

CHAPTER 5

Absence and exclusion from school for pupils with special educational needs

Introduction

This chapter compares absence and exclusion levels between pupils with and without special educational needs. It looks at the proportion of pupils with special educational needs who were absent and persistently absent from school by different characteristics, such as their gender, primary type of need and reasons for being absent. It also compares the characteristics for those who receive fixed-period and permanent exclusions from school by gender, primary type of need and reasons for exclusion. All analysis which appears in this chapter is taken from the School Census. See Data Annex 5 for further details on all the material covered within this chapter.

Referenced tables for absence can be found in the Statistical First Release *Pupil Absence in Schools in England, including Pupil Characteristics: 2010/11* at <http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s001060/index.shtml>. Referenced tables for exclusions can be found in the Statistical First Release *Permanent and Fixed Period Exclusions from Schools in England 2010/11* at <http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s001080/index.shtml>.

Absence from school in 2010/11

Key findings from absence data

Overall absence

Pupils with special educational needs were more likely to be absent from school than other pupils. In 2010/11, pupils with no special educational needs missed the least amount of school through absence (5.1 per cent of half days missed). Pupils at School Action Plus missed the most school through absence (8.9 per cent of half days missed). Of all the primary types of need, pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulty were the most likely to be absent from school (14.0 per cent of half days missed).

Reasons for absence

Compared to pupils with no special educational needs, pupils with special educational needs were more likely to be absent due to being excluded from school. However, pupils with special educational needs were less likely to be absent due to illness than those without.

Persistent absentees

Pupils with special educational needs were more likely to be persistent absentees compared to those without special educational needs in 2010/11. In general, girls were more likely to be persistent absentees compared to boys. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulty as their primary type of need were the most likely to be persistent absentees.

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On average, persistent absentees with statements of special educational needs missed 29.3 per cent of half day sessions compared to 28.9 per cent for those at School Action Plus, 24.8 per cent for those at School Action and 23.2 per cent for those with no special educational needs.

Absence rates for pupils with special educational needs

This section reports on absence rates for pupils with special educational needs, which is measured by the percentage of half day school sessions missed as a percentage of the total number of possible sessions during the academic year (this is also known as overall absence).

Figure 5.1 shows the percentage of half days of school missed through absence in 2010/11 for pupils by their level of provision for special educational need in January 2011 and school type attended. Pupils with special educational needs missed more school through absence compared to those without special educational needs. Overall, pupils with no special educational needs missed the least amount of school through absence (5.1 per cent of half days missed), followed by those at School Action (7.1 per cent). Pupils at School Action Plus and with statements of special educational needs missed the most school through absence of all the levels of provision for special educational need (8.9 per cent and 8.8 per cent respectively). Absence rates for all of the levels of provision for special educational needs decreased from the equivalent figures in 2009/10.

Figure 5.1: Percentage of half day sessions missed due to absence by pupils with special educational needs in 2010/11 by levels of provision for special educational need and school type attended

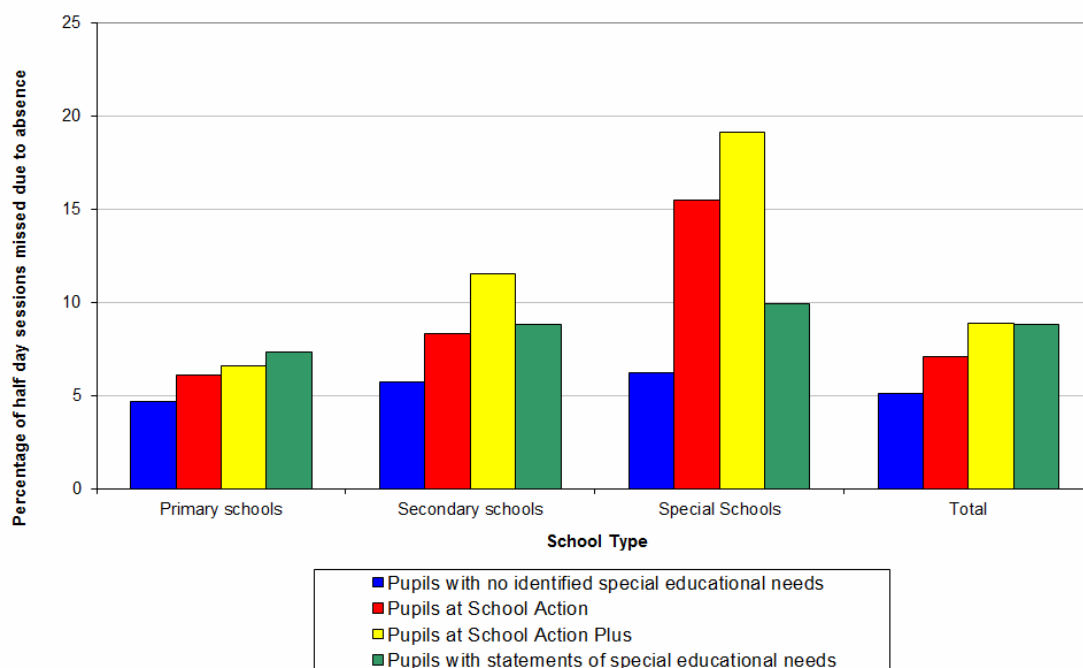


Figure 5.1 shows that pupils at special schools missed more school through absence than those at secondary schools in 2010/11, and those at secondary schools missed more time than those at primary school, regardless of their level of provision for

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special educational need. At primary schools, pupils with statements of special educational needs had the highest overall absence rate (7.3 per cent), of all the levels of provision for special educational need, while at secondary schools, pupils at School Action Plus had the highest rate (11.5 per cent). Absence percentages for pupils with no special educational needs and those at School Action in special schools should be treated with caution due to low numbers of pupil enrolments.

