



Revised August 2017

8th August 2017

Coverage: Northern Ireland

Frequency: Annual

Theme: Schools

Issued by:

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The purpose of this statistical bulletin is to present detailed, final attendance figures for schools for the 2015/16 academic year. It includes information on the rates of absence, type of absence and reason for absence.

KEY FINDINGS

Absence is reported by schools in half day sessions and recorded as authorised or unauthorised.

- The overall attendance rate for primary, post-primary and special schools in the 2015/16 academic year was 94.6% of the total half days. The overall absence rate has remained unchanged from 2014/15.
- 5.4% of total half days in primary, post-primary and special schools were missed due to absence. These comprised 3.8% authorised absence and 1.6% unauthorised absence.
- The attendance rate for primary schools in 2015/16 was 95.5% of total half days. 3.3% of half days were missed due to authorised absence and 1.2% due to unauthorised absence.
- The attendance rate for post-primary schools in 2015/16 was 93.5% of total half days. 4.3% of half days were missed due to authorised absence and 2.2% due to unauthorised absence.
- In special schools, the attendance rate in 2015/6 was 90.2% of total half days. This sector continues to have the highest overall absence rates – 6.7% of all half days were missed due to authorised absence and 3.1% due to unauthorised absence.



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Introduction

Attendance data are collected annually via the school census and are required by a range of organisations and individuals for a variety of purposes. The data are used by members of the Northern Ireland Assembly, the Department of Education (DE), the Education Authority (EA) and the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) for benchmarking, policy making and performance monitoring.

Responsibility for attendance policy lies with Tackling Educational Disadvantage Team in DE which monitors non-attendance and provides guidance to schools in relation to attendance. In December 2016, the Department launched a new attendance strategy *Miss School = Miss Out*, which aims to reduce school absence levels by 2021.

The statistics are also used by other departments when developing and monitoring cross-departmental policies. For example, attendance is an indicator in the Education Domain of the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure. The data are also used by researchers, academics and students for research purposes and by the general public for informing choices about service providers.

Initial findings for 2015/16 were published on 26 January 2017. This statistical bulletin supplements that information with analysis of attendance data by school characteristics, such as management type, and pupil characteristics such as gender and ethnicity.

This is the first set of attendance statistics which have been produced following the amalgamation of the historic Education and Library Boards (ELBs) into the new Education Authority, covering the entirety of Northern Ireland. As a result of this restructuring, the presentation of attendance data at ELB level has been discontinued.

Attendance data for the 2015/16 academic year was collected from all grant-aided primary, post-primary and special schools in Northern Ireland via the School Census which was conducted in October 2016.

A technical error with the source data from schools resulted in a small number of primary schools (three in total) whose School Census returns did not include attendance data. The total number of pupils within these three schools, 696 represents less than one half of one per cent of the student population in 2015/16. The attendance data for these schools is included in this revised publication. Where a figure within the report has been revised this

will be indicated by (r). However it should be noted that due to the small number of schools / pupils the overall absence levels; including both authorised and unauthorised, are unchanged at the reporting level of percentages, rounded to one decimal place.

1. All Schools by Sector

1.1 Key Findings

There are rarely large variations in annual absence levels and overall absence levels were unchanged in 2015/16 compared with 2014/15.

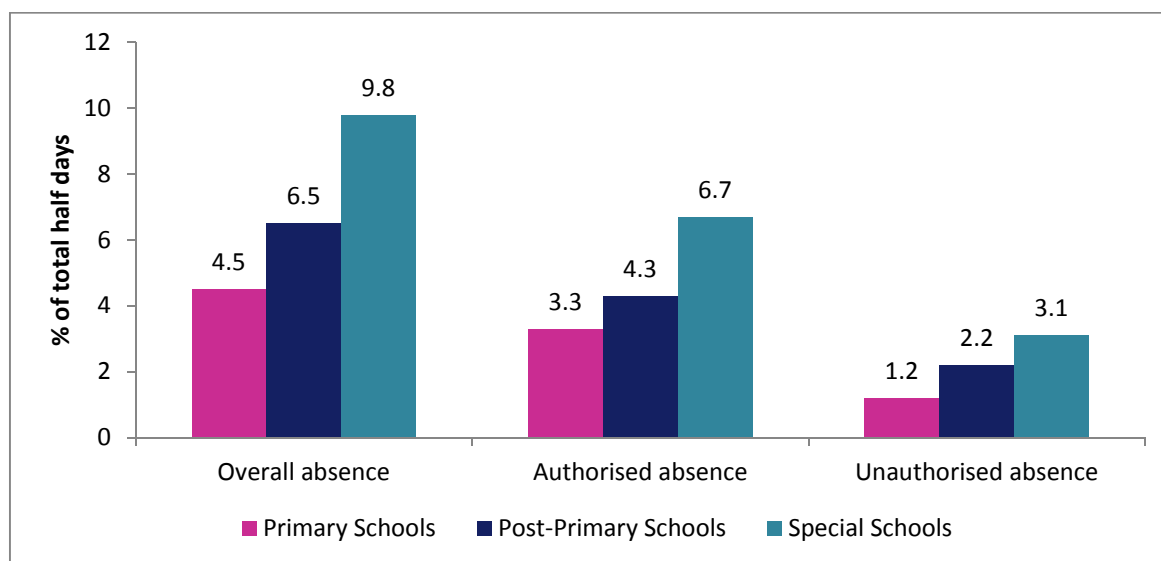
- In primary schools, 4.5% of all half days were missed, comprising 3.3% authorised and 1.2% unauthorised absence (see Table 1.1 below). In 2014/15, overall absence was 4.6% of all half days (3.5% authorised and 1.1% unauthorised)¹.
- In post-primary schools, 6.5% of all half days were missed, comprising 4.3% authorised absence and 2.2% unauthorised absence (see Table 1.1 below). In 2014/15, overall absence was 6.6% of the total half days (4.5% authorised and 2.1% unauthorised).
- In special schools, 9.8% of all half days were missed, comprising 6.7% authorised and 3.1% unauthorised absence (see Table 1.1 below). These figures were unchanged from 2014/5.

Table 1.1: Attendance and absence at school by school type, 2015/16

	% of total half days		
	Primary Schools	Post-primary Schools	Special Schools
Attended	95.5	93.5	90.2
Overall absence	4.5	6.5	9.8
Authorised absence	3.3	4.3	6.7
Unauthorised absence	1.2	2.2	3.1

¹ All comparisons with 2014/15 are sourced from Statistical Bulletin 2/2016 - *Attendance at grant-aided primary, post-primary and special schools in Northern Ireland – 2015/16*: <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/de/attendance-at-primary-and-special-schools-in-northern-ireland-2014-15-detailed-statistics.pdf>

Chart 1.1: Absence from primary, post-primary and special schools, 2015/16



1.2 Reasons for Absence

The level of absence attributable to any particular reason tends to remain fairly consistent on an annual basis and this pattern continued in 2015/6. A full set of figures is provided overleaf in Table 1.2.

- Illness remains the most common reason for absence in all schools. It accounted for 63.1% of absent half days in primary schools, 53.0% in post-primary schools and 48.4% in special schools. The equivalent figures in 2014/15 were 63.9%, 52.9% and 46.2% respectively. Illness is an authorised absence.
- Absences stemming from other exceptional circumstances; an authorised absence, showed a decrease in 2015/16 compared with the previous year. Such absences accounted for 3.0% of missed half days in primary schools, 3.6% in post-primary schools and 7.8% in special schools. In 2014/15, these figures were 4.9%, 5.8% and 10.5% respectively.
- The decline in absences from other exceptional circumstances was offset by increases in two other unauthorised absence categories: non-agreed family holidays and absences for which no reason was provided.
- In primary schools, non-agreed family holidays represented 9.2% of absent half days in 2015/16, 2.9% in post-primary schools and 5.0% in special schools. The equivalent figures in 2014/15 were 8.1%, 2.6% and 2.5% respectively.

- After a decline in 2014/15, the proportion of absent half days for which no reason was provided increased across primary and post-primary schools during 2015/16. These absences represented 12.1% of absent half days in primary schools and 22.3% in post-primary schools. The equivalent figures from 2014/5 were 10.2% and 19.7%. The proportion fell in special schools from 24.6% to 23.4%.

Table 1.2: Absence from all grant-aided schools by reason, 2015/16

	Primary Schools		Post-Primary Schools		Special Schools	
	% absent half days	% total half days	% absent half days	% total half days	% absent half days	% total half days
Authorised absence						
Total	73.2^(r)	3.3	66.7	4.3	68.3	6.6
Illness	63.1	2.9 ^(r)	53.0	3.5	48.4	4.7
Medical / dental appointments	3.4	0.2	5.8	0.4	8.4	0.8
Other exceptional circumstances	3.0	0.1	3.6	0.2	7.8	0.8
Family holiday agreed	2.0	0.1	0.6	*	2.1	0.2
Bereavement	1.2	0.1	1.8	0.1	0.5	*
Artistic endeavour	0.3	*	0.3	*	*	*
Suspended	0.1	*	1.5	0.1	0.7	*
Religious observance	0.1	*	0.1	*	0.3	*
Unauthorised absence						
Total	26.8^(r)	1.2	33.3	2.2	31.7	3.1
No reason provided	12.1	0.5	22.3	1.5	23.4	2.3
Family holiday not agreed	9.2	0.4	2.9	0.5	5.0	0.5
Other	4.9 ^(r)	0.2	7.7	0.2	3.2	0.3
Late after registration closed	0.8	*	0.3	*	0.2	*
Total overall absence	100	4.5	100	6.5	100	9.7

Note: * denotes a figure greater than zero but less than 0.1. In some cases, percentages may not sum due to rounding.

^(r) denotes a revised figure

1.3 Comparisons with England, Scotland and Wales

There are differences in how attendance is recorded across the countries of the UK, which means that any attempt to compare across the countries of the UK must be accompanied by some caveats. The most notable are:

- Figures for Scotland are prepared on a biennial (every two years) basis. This means that no figures are available for 2015/16.
- Figures for Wales are not directly comparable as special schools data are contained within figures for primary and post-primary schools.

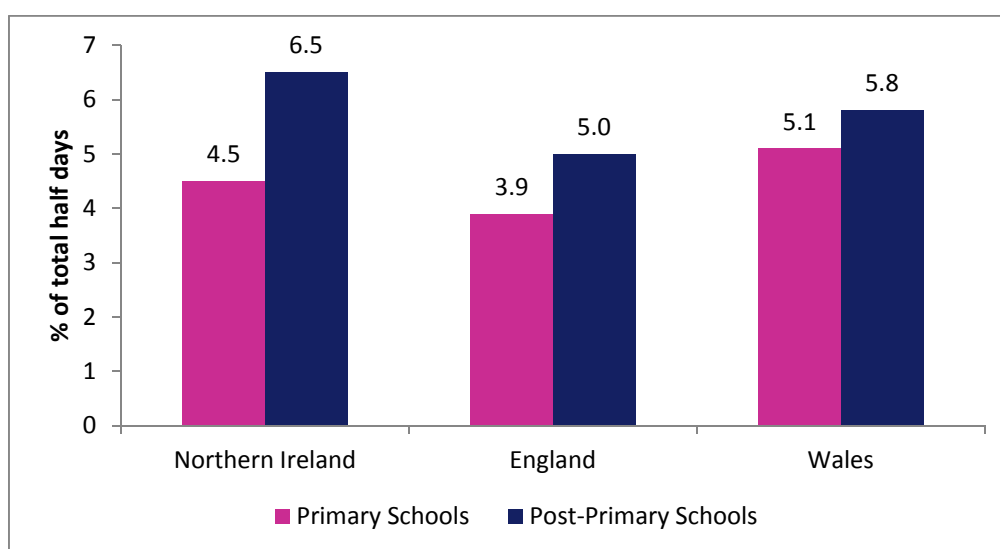
The highest overall absence rate in primary schools in 2015/6 was recorded in Wales with 5.1% of total half days missed through absence. This compares with 4.5% in Northern Ireland and 3.9% in England. Northern Ireland had the highest level of unauthorised absences at 1.2% of all half days. The equivalent figures for England and Wales were 0.8% and 1.1% respectively (See Table 1.3 below).

