



## Statistical First Release

### Pupil absence in schools in England: 2013 to 2014

---

Reference	SFR 10/2015
Date	26 March 2015
Coverage	England
Theme	Children, Education and Skills
Issued by	Department for Education, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BT
Press office	020 7925 6789
Public enquiries	037 0000 2288
Statistician	Clare Jones
Phone	020 7340 7287
Email	<a href="mailto:Schools.statistics@education.gsi.gov.uk">Schools.statistics@education.gsi.gov.uk</a>
Internet	<a href="#">Statistics: pupil absence</a>

---

**Overall absence rates have decreased** Overall absence rates have decreased from 5.3 per cent in 2012/13 to 4.5 per cent in 2013/14. This is due to a decrease in authorised absence rates from 4.2 per cent in 2012/13 to 3.5 per cent in 2013/14. Unauthorised absence rates have remained stable at 1.1 per cent.

---

**The number of pupil enrolments classified as persistent absentees has also decreased** The percentage of pupils classified as persistent absentees has decreased by 1.0 percentage points from 4.6 per cent in 2012/13, to 3.6 per cent in 2013/14.

---

**The fall in overall absence rates is largely due to a fall in levels of illness** Absence due to illness decreased from 3.1 per cent of all possible sessions in 2012/13 to 2.6 per cent of all possible sessions in 2013/14. Illness remains the most common reason for absence, accounting for 57.9 per cent of all absences in 2013/14.

---

**Overall absence rates for the first five half terms of the academic year are at their lowest since 2006/07** Looking at longer term trends, based on data for the first five half terms of the academic year, overall absence rates have fallen from 6.5 per cent in 2006/07 to 4.4 per cent in 2013/14.

---

#### A National Statistics publication

National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the National Statistics Code of Practice. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs. They are produced free from any political interference.

## 1. Background and context

This Statistical First Release reports on absence in state-funded primary, secondary and special schools during the 2013/14 academic year. Information on absence in pupil referral units and absence for four year olds is also included.

The Department uses two key measures to monitor pupil absence; overall absence and persistent absence. Absence information by reason, characteristics and geographic location is also included in this release.

Unless explicitly stated, the figures quoted within this release relate to pupil absence across the full six half terms of the academic year, with data for the second half of the summer term having been collected for the second time in 2013/14. Five half term figures are used to look at longer term trends prior to the 2012/13 academic year but, as previously noted, this is the last release in which a full set of five half term absence figures will be provided. As of 2012/13 six half term absence figures should be used to monitor full year pupil absence levels. All figures in this release are based on unrounded data; therefore constituent parts may not add up due to rounding.

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 published absence statistics”, which provides historical information on absence statistics, technical background information to the figures and data collection, and definitions of key terms is also being published alongside this release for the first time.

## 2. Overall absence rates (Table 1.2 and underlying data)

**Table 1: Overall absence rates have decreased**

	2012/13	2013/14
State-funded primary schools	4.7	3.9
State-funded secondary schools	5.9	5.2
Special schools	9.6	9.0
<b>State-funded primary, secondary and special schools</b>	<b>5.3</b>	<b>4.5</b>

**Overall absence rates have decreased** The overall absence rate over the full academic year across state-funded primary, secondary and special schools fell from 5.3 per cent in 2012/13, to 4.5 per cent in 2013/14.

**The decrease in absence rates is due to a fall in authorised absence rates** Authorised absence rates have fallen from 4.2 per cent in 2012/13, to 3.5 per cent in 2013/14 across state-funded primary, secondary and special schools. This is largely due to a decrease in absence due to illness and agreed family holidays. Unauthorised absence rates have remained relatively unchanged at 1.1 per cent.

**Fewer days are being missed due to absence** The total number of days missed due to overall absence has fallen from 60.1 million in 2012/13 to 52.0 million in 2013/14.

