

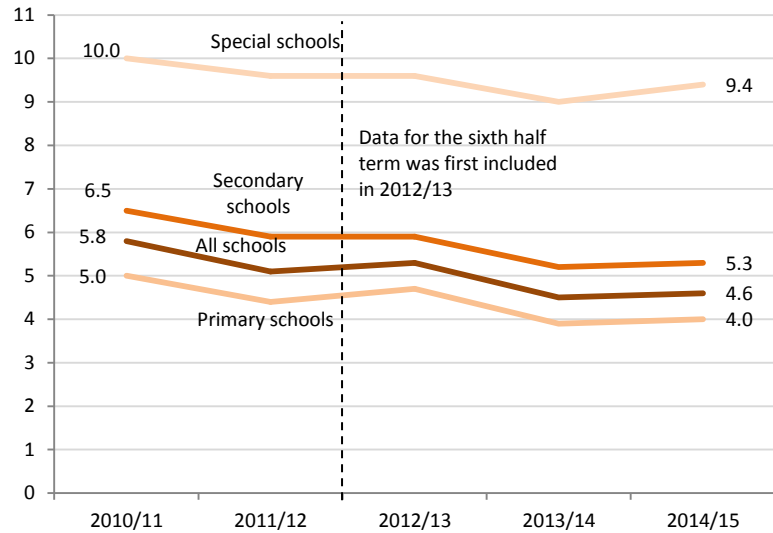


SFR 10/2016, 24 March 2016

## Overall absence rates have increased slightly since last year

The overall absence rate across state-funded primary, secondary and special schools has increased slightly from 4.5 per cent in 2013/14 to 4.6 per cent in 2014/15.

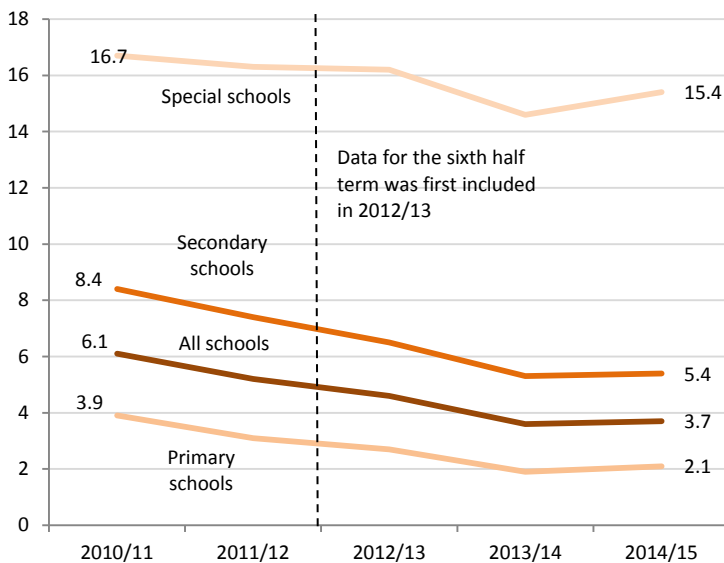
Overall absence rates have followed a generally downward trend since 2006/07 when the overall absence rate was 6.5 per cent.



## The increase in overall absence is driven by an increase in illness, whilst levels of absence for other reasons are relatively unchanged

Absence due to illness has increased from 2.6 per cent in 2013/14 to 2.8 per cent in 2014/15. Illness remains the most common reason for absence, accounting for 60.1 per cent of all absences.

## The percentage of pupils who are persistent absentees has increased slightly



The percentage of pupils who are persistent absentees across state-funded primary and secondary schools has increased from 3.6 per cent in 2013/14 to 3.7 per cent in 2014/15.

Persistent absence rates have followed a general downward trend since 2010/11.

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## About this release

This statistical first release (SFR) reports on absence in state-funded primary, secondary and special schools during the full school year 2014 to 2015. Information on absence in pupil referral units is also included.

The Department uses two key measures to monitor pupil absence - overall and persistent absence. Absence by reason and characteristics is also included in this release.

Figures held in this release are used as key indicators in behaviour and attendance policy. High levels of attendance are essential in ensuring that all pupils can benefit from the opportunities provided by education.

