districts by **Simba Ghana**, is a nonpartisan citizen empowerment initiative that provides accessible data on public service delivery in key sectors, including education. Its goal is to raise citizen awareness, strengthen accountability, improve duty-bearers' responsiveness, and promote better service delivery. This project played a significant role in generating the reliable data presented in this report.

Karaga District faces persistent challenges in educational outcomes that necessitate systematic monitoring. Past assessments by national and civil society actors provide consistent evidence of poor educational performance. For example, UNICEF and NDPC District League Table 2020 and 2021 ranked Karaga District among the bottom 30% of districts in education performance nationwide, with education indicators falling below both regional and national averages.

In response to these challenges, Simba Ghana under the IAA project, sought to generate reliable data to inform policy dialogue among local education stakeholders, including district education directorates and school leadership, and to co-create solutions with civil society actors, including the IAA SAGs. By empowering community-based Social Action Groups (SAGs) to monitor using a self-designed tool, the exercise aimed not only to uncover gaps in education service delivery but also to strengthen community ownership and accountability in the education sector, thereby improving service delivery, which is the overall goal of the **IAA project**.

The findings presented in this report are intended to serve as a foundation for inclusive planning and follow-up action by the District Education Oversight Committee (DEOC). It will also provide evidence to support targeted interventions, including teacher deployment, capacity building for school governance and accountability bodies, and strategies to improve pupil retention in schools. Ultimately, the goal is to enhance basic education's transparency, accountability, and service delivery.

1.2 GOAL AND OBJECTIVES OF THE MONITORING:

The study aims to assess the state of basic education service delivery in the Karaga district. However, it specifically sought to:

1. Generate evidence on pupil enrolment, PTA/SMC presence and functionality, and Teacher attendance and absenteeism.
2. Identify gaps and challenges that contribute to poor learning outcomes in the Karaga district.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

This section outlines the approach and processes used to conduct the study. The study aimed to identify gaps and challenges contributing to poor learning outcomes in the Karaga district, with the ultimate goal of informing targeted interventions and policy decisions.

2.1 MONITORING AREA:

The monitoring covered **12 basic schools** across the Karaga district of the **Northern Region**. Both primary and junior high schools (JHS) were targeted. The schools covered included: Nuri-islam primary school, Karaga Ishadia E/A Block B, Girls Module Junior High School, Binduli Methodist primary School, Karaga D/A JHS, Binduli Methodist JHS, Shebo primary, Nyengbalo Primary, Karaga M/A primary block A, Karaga M/A primary block B, Gunaayili JHS, Gunaayili primary

2.2 SAMPLE SIZE:

The monitoring exercise was conducted in **12 basic schools** across the Karaga district.

2.3 SAMPLING TECHNIQUE:

A purposive sampling approach was employed to select schools for inclusion in the study. This method was chosen to ensure that the sample reflected a diverse and representative cross-section of educational institutions within the district. The selection criteria were carefully considered and included factors such as:

- Schools of varying enrollment sizes were included to account for differences in administrative capacity, resource allocation, and student dynamics.
- Priority was given to schools that were reasonably accessible regarding transportation and logistical feasibility, ensuring efficient data collection.
- Schools with active community structures—such as Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) and School Management Committees (SMCs)—were targeted for governance. This highlighted the community's active role in school governance, making them feel involved and responsible for the educational development in the district.

Twelve (12) schools were deliberately selected based on these criteria, ensuring that the sample was strategically composed and contextually relevant to the study's objectives. This meticulous approach enhanced the thoroughness of the study design, instilling confidence in the validity of the findings.

2.4 DATA COLLECTION:

Data was collected by trained Social Action Groups (SAG) members, who played a crucial role in using a self-developed monitoring tool. These members, selected for their community ties and commitment to education, were given capacity-building training on monitoring by the head of Circuit Supervision of Gushegu Municipal Education Directorate, Madam Mohammed Mariama. Data was gathered through observation, interviews with school heads, and a review of attendance and meeting records. The monitoring tool was designed to collect data on demographic

characteristics of SAG members, pupils' enrollment, PTA/SMC presence and functionality, and teacher attendance and absenteeism in the selected schools. The data was collected from headteachers in the various schools chosen in the district. The data was collected using Kobo Toolbox between the 31st and the 35th day of the term.

Before the data collection, the Programs and MERL departments of Simba Ghana organized an orientation session for the Social Action Group (SAG) members. The session was designed to familiarize them with the monitoring process and provide practical guidance on deploying the monitoring tool effectively.

2.5 DATA ANALYSIS:

Data was cleaned and analyzed using SPSS version 2021. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages were used to summarize the results.

3.0 RESULTS AND FINDINGS

This section presents the key results from the monitoring exercise across the selected schools, highlighting the presence and functionality of PTAs and SMCs, teacher attendance and absenteeism, and pupil enrolment. It also captures the broader challenges identified during the process, which provided essential insights into factors affecting education delivery in the Karaga district. These findings can guide future interventions and policy decisions, underscoring the importance the role in the educational development of the district.

3.1 PTA Presence and Functionality

3.1.0 All the schools monitored reported having Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs). PTAs were present in all 12 schools, representing 100%, and 10(83%) out of 12 are functional.

3.1.1. The figure below shows that all the schools 12 (100%) reported having PTA.

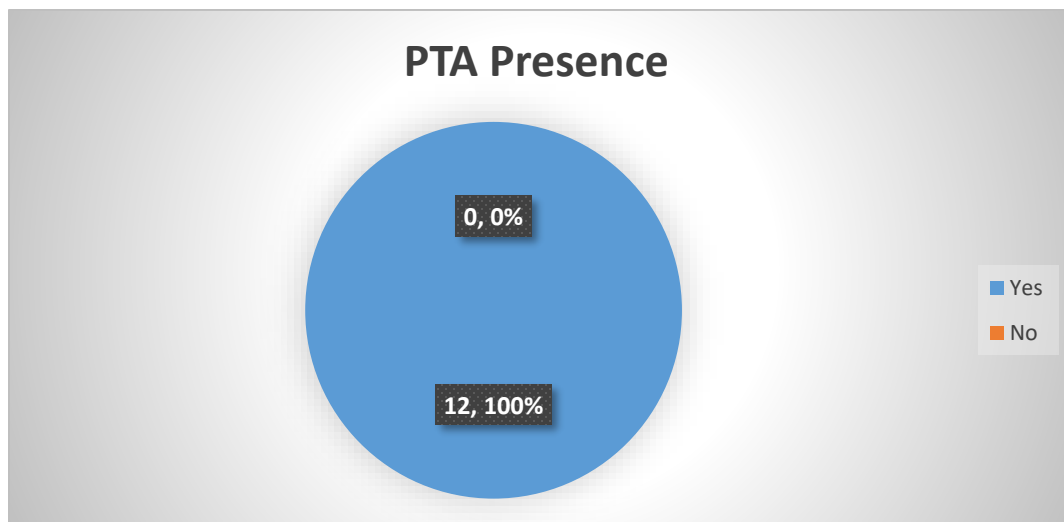


Figure 1: PTA Presence

3.1.2. It was found out that most schools (83%) reported having a functional Parent-Teacher Association (PTA), while 17% indicated their PTAs were not functional. This suggests that most schools have active PTAs in school governance and parent engagement, although a few still lack fully operational associations.