Absence rates for pupils with special educational needs by primary type of need

Table 5.5 of the above absence Statistical First Release shows the percentage of half days missed through absence for pupils at School Action Plus or with statements of special educational needs by their primary type of need during 2010/11. Of all the primary types of special educational need, pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties were the most likely to be absent from school (14.0 per cent of half days missed). Pupils with speech, language and communication difficulties and autistic spectrum disorder missed the least school through absence.

Authorised and unauthorised absence for pupils with special educational needs

The above findings relate to overall absence, which includes:

- **Authorised absence** which is absence with permission from a teacher or other authorised representative of the school. This includes instances of absences for which a satisfactory explanation has been provided (for example, illness).
- **Unauthorised absence** which is absence without permission from a teacher or other authorised representative of the school. This includes all unexplained or unjustified absences. Arriving late for school, after the register has closed, is recorded as unauthorised absence.

Tables 5.1 and 5.5 of the above Statistical First Release show that the proportion of school missed through authorised absence was greater than unauthorised absence for all the levels of provision for and primary types of special educational need in 2010/11. Of all the levels of provision for special educational need, pupils at School Action Plus missed the greatest proportion of sessions through unauthorised absence (2.5 per cent). The equivalent figure for pupils with no special educational needs was 0.8 per cent.

Reasons for absence by level of provision for special educational need

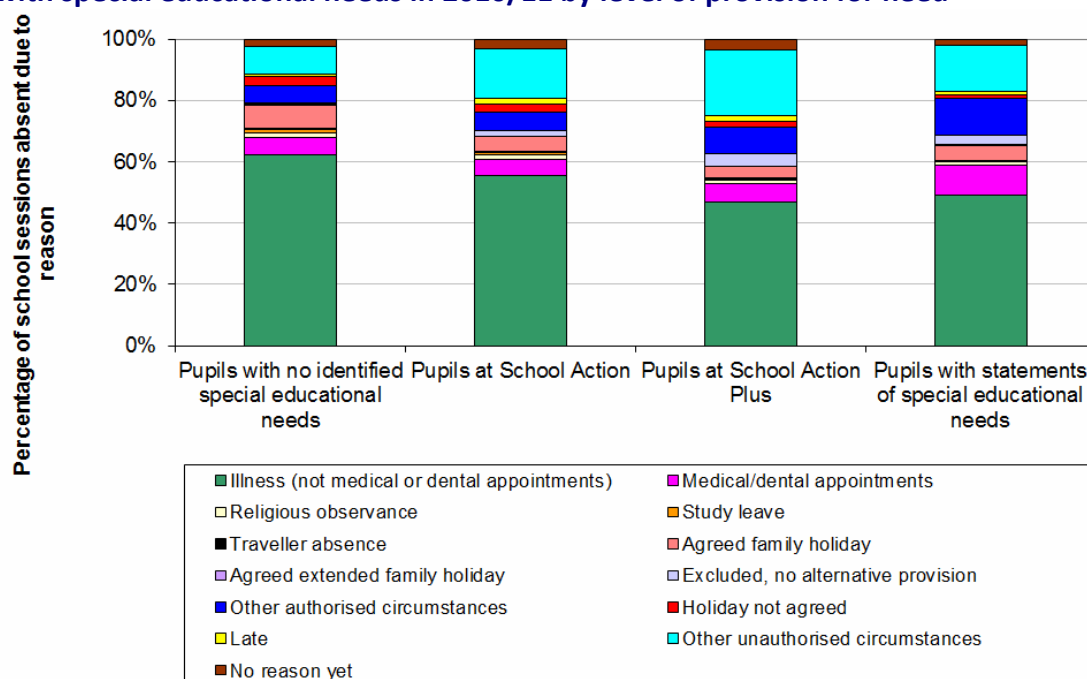
Figure 5.2 shows the reasons for which pupils were absent from school in 2010/11 by level of provision for special educational need. For example, Table 5.1 of the Statistical First Release and Figure 5.1 above showed that pupils with statements missed 8.8 per cent of all half day sessions due to absence and Figure 5.2 shows the distribution of reasons which make up this absence figure, as well as data for the other levels of provision. Data Annex 5 shows the list of reasons for absence.

Figure 5.2 shows that the biggest single reason for pupils to be absent in 2010/11 was illness (not medical or dental appointments), regardless of level of special educational need provision. This reason accounted for 62.1 per cent of absent sessions for pupils with no special educational needs. However, pupils with special educational needs were less likely to be absent due to this reason than those

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without special educational needs, with the smallest prevalence occurring amongst those at School Action Plus (46.9 per cent). Compared to pupils with no special educational needs, pupils with special educational needs were more likely to be absent due to exclusions (no alternative provision) and traveller absence. However, pupils with special educational needs were less likely to be absent due to agreed and not agreed family holidays, compared to those without special educational needs.

Figure 5.2: Percentage of absent sessions missed by reason for absence for pupils with special educational needs in 2010/11 by level of provision for need



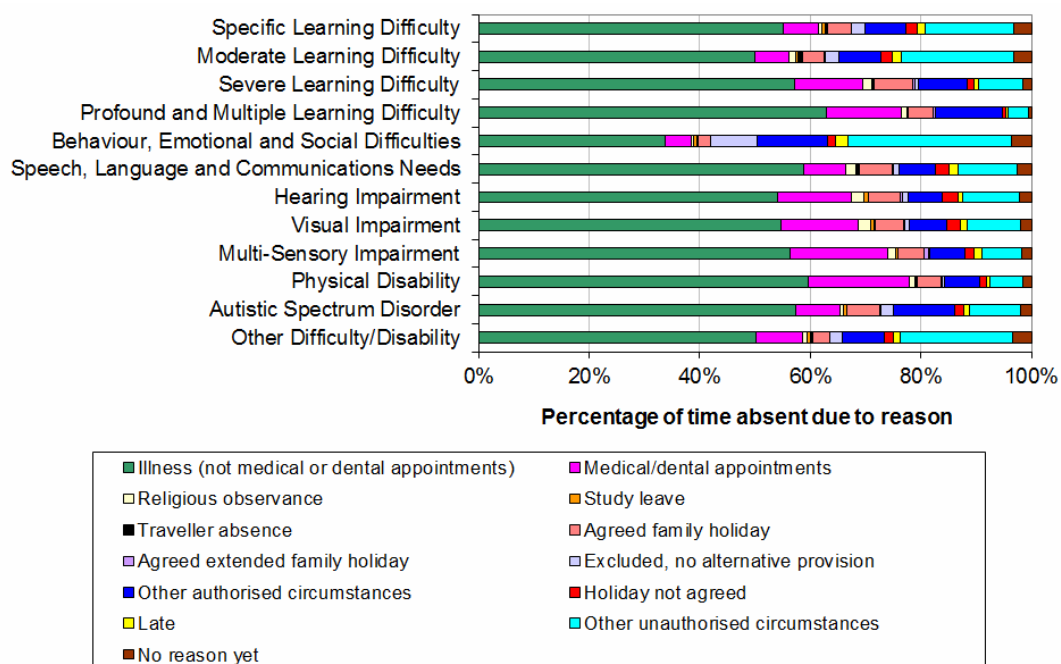
Reasons for absence by primary type of special educational need