### 3. Persistent absentees (Table 1.4 and 4.1)

Persistent absentees are defined as those pupils missing around 15 per cent or more of possible sessions. The persistent absence threshold is identified as 15 per cent or more of the typical amount of possible sessions across a given period. This equates to 56 or more sessions of absence (either authorised or unauthorised) for pupils aged 5 to 14 and 46 or more sessions of absence for pupils aged 15 during the full academic year.

This threshold is reviewed every year to account for any changes to the typical amount of possible sessions for all pupils – however, the thresholds do not tend to change from year to year (see Chapter 3 of "Guide to absence statistics" for full information on the standard thresholds since 2005/06).

**Table 2: The percentage of pupil enrolments that are persistent absentees has decreased**

	2012/13	2013/14
State-funded primary schools	2.7	1.9
State-funded secondary schools	6.5	5.3
Special schools	16.2	14.6
<b>State-funded primary, secondary and special schools</b>	<b>4.6</b>	<b>3.6</b>

The percentage of pupils classified as persistent absentees has decreased

The percentage of pupils across state-funded primary, secondary and special schools classified as persistent absentees fell by 1.0 percentage points from 4.6 per cent in 2012/13, to 3.6 per cent in 2013/14.

Persistent absentees now account for a smaller proportion of all absence

In 2013/14, absence by persistent absentees accounted for 19.9 per cent of all absence compared to 21.3 per cent in 2012/13.

The majority of primary and secondary schools have a low percentage of pupils that are persistent absentees

In 2013/14, 99.4 per cent of primary schools and 89.9 per cent of secondary schools had 9 per cent or fewer pupils that were classified as persistent absentees. This compares to 98.0 per cent of primary schools and 80.6 per cent of secondary schools in 2012/13.

### 4. Reasons for absence (Table 2.1)

Illness remains the most common reason for absence

Illness (not medical or dental appointments) accounted for 57.9 per cent of all absences in 2013/14 compared to 58.3 per cent of all absences in 2012/13.

The percentage of all possible sessions missed due to illness also decreased, from 3.1 per cent in 2012/13 to 2.6 per cent in 2013/14.

Family holidays account for a lower proportion of absence than last year

Family holidays (authorised and unauthorised) accounted for 8.5 per cent of all absences in 2013/14 compared to 11.4 per cent of all absences in 2012/13.

The percentage of all possible sessions missed due to all family holidays also decreased from 0.6 per cent in 2012/13, to 0.4 per cent in 2013/14.

This decrease is due to a fall in authorised family holidays (from 0.4 per cent in 2012/13 to 0.1 per cent in 2013/14), whilst unauthorised family holidays have seen a small increase (from 0.2 per cent in 2012/13 to 0.3 per cent in 2013/14).

## 5. Distribution of absence (Table 3.1 and underlying data)

The majority of pupils were absent for five days or fewer

50.6 per cent of pupil enrolments had five or fewer days of absence in 2013/14, compared to 42.3 per cent in 2012/13.

53.5 per cent of pupil enrolments in primary schools, and 47.2 per cent of pupil enrolments in secondary schools had five or fewer days of absence in 2013/14.

Pupils in primary school miss fewer days on average

Per pupil enrolment, the average total absence in primary schools was 6.9 days. This compares to 15.5 days in special schools and around 9.1 days in secondary schools.

## 6. Absence by pupil characteristics (Table 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, 5.5 and 6.1)

Absence levels for FSM pupils are higher than the national average

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 pupil enrolments that were persistent absentees was 8.3 per cent, compared to 2.5 per cent of pupil enrolments not eligible for FSM that were persistent absentees.

Absence levels for SEN pupils are higher than the national average

Pupils with a statement of special education needs (SEN) had an overall absence rate of 7.5 per cent whereas pupils with no identified SEN had an overall absence rate of 4.1 per cent.

The percentage of pupils with a statement of SEN that are persistent absentees (11.0 per cent) is more than four times higher than the percentage for pupils with no identified SEN (2.6 per cent).

Absence rates are higher later in school

Pupils in national curriculum year group 11 had an overall absence rate (6.2 per cent) that was approximately 1.5 times higher than the rate for pupils in national curriculum year group 7 (4.2 per cent).

