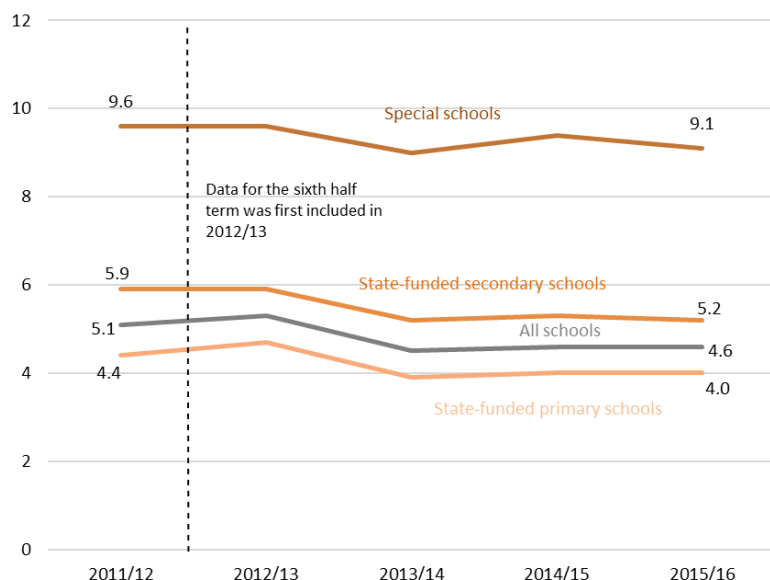




SFR 14/2017, 23 March 2017

Overall absence rates are unchanged since last year



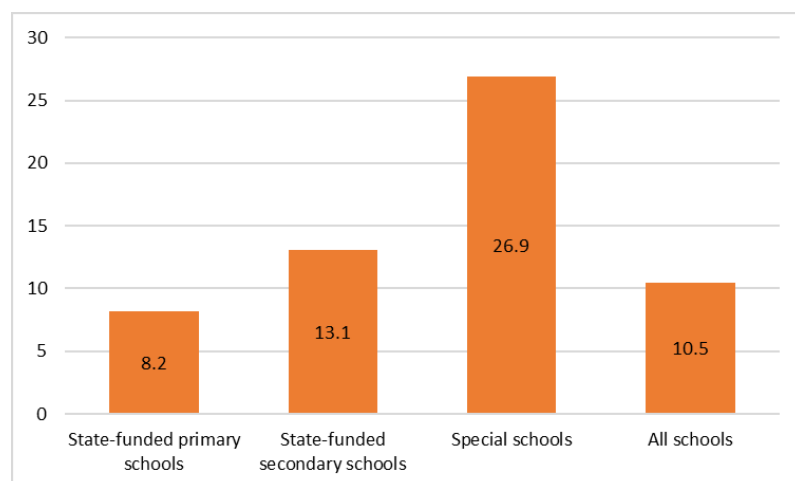
The overall absence rate across state-funded primary, secondary and special schools has remained at the same rate of 4.6 per cent in 2015/16 as in 2014/15. The overall absence rate has remained broadly stable since 2013/14.

Overall absence rates have followed a generally downward trend since 2006/07 when the overall absence rate was 6.5 per cent (see section 1.)

Rates of absence by reason have remained stable since last year

Absence due to illness has remained stable, at 2.8 per cent in 2014/15 compared to 2.6 per cent in 2015/16. Illness remains the most common reason for absence, accounting for 57.3 per cent of all absences. Levels of absence for all other reasons remain relatively unchanged compared to last year.

One in ten pupils was persistently absent during the academic year 2015/16



The percentage of enrolments in state-funded primary, state-funded secondary and special schools that were classified as persistent absentees in 2015/16 was 10.5 per cent. This is lower than the equivalent figure of 11.0 per cent in 2014/15.

Note that this is based on the revised persistent absence measure which was introduced in September 2015, where a pupil enrolment is classified as a persistent absentee if they miss 10 per cent or more of their own possible sessions, rather than 15 per cent of a standard threshold (see section 2.)

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About this release

This statistical first release (SFR) reports on absence of pupils of compulsory school age in state-funded primary, secondary and special schools during the full school year 2015 to 2016. Information on absence in pupil referral units, and for pupils aged four, is also included.

The Department uses two key measures to monitor pupil absence – overall and persistent absence. Absence by reason and pupils characteristics is also included in this release. Figures are available at national, regional, local authority and school level.

Figures held in this release are used for policy development as key indicators in behaviour and school attendance policy. Schools and local authorities also use the statistics to compare their local absence rates to regional and national averages for different pupil groups.

A '[Guide to absence statistics](#)', which provides historical information on absence statistics, as well as information on the data sources and technical background information on the figures and data collection, should be referenced alongside this release. It also explains the coverage and quality of the statistics, and explains the methodology used in producing the data.