Figure 5.3 shows the reasons for which pupils with each of the primary types of special educational need for pupils at School Action Plus or with statements were absent from school in 2010/11.

Figure 5.2 showed that the single biggest reason for absence for pupils at School Action Plus or with statements in 2010/11 was illness (not medical or dental appointments). Of all the primary need groups at School Action Plus and with statements, pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties missed the highest proportion of absent sessions (62.8 per cent) through this reason. However, pupils with behaviour, emotional and social difficulties missed the smallest proportion of sessions (33.8 per cent) through this reason. The distribution of reasons for absence amongst pupils with behaviour, emotional and social difficulties was quite different from the other primary need groups. Pupils with behaviour, emotional and social difficulties were more likely than any other primary need group to be absent due to: being excluded (no alternative provision) at 8.3 per cent, lateness (2.2 per cent), no reason yet (3.7 per cent) and other authorised and unauthorised circumstances.

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Figure 5.3: Percentage of absent sessions missed by reason for absence for pupils at School Action Plus or with statements in 2010/11 by primary type of special educational need



Persistent absentees with special educational needs

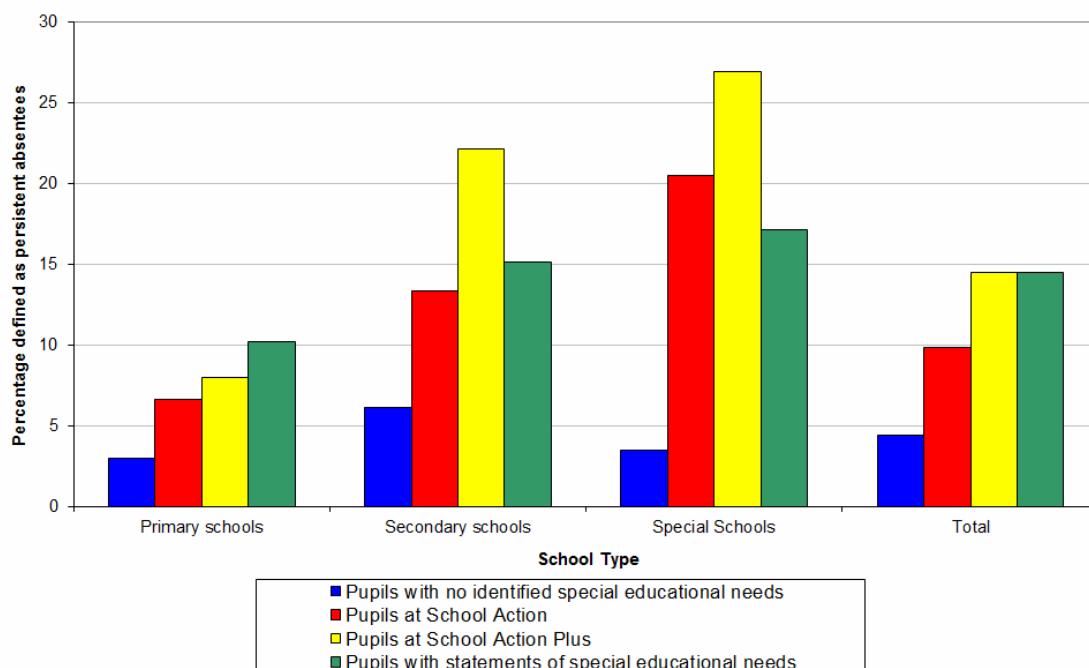
Persistent absentees are defined as those pupils with 46 or more sessions of absence (authorised and unauthorised) during the academic year, i.e. those missing around 15 per cent of available half day sessions. Note that this threshold has been tightened from 20 per cent of sessions in 2009/10. As a result direct comparisons are not readily available.

Table 5.2 in the Statistical First Release and Figure 5.4 below shows the percentage of pupil enrolments that were defined as persistent absentees by their level of provision for special educational need and school type in 2010/11. Pupils could have been enrolled in more than one school throughout the academic year, in which case they could appear in the absence record more than once.

Pupils with special educational needs were more likely to be persistent absentees compared to those without special educational needs. 14.5 per cent of pupils at School Action Plus and with statements of special educational needs were persistent absentees compared to 4.4 per cent of those with no special educational needs.