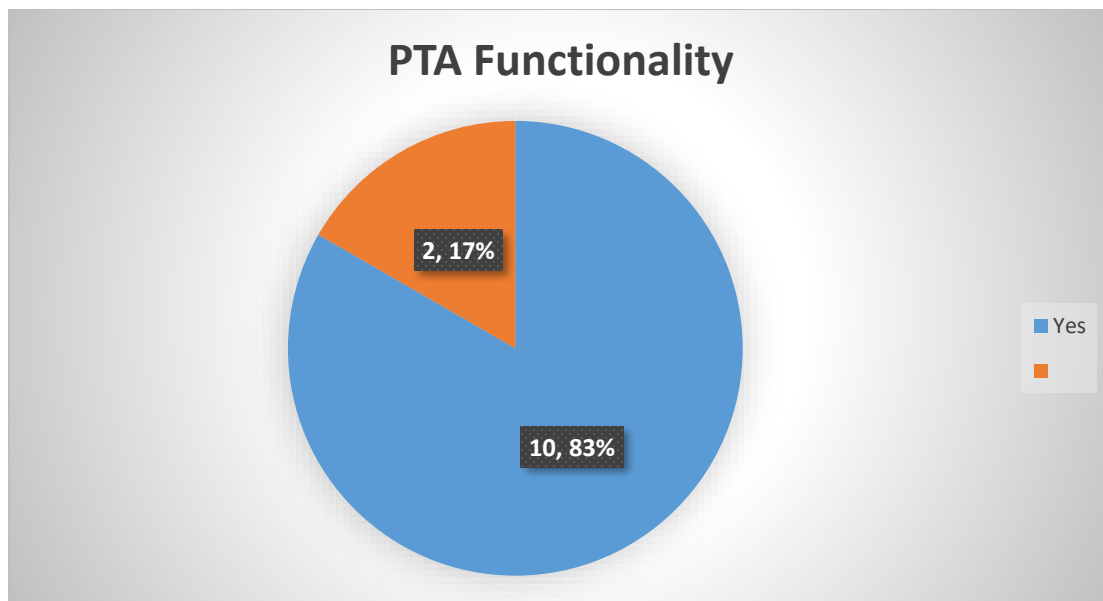


Figure 2: PTA Functionality

3.1.3. The number of members ranges from 5 to 40. Notably, Karaga D/A JHS have the highest PTA membership of 40. Also, several schools, including Binduli Methodist Primary, Karaga M/A Primary Block B, Gunaayili JHS, and Gunaayili Primary, have just five members each. Most schools fall within the range of 5 to 11 members.

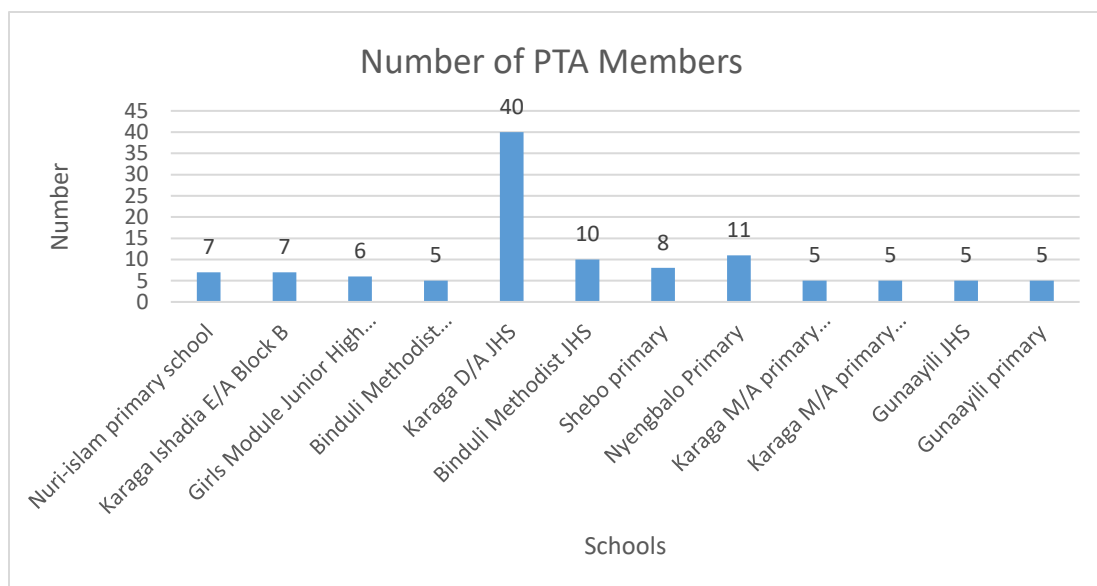


Figure 3: Number of PTA Members

3.1.4. 6 (50%) reported holding PTA meetings **twice or more per term**. In comparison, 4 (33%) and 2 (17%) of the schools reported holding meetings once per term and rarely or never, respectively, indicating an inconsistent effort to engage parents regularly in some schools.

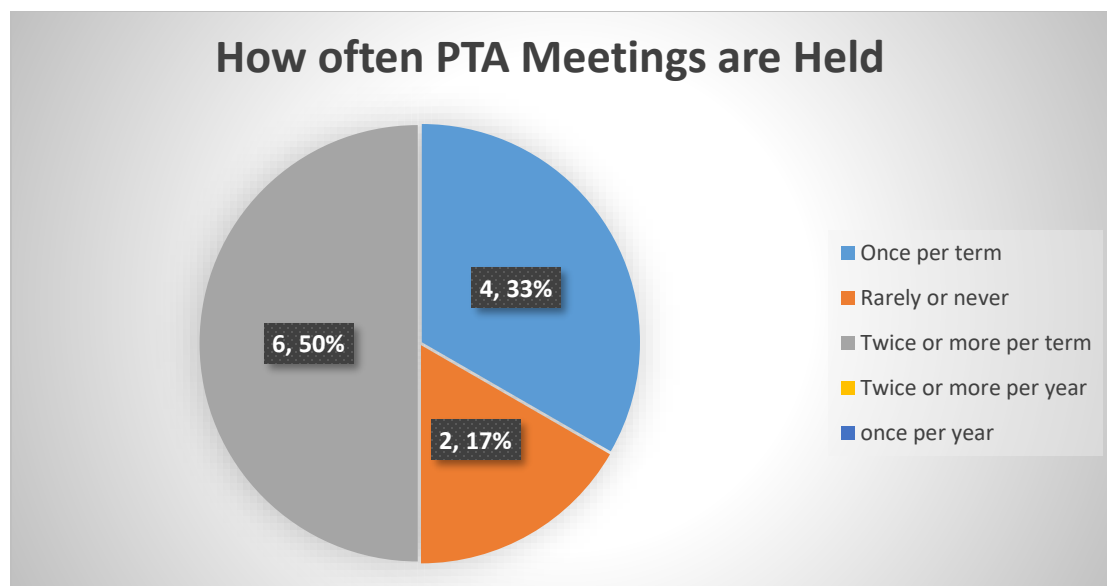


Figure 4 How often are PTA Meetings Held?

3.1.5. 10 (83%) reported having a PTA meeting this term, while **2 (17%)** did not. This indicates that although most schools are engaging parents, just a few have yet to do so this term.

