



## Statistical First Release

### Pupil absence in schools in England: Autumn term 2014

Reference	SFR 12/2015
Date	21 May 2015
Coverage	England
Theme	Children, Education and Skills
Issued by	Department for Education, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BT
Press office	020 7925 6789
Public enquiries	037 0000 2288
Statistician	Clare Jones
Phone	020 7340 7287
Email	<a href="mailto:Schools.statistics@education.gsi.gov.uk">Schools.statistics@education.gsi.gov.uk</a>
Internet	<a href="#">Statistics: pupil absence</a>

Overall absence rates have increased slightly

The overall absence rate has increased slightly from 4.3 per cent in autumn 2013 to 4.4 per cent in autumn 2014. Overall absence rates have followed a general downward trend since autumn 2008, when the overall absence rate was 6.4 per cent.

The percentage of pupil enrolments who are, or may become, persistent absentees has remained the same

The percentage of pupil enrolments who are, or may become, persistent absentees has remained unchanged since autumn 2013, at 4.7 per cent.

Absence due to illness has increased

Absence due to illness increased from 2.5 per cent of all possible sessions in autumn 2013 to 2.8 per cent in autumn 2014. Illness remains the most common reason for absence, accounting for 64.2 per cent of all absences.

Absence due to all family holidays has fallen slightly

The percentage of all possible sessions missed due to family holidays decreased from 0.4 per cent in autumn 2013 to 0.3 per cent in autumn 2014. This is due to lower levels of agreed family holidays. Absence for family holiday accounts for 6.6 per cent of all absences.

#### A National Statistics publication

National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the National Statistics Code of Practice. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs. They are produced free from any political interference.

## 1. Background and context

This Statistical First Release reports on absence in state-funded primary and secondary schools during the autumn 2014 term. Information on absence in pupil referral units has also been included.

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

Only full year absence figures give a complete view of pupil absence. Single term absence figures are volatile so year on year comparisons in this release should be treated with caution. Final absence statistics relating to the full 2014/15 school year are intended for publication in March 2016.

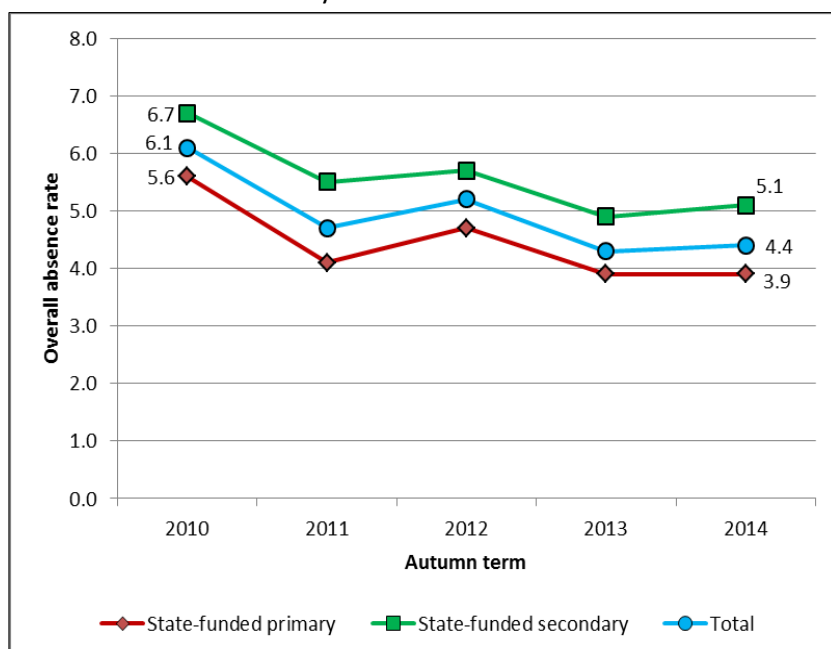
Figures held in this release are used as key indicators in behaviour and attendance policy. High levels of attendance are essential in ensuring that all pupils can benefit from the opportunities provided by education.

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

## 2. Absence rates

Chart 1: Overall absence rates

Overall absence rates are slightly higher than in autumn 2013 but remain lower than they were in autumn 2010



Overall absence rates have increased slightly

The overall absence rate across state-funded primary and secondary schools increased slightly from 4.3 per cent in autumn term 2013 to 4.4 per cent in autumn term 2014.

