

Chapter 6 – Absence and exclusion from school

Introduction

This chapter compares absence and exclusions levels between pupils with and without special educational needs. It looks at the proportion of pupils with special educational needs who were absent and persistently absent from school by different characteristics, such as their gender, primary type of need and reasons for being absent. It also compares the characteristics of those pupils who were excluded from school. All referenced tables can be found in the accompanying downloadable spreadsheets at: <http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/STA/t000965/index.shtml>. All numbers which appear in this chapter were taken from the School Census. See Data Annex 6 for further details on all the material covered within this chapter.

Absence from school in 2008/09

Key findings from absence data

Overall absence

Pupils with special educational needs were more likely to be absent from school than other pupils. In 2008/09, pupils with no special educational needs missed the least amount of school through absence (5.6 per cent of half days missed). Pupils at School Action Plus (9.6 per cent) and with statements (9.4 per cent) missed the most school through absence. Of all the primary types of need, pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties and behavioural, emotional and social difficulties were the most likely to be absent from school.

Reasons for absence

Compared to pupils with no special educational needs, pupils with special educational needs were more likely to be absent due to arriving late, being excluded (no alternative provision) and other unauthorised or authorised circumstances. However, pupils with special educational needs were less likely to be absent due to illness (not medical or dental appointments) and family holidays, compared to those without.

Persistent absentees

Pupils with special educational needs were more likely to be persistent absentees compared to those without special educational needs in 2008/09. In general, girls were more likely to be persistent absentees compared to boys. Pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and profound and multiple learning difficulties as their primary need type were most likely to be persistent absentees.

On average, persistent absentees with statements of special educational needs missed 39.0 per cent of half day sessions in 2008/09, compared to 32.9 per cent for those without special educational needs.

Absence rates for pupils with special educational needs

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

Figure 6.1 shows the percentage of half days of school missed through absence in 2008/09 for pupils by their special educational need provision in January 2009 and school type attended. Pupils with special educational needs missed more school through absence compared to those without special educational needs. Overall, pupils with no special educational needs missed the least amount of school through absence (5.6 per cent of half days missed), followed by those at School Action (7.7 per cent). Pupils at School Action Plus and with statements missed the most school through absence, of all the special educational need provisions (9.6 per cent and 9.4 per cent respectively). Web based Table 6.1 contains the data used to produce Figure 6.1. Local Authority figures are available in web based Table 6.2.

Figure 6.1: Percentage of half day sessions missed due to absence by pupils with special educational needs in 2008/09 by provision of need and school type attended

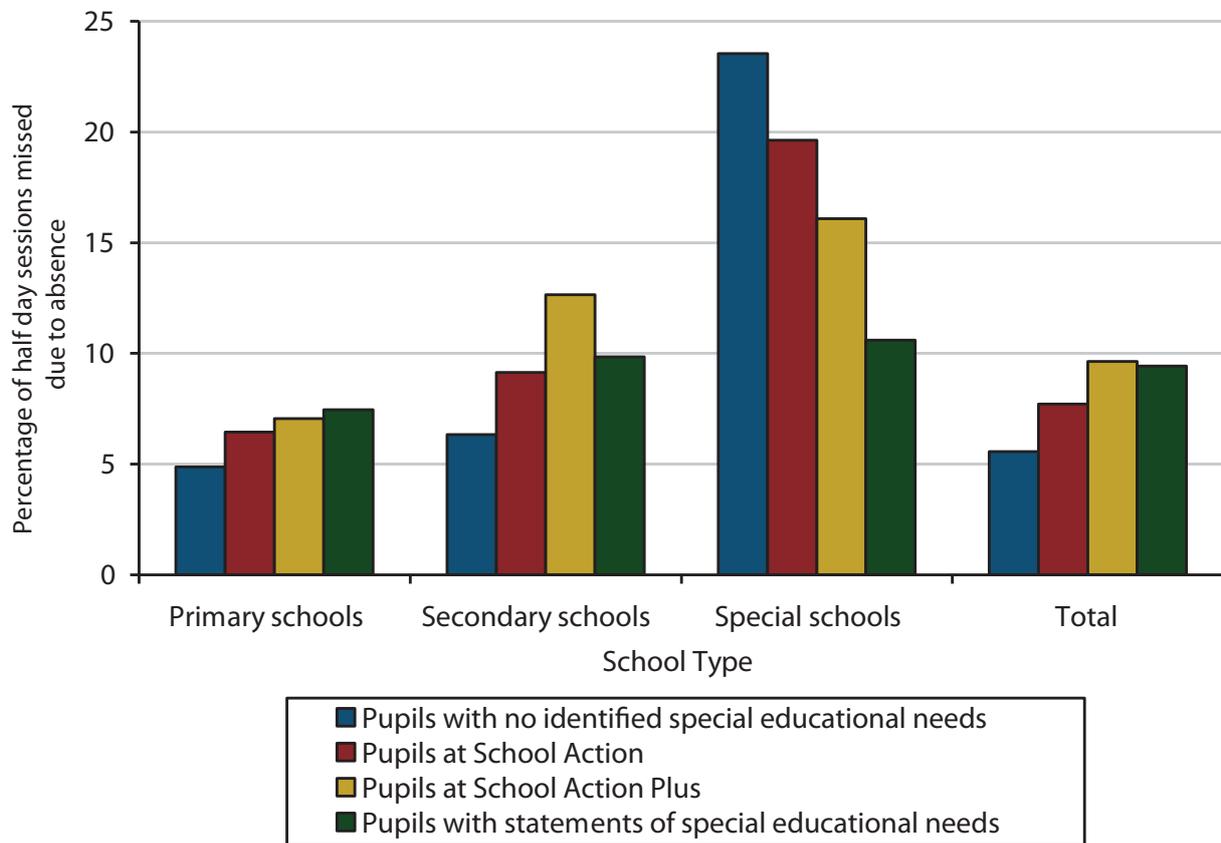
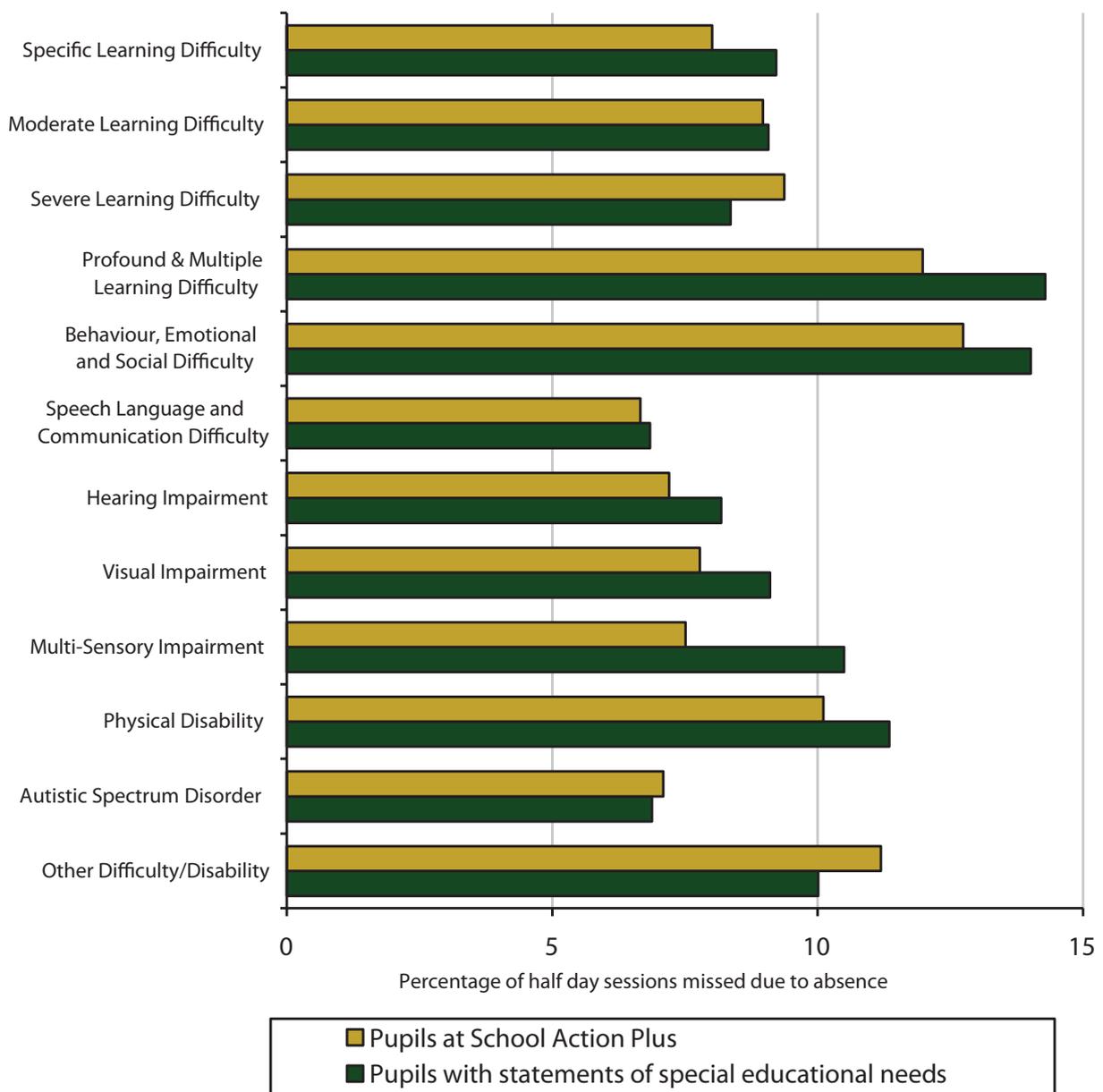


Figure 6.1 shows that pupils at special schools missed more school through absence than those at secondary schools in 2008/09, and those at secondary schools missed more time than those at primary schools, regardless of special educational need provision. At primary schools, pupils with statements had the highest overall absence rate (7.5 per cent), of all the special educational need provisions, while at secondary schools, pupils at School Action Plus had the highest rate (12.7 per cent). Overall absence percentages for pupils with no special educational needs and those at School Action in special schools should be treated with caution due to low numbers of pupil enrolments.