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Figure 5.4: Percentage of pupils enrolled in 2010/11 who were defined as persistent absentees, by level of provision for special educational need and school type



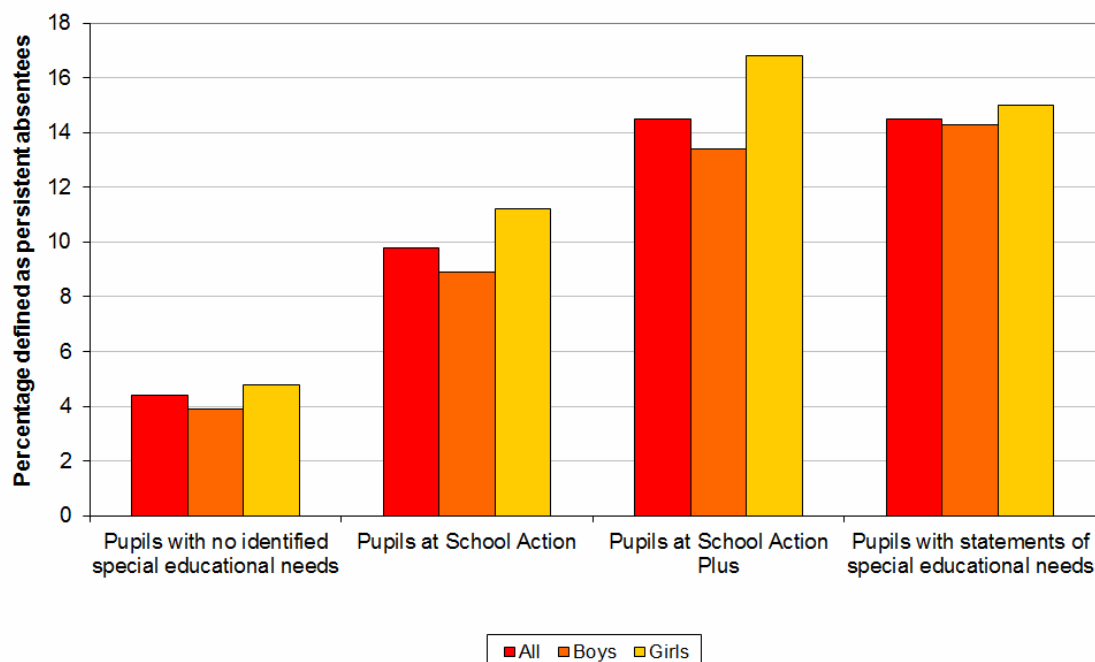
Pupils at special schools were more likely to be persistent absentees than those at secondary schools who were in turn more likely to be persistent absentees than pupils at primary schools. Figures for pupils with no special educational needs and at School Action at special schools should be treated with caution due to the low numbers of pupils involved.

Persistent absentees with special educational needs by gender

Figure 5.5 shows the percentage of pupils defined as persistent absentees by their level of provision for special educational need and gender. It shows that girls were more likely to be persistent absentees than boys regardless of level of provision for special educational need. 4.8 per cent of girls without special educational needs enrolled at school in 2010/11 were persistent absentees compared to 3.9 per cent of boys enrolled. The gap was largest between those at School Action Plus, where 16.8 per cent of girls on roll were persistent absentees compared to 13.4 per cent of boys.

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Figure 5.5: Percentage of pupils enrolled in 2010/11 who were defined as persistent absentees, by level of provision for special educational need and gender



Persistent absentees by primary type of special educational need

Table 5.5 of the Statistical First Release shows the percentage of persistent absentees at School Action Plus or with statements of special educational needs by their primary type of need. Pupils with speech, language and communication difficulties were least likely to be persistent absentees (7.4 per cent), while pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties were most likely (29.4 per cent). Caution should be used when interpreting the figures for multi-sensory impairments, due to the low numbers of pupils enrolled.

Rate of authorised and unauthorised absence by persistent absentees

Table 5.2 of the Statistical First Release shows that persistent absentees with statements of special educational needs missed the highest percentage of half day sessions from authorised absence (20.7 per cent) and those at School Action Plus missed the highest percentage from unauthorised absence (12.5 per cent)

Exclusions from school in 2010/11

Key findings from exclusions data

Fixed period exclusions

Pupils with special educational needs were much more likely to receive a fixed period exclusion from school than their peers. Pupils at School Action Plus were most likely to receive a fixed period exclusion from school in 2010/11. 9.8 per cent of pupils at School Action Plus received a fixed period exclusion compared to 8.1 per cent with statements of special educational needs, 4.7 per cent at School Action and 2.7 per cent for those with no special educational needs.

Reasons for fixed period exclusions in 2010/11

Compared to those with no special educational needs, pupils with special educational needs were less likely to receive a fixed period exclusion due to bullying, theft, drug and alcohol related reason or physical assaults on pupils. However, pupils with special educational needs were more likely than their peers to receive a fixed period exclusion due to physical assaults on and verbal abuse against adults and persistent disruptive behaviour.

Permanent exclusions

Pupils with special educational needs were more likely to receive a permanent exclusion from school than their peers. Pupils at School Action Plus were most likely to receive a permanent exclusion from school in 2010/11. 0.5 per cent of pupils at School Action Plus received a permanent exclusion compared to 0.2 per cent with statements of special educational needs, 0.1 per cent at School Action and less than 0.1 per cent of those with no special educational needs.

Gender

Boys were more likely to receive any type of exclusion from school than girls in 2010/11, regardless of their level of provision for special educational need.

Primary type of special educational need

Of all the primary types of need, pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties were by far the most likely to receive either type of exclusion.

Rate of fixed period exclusions for pupils with special educational needs

This section reports on fixed period exclusion rates for pupils with special educational needs. A fixed period exclusion is when a pupil is excluded from school but remains on the register because they are expected to return once the exclusion period is over. This analysis reports on the number of fixed period exclusions per enrolment. Pupils could have been enrolled in more than one school throughout the year, in which case they would be counted on each occasion in which they enrolled. The 'fixed period exclusion rate' is defined as the number of pupil enrolments that received one or more fixed period exclusions expressed as a percentage of all pupils of the same group.

Figure 5.6 shows the percentage of pupil enrolments in 2010/11 that received one or more fixed period exclusion in the year by their level of provision for special educational need in January 2011 and school type attended. Pupils with special educational needs were much more likely to receive a fixed period exclusion than those with no special educational needs. Overall, pupils with no special educational needs were least likely to receive a fixed period exclusion (1.2 per cent of all pupils enrolments), followed by those at School Action (4.7 per cent), those with statements (7.4 per cent) and those at School Action Plus (9.8 per cent). 6.3 per cent of pupils with special educational needs without statements which combines School Action and School Action Plus received at least one fixed period exclusion. Exclusion rates for all of the levels of provision for special educational needs decreased slightly from 2009/10.