In post-primary schools, the highest overall absence rate in 2015/16 was recorded in Northern Ireland (6.5%). The overall absence rates recorded in Wales and England were lower at 5.8% and 5.0% of total half days respectively (see Chart 1.2 below). The highest level of unauthorised absence was also recorded in Northern Ireland, representing 2.2% of all half days. The equivalent figures for both Wales and England were 1.3% and 1.2% respectively.

Table 1.3: Absence rates for Northern Ireland, England and Wales, 2015/16

	% of total half days			
	Primary Schools		Post-Primary Schools	
	Overall absence	Unauthorised absence	Overall absence	Unauthorised absence
Northern Ireland	4.5	1.2	6.5	2.2
England	3.9	0.8	5.0	1.2
Scotland	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Wales	5.1	1.1	5.8	1.3

Chart 1.2: Comparisons with England and Wales – overall absence, 2015/16



Data sources: England - *Pupil Absence in Schools in England, Autumn Term 2015 and Spring Term 2016*; Wales - *Absenteeism from Primary Schools, 2015/16 and Absenteeism from Secondary Schools, 2015/16*.

2. Primary Schools

2.1 Key Findings

In 2015/16, 4.5% of all half days in primary schools were missed due to absence – 3.3% authorised and 1.2% unauthorised absence. The most common reason for absence in primary school was illness, which is an authorised absence and accounted for 2.9%^(r) of total half days in 2015/6. This equated to 63.1% of all absent half days. A full set of figures are provided in Table 1.2.

2.2 School Level Analysis

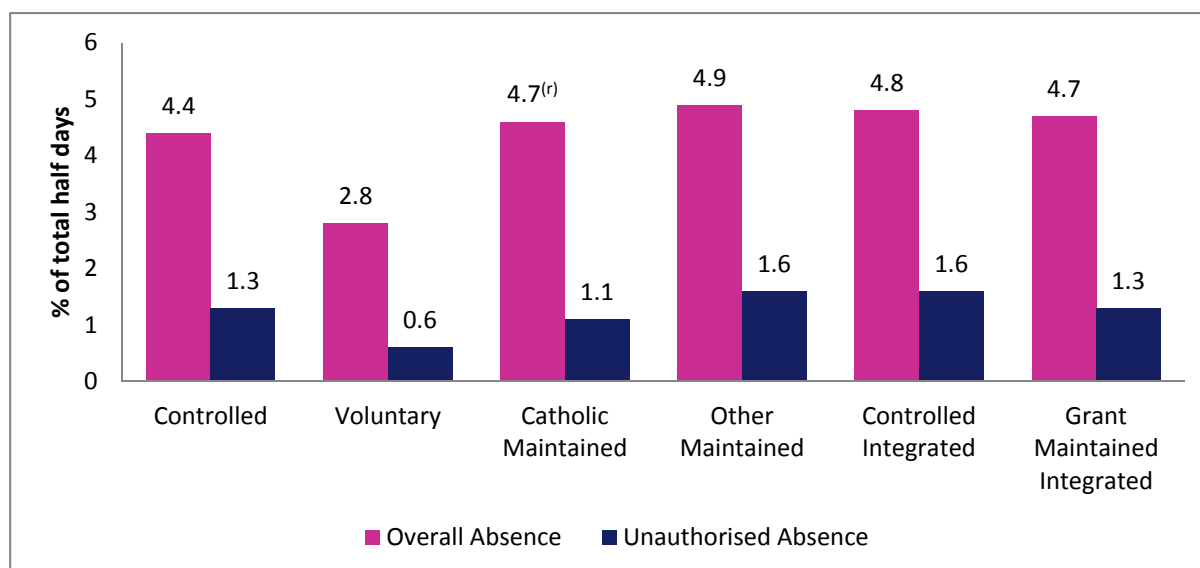
2.2.1 Management Type

The category “Other Maintained” primary schools had the highest rate of overall absence in 2015/16 with 4.9% of total half days missed. Voluntary schools continued to have the lowest level of absence at 2.8% of total half days missed (See Table 2.1 and Chart 2.1 below).

Table 2.1 Attendance at primary school by management type, 2015/16

Management Type	Percentage of total half days			
	Attended	Overall absence	Authorised absence	Unauthorised absence
Controlled	95.6	4.4	3.1	1.3
Voluntary	97.2	2.8	2.3	0.6
Catholic Maintained	95.3 ^(r)	4.7 ^(r)	3.6 ^(r)	1.1
Other Maintained	95.1	4.9	3.3	1.6
Controlled Integrated	95.2	4.8	3.2	1.6
Grant Maintained Integrated	95.3	4.7	3.4	1.3
Total	95.5	4.5	3.3	1.2

Note: (r) denotes a revised figure

Chart 2.1: Absence from primary school by management type, 2015/16

Note: (r) denotes a revised figure

Table 2.2 breaks down total enrolment across schools in each management type into three attendance bands: pupils with 100% attendance, those with attendance of between 85.01% and 99.99% of total half days and those with attendance of 85% or below.

The 85% threshold has particular significance as schools tend to consider referring pupils to the Education Welfare Service for non-attendance if their absence rate is 15% or more. This decision is, however, taken by the school at its discretion upon consideration of the individual circumstances involved.

The figures show that the percentage of pupils with 100% attendance is highest in voluntary schools (14.2%) and that such schools have the lowest percentage of pupils with attendance rates of 85% or less (1.1%). At 5.0%, controlled integrated schools had the highest percentage of pupils with attendance rates of 85% or less.

Table 2.2: Attendance profile of schools by management type 2015/16

Management Type	Percentage of enrolments by attendance band		
	100% attendance	85.01%-99.99% attendance	85% or less attendance
	%	%	%
Controlled	9.5	86.4	4.1
Voluntary	14.2	84.7	1.1
Catholic Maintained	7.6	88.3 ^(r)	4.1 ^(r)
Other Maintained	6.9	89.1	4.0
Controlled Integrated	7.1	88.0	5.0
Grant Maintained Integrated	6.3	90.1	3.6

Note: (r) denotes a revised figure

Table 2.3 compares the proportion of total enrolments and the proportion of enrolments with attendance rates of 85% or less across school management types. It indicates that the relative proportions are broadly aligned across all management types.

Table 2.3: Enrolments and pupils with attendance of 85% and below by management type

School Characteristic	Characteristic distribution	
	All enrolments	Attendance 85% or below
Management Type	%	%
Controlled	46.1	46.3 ^(r)
Voluntary	1.0	0.3
Catholic Maintained	45.3	45.7 ^(r)
Other Maintained	1.8	1.7 ^(r)
Controlled Integrated	2.4	2.9 ^(r)
Grant Maintained Integrated	3.4	3.0 ^(r)

Note: (r) denotes a revised figure

2.2.2 Location² of school (urban / rural)

Overall attendance is higher in rural primary schools at 96.2% of total half days compared with an equivalent figure of 95.0%^(r) in urban primary schools. Unauthorised absence was higher in urban primary schools (1.5% of total half days) compared with rural ones (0.7% of half days).

Table 2.4: Attendance at primary school by location of school, 2015/16

School Location	Percentage of total half days			
	Attended	Overall absence	Authorised absence	Unauthorised absence
Urban	95.0 ^(r)	5.0 ^(r)	3.5 ^(r)	1.5
Rural	96.2	3.8	3.0 ^(r)	0.7
Total	95.5	4.5	3.3	1.2

Note: (r) denotes a revised figure

2.2.3 Free School Meal Entitlement (FSME)

Primary school pupils who are entitled to free school meals have lower attendance rates than those who do not. In 2015/16, entitled pupils were absent for 6.3%^(r) of total half days compared with 3.7%^(r) for pupils not entitled to free school meals. This is reflected in the

² Location defined using NISRA Central Postcode Directory urban/rural classification. Boundaries are available for Northern Ireland as defined by the Planning Service. These areas are defined from Settlement Development Limits (SDLs) which are a statistical classification and delineation of settlements. See http://www.nisra.gov.uk/archive/geography/digital_products/urban_rural_classifications/ur_report.pdf for more information.

school level data which shows that absence rates increases in line with the percentage of enrolled pupils who are eligible for free school meals (See Table 2.5 and Chart 2.2).

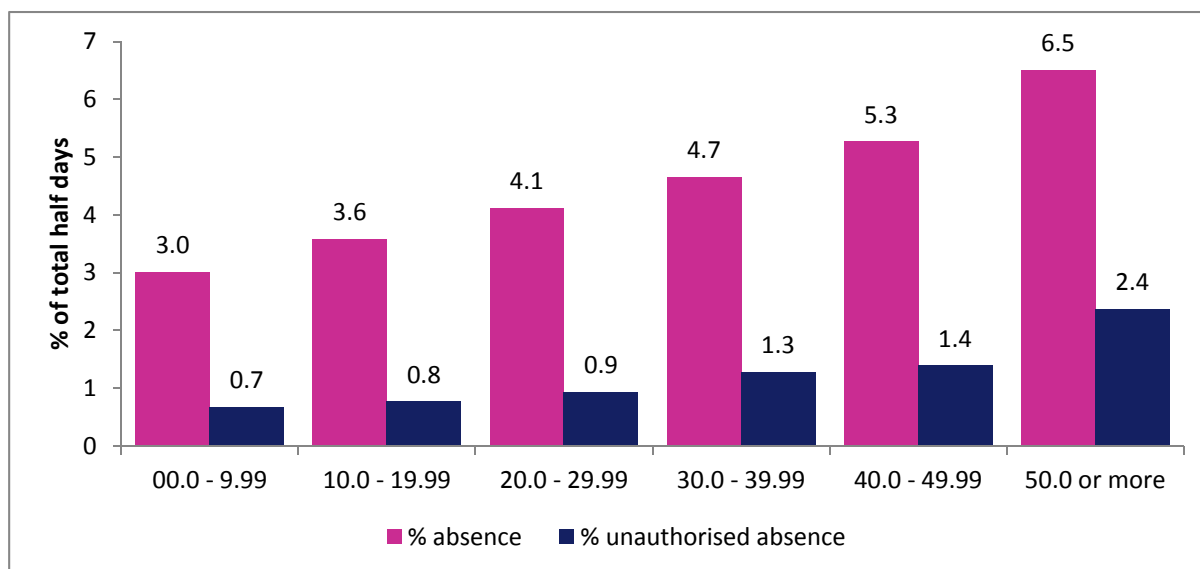
The overall absence rate in schools where less than 10% of pupils were entitled to free school meals was 3.0% of total half days in 2015/16. By comparison, schools where more than 50% of pupils were eligible for free school meals had an absence rate of 6.5%. Since the level of free school meal eligibility is indicative of deprivation levels, the data suggests that absence is higher in more disadvantaged areas.

