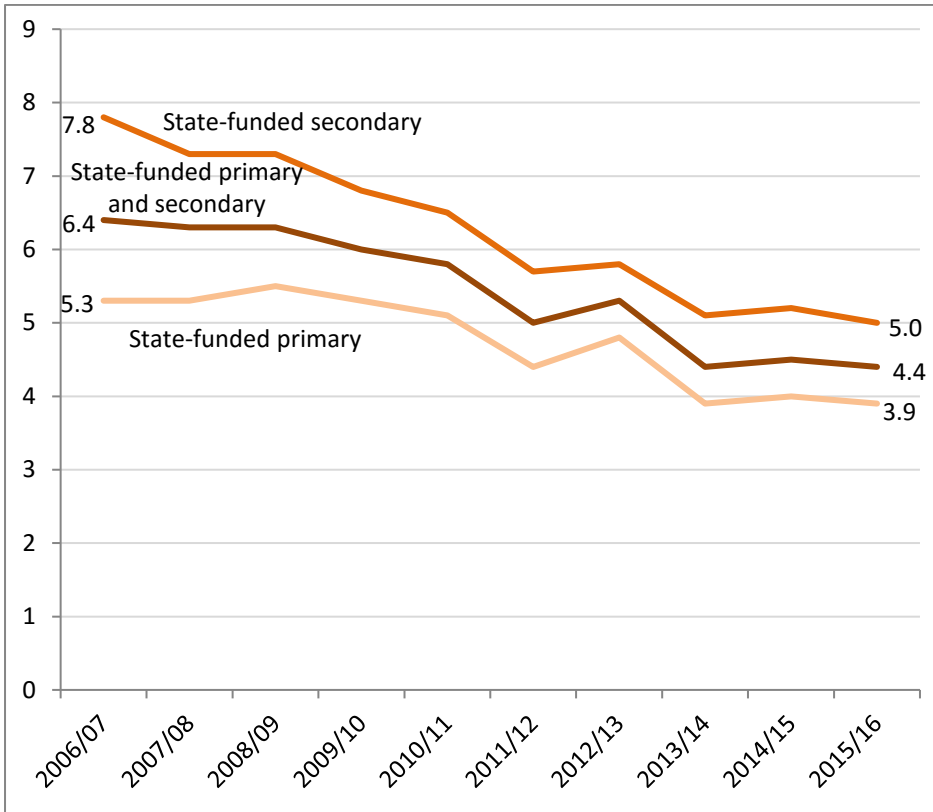




SFR 51/2016, 20 October 2016

Overall absence rates have decreased slightly since last year



The overall absence rate across state-funded primary and secondary schools has decreased slightly from 4.5 per cent in autumn/spring 2014/15 to 4.4 per cent in autumn/spring 2015/16.

Overall absence rates have followed a generally downward trend over the past decade and have decreased by 2 percentage points since absence data was first collected at pupil level in autumn/spring 2006/07 when the overall absence rate was 6.4 per cent.

The decrease in overall absence is driven by an decrease in illness

Absence due to illness has decreased from 2.9 per cent of all sessions in autumn/spring 2014/15 to 2.7 per cent in autumn/spring 2015/16. Illness remains the most common reason for absence, accounting for 62.2 per cent of all absences.

One in ten pupils were persistently absent in the autumn and spring terms

The percentage of enrolments in state-funded primary and state-funded secondary schools that were classified as persistent absentees in autumn/spring 2015/16 was 10.3 per cent. This is lower than the equivalent figure of 11.1 per cent in autumn and spring 2014/15.

Note that this is based on the revised persistent absence measure which was introduced in September 2015, where a pupil enrolment is classified as a persistent absentee if they miss 10 per cent or more of their possible sessions.

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About this release

This statistical first release (SFR) reports on absence in state-funded primary and secondary schools and pupil referral units during the autumn term 2015 and spring term 2016. The Department uses two key measures to monitor pupil absence – overall and persistent absence. Absence by reason and by pupil characteristics is also included in this release.