In this publication

The following tables are included in the SFR:

- SFR14_2017_Main_tables (Excel .xls and open format)
- Underlying data (open format .csv and metadata .txt)

Feedback

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

1. Absence rates (Tables 1.1, 2.1, 2.2 & underlying data)

Overall absence rate definition

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

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

The overall absence rate across state-funded primary, secondary and special schools in 2015/16 has stayed the same as in 2014/15 at 4.6 per cent. This follows a longer term downward trend in overall absence since 2006/07, when the rate was 6.5 per cent.

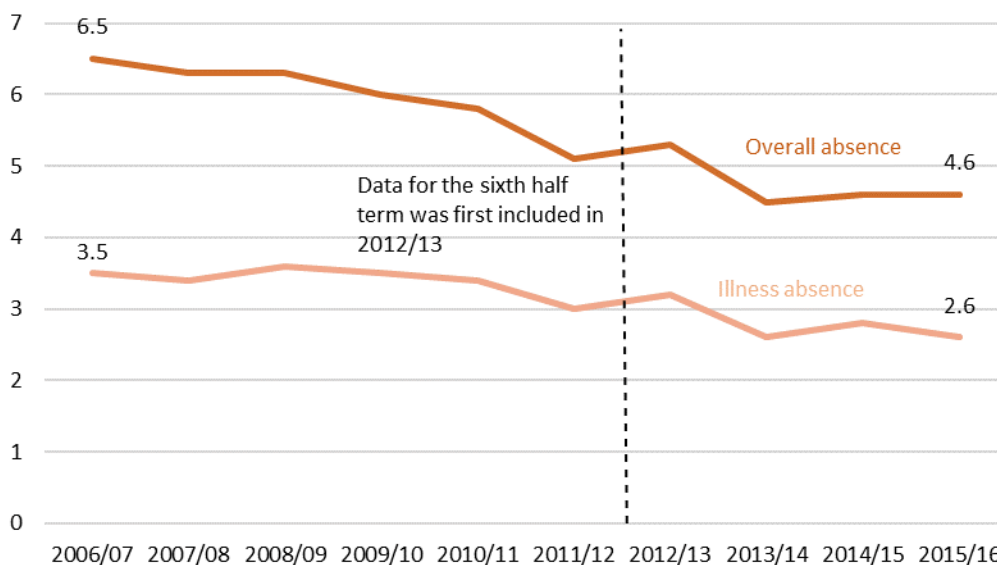
The overall absence rate in primary schools in 2015/16 has also remained the same as in 2014/15 at 4.0 per cent. The rate in secondary schools decreased slightly from 5.3 per cent in 2014/15 to 5.2 per cent in 2015/16 and in special schools the rate also decreased from 9.4 per cent to 9.1 per cent. There are a greater number of pupil enrolments in state-funded primary schools than in state-funded secondary and special schools combined, which explains why the total overall absence rate for all schools remains unchanged.

The total number of days missed across all state-funded primary, secondary and special schools due to overall absence has risen slightly from 54.5 million in 2014/15 to 54.8 million in 2015/16. This reflects the higher total number of pupil enrolments in 2015/16 compared to 2014/15.

The absence rates for illness for state-funded primary, secondary and special schools has decreased from 2.8 per cent to 2.6 per cent between 2014/15 and 2015/16. Illness is the most common reason for absence and heavily influences overall absence rates (see chart 1.)

In 2015/16, 91.7 per cent of pupils in state-funded primary, state-funded secondary and special schools missed at least one session during the school year. This is down slightly from 92.0 per cent in 2014/15.

Chart 1: Comparison of the trend in overall and illness absence rates:
England, 2006/07 to 2011/12 (five half terms) and 2012/13 to 2015/16 (six half terms)



Source: School census

2. Persistent Absence (Tables 1.2, 2.3 & 4)

Persistent absence definition

Since the beginning of the 2015/16 academic year, pupils have been identified as persistent absentees if they miss 10% or more of their own possible sessions, rather than if they reach a threshold of 15% of the standard number of possible sessions for the period.

Tables in this SFR which include time series data, as well as charts and year on year comparisons in this document, provide figures for persistent absence for previous years at the 10 per cent level based on the new methodology to assist users. Caution should be used for these time series as they might be impacted by the change in the measure itself.