Absence rates for Traveller of Irish Heritage and Gypsy/Roma pupils are higher than any other pupil ethnic group

The overall absence rates for Traveller of Irish Heritage and Gypsy/Roma were 19.2 per cent and 13.3 per cent respectively.

The overall absence rates for pupils of a Chinese and Black-African ethnicity were substantially lower than the national average of 4.5 per cent at 2.5 per cent and 2.9 per cent respectively.

A similar pattern is seen in the persistent absence rates, Traveller of Irish Heritage pupils have the highest rate at 36.3 per cent, and Chinese pupils have the lowest rate at 0.6 per cent.

Overall absence rates in the most deprived areas are higher than in the least deprived areas

The rate of overall absence for pupils living in the most deprived areas (5.3 per cent) was 1.6 times higher than for pupils living in the least deprived areas (3.4 per cent).

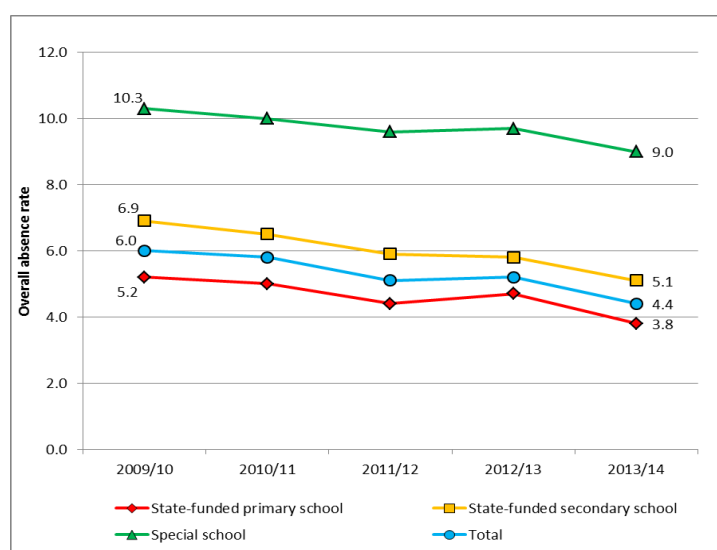
The percentage of pupils in the most deprived areas that are persistent absentees (5.0 per cent) is over three times higher than the percentage for pupils in the least deprived areas (1.6 per cent).

## 7. Five half term absence

The Department first collected absence data for the second half of the summer term (sixth half term) for the 2012/13 academic year. Prior to this absence data had only been collected for the autumn term, spring term and the first half of the summer term. Whilst the Department's full year key absence measures are now based on the full academic year's (six half terms) data absence information for the first five half terms has been used in this release to inform analysis of longer term trends. Five and six half term data is similar, with overall differences typically lying between 0.0 and 0.1 percentage points.

This is the last year for which a full set of five half term tables will be provided as part of this release.

**Figure 1: Overall absence rates have decreased**



Overall absence rates for the first five half terms of the academic year are at their lowest since 2006/07

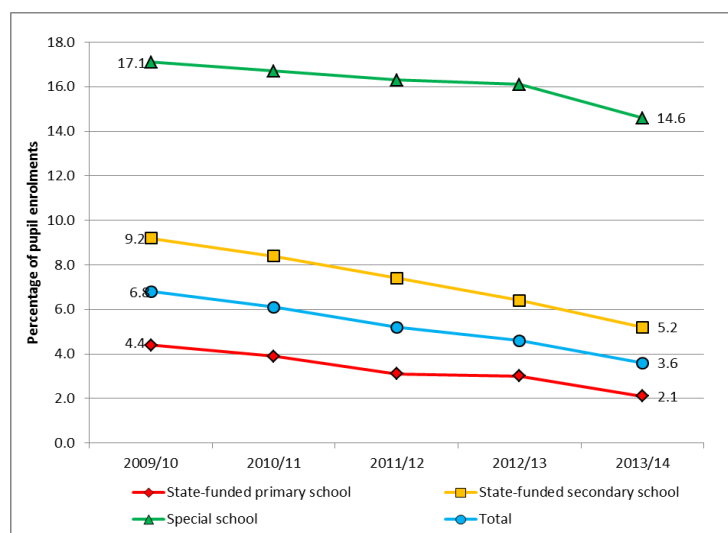
Overall absence rates for the first five half terms of the academic year have fallen from 6.5 per cent in 2006/07 to 4.4 per cent in 2013/14.