Only full year absence figures give a complete view of pupil absence. Two term absence figures can be volatile so year on year comparisons in this release should be treated with caution. Final absence statistics relating to the full 2015/16 school year are intended for publication in March 2017.

Figures held in this release are used as key indicators in behaviour and attendance policy. High levels of attendance are essential in ensuring that all pupils can benefit from the opportunities provided by education.

[A guide to absence statistics](#), which provides historical information on absence statistics, as well as technical background information on the figures and data collection, should be referenced alongside this release.

In this publication

The following tables are included in the SFR:

- SFR51_2016_National_tables.xls and .ods
- Underlying data (open format .csv and metadata .txt)

Feedback

We are changing how our releases look and welcome feedback on any aspect of this document at schools.statistics@education.gov.uk.

1. Absence rates (Tables 1, 2)

The national overall absence rate is the total number of overall absence sessions for all pupils as a percentage of the total number of possible sessions for all pupils, where overall absence is the sum of authorised and unauthorised absence and one session is equal to half a day.

$$\text{Overall absence rate} = \frac{\text{Total overall absence sessions}}{\text{Total sessions possible}} \times 100$$

The overall absence rate across state-funded primary and secondary schools decreased slightly from 4.5 per cent in autumn/spring 2014/15 to 4.4 per cent in autumn/spring 2015/16. The overall absence rate in primary schools decreased from 4.0 per cent to 3.9 per cent and the rate in secondary schools decreased from 5.2 per cent to 5.0 per cent.

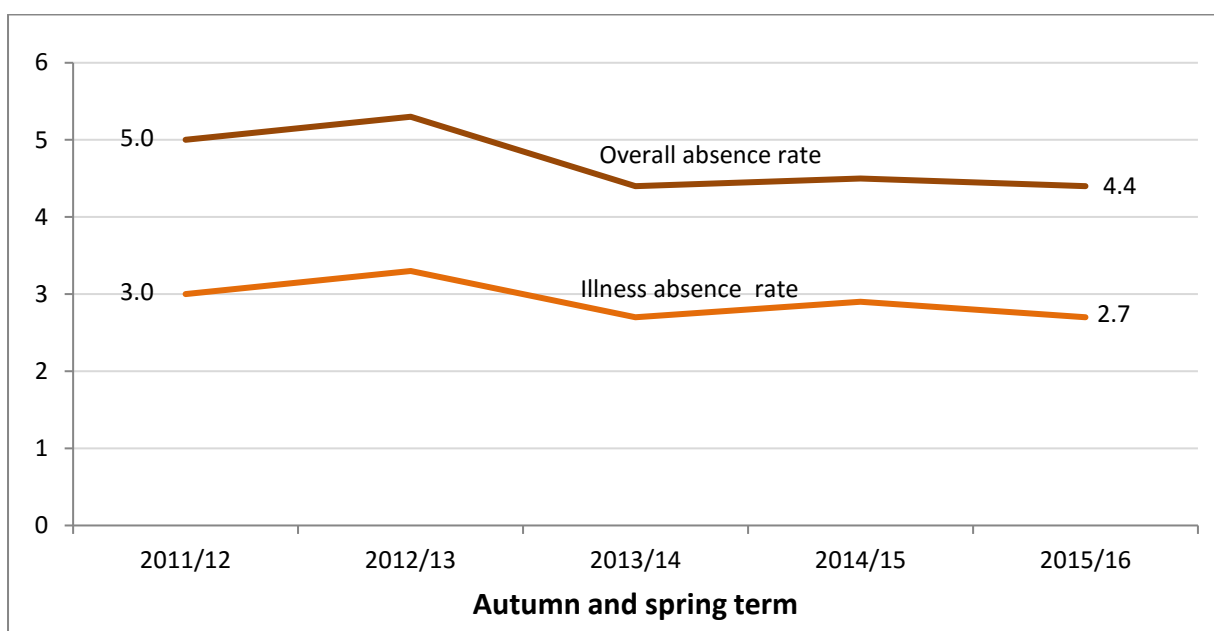
The decrease in overall absence has been driven by a decrease in the authorised absence rate across state-funded primary and secondary schools – which fell from 3.6 per cent to 3.4 per cent between autumn/spring 2014/15 and autumn/spring 2015/16.