A "[Guide to absence statistics](#)", which provides historical information on absence statistics, as well as technical background information on the figures and data collection, should be referenced alongside this release.

## In this publication

The following sets of tables are included in this release:

- SFR10\_2016\_Main\_tables (Excel .xls)
- SFR10\_2016\_Local\_authority\_tables (Excel .xls)
- SFR10\_2016\_Additional\_tables\_pupil\_residency\_and\_school\_location\_tables (Excel .xls)
- SFR10\_2016\_Additional\_tables\_new\_PA\_methodology\_15\_perc\_tables (Excel .xls)
- SFR10\_2016\_Additional\_tables\_new\_PA\_methodology\_10\_perc\_tables (Excel .xls)
- 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 to [schools.statistics@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:schools.statistics@education.gsi.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.

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

Overall absence across state-funded primary, secondary and special schools has increased slightly

The overall absence rate across state-funded primary, secondary and special schools increased slightly from 4.5 per cent in 2013/14 to 4.6 per cent in 2014/15. This follows a longer term downward trend in overall absence has decreased since 2006/07 when the rate was 6.5 per cent.

The overall absence rate in primary schools increased from 3.9 per cent to 4.0 per cent between 2013/14 and 2014/15, the rate in secondary schools increased from 5.2 per cent to 5.3 per cent and in special schools the rate increased from 9.0 per cent to 9.4 per cent.

More days were missed due to absence

The total number of days missed across all state-funded primary, secondary and special schools due to overall absence has risen from 52.0 million in 2013/14 to 54.5 million in 2014/15. This reflects both the slight increase in overall absence and the higher total number of pupil enrolments in 2014/15 compared to 2013/14.

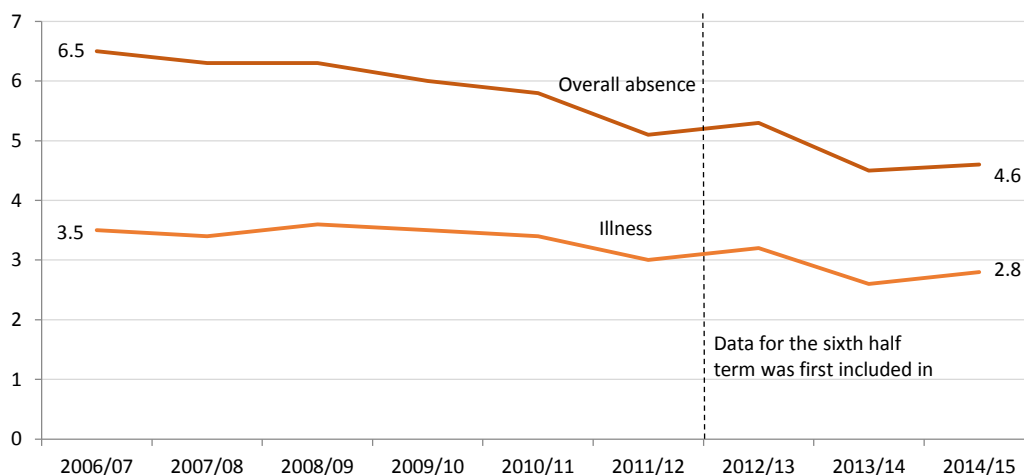
The increase in overall absence has been driven by an increase in illness

Absence rates for illness for state-funded primary, secondary and special schools have increased from 2.6 per cent to 2.8 per cent between 2013/14 and 2014/15. Illness is the most common reason for absence and heavily influences overall absence rates (see Chart 1).

Over 90% of pupils had at least one session of absence

In 2014/15, 92.0 per cent of pupils in state-funded primary, secondary and special schools missed at least one session during the school year. This is up from 88.4 per cent in 2013/14, but remains lower than the equivalent figure of 93.8 per cent for 2012/13.

**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 2014/15 (six half terms)



Source: School Census

## 2. Persistent absence (Tables 1.2, 4.1)

### Persistent absence definition

Pupils are identified as persistent absentees by comparing the number of overall absence sessions they have against a standard threshold of around 15 per cent of possible sessions, equating to 56 or more sessions across the full academic year for pupils aged 5 to 14 and 46 or more sessions across the full academic year for pupils aged 15.