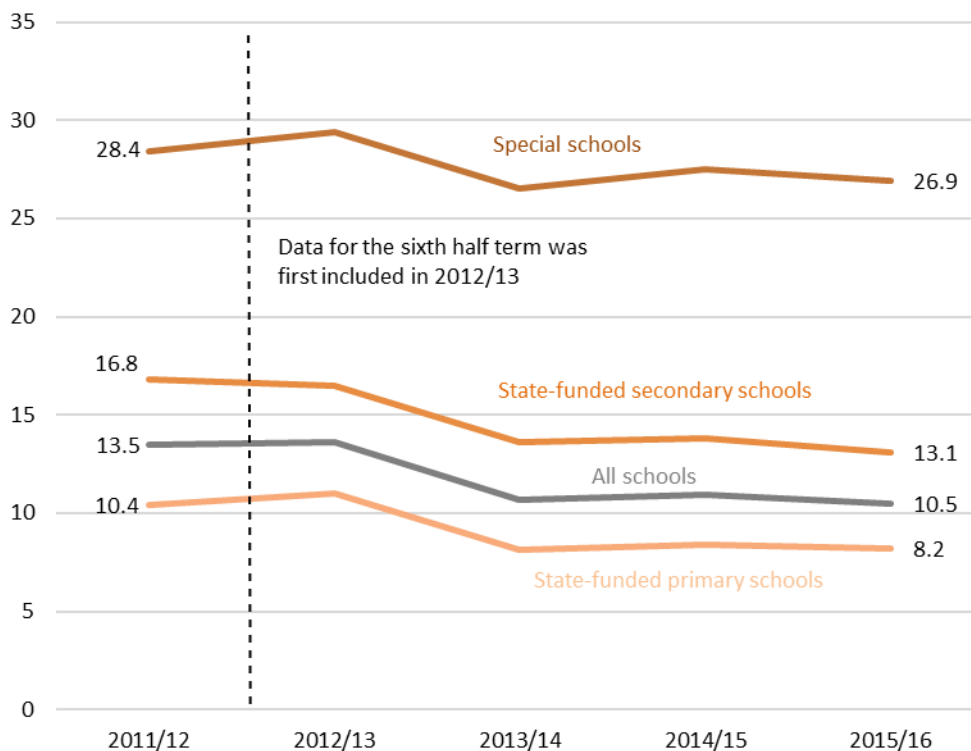
For more information on this and on the methodologies used in previous years, please see the [‘Guide to absence statistics’](#).

For state-funded primary schools, state-funded secondary schools and special schools, the percentage of pupils who are persistent absentees according to the new definition decreased from 11.0 per cent in 2014/15 to 10.5 per cent in 2015/16.

Special schools have the highest rate of persistent absence (26.9 per cent of enrolments) but have also seen a decrease from 27.5 per cent in 2014/15.

Chart 2: Percentage of enrolments that are persistent absentees

England, 2011/12 (five half terms) and 2012/13 to 2015/16 (six half terms)



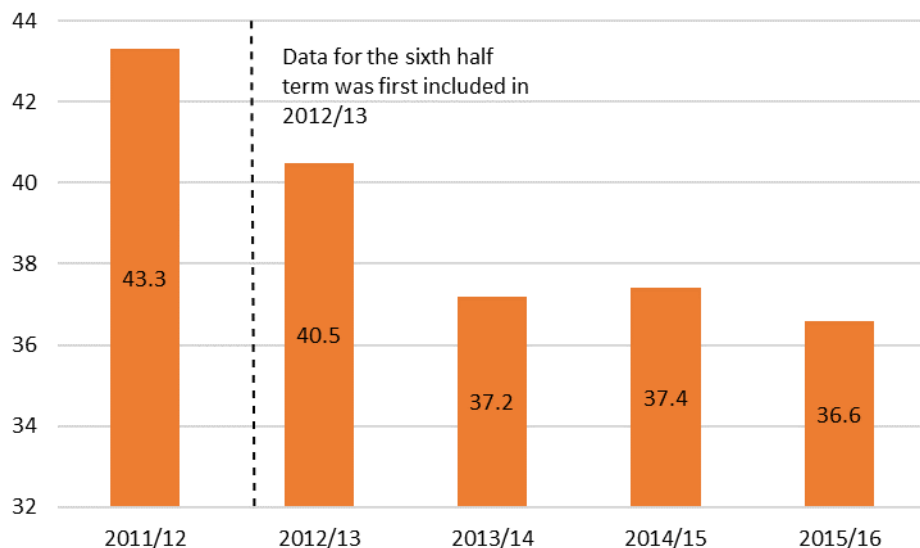
Source: School census

In 2015/16, persistent absentees accounted for 36.6 per cent of all absence compared to 37.4 per cent in 2014/15. Longer term, there has been a decrease in the proportion of absence that persistent absentees account for – down from 43.3 per cent in 2011/12 (see chart 3).

The overall absence rate for persistent absentees across all schools was 17.6 per cent, nearly four times higher than the rate for all pupils. This is a slight increase from 2014/15, when the overall absence rate for persistent absentees was 17.3 per cent.

Persistent absentees account for almost a third, 30.9 per cent, of all authorised absence and more than half, 53.8 per cent of all unauthorised absence. The rate of illness absences is almost four times higher for persistent absentees compared to other pupils, at 7.9 per cent and 2.0 per cent respectively.