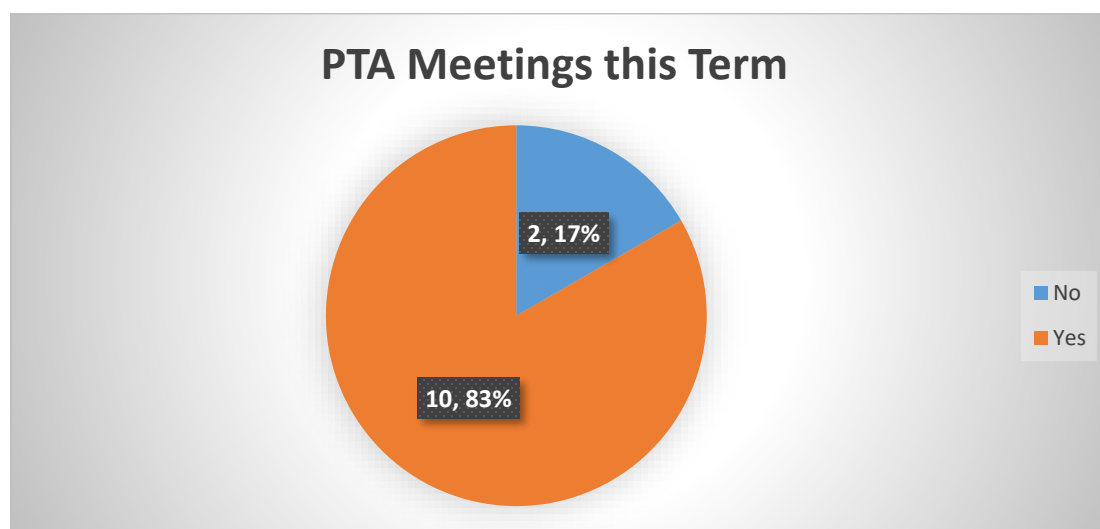


Figure 5: PTA Meetings this Term

3.1.6. 9 (75%) held **one** meeting, whilst **2 (17%)** held **none**, and **another 1 (8%)** held **two** meetings. No school held **three or more** meetings. The figure below shows the number of PTA meetings held during the term.

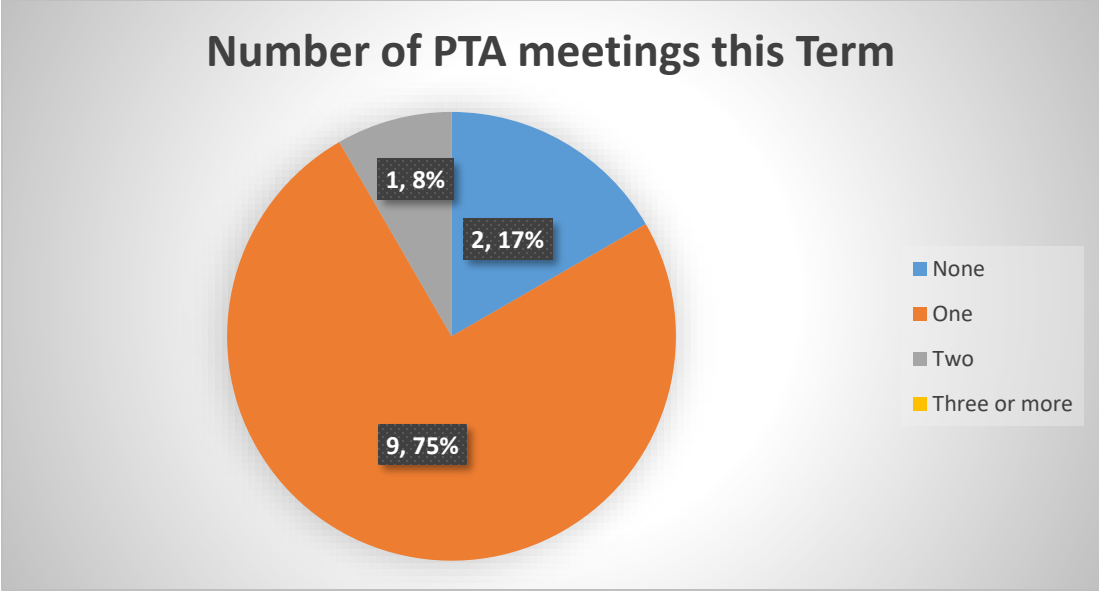


Figure 6: Number of PTA meetings this Term

3.1.7. Half of the schools **50%** did **not** record minutes of PTA meetings. In comparison, also **50%** **recorded PTA meeting minutes**, suggesting that proper documentation of PTA meetings is lacking in most schools. Figure 7 below further shows whether minutes were recorded during PTA meetings.

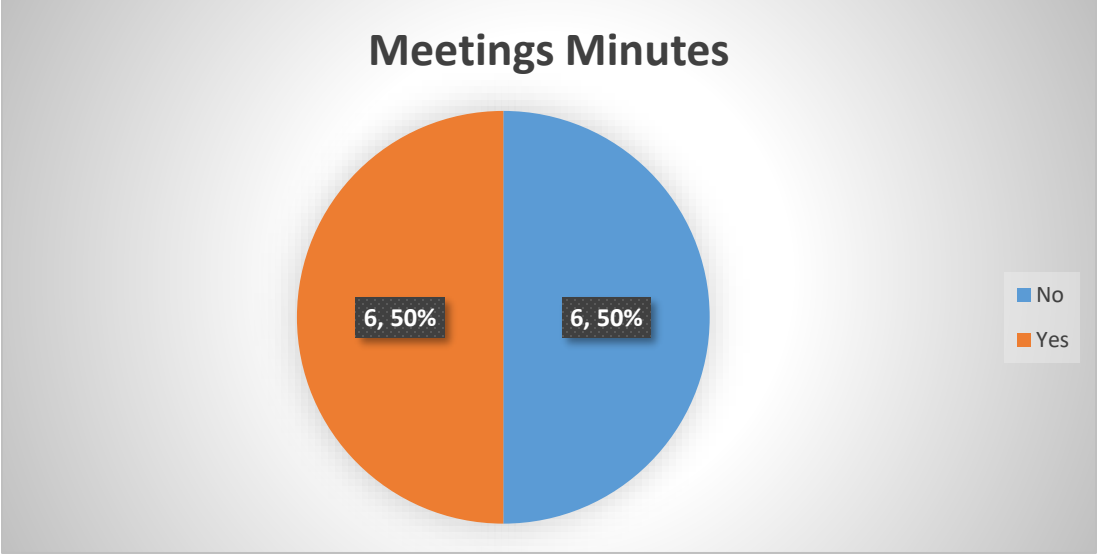


Figure 7: Meeting Minutes

3.2 SMC Presence and Functionality

This section highlights the presence, functionality, and participation of School Management Committees (SMCs) as a governance structure in basic schools.

3.2.1. All schools (100%) had SMCs in place, demonstrating that the school's framework for community participation in education exists. However, the functionality of SMCs varied. While most schools reported holding regular meetings, about $\frac{1}{4}$ did not convene any meetings during the term, which limited SMCs' oversight and support role.

