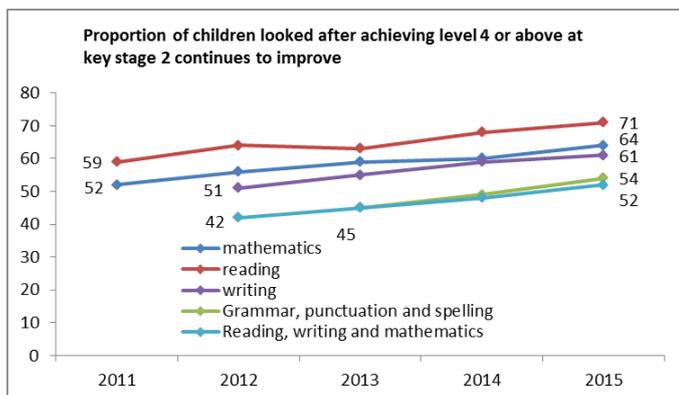




SFR 11/2016, 24 March 2016

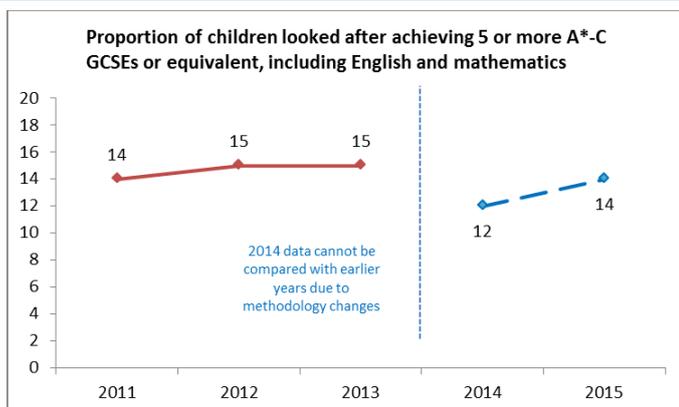
Attainment at key stage 2 continues to improve for looked after children...



Attainment for looked after children at key stage 2 continues to improve with increases seen in all subjects.

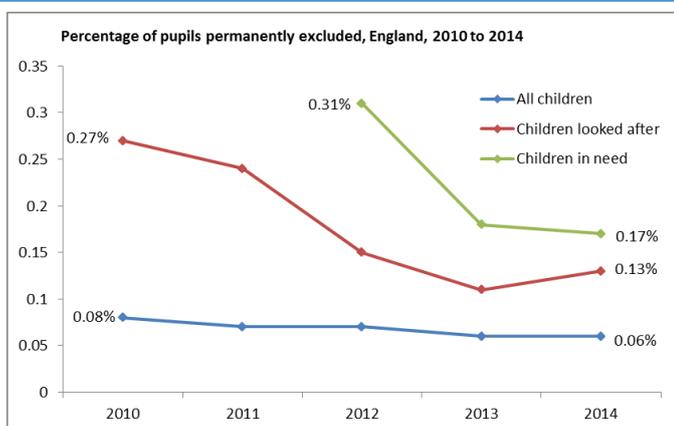
The largest increase was in grammar, punctuation and spelling, where the percentage achieving level 4 or above increased by 5 percentage points on last year, to 54%. The headline measure, percentage achieving level 4 or above in reading, writing and mathematics increased by 4 percentage points to 52%.

Proportion achieving 5 or more A*-C GCSEs or equivalent, including English and mathematics increases...



14% of looked after children achieved 5 or more A*-C GCSEs or equivalent, including English and mathematics. This is an increase on the 12% achieving last year. Changes to the way these figures are calculated means comparisons cannot be made to earlier years.

Proportion of looked after children permanently excluded stabilises after a period of decline...



0.13% of looked after children have been permanently excluded – this is broadly stable following a period of decline in recent years.

Looked after children are twice as likely as all children to be permanently excluded, but they are less likely to be permanently excluded than children in need.

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About this release

This statistical first release provides national and local authority (LA) level information on the outcomes for children who have been looked after continuously for at least 12 months at 31 March 2015. All figures are based on data collected annually through the longitudinal children looked after return (also known as SSDA903) which is completed each spring by all local authorities in England. Further details on which children are included in the data collection can be found in the children looked after return [collection guide](#).

Information on attainment, special educational needs (SEN), absence and exclusions are based on children looked after data that has been matched to attainment and school census data. Where possible, figures are presented for the last 5 years to allow comparisons back to 2011.

Data previously included in this release on health outcomes were published as additional tables to the [main release](#) on 10 December 2015.

In this publication

The following tables are included in the SFR:

- SFR11_2016_MainTables (Excel .xls)
- SFR11_2016_ExperimentalStatistics (Excel .xls)
- Underlying data (open format .csv and metadata .txt)

The accompanying quality and methodology information document, provides information on the data sources, their coverage and quality and explains the methodology used in producing the data.