Persistent absence thresholds are reviewed every year to account for any changes to the typical amount of possible sessions for all pupils, but do not tend to change (see Chapter 3 of the [“Guide to absence statistics”](#) for more details).

The percentage of pupil enrolments who are persistent absentees has increased slightly

For state-funded primary schools, secondary schools and special schools, the percentage of pupils who are persistent absentees has increased from 3.6 per cent in all schools in 2013/14 to 3.7 per cent in 2014/15.

Special schools have the highest rate of persistent absence (15.4 per cent) and also saw the greatest increase (up from 14.6 per cent in 2013/14).

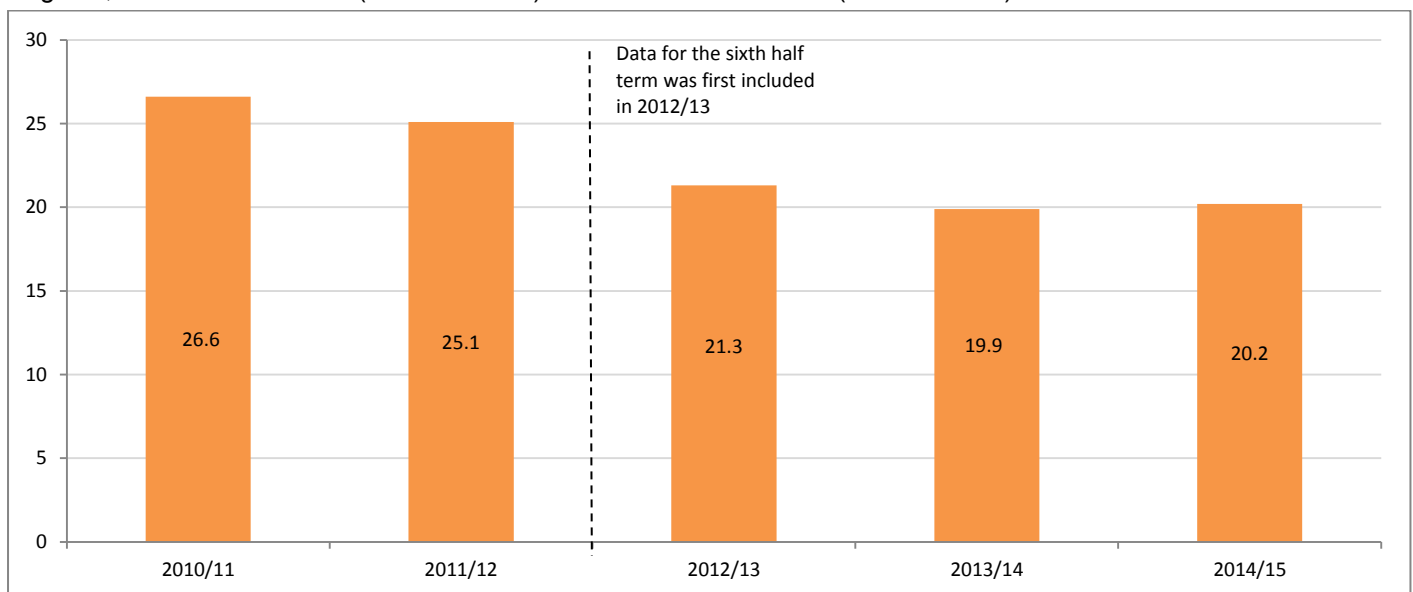
Persistent absentees accounted for around a fifth of all absence

In 2014/15, persistent absentees accounted for 20.2 per cent of all absence compared to 19.9 per cent in 2013/14. Longer term, there has been a decrease in the proportion of absence that persistent absentees account for – down from 26.6 per cent in 2010/11 (see Chart 2).

Absence rates for persistent absentees are considerably higher than for all pupils

The overall absence rate for persistent absentees across all schools was 25.9 per cent, over five times higher than the rate for all pupils. This is a slight decrease from 2013/14, when the overall absence rate for persistent absentees was 26.0 per cent.