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Figure 5.6: Pupil enrolments that received one or more fixed period exclusion expressed as a percentage of the number of all pupils of the same level of provision for special educational need by school type attended in 2010/11

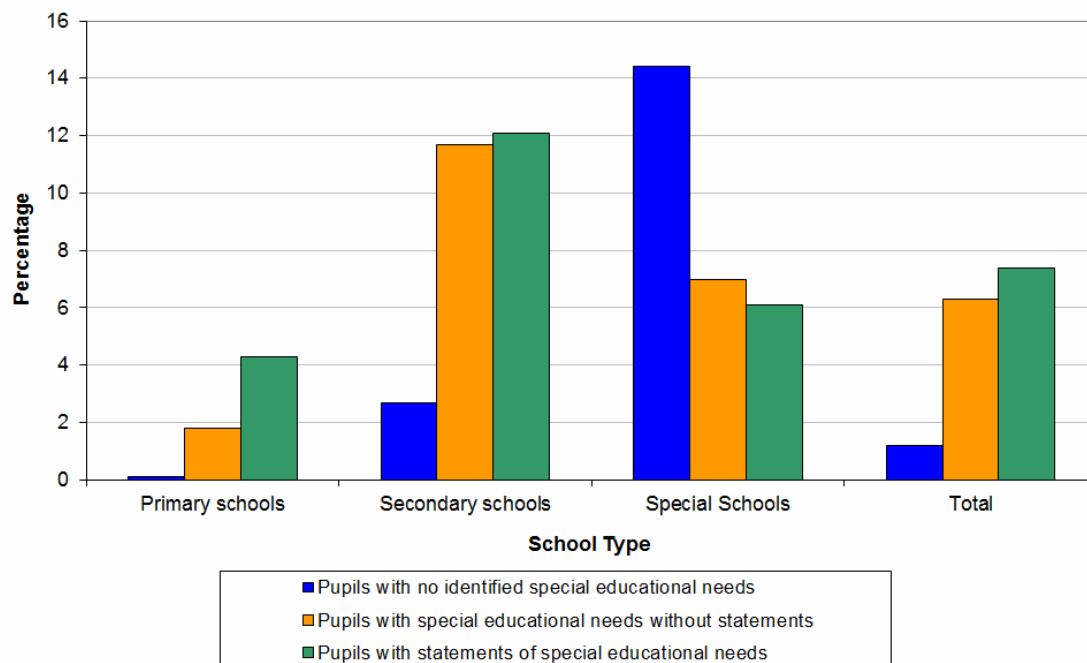


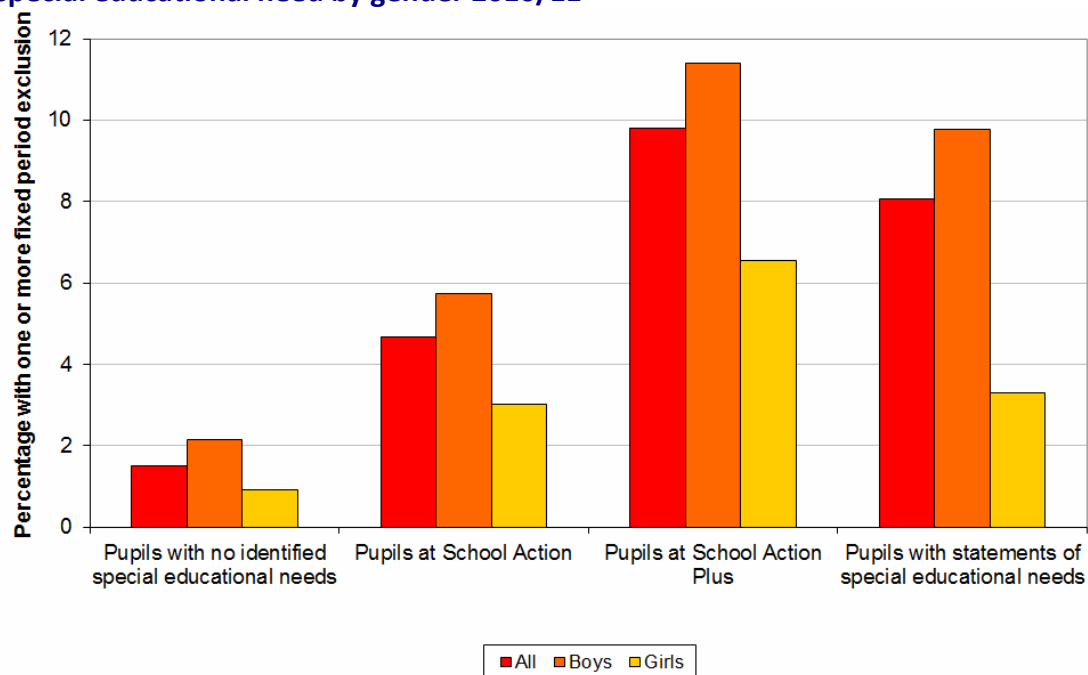
Figure 5.6 shows that pupils at secondary schools were more likely to receive a fixed period exclusion than those in primary schools in 2010/11. At primary schools, pupils with statements of special educational need were more than twice as likely as those with special educational needs without statements but were only slightly more likely to do so at secondary schools. The figure for pupils with no special educational needs at special schools should be treated with caution due to the low number of pupils in the group.

Rate of fixed period exclusions for pupils with special educational needs by gender

Figure 5.7 shows fixed period exclusion rates for pupils enrolled 2010/11 by their gender and level of provision for special educational need. Boys were more likely to receive a fixed period exclusion from school than girls regardless of their level of provision for need in 2010/11. Boys with statements (9.8 per cent) were almost three times more likely than girls (3.3 per cent) to receive a fixed period exclusion. Boys at School Action and School Action Plus were over one and a half times as likely as girls to receive a fixed period exclusion. Boys with no identified special educational needs (2.2 per cent) were over twice as likely as girls (0.9 per cent) to receive a fixed period exclusion.