Feedback

We are changing how our releases look and welcome feedback on any aspect of this document at CLA.STATS@education.gsi.gov.uk.

1. Introduction

What is a looked after child?

Under the Children Act 1989, a child is legally defined as 'looked after' by a local authority if he or she:

- is provided with accommodation for a continuous period for more than 24 hours
- is subject to a care order; or
- is subject to a placement order

A looked after child ceases to be looked after when he or she turns 18 years old. On reaching his or her 18th birthday, the status of the child changes from being looked after to being a young adult eligible for help and assistance from the local authority. Such help and assistance is usually provided in accordance with the various aftercare provisions of the Children Act.

Definitions for this publication

For this publication, the definition of a 'looked after child' is a child who has been continuously looked after for at least 12 months up to and including 31 March 2015. This definition has been used because 12 months is considered an appropriate length of time to gauge the possible association of being looked after on educational attainment. It is also the cohort of children for whom information on outcomes such as health, wellbeing and offending are collected through the SSDA903. In previous years these health outcomes figures have been included in this publication but this year they were published in December 2015 in the additional tables to the main children looked after statistical first release '[Children looked after in England including adoption](#)'.

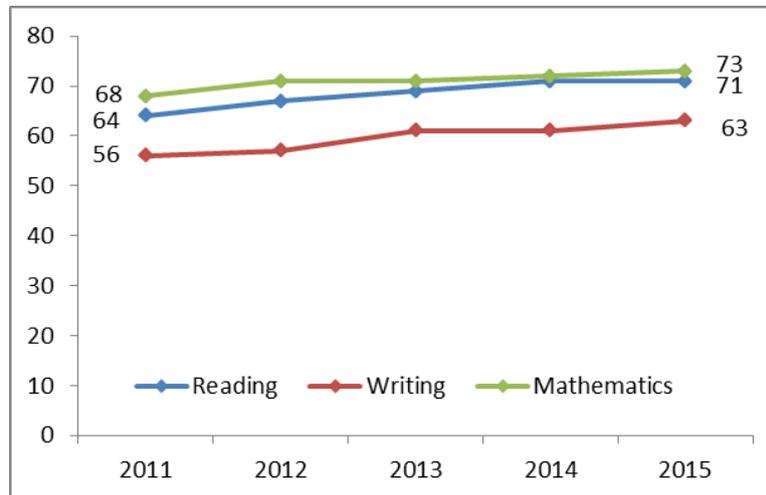
Where reference throughout this publication is made to a 'non-looked after child', we have defined this as a child who has not been looked after continuously for 12 months as at 31 March. This will include both children who have never been looked after and also those who have been looked after but who have not met the 12 months criteria.

For comparison purposes, this year for the first time children in need figures are included in this release where the figures have already been published. Figures are taken from the additional tables to the statistical first release '[Characteristics of children in need](#)'. These are children who have been identified as being in need of children's social care services at 31 March, excluding any children who are looked after. Data collected in the children in need census is matched to the national pupil database and where a match is found the child is included.

2. Attainment at key stage 1 (Table 1)

Key stage 1 attainment for looked after children continues to improve – increasing slightly for both mathematics and writing and remaining stable for reading. 73% achieved level 2 or above in mathematics, up from 72% last year, 71% achieved level 2 or above in reading, the same as last year, and 63% achieved level 2 or above in writing, up from 61% last year.

Figure 1: Attainment at key stage 1 in writing and mathematics improves slightly but stabilises for reading
Children looked after in England for at least 12 months at 31 March



Source: CLA-NPD

Compared to non-looked after children, attainment for looked after children is much lower. The largest difference is in writing where in 2015 only 63% of looked after children achieved level 2 or above compared to 88% of non-looked after children.

Girls continue to outperform boys. The greatest differences are in writing and reading where girls outperform boys by 10 or more percentage points. Attainment is much closer for mathematics, for children looked after at 31 March 2015 for at least 12 months the difference in attainment between boys and girls was just 6 percentage points. However, we see similar patterns when looking at attainment for non-looked after children, although the differences are smaller.

Table 1: Girls outperform boys at key stage 1

Percentage of children looked after achieving level 2 or above at key stage 1, England, Children looked after for at least 12 months at 31 March 2015

	Girls	Boys	Difference
Reading	77	67	10
Writing	72	57	15
Mathematics	76	70	6

Source: CLA-NPD

3. Attainment at key stage 2 (Table 2)

Attainment for looked after children at key stage 2 also continues to improve. The headline measure, achieving level 4 or above in reading, writing and mathematics, increased to 52%, up four percentage points on last year and up from 42% in 2012. Rises have been seen across all individual subjects, continuing year-on-year trends. However, key stage 2 attainment for looked after children is lower than for non-looked after children, although slightly higher than children in need (see table 2)