Chart 3: Percentage of overall absence accounted for by persistent absentees: England, 2011/12 (five half terms) and 2012/13 to 2015/16 (six half terms)



Source: School census

3. Reasons for absence (Tables 2.1, 2.2, 2.3 & underlying data)

Illness remained the most common reason for absence in 2015/16, accounting for 57.3 per cent of all absence. In 2015/16, of all pupils in state-funded primary, secondary and special schools, 80.8 per cent missed at least one session due to illness, and 36.3 per cent missed at least one session due to medical/dental appointments (see chart 4.)

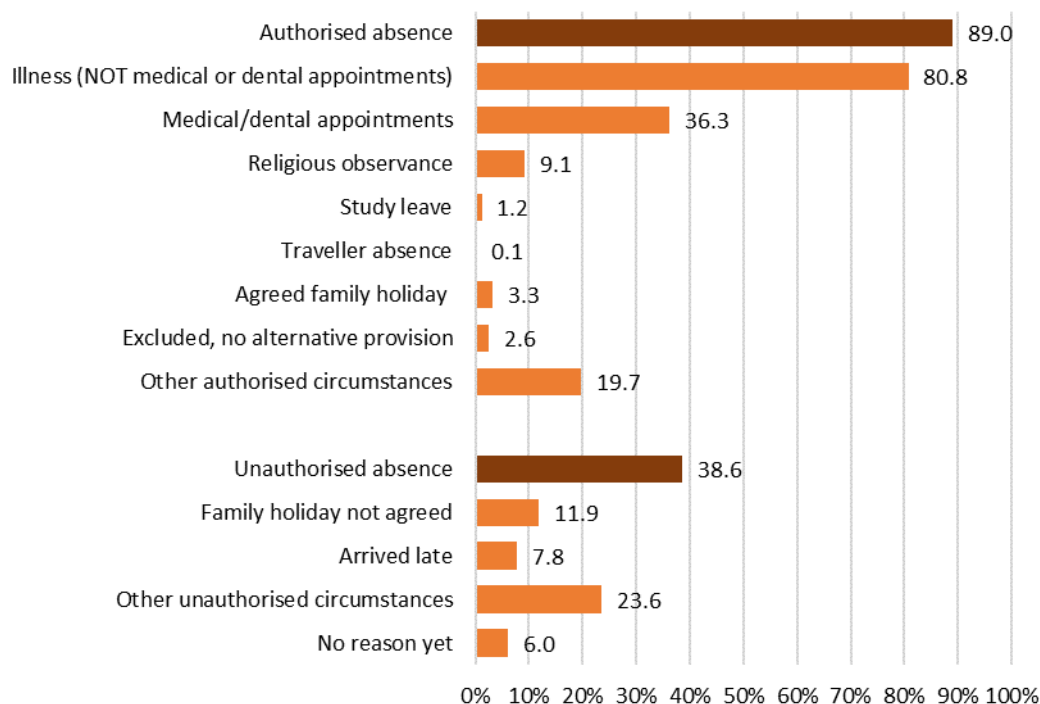


The rate of absence due to illness (not medical or dental appointments) has remained stable in the last year, at 2.6 per cent of all possible sessions in 2015/16 compared to 2.8 per cent in 2014/15. Illness accounted for 57.3 per cent of all absence in 2015/16 compared to 60.1 per cent in 2014/15. In 2015/16, 80.8 per cent of pupil enrolments had missed at least one session due to illness, a decrease from 82.7 per cent in 2014/15. Absence for other reasons has remained stable since last year.



Family holidays (authorised and unauthorised) accounted for 8.2 per cent of all absences in 2015/16 compared to 7.5 per cent in 2014/15. The percentage of all possible sessions missed due to all family holidays has also increased slightly from 0.3 per cent in 2014/15 to 0.4 per cent in 2015/16. In 2015/16, 14.7 per cent of pupil enrolments had missed at least one session for family holidays (both authorised and unauthorised); an increase from 13.8 per cent in 2014/15.

Chart 4: Percentage of pupils with one or more session of absence by reason:
 England, 2015/16 (six half terms)