Absence rates by primary type of need

Figure 6.2 shows the percentage of half days of school missed through absence by primary type of need for pupils at School Action Plus or with statements during 2008/09. Of all the primary types of need, pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties (12.0 per cent of those at School Action Plus and 14.3 per cent for those with statements) and pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (12.7 per cent of those at School Action Plus and 14.0 per cent for those with statements) were the most likely to be absent from school. Pupils with speech, language and communication difficulties and autistic spectrum disorder missed the least school through absence. Web based Table 6.1 contains the data which was used to produce Figure 6.2.

Figure 6.2: Percentage of half day sessions missed due to absence by pupils at School Action Plus or with statements in 2008/09 by primary type of need



Authorised and unauthorised absence

The above findings relate to overall absence, which includes:

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

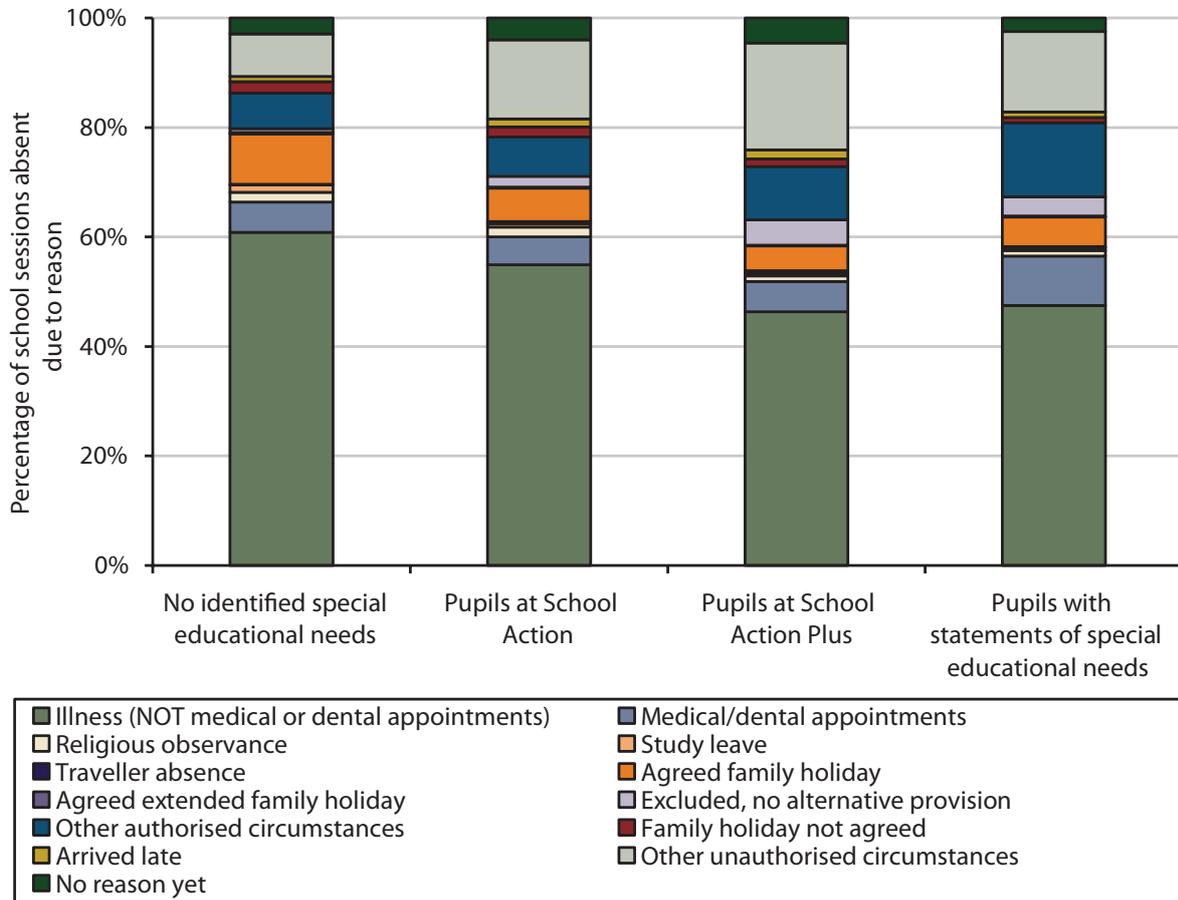
Web based Table 6.1 shows that the proportion of school missed through authorised absence was greater than unauthorised absence for all the special educational need provisions and primary need groups in 2008/09. Of all the special educational need provisions, pupils at School Action Plus missed the greatest proportion of sessions through unauthorised absence (around 27 per cent). The equivalent figure for pupils with no special educational needs was around 14 per cent.

Reasons for absence by provision for need

Figure 6.3 shows the reasons for which pupils were absent from school in 2008/09 by provision for special educational needs. For example, Figure 6.1 earlier showed that pupils with statements missed 9.4 per cent of half day sessions in 2008/09 due to absence and Figure 6.3 shows the distribution of reasons for absence which made up this figure, as well as data for the other provisions of need. Web based Table 6.3 contains the data which was used to produce Figure 6.3. Data Annex 6 shows the list of reasons for absence.

Figure 6.3 shows that the biggest single reason for pupils to be absent in 2008/09 was illness (not medical or dental appointments), regardless of special educational need provision. This reason accounted for 60.8 per cent of absent sessions for pupils with no special educational needs. However, pupils with special educational needs were less likely to be absent due to this reason than those without special educational needs, with the smallest prevalence occurring amongst those at School Action Plus (46.4 per cent). Compared to pupils with no special educational needs, pupils with special educational needs were more likely to be absent due to arriving late, being excluded (no alternative provision) and other unauthorised or authorised circumstances. However, pupils with special educational needs were less likely to be absent due to agreed and not agreed family holidays, compared to those without special educational needs.

Figure 6.3: Percentage of absent sessions missed by reason for absence for pupils with special educational needs in 2008/09 by provision of need



Reasons for absence by primary type of need

Figure 6.4 shows the reasons for which pupils with each of the primary types of special educational need at School Action Plus were absent from school in 2008/09. For example Figure 6.2 earlier showed that pupils with behaviour, emotional and social difficulties at School Action Plus missed 12.7 per cent of half day sessions in 2008/09 due to absence and Figure 6.4 shows the distribution of reasons for absence which made up this figure. Web based Table 6.3 contains the data which was used to produce Figure 6.4.

Figure 6.4 shows that the single biggest reason for absence for pupils at School Action Plus in 2008/09 was illness (not medical or dental appointments). Of all the primary need groups at School Action Plus, pupils with physical disabilities missed the highest proportion of absent sessions (61.3 per cent) through this reason. However, pupils with behaviour, emotional and social difficulties missed the smallest proportion of sessions (34.7 per cent) through this reason. The distribution of reasons for absence amongst pupils with behaviour, emotional and social difficulties was quite different from the other primary need groups. Pupils with behaviour, emotional and social difficulties were more likely than any other primary need group to be absent due to; being excluded (no alternative provision) at 8.7 per cent, other authorised circumstances (12.7 per cent), arriving late (2.1 per cent), other unauthorised circumstances (27.0 per cent) and no reason yet (5.3 per cent). Pupils with physical disabilities (15.0 per cent) were most likely, of all the primary need groups, to be absent due to medical or dental appointments.

Figure 6.4: Percentage of absent sessions missed by reason for absence for pupils at School Action Plus in 2008/09 by primary type of need