This is largely due to an decrease in absence due to illness. Illness remains the most common reason for absence and heavily influences overall absence rates (See figure 1).

The unauthorised absence rate remained unchanged from the equivalent period in 2014/15 at 0.9 per cent.

Figure 1: Comparison of the trend in overall and illness absence rates

England, Autumn term 2011 and spring term 2012 to autumn term 2015 and spring term 2016



Source: School Census

2. Persistent absence (Table 1)

Persistent absence definition

Since September 2015, pupils have been identified as persistent absentees if they miss 10% or more of their possible sessions.

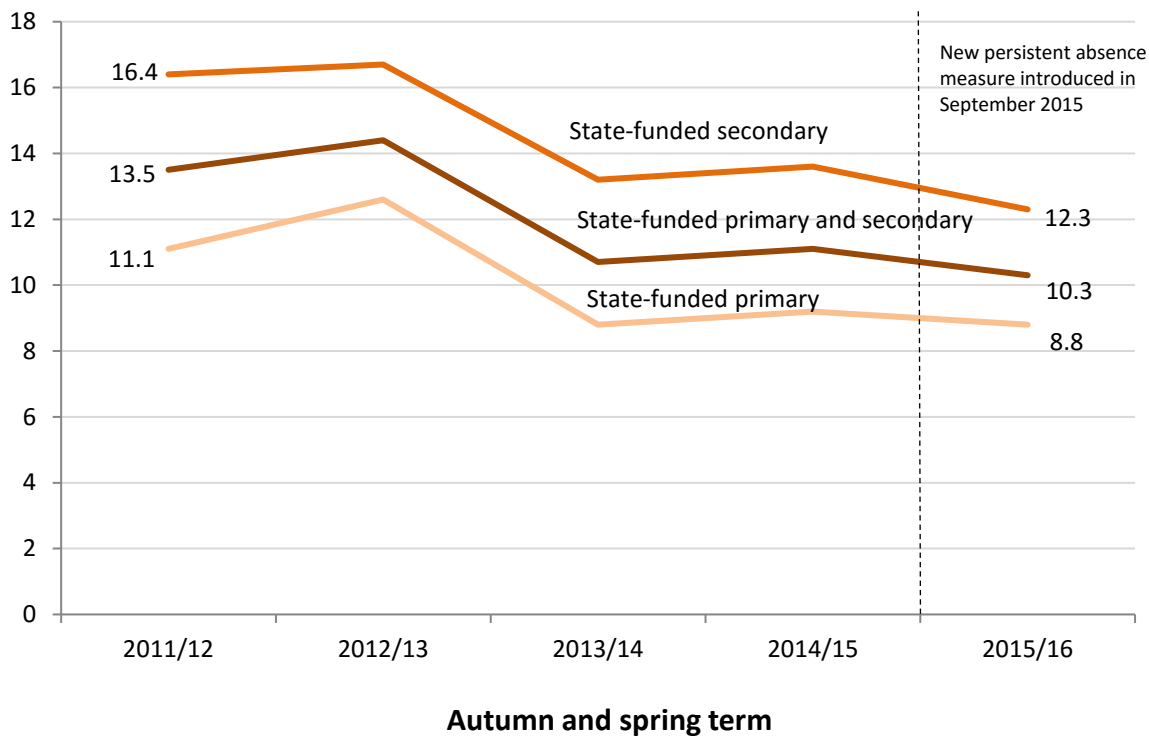
For more information on this and on the methodologies used in previous years, please see the [‘Guide to absence statistics’](#).

The percentage of enrolments in state-funded primary and state-funded secondary schools that were classified as persistent absentees in autumn/spring 2015/16 was 10.3 per cent. This is lower than the equivalent figure of 11.1 per cent in autumn/spring 2014/15 (see Figure 2 below which presents figures for the new measure for earlier years).

Note that this is based on the revised persistent absence measure which was introduced in September 2015, where a pupil enrolment is classified as a persistent absentee if they miss 10 per cent or more of their own possible sessions.