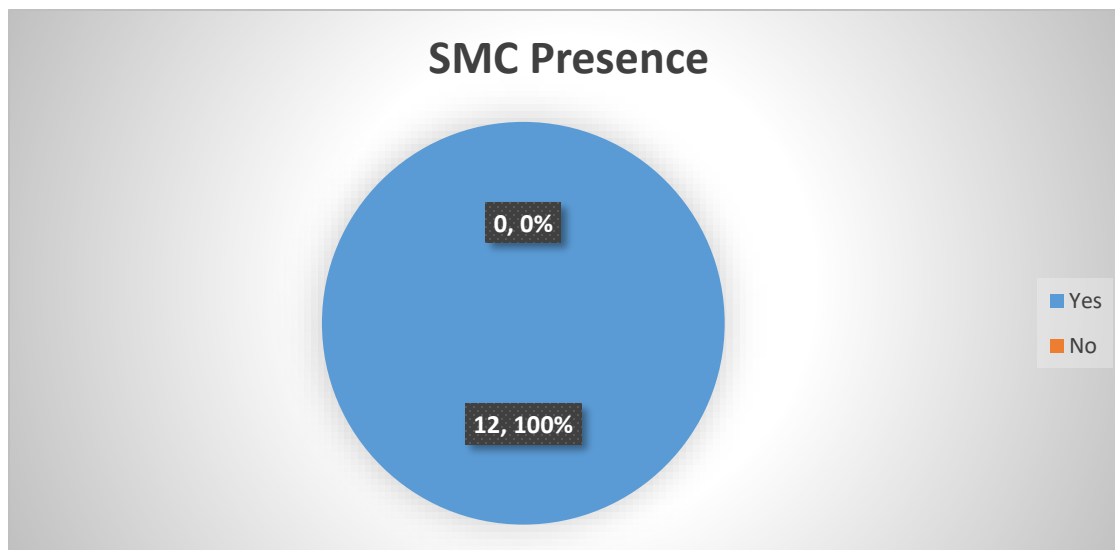


Figure 8: SMC Presence

3.2.2 The membership of the SMCs differed significantly. Most schools reported having between **4 and 5 members**, indicating a relatively small core of stakeholders involved in school governance. Notably, **Nyengbalo Primary** had the highest number of SMC members, with 11, followed by **Shebo Primary** with 7. In contrast, **Karaga Ishadia E/A Block B** had the lowest, with only **three members**. These disparities indicate that although SMCs were reported as present, their effectiveness in providing governance, ensuring accountability, and supporting school improvement remains uneven.

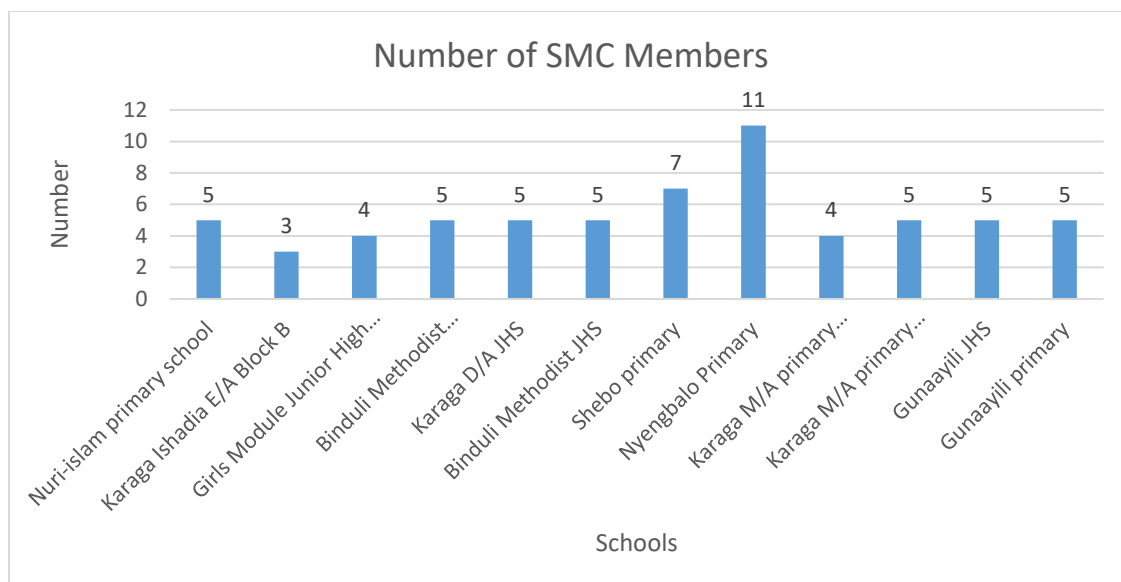


Figure 9: Number of SMC Members

3.2.3. 83% hold SMC meetings, while 17% do not, indicating that most schools actively engage their SMCs.

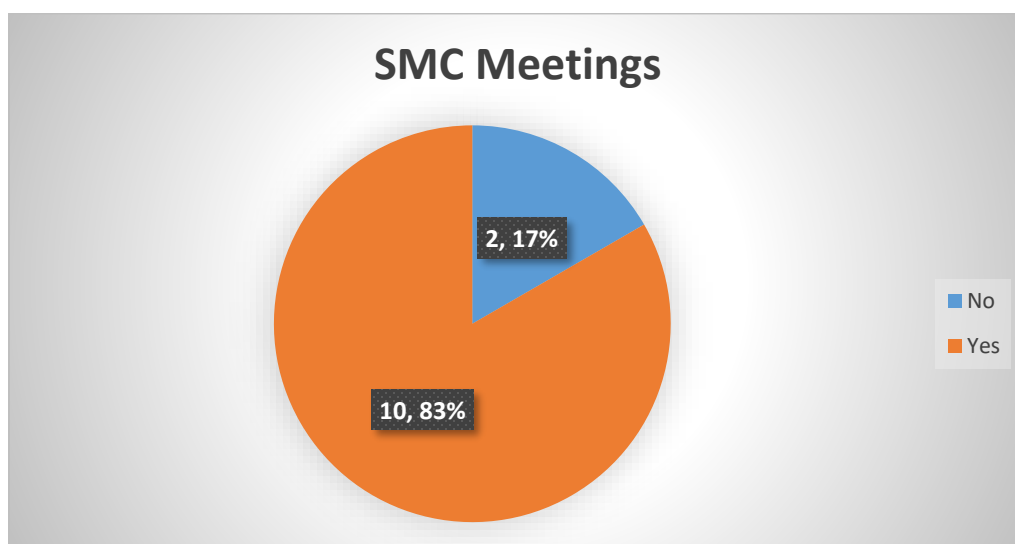


Figure 10: SMC Meetings

3.2.4 Half of the schools hold SMC meetings twice or more per term, while three schools representing 25% reported holding meetings only once per term. Also, 3(25%) rarely or never hold SMC meetings, indicating no engagement with the schools.

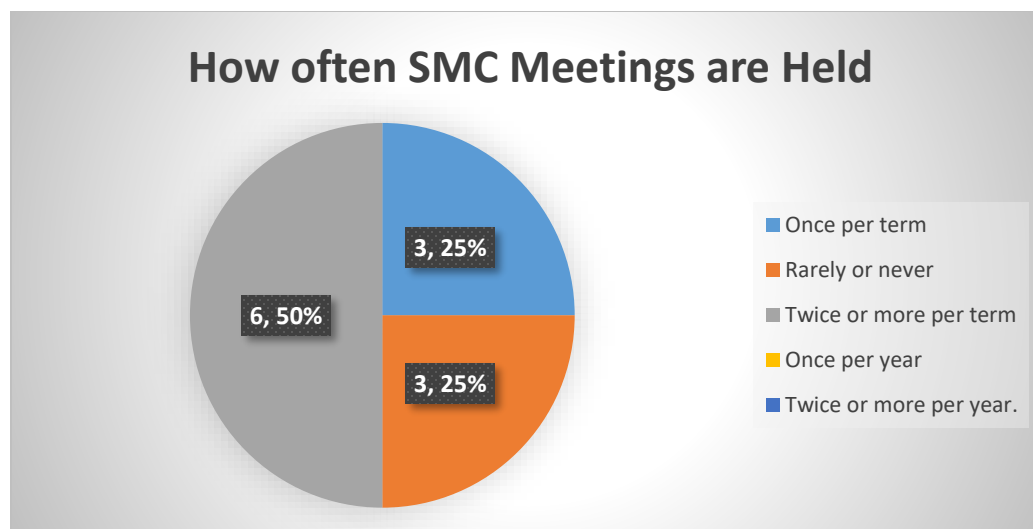


Figure 11: How often are SMC Meetings held

3.2.5. 7 (58%) of schools held one meeting this quarter, while 25% did not hold any meeting. And only 17% held exactly two meetings.