The overall absence rate in primary schools remains unchanged at 3.9 per cent since autumn 2013, whereas the overall absence rate in secondary schools has increased from 4.9 per cent in autumn 2013 to 5.1 per cent in autumn 2014.

More days are being missed due to absence

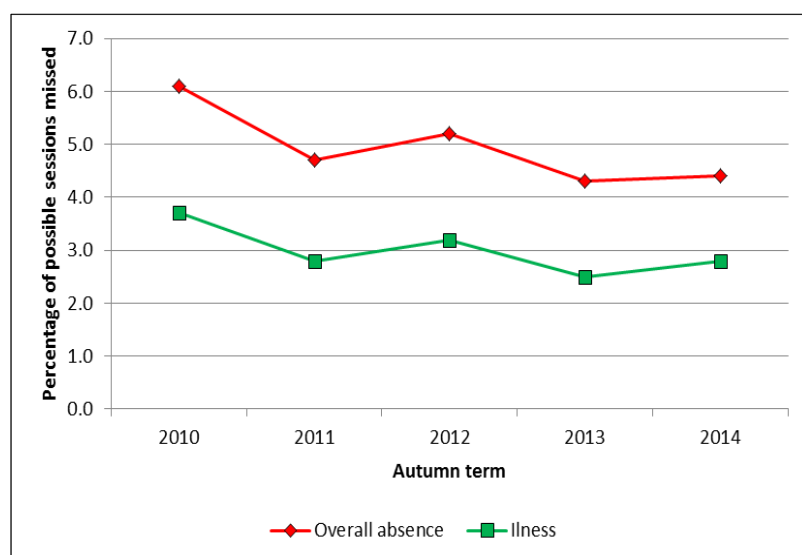
The total number of days missed due to overall absence has increased from 19.0 million in autumn 2013 to 19.8 million in autumn 2014. However, considerably fewer days were missed than in autumn 2010 when 25.4 million days were missed due to absence.

The slight increase in absence rates is due to increased levels of illness

The slight increase in overall absence is due to higher levels of authorised absences, specifically absences due to illness. Illness is the most common reason for absence and heavily influences overall absence rates (see chart 2).

Chart 2: Absence due to illness in state-funded primary and secondary schools

The rate of absence due to illness has increased since autumn 2013 which has resulted in a rise in overall absence.



### 3. Persistent absentees

Trends in termly persistent absence figures are for indicative purposes only and should be treated with caution. Only full year figures provide a definitive view of persistent absence.

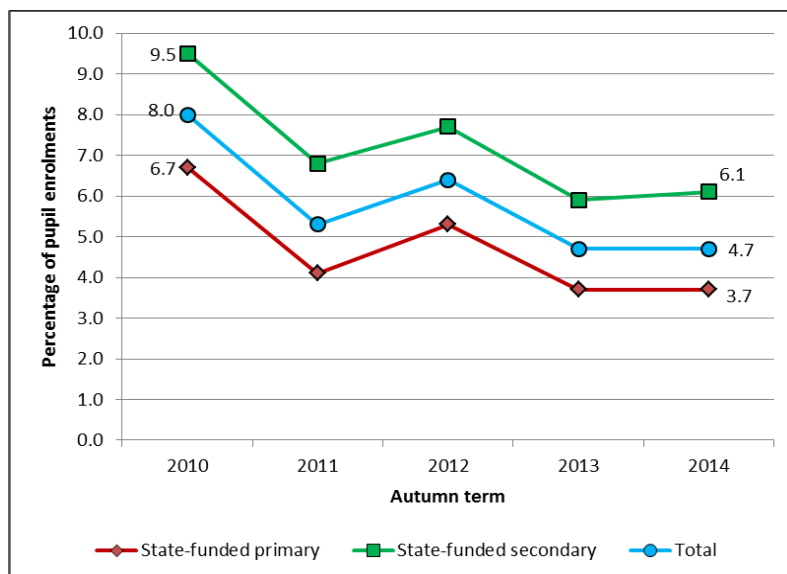
The persistent absence threshold is identified as 15 per cent or more of the typical amount of possible sessions across a given period. This equates to 56 or more sessions of absence (either authorised or unauthorised) for pupils aged 5 to 14 and 46 or more sessions of absence for pupils aged 15 during the full academic year.