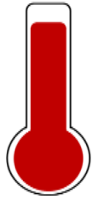
Figure 2: Percentage of enrolments who are persistent absentees (new measure – based on a pupil missing 10 per cent or more of their own possible sessions)

England, Autumn term 2011 and spring term 2012 to autumn term 2015 and spring term 2016



Source: School Census

3. Reasons for absence (Tables 2 & 3)



In autumn/spring 2015/16, 2.7 per cent of all possible sessions were missed through illness (not medical or dental appointments), compared to 2.9 per cent in 2014/15. Illness accounted for 62.2 per cent of all absence compared to 64.7 per cent in autumn/spring 2014/15.

In autumn/spring 2015/16, 73.5 per cent of pupils had a least one session of absence due to illness, a decrease from 76.7 per cent in autumn/spring 2014/15.



The percentage of all possible sessions missed due to family holidays (authorised and unauthorised) remained the same between autumn/spring 2014/15 and autumn/spring 2015/16 at 0.3 per cent.

The percentage of pupils who missed at least one session due to a family holiday in autumn/spring 2015/16 was 7.6 per cent, compared with 7.2 per cent in autumn/spring 2014/15.

4. Absence by pupil characteristics (Tables 4.1, 4.2, 5.1 & 5.2)

The following findings on absence rates for pupils with different characteristics have been broadly consistent across recent years, with slight changes in rates reflecting changes in overall absence rates.

Gender

- The overall absence rate and persistent absence rate across state-funded primary and secondary schools was the same for boys and girls

Free school meals (FSM) eligibility

- The overall absence rate for pupils who are known to be eligible for and claiming free school meals (FSM) was 6.7 per cent, compared to 4.0 per cent for non FSM pupils.
- The percentage of FSM eligible pupils that were persistent absentees was 20.5 per cent, compared to 8.2 per cent of pupil enrolments that were not eligible for FSM.

National curriculum year group

- Pupils in national curriculum year groups 2 to 7 had the lowest overall absence rate at 3.8 or 3.9 per cent. Pupils in national curriculum year group 10 and 11 had the highest overall absence rates at 5.6 per cent and 5.7 per cent respectively.
- This trend is replicated for persistent absence.

Special educational need (SEN)

- Pupils with a statement of special educational needs (SEN) or education healthcare plan (EHC) had an overall absence rate of 6.8 per cent compared to 4.1 per cent for those with no identified SEN.
- The percentage of pupils with a statement of SEN or an EHC plan that are persistent absentees is more than two times higher than the percentage for pupils with no identified SEN.

Ethnic group

- The highest overall absence rates were for Traveller of Irish Heritage and Gypsy/ Roma pupils at 16.8 per cent and 11.9 per cent respectively. Gypsy/ Roma pupils had the largest decrease in overall absence rates since the same period last year compared to other ethnic groups, of 0.6 percentage points.
- Overall absence rates for pupils of a Chinese and Black African ethnicity were substantially lower than the national average of 4.4 per cent at 2.3 per cent and 2.7 per cent respectively.

- A similar pattern is seen in persistent absence rates, Traveller of Irish heritage pupils had the highest rate at 58.5 per cent and Chinese pupils had the lowest rate at 3.7 per cent.

5. Absence for four year olds (Underlying data)

The overall absence rate for four year olds in autumn/spring 2015/16 was 5.3%. The rate has remained unchanged since autumn/spring 2014/15 and autumn/spring 2013/14.

6. Pupil referral unit absence (Table 6)

The overall absence rate for pupil referral units in autumn/spring 2015/16 was 31.7 per cent, compared to 31.1 per cent in autumn/spring 2014/15.

The percentage of enrolments in pupil referral units who were persistent absentees was 70.2 per cent in autumn/spring 2015/16, compared to 68.6 per cent in autumn/spring 2014/15.

7. Background: Additional information and updates

This SFR is accompanied by underlying data, including national, local authority and school level information. The accompanying file includes a metadata document which provides further information on the contents of these files. This data is released under the terms of the [Open Government License](#) and is intended to meet at least 3 stars for [Open Data](#).

