



## Statistical Press Release

31 January 2014

### Coverage

Northern Ireland

### Theme

Children, Education and Skills

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## Attendance at grant-aided primary, post-primary and special schools 2012/13: Summary statistics

### Background

Attendance data for the 2012/13 academic year was collected from all grant-aided primary, post-primary and special schools via the school census in October 2013.

The purpose of this statistical first release is to present basic attendance figures for schools for the 2012/13 academic year. It includes information on the levels of absence, type of absence and reason for absence.

A further release containing a more detailed set of tables, including absence by pupil characteristics, will be published by the end of February 2014.

## KEY FINDINGS

### Absence rates

While there does not tend to be large variation in absence levels year on year, overall absence was slightly higher in all sectors in 2012/13 than in the previous year.

In primary schools in 2012/13, 5.1 per cent of all half days were missed due to absence, comprising 3.7 per cent authorised and 1.4 per cent unauthorised absence. This represents an increase on 2011/12, when overall absence accounted for 4.8 per cent of the total half days (3.4 per cent authorised and 1.3 per cent unauthorised).

In post-primary schools in 2012/13, 7.1 per cent of all half days were missed due to absence, 4.5 per cent was authorised absence and 2.6 per cent was unauthorised absence. In 2011/12, overall absence represented 7.0 per cent of the total half days, 4.4 per cent authorised and 2.6 per cent unauthorised. As with primary schools, the figures show a slight increase in absence levels on the previous year for overall and authorised absence, while unauthorised absence has remained the same.

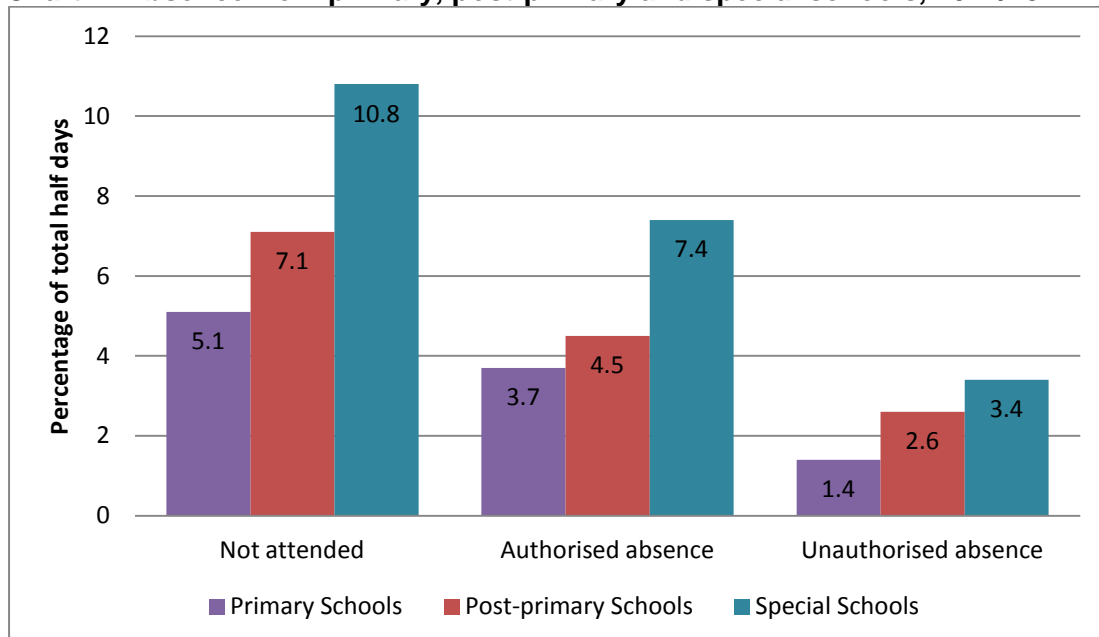
In special schools, 10.8 per cent of all half days were missed due to absence in 2012/13, comprising 7.4 per cent authorised and 3.4 per cent unauthorised absence. These figures show an increase in overall, authorised and unauthorised absence since 2011/12, when levels were 9.8 per cent, 6.5 per cent and 3.3 per cent respectively.

**Table 1: Attendance at school, 2012/13**

	Per cent of total half days		
	Primary Schools	Post-primary Schools	Special Schools
Attended	94.9	92.9	89.2
Not attended	5.1	7.1	10.8
<i>Comprising:</i>			
Authorised absence	3.7	4.5	7.4
Unauthorised absence	1.4	2.6	3.4

Note: In some cases, percentages may not add due to rounding.