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Figure 5.7: Pupil enrolments that received one or more fixed exclusion expressed as a percentage of the number of all pupils of the same level of provision for special educational need by gender 2010/11

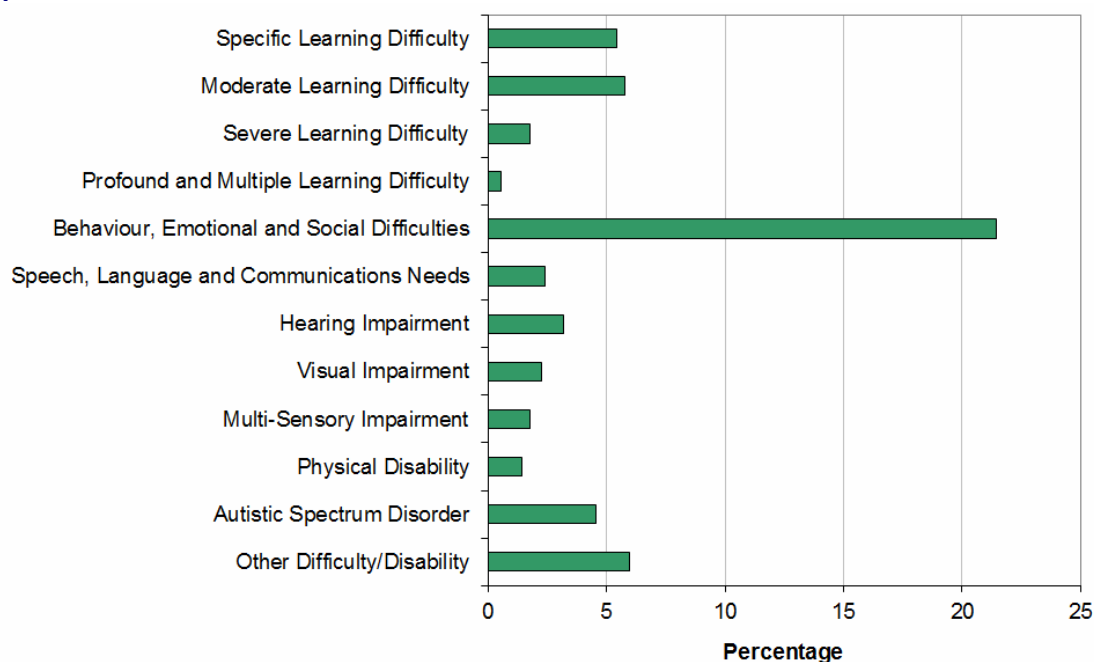


Rate of fixed period exclusions by primary type of special educational need

Figure 5.8 shows the rate of fixed period exclusions by primary type of special educational need among pupils at School Action Plus and those with statements of special educational needs in 2010/11. Pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties were by far the most likely to receive a fixed period exclusion (21.5 per cent of those enrolled with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties received one or more fixed period exclusion). Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties were the least likely to receive a fixed period exclusion (0.6 per cent).

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Figure 5.8: Pupil enrolments that received one or more fixed period exclusion expressed as a percentage of the number of all pupils of the same primary type of special educational need, 2010/11

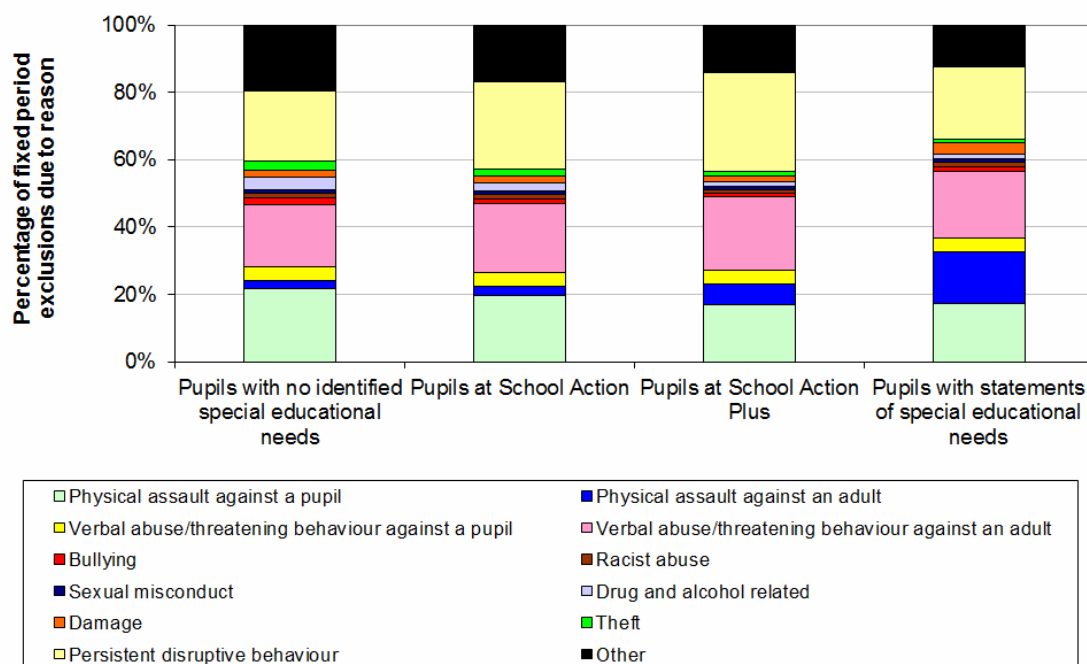


Reasons for fixed period exclusion by level of provision for special educational need

Figure 5.9 shows the reasons for which pupils received fixed period exclusions from school in 2010/11 by level of provision for special educational need. It shows that pupils received a fixed period exclusion for a variety of reasons in 2010/11. The most common reasons for exclusions were persistent disruptive behaviour, verbal abuse/threatening behaviour against an adult, physical assault against a pupil and the any other reason category. Pupils with statements of special educational need were much more likely to receive a fixed period exclusion for physical assault against an adult than other levels of provision for special educational need. Compared to those with no special educational needs, pupils with special educational needs were less likely to receive a fixed period exclusion due to drug and alcohol related reasons, bullying, theft, physical assaults against pupils or the any other reason category.