Table 2: Attainment at key stage 2 for looked after children

Percentage of children achieving level 4 or above at key stage 2, England,

Children looked after for at least 12 months at 31 March, 2011 to 2015, non-looked after children and children in need, 2015

	Looked after children					Non-looked after children	Children in need ¹
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2015	2015
Reading	59	64	63	68	71	89	64
Writing	.	51	55	59	61	87	58
Mathematics	52	56	59	60	64	87	60
Grammar, punctuation and spelling	.	.	45	49	54	80	50
Reading, writing and mathematics	.	42	45	48	52	80	49

Source: CLA-NPD, CIN-NPD

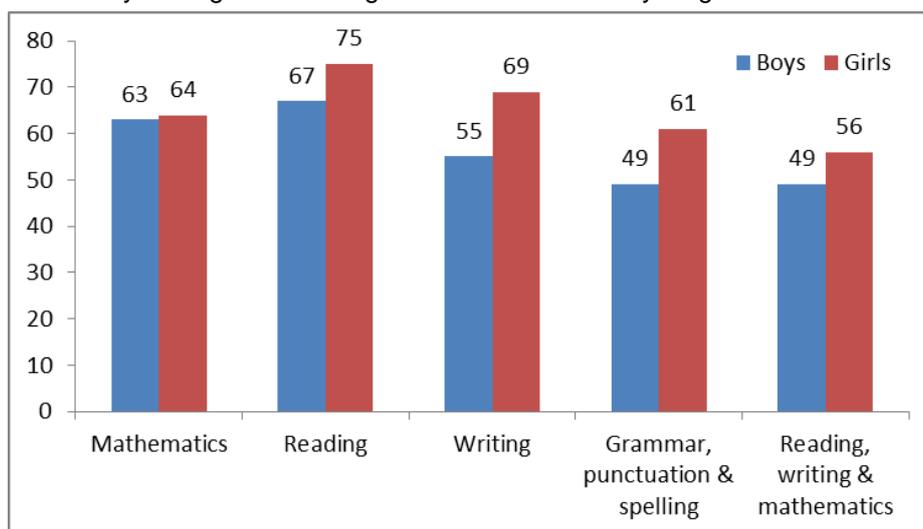
Children in need

When a child is referred to children's social care, an assessment is carried out to identify if the child is in need of services, which local authorities have an obligation to provide under section 17 of the Children Act 1989. These services can include, for example, family support (to help keep together families experiencing difficulties), leaving care support (to help young people who have left local authority care), adoption support or disabled children's services (including social care, education and health provision). Figures for children in need in this publication exclude children in need who are also looked after.

Looked after girls outperform looked after boys in all subjects, although the difference is small for mathematics, with 64% of looked after girls achieving level 4 or above compared to 63% of looked after boys. This is similar to previous years and similar to trends in the gender attainment gap for non-looked after children.

Figure 2: Girls outperform boys at key stage 2

Percentage of looked after boys and girls achieving level 4 or above at key stage 2



Source: CLA-NPD

¹ Children in need figures exclude looked after children

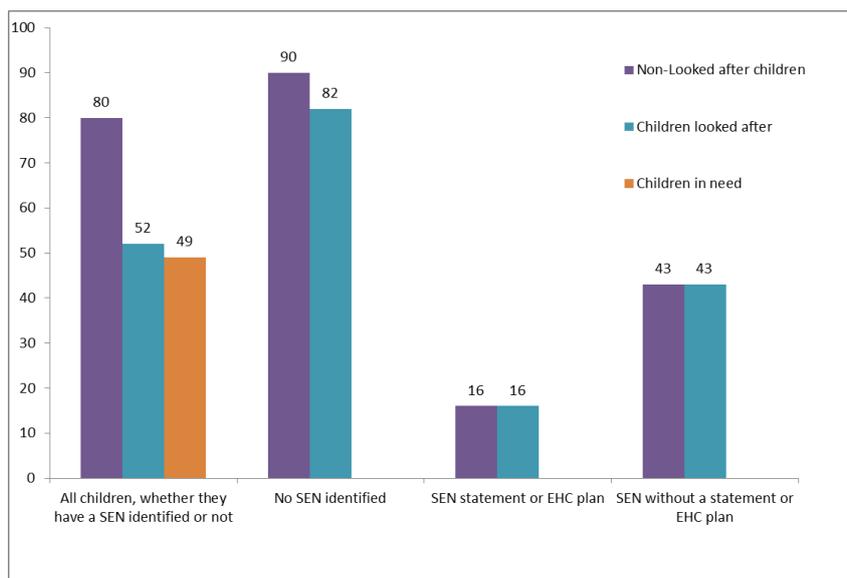
The percentage of looked after children making the expected level of progress (a minimum of two levels of progress between key stage 1 and key stage 2) has increased in each subject. 77% made the expected level of progress in mathematics (up from 75% last year), 82% made the expected level of progress in reading (up from 81% last year) and 84% made the expected level of progress in writing (up from 82% last year).