**Chart 2: Percentage of overall absence accounted for by persistent absentees:** England, 2010/11 to 2011/12 (five half terms) and 2012/13 to 2014/15 (six half terms)



Source: School Census

### 3. Reasons for absence (Tables 2.1, 2.2)



Illness (not medical or dental appointments) accounted for 60.1 per cent of all absence compared to 57.9 per cent in 2013/14. 2.8 per cent of all possible sessions were missed through illness, compared to 2.6 per cent in 2013/14.

In 2014/15, 82.7 per cent of pupil enrolments had missed at least one session due to illness, an increase from 80.6 per cent in 2013/14.



Family holidays (authorised and unauthorised) accounted for 7.5 per cent of all absences in 2014/15 compared to 8.5 per cent in 2013/14. The percentage of all possible sessions missed due to all family holidays decreased slightly from 0.4 per cent to 0.3 per cent between 2013/14 and 2014/15.

In 2014/15, 13.8 per cent of pupil enrolments had missed at least one session for family holidays (both authorised and unauthorised); a decrease from 15.0 per cent in 2013/14.

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

Nearly half of pupils were absent for five days or fewer

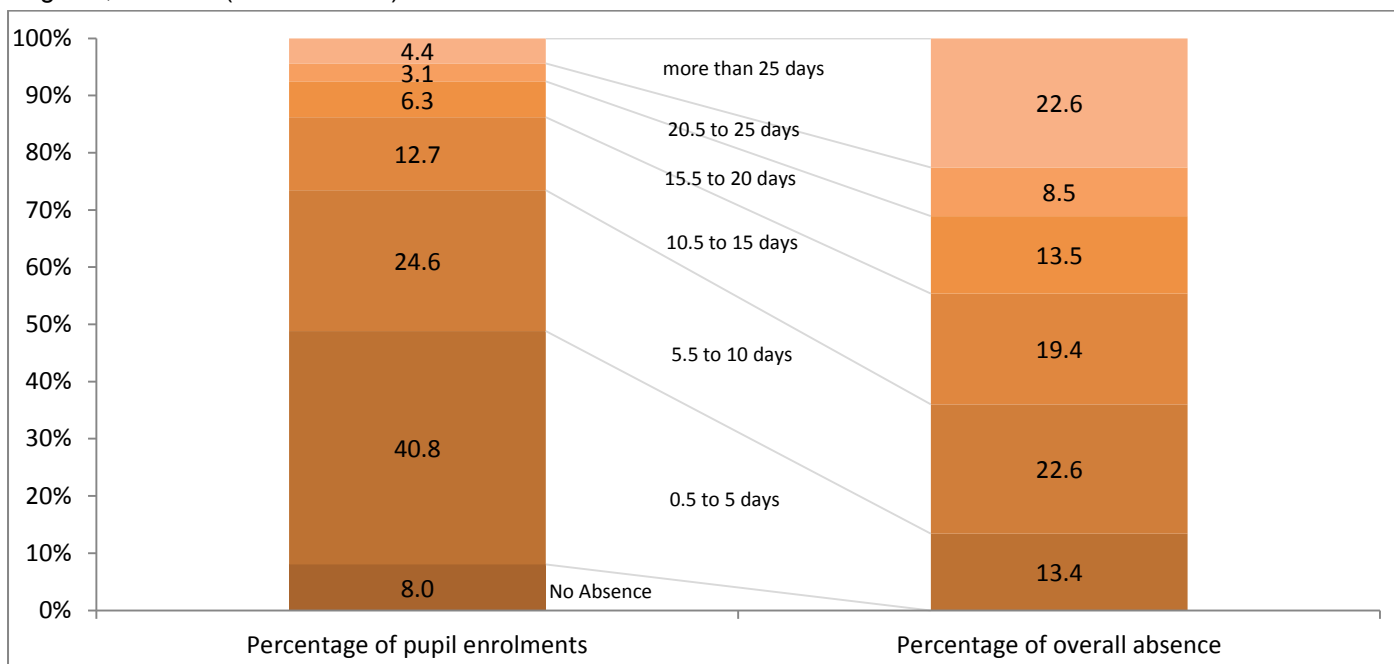
48.8 per cent of pupil enrolments across state-funded primary, secondary and special schools had five or fewer days of absence in 2014/15, down from 50.6 per cent in 2013/14.

