Attendance at grant aided primary, post primary and special schools in Northern Ireland – 2019/20

The purpose of this statistical release is to present detailed, final attendance figures for schools for the 2019-20 academic year. It includes information on the rates of absence, type of absence and reason for absence.

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Reader Information

Purpose	The purpose of this statistical release is to present final attendance figures for the 2019-20 academic year.
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Frequency	Annual
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Key Points

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 2019/20 academic year was 93.5% of the total half days.

- 6.5% of total half days in primary, post-primary and special schools were missed due to absence. These comprised 4.5% authorised absence and 2.0% unauthorised absence.

- The attendance rate for primary schools in 2019/20 was 94.4% of total half days. 4.0% of half days were missed due to authorised absence and 1.6% due to unauthorised absence.

- The attendance rate for post-primary schools in 2019/20 was 92.4% (94.6% Grammar, 91.0% Non-Grammar) of total half days. 5.1% of half days were missed due to authorised absence and 2.5% due to unauthorised absence.

- In special schools, the attendance rate in 2019/20 was 89.3% of total half days. This sector continues to have the highest overall absence rates – 7.2% of all half days were missed due to authorised absence and 3.5% due to unauthorised absence.

Contents

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 the 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.

Attendance data for the 2019/20 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 2020. Data for the 2018/19 academic year was not processed due to resource priorities therefore comparisons are made with the 2017/18 academic year throughout this bulletin.

Covid-19

From the 23rd March due to COVID-19 school settings were closed to pupils with the exception of vulnerable children and children of key workers. These pupils were recorded as present when in school. From this date until the end of June all other pupils were recorded as *attendance not required*.

Management information on pupil and workforce attendance for the 2020/21 academic year is published each week on the Department of Education website.   These publications are available at Management information on attendance of pupils and workforce in schools | Department of Education (education-ni.gov.uk).

1. All Schools by Sector

1.1 Key Findings

- In primary schools, 5.6% of all half days were missed, comprising 4.0% authorised and 1.6% unauthorised absence (see Table 1.1 below). In 2017/18, overall primary absence was 5.1% of all half days (3.5% authorised and 1.6% unauthorised).

- In post-primary schools, 7.6% of all half days were missed, comprising 5.1% authorised absence and 2.5% unauthorised absence (see Table 1.1 below). In 2017/18, overall post primary absence was 6.7% of the total half days (4.5% authorised and 2.2% unauthorised).

- In Grammar schools 5.4% of all half days were missed, comprising 4.5% authorised absence and 0.9% unauthorised absence. In Non-Grammar schools 9.0% of all half days were missed comprising 5.4% authorised absence and 3.6% unauthorised absence.

- In special schools, 10.7% of all half days were missed, comprising 7.2% authorised and 3.5% unauthorised absence (see Table 1.1 below). In 2017/18 overall special school absence was 10.1% of total half days (6.7% authorised and 3.5 unauthorised absence).

Table 1.1: Attendance and absence at school by school type, 2019/20

	% of total half days		
	Primary Schools	**Post-primary Schools**	**Special Schools**
Attended	94.4	92.4	89.3
Overall absence	5.6	7.6	10.7
Authorised absence	4.0	5.1	7.2
Unauthorised absence	1.6	2.5	3.5

Chart 1.1: Absence from primary, post-primary and special schools, 2019/20
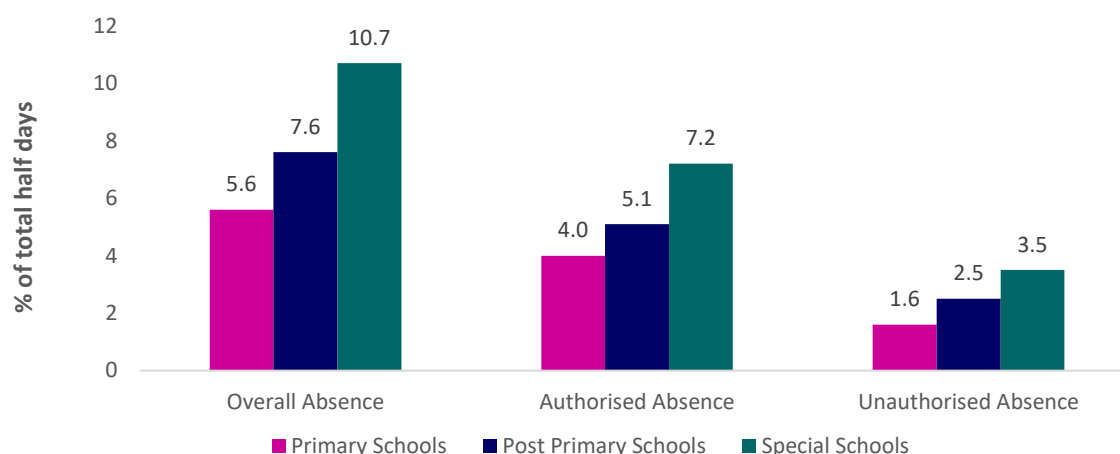
1.2 Reasons for Absence