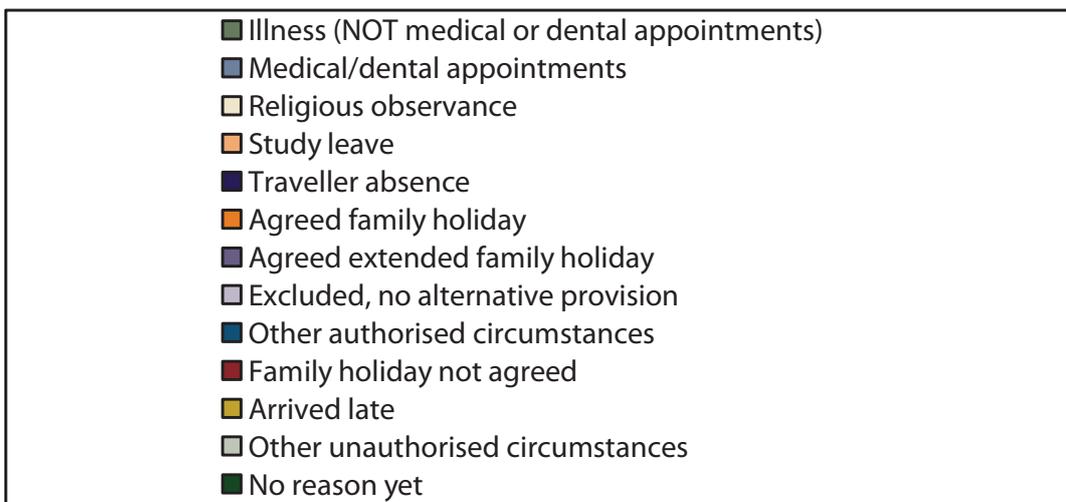
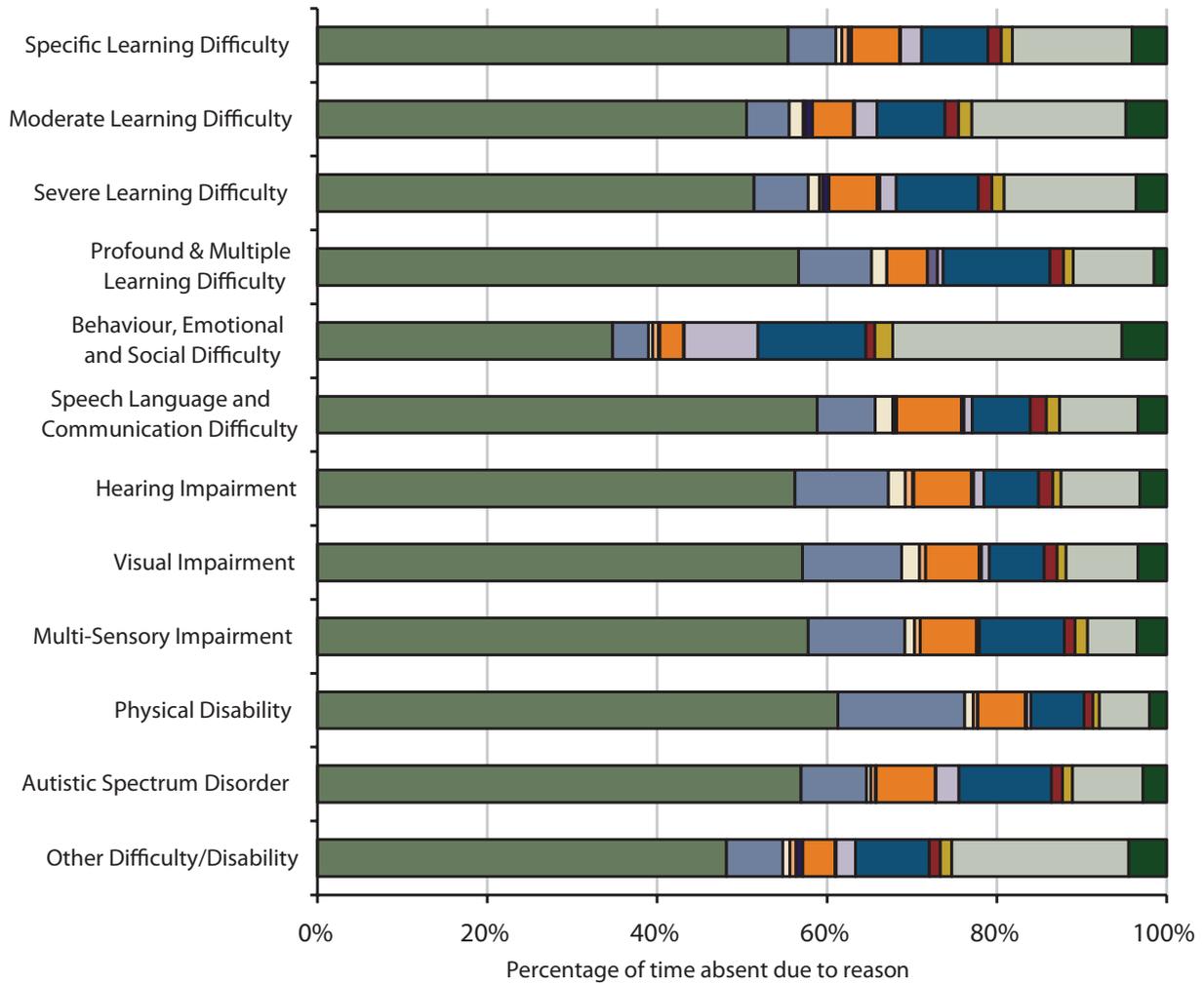


Figure 6.5: Percentage of absent sessions missed by reason for absence for pupils with statements in 2008/09 by primary type of need

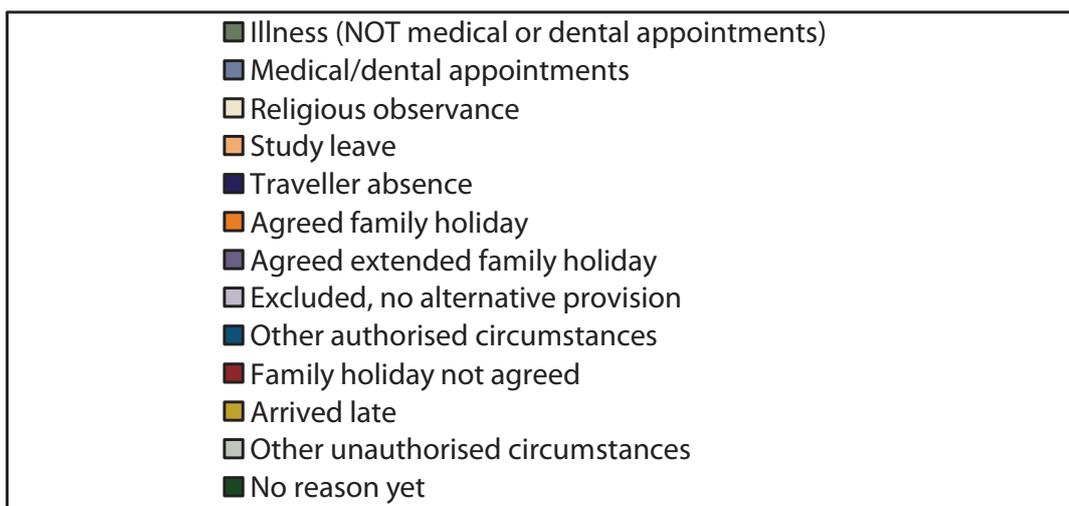
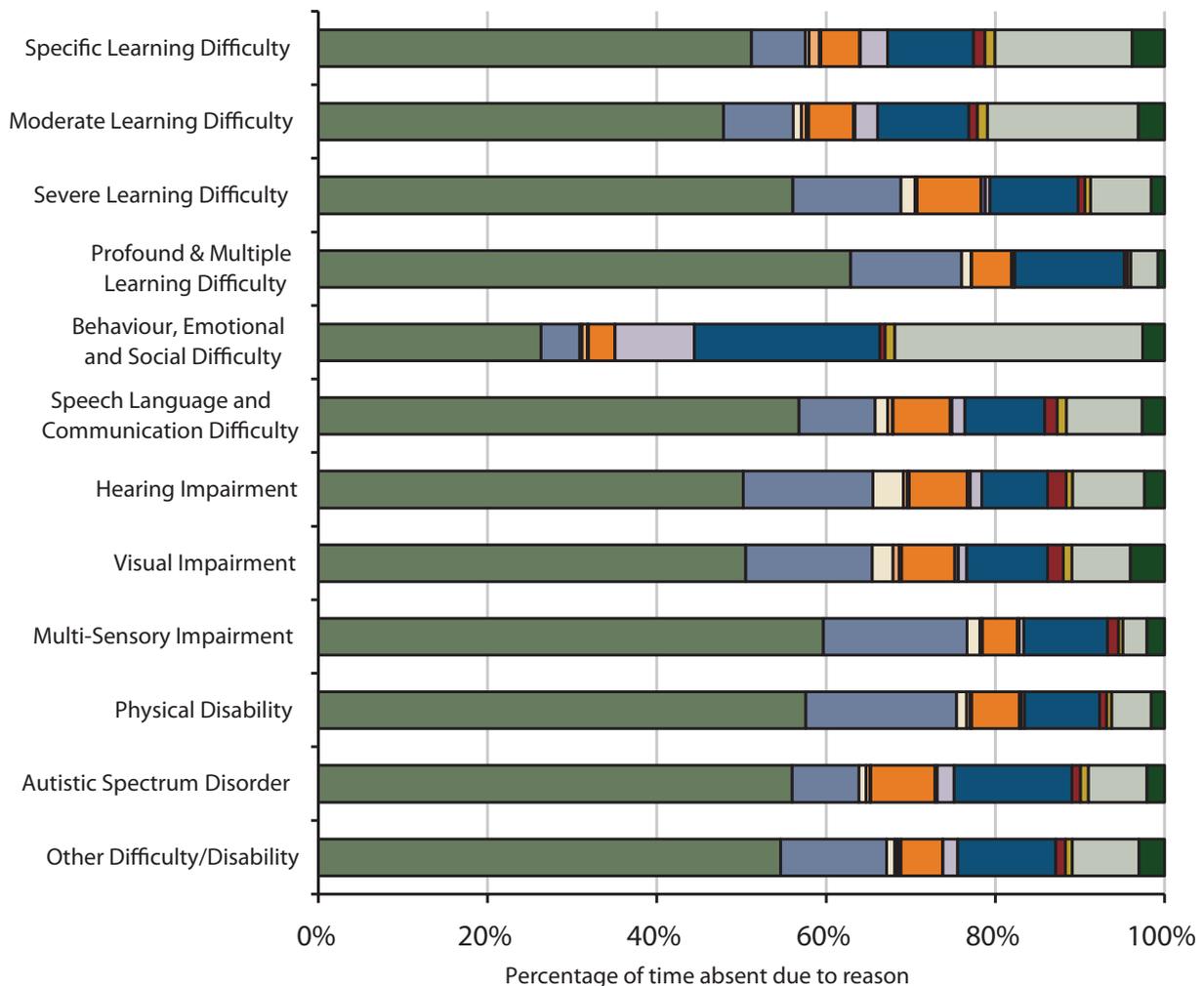


Figure 6.5 shows the reasons for which pupils with each of the primary types of special educational need with statements were absent from school in 2008/09. Figure 6.5 shows a very similar pattern to that shown in Figure 6.4. Pupils with behaviour, emotional and social difficulties again had a very different spread of reasons for absence compared to the other primary need groups.

Persistent absentees

Persistent absentees are defined as pupils aged between 5 and 15 years who have 64 or more sessions of absence (authorised and unauthorised) during the academic year, i.e. those missing around 20 per cent of available half day sessions.