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Figure 5.9: Percentage of fixed period exclusions by reason for exclusion for pupils with special educational needs in 2010/11 by level of provision for need



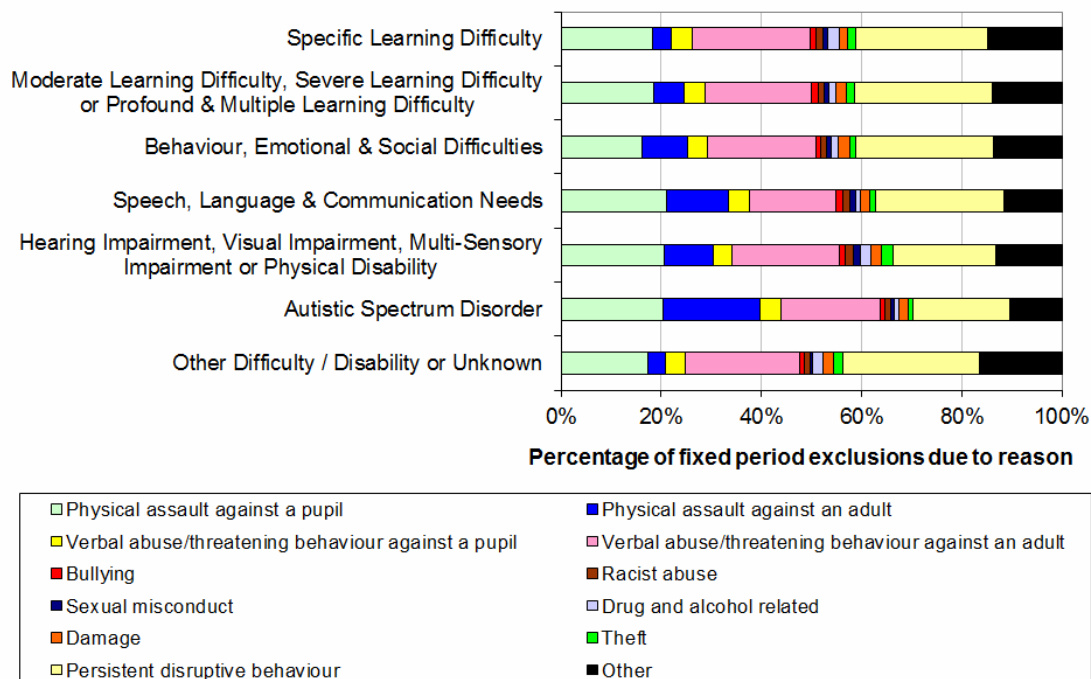
Reasons for fixed period exclusion by primary type of special educational need

Figure 5.10 shows the reasons for which pupils at School Action Plus and with statements of special educational needs received fixed period exclusions from school in 2010/11 by their primary type of need. Primary types of need were combined in some cases to ensure the groups were large enough to draw robust conclusions from the data. Figure 5.12 shows the following:

- Pupils with speech, language and communication difficulty and autistic spectrum disorder were most likely to receive a fixed period exclusion due to physical assaults against pupils and adults.
- Pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties were most likely to receive a fixed period exclusion due to persistent disruptive behaviour.

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Figure 5.10: Percentage of fixed period exclusions by reason for exclusion for pupils at School Action Plus or with statements of special educational needs in 2010/11 by primary type of need



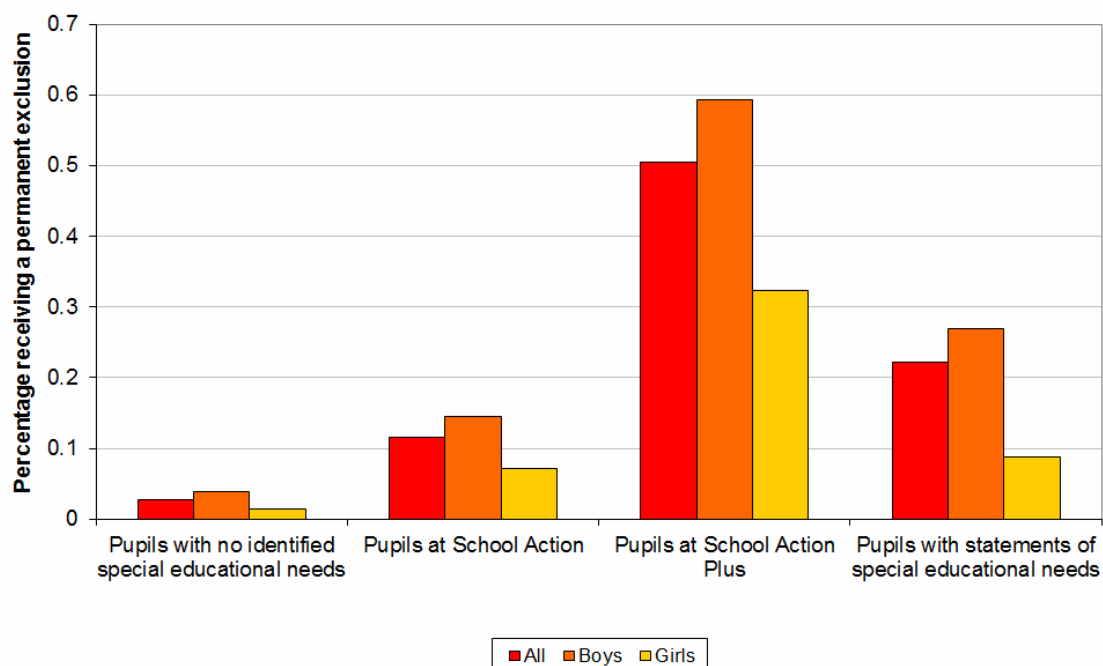
Rate of permanent exclusions for pupils with special educational needs

A permanent exclusion is when a pupil is excluded from a school and their name is removed from the register.