Source: School census

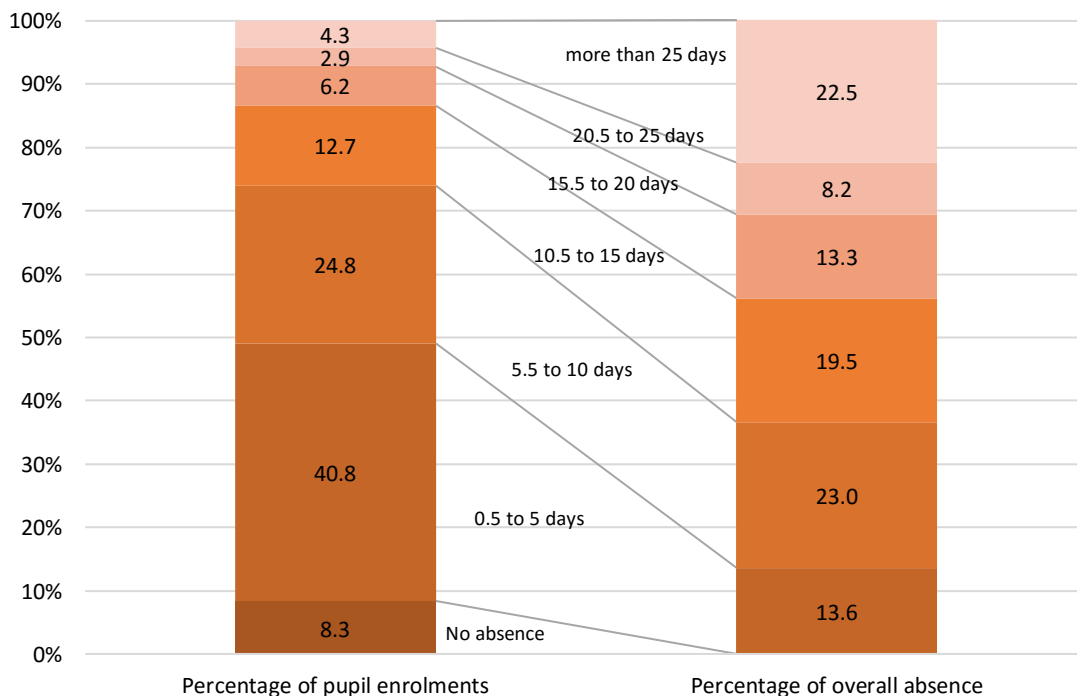
4. Distribution of absence (Tables 3.1, 3.2 & underlying data)

Nearly half of all pupils were absent for five days or fewer in 2015/16. 49.3 per cent of pupil enrolments across state-funded primary, secondary and special schools had five or fewer days of absence, up from 48.8 per cent in 2014/15.

4.3 per cent of pupil enrolments had more than 25 days of absence in 2015/16 (down slightly from 4.4 per cent of pupils in 2014/15). These pupil enrolments accounted for 22.5 per cent of days missed (see chart 5). 8.3% of pupil enrolments had no absence during 2015/16.

Per pupil enrolment, the average total absence in primary schools was 7.2 days. This compares to 16.1 days in special schools and 9.1 days in secondary schools.

Chart 5: Distribution of enrolments and overall absence
 England, 2015/16 (six half terms)



Source: School census

5. Absence by pupil characteristics (Tables 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, 5.5 & 6)

Absence data for pupils who have been eligible to receive free school meals in the last 6 years, and including those currently receiving free school meals, (FSM Ever 6) has been included for the first time in this SFR. All other findings presented below on absence rates for pupils with different characteristics have been broadly consistent across recent years, with slight changes in rates reflecting changes in overall absence rates. For more details on pupil characteristics, please refer to the '[Guide to absence statistics](#)'.

Free school meal eligibility

The overall absence rate for pupil enrolments known to be eligible for and claiming free school meals (FSM) was 7.0 per cent, compared to 4.1 per cent for non FSM enrolments. The percentage of FSM eligible enrolments that were persistent absentees was 21.6 per cent, compared to 8.2 per cent of pupil enrolments that were not eligible for free schools meals.

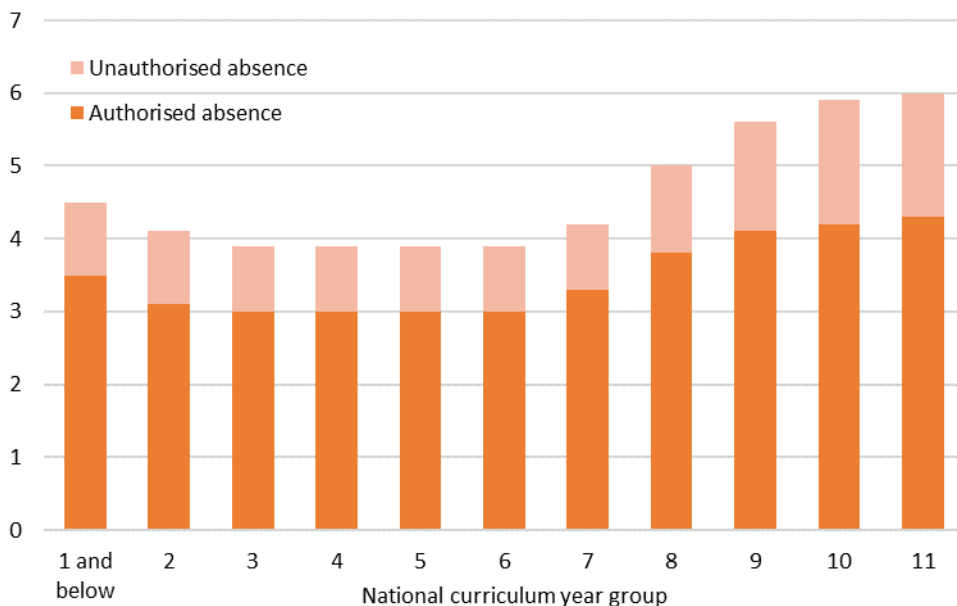
The overall absence rate for pupil enrolments who have been eligible for free school meals in the last 6 years (FSM Ever 6) was 6.4 per cent, a slightly lower rate than those currently eligible and claiming FSM. The equivalent rate for enrolments who were not eligible for free school meals in the last 6 years was 3.8 percent. The percentage of FSM Ever 6 enrolments that were persistent absentees was also slightly lower than FSM pupils at 19.0 per cent.