For the autumn term, pupils having 22 or more sessions of absence (authorised or unauthorised) in the autumn term may become persistent absentees or in some cases are already persistently absent.

Persistent absence thresholds are reviewed every year to account for any changes to the typical amount of possible sessions for all pupils – however, the thresholds do not tend to change from year to year (see Chapter 3 of "[Guide to absence statistics](#)" for full information on the standard thresholds since 2005/06).

### Chart 3: Percentage of pupils who are, or may become, persistent absentees

The percentage of pupils who are, or may become, persistent absentees remains broadly unchanged since autumn 2013, and remains much lower than autumn 2010.



The percentage of enrolments who are, or may become, persistent absentees has remained the same

The percentage of pupils who are, or may become persistent absentees has remained unchanged since autumn 2013, at 4.7 per cent. However rates remain considerably lower than in autumn 2010 when they stood at 8.0 per cent.

The percentage of pupils already classified as persistent absentees is the same

As of autumn 2014, 0.5 per cent of pupil enrolments had already missed 56 or more sessions, meaning they are classified as persistently absent using the standard full academic year threshold. This rate is the same as that of autumn 2013.

## 4. Reasons for absence

Absence rates due to illness have increased and illness remains the most common reason for absence

Illness (not medical or dental appointments) accounted for 64.2 per cent of all absences compared to 58.8 per cent of absences in autumn 2013.

2.8 per cent of all possible sessions were missed through illness, compared to 2.5 per cent in autumn 2013.

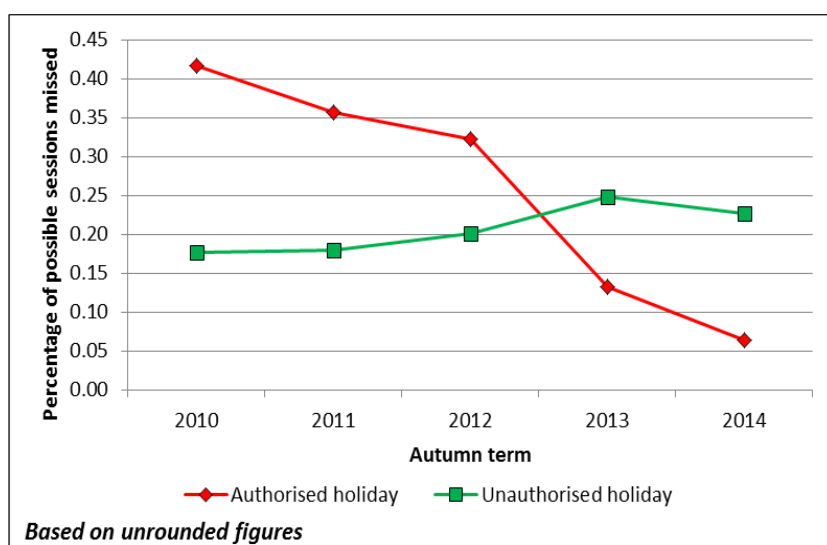
Authorised absence rates due to family holiday have continued to decrease

The percentage of all possible sessions missed due to family holidays (authorised and unauthorised) decreased from 0.6 per cent in autumn 2010, to 0.3 per cent in autumn 2014.

This decrease is primarily due to a continued decrease in authorised family holidays. Unauthorised family holidays saw a small decrease between autumn 2013 and autumn 2014 but rates remain higher than they were in autumn 2010 (see chart 4).

Chart 4: Family holiday absence rates

Authorised and unauthorised family holiday absence rates have decreased since autumn 2013.



## 5. Absence for four year olds

Absence data for four year olds (who are not of compulsory school age) has been collected since autumn term 2012.

The overall absence rate for four year olds decreased slightly from 5.2 per cent in autumn 2013 to 5.1 per cent in autumn 2014.

## 6. Pupil referral unit absence

Absence data for pupil referral units (PRUs), including alternative provision academies and free schools, was collected termly for the first time in the spring 2014 School Census, having previously only been collected annually via the PRU Census. In 2012/13 the PRU annual census was discontinued.