Table 2.5: Attendance at primary school by FSME, 2015/16

% of pupils entitled to Free School Meals	Percentage of total half days			
	Attended	Overall absence	Authorised absence	Unauthorised absence
Under 10.00	97.0	3.0	2.3	0.7
10.00 – 19.99	96.4	3.6	2.8	0.8
20.00 – 29.99	95.9	4.1	3.2	0.9
30.00 – 39.99	95.3	4.7	3.4	1.3
40.00 – 49.99	94.7	5.3	3.9	1.4
50.00 or more	93.5	6.5	4.2 ^(r)	2.4
Total	95.5	4.5	3.3	1.2

Note: (r) denotes a revised figure

Chart 2.2: Absence from Primary School by percentage of pupils entitled to FSM



2.3 Pupil Level Analysis

2.3.1 Gender

Overall absence rates were similar for boys and girls of primary school age at 4.4% and 4.6% respectively.

Table 2.6: Attendance at primary school by gender, 2015/16

Gender	Percentage of total half days			
	Attended	Overall absence	Authorised absence	Unauthorised absence
Male	95.6	4.4	3.3	1.2
Female	95.4	4.6	3.4 ^(r)	1.2
Total	95.5	4.5	3.3	1.2

Note: (r) denotes a revised figure

2.3.2 Year group

The overall absence rates were similar across year groups. (See Table 2.7 overleaf).

Table 2.7: Attendance at primary school by year group, 2015/16

Year Group	Percentage of total half days			
	Attended	Overall absence	Authorised absence	Unauthorised absence
Year 1	95.0	5.0 ^(r)	3.9	1.1
Year 2	95.4	4.6	3.4	1.2
Year 3	95.7	4.3	3.1	1.2
Year 4	95.8	4.2	3.0	1.2
Year 5	95.6	4.4	3.2	1.2 ^(r)
Year 6	95.6	4.4	3.2	1.2
Year 7	95.4	4.7 ^(r)	3.4	1.3
Total	95.5	4.5	3.3	1.2

Note: (r) denotes a revised figure

2.3.3 Ethnicity

Irish Traveller children attending primary school have a markedly higher absence rate than any other ethnic group (see Table 2.8 below). They missed 26.0%^(r) of total half days, compared with a rate of 26.4% in 2014/15. The absence rate for children from a minority ethnic background fell from 5.7% to 5.5%^(r) while the rate for white children remained unchanged.

Table 2.8: Attendance at primary school by ethnicity, 2015/16

Ethnicity	Percentage of total half days			
	Attended	Overall absence	Authorised absence	Unauthorised absence
White	95.6	4.4	3.3	1.1
Minority Ethnic Background ³	94.5 ^(r)	5.5 ^(r)	3.4 ^(r)	2.1
Irish Traveller	74.0 ^(r)	26.0 ^(r)	14.0 ^(r)	12.0 ^(r)
Total	95.4	4.5	3.3	1.2

Note: Ethnicity was not available for 29 enrolments, representing 0.02% of the total enrolments.
(r) denotes a revised figure

2.3.4 Home Language

Table 2.9 shows the attendance of primary pupils for the ten most-reported home languages. The lowest absence rate was recorded for pupils whose home language was Chinese (Mandarin/Putonghua), who missed an average of 3.2% of total half days. The highest absence rate (11.5%^(r)) was recorded for pupils whose home language is Romanian. Pupils from that group also had the highest rate of unauthorised absence at 7.0%^(r) of total half days. The lowest rate of unauthorised absence was reported for pupils whose home language was English (1.1%).

Table 2.9 : Attendance at primary school by home language, 2015/16

Home Language	Percentage of total half days			
	Attended	Overall absence	Authorised absence	Unauthorised absence
English	95.6 ^(r)	4.4 ^(r)	3.2	1.1
Polish	92.4	7.6	5.0	2.7
Lithuanian	92.7	7.3 ^(r)	4.9	2.4
Portuguese	93.6	6.4	3.6	2.8
Malayalam	95.4	4.6	3.3	1.3
Romanian	88.5 ^(r)	11.5 ^(r)	4.5 ^(r)	7.0 ^(r)
Tagalog/Filipino	95.2	4.8	3.3	1.5
Slovak	90.0	10.0	6.4	3.6
Latvian	92.7	7.3	4.8	2.5
Chinese (Mandarin/Putonghua)	96.8	3.2	1.7	1.5
Other ⁴	94.1 ^(r)	5.9 ^(r)	3.6	2.3 ^(r)
Total	95.5	4.5	3.3	1.2

Note: Language was not available for 42 enrolments, representing 0.03% of the total enrolments.
(r) denotes a revised figure

³ Minority Ethnic Background includes Black African, Black Caribbean, Black Other, Bangladeshi, Chinese/Hong Kong, Indian/Sri Lankan, Korean, Malaysian, Pakistani, Roma, Vietnamese, Mixed, Other

⁴ 'Other' includes a further 69 languages. For a full list of the languages included here, see Table A in Annex 1.

2.3.5 Looked After Children⁵

In 2015/16, Looked After Children in primary schools continued to have a higher attendance rate (96.2%) than those who were not in care (95.5%). There is, however, little difference in the rate of unauthorised absence among Looked After Children and other children (see Table 2.10)

Table 2.10: Attendance of Looked After Children at primary school, 2015/16

Location	Percentage of total half days			
	Attended	Overall absence	Authorised absence	Unauthorised absence
Looked After Children	96.2	3.8	2.7	1.1
Other	95.5	4.5	3.3	1.2
Total	95.5	4.5	3.3	1.2

2.3.6 Neighbourhood Renewal Areas⁶ (NRAs)

At 6.4%, the absence rate for pupils living in Neighbourhood Renewal Areas was 2.2 percentage points higher than for pupils who did not live in an NRA (see Table 2.11) .

Table 2.11: Attendance rates for primary pupils living in NRAs, 2015/16

Area	Percentage of total half days			
	Attended	Overall absence	Authorised absence	Unauthorised absence
Neighbourhood Renewal Area	93.6	6.4	4.1	2.3
Other	95.8	4.2	3.2	1.0
Total	95.5	4.5	3.3	1.2

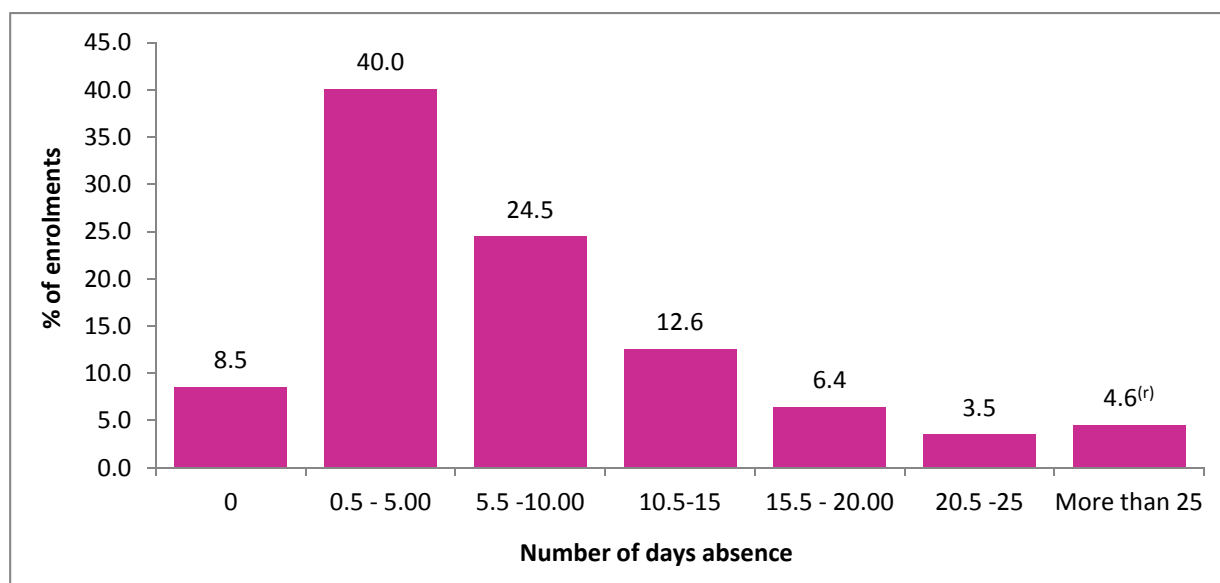
2.3.7 Duration of absence

Chart 2.3 shows the absence levels of all primary pupils enrolled in 2015/16 grouped by numbers of days absent. In 2015/16, 8.5% of all pupils had no absence compared with 7.9% in the previous year. The single largest group comprised pupils who had between 0.5 and 5 days absence, representing 40% of total enrolments. The percentage of pupils absent for more than 25 days (4.6%^(r)) is similar to the level in 2014/15 at 4.5% of all enrolments.

⁵ 'Looked after children' includes children defined in 'The Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995', i.e., 'a child who is looked after by an authority is a reference to a child who is: (a) in the care of the authority; or (b) provided with accommodation by the authority.' This includes children who are fostered.

⁶ Neighbourhood Renewal Areas (NRAs) are neighbourhoods identified as experiencing the most severe multiple deprivation and have been chosen to receive support under the Department of Communities' People and Place strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal.

Chart 2.3: Number of days absence at primary schools, 2015/16

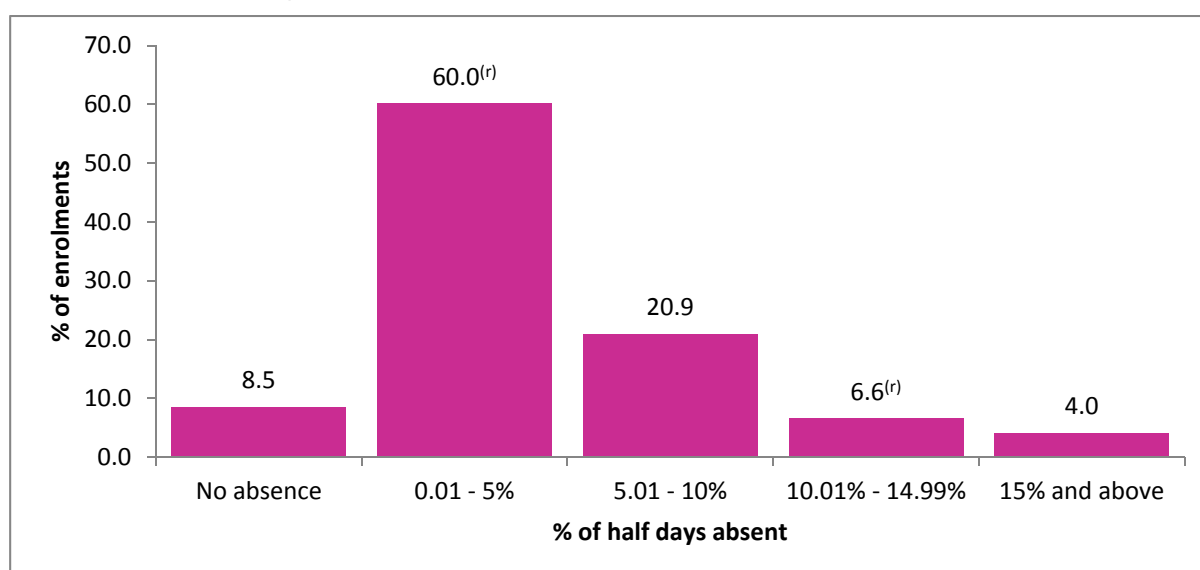


Note: (r) denotes a revised figure

2.3.8 Levels of absence

Three-fifths of primary school pupils (60.0%^(r)) had an absence rate of between 0.01% and 5.0% of total half days in 2015/16. Four per cent of pupils had an absence rate of at least 15% during 2015/16 (See Chart 2.4 below). This figure was unchanged compared with 2014/15. This threshold has particular significance as schools tend to consider referring pupils to the Education Welfare Service for non-attendance if their absence rate is 15% or more. This decision is, however, taken by the school at its own discretion on consideration of the individual circumstances involved.