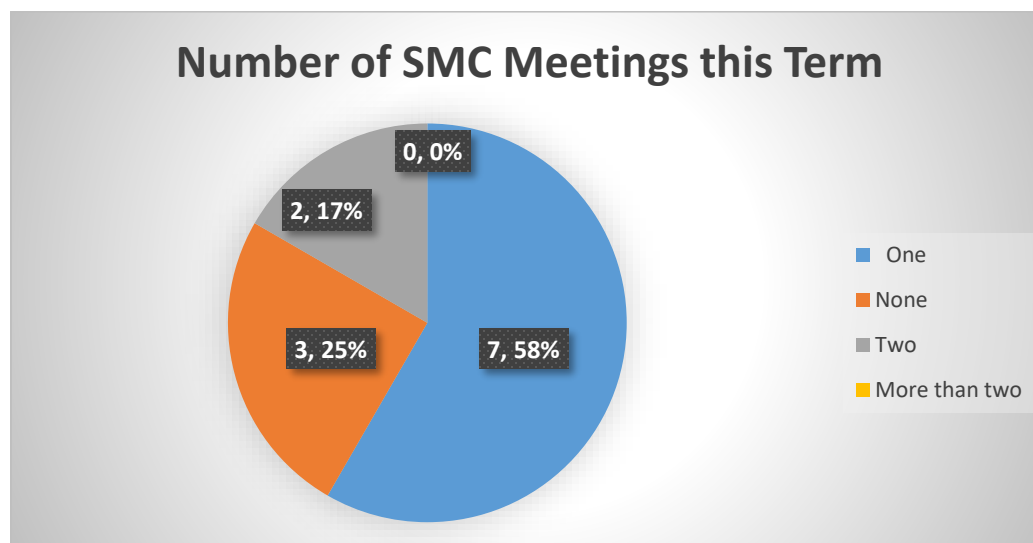


Figure 12: Number of SMC Meetings this Term

3.3 Teacher Attendance and Absenteeism

Teacher attendance is a critical determinant of educational quality and high learning outcomes. The findings from the monitoring exercise in the Karaga District revealed a significant gap in teacher attendance and absenteeism.

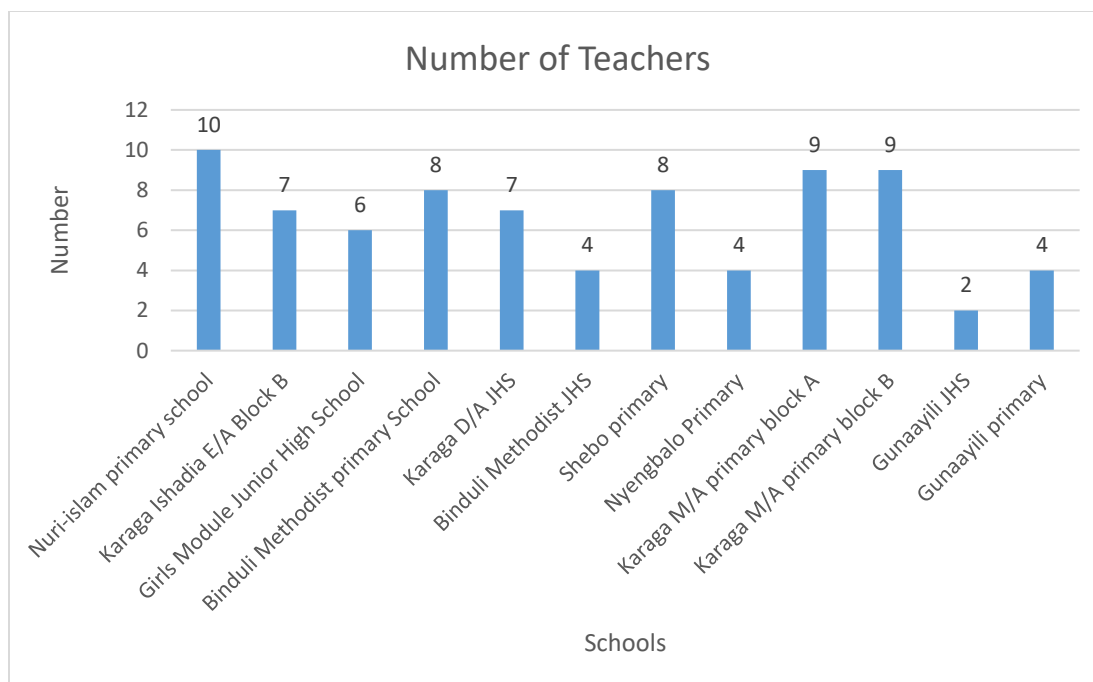


Figure 13: Number of Teachers

The figure above presents the distribution of teachers across various schools. Nuri-Islam Primary School has 10 teachers, Karaga Ishadia E/A Block B has 7, Girls Module Junior High School has 6, Binduli Methodist Primary School has 8, Karaga D/A JHS has 7, Binduli Methodist JHS has 4, Shebo Primary has 4, Nyengbalo Primary has 8, Karaga M/A Primary A has 9, Karaga M/A Primary B also has 9, Gunaayili JHS has 2, and Gunaayili Primary has 4 teachers.

3.3.1 The data indicate that consistent teacher attendance is limited in most schools, with only a few having staff who attend all days.

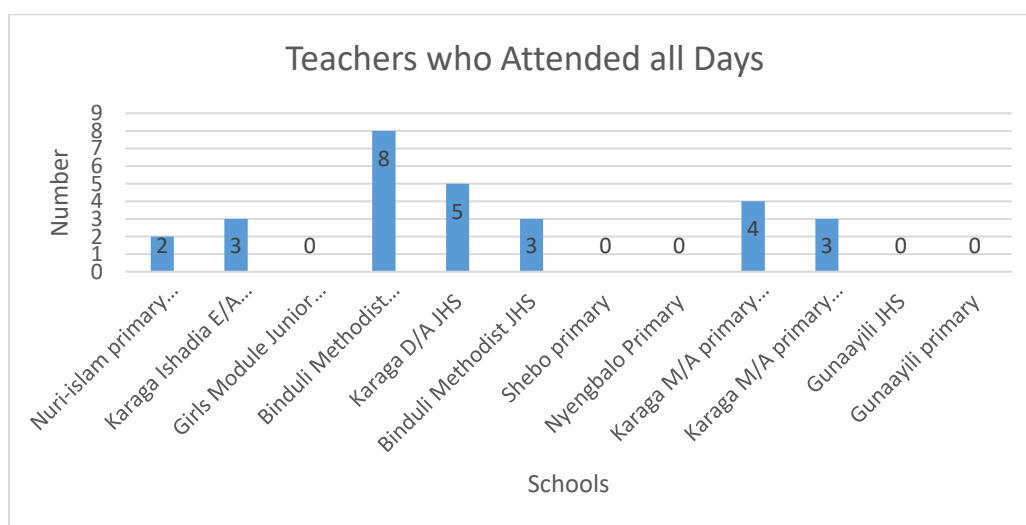


Figure 14: Attended All Days

The figure above illustrates the number of teachers in each school who were present on all the school days recorded in the term. Binduli Methodist Primary School had the highest number of fully attending teachers (8), followed by Karaga D/A JHS with 5, Karaga M/A Primary A with 4, and Karaga Ishadia E/A Block B, Binduli Methodist JHS, and Karaga M/A Primary B, each with 3 teachers. Nuri-Islam Primary School had 2, while Girls Module Junior High School, Shebo Primary, Nyengbalo Primary, Gunaayili JHS, and Gunaayili Primary had no teachers who attended all days.