National curriculum year group

Not including those pupil enrolments of compulsory school age in year 12 or above (which are very few in number) and enrolments not classified by year group, enrolments in national curriculum year group 11 have the highest overall absence rates at 6.0 per cent.

Pupil enrolments in national curriculum year groups 4, 5 and 6 have the lowest overall absence rate at 3.9 per cent (see chart 6).

Chart 6: Authorised and unauthorised absence rates by national curriculum year group
England, 2015/16 (six half terms)



Source: School census

Special educational needs

Pupil enrolments with a statement of special educational needs (SEN) and those with an education healthcare plan (EHC) had an overall absence rate of 7.7 per cent compared to 4.2 per cent for those with no identified SEN.

The percentage of pupil enrolments with a statement of SEN or an EHC plan that are persistent absentees is at 22.6 per cent, almost three times higher than the percentage for enrolments with no identified SEN.

Due to recent SEN reforms, figures for 2015/16 are not directly comparable to years before 2014/15.

Ethnicity

Among ethnic groups, the highest overall absence rates were seen for Traveller of Irish Heritage and Gypsy/Roma pupil enrolments who had rates of 17.9 per cent and 12.7 per cent respectively. Enrolments of a Chinese and Black African ethnicity had the lowest overall absence rate of any ethnic groups, at 2.4 per cent and 3.0 per cent respectively, a substantially lower rate than the national average of 4.6 per cent.

A similar pattern is seen in persistent absence rates: Traveller of Irish heritage enrolments have the highest rate at 63.2 per cent and Chinese enrolments have the lowest at 3.1 per cent.

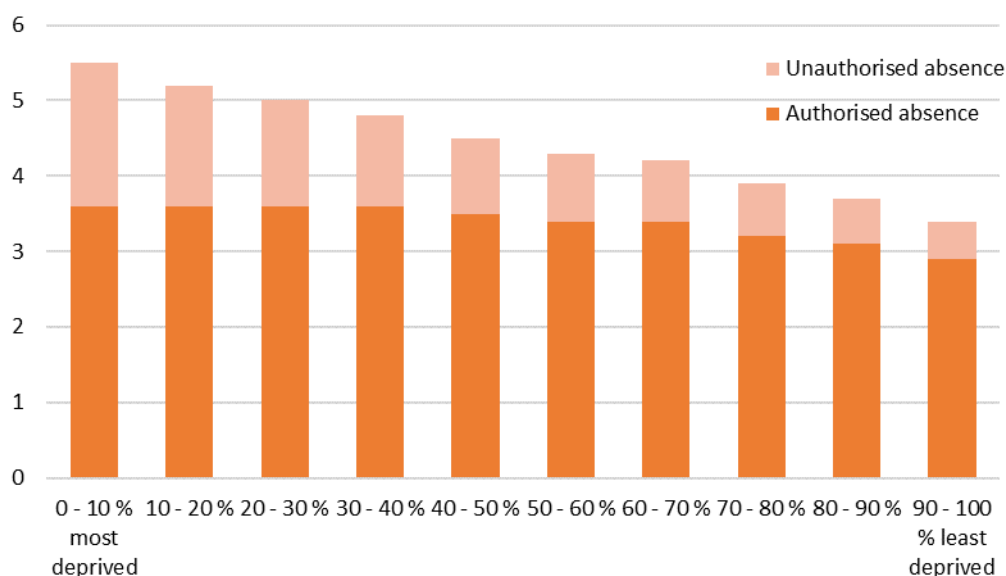
Gypsy/Roma enrolments had the largest decrease in overall absence rates since the same period last year compared to other ethnic groups, from 13.2 in 2014/15 to 12.7 in 2015/16. Please note the number of Traveller of Irish Heritage pupil enrolments is much lower than in other ethnic groups and comparisons should therefore be made with caution. Pakistani pupil enrolments had the largest increase in overall absence rates from 4.9 per cent in 2014/15 to 5.4 per cent in 2015/16.

Deprivation

When considering the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) decile of pupils' residence, overall absence rates increase with deprivation. The rate of overall absence for pupils living in the most deprived areas (5.6 per cent) was 1.6 times higher than for enrolments living in the least deprived areas (3.4 per cent). Both authorised and unauthorised absence rates increase for the most deprived deciles of IDACI (see chart 7).