Figure 6.6 shows the percentage of pupil enrolments that were defined as persistent absentees at School Action, School Action Plus and with statements of special educational needs. Pupils could have been enrolled in more than one school throughout the academic year, in which case they could appear in the absence record more than once.

Pupils with special educational needs were more likely to be persistent absentees compared to those without special educational needs. 9.2 per cent of pupils with statements of special educational needs who were enrolled at school in 2008/09 were persistent absentees. Pupils at School Action Plus were most likely to be persistent absentees (9.4 per cent of all enrolments). This compared to 5.3 per cent for those at School Action and 2.1 per cent of pupils on roll where no special educational needs were identified.

Figure 6.6: Percentage of pupils enrolled in 2008/09 who were defined as persistent absentees, by provision for need and gender

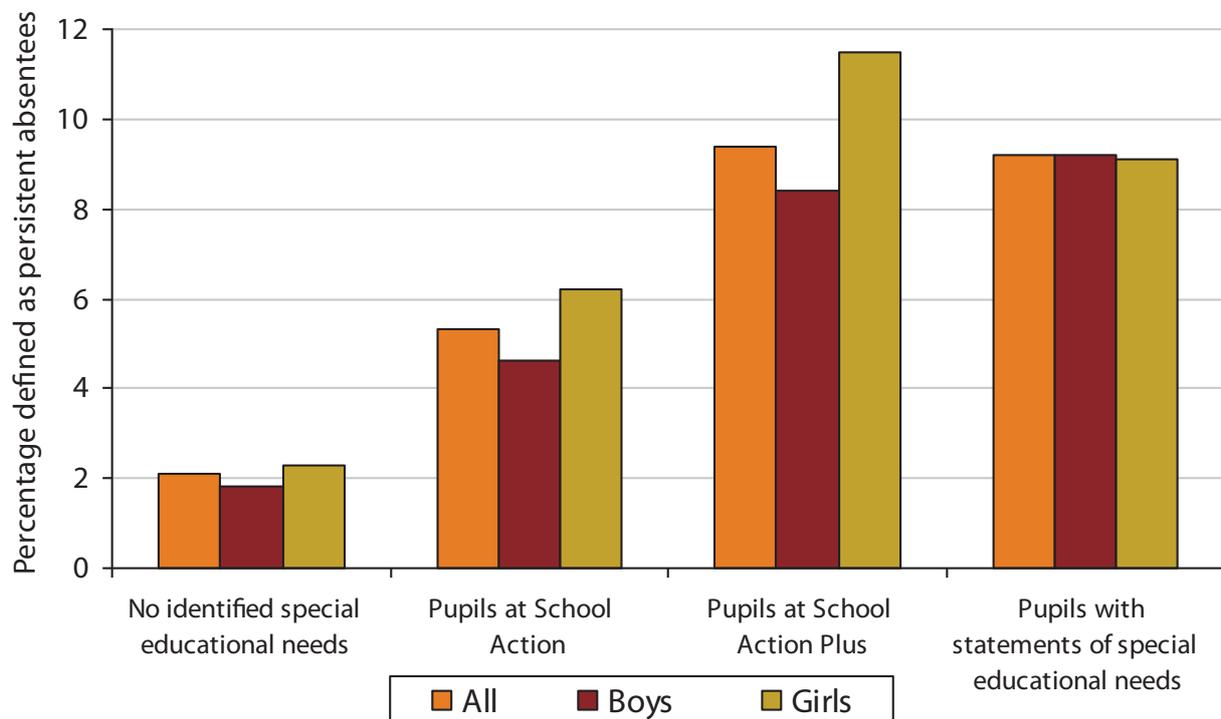
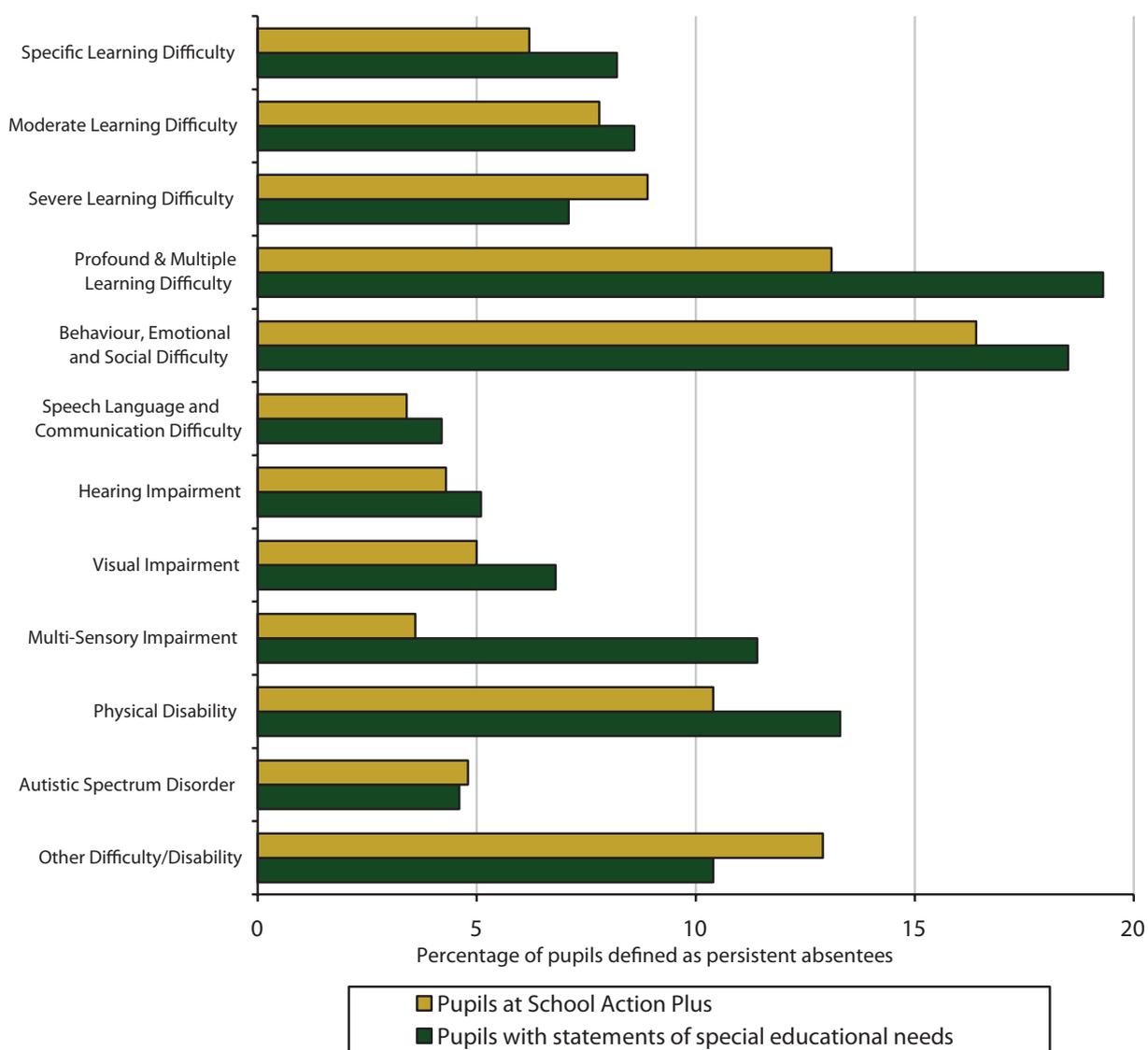


Figure 6.6 also shows that girls were more likely to be persistent absentees than boys. 2.3 per cent of girls without special educational needs enrolled at school in 2008/09 were persistent absentees compared to 1.8 per cent of boys enrolled. The gap was largest between those at School Action Plus, where 11.5 per cent of girls on roll were persistent absentees compared to 8.4 per cent of boys. Web based Table 6.4 contains the data which was used to produce Figure 6.6. Local Authority figures are available in web based Table 6.5.

Persistent absentees by primary type of need

Figure 6.7 shows the percentage of persistent absentees at School Action Plus and with statements by primary types of special educational need. Pupils with speech, language and communication difficulties were least likely to be persistent absentees, while pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and profound and multiple learning difficulties were most likely. Web based Table 6.4 contains the data which was used to produce Figure 6.7. Caution should be used when interpreting the figures for multi-sensory impairments in both groups along with the figure for profound and multiple learning at School Action Plus, due to low numbers of pupils enrolled.

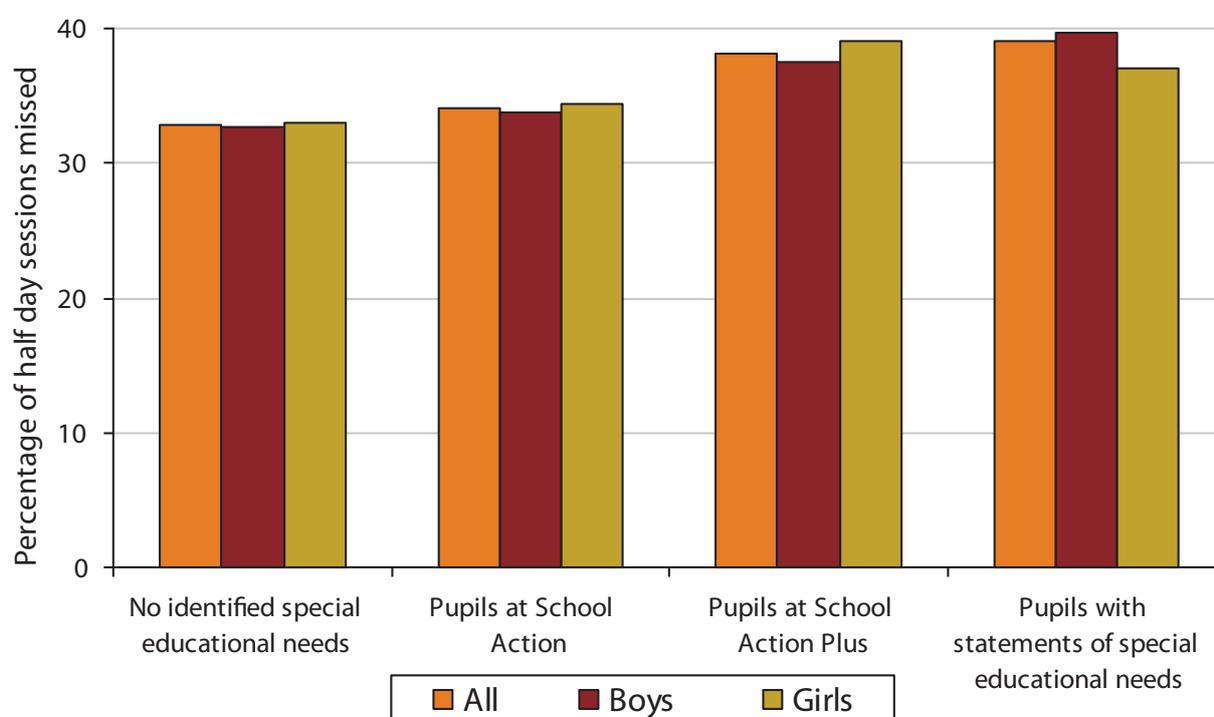
Figure 6.7: Percentage of pupils enrolled in 2008/09 who were defined as persistent absentees, by primary need type