4.4 per cent of pupil enrolments had more than 25 days of absence in 2014/15. These pupil enrolments accounted for 22.6 per cent of days missed (see Chart 3).

Pupils in primary school miss fewer days on average

Per pupil enrolment, the average total absence in primary schools was 7.2 days. This compares to 16.3 days in special schools and 9.2 days in secondary schools.

**Chart 3: Distribution of enrolments and overall absence**  
England, 2014/15 (six half terms)



Source: School Census

## 5. Absence by pupil characteristics (Tables 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, 5.5, 6.1)

The 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.

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Absence levels for FSM pupils are higher than the national average

The overall absence rate for pupils who are 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 pupils.

The percentage of FSM eligible pupils that were persistent absentees was 8.9 per cent, compared to 2.7 per cent of pupil enrolments that were not eligible for FSM.

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Absence rates are highest in year 11

Pupils in national curriculum year group 11 have the highest overall absence rates at 6.2.

Pupils in national curriculum year groups 3, 4 and 6 have the lowest overall absence rate at 3.9 per cent.

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Absence levels for SEN pupils are higher than the national average

Pupils with a statement of special educational needs (SEN) and pupils 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 pupils with a statement of SEN or an EHC plan that are persistent absentees is at 11.6 per cent, four times higher than the percentage for pupils with no identified SEN.

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

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Absence rates for Traveller of Irish Heritage and Gypsy/Roma pupils are higher than any other pupil ethnic group

The highest overall absence rates were seen for Traveller of Irish Heritage and Gypsy/Roma pupils who had rates of 18.1 per cent and 13.2 per cent respectively. Traveller of Irish Heritage pupils had the largest decrease in overall absence rates since the same period last year compared to other ethnic groups, of 1.1 percentage points. Please note the number of Traveller of Irish Heritage pupils is much lower than in other ethnic groups.

Overall absence rates for pupils of a Chinese and Black African ethnicity were substantially lower than the national average of 4.6 per cent at 2.6 per cent and 2.9 per cent respectively.

A similar pattern is seen in persistent absence rates, Traveller of Irish heritage pupils have the highest rate at 35.2 per cent and Chinese pupils have the lowest at 0.7 per cent.

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Overall absence rates in the most deprived areas are higher than in the least deprived areas

The rate of overall absence for pupils living in the most deprived areas (5.6 per cent) was 1.6 times higher than for pupils living in the least deprived areas (3.5 per cent).

The persistent absence rate for pupils living in the most deprived areas (5.8 per cent) is over three times higher than the percentage for pupils living in the least deprived areas (1.7 per cent).

## **6. Absence for four year olds** (Table 12.1)

The overall absence rate for four year olds (who are not of compulsory school age) has increased slightly since 2013/14 from 5.1 per cent to 5.2 per cent.

## **7. Pupil referral unit absence** (Table 13.1)

The overall absence rate for pupil referral units in 2014/15 was 31.5 per cent, down from 31.9 per cent in 2013/14.

The percentage of enrolments in pupil referral units who are persistent absentees was 38.3 per cent in 2014/15, down from 37.6 per cent in 2013/14.