The persistent absence rate for pupil enrolments living in the most deprived areas (15.3 per cent) is almost three times higher than the rate for those living in the least deprived areas (5.3 per cent).

Chart 7: Authorised and unauthorised absence rates by IDACI decile
England, 2015/16 (six half terms)



6. Absence for four year olds (Table 7 and underlying data)

The overall absence rate for four year olds (who are not of compulsory school age) has stayed the same as in 2014/15 at 5.2 per cent. Absence recorded for four year olds is not treated as ‘authorised’ or ‘unauthorised’ and is therefore reported as overall absence only.

7. Pupil referral unit absence (Table 8)

The overall absence rate for pupil referral units in 2015/16 was 32.6 per cent, up from 31.5 per cent in 2014/15. Pupil referral units are an alternative provision of education outside of mainstream and special schools, and their absence rate has historically been higher than other types of schools.

In the latest year, there was an increase in both the authorised absence rate (from 18.3 to 18.6 per cent) and the unauthorised absence rate (from 13.3 to 14.0 per cent) in pupil referral units. The increase in overall absence is largely due to increases in authorised and unauthorised absence for ‘other circumstances’ which also represent the highest proportion of absence by reason.

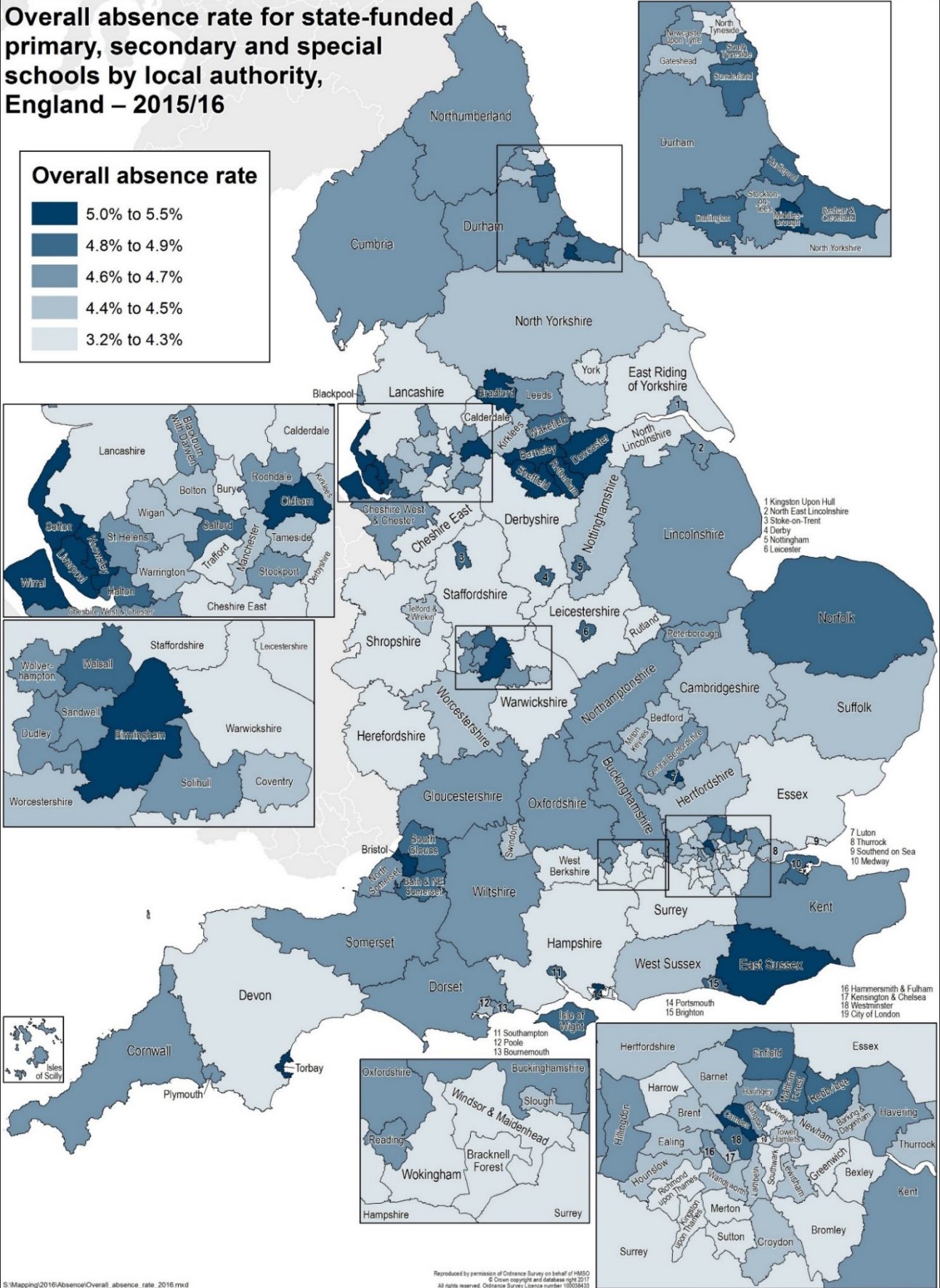
The percentage of enrolments in pupil referral units who are persistent absentees was 72.5 per cent in 2015/16, up from 70.6 per cent in 2014/15.