Chart 2.4: Percentage of enrolments at primary school by overall absence rates, 2015/16



Note: (r) denotes a revised figure

2.3.9 Comparison of pupil characteristics and attendance rates

On the following page, Table 2.12 provides a detailed breakdown of attendance by pupil characteristics, grouped by thematic categories such as gender, religion and ethnicity.

The attendance information for each characteristic is broken into three bands:

- Pupils with full (100%) attendance
- Pupils who have attended between 85.01% and 99.99% of total half days
- Pupils with attendance of 85% or below.

As previously outlined, the 85% threshold is the point at which schools tend to consider referring pupils to the Education Welfare Service for non-attendance. This breakdown can help identify characteristics which make a pupil more prone to poor attendance.

At primary school level, the figures indicate that there are particular attendance issues involving Irish Traveller children – 63.7% of all such pupils enrolled in primary schools are absent for at least 15% of total half days.

Table 2.12: Detailed attendance overview by primary school pupil characteristics, 2015/6

Pupil Characteristic	Banded Attendance Rates		
	100%	85.01% - 99.99%	85% or below
Gender	%	%	%
Male	8.3	87.5	4.3 ^(r)
Female	8.7	87.5	3.8
Year Group	%	%	%
Year 1	6.3 ^(r)	88.8 ^(r)	4.9 ^(r)
Year 2	7.6 ^(r)	88.4	4.0 ^(r)
Year 3	8.6	88.0	3.5 ^(r)
Year 4	9.2	87.4	3.4
Year 5	9.1	87.1	3.8
Year 6	9.6	86.3 ^(r)	4.1 ^(r)
Year 7	9.2	86.1 ^(r)	4.7 ^(r)
Free Meal Entitlement	%	%	%
Entitled	4.7	87.5	7.7
Non-Entitled	10.3	87.5	2.3
Ethnicity	%	%	%
White	8.5	87.9	3.6
Minority Ethnic Background	8.9	83.7 ^(r)	7.5 ^(r)
Irish Traveller	0.8 ^(r)	37.6 ^(r)	61.6 ^(r)
Religion	%	%	%
Catholic	7.5	88.4	4.2 ^(r)
Protestant	10.1	86.5	3.4 ^(r)
Other Christian	9.7	86.0	4.4
Non-Christian	7.2 ^(r)	85.7	7.2
No Religion	7.9	86.9	5.2
Home Language	%	%	%
English	8.7	87.7	3.6
Polish	3.5	85.4	11.1
Lithuanian	3.3	86.9	9.8
Portuguese	5.2	85.0	9.7
Malayalam	8.4	88.1	3.6
Romanian	4.9 ^(r)	67.1 ^(r)	28.0 ^(r)
Slovak	1.8	77.6	20.6
Tagalog/Filipino	12.1	83.9 ^(r)	3.9 ^(r)
Latvian	3.1	86.6	10.2
Chinese (Mandarin/Putonghua)	16.9	80.0	3.1
Others	7.8	84.8	7.4

Note: (r) denotes a revised figure

This is the first time that attendance data has been provided by religion and the data indicates that attendance among Protestant students at primary school level is slightly higher than that of their Catholic peers. Table 2.13 provides a further overview comparing each pupil characteristic in terms of its percentage of all enrolments and its percentage of all pupils with attendance of 85% or below.

Table 2.13: Primary pupil characteristics as a percentage of total enrolments and enrolments with attendance levels of 85% or below

Pupil Characteristic	Characteristic distribution	
	All enrolments	85% or below
Gender	%	%
Male	50.9	53.6
Female	49.1	46.4
Year Group	%	%
Year 1	14.8 ^(r)	17.8 ^(r)
Year 2	14.7	14.5 ^(r)
Year 3	14.8	12.7 ^(r)
Year 4	14.8	12.6
Year 5	14.1	13.3 ^(r)
Year 6	13.5	13.5
Year 7	13.4 ^(r)	15.6 ^(r)
Free Meal Entitlement	%	%
Not Entitled	68.1 ^(r)	38.3 ^(r)
Entitled	31.9 ^(r)	61.7 ^(r)
Ethnicity	%	%
White	95.7 ^(r)	86.1 ^(r)
Minority Ethnic Background	3.8	7.1 ^(r)
Irish Traveller	0.4	6.7 ^(r)
Religion	%	%
Catholic	50.8 ^(r)	52.2 ^(r)
Protestant	33.7 ^(r)	28.1
Other Christian	3.5	3.8 ^(r)
Non-Christian	0.9	1.6 ^(r)
No Religion	11.1	14.2 ^(r)
Home Language	%	%
English	93.0	82.4 ^(r)
Polish	2.3	6.2 ^(r)
Lithuanian	0.9	2.3
Portuguese	0.4	1.0
Malayalam	0.3	0.2
Romanian	0.3	2.0 ^(r)
Slovak	0.2	1.0
Tagalog/Filipino	0.2	0.2 ^(r)
Latvian	0.2	0.5 ^(r)
Chinese (Mandarin/Putonghua)	0.2	0.1
Others	2.1	4.1 ^(r)

Note: (r) denotes a revised figure

3. Post-primary schools

3.1 Key Findings

In 2015/16, 6.5% of total half days were missed due to absence in post-primary schools – 4.5% through authorised absence and 2.1% through unauthorised absence (see Table 1.1). The most common reason for absence in post-primary schools was illness, which is an authorised absence, and accounted for 3.5% of total half days (53.0% of all half days missed) (See Table 1.2).

3.2 School Level Analysis

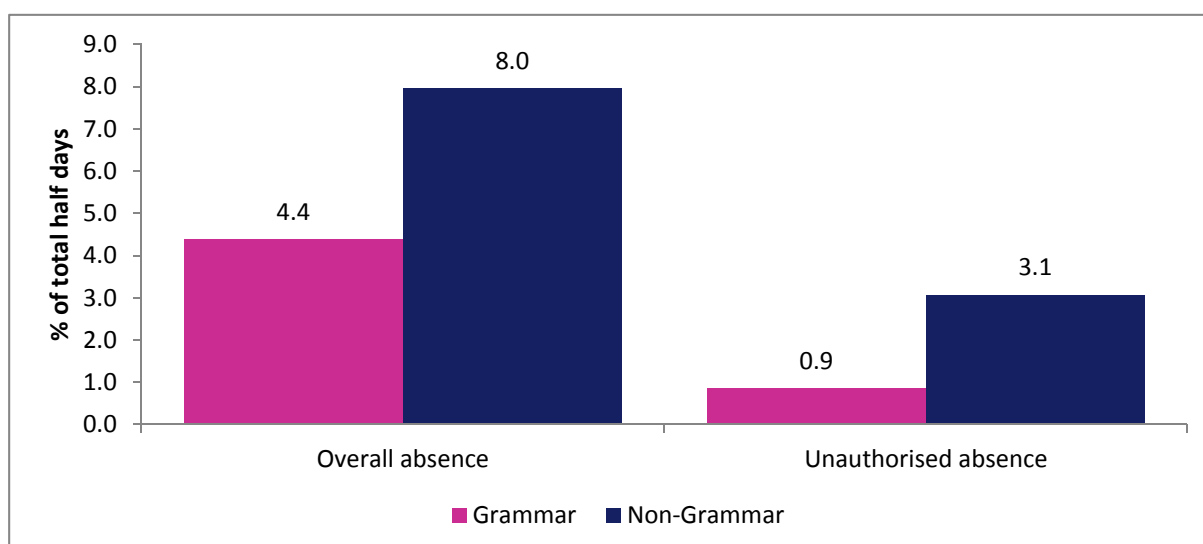
3.2.1 School Type

The overall absence rate in both grammar and non-grammar schools remained unchanged from 2014/15 and there continues to be a marked difference in absence rates between both school types. In non-grammar schools, 8.0% of total half days are missed through absence compared with 4.4% in grammar schools. Meanwhile, unauthorised absence in non-grammar schools stood at 3.1% of total half days while the equivalent figure in grammar schools was 0.9% (see Table 3.1 and Chart 3.1 below)

Table 3.1: Attendance at post-primary school by school type, 2015/16

School Type	Percentage of total half days			
	Attended	Overall absence	Authorised absence	Unauthorised absence
Non-Grammar	92.0	8.0	4.9	3.1
Grammar	95.6	4.4	3.6	0.9
Total	93.5	6.5	4.3	2.2

Chart 3.1: Attendance at post-primary school by school type, 2015/16



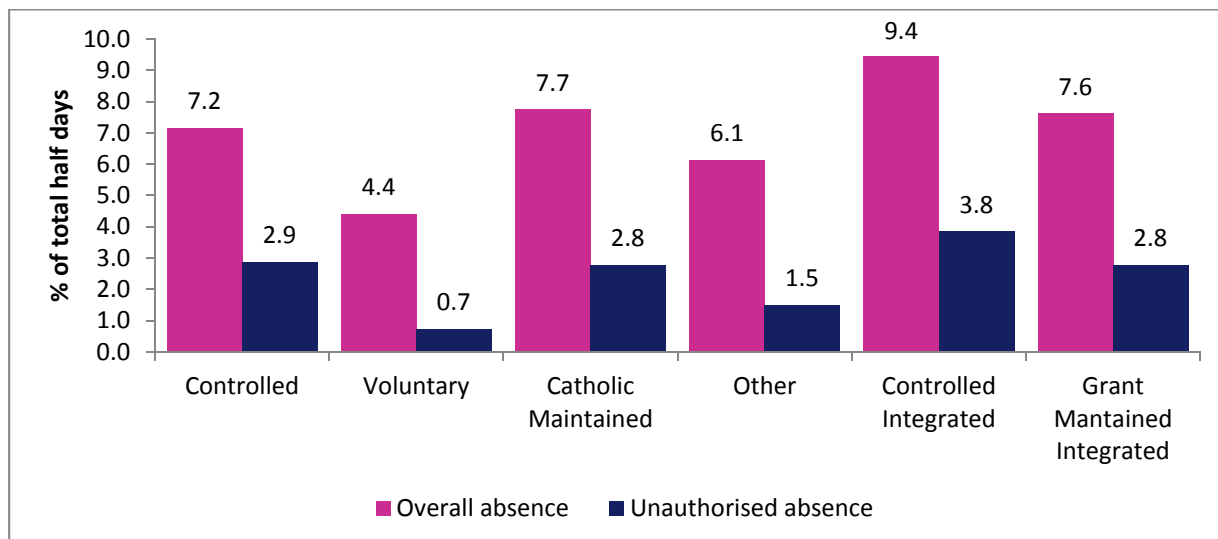
3.2.2 Management type

Controlled integrated schools continued to have the highest absence rate in 2015/6 with 9.4% of all half days missed through absence. The sector also had the highest level of unauthorised absence, equating to 3.8% of total half days. The lowest absence rate was recorded within the voluntary sector where 4.4% of half days were lost through absence. In those schools, the level of unauthorised absence stood at 0.7% of total half days (See Table 3.2 and Chart 3.2 below).