Half days missed at school by persistent absentees by provision for need

Figure 6.8 shows the percentage of half days missed at school by persistent absentees with special educational needs. Persistent absentees with special educational needs missed more school through absence compared to pupils with no special educational needs. On average, persistent absentees with statements of special educational needs missed 39.0 per cent of half day sessions in 2008/09, compared to 32.9 per cent for those without special educational needs. The figures for pupils at School Action and School Action Plus were 34.1 per cent and 38.1 per cent respectively. Web based Table 6.4 contains the data which was used to produce Figure 6.8.

Figure 6.8: Percentage of half day sessions missed by persistent absentees in 2008/09 by provision for need and gender

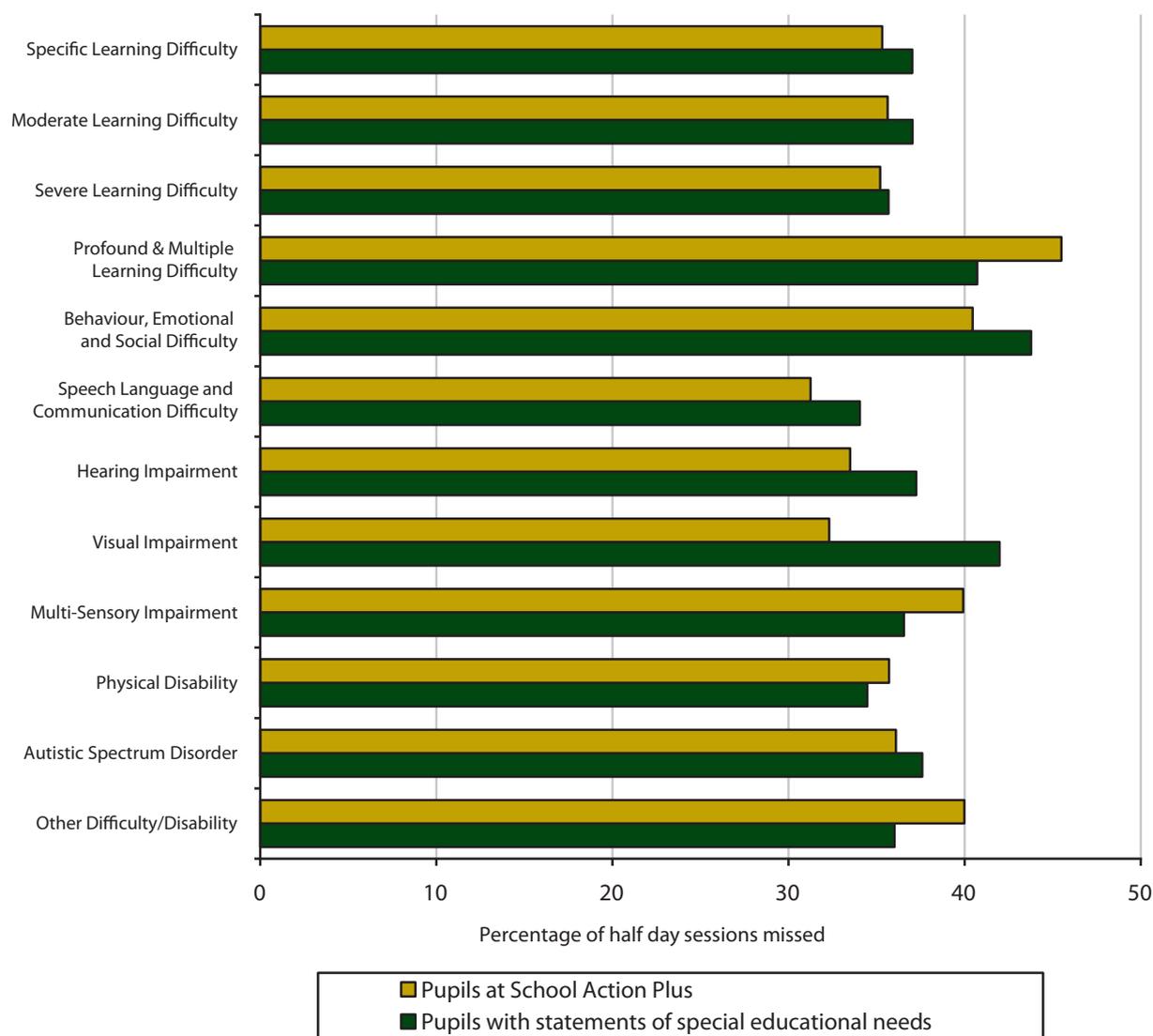


Half days missed at school by persistent absentees by primary type of need

Figure 6.9 shows the percentage of half days missed at school by primary types of special educational need for persistent absentees at School Action Plus and with statements. Web based Table 6.4 contains the data which was used to produce Figure 6.9.

Persistent absentees at School Action Plus and with statements with speech, language and communication difficulties as their primary need type missed the least number of half days, while pupils with behaviour, emotional and social difficulties and profound and multiple learning difficulties missed the most. Caution should be used when interpreting the figures for multi-sensory impairments in both groups along with the figure for profound and multiple learning at School Action Plus, due to low numbers of pupils enrolled.

Figure 6.9: Percentage of half day sessions missed by persistent absentees in 2008/09 by primary need type



Rate of authorised and unauthorised absence by persistent absentees

Web based Table 6.4 shows that persistent absentees with statements of special educational needs missed more half days through authorised absence (26.3 per cent of half days missed, which accounted for approximately 67 per cent of authorised and unauthorised absence for pupils with statements) compared to those with no special educational needs (20.4 per cent, which accounted for approximately 62 per cent of authorised and unauthorised absence for pupils with no special educational needs). Persistent absentees at School Action Plus missed the most half days through unauthorised absence at 17.6 per cent of half days. This compared to 12.5 per cent of persistent absentees with no special educational needs. Web based Table 6.4 shows data on all the primary need groups.

Exclusions from school in 2007/08

Key findings from exclusions data

Fixed period exclusions

Pupils with special educational needs were much more likely to receive a fixed period exclusion from school than their peers. Pupils at School Action Plus were most likely to receive a fixed period exclusion from school in 2007/08. Pupils at School Action Plus were over 7 times more likely to receive a fixed period exclusion than those with no special educational needs.

Reasons for fixed period exclusions in 2007/08

Compared to those with no special educational needs, pupils with special educational needs were less likely to receive a fixed period exclusion due to drug and alcohol related reasons, physical assaults on pupils or the any other reason category. However, pupils with special educational needs were more likely than their peers to receive a fixed period exclusion due to physical assaults on adults and persistent disruptive behaviour.

Permanent exclusions

Pupils with special educational needs were much more likely to receive a permanent exclusion from school than their peers. Pupils at School Action Plus were most likely to receive a permanent exclusion from school in 2007/08. Pupils at School Action Plus were about 20 times more likely to receive a permanent exclusion than those with no special educational needs.

General findings

Boys were more likely to receive any type of exclusion from school than girls in 2007/08. Of all the primary need groups, pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties were by far the most likely to receive either type of exclusion.

Rate of fixed period exclusions for pupils with special educational needs

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

Figure 6.10 shows the percentage of pupil enrolments in 2007/08 that received one or more fixed period exclusion in the year by their special educational need provision in January 2008 and school type attended. Pupils with special educational needs were much more likely to receive a fixed period exclusion than those with no special educational needs. Overall, pupils with no special educational needs were least likely to receive a fixed period exclusion (1.5 per cent), followed by those at School Action

(5.2 per cent). Pupils at School Action Plus (11.4 per cent) were most likely to receive a fixed period exclusion, of all the special educational need provisions. This shows that pupils at School Action Plus were over 7 times more likely to receive a fixed period exclusion than those with no special educational needs. Web based Table 6.6 contains the data used to produce Figure 6.10.