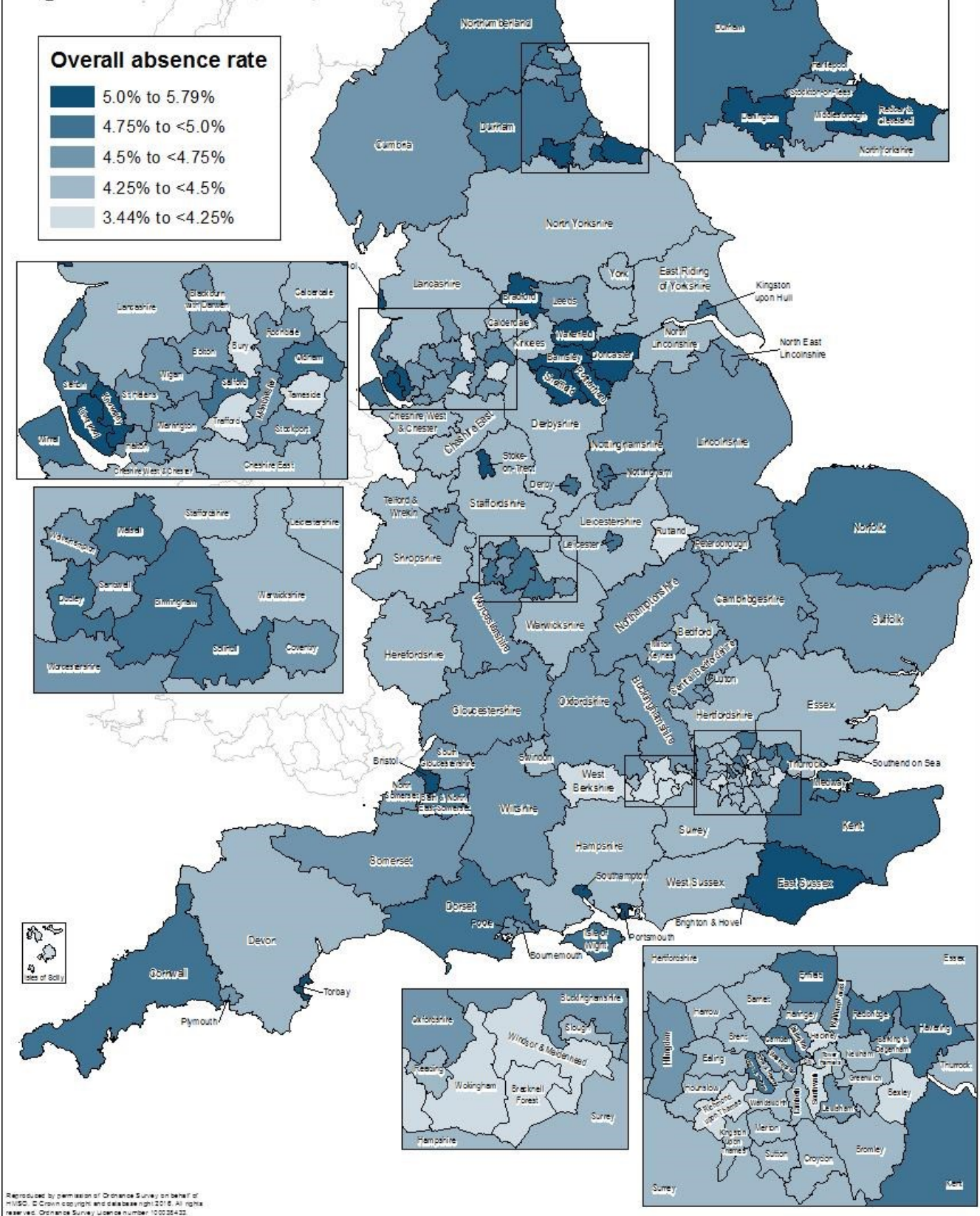
## **8. Pupil absence by local authority** (Table 11.1)

There is variation in overall and persistent absence rates across state-funded primary, secondary and special schools by region and local authority (See Chart 4).

The region with the highest overall absence rate across all state-funded primary, secondary and special schools is the North East (4.9 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 4.2 per cent of pupil enrolments are persistent absentees, with Inner and Outer London having the joint lowest rate of persistent absence (at 3.3 per cent).

**Chart 4: Pupil absence by local authority**  
 England, 2014/15 (six half terms)

**Overall absence rate for state-funded primary, secondary and special schools by local authority, England – 2014/15**





## 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. Future changes to this release

In October 2014 the Department consulted on proposed changes to the persistent absence methodology and structure of the absence statistics publications. The full consultation can be found in Section 9 of the "[Pupil absence in schools in England: autumn 2013 and spring 2014](#)" Statistical First Release. A response to this consultation, outlining the next steps to implement changes from the 2015/16 academic year, is available on the same page as the [original consultation](#).

Additional tables are provided in this release to show 15 per cent persistent absence figures under the new methodology set out in the consultation so that users can fully understand the differences between the existing and new methodology.

From the beginning of the 2015/16 academic year the persistent absence threshold will change from 15 per cent to 10 per cent. Figures for persistent absence at the 10 per cent level based on the new methodology are also included in additional tables accompanying this release to assist users in understanding how the change from 15% to 10% will affect persistent absence figures.