The addition of the second half of the summer term has a negligible effect on overall absence and persistent absence rates

The overall absence rate for the first five half terms of 2013/14 was 4.4 per cent, compared to 4.5 per cent for the full academic year. The difference in the overall absence rate is partly due to an increase in the unauthorised absence rate by 0.1 percentage points for six half terms.

The persistent absence rate was the same (to one decimal place) for the first five half terms of 2013/14 and the full academic year, at 3.6 per cent.

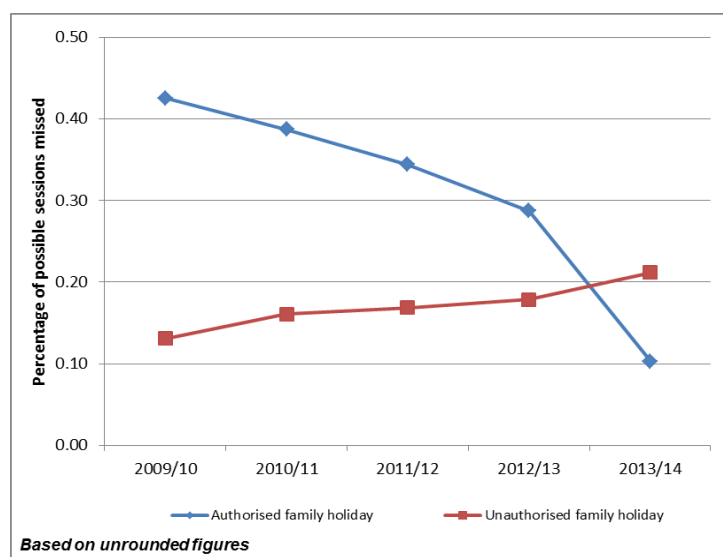
**Figure 2: Persistent absence rates have decreased**



The number of pupil enrolments classified as persistent absentees has continued to fall

The percentage of pupils classified as persistent absentees (missing 46 or more sessions) has decreased from 6.8 per cent in the first five half terms of 2009/10 to 3.6 per cent in the first five half terms of 2013/14.

**Figure 3: The fall in overall family holiday absence is due to a decrease in authorised family holidays**



Over the last five years authorised absence rates due to family holiday have decreased substantially

The percentage of all possible sessions missed due to family holidays (authorised and unauthorised) in the first five half terms decreased from 0.6 per cent in 2009/10, to 0.3 per cent in 2013/14.

This decrease is due to a decrease in authorised family holidays, whilst unauthorised family holidays have seen a small increase.

## 8. Absence for four year olds (Table 12.2)

Absence information for four year olds (who are not of compulsory school age) has been collected since autumn term 2012.

The overall absence rate for four year olds dropped from 6.1 per cent in 2012/13 to 5.1 per cent in 2013/14.

## 9. Pupil referral unit absence (Table 13.2)

Absence data for pupil referral units (PRUs), including alternative provision academies and free schools, was collected termly for the first time in the spring 2014 School Census, having previously only been collected annually via the PRU Census. In 2012/13 the PRU annual census was discontinued; therefore there is no comparable data available for the 2012/13 academic year.

The overall absence rate for pupils enrolled in PRUs in the full 2013/14 academic year was 31.9 per cent, of which 18.1 per cent of sessions were missed due to authorised absences, and 13.8 per cent of sessions were missed because of unauthorised absence.