Figure 6.10: Pupil enrolments that received one or more fixed period exclusion expressed as a percentage of the number of all pupils of the same special educational need provision by school type attended, 2007/08

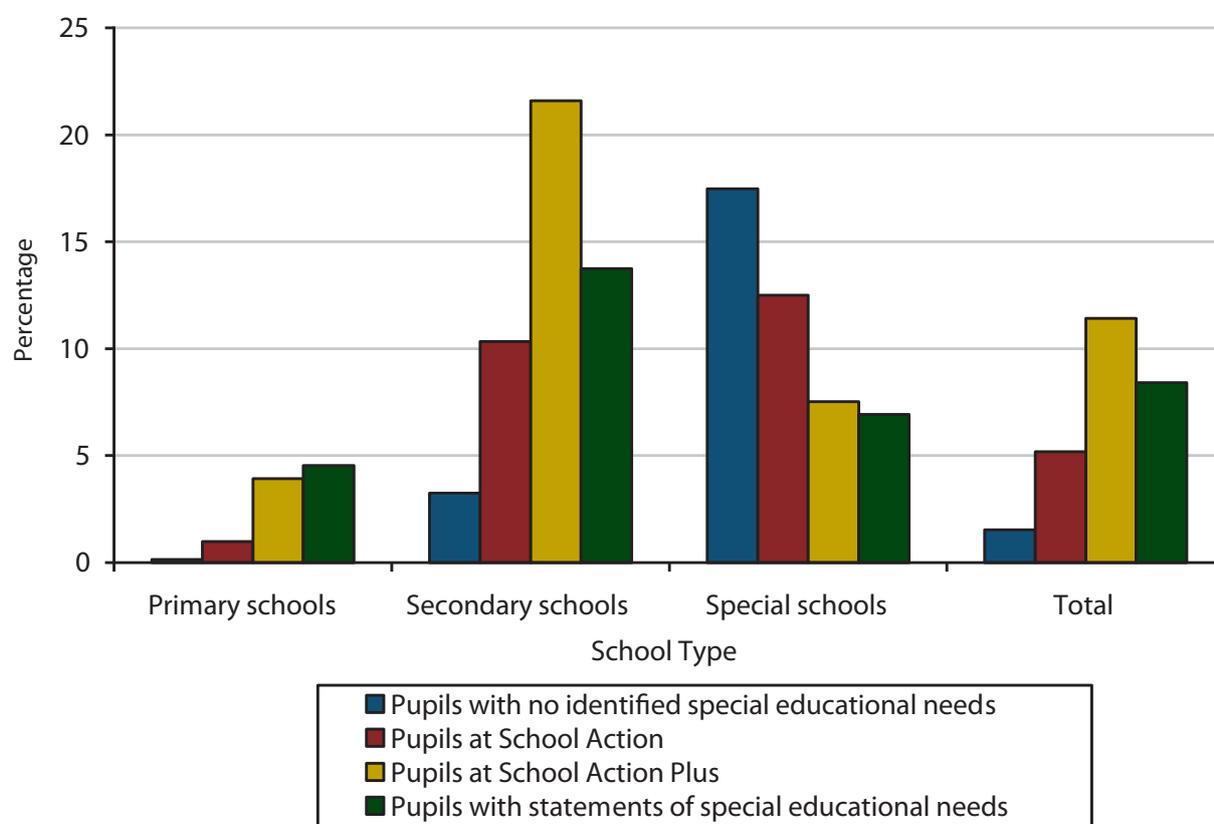
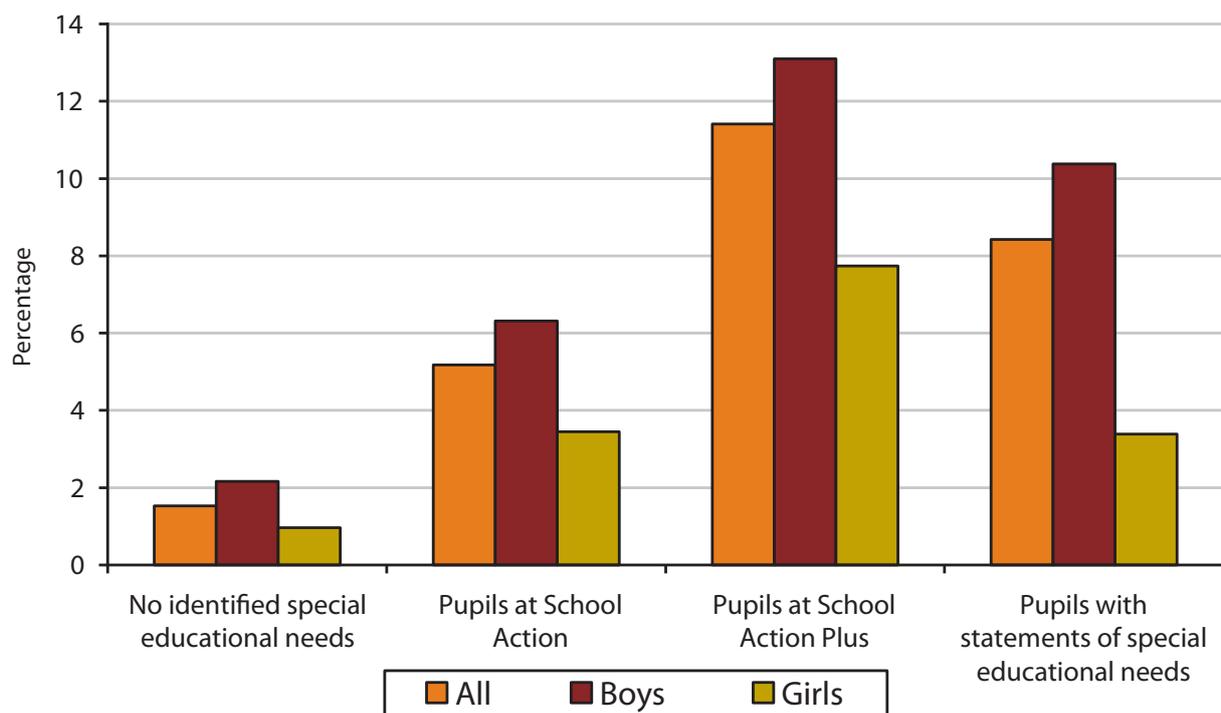


Figure 6.10 shows that pupils at secondary schools were more likely to receive a fixed period exclusion than those at primary schools in 2007/08, regardless of special educational need provision. At primary schools, pupils with statements had the highest overall fixed period exclusion rate (4.5 per cent), of all the special educational need provisions, while at secondary school, pupils at School Action Plus had the highest rate (21.6 per cent). 6.9 per cent of pupils with statements enrolled in special schools received at least one fixed period exclusion. Overall fixed period exclusion percentages for pupils with no special educational needs and those at School Action in special schools should be treated with caution due to low numbers of pupil enrolments.

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

Figure 6.11 shows fixed period exclusion rates for pupils enrolled in 2007/08 by their gender and special educational need provision. Boys were more likely to receive a fixed period exclusion from school than girls regardless of their provision for need in 2007/08. Boys with statements (10.4 per cent) were three times more likely than girls (3.4 per cent) to receive a fixed period exclusion. Boys at School Action Plus and School Action were nearly twice as likely as girls to receive a fixed period exclusion. Boys with no identified special educational needs were over twice as likely as girls to receive a fixed period exclusion. Web based Table 6.7 contains the data used to produce Figure 6.11. Local Authority figures are available in web based Table 6.8.

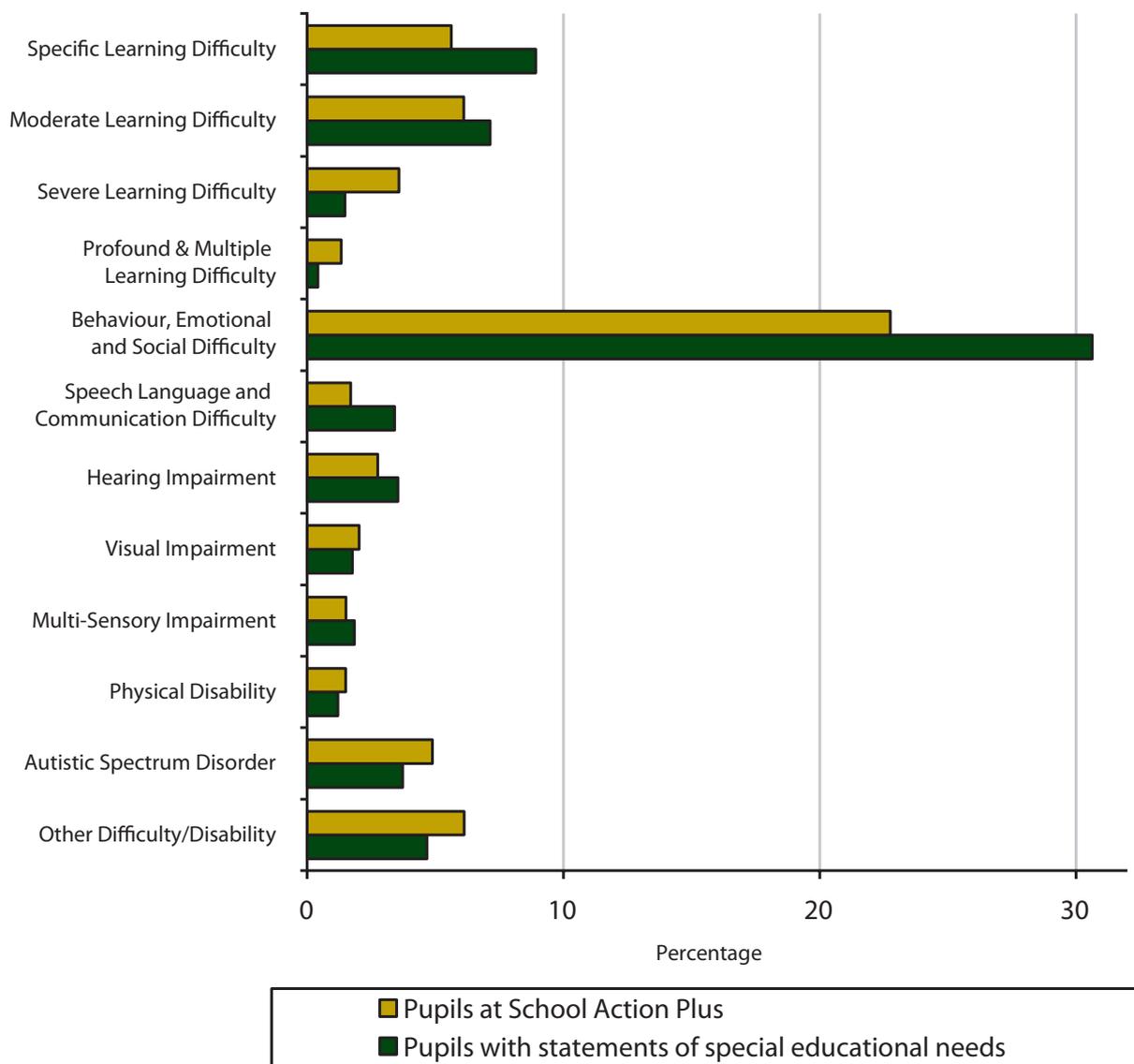
Figure 6.11: Pupil enrolments that received one or more fixed period exclusion expressed as a percentage of the number of all pupils of the same special educational need provision by gender, 2007/08