**Chart 1: Absence from primary, post-primary and special schools, 2012/13**



## Reasons for absence

**Table 2: Absence from schools by reason, 2012/13**

	Primary Schools		Post-Primary Schools		Special Schools	
	Per cent of absent half days	Per cent of total half days	Per cent of absent half days	Per cent of total half days	Per cent of absent half days	Per cent of total half days
<b>Authorised absence</b>						
Artistic endeavour	0.2	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0
Bereavement	1.0	0.1	1.5	0.1	0.6	0.1
Suspended	0.1	0.0	1.2	0.1	0.7	0.1
Family holiday agreed	2.4	0.1	0.6	0.0	2.4	0.3
Illness	61.8	3.1	49.2	3.5	45.7	4.9
Medical / dental appointments	2.7	0.1	5.3	0.4	7.0	0.8
Other exceptional circumstances	4.4	0.2	5.6	0.4	12.2	1.3
Religious observance	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0
<b>Total authorised absence</b>	<b>72.6</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>63.8</b>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>68.7</b>	<b>7.4</b>
<b>Unauthorised absence</b>						
Family holiday not agreed	6.4	0.3	2.1	0.2	1.8	0.2
Other	3.7	0.2	5.0	0.4	3.7	0.4
No reason yet provided	16.6	0.8	28.7	2.0	25.5	2.7
Late after registration closed	0.7	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.3	0.0
<b>Total unauthorised absence</b>	<b>27.4</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>36.2</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>31.3</b>	<b>3.4</b>
<b>Total overall absence</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>5.1</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>7.1</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>10.8</b>

The most common reason for absence in all schools was illness, which is an authorised absence. Illness accounted for 61.8 per cent of all absent half days in primary schools, 49.2 per cent in post-primary schools and 45.7 per cent in special schools. This equates to 3.1 per cent, 3.5 per cent and 4.9 per cent of the total half days respectively.

While the level of absence attributable to each reason tends to be similar year on year, there was an increase in 'other exceptional circumstances' in 2012/13. In 2011/12, this reason represented 3.3 per cent of all absent half days in primary schools, 3.7 per cent in post-primary and 7.3 per cent in special schools. Levels increased to 4.4 per cent, 5.6 per cent and 12.2 per cent respectively in 2012/13. One reason for this reported increase could be severe weather conditions, which caused widespread disruption to schools in early spring of the reporting year, with pupils affected being recorded as absent due to 'other exceptional circumstances'.

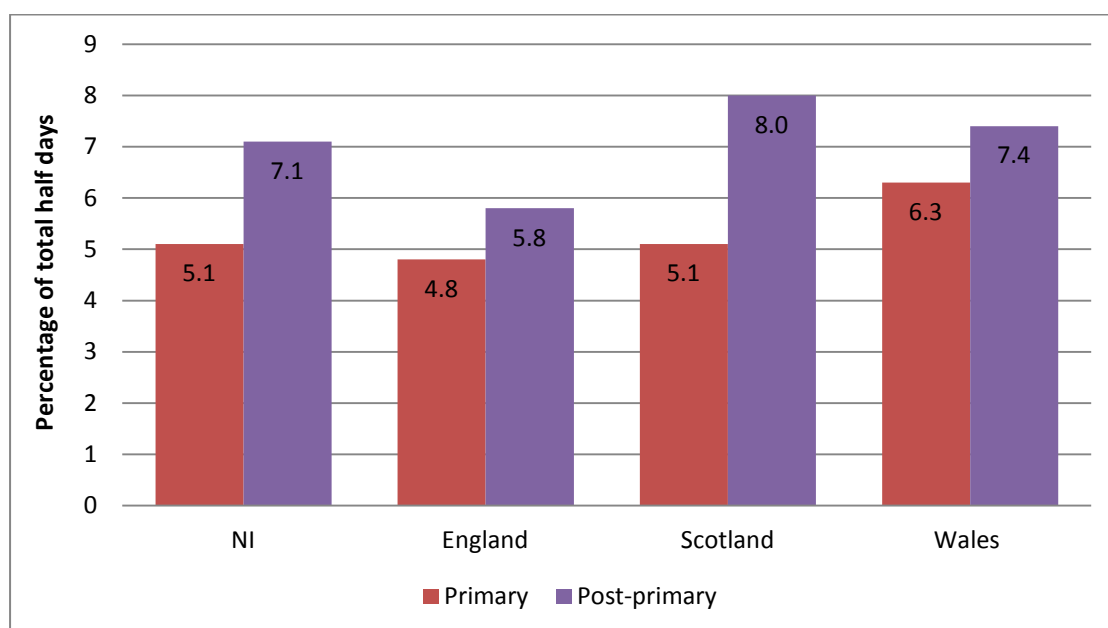
## Comparisons with England, Scotland and Wales