3.3.2 The data shows notable variations in teacher absenteeism across schools, with Nuri-Islam Primary and Shebo Primary recording the highest cases. This indicates that a few schools, to some extent, face frequent teaching disruptions due to teacher absenteeism.

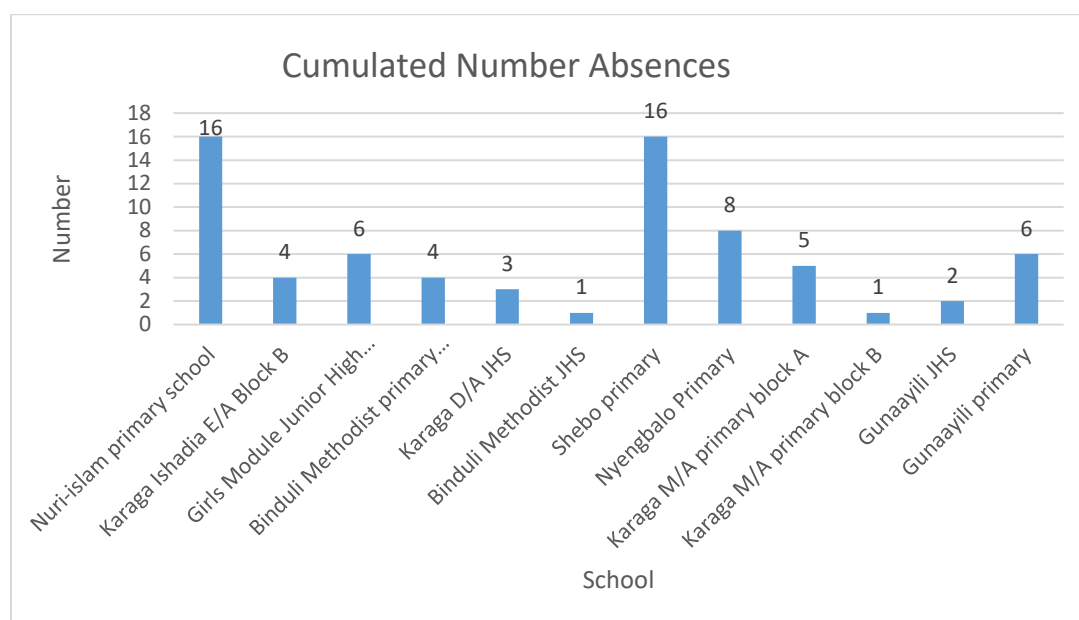


Figure 15: Cumulated Number of Absences

The figure above illustrates the total teacher absences reported in each school. Nuri-Islam Primary School and Shebo Primary recorded the highest absences, each with 16 instances. Nyengbalo Primary followed with 8, and Girls Module Junior High School and Gunaayili Primary each recorded 6. Karaga Ishadia E/A Block B and Binduli Methodist Primary had 4, Karaga D/A JHS had 3, and Karaga M/A Primary A and Gunaayili JHS had 1 and 2, respectively. Binduli Methodist JHS and Karaga M/A Primary B reported the lowest, with just **one** each. These figures represent the cumulative number of times teachers were absent and provide insight into patterns of absenteeism across the schools surveyed.

3.3.3 The figure shows that 83% (10 out of 12) of the schools surveyed record or document teacher absences. However, 17% (2 out of 12) do not keep any formal record of teacher absences.

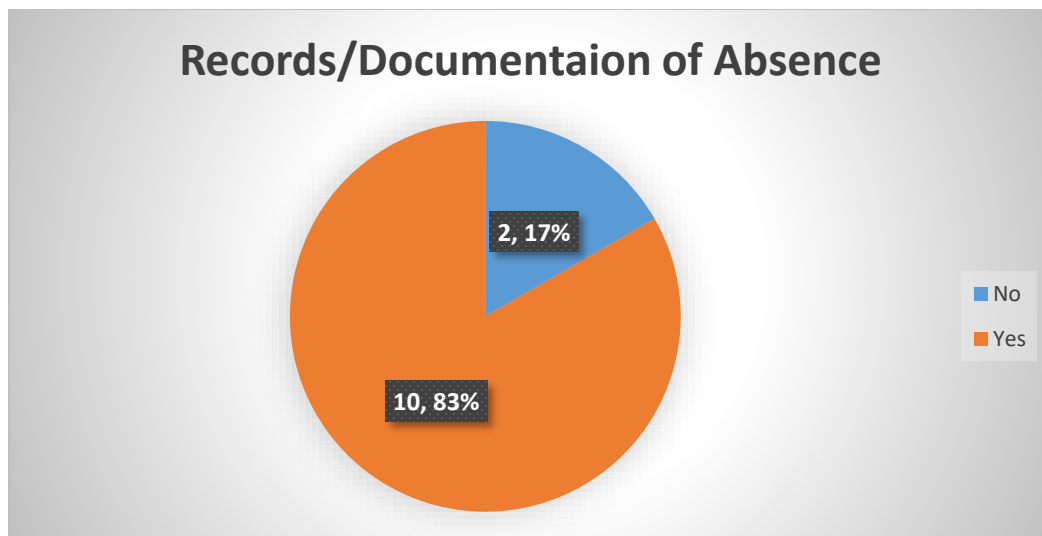


Figure 16: Records/Documentation of Absence

3.3.4 Frequency of absenteeism reveals that in most schools (**75%**), teacher absenteeism is rare, occurring between 0 and 2 days per teacher per term in 9 schools. A smaller proportion of schools (**25%**) reported occasional absenteeism, defined as 3 to 5 days per teacher per term.