Table 3.2: Attendance at post-primary school by management type, 2015/16

Management Type	Percentage of total half days			
	Attended	Overall absence	Authorised absence	Unauthorised absence
Controlled	92.9	7.2	4.3	2.9
Voluntary	95.6	4.4	3.7	0.7
Catholic Maintained	92.3	7.7	5.0	2.8
Other	93.9	6.1	4.6	1.5
Controlled Integrated	90.6	9.4	5.6	3.8
Grant Maintained Integrated	92.4	7.6	4.8	2.8
Total	93.5	6.5	4.3	2.2

Chart 3.2: Absence from post-primary school by management type, 2015/16



3.2.3 Location⁷ of school (urban / rural)

Less than one-fifth (19.4%) of post-primary schools are located in a rural area. In 2015/16, the difference in the attendance levels between urban and rural schools was less than 0.1 percentage points. Authorised absence is slightly higher in rural schools while the rate of unauthorised absence is greater in urban schools (See Table 3.3 below)

Table 3.3: Attendance at post-primary school by location of school, 2015/16

Location	Percentage of total half days			
	Attended	Overall absence	Authorised absence	Unauthorised absence
Urban	93.5	6.5	4.3	2.2
Rural	93.4	6.6	4.8	1.8
Total	93.5	6.5	4.3	2.2

3.2.4 Free School Meal Entitlement (FSME)

Post-primary school pupils who are entitled to free school meals have lower attendance rates than those who do not. In 2015/16, entitled pupils were absent for 9.6% of total half days compared with 5.1% for those who were not in receipt of free meals. This pattern is naturally reflected within the school level data as absence rates increase in line with the percentage of pupils enrolled who were eligible for free school meals (see Table 3.4 below).

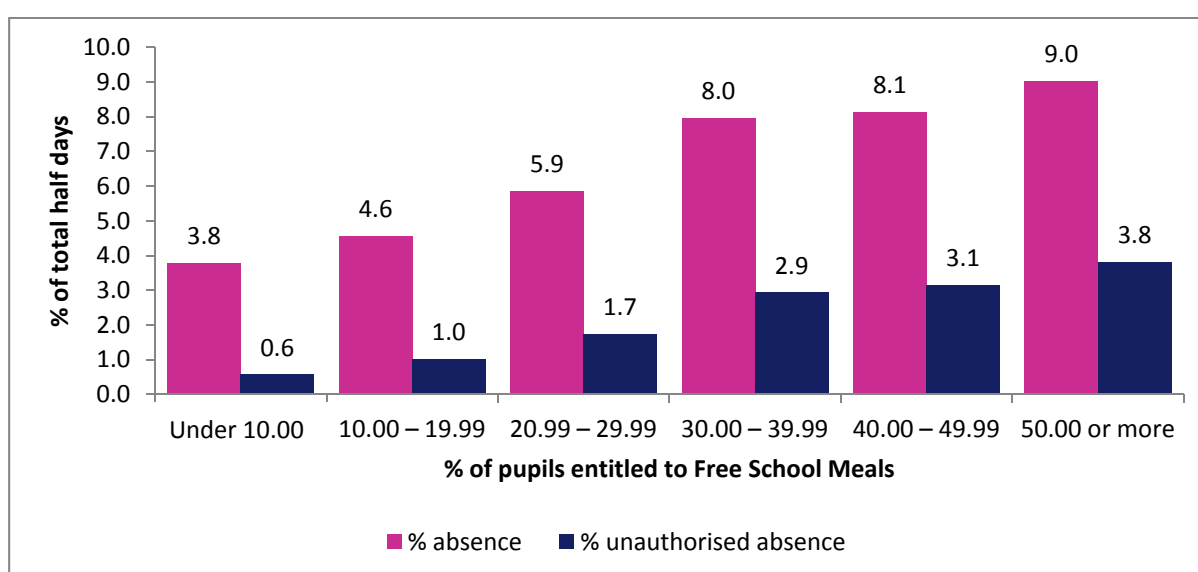
In schools where less than 10% of pupils were eligible for free school meals, the overall absence rate was 3.8% of total half days while the unauthorised absence rate stood at 0.6%. At the opposite end of the spectrum, schools where 50% or more of all pupils were eligible for free school meals had an overall absence rate of 9.0% of total half days. In these schools, the unauthorised absence rate was 3.8%.

Since the level of free school meal eligibility is indicative of levels of deprivation, the data suggests that absence tends to be higher in more disadvantaged areas (see Table 3.4 below and Chart 3.3 overleaf)

⁷ Location defined using NISRA Central Postcode Directory urban/rural classification. Boundaries are available for Northern Ireland as defined by the Planning Service. These areas are defined from Settlement Development Limits (SDLs) which are a statistical classification and delineation of settlements. See http://www.nisra.gov.uk/archive/geography/digital_products/urban_rural_classifications/ur_report.pdf for more information.

Table 3.4: Attendance at post-primary school by FSME, 2015/16

% of pupils entitled to Free School Meals	Percentage of total half days			
	Attended	Overall absence	Authorised absence	Unauthorised absence
Under 10.00	96.2	3.8	3.2	0.6
10.00 – 19.99	95.4	4.6	3.6	1.0
20.99 – 29.99	94.2	5.9	4.1	1.7
30.00 – 39.99	92.0	8.0	5.0	2.9
40.00 – 49.99	91.9	8.1	5.0	3.1
50.00 or more	91.0	9.0	5.2	3.8
Total	93.5	6.5	4.3	2.2

Chart 3.3: Absence from post-primary school by FSME, 2015/16

3.3 Pupil Level Analysis

3.3.1 Gender

Overall absence levels for male and female pupils remain similar at 6.6% and 6.4% of total half days respectively (See Table 3.5 below). While the predominant cause of absence for both genders was illness, female pupils missed a greater proportion of the total half days for this reason than males – the figures stood at 55.1% and 51.1% of total absent half days respectively.

Table 3.5: Attendance at post-primary school by gender, 2015/16

Gender	Percentage of total half days			
	Attended	Overall absence	Authorised absence	Unauthorised absence
Male	93.4	6.6	4.3	2.3
Female	93.6	6.4	4.4	2.0
Total	93.5	6.5	4.3	2.2

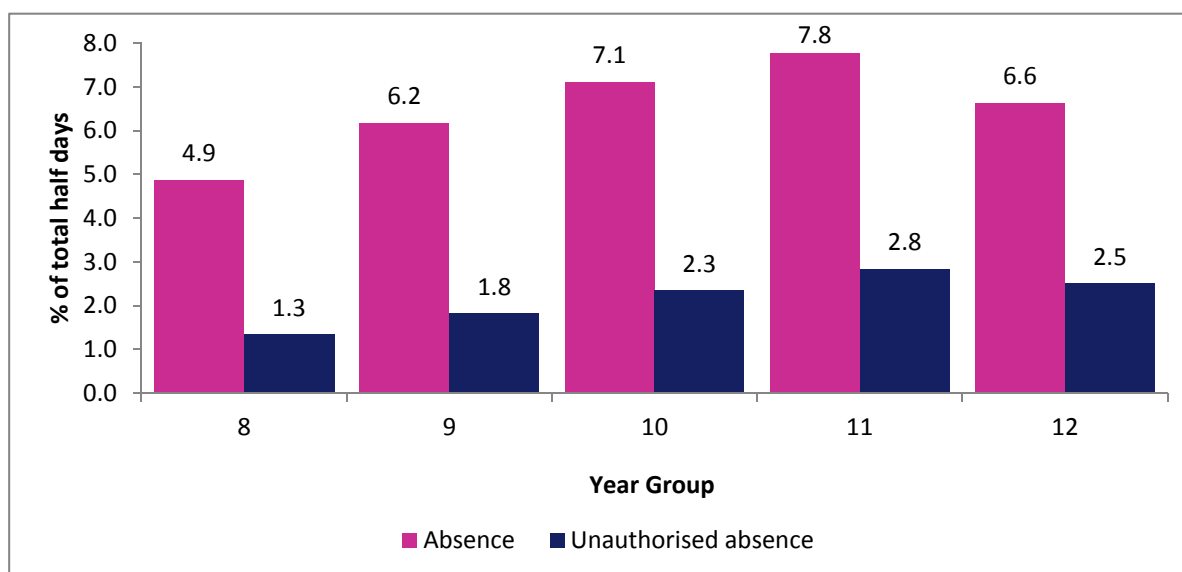
3.3.2 Year group

Absence rates increase steadily between Year 8 and Year 11 – from 4.9% to 7.8% of total half days – before decreasing in Year 12 to 6.5% of total half days in Year 12. Rates of unauthorised absence follow the same pattern, rising from 1.3% of total half days in Year 8 to 2.8% of total half days in Year 11, before falling to 2.5% in Year 12 (see Table 3.6 and Chart 3.4 overleaf).

Table 3.6: Attendance at post-primary school by year group, 2015/16

Year Group	Percentage of total half days			
	Attended	Overall absence	Authorised absence	Unauthorised absence
Year 8	95.1	4.9	3.5	1.3
Year 9	93.8	6.2	4.4	1.8
Year 10	92.9	7.1	4.8	2.3
Year 11	92.2	7.8	4.9	2.8
Year 12	93.4	6.6	4.1	2.5
Total	93.5	6.5	4.3	2.2

Chart 3.4: Attendance at post-primary school by year group, 2015/16



3.3.3 Ethnicity

At 32.5% of total half days, the overall absence rate continues to be higher for Irish Traveller children than for any other ethnic group. This compares with 6.5% for white children and 5.8% for children from a minority ethnic background. Unauthorised absences among Traveller children in 2015/6 stood at 20.9% of total half days.

The absence rate for Irish Traveller children has decreased since 2014/15 when it stood at 39.0% of total half days. Absence rates for white children and those from a minority ethnic background were almost identical to those recorded in 2014/15 (see Table 3.7 overleaf).

Table 3.7: Attendance at post-primary school by ethnicity, 2015/16

Ethnicity	Percentage of total half days			
	Attended	Overall absence	Authorised absence	Unauthorised absence
White	93.5	6.5	4.4	2.1
Minority Ethnic Background ⁸	94.2	5.8	3.5	2.3
Irish Traveller	67.5	32.5	11.6	20.9
Total	93.5	6.5	4.3	2.2

3.3.4 Home Language

Table 3.8 below shows the attendance of post-primary pupils for the ten most-reported home languages. The lowest absence rate was recorded for pupils whose home language was Malayalam, who missed an average of 2.7% of total half days. This group also had the lowest rate of unauthorised absence (0.8%). The highest absence rate (13.1%) was recorded for pupils whose home language is Romanian. Pupils from that group also had the highest rate of unauthorised absence at 7.7% of total half days.