The highest overall absence rates in the primary sector were recorded in Wales – 6.3 per cent of the total half days. Scotland had the highest overall absence levels in post-primary, at 8.0 per cent of the total half days. This compares with 5.1 per cent and 7.1 per cent respectively in Northern Ireland. However, unauthorised absence in NI schools, at 1.4 per cent of the total half days in primary and 2.6 per cent in post-primary, was notably higher than in England and Wales, and marginally higher than in Scotland.

**Table 3: Comparison with England, Scotland and Wales, 2012/13**

	Per cent of total half days			
	Primary Schools		Post-Primary Schools	
	Unauthorised absence	Overall absence	Unauthorised absence	Overall absence
NI	1.4	5.1	2.6	7.1
England	0.7	4.8	1.2	5.8
Scotland	1.3	5.1	2.5	8.0
Wales	0.9	6.3	1.3	7.4

**Chart 2: Comparisons with England, Scotland and Wales – overall absence, 2012/13**



## Notes to 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. 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.
2. 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 [http://www.deni.gov.uk/updated\\_data\\_collection\\_procedures.doc](http://www.deni.gov.uk/updated_data_collection_procedures.doc)
3. The 2012/13 figures in this statistical release are based on school census information as at 11 October 2013. They may be subject to minor revision and these will be notified in accordance with our revisions policy. This can be accessed at [http://www.deni.gov.uk/de\\_statement\\_on\\_statistical\\_revisions-2.doc](http://www.deni.gov.uk/de_statement_on_statistical_revisions-2.doc)

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

[http://www.deni.gov.uk/de\\_statement\\_on\\_confidentiality\\_-\\_new.doc](http://www.deni.gov.uk/de_statement_on_confidentiality_-_new.doc)

#### Definitions

4. Attendance or absence is measured for every pupil in half day sessions (am and pm).

##### Attendance

In addition to actual attendance within the school premises, attendance also includes:

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

\* 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.

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

#### Data quality and coverage

5. As with the data for England, Scotland and Wales, overall absence is considered to be a more reliable measure of absence than authorised and unauthorised absence. 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 levels of unauthorised absence being recorded as 'no reason yet provided' and lower figures for 'other' than in previous years.

Both figures have been provided, however limitations in comparing rates of unauthorised and authorised absence should be noted. In addition, 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.

6. 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 2012/13.
7. Attendance information was not available for ten primary schools and four post-primary schools which had closed prior to the data being collected. This accounts for 1.2 per cent and 1.9 per cent of the total primary schools and post-primary schools, respectively, and 0.6 per cent and 0.2 per cent of all pupils in Years 1 to 7 and Years 8 to 12, respectively.
8. Comparative data was obtained from the following sources:

Pupil Absence in Schools in England, Autumn Term 2012 and Spring Term 2013

Absenteeism from Primary Schools, 2012/13 (Wales)

Absenteeism from Secondary Schools, 2012/13 (Wales)

Attendance and Absence in Scottish Schools, 2012/13

There are slight differences in definitions between the regions, for example, England statistics include study leave in authorised absence while the DE statistics categorise it as present. There are also methodological differences in collecting the information. For example, the statistics for England are reported on a termly basis.

9. In some cases, percentages may not add due to rounding.

### **Users and uses of the data**

10. The statistics are widely used by a range of groups including members of the NI Assembly, the Department of Education, other government departments, Education and Library Boards, schools, the Education and Training Inspectorate, researchers, students and the public. The data are used for benchmarking, performance indicators, policy development and monitoring, cross-departmental indicators e.g. NI Multiple Deprivation Measure, OFMDFM 10 Year Strategy for Children and Young People and research studies.
  
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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 ([www.deni.gov.uk](http://www.deni.gov.uk)) under the Statistics and Research section.

If you have any comments or suggestions in relation to attendance data or this release, please let us know via the short questionnaire at the following link:  
[http://www.deni.gov.uk/attendance\\_statistics\\_user\\_questionnaire.doc](http://www.deni.gov.uk/attendance_statistics_user_questionnaire.doc)