Rate of fixed period exclusions by primary type of need

Figure 6.12 shows the rate of fixed period exclusions by primary types of special educational need among pupils at School Action Plus and those with statements in 2007/08. Pupils with behaviour, emotional and social difficulties were by far the most likely to receive a fixed period exclusion (22.8 per cent of those enrolled with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties at School Action Plus received one or more fixed period exclusion. The equivalent figure for those of this primary need group amongst those with statements was 30.6 per cent). Web based Table 6.7 shows the data used to produce Figure 6.12.

Figure 6.12: Pupil enrolments that received one or more fixed period exclusion expressed as a percentage of the number of all pupils of the same primary type of special educational need, 2007/08



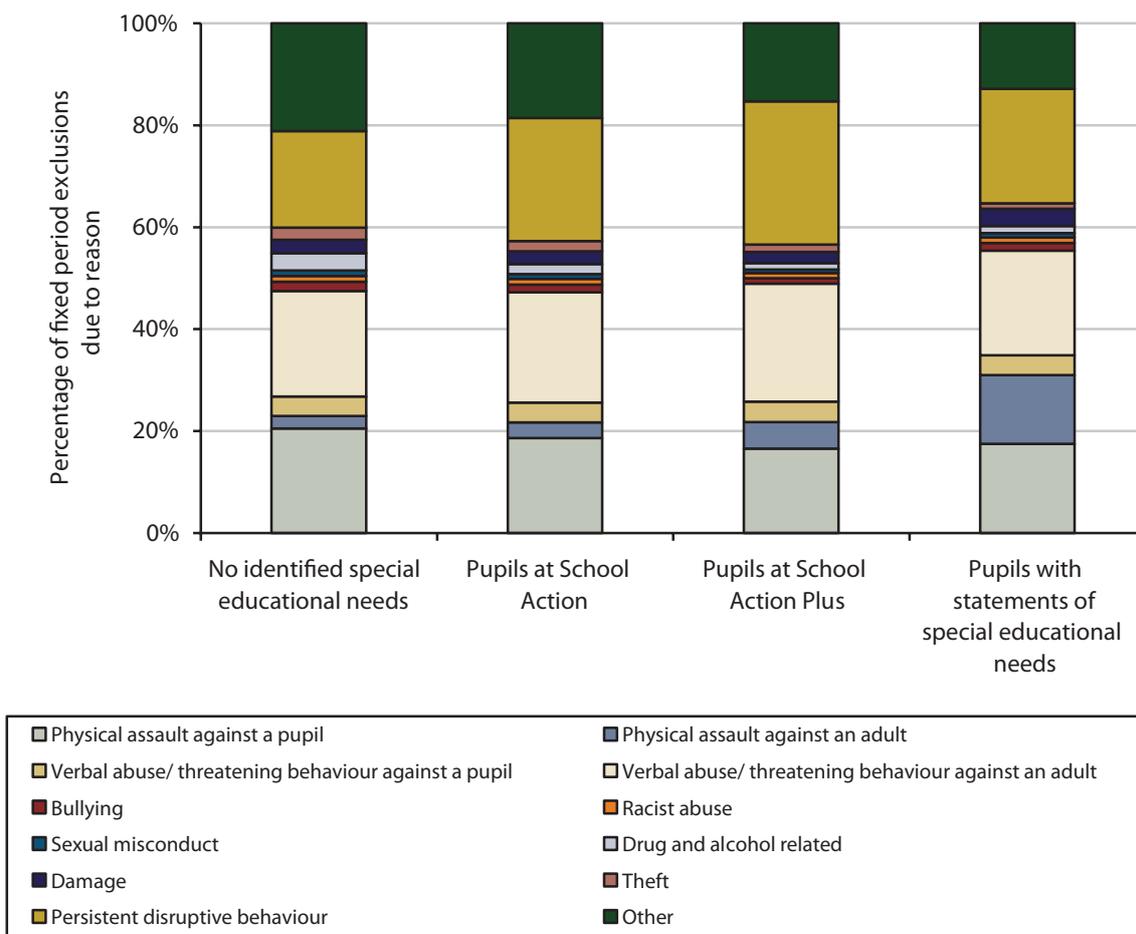
Reasons for fixed period exclusion by provision for need

Figure 6.13 shows the reasons for which pupils received fixed period exclusions from school in 2007/08 by provision for special educational needs. For example, Figure 6.13 shows the distribution and prevalence of reasons for all fixed period exclusions received by pupils with statements. Web based Table 6.9 contains the data which was used to produce Figure 6.13.

Figure 6.13 shows that pupils received a fixed period exclusion for a variety of reasons in 2007/08. The patterns were quite consistent across provisions of special educational need with the most common reasons being persistent disruptive behaviour, verbal abuse/ threatening behaviour against an adult, physical assault against a pupil and any other reason. Compared to those with no special educational needs, pupils with special educational needs were less likely to receive a fixed period exclusion due to drug and alcohol related reasons, physical assaults on pupils or the any other reason category.

However, pupils with special educational needs were more likely than their peers to receive a fixed period exclusion due to physical assaults on adults and persistent disruptive behaviour.

Figure 6.13: Percentage of fixed period exclusions by reason for exclusion for pupils with special educational needs in 2007/08 by provision of need

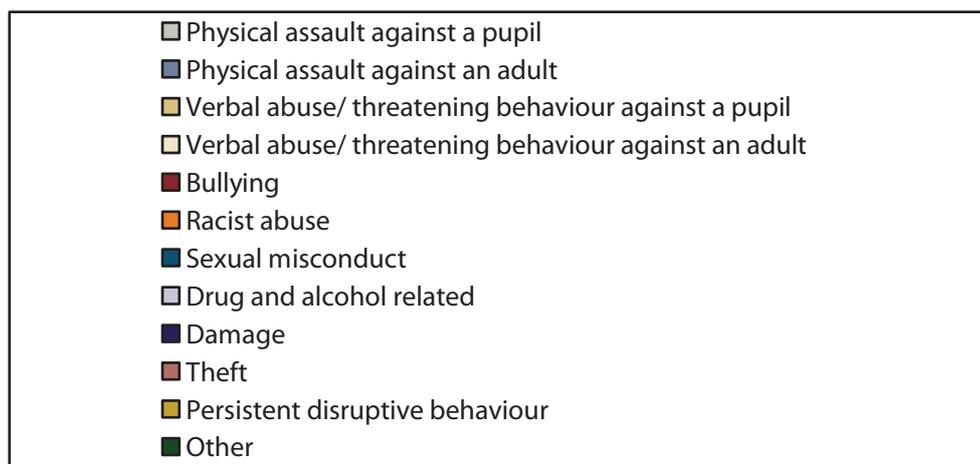
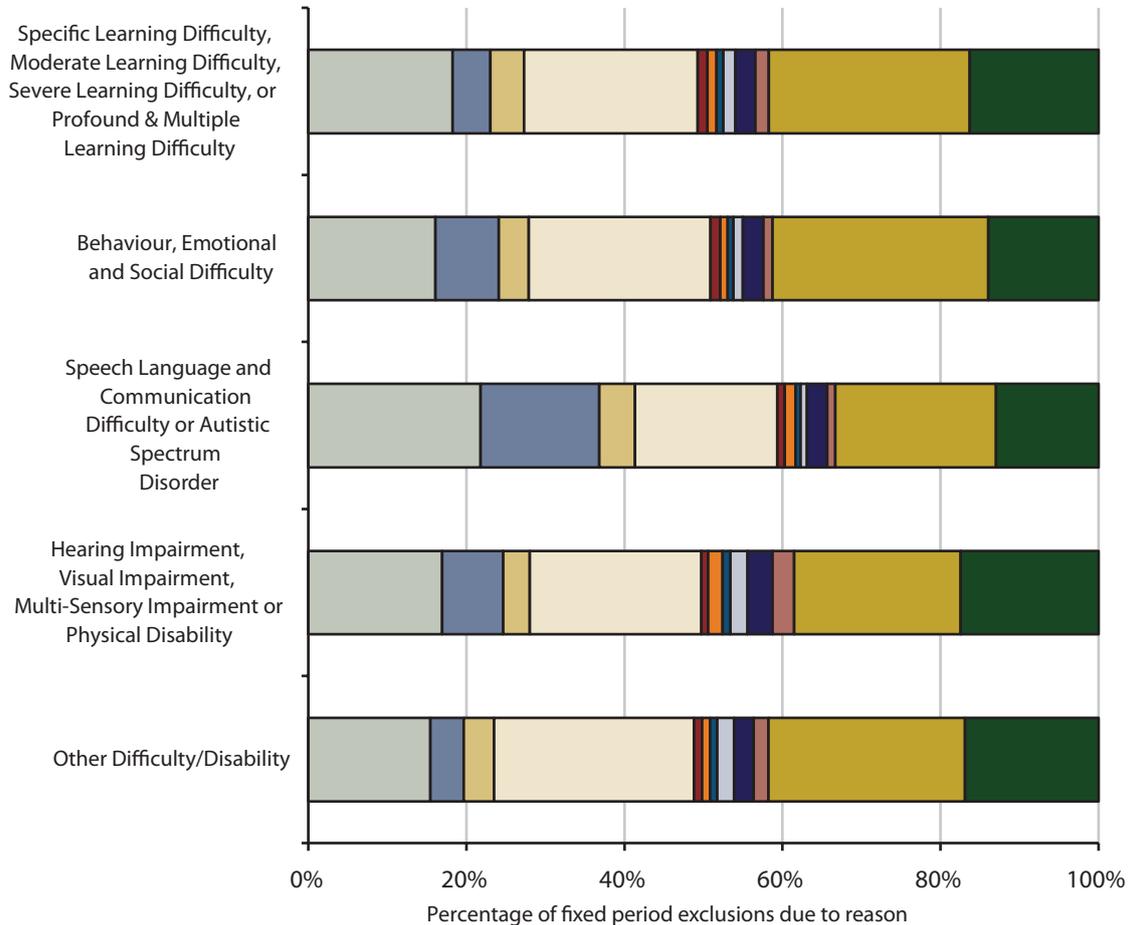