Attainment at key stage 2 by special educational needs

Compared to non-looked after children, far fewer looked after children achieve level 4 or above in the headline measure of reading, writing and mathematics. This year, 52% of looked after children achieved level 4 or above compared to 80% of non-looked after children.

However, the figures show that 61% of looked after children at key stage 2 have a special educational need identified², compared to around 19% of non-looked after children, and attainment rates for children with a special educational need are lower. Looking at children with no special educational needs, we can see that attainment levels are more similar between looked after and non-looked after children, for example 82% of looked after children without a SEN achieved level 4 or above in reading, writing and mathematics compared with 90% of non-looked after children. Similarly, attainment for looked after children with a statement or education, health and care plan (EHC plan) is similar to that for non-looked after children with a statement or EHC plan, across all measures.

Figure 3: Attainment at key stage 2, children³ achieving level 4 or above in reading, writing and mathematics in 2015



Source: CLA-NPD, CIN-NPD

² Percentages with a special educational need are based upon key stage 2 data where SEN status is known.

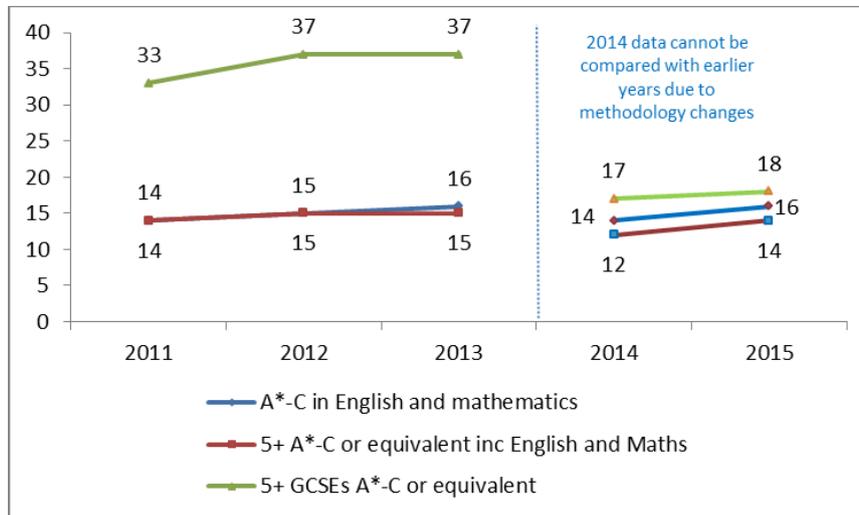
³ Figures for attainment of children in need are not currently published split by special educational needs.

4. Attainment at key stage 4 (Table 3)

14% of looked after children achieved 5 or more A*-C GCSEs or equivalent, including English and mathematics. This is an increase on the 12% achieving last year. Changes to the way these figures are calculated means comparisons cannot be made to earlier years (see blue box below).

Figure 4: Attainment at key stage 4 for children looked after improves

Children looked after in England for at least 12 months at 31 March



Source: CLA-NPD

As for key stage 2, attainment is lower for looked after children than non-looked after children, but it is similar to attainment for children in need.

Table 3: Attainment at key stage 4 for looked after children

Percentage of children achieving key measures at key stage 4, England,

Children looked after for at least 12 months at 31 March, 2011 to 2015, non-looked after children and children in need, 2015

	Looked after children		Non-looked after children	Children in need ⁴
	2014	2015	2015	2015
5 A*-C GCSEs or equivalent including English and mathematics	12	14	53	15
5 A*-C GCSEs or equivalent	17	18	64	19
A*-C in English and mathematics	14	16	55	..

Source: CLA-NPD, CIN-NPD

Key stage 4 performance measures

Two major reforms have been implemented which affect the calculation of key stage 4 performance measures:

1. **Professor Alison Wolf's review of Vocational Education** recommendations which restricted the qualifications counted, prevented any qualification from counting as larger than one GCSE and capped the number of non-GCSEs included in performance measures to two per pupil
2. An **early entry policy** to only count a pupil's first attempt at a qualification.

As a result of these changes data for 2014 and later cannot be compared to earlier years. A full breakdown of the reforms and their impact is given in [SFR41/2014](#).

The early entry policy introduced for some subjects in 2014 was rolled out to cover all subjects in 2015. Analysis in [SFR01/2016](#) suggests the impact of this should be very small at a national level.

⁴ Children in need figures exclude looked after children. A*-C in English and mathematics is not currently published for children in need

The proportion of looked after children making the expected level of progress in English increased from 35% last year to 37% this year, and the proportion making the expected level of progress in mathematics increased from 26% to 29%.