The percentage of pupil enrolments in PRUs classified as persistent absentees in 2013/14 was 37.6 per cent.

## 10. List of tables

The following tables are available in excel format on the Department's statistics website: [Pupil absence in schools in England](#).

### National tables

#### Figures

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 State-funded primary, secondary and special schools: Overall absence rates by sector</li> <li>2 State-funded primary, secondary and special schools: Percentage of pupil enrolments that are Persistent Absentees.</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3.2 State-funded primary, secondary and special schools: Percentage of enrolments by their overall absence rates, six half terms</li> <li>4.1 State-funded primary, secondary and special schools: Number of schools by the percentage of Persistent Absentees, six half terms</li> </ol> |
|--|--|

#### National Tables

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.1 State-funded primary, secondary and special schools: Pupil absence by type of school, five half terms</li> <li>1.2 State-funded primary, secondary and special schools: Pupil absence by type of school, six half terms</li> <li>1.3 State-funded primary, secondary and special schools: Persistent Absentees, five half terms</li> <li>1.4 State-funded primary, secondary and special schools: Persistent Absentees, six half terms</li> <li>2.1 State-funded primary, secondary and special schools: Absence by reason and gender, six half terms</li> <li>2.2 State-funded primary, secondary and special schools: Absence by reason for Persistent Absentees, six half terms</li> <li>3.1 State-funded primary, secondary and special schools: Distribution of enrolments by length of overall absence, six half terms</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5.1 State-funded primary, secondary and special schools: Pupil absence by characteristics, six half terms</li> <li>5.2 State-funded primary, secondary and special schools: Characteristics of Persistent Absentees, six half terms</li> <li>5.3 State-funded primary, secondary and special schools: Pupil absence by ethnic group, six half terms</li> <li>5.4 State-funded primary, secondary and special schools: Persistent Absentees by ethnic group, six half terms</li> <li>5.5 Absence rates by type of special educational need, six half terms</li> <li>6.1 State-funded primary, secondary and special schools: Pupil absence in schools by Income Deprivation Affecting Children Indices (IDACI) decile of pupil residence, six half terms</li> </ol> |
|--|---|

### Additional tables – National five half terms

#### Figure

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3 State-funded primary, secondary and special schools: Authorised and unauthorised family holiday absence rates</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7.2 State-funded primary, secondary and special schools: Absence by reason for persistent absentees, five half terms</li> </ol> |
|---|--|

#### National Tables

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7.1 State-funded primary, secondary and special schools: Absence by reason and gender, five half terms</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8.1 State-funded primary, secondary and special schools: Distribution of enrolments by length of overall absence, five half terms</li> <li>8.2 State-funded primary, secondary and special schools: Percentage of enrolments by their overall absence rates, five half terms</li> </ol> |
|--|--|



9.1 State-funded primary, secondary and special schools: Number of schools by the percentage of Persistent Absentees, five half terms

10.1 State-funded primary, secondary and special schools: Pupil absence by characteristics, five half terms

10.2 State-funded primary, secondary and special schools: Characteristics of Persistent Absentees, five half terms

### **Local authority tables**

11.1 State-funded primary, secondary and special schools: Pupil absence by type of school and local authority, five half terms

11.2 State-funded primary, secondary and special schools: Pupil absence by type of school and local authority, six half terms

12.1 State-funded primary, secondary and special schools: Four year old absence by local authority, five half terms

12.2 State-funded primary, secondary and special schools: Four year old absence by local authority, six half terms

13.1 Pupil referral units: Pupil absence by type of school and local authority, five half terms

13.2 Pupil referral units: Pupil absence by type of school and local authority, six half terms

### **Additional tables - Proposed persistent absentee methodology**

#### **National tables**

15.1 Persistent absentees, proposed methodology

15.2 Pupil absence by characteristics: persistent absentees, proposed methodology

10.3 State-funded primary, secondary and special schools: Pupil absence by ethnic group, five half terms

10.4 State-funded primary, secondary and special schools: Persistent Absentees by ethnic group, five half terms

10.5 State-funded primary, secondary and special schools: Absence rate by type of Special Educational need, five half terms