The overall absence rate for pupil referral units in autumn 2014 was 30.2 per cent, compared to 30.8 per cent in autumn 2013.

The percentage of enrolments in pupil referral units who are, or may become, persistent absentees (missing 22 or more sessions in the autumn term) was 42.3 per cent with 20.8 per cent of all enrolments already classified as persistent absentees (missing 56 or more sessions in the autumn term) in autumn 2014.

## 7. 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](#).

In October 2014 the Department consulted on a change to the methodology used to identify pupils who are persistently absent and a change to the structure of the absence Statistical First Releases to focus on the provision of more time series data via a machine readable CSV format rather than in data tables. 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.

Responses to this consultation are still being reviewed by the Department and a full response will be released in due course. Additional tables are provided in this release to show persistent absentee figures under the proposed methodology so that users can fully understand the differences between the current and proposed 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 the 10 per cent threshold are included in the additional tables accompanying this release to assist users in understanding how the change will affect persistent absence figures.

## 8. List of tables

The following tables are available in excel format on the [Department's statistics website](#):

### Charts

- 1 Overall absence rates by type of school
- 2 Percentage of pupil enrolments who are, or may become, persistent absentees (15 per cent threshold)

### National tables

- 1.1 Pupil absence by type of school
- 1.2 Number and rates of enrolments who are, or may become, persistent absentees (15 per cent threshold)
- 1.3 Absence by reason

### Local authority tables

- 2.1 Pupil absence by type of school
- 2.2 Pupil absence for four year olds

### Pupil referral unit tables

- 3.1 Pupil absence

### Additional tables: 10 per cent persistent absence threshold

- 4.1 Number and rates of enrolments who are, or may become, persistent absentees (10 per cent threshold)
- 4.2 Number and rates of enrolments who are, or may become, persistent absentees by school type (10 per cent threshold)
- 4.3 Number and rates of enrolments who are, or may become, persistent absentees in pupil referral units (10 per cent threshold)
- 4.4 Number and rates of enrolments who are, or may become, persistent absentees school level, raw data (10 per cent threshold)

### Additional tables: Proposed persistent absentee methodology tables

- 5.1 Persistent absentees, proposed methodology
- 5.2 Proposed persistent absentee methodology by school type
- 5.3 Proposed persistent absentee methodology in pupil referral units
- 5.4 Proposed persistent absentee methodology school level, raw data

When reviewing the tables, please note the following:

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.

So 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 pupil confidentiality. Where any number is shown as 0, the original figure was also 0. Where the numerator or denominator of any percentage calculated on enrolment numbers is less than 3, the percentage has been suppressed. This suppression is consistent with the [Departmental statistical policy](#).

And adopt symbols to help identify this

Symbols are used in the tables as follows:

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

---

Persistent absentee figures should be treated with caution

Termly data can be affected by the term length. Longer terms have a greater number of possible sessions which provide more opportunity for pupils to become persistent absentees based on fixed thresholds. Only full year absence figures give a definitive view of persistent absence. The persistent absentee information in this release should be used with care.

---

## 9. Technical notes

The 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 to 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.

- 9.1 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.
- 9.2 8 sponsor-led academies opened on or after the beginning of the spring 2015 term and incorrectly returned absence data for the autumn term. 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.
- 9.3 Schools with fewer than 6 pupil enrolments aged between five and fifteen are removed from our analysis. For this release, 20 such schools were removed from the main five to fifteen year old analysis.



## 10. Want more?

---

Want previously published figures?

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

---

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](#)

---

For related publications

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

Final absence statistics relating to the full 2014/15 school year are intended for publication as National Statistics in March 2016.

---

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](#).

---

## 11. Got a query? Like to give feedback?

---

If from the media                      Press Office News Desk, Department for Education, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BT. 020 7925 6789

If non-media                              Education Standards Evidence and Dissemination Division, Level 2, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London, SW1P 3BT  
schools.statistics@education.gsi.gov.uk

---



Department  
for Education



© Crown copyright 2015

You may re-use this information (excluding logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [Open Government Licence](#) or e-mail: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at [Schools.statistics@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Schools.statistics@education.gsi.gov.uk).

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