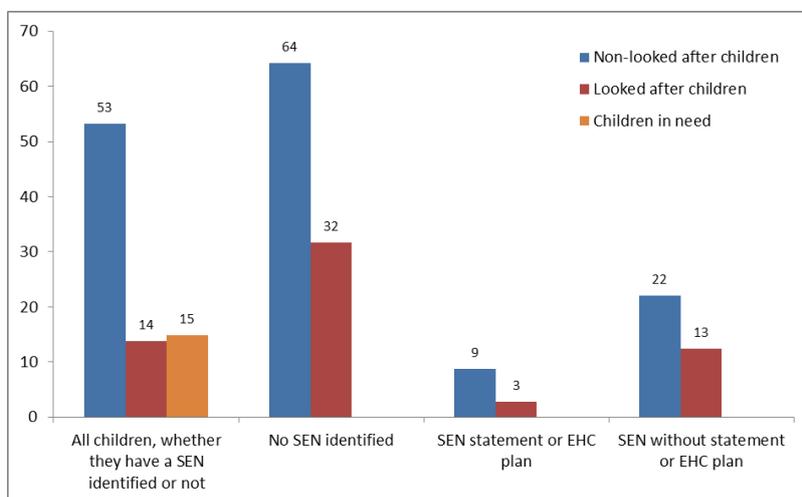
Attainment at key stage 4 by special educational needs

At key stage 4, 14% of looked after children achieved 5 or more A*-C GCSEs or equivalent including English and mathematics. This compares to 15% of children in need and 53% of non-looked after.

If we look at the figures split by whether the child has a special educational need we see that whilst the differences between looked after and non-looked after children are slightly less pronounced, there are still some considerable differences. For example 32% of looked after children without a SEN achieved 5 or more GCSEs or equivalents including English and mathematics, compared to 64% of non-looked after children without a SEN. This is in contrast to key stage 2 where we see looked after children performing similarly to their non-looked after peers with the same SEN status.

Figure 5: Percentage of children achieving 5 or more A*-C GCSEs or equivalents including English and mathematics, by special educational need

Children looked after in England for at least 12 months at 31 March, children in need⁵ and all children, 2015



Source: CLA-NPD, CIN-NPD

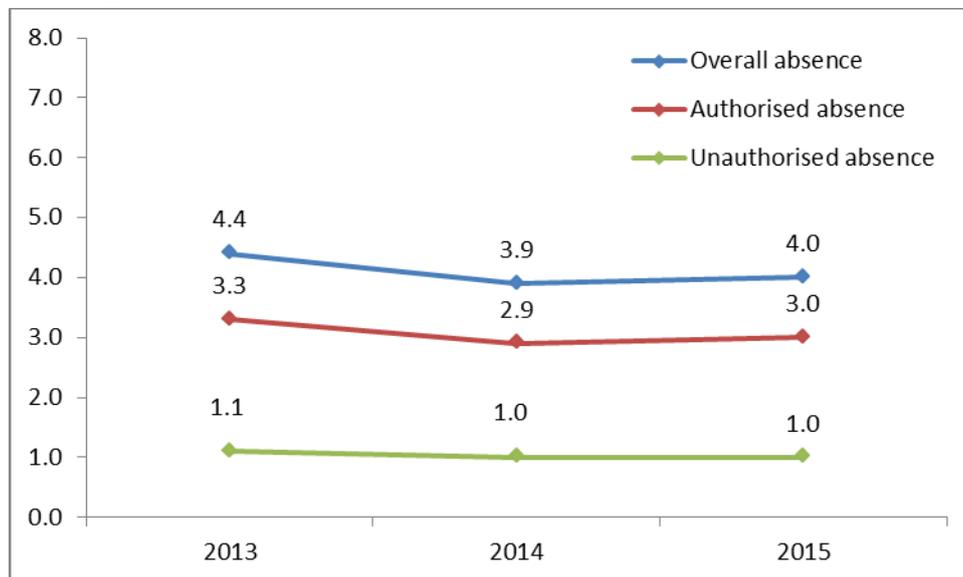
⁵ Figures for attainment for children in need are not currently published split by special educational needs

5. Absence rates (Table 5)

Absence rates for looked after children are similar to last year – overall absence has increased very slightly from 3.9% in 2014 to 4.0% in 2015. Unauthorised absence has remained the same (at 1.0% of sessions missed) and authorised absence has increased very slightly from 2.9% of sessions missed to 3.0%.