Table 3.8: Attendance at post-primary school by home language, 2015/16

Home Language	Percentage of total half days			
	Attended	Overall absence	Authorised absence	Unauthorised absence
English	93.5	6.5	4.3	2.1
Polish	91.5	8.5	5.3	3.2
Lithuanian	91.5	8.5	5.1	3.4
Portuguese	92.6	7.4	3.8	3.6
Tagalog/Filipino	96.3	3.7	2.4	1.3
Chinese (Cantonese)	96.1	3.9	2.5	1.4
Malayalam	97.3	2.7	2.0	0.8
Romanian	86.9	13.1	5.4	7.7
Irish	94.0	6.0	4.2	1.8
Latvian	90.9	9.1	5.3	3.8
Other ⁹	93.1	7.0	4.0	2.9
Total	93.5	6.5	4.3	2.2

Note: The table is presented in descending order of proportion of enrolments. Some rates are based on a small number of enrolments, in which case the attendance of one pupil may significantly impact on that attendance rate. Home language is not known for 5 enrolments, representing 0.005% of total enrolments.

⁸ Minority Ethnic Background includes Black African, Black Caribbean, Black Other, Bangladeshi, Chinese/Hong Kong, Indian/Sri Lankan, Korean, Malaysian, Pakistani, Roma, Vietnamese, Mixed, Other

⁹ 'Other' includes a further 69 languages. For a full list of the languages included here, see Table B in Annex 1.

3.3.5 Looked after children¹⁰

Looked after children enrolled in post-primary schools have higher rates of both overall absence than other pupils (9.6% of total half days compared with 6.5% respectively). While absence rates for other pupils have remained static from 2014/15, there was a reduction in absence figures for looked after children in 2015/16. In 2014/15, such pupils had an overall absence rate of 10.3% and an unauthorised absence rate of 5.2%. The rate of unauthorised absence among looked after children remained more than double that of other pupils at 4.7% compared with 2.1% for all other pupils (See Table 3.9 overleaf).

Table 3.9: Attendance of Looked After Children at post-primary school, 2015/16

Location	Percentage of total half days			
	Attended	Overall absence	Authorised absence	Unauthorised absence
Looked After Children	90.4	9.6	5.0	4.7
Other	93.5	6.5	4.3	2.1
Total	93.5	6.5	4.3	2.2

3.3.6 Neighbourhood Renewal Areas¹¹ (NRAs)

At 9.3%, the overall absence rate for pupils living in NRAs was 3.2 percentage points higher than for pupils who did not live in an NRA (See Table 3.10).

Table 3.10: Attendance rates for post-primary pupils living in NRAs, 2015/16

Area	Percentage of total half days			
	Attended	Overall absence	Authorised absence	Unauthorised absence
Neighbourhood Renewal Area	90.7	9.3	5.7	3.6
Other	93.9	6.1	4.2	2.0
Total	93.5	6.5	4.3	2.2

3.3.7 Duration of absence

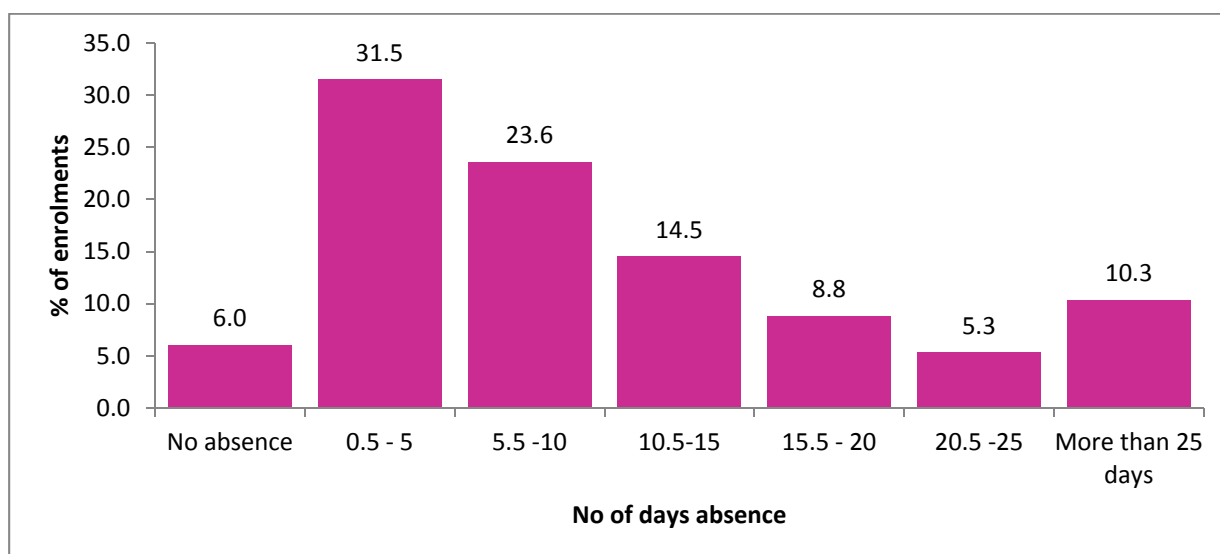
Chart 3.5 overleaf shows the absence levels of all pupils enrolled in Year 8 to Year 12 in post-primary schools in 2015/16 grouped by numbers of days absent. The data shows that 6.0% of these pupils had no absence during 2015/16 compared with 5.4% in 2014/15¹². The single largest group comprised pupils who had between 0.5 and 5 days absence, representing 31.5% of total enrolments. The percentage of pupils absent for more than 25 days remained unchanged from 2014/15 at 10.3% of all enrolments.

¹⁰ Looked after children includes children defined in "The Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995, i.e. 'a child who is : (a) in the care of the authority or (b) provided with accommodation by the authority.' These include children who are fostered

¹¹ Neighbourhood Renewal Areas (NRAs) are neighbourhoods identified as experiencing the most severe multiple deprivation and have been chosen to receive support under the Department of Social Development People and Place strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal.

¹² <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/de/attendance-at-primary-and-special-schools-in-northern-ireland-2014-15-detailed-statistics.pdf>

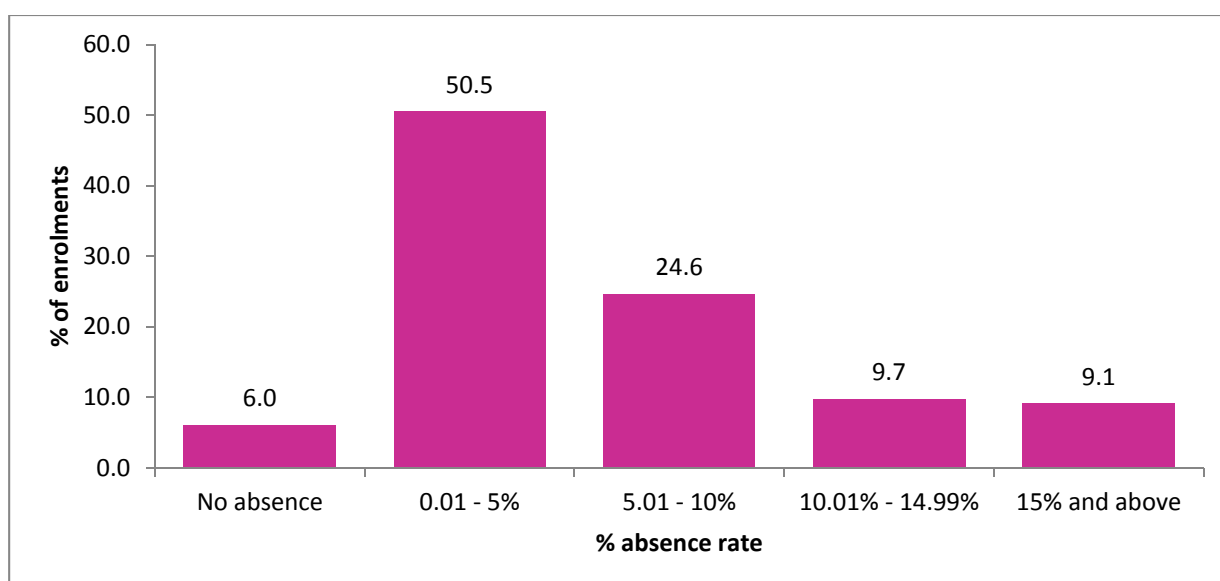
Chart 3.5: Number of days absent at post-primary schools by enrolment, 2015/16



3.3.8 Levels of absence

More than 50% of post-primary school pupils had an absence rate of between 0.01% and 5.0% of total half days in 2015/16. Meanwhile, 9.1% of pupils were absent for more than 15% of total half days (See Chart 3.6 below). This proportion was unchanged compared with 2015/6. The 85% attendance threshold has particular significance as schools tend to consider referring pupils to the Education Welfare Service for non-attendance if their absence rate exceeds 15%. This decision is, however, taken by the school at its discretion on consideration of the individual circumstances involved.

Chart 3.6: Percentage of enrolments at post-primary school by overall absence rates



3.3.9 Comparison of pupil characteristics and attendance rates.

Table 3.11 provides a detailed breakdown of attendance by pupil characteristics, grouped by thematic categories such as gender, religion and ethnicity.

As previously outlined, the 85% threshold is the point at which schools tend to consider referring pupils to the Education Welfare Service for non-attendance. This breakdown can help identify characteristics which make a pupil more prone to poor attendance.

At post-primary school level, the figures indicate that there are particular attendance issues involving Irish Traveller children – 67.1% of all such pupils enrolled in post-primary schools are absent for at least 15% of total half days.

This is the first time that attendance data has been provided by religion and the data indicates that attendance among Protestant students at post-primary school, other than the proportion of pupils with 100% attendance, is slightly worse than that of their Catholic peers.

Table 3.11: Detailed attendance overview by post-primary pupil characteristics, 2015/6

Pupil Characteristic	Banded Attendance Rates		
	100%	85.01% - 99.99%	85% or below
Gender	%	%	%
Male	6.0	84.6	9.5
Female	6.1	85.0	8.9
Year Group	%	%	%
Year 8	9.0	85.7	5.4
Year 9	5.7	86.3	8.1
Year 10	4.8	84.8	10.5
Year 11	4.2	83.4	12.3
Year 12	6.4	83.9	9.7
School Types	%	%	%
Grammar	7.3	89.2	3.5
Non-Grammar	5.1	81.7	13.1
Free Meal Entitlement	%	%	%
Entitled	3.4	78.6	18.0
Non-Entitled	7.2	87.6	5.3
Ethnicity	%	%	%
White	5.9	85.1	9.0
Minority Ethnic Background	9.5	81.6	9.0
Irish Traveller	6.0	26.9	67.1

Pupil Characteristic	Banded Attendance Rates		
	100%	85.01% - 99.99%	85% or below
Religion	%	%	%
Catholic	5.0	86.5	8.5
Protestant	7.3	83.0	9.7
Other Christian	7.0	84.6	8.5
Non-Christian	6.0	84.6	9.5
No Religion	6.4	82.0	11.6
Home Language	%	%	%
English	6.0	84.9	9.0
Polish	2.1	85.4	12.5
Lithuanian	3.2	83.5	13.3
Portuguese	6.0	80.8	13.2
Tagalog/Filipino	13.5	85.8	*
Chinese (Cantonese)	11.7	86.4	*
Romanian	6.2	63.2	30.6
Malayalam	15.0	84.5	*
Irish	*	92.1	6.1
Latvian	*	80.1	17.8
Others	7.7	79.8	12.5

Note: * denotes a figure which relates to five or fewer enrolments

Table 3.12 provides a further comparison of each pupil characteristic as percentage of all enrolments and its percentage of all pupils with attendance of 85% or below.