Figure 5.11 shows the number of pupil enrolments that received a permanent exclusion expressed as a percentage of the number of all pupils of the same group in 2010/11. It compares differences between boys and girls at School Action, School Action Plus, with statements of special educational needs and with no special educational needs. Figure 5.11 displays a similar trend to that shown in Figure 5.7 which related to fixed period exclusions. Compared to their peers, pupils with special educational needs were more likely to be permanently excluded. As with fixed period exclusions, pupils at School Action Plus were most likely to receive a permanent exclusion.

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Figure 5.11: Pupils enrolments that received a permanent exclusion expressed as a percentage of the number of all pupils of the same level of provision for special educational need and gender, 2010/11



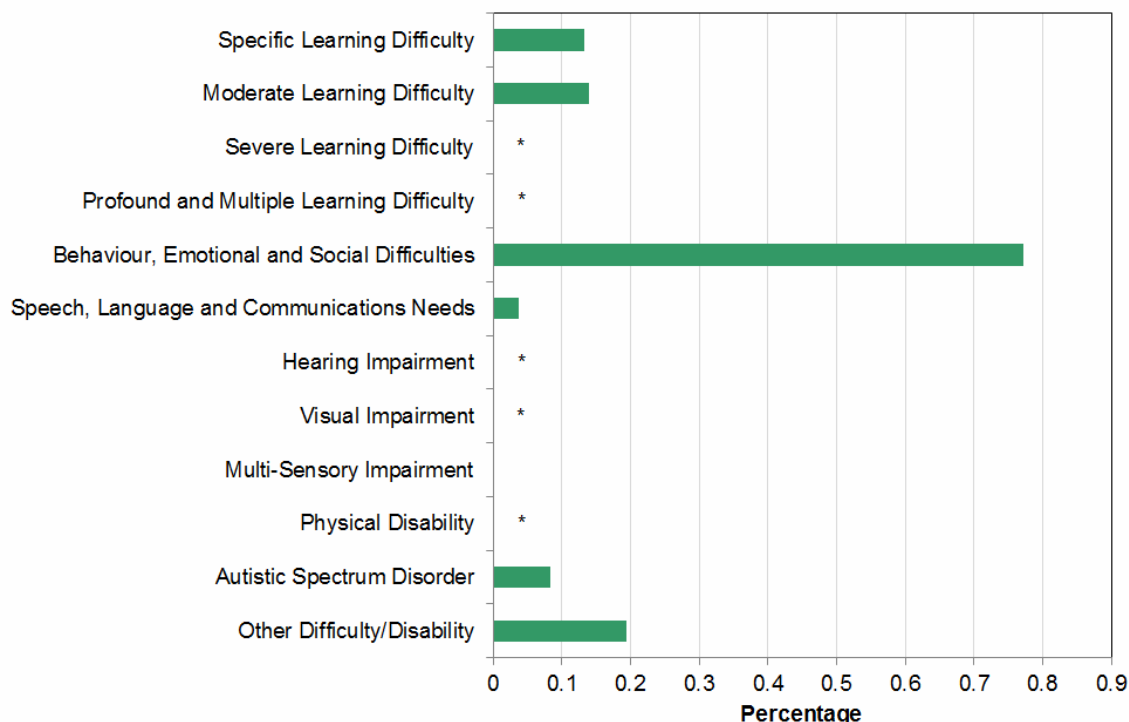
Pupils at School Action Plus were nearly 19 times more likely to receive a permanent exclusion than those with no special educational needs. Figure 5.11 shows that boys were more likely to be permanently excluded than girls, regardless of level of special educational need provision. Boys with statements of special educational needs were over three times more likely to be permanently excluded than girls in 2010/11.

Rate of permanent exclusions by primary type of special educational need

Figure 5.12 shows the rate of permanent exclusions by primary type of special educational need among pupils at School Action Plus and those with statements of special educational needs in 2010/11. Pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties were by far the most likely to receive a permanent exclusion (0.8 per cent of those enrolled with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties received a permanent exclusion). Pupils with multi-sensory impairment were the least likely to receive a permanent exclusion. No pupils in this group were permanently excluded.

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Figure 5.12: Pupil enrolments that received a permanent exclusion expressed as a percentage of the number of all pupils of the same primary type of special educational need, 2010/11



* Figures for pupils with severe learning difficulty, profound and multiple learning difficulty, hearing impairment, visual impairment and physical disability are not shown due to small numbers in the groups.

Reasons for permanent exclusion by level of provision for special educational need

The most common reasons for permanent exclusions in 2010/11 were persistent disruptive behaviour, physical assault against a pupil and the any other reason category. Pupils with statements of special educational needs were much more likely to receive a permanent exclusion for physical assault against an adult than other levels of provision for special educational need (26.8 per cent for pupils with statements compared to 10.7 per cent for pupils at School Action Plus, 9.4 per cent for pupils at School Action and 8.3 per cent for pupils with no special educational needs). Compared to those with no special educational needs, pupils with special educational needs were less likely to receive a permanent exclusion due to drug and alcohol related reasons, bullying, theft, physical assaults against pupils or the any other reason category. A chart is not included due to the risk of identification of small numbers in some of the categories.

Reasons for permanent exclusion by primary type of special educational need

Pupils with autistic spectrum disorder were the most likely to receive a permanent exclusion for physical assault against an adult than other primary types of special educational need (37.8 per cent of all permanent exclusions for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder). Pupils with a specific learning difficulty were the most likely to be permanently excluded due to persistent disruptive behaviour. A chart is not included due to the risk of identification of small numbers in some of the categories.