Figure 6: Absence rates for looked after children

Children looked after in England for at least 12 months at 31 March, 2013 to 2015



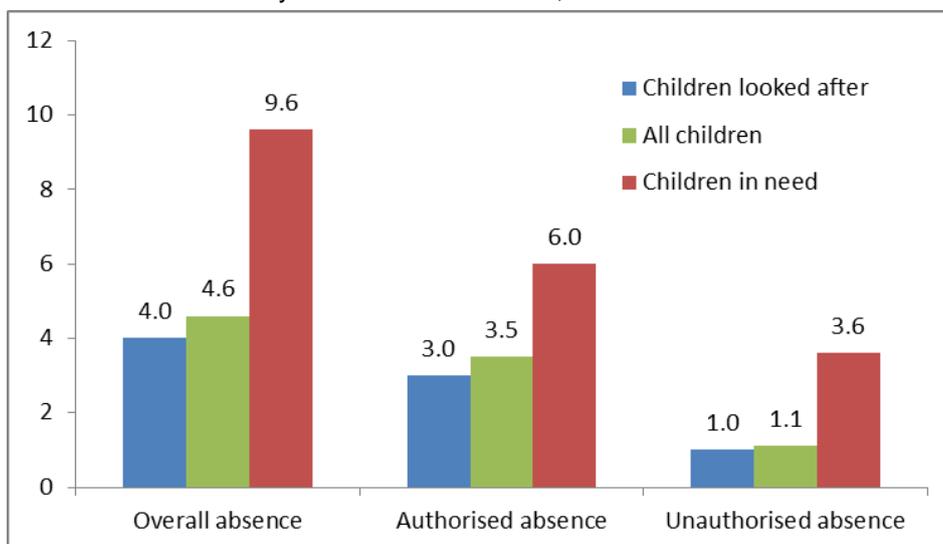
Source: CLA-NPD

Overall absence rates for looked after children are lower than for all children (who missed 4.6% of sessions in 2015) and much lower than for children in need (9.6% in 2015).

Comparing to all children, the difference in overall absence rates is due to looked after children having lower authorised absence rates. In 2015, 3.0% of sessions for looked after children were missed due to authorised absence, compared to 3.5% of sessions for all children. Unauthorised absences were similar at 1.0% of sessions for looked after children and 1.1% for all children.

Figure 7: Proportion of sessions missed by looked after children are lower than for all children and for children in need

England, children looked after continuously for at least 12 months, children in need and all children, 2015



Source: CLA-NPD

6. Permanent and fixed period exclusions (Table LA5)

The rate of permanent exclusions for looked after children is around twice as high as the rate for all children, but continues to be less than the rate for all children in need⁶.

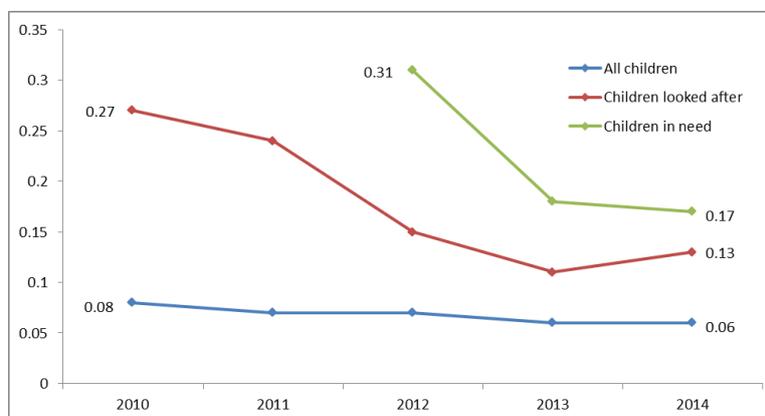
0.13% of looked after children were permanently excluded from school in 2015, compared to 0.06% of all children. Whilst there has been little change in the percentage of looked after children who had been excluded this year, the rate has halved since 2010 when 0.27% of looked after children were permanently excluded.

Exclusions data

Exclusions data are collected two terms in arrears, so the latest exclusions data currently available is from the academic year 2013/14. This is matched to the looked after children from the corresponding year – year ending 31 March 2014. Please note that this is a year earlier than the other information in this statistical release. In 2014, 29,580 looked after children aged 5 to 15 were matched to the school census.

Figure 8: Children looked after are twice as likely to be permanently excluded

Percentage of children permanently excluded, 2010 to 2014



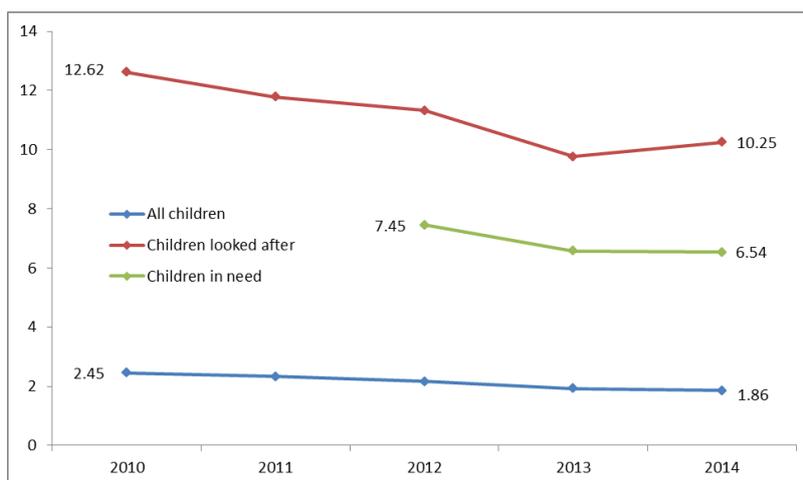
Source: CLA-NPD, CIN-NPD, school census

Fixed period exclusions are more than five times as likely for looked after children than for all children, and looked after children are more likely to have a fixed period exclusion than children in need (one and a half times the rate).