8. Pupil absence by local authority (Table 9)

There is variation in overall and persistent absence rates across state-funded primary, secondary and special schools by region and local authority (See Chart 8).

Similarly to last year, the three regions with the highest overall absence rate across all state-funded primary, secondary and special schools are the North East, Yorkshire and the Humber and the South West (4.7 per cent), with Inner London having the lowest overall absence rate (4.4 per cent). The region with the highest persistent absence rate is Yorkshire and the Humber, where 11.3 per cent of pupil enrolments are persistent absentees, with East of England having the lowest rate of persistent absence (at 9.9 per cent).

Chart 8: Pupil absence by local authority England, 2015/16 (six half terms)



9. 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](#).

10. Accompanying tables

The following tables are available in Excel format on the Department's statistics website.

Table coverage

All tables are based on the full academic year (six half terms), and relate to state-funded primary, state-funded secondary and special schools unless otherwise stated. As of the 2012/13 academic year, the Department's key absence indicators have been based on the full academic year's (six half term) data. Information for the first five half terms for 2006/07 to 2014/15 is available in the release's underlying data section.

Main tables

Charts

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

Tables

- 1.1 Pupil absence by type of school
- 1.2 Pupil enrolments that are persistent absentees
- 2.1 Pupil absence by reason and gender
- 2.2 Pupil enrolments with one or more session of absence by reason
- 2.3 Pupil absence by reason for persistent absentees
- 3.1 Distribution of enrolments by length of overall absence
- 3.2 Percentage of enrolments by their overall absence rates
- 4 Number of schools by the percentage of persistent absentees
- 5.1 Pupil absence by characteristics
- 5.2 Characteristics of pupil enrolments that are persistent absentees
- 5.3 Pupil absence by ethnic group
- 5.4 Pupil enrolments that are persistent absentees by ethnic group
- 5.5 Pupil absence by type of special educational need
- 6 Pupil absence by Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) decile of pupil residence
7. Pupil absence for four year olds
8. Pupil absence, persistent absence and pupil absence by reason for pupil referral units

Local authority tables

9. Pupil absence by type of school (by local authority area and region)

When reviewing the tables, please note that:

We preserve confidentiality

The Code of Practice for Official Statistics requires that reasonable steps should be taken to ensure that all published or disseminated statistics

produced by the Department for Education protect confidentiality.

We round numbers

Enrolment numbers at national and regional levels have been rounded to the nearest 5. Enrolment numbers of 1 or 2 have been suppressed to protect confidentiality. Where any number is shown as 0, the original figure was also 0. Where the numerator or denominator of any percentage calculated on enrolment numbers is less than 3, the percentage has been suppressed. This suppression is consistent with the [Departmental statistical policy](#).

We adopt symbols to help identify suppression

Symbols are used in the tables as follows:

- 0 zero
- x small number suppressed to preserve confidentiality
- . not applicable
- .. not available

11. Further information is available

Want previously published figures?

For the previous full year pupil absence figures visit: [Pupil Absence in Schools in England, Including Pupil Characteristics: 2014/15](#)

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.gov.uk or [Welsh Government – Statistics and Research](#)

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

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

For related publications

For related publications, visit [Pupil absence in schools in England](#)

Revisions?

There are no further planned revisions to this Statistical First Release. However, if at a later date we need to make a revision, this will comply with the [Departmental revisions policy](#).

12. National Statistics

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

Designation can be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics:

- meet identified user needs;

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

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

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

13. Technical information

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

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

The following technical notes are specific to this publication:

- Data are collected a term in arrears, meaning that where a school closes, data are not collected for the last term the school was open. For schools which close at the end of a term, data for that term will not be collected.
- 10 sponsor-led academies and 1 new school opened part way through the year and incorrectly returned absence data for their predecessor school. As the combined absence data would then be related to both the academy and their predecessor school these academies have been completely removed from this analysis. Another 19 sponsor-led academies and 2 new schools opened after the end of the academic year and incorrectly returned absence data for their predecessor school, and were removed.
- Year on year comparisons of local authority data may be affected by schools converting to academies.
- Schools with fewer than 6 enrolments aged between five and fifteen are removed from our analysis. For this release, 23 schools were removed from the main five to fifteen year old analysis.

14. Get in touch

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Department
for Education



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This document is also available from our website “statistics: pupil absence”

Reference: [SFR 14/2017]



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