The level of absence attributable to any particular reason tends to remain fairly consistent on an annual basis and this pattern continued in 2019/20. 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 58.6% of absent half days in primary schools, 52.6% in post-primary schools and 48.0% in special schools. The equivalent figures in 2017/18 were 58.0%, 51.7% and 44.7% respectively. Illness is an authorised absence.

- Absences stemming from medical/dental appointments; an authorised absence, accounted for 2.9% of missed half days in primary schools, 5.0% in post-primary schools and 7.6% in special schools. In 2017/18, these figures were 3.1%, 5.5% and 8.3% respectively.

- In primary schools, non-agreed family holidays represented 6.4% of absent half days in 2019/20, 2.4% in post-primary schools and 2.5% in special schools. The equivalent figures in 2017/18 were 10.3%, 3.2% and 3.7% respectively.

- The proportion of absent half days for which no reason was provided increased across primary and post primary schools during 2019/20. These absences represented 15.5% of absent half days in primary schools and 21.9% in post primary schools. The equivalent figures from 2017/18 were 14.6% and 20.6%. The proportion in special schools was 24.5% in 2017/18 compared to 22.5% in 2019/20.

Table 1.2: Absence from all grant-aided schools by reason, 2019/20

	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	**71.9**	**4.0**	**67.0**	**5.1**	**67.2**	**7.2**
Illness	58.6	3.3	52.6	4.0	48.0	5.1
Medical / dental appointments	2.9	0.2	5.0	0.4	7.6	0.8
Other exceptional circumstances	8.0	0.4	5.6	0.4	9.3	1.0
Family holiday agreed	1.0	0.1	0.4	*	1.2	0.1
Bereavement	1.0	0.1	1.6	0.1	0.5	0.1
Artistic endeavour	0.2	*	0.3	*	*	*
Suspended	0.1	*	1.5	0.1	0.4	*
Religious observance	*	*	*	*	0.1	*
Unauthorised absence						
Total	**28.1**	**1.6**	**33.0**	**2.5**	**32.8**	**3.5**
No reason provided	15.5	0.9	21.9	1.7	22.5	2.4
Family holiday not agreed	6.4	0.4	2.4	0.2	2.5	0.3
Other	5.6	0.3	8.4	0.6	7.5	0.8
Late after registration closed	0.7	*	0.3	*	0.3	*
Total overall absence	**100**	**5.6**	**100**	**7.6**	**100**	**10.7**

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

1.3 Comparisons with England, Scotland and Wales

Due to inconsistencies in recording and because of the COVID-19 pandemic it is not possible to provide comparative analysis for the 2019/20 academic year.

2. Pupil Level Analysis

2.1 Gender

Overall absence rates were similar for males and females of primary school age at 5.7% and 5.5% respectively. In post primary schools males (7.7%) had a slightly higher overall absence rate than females (7.4%). In special schools overall absence was higher for females (11.7%) compared with males (10.3%). This difference can be explained by an authorised absence of 8.4% for females and 6.7% for males.

Table 2.1: Attendance by gender, 2019/20

Gender		Percentage of total half days			
		Attended	Overall absence	Authorised absence	Unauthorised absence
Primary	Male	94.3	5.7	4.1	1.6
	Female	94.5	5.5	4.0	1.6
	Total	**94.4**	**5.6**	**4.0**	**1.6**
Post Primary	Male	92.3	7.7	5.1	2.6
	Female	92.6	7.4	5.1	2.4
	Total	**92.4**	**7.6**	**5.1**	**2.5**
Special	Male	89.7	10.3	6.7	3.6
	Female	88.3	11.7	8.4	3.4
	Total	**89.3**	**10.7**	**7.2**	**3.5**
All Schools	Male	93.4	6.6	4.5	2.0
	Female	93.6	6.4	4.5	1.9
	Total	**93.5**	**6.5**	**4.5**	**2.0**

2.2 Religion of Pupil

There is very little difference between the attendance rates of each religion in the table below. Overall, Protestant pupils (93.7%) have a similar attendance rate to Catholic pupils (93.6%). In primary schools the authorised absence rate for Catholic pupils (5.6%) was 0.4 of a percentage point higher than the rate for Protestant pupils (5.2%).