10.25% of looked after children had at least one fixed period exclusion in 2014, up very slightly from 9.77% last year. Over recent years this figure has been falling, from 12.62% in 2010; this downward trend has also been seen in figures for all children, and has continued in 2014.

⁶ Figures for children in need exclude looked after children.

Figure 9: Fixed period exclusions for looked after children are higher than for all children and children in need
 Percentage of looked after children, children in need and all children⁷ who had at least one fixed period exclusion, England



Source: CLA-NPD, CIN-NPD, school census

Table 4: Permanent exclusions and fixed period exclusions

Percentage of looked after children, children in need and all children⁸ who were permanently excluded, or had at least one fixed period exclusion, England

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Permanently excluded					
Looked after children	0.27	0.24	0.15	0.11	0.13
Children in need	..	..	0.31	0.18	0.17
All children	0.08	0.07	0.07	0.06	0.06
At least one fixed period exclusion					
Looked after children	12.62	11.79	11.32	9.77	10.25
Children in need	..	..	7.45	6.58	6.54
All children	2.45	2.33	2.16	1.92	1.86

Source: CLA-NPD, CIN-NPD, school census

⁷ Figures taken from [Permanent and fixed period exclusions in England](#).

⁸ Figures taken from [Permanent and fixed period exclusions in England](#).

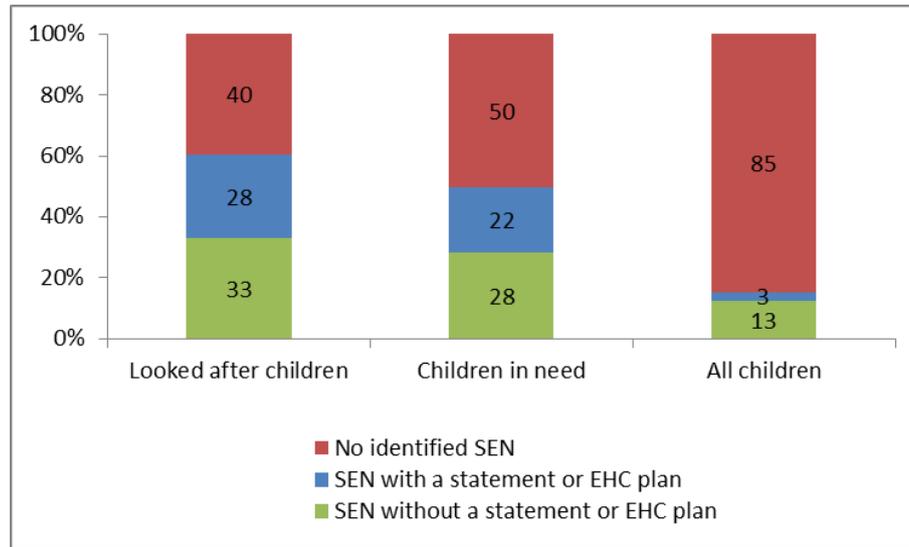
7. Children looked after with special educational needs (Table 4a & 4b)

Looked after children are four times more likely to have a special educational need than all children and are almost 10 times as likely to have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan (EHC plan).

In 2015, 61% of children looked after had a special educational need, compared to 50% of children in need and 15% of all children.

Figure 10: Looked after children are more likely to have special educational needs

Children looked after in England for at least 12 months at 31 March, children in need and all children