14.1 Pupil absence in schools by degree of rurality of school location, six half terms

14.2 Pupil absence in schools by local authority district of school location, six half terms

14.3 Pupil absence in schools by IDACI decile of pupil residence, six half terms

14.4 Pupil absence in schools by degree of rurality of pupil residence, six half terms

14.5 Pupil absence in schools by local authority district of pupil residence, six half terms

14.6 Pupil absence in schools by IDACI decile and degree of rurality of pupil residence, six half terms

15.3 Pupil absence by ethnic group: persistent absentees, proposed methodology

#### **Local authority tables**

15.4 Proposed persistent absence methodology, Local Authority

#### **School level tables**

15.5 Proposed persistent absence methodology, Pupil referral units

When reviewing the tables, please note the following:

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 protects confidentiality.
So 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 pupil 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 <a href="#">Departmental statistical policy</a> .
And adopt symbols to help identify this	Symbols are used in the tables as follows: 0 zero x small number suppressed to preserve confidentiality . not applicable .. not available

## 11. 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](#).

In October 2014 the Department consulted on a change to the methodology used to identify pupils who are persistently absent and a change to the structure of the absence Statistical First Releases to focus on the provision of more time series data via a machine readable CSV format rather than in data tables. The full consultation can be found in Section 9 of the "[Pupil absence in schools in England: autumn 2013 and spring 2014](#)" Statistical First Release.

Responses to this consultation are still being reviewed by the Department and a full response will be released in due course.

However, as outlined in the previous statistical first release, additional tables are provided in this release to show persistent absence figures under the proposed methodology so that users can fully understand the differences between the current and proposed methodology.

The proposed methodology would mean that a pupil enrolment would be classified as a persistent absentee if they missed 15 per cent or more of possible sessions. This differs from the current methodology which uses a standard threshold where a pupil enrolment is classified as persistently absent if they miss 56 or more sessions for the full academic year, and 46 or more sessions for the first five half terms.

## 12. Technical notes

A “Guide to published absence statistics”, which provides historical information on absence statistics, technical background information to the figures and data collection, and definitions of key terms is also being published alongside this release for the first time.

The following technical notes are specific to this publication.

- 12.1 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.
- 110 sponsor-led academies opened on or after the beginning of the spring 2014 term and incorrectly returned absence data for the autumn term. The autumn term data for these schools has been excluded from this analysis.
- Also, 64 sponsor-led academies opened part way through the spring term and incorrectly returned absence data for their predecessor school. As the combined absence data would then related to both the academy and their 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.
- 12.2 Schools with fewer than 6 pupil enrolments aged between five and fifteen are removed from our analysis. For this release, 27 such schools were removed from the main five to fifteen year old analysis.

## 13. Want more?

---

Want previously published figures?

For recent pupil absence figures visit: [Pupil absence in schools in England](#)

---

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:

Wales: [school.stats@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:school.stats@wales.gsi.gov.uk) or [Welsh Government – Statistics and Research](#)

Scotland: [school.stats@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:school.stats@wales.gsi.gov.uk) or [Scottish Government – School Education Statistics](#)

Northern Ireland: [statistics@deni.gov.uk](mailto:statistics@deni.gov.uk) or [Department of Education – Education Statistics](#)

---

Revisions?

There are no 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 revision policy.

---

## 14. Got a query? Like to give feedback?

---

If from the media

Press Office News Desk, Department for Education, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BT.  
020 7925 6789

If non-media

Education Standards Evidence and Dissemination Division, Level 2, Department for Education, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BT.  
[schools.statistics@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:schools.statistics@education.gsi.gov.uk)

---



Department  
for Education



© Crown copyright 2015

You may re-use this information (excluding logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [Open Government Licence](#) or e-mail: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at [schools.statistics@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:schools.statistics@education.gsi.gov.uk).

This document is also available from our website at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-pupil-absence>.