Table 2.2: Attendance by religion of pupil, 2019/20

Religion		Percentage of total half days			
		Attended	Overall absence	Authorised absence	Unauthorised absence
Primary	Protestant	94.8	5.2	3.6	1.6
	Catholic	94.4	5.6	4.2	1.4
	Other[1]	93.7	6.3	4.2	2.1
	Total	**94.4**	**5.6**	**4.0**	**1.6**
Post Primary	Protestant	92.5	7.5	4.7	2.7
	Catholic	92.6	7.4	5.3	2.1
	Other[1]	91.7	8.3	5.1	3.2
	Total	**92.4**	**7.6**	**5.1**	**2.5**
Special	Protestant	89.4	10.6	7.0	3.6
	Catholic	89.2	10.8	7.2	3.6
	Other[1]	89.4	10.6	7.5	3.1
	Total	**89.3**	**10.7**	**7.2**	**3.5**
All Schools	Protestant	93.7	6.3	4.2	2.1
	Catholic	93.6	6.4	4.7	1.7
	Other[1]	92.9	7.1	4.6	2.5
	Total	**93.5**	**6.5**	**4.5**	**2.0**

2.3 Ethnicity

Irish Traveller children have a markedly higher absence rate than any other ethnic group (see Table 2.3 below). They missed 26.3% of total half days, compared with a rate of 7.4% for children from a Minority Ethnic background and 6.4% for White pupils.

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[1]Other religion includes Other Christian, No religion and non-Christian.

Table 2.3: Attendance by ethnicity, 2019/20

Ethnicity		Percentage of total half days			
		Attended	Overall absence	Authorised absence	Unauthorised absence
Primary	White	94.6	5.4	4.0	1.5
	Minority Ethnic Background[1]	92.6	7.4	4.4	3.0
	Irish Traveller	75.9	24.1	11.3	12.8
	Total	**94.4**	**5.6**	**4.0**	**1.6**
Post Primary	White	92.5	7.5	5.1	2.4
	Minority Ethnic Background[2]	92.7	7.3	4.1	3.2
	Irish Traveller	67.8	32.2	16.4	15.7
	Total	**92.4**	**7.6**	**5.1**	**2.5**
Special	White	89.5	10.5	7.1	3.4
	Minority Ethnic Background[1]	88.9	11.1	7.2	3.9
	Irish Traveller	73.4	26.6	12.8	13.9
	Total	**89.3**	**10.7**	**7.2**	**3.5**
All Schools	White	93.6	6.4	4.5	1.9
	Minority Ethnic Background[1]	92.6	7.4	4.3	3.1
	Irish Traveller	73.7	26.3	12.7	13.6
	Total	**93.5**	**6.5**	**4.5**	**2.0**

2.4 Children Looked After[2]

In 2019/20, Children Looked After in post primary schools have an attendance rate of 88.8% compared with those who were not in care (92.5%). The largest difference in attendance rates between Children Looked After and those that are not Looked After was for unauthorised absence in post primary schools, 5.3% and 2.5% respectively. (See Table 2.4)

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[1] Minority Ethnic Background includes Black African, Black Caribbean, Black Other, Bangladeshi, Chinese/Hong Kong, Indian/Sri Lankan, Korean, Malaysian, Pakistani, Roma, Vietnamese, Mixed, Other
[2] 'Children looked after' 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.

Table 2.4: Attendance of Children Looked After, 2019/20

Children Looked After		Percentage of total half days			
		Attended	Overall absence	Authorised absence	Unauthorised absence
Primary	Children Looked After	94.5	5.5	3.8	1.7
	Other	94.4	5.6	4.0	1.6
	Total	**94.4**	**5.6**	**4.0**	**1.6**
Post Primary	Children Looked After	88.8	11.2	5.9	5.3
	Other	92.5	7.5	5.1	2.5
	Total	**92.4**	**7.6**	**5.1**	**2.5**
Special	Children Looked After	91.4	8.6	5.7	2.9
	Other	89.2	10.8	7.3	3.5
	Total	**89.3**	**10.7**	**7.2**	**3.5**
All Schools	Children Looked After	91.9	8.1	4.8	3.3
	Other	93.5	6.5	4.5	2.0
	Total	**93.5**	**6.5**	**4.5**	**2.0**

2.5 Neighbourhood Renewal Areas[3] (NRAs)

At 8.7%, the absence rate for pupils living in Neighbourhood Renewal Areas was 2.7 percentage points higher than for pupils who did not live in a NRA (6.0%). When comparing school types the gap is widest in the post primary sector at 3.3 percentage points (see Table 2.5).