8. Accompanying tables

The following tables are available in Excel format on the [department's statistics website](#):

National tables

Charts

- 1 Overall absence rates by type of school
- 2 Percentage of pupil enrolments who are persistent absentees

Tables

- 1 Pupil absence and pupil enrolments that are persistent absentees by type of school
- 2 Pupil absence by reason and gender
- 3 Pupil enrolments with one or more sessions of absence by reason
- 4.1 Pupil absence by characteristics
- 4.2 Characteristics of pupil enrolments who are persistent absentees
- 5.1 Pupil absence by ethnic group
- 5.2 Pupil enrolments who are persistent absentees by ethnic group
- 6 Pupil absence, persistent absence and pupil absence by reason for pupil referral units

Note that this release has been reviewed following the consultation on improvements to pupil absence statistics (and the [response](#) to it published in October 2015). We are no longer publishing local authority tables as part of this release, but all the data that was previously in these tables can be found in the accompanying underlying data.

When reviewing the tables, please note that:

We preserve confidentiality	The Code of Practice for Official Statistics requires that reasonable steps should be taken to ensure that all published or disseminated statistics produced by the Department for Education protect confidentiality.
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We round numbers	Enrolment numbers at national and regional levels have been rounded to the nearest 5. Enrolment numbers of 1 or 2 have been suppressed to protect confidentiality. Where any number is shown as 0, the original figure was also 0. Where the numerator or denominator of any percentage calculated on enrolment numbers is less than 3, the percentage has been suppressed. This suppression is consistent with the Departmental statistical policy .
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We adopt symbols to help identify suppression	Symbols are used in the tables as follows: 0 zero x small number suppressed to preserve confidentiality . not applicable .. not available
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9. Further information is available

Want previously published figures?	For the previous full year pupil absence figures visit: Pupil Absence in Schools in England, 2014 to 2015
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	For the previous autumn and spring term pupil absence figures visit: Pupil Absence in Schools in England, Autumn 2014 and spring 2015
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Want Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland?	The School Census only collects absence information from schools in England. For information for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, contact the departments below or access their statistics at the following links:
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	Wales: school.stats@wales.gov.uk or Welsh Government - Statistics and Research
--	---

	Scotland: school.stats@scotland.gov.uk or Scottish Government - School Education Statistics
--	---

	Northern Ireland: statistics@deni.gov.uk or Department of Education - Education Statistics
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For related publications	For related publications, visit Pupil absence in schools in England
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Revisions?	There are no further planned revisions to this Statistical First Release. However, if at a later date we need to make a revision, this will comply with the Departmental revisions policy .
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10. National Statistics

The United Kingdom Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

Designation can be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics:

- meet identified user needs;
- are well explained and readily accessible;
- are produced according to sound methods, and
- are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.

Once statistics have been designated as National Statistics it is a statutory requirement that the Code of Practice shall continue to be observed.

The Department has a set of [statistical policies](#) in line with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

11. Technical information

These statistics are presented as emerging findings and have been released to help planning, to study trends and to monitor outcomes of initiatives and interventions on pupil attendance.

[A guide to absence statistics](#), which provides historical information on absence statistics, technical background information on the figures and data collection, and definitions of key terms should be referred to alongside this release.

The following technical notes are specific to this publication.

- Data are collected a term in arrears, meaning that where a school closes, data are not collected for the last term the school was open. For schools which close at the end of a term, data for that term will not be collected.
 - 6 sponsor-led academies opened part way through the term and incorrectly returned absence data for their predecessor school. As the combined absence data would then be related to both the academy and the predecessor school these academies have been completely removed from this analysis.
 - Year on year comparisons of local authority data may be affected by schools converting to academies.
- Schools with fewer than 6 enrolments aged between five and fifteen are removed from our analysis. For this release, 13 schools were removed from the main five to fifteen year old analysis.

12. Get in touch

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Tel: 020 7783 8300

Other enquiries/feedback

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Email: schools.statistics@education.gov.uk



Department
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This document is also available from our website "[Statistics: pupil absence](#)"

Reference: [SFR 51/2016]



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