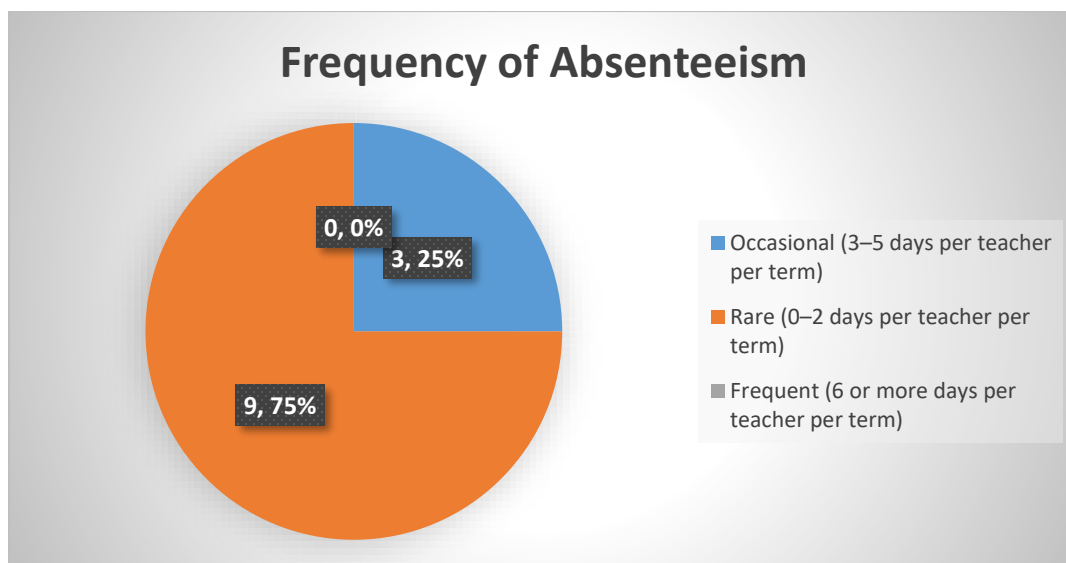


Figure 17: Frequency of Absenteeism

3.3.5 Most schools (**59%**) reported that reasons for absenteeism were unplanned and often occurred on Fridays.

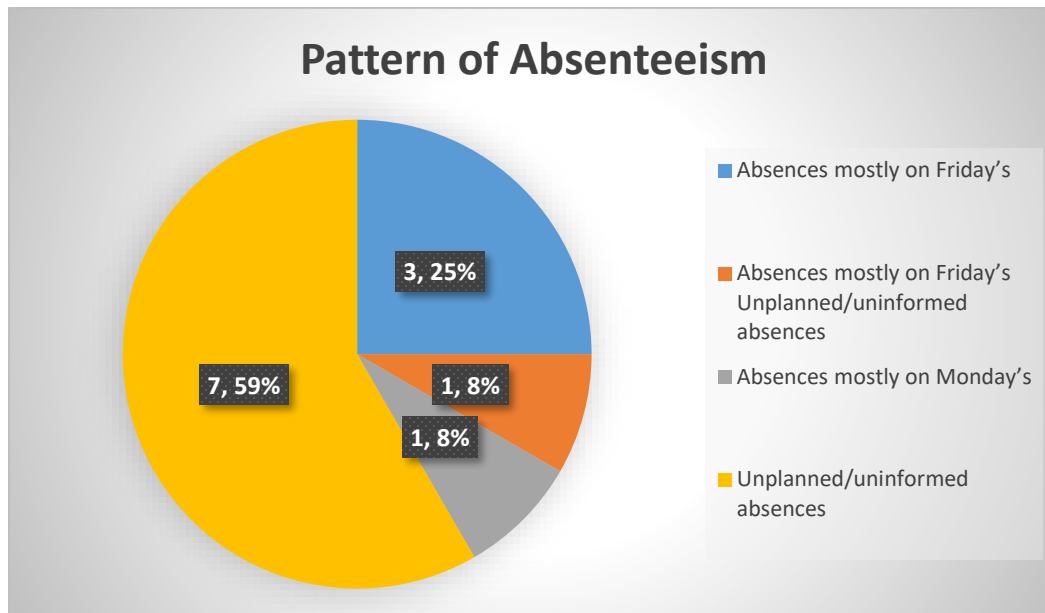


Figure 18: Pattern of Absenteeism

The figure above illustrates the patterns of absenteeism. The data indicate that most teacher absences (59%) are unplanned or uninformed, suggesting a lack of prior notice or scheduling. Absences mostly occurring on Friday account for 25%, which may point to a trend of teachers extending weekends. Meanwhile, absences primarily happen on Mondays, and a combination of Fridays and unplanned absences represents 8% of the reported cases.

3.3.6 Another, **83%** of the schools confirmed that they documented absenteeism.

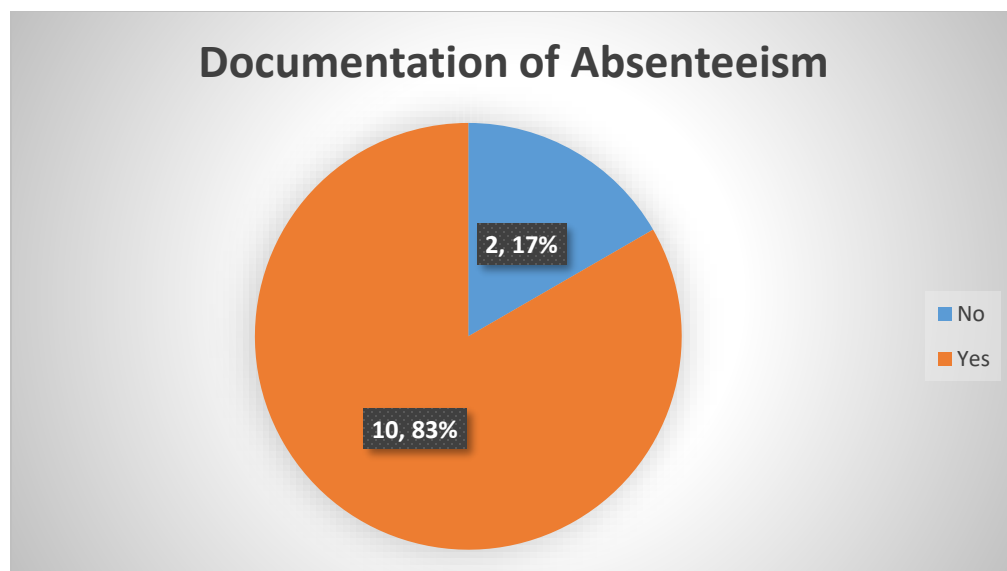


Figure 19: Documentation of Absenteeism

The chart shows that absences are accurately documented in the staff register in 83% of the schools surveyed. However, in 17% of schools, absences are not adequately recorded.

3.4 Enrollment Patterns

3.4.1 The data show wide disparities in pupil enrollment across schools. Karaga M/A Primary School has the highest enrollment with 420 pupils, followed closely by Nuri-Islam Primary School with 412. Karaga M/A Primary 'B' and Binduli Methodist Primary also show high enrollments with 253 and 248 pupils respectively. In contrast, Gunaayili JHS has the lowest pupil count at 50, followed by Girls Module Junior High with 63 pupils. The data highlights significant variation in pupil populations across the schools.

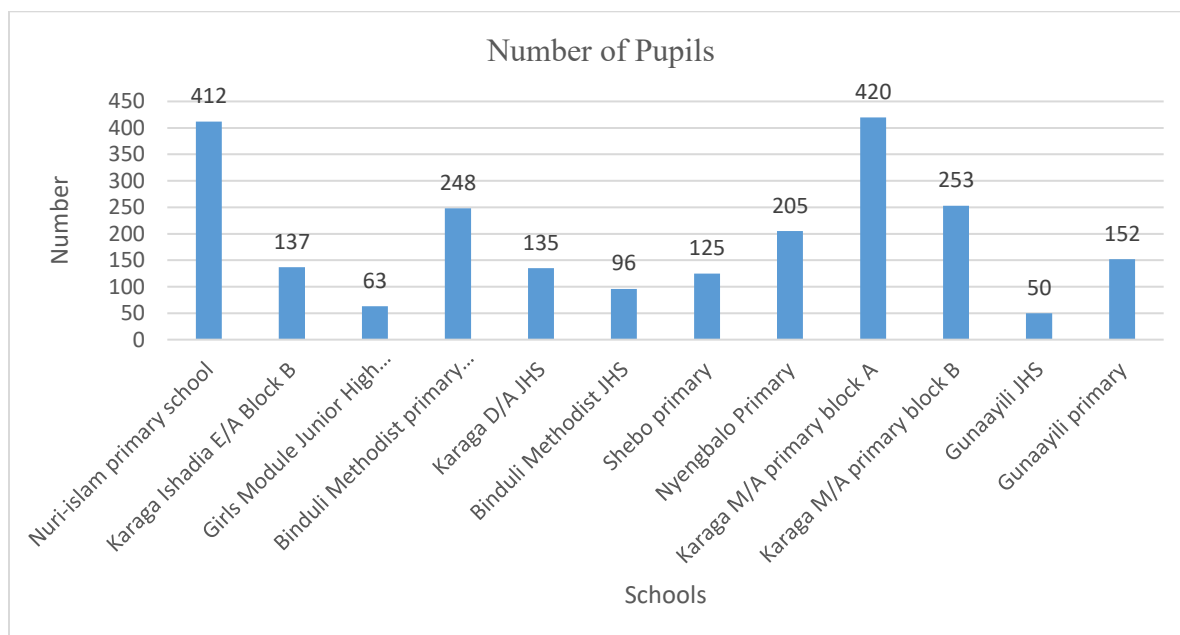


Figure 20: Number of Pupils

Number of Pupils Based on Classes

3.4.2 The data indicate that lower primary classes tend to enroll higher than upper primary and junior high levels. This suggests a declining trend in pupil retention as learners progress to higher grades, consistent across most of the schools reviewed.