Table 3.12: Post-primary pupil characteristics as a percentage of total enrolments and enrolments with attendance levels of 85% or below

Pupil Characteristic	Characteristic distribution	
	All enrolments	85% or below
Gender	%	%
Male	51.0	52.6
Female	49.0	47.4
Year Group	%	%
Year 8	20.2	11.8
Year 9	19.9	17.4
Year 10	20.0	22.8
Year 11	19.9	26.7
Year 12	20.1	21.2
School Type	%	%
Grammar	41.2	15.6
Non-Grammar	58.8	84.4

Pupil Characteristic	Characteristic distribution	
	All enrolments	85% or below
Free Meal Entitlement	%	%
Entitled	30.8	60.3
Non-Entitled	69.2	39.7
Ethnicity	%	%
White	96.7	95.1
Minority Ethnic Background	3.1	3.0
Irish Traveller	0.3	1.9
Religion	%	%
Catholic	51.4	47.5
Protestant	37.5	39.6
Other Christian	3.1	2.9
Non-Christian	0.7	0.7
No Religion	7.4	9.3
Home Language	%	%
English	94.9	93.4
Polish	1.4	2.0
Lithuanian	0.6	0.9
Portuguese	0.3	0.5
Tagalog/Filipino	0.3	*
Chinese (Cantonese)	0.2	*
Romanian	0.2	0.6
Malayalam	0.2	*
Irish	0.1	0.1
Latvian	0.1	0.3
Others	1.5	2.1

Note: * denotes a figure greater than zero but less than 0.1.

4. Special Schools

4.1 Key Findings

In 2015/16, 9.8% of all half days were missed due to absence in special schools – 6.7% authorised and 3.1% unauthorised absence (See Table 1.1 and Chart 1.1). The most common reason for absence in special schools was illness, which is an authorised absence and accounted for 48.4% of all absent half days. This figure equates to 4.7% of total half days (See Table 1.2).

4.2 Pupil Level Analysis

4.2.1 Gender

Overall absence rates were higher for females attending special schools than for males, standing at 11.0% and 9.2% of total half days respectively (see Table 4.1).

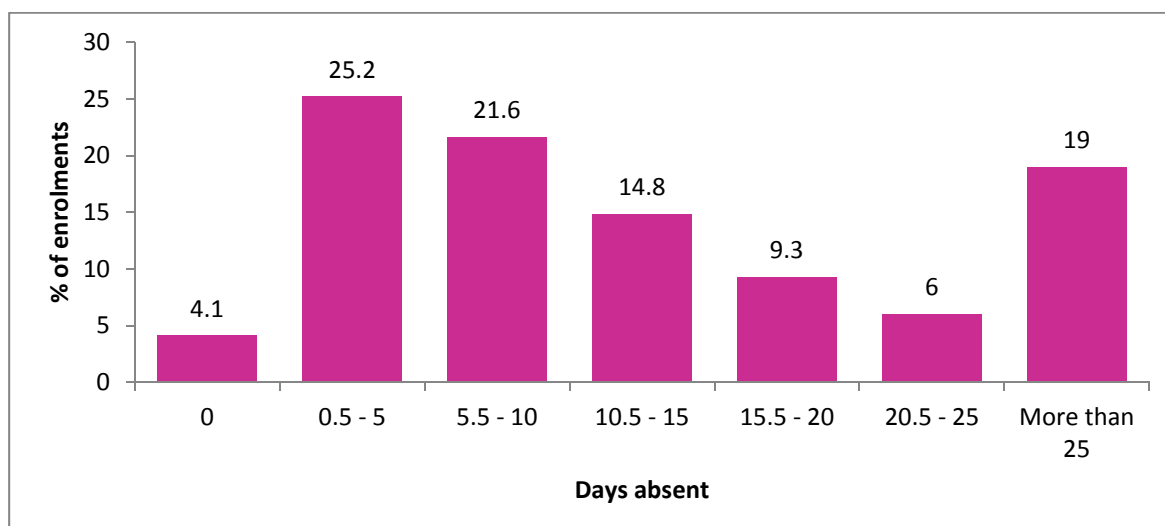
Table 4.1: Attendance at special school by gender, 2015/16

Gender	Percentage of total half days			
	Attended	Overall absence	Authorised absence	Unauthorised absence
Male	90.8	9.2	6.1	3.2
Female	89.0	11.0	8.0	3.0
Total	90.2	9.8	6.7	3.1

4.3.2 Duration of absence

Of all pupils enrolled in special schools in 2015/16, 4.1% had no absence. In terms of days missed, 19% of pupils enrolled missed more than 25 days in the same year. The equivalent 2014/15 figure was 20% (See Chart 4.1).

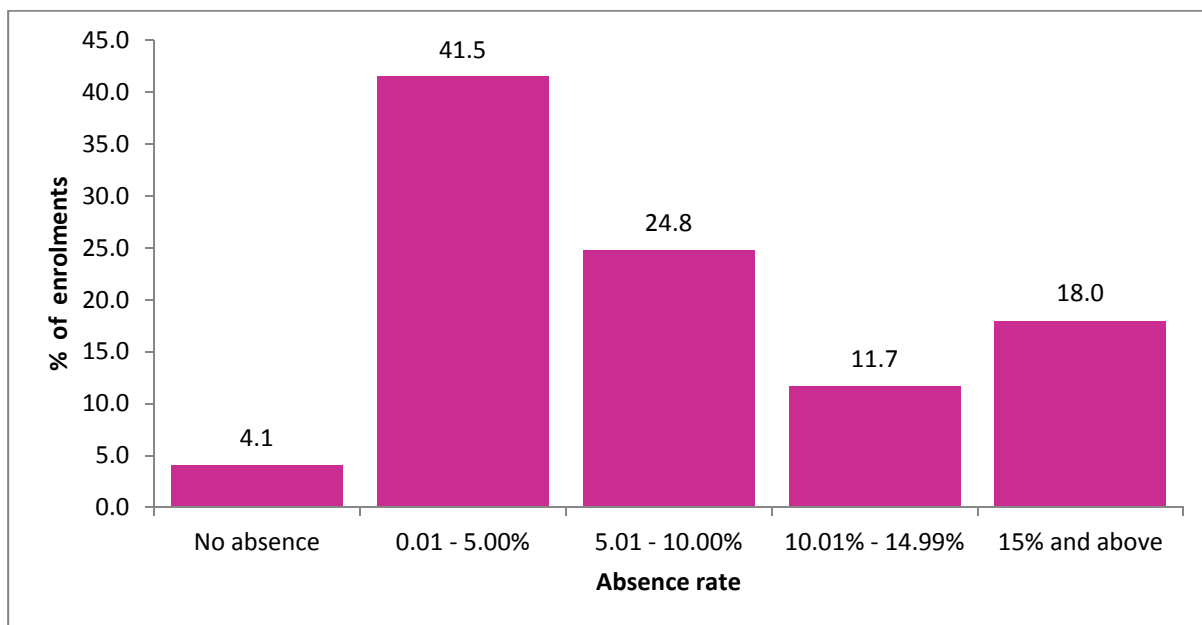
Chart 4.1: Absence from special school by number of days absent, 2015/16



4.3.3 Levels of absence

Chart 4.2 shows special school enrolment broken down by absence rate bands. Over two-fifths (41.5%) of pupils enrolled in such schools had an overall absence rate of between 0.01% and 5.00% of total half days. Meanwhile, the proportion of pupils absent for more than 15% of total half days stood at 18%. This figure is stable compared to 2014/15.

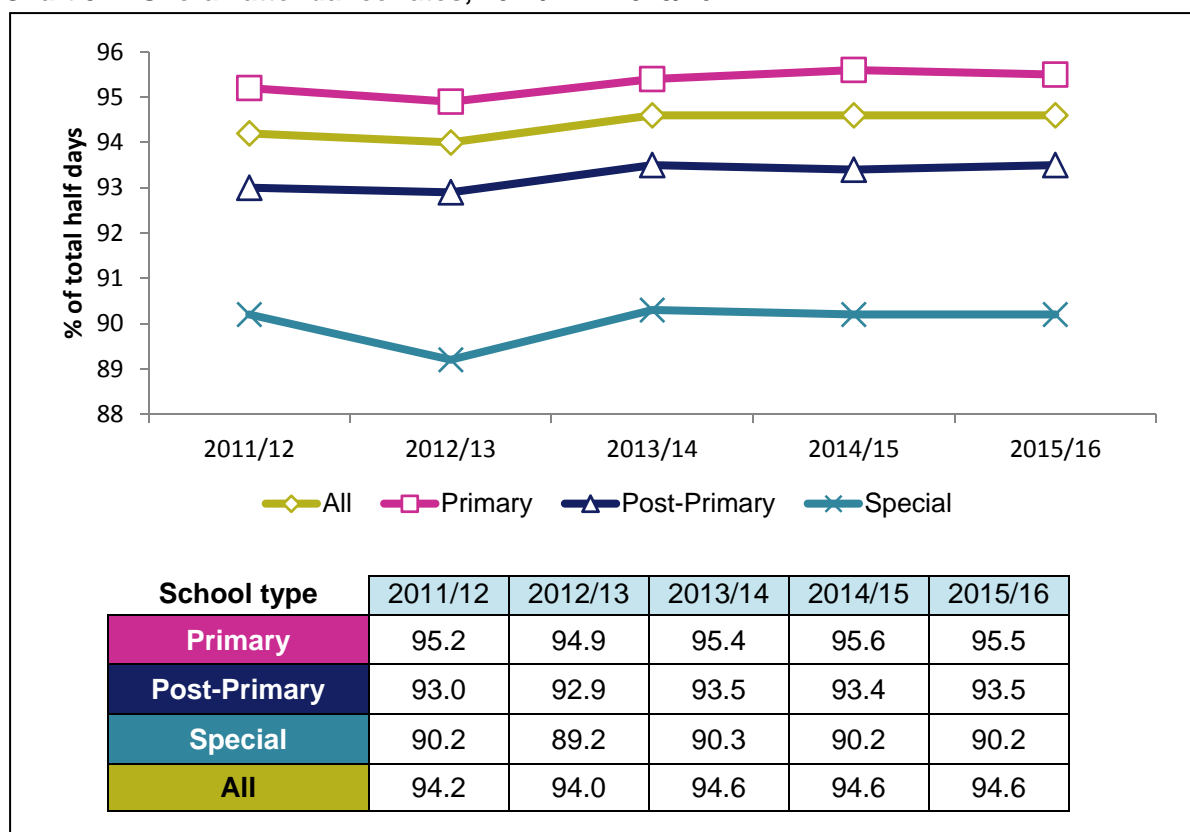
Chart 4.2: Percentage of enrolments at special school by overall absence rates, 2015/16



5. Conclusions

Over the past five years, there has been little variation in annual attendance levels within all types of granted-aided school in Northern Ireland (see Chart 5.1). Primary schools have consistently had the highest overall attendance level, only once falling below 95.0% of all total half days since 2011/12.