## 11. 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 and secondary 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 (15 per cent threshold)

#### Tables

- 1.1 Pupil absence by type of school
- 1.2 Pupil enrolments that are persistent absentees (15 per cent threshold)
- 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 (15 per cent threshold)
- 3.1 Distribution of enrolments by length of overall absence
- 3.2 Percentage of enrolments by their overall absence rates
- 4.1 Number of schools by the percentage of persistent absentees (15 per cent threshold)
- 5.1 Pupil absence by characteristics
- 5.2 Characteristics of pupil enrolments that are persistent absentees (15 per cent threshold)
- 5.3 Pupil absence by ethnic group
- 5.4 Pupil enrolments that are persistent absentees by ethnic group (15 per cent threshold)
- 5.5 Pupil absence by type of special educational need
- 6.1 Pupil absence by Income Deprivation Affecting Children Indices (IDACI) decile of pupil residence

### Local authority tables

- 11.1 Pupil absence by type of school
- 12.1 Pupil absence for four year olds
- 13.1 Pupil absence for pupil referral units

### Additional tables – pupil residency and school location tables

- 14.1 Pupil absence by degree of rurality of school location
- 14.2 Pupil absence by local authority district of school location
- 14.3 Pupil absence by degree of rurality of pupil residence
- 14.4 Pupil absence by local authority district of pupil residence
- 14.5 Pupil absence by IDACI decile of pupil residence

### Additional tables – new persistent absence methodology (15 per cent)

#### National tables

- 15.1 Percentage of pupil enrolments that are persistent absentees (15 per cent, new methodology)
- 15.2 Characteristics of pupil enrolments that are persistent absentees (15 per cent, new methodology)
- 15.3 Pupil enrolments that are persistent absentees by ethnic group (15 per cent, new methodology)

### Local authority tables

15.4 Pupil enrolments that are persistent absentees by type of school (15 per cent, new methodology)

15.5 Pupil enrolments that are persistent absentees in pupil referral units (15 per cent, new methodology)

### School level tables

15.6 Pupil enrolments that are persistent absentees at school level (15 per cent, new methodology)

### **Additional tables – new persistent absence methodology (10 per cent)**

#### National tables

16.1 Percentage of pupil enrolments that are persistent absentees (10 per cent, new methodology)

16.2 Characteristics of pupil enrolments that are persistent absentees (10 per cent, new methodology)

16.3 Pupil enrolments that are persistent absentees by ethnic group (10 per cent, new methodology)

#### Local authority tables

16.4 Pupil enrolments that are persistent absentees by type of school (10 per cent, new methodology)

16.5 Pupil enrolments that are persistent absentees in pupil referral units (10 per cent, new methodology)

#### School level tables

16.6 Pupil enrolments that are persistent absentees at school level (10 per cent, new methodology)

When reviewing the tables, please note that:

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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.
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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 <a href="#">Departmental statistical policy</a> .
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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
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## 12. Further information is available

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Want previously published figures?

For the previous full year pupil absence figures visit: [Pupil Absence in Schools in England, Including Pupil Characteristics: 2013/14](#)

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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.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:school.stats@wales.gsi.gov.uk) or [Welsh Government - Statistics and Research](#)

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

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

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For related publications

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

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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](#).

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## 13. 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.

## 14. 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.
  - 13 sponsor-led academies 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.
  - Year-on-year comparisons of local authority data may be affected by schools converting to academies.
- Schools with fewer than six pupil enrolments aged between five and fifteen are removed from our analysis. For this release, 12 schools were removed from the main five to fifteen year old analysis.

## 15. Get in touch

### Media enquiries

Press Office News Desk, Department for Education, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BT.

Tel: 020 7783 8300

### Other enquiries/feedback

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[Schools.statistics@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Schools.statistics@education.gsi.gov.uk).



Department  
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email [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk)

write to Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London, TW9 4DU

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[Schools.statistics@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Schools.statistics@education.gsi.gov.uk)

This document is also available from our website "[statistics: pupil absence](#)".

Reference: [SFR 10/2016]



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