The data shows that pupil enrollment across the various schools significantly varies by class. Nuri-Islam Primary School had the highest number of pupils in the early grades, particularly in Nursery/KG, with 221 pupils, but the figures gradually declined across the upper classes. Binduli Methodist Primary School also showed strong enrollment in lower grades, beginning with 40 pupils in Nursery/KG and tapering to 18 in Basic 6. In contrast, Karaga Ishadia E/A Block B had no primary classes but reported 100 pupils each in Basic 7 and 8. This was similar to Binduli Methodist JHS and Karaga D/A JHS, which had all their junior high-level pupils. Shebo and Nyengbalo Primary Schools recorded moderate enrollments across Basic 1 to 6, with Nyengbalo peaking at 51 pupils in Nursery/KG. Karaga M/A Primary (blocks A and B) reported steady pupil populations across classes, with Block A having a noticeable peak of 66 pupils in Basic 4. Gunaayili JHS had a small student population across the JHS levels, while its primary section gradually declined from Nursery/KG through Basic 6. Lower primary classes tend to enroll more than upper primary and junior high levels.

Table 1: Number of Pupils Based on Classes

Classes/School	Nursery/KG	Basic 1	Basic 2	Basic 3	Basic 4	Basic 5	Basic 6	Basic 7	Basic 8	Basic 9
Nuri-Islam primary school	221	34	42	34	46	61	44			
Karaga Ishadia E/A Block B								100	100	
Girls Module Junior High School								21	12	
Binduli Methodist Primary School	40	39	34	32	30	25	18			
Karaga D/A JHS								38	45	52
Binduli Methodist JHS								45	51	
Shebo primary	29	18	19	16	16	17	10			
Nyengbalo Primary	51	26	27	23	24	24	30			
Karaga M/A primary block A	62	26	25	57	66	59	32			
Karaga M/A primary block B	29	30	32	28	60	36	38			
Gunaayili JHS								15	16	17
Gunaayili primary	39	17	28	25	20	15	8			

4.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

4.1 Conclusion

The monitoring exercise in the Karaga District by SAGs yielded a mixed picture of basic education service delivery, showing progress in some areas and persistent challenges that undermine learning outcomes.

In terms of enrollment, schools such as Karaga M/A primary and Nuri-Islam primary remain encouraging, with a fair gender distribution indicating progress toward equitable access to education. However, these gains were not evenly distributed across the district, and remote schools continued to record low enrollment figures.

Teacher absenteeism also emerged as a critical concern across several schools in the district, as high absence rates directly affect institutional time and quality of teaching. Furthermore, while the essential governance structures—the Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) and School Management Committees (SMCs)—are formally present in nearly all schools, their practical

effectiveness is markedly uneven. Common procedural weaknesses significantly curtailed their ability to support schools and ensure local accountability. These include:

- I. Irregular meetings lead to poor communication and planning.
- II. Low membership in several schools, indicating a lack of broad community engagement.
- III. Weak documentation practices, which prevent systematic tracking of decisions, resource utilization, and follow-up actions.

These operational and governance deficits collectively limit the potential of these crucial community structures to act as robust accountability mechanisms, ultimately contributing to the low learning outcomes observed across the district.

4.2 Recommendations

This section presents recommendations from the monitoring findings, organized under three focus areas: addressing enrolment and equity gaps, tackling teacher absenteeism and operational integrity, and enhancing governance and accountability structures.

1. Addressing Enrollment and Equity Gaps

- I. The District Education Directorate should monitor attrition by mandating that school managements track student flow between lower primary, upper primary, and JHS to identify exact points of high student attrition.
- II. PTAs and SMCs in rural schools should actively engage with community elders and parents to advocate for the value of girls' education and address perceptions that lead to premature withdrawal or exclusion.

2. Tackling Teacher Absenteeism and Operational Integrity

- I. Circuit Supervisors and Headteachers should strengthen their oversight of the mandatory system for teacher attendance, particularly in schools with very high absenteeism. They should link compliance directly to performance appraisals and payroll.
- II. The office of the District Chief Executive, in partnership with the DEOC and the District Education Directorate, should introduce attractive non-monetary incentives to encourage qualified teachers to accept postings and remain in schools located in remote rural communities.
- III. DEOC should increase the frequency and quality of unannounced inspections to hold teachers and school heads accountable for ensuring instructional continuity.

3. Enhancing Governance and Accountability Structures

- I. The District Education Directorate should collaborate with development partners such as Simba Ghana to provide comprehensive training workshops for all PTA and SMC leaders, focusing specifically on:

- Financial management and resource mobilization and utilization to address limited resources.
 - Effective meeting management and record-keeping to correct irregular meetings and weak documentation practices.
 - Roles in holding school administration accountable.
- II. School heads must actively facilitate regular PTA/SMC meetings and ensure decisions regarding school support and resource use are transparently documented and disseminated to the broader community, addressing weak documentation practices.
- III. School heads must develop clear strategies to increase broad community engagement and membership, transforming the PTA/SMC from a formal structure into a truly functional, robust local accountability mechanism.

5.0 GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND ACRONYMS

TERM/ACRONYM	DEFINITION
BECE	Basic Education Certificate Examination: A national examination in Ghana taken by students at the end of Junior High School (JHS), used as a measure of academic performance.
CDD-Ghana	Center for Democratic Development (CDD)-Ghana: A civil society organization that supports the implementation of the
Karaga District	The specific administrative area in the Northern Region of Ghana where the school monitoring exercise was conducted.
I Am Aware (IAA) Project	A non-partisan citizen empowerment initiative that provides accessible data on public service delivery in key sectors, including education, implemented by Simba Ghana and supported by CDD-Ghana.
JHS	Junior High School: The level of basic education that follows primary school, concluding with the BECE.
DEOC	District Education Oversight Committee: The local committee responsible for inclusive planning and follow-up action regarding education within the Municipality.
PTA	Parent-Teacher Association: A formal structure intended to facilitate collaboration, oversight, and community engagement between parents and teachers in a school.
Pupil Attrition	The process where the number of students drops off or declines as they move from one educational level to the next, specifically noted between lower primary and JHS.
SAG	Social Action Group: Community-based groups trained under the IAA project to carry out the monitoring exercise and advocate for improved service delivery.
Simba Ghana	The organization implementing the <i>I Am Aware (IAA)</i> project compiled the monitoring report.

SMC	School Management Committee: A school governance structure intended to ensure community participation, accountability, and support for school improvement.
Teacher Absenteeism	The pervasive and critical problem of teachers' absence from school, often unplanned, disrupts instructional time and compromises learning outcomes.

References:

CDD-Ghana. (2019). *District League Table Report 2019*. Centre for Democratic Development, Ghana.

UNICEF & NDPC. (2021). *District League Table Report 2018–2019*. United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and National Development Planning Commission (NDPC), Accra, Ghana.

DATA:

Monitoring Data:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1FkJss3LHNHCOXezugBPcS3wEPUPU5QXP/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=114482592867687459165&rtpof=true&sd=true>