Reasons for fixed period exclusion by primary type of need

Figure 6.14 shows the reasons for which pupils at School Action Plus and statements received fixed period exclusions from school in 2007/08. Web based Table 6.9 contains the data which was used to produce Figure 6.14. Primary need figures were combined for those at School Action Plus and with statements due to small numbers of pupils in some groups. Figures were also combined for specific primary need groups which were similar (i.e. hearing impairment, visual impairment, multi-sensory impairment and physical disability), to ensure the groups were large enough to draw robust conclusions from the data. Figure 6.14 shows the following:

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

Figure 6.14: Percentage of fixed period exclusions by reason for exclusion for pupils at School Action Plus and with statements of special educational needs in 2007/08 by primary type of need



Rate of permanent exclusions

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

Figure 6.15 shows the number of pupil enrolments that received a permanent exclusion expressed as a percentage of the number of all pupils of the same group in 2007/08. It compares differences between boys and girls at School Action, School Action Plus, with

statements of special educational needs and with no special educational needs. Web based Table 6.10 contains the data which was used to produce Figure 6.15.

Figure 6.15 displays a very similar trend to that shown in Figure 6.11 which related to fixed period exclusions. Compared to their peers, pupils with special educational needs were more likely to be permanently excluded. As with fixed period exclusions, pupils at School Action Plus were most likely to receive a permanent exclusion. Pupils at School Action Plus were around 20 times more likely to receive a permanent exclusion than those with no special educational needs.

Figure 6.15: Pupil enrolments that received a permanent exclusion expressed as a percentage of the number of all pupils of the same special educational need provision by gender, 2007/08

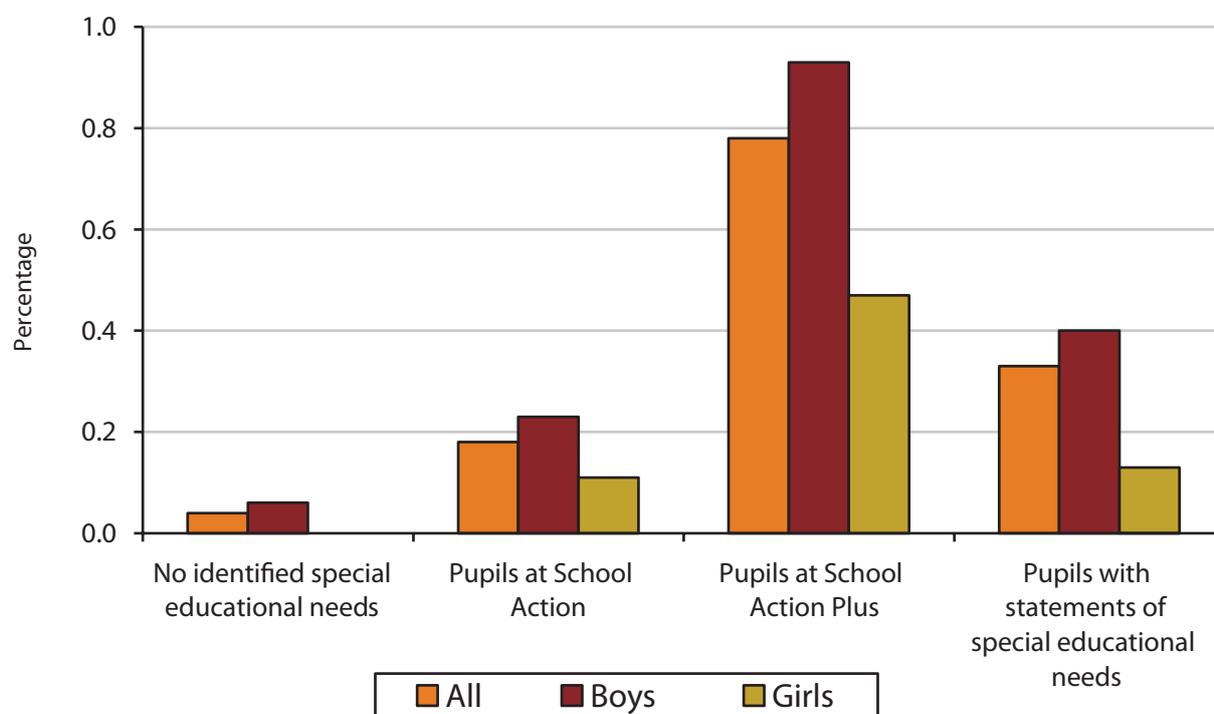


Figure 6.15 shows that boys were more likely to be permanently excluded than girls, regardless of special educational need provision. Boys with statements of special educational needs were three times more likely to be permanently excluded than girls in 2007/08.

Pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulty were the most likely to be permanently excluded. Web based Table 6.10 shows data on all the primary need groups.

Exclusions from school in 2008/09

Special educational need provision information on the number of pupils with special educational needs who were excluded from school in 2008/09 was published in July 2010 and can be found at:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000942/index.shtml>

Data Annex 6: Absence and exclusion from school for pupils with special educational needs

The data included in Chapter 6 has been provided as additional analysis following the publication of the Statistical First Releases (SFR) entitled

- Pupil Absence in Schools in England, including Pupil Characteristics: 2008/09, available at <http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000918/index.shtml>
- Permanent and Fixed Period Exclusions from Schools in England 2007/08, available at <http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000860/index.shtml>

Web based Tables 6.1 to 6.5 contain 2008/09 absence data for pupils at maintained primary, state-funded secondary and maintained and non-maintained special schools. Special educational need provision was recorded in January 2009. Numbers were rounded to the nearest 10 and 'x' represents a number, percentage or rate based on fewer than five. Totals may not appear to equal the sum of the component parts because numbers have been rounded to the nearest 10. It is not compulsory for schools to provide reasons for absence data – it is dependent on the software used by schools to collate their attendance data. However, in 2008/09, over 99 per cent of schools provided reason codes for all pupil absence. Further information can be found at the first weblink above. Figures relate to 2008/09 (this ran from September 2008 to July 2009) and include pupils who enrolled in schools in England from the start of the academic year to 22 May 2009 who were aged between 5 and 15. Pupils could have been enrolled in more than one school throughout the academic year, in which case they could appear in the absence record more than once.

Chapter 6 contains information on the reasons why pupils with special educational needs are absent from school. The reasons for absence fall into the following categories within each of the authorised and unauthorised absence groups:

Authorised absence	Unauthorised absence
Illness (NOT medical or dental appointments)	Family holiday not agreed
Medical/dental appointments	Arrived late
Religious observance	Other unauthorised circumstances
Study leave	No reason yet
Traveller absence	
Agreed family holiday	
Agreed extended family holiday	
Excluded, no alternative provision	
Other authorised circumstances	

Web based Tables 6.6 to 6.10 contain 2007/08 exclusion data for pupils at maintained primary, state-funded secondary and maintained and non-maintained special schools. Special educational need provision was recorded in January 2008. Numbers were rounded to the nearest 10 and '#' represents a number, percentage or rate based on fewer than five. Totals may not appear to equal the sum of the component parts because numbers have been rounded to the nearest 10.

Some information on pupils with special educational needs who were excluded in 2008/09 can be found in Statistical First Release (SFR) entitled Permanent and Fixed Period Exclusions from Schools in England 2008/09, available at <http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000942/index.shtml>

The data source used in the tables was the School Census. Details on the School Census data collection can be found at <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/cmipo/plugin/support-docs/>

The ten tables referenced within chapter 6 are listed below. The tables can be found in the accompanying web based spreadsheets on the publication webpage.

Index of tables for chapter 6

Table 6.1: Pupil absence by special educational needs (SEN) provision and primary type of need, 2008/09

Table 6.2: Pupil absence by special educational needs (SEN) provision by Local Authority, 2008/09

Table 6.3: Absence by reason and special educational needs (SEN) provision and primary type of need, 2008/09

Table 6.4: Persistent absentees by SEN provision and primary type of need and gender, 2008/09

Table 6.5: Persistent absentees by SEN provision and Local Authority, 2008/09

Table 6.6: Number of pupil enrolments receiving one or more fixed period exclusions, by special educational needs, 2007/08

Table 6.7: Number of pupil enrolments receiving one or more fixed period exclusions by SEN provision, primary type of need and gender, 2007/08

Table 6.8: Number of pupil enrolments receiving one or more fixed period exclusions, by SEN provision for each local authority, 2007/08

Table 6.9: Percentage of fixed period exclusions by reason for exclusion for pupils with SEN, 2007/08

Table 6.10: Pupils with permanent exclusions by SEN provision, primary type of need and gender, 2007/08