Chart 5.1: Overall attendance rates, 2011/12 – 2015/16



The post-primary school attendance level has remained virtually static since 2013/14.

Throughout the period, special schools have had the overall lowest attendance level of any school type. The attendance rate for special schools has remained, with the exception of 2012/13, virtually unchanged over time.

On an overall level, Northern Ireland's school attendance rate had been at least 94.0% in each of the past five years with figures occupying a statistical range of 0.6 percentage points. This stability is further emphasised by the fact that the attendance rate for all school types has remained virtually unchanged since 2013/14.

Notes for readers

Background information

National Statistics

1. 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.

National Statistics status means that official statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value.

All official statistics should comply with all aspects of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. They are awarded National Statistics status following an assessment by the Authority's regulatory arm. The Authority considers whether the statistics meet the highest standards of Code compliance, including the value they add to public decisions and debate.

It is the Department of Education's responsibility to maintain compliance with the standards expected of National Statistics. If we become concerned about whether these statistics are still meeting the appropriate standards, we will discuss any concerns with the Authority promptly. National Statistics status can be removed at any point when the highest standards are not maintained, and reinstated when standards are restored

2. For general enquiries about National Statistics, contact the National Statistics Public Enquiry Service:

Customer Contact Centre,
Office for National Statistics,
Rm 1.101,
Government Buildings,
Cardiff Road,
Newport, NP10 8XG

E-mail: info@statistics.gov.uk

Tel: 0845 601 3034

Minicom: 01633 812399 *Fax:* 01633 652747

3. You can also find National Statistics on the Internet: <http://www.statistics.gov.uk>
4. The statistics in this release have been derived from the annual School Census. More information about the collection of school attendance data can be found at: <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/de/updated-data-collection-procedures-1415.pdf>
5. The 2015/16 figures in this statistical release are based on school census information as at 7 October 2016. They may be subject to minor revision and these will be notified in accordance with our revisions policy. This can be accessed at: <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/education/Revisions%20policy.pdf>
6. The data is produced at aggregate level only; therefore individual pupils cannot be identified. More information on confidentiality can be found in the DE Confidentiality and Access Statement at the following link: <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/education/Confidentiality%20and%20Access.pdf>

Definitions

- Attendance or absence is measured for every pupil in half day sessions (am and pm). Absence can be either authorised or unauthorised.

Attendance

In addition to actual attendance within the school premises, the following are also considered as attendance at school:

- Late (before registration closed)
- Approved sporting activities
- Study leave
- Educational visits
- Work experience
- Alternative education provision (organised by the EA)*
- Home/hospital tuition (organised by the EA)*
- Pupil referral unit*
- Another mainstream school (under Entitlement Framework)*
- Training Organisation (under Entitlement Framework)*
- FE College (under Entitlement Framework)*
- Intensive Support Learning Unit*
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)*

Authorised absence

An authorised absence is absence with permission from an authorised school representative on provision of a satisfactory explanation. This includes:

- Artistic endeavour**
- Bereavement
- Suspension
- Agreed family holiday (in very exceptional circumstances)
- Illness
- Medical / dental appointments
- Other exceptional circumstances (includes an exceptional event outside control of the school, for example, travelling children, court appearance)
- Religious observance

Unauthorised absence

An unauthorised absence is absence without permission from an authorised school representative due to unexplained or unjustified absence. This includes:

- Family holiday not agreed
- Other absence (includes absence not covered by any other code or a reason which is not acceptable to the school, for example, pupil's / parent's or sibling's birthday).
- No reason provided for absence
- Late (after registration closed)

Notes

The code 'T – Traveller absence' was removed prior to the 2010/11 academic year.

* In 2010/11, the code 'E – Educated offsite' was removed and broken down into 8 new codes, providing more detail on the type of alternative educational provision.

** New code added in 2010/11.

See <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/education/Attendance%20Guidance%20and%20Absence%20Recording%20by%20Schools.pdf> for further information.

Data quality and coverage

8. Overall absence is considered to be a more reliable measure of absence than authorised and unauthorised absence. Both figures have been provided, however limitations in comparing rates of unauthorised and authorised absence should be noted - for those absences which are not covered by a specific code, the decision to allocate the absence as authorised or unauthorised is taken by the school.
9. Prior to September 2009, schools were advised to record unexplained absence initially as 'no reason yet provided', however, if a reason was not provided within a specified period of time, these should be changed to 'other'. From September 2009 onwards, schools were instructed that, if a reason was never provided, the code should remain as 'no reason yet provided'. This has resulted in higher rates of unauthorised absence being recorded as 'no reason yet provided' and lower figures for 'other' than in previous years.
10. Primary and post-primary data refer to pupils in Years 1 to 12 only, which aligns with the compulsory school age in Northern Ireland. Figures for special schools include all pupils attending special schools in 2014/15.
11. Attendance information was not available for ten primary schools and two post-primary schools which closed or amalgamated prior to the data being collected. This accounts for 1.2% and 1.0% of the total primary schools and post-primary schools.
12. Comparative data was obtained from the following sources:
Pupil Absence in Schools in England, Autumn Term 2015 and Spring Term 2016:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/pupil-absence-in-schools-in-england-autumn-2015-and-spring-2016>
Absenteeism from Primary Schools, 2015/16 (Wales):
<http://wales.gov.uk/statistics-and-research/absenteeism-primary-schools/?lang=en>
Absenteeism from Secondary Schools, 2015/16 (Wales):
<http://wales.gov.uk/statistics-and-research/absenteeism-secondary-schools/?lang=en>

There are slight differences in definitions between the regions, for example, statistics for England include study leave in authorised absence while the DE statistics categorise it as present. Figures for England do not include Summer Term 2016 (when the majority of study leave is recorded), meaning their data can only be compared with DE's data with appropriate caveats. There are also methodological differences in collecting the information. For example, the statistics for England are reported on a term by term basis. Overall absence is considered to be a better measure of comparison, rather than authorised or unauthorised absence.
13. In some cases, percentages may not sum due to rounding.
14. Pupil level information refers to the number of pupil enrolments rather than the number of pupils. A pupil can move schools during the year and will therefore have an attendance record at more than one school.

15. Comparison of the number of looked after children recorded in the school census and the number recorded by the DHSSPS Children Order Statistical Tables suggests some under-reporting of looked after children in the school census. It is possible that schools are unaware of the child's looked after status. Also, since attendance data is collectively retrospectively from schools and matched with current pupil characteristics, the looked after status may have changed. Despite this, attendance rates for looked after children have been included in this publication since the data are sufficiently robust to produce indicative figures.
16. Analysis by the home language of the pupil is included as this variable is the closest approximation available for Country of Birth.
17. As stated earlier, attendance is measured for each pupil in half day sessions. In order to provide information on the actual number of school days missed, these totals have been divided by two. While this is useful to provide an indication of school days missed, it is generally more accurate to report in terms of half days.
18. Schools are required to be in operation for 190 days in the school year, less any School Development Days (SDDs). Schools can apply for up to five SDDs, which can produce slight variations between the numbers of days individual schools are open to pupils.

Users and uses of the data

19. Attendance data are collected annually via the school census and are required by a range of organisations and individuals for a variety of purposes. The data are used by members of the NI Assembly, the Department of Education (DE), the Education Authority and the Education and Training Inspectorate for benchmarking, policy making and performance monitoring. Responsibility for attendance policy lies with Additional Educational Needs Team in DE which monitors non-attendance and provides guidance to schools in relation to attendance. In December 2016, the Department launched a new attendance strategy *Miss School = Miss Out*, which aims to reduce school absence levels by 2021. The statistics are also used by other departments when developing and monitoring cross-departmental policies. For example, attendance is an indicator in the Education Domain of the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure. The data are also used by researchers, academics and students for research purposes and by the general public for informing choices about service providers.
20. Requests for further information should be addressed to:

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Rathgael House
Balloo Road
Bangor
Co. Down
BT19 7PR
Telephone: 02891 279616
Fax: 028 9127 9594
Email: michael.woods@education-ni.gov.uk

Special analyses of the attendance information can be undertaken on request.

DE Statistical Releases can be accessed on the DE website: <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/topics/statistics-and-research-1>

Attendance at grant- schools in Northern Ireland 2015/16: Detailed statistics

Feedback on this publication can be provided directly to Michael Woods (contact details above) or via the feedback section on our website: <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/forms/feedback>.

Appendix 1 – ‘Other’ languages in grant-aided schools

Table A – ‘Other’ Languages in Primary Schools		
Afrikaans	Hungarian	Rajasthani/Marwari
Albanian/Shqip	Icelandic	Romany
Arabic	Igbo	Russian
Bengali/Bangla/Sylheti	Irish	Serbian/Croatian/Bosnian
Bulgarian	Italian	Shona
Chinese (Any Other)	Japanese	Sinhala/Sinhalese
Chinese (Cantonese)	Kannada	Slovenian
Chinese (Hakka)	Korean	Somali
Creole English	Kurdish	Spanish
Creole French	Lingala	Swahili/Kiswahili
Czech	Luganda/Ganda	Swedish
Danish	Macedonian	Tamil
Dutch/Flemish	Malay/Indonesian	Telugu
Edo/Bini	Marathi	Tetum
Estonian	Ndebele	Thai
Fijian	Nepali	Tswana/Setswana
Finnish	Norwegian	Turkish
French	Oriya	Ukrainian
German	Other Language	Urdu
Greek	Pahari/Himachali (India)	Vietnamese
Gujarati	Panjabi	Xhosa
Hebrew	Pashto/Pakhto	Yoruba
Hindi	Persian/Farsi	Zulu

Table B – ‘Other’ Languages in Post-Primary Schools		
Afrikaans	Gujarati	Serbian/Croatian/Bosnian
Albanian/Shqip	Hindi	Shona
Arabic	Hungarian	Sinhala/Sinhalese
Bengali/Bangla/Sylheti	Icelandic	Slovak
British Sign Language	Igbo	Slovenian
Bulgarian	Italian	Somali
Chinese (Any Other)	Japanese	Spanish
Chinese (Hokkien/Fujianese)	Kannada	Swahili/Kiswahili
Chinese (Hakka)	Korean	Swedish
Chinese (Mandarin/Putonghua)	Kurdish	Tamil
Creole English	Macedonian	Telugu
Creole French	Malay/Indonesian	Tetum
Czech	Marathi	Thai
Danish	Ndebele	Tswana/Setswana
Dutch/Flemish	Nepali	Turkish
Edo/Bini	Norwegian	Ukrainian
Estonian	Other Language	Urdu
Fijian	Pahari/Himachali (India)	Venda
Finnish	Panjabi	Vietnamese
French	Pashto/Pakhto	Xhosa
Gaelic (Scotland)	Persian/Farsi	Yiddish
German	Romany	Yoruba
Greek	Russian	Zulu