Table 2.5: Attendance rates for pupils living in NRAs, 2019/20

		Percentage of total half days			
		Attended	Overall absence	Authorised absence	Unauthorised absence
Primary	NRA	92.5	7.5	4.7	2.8
	Other	94.8	5.2	3.9	1.3
	Total	**94.4**	**5.6**	**4.0**	**1.6**
Post Primary	NRA	89.6	10.4	6.3	4.0
	Other	92.9	7.1	4.8	2.2
	Total	**92.4**	**7.6**	**5.1**	**2.5**
Special	NRA	88.0	12.0	7.3	4.7
	Other	89.8	10.2	7.1	3.1
	Total	**89.3**	**10.7**	**7.2**	**3.5**
All Schools	NRA	91.3	8.7	5.4	3.3
	Other	94.0	6.0	4.3	1.7
	Total	**93.5**	**6.5**	**4.5**	**2.0**

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[3] 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.

2.6 Free School Meal Entitlement (FSME)

2.6.1 School Level data

Primary school pupils who are entitled to free school meals have lower attendance rates than those who are not. This is reflected in the **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 2.6).

The overall absence rate in primary schools where less than 10% of pupils were entitled to free school meals was 3.8% of total half days in 2019/20. By comparison, primary schools where more than 50% of pupils were entitled to free school meals had an absence rate of 7.8%. In the post primary sector the difference is even greater with an absence rate of 4.6% for schools with less than 10% of pupils entitled to free school meals compared with 10.1% for schools with 50% or more of their pupils entitled to free school meals. 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 2.6: Attendance by FSME band, 2019/20

% of pupils entitled to Free School Meals		Percentage of total half days			
		Attended	Overall absence	Authorised absence	Unauthorised absence
Primary	Under 10.00	96.2	3.8	3.1	0.7
	10.00 – 19.99	95.5	4.5	3.6	0.9
	20.00 – 29.99	94.6	5.4	3.9	1.4
	30.00 – 39.99	93.3	6.7	4.8	1.9
	40.00 – 49.99	93.6	6.4	4.3	2.2
	50.00 or more	92.2	7.8	4.8	3.0
	Total	**94.4**	**5.6**	**4.0**	**1.6**
Post Primary	Under 10.00	95.4	4.6	4.0	0.6
	10.00 – 19.99	94.5	5.5	4.4	1.1
	20.00 – 29.99	92.6	7.4	5.0	2.4
	30.00 – 39.99	90.5	9.5	5.7	3.7
	40.00 – 49.99	90.7	9.3	5.9	3.3
	50.00 or more	89.9	10.1	5.7	4.4
	Total	**92.4**	**7.6**	**5.1**	**2.5**

2.6.2 Pupil Level data

In 2019/20, free school meal entitled pupils were absent for 9.0% of total half days compared with 5.5% for pupils not entitled to free school meals, a gap of 3.5 percentage points. At 4.6 percentage points the gap in the absence rate between FSME pupils (10.9%) and Non FSME pupils (6.3%) is greatest in the post primary sector.

Table 2.7: Attendance by free school meal status and school type, 2019/20

| | | Percentage of total half days | | | |
		Attended	Overall absence	Authorised absence	Unauthorised absence
Primary	FSME	92.3	7.7	5.2	2.5
	Non FSME	95.2	4.8	3.6	1.2
	Total	**94.4**	**5.6**	**4.0**	**1.6**
Post Primary	FSME	89.1	10.9	6.7	4.2
	Non FSME	93.7	6.3	4.5	1.9
	Total	**92.4**	**7.6**	**5.1**	**2.5**
Special	FSME	88.9	11.1	7.3	3.8
	Non FSME	89.7	10.3	7.1	3.2
	Total	**89.3**	**10.7**	**7.2**	**3.5**
All Schools	FSME	91.0	9.0	5.8	3.2
	Non FSME	94.5	5.5	4.0	1.5
	Total	**93.5**	**6.5**	**4.5**	**2.0**

2.7 Newcomer

In 2019/20, Newcomer pupils had a lower attendance rate (90.7%) than those who were not Newcomer pupils (93.7%). There is also a difference in the rate of unauthorised absence among Newcomer and Non Newcomer pupils with the rate for Newcomers double that for non-Newcomers at 3.8% and 1.9% of total half days respectively.

Table 2.8: Attendance by Newcomer status and school type, 2019/20

		Percentage of total half days			
		Attended	Overall absence	Authorised absence	Unauthorised absence
Primary	Newcomer	91.1	8.9	5.5	3.4
	Non Newcomer	94.6	5.4	3.9	1.4
	Total	**94.4**	**5.6**	**4.0**	**1.6**
Post Primary	Newcomer	89.3	10.7	5.2	5.5
	Non Newcomer	92.5	7.5	5.1	2.4
	Total	**92.4**	**7.6**	**5.1**	**2.5**
Special	Newcomer	86.0	14.0	8.5	5.5
	Non Newcomer	89.4	10.6	7.2	3.5
	Total	**89.3**	**10.7**	**7.2**	**3.5**
All Schools	Newcomer	90.7	9.3	5.5	3.8
	Non Newcomer	93.7	6.3	4.4	1.9
	Total	**93.5**	**6.5**	**4.5**	**2.0**

2.8 Overview

Schools monitor attendance to identify potential concerns at an early stage. When a concern is identified the school will contact parents to seek their assistance. However there are instances when, despite the school using a range of intervention strategies to support them, the pupil will still struggle with attendance. When schools are unable to resolve an attendance issue and the school is concerned or attendance has reduced below 85%, they should refer a pupil to the EA's dedicated Education Welfare Service (EWS). The detailed breakdown in Table 2.9 of attendance by pupil characteristics, grouped by categories such as gender, religion and ethnicity 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 – 64.7% of these pupils are absent for at least 15% of total half days. For primary schools the corresponding figure for Irish Travellers was 59.1%.

Table 2.9 Attendance overview by school type 2019/20

Pupil Characteristic	Primary			Post Primary			Special			Total		
	100%	85.01%-99.99%	85%or below	100%	85.01%-99.99%	85%or below	100%	85.01%-99.99%	85%or below	100%	85.01%-99.99%	85%or below
Gender	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Male	9.9	83.3	6.8	7.0	81.1	11.8	5.5	75.6	18.9	8.7	82.2	9.1
Female	10.1	83.6	6.3	7.6	81.2	11.2	4.8	71.1	24.1	9.0	82.5	8.5
Free Meal Entitlement	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Entitled	5.5	82.4	12.2	4.4	74.1	21.5	4.3	73.6	22.1	5.0	78.9	16.1
Non-Entitled	11.7	83.8	4.4	8.4	83.8	7.8	6.4	74.9	18.8	10.3	83.7	6.0
Ethnicity	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
White	10.1	83.9	6.0	7.2	81.5	11.4	5.3	74.6	20.1	8.8	82.7	8.4
Minority Ethnic Background	9.2	78.8	12.0	10.5	77.5	12.0	6.0	72.9	21.1	9.7	78.2	12.1
Irish Traveller	2.7	38.2	59.1	6.1	29.1	64.7	*	#	45.9	3.7	36.5	59.8
Religion	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Protestant	11.7	82.4	5.9	8.5	79.7	11.8	6.0	74.3	19.7	10.2	81.1	8.8
Catholic	9.6	84.3	6.1	6.3	83.0	10.7	4.5	75.3	20.2	8.2	83.6	8.2
Other	8.5	82.8	8.7	7.8	78.5	13.7	5.9	72.3	21.8	8.2	81.1	10.7
Total	**10.0**	**83.4**	**6.6**	**7.3**	**81.2**	**11.5**	**5.3**	**74.3**	**20.4**	**8.8**	**82.4**	**8.8**

* Denotes fewer than 5 pupils
# figure not provided under rules of statistical disclosure

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/education/Census%20description%20for%20web%202020.docx

5. The 2019/20 figures in this statistical release are based on school census information. 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 are 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

7. 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.
A new 'J – Extended Leave' code was introduced in the 2018/19 academic year. This will allow pupils, for a limited period only to travel outside the UK without their attendance levels being adversely affected. Further details can be found by clicking the link below.

See https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/circular-202008-attendance-guidance-and-absence-recording-by-schools 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 2019/20.

11. In some cases, percentages may not sum due to rounding.

12. 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.

13. Comparison of the number of looked after children recorded in the school census and the number recorded by the DoH 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.

14. 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.

15. 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

16. 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 the 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.

17. Requests for further information should be addressed to:

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>   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

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