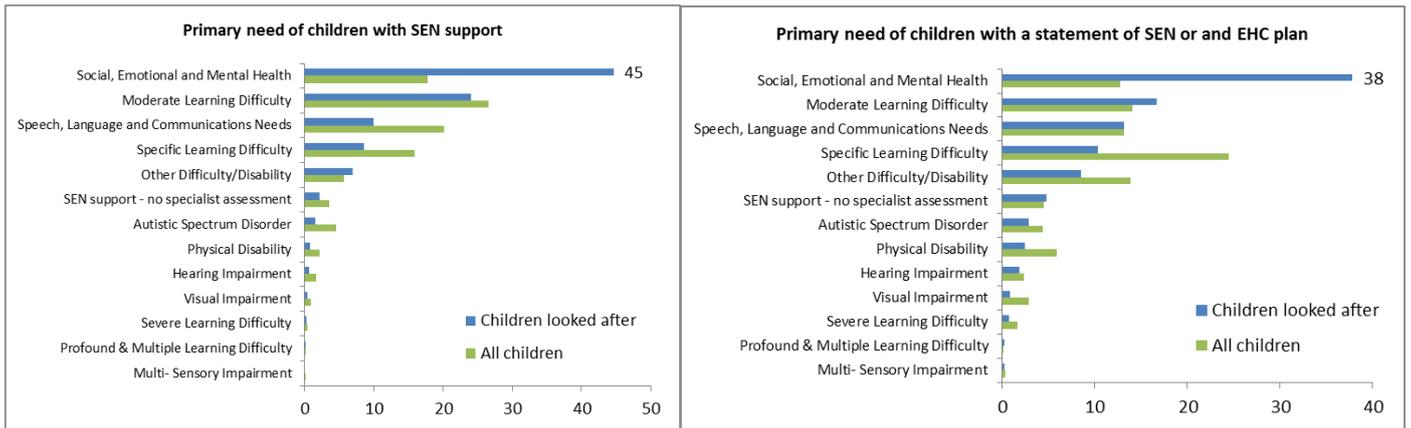
Source: CLA-NPD, CIN-NPD, school census

Information on the primary need is collected for children who have special educational needs with a statement or an EHC plan⁹, or who have been identified as needing SEN support. For both groups, social, emotional and mental health was the most common primary need for looked after children covering 38% of those with a statement or EHC plan and 45% of looked after children with SEN support. This is quite a contrast to the needs identified in the child population as a whole¹⁰ – looked after children are three times more likely to have a primary need of social, emotional and mental health and are less likely to have specific learning difficulties or speech, language and communication needs.

⁹ Changes were made to special educational needs provision from September 2014. Any children or young people newly referred to a local authority for assessment are considered under the new EHC plan assessment process and the previous 'school action' and 'school action plus' categories were replaced by a new category 'SEN support'.

¹⁰ Figures for all children are available in table A of the SFR: ['Special Educational Needs in England: 2015'](#)

Figure 11: Looked after children by primary special educational need
 Children looked after in England for at least 12 months at 31 March, and all children



Source: CLA-NPD, school census

8. Attainment at key stage 2 and key stage 4 for children adopted from care (Table A & B)

Figures on attainment of adopted children and children who have left care due to a special guardianship order or child arrangements order have been published alongside the main SFR tables. These are labelled as ‘Experimental Statistics’ to reflect that they are new statistics with only partial coverage at this stage, and do not yet meet the overall quality standards necessary to be designated National Statistics. Children are only reported as adopted or having left care due to a special guardianship order (SGO) or child arrangements order (CAOs) in the school census if their parents have declared this to the school. The figures are not, therefore, based on a full count of adopted/SGO/CAO children. We are reliant on this self-declared data from the school census as we cannot simply match the children looked after (SSDA903) data to the attainment data as when a child is adopted the key matching data item, the Unique Pupil Number (UPN) is changed.

Comparisons with other sources suggest that at key stage 2 the attainment figures for adopted children are based on approximately two thirds of children, but at key stage 4 this is much lower, with data only being available for around 30% of all adopted children. Estimates suggest the coverage for SGOs/CAOs at key stage 4 is similar, but at key stage 2 it is lower. Users should consider the low coverage rates when using the statistics.

Based on the data available, children adopted from care, and those leaving care with a SGO or CAO achieve slightly better than looked after children at both key stage 2 and key stage 4, however they have lower attainment rates than non-looked after children.

Table 5: Attainment at key stage 2 and key stage 4 for former looked after children adopted from care

Percentage of looked after and non-looked after children, children adopted from care and those leaving care through a special guardianship order or child arrangements order achieving at key stages 2 and 4, England, 2015

	Achieving level 4 or above in reading, writing and mathematics at key stage 2	Achieving 5+ A*-C GCSEs or equivalent including English and mathematics at key stage 4
Looked after children	52%	14%
Non-looked after children	80%	53%
Adopted from care	68%	23%
Special guardianship order	65%	21%
Child arrangements order	64%	20%

Source: CLA-NPD

9. Accompanying tables

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

National tables

- 1 Key stage 1 eligibility and performance of children who have been looked after continuously for at least twelve months, by gender, 2011 to 2015
- 2 Key stage 2 eligibility and performance of children who have been looked after continuously for at least twelve months, by gender, 2011 to 2015
- 3 Key stage 4 eligibility and performance of children who have been looked after continuously for at least twelve months, by gender, 2011 to 2015
- 4a Looked after children, non-looked after children and children in need by special educational need (SEN), 2015
- 4b Children who have been looked after continuously for at least twelve months by type of special educational need (SEN), 2015
- 5 Absence by type of school for children who have been looked after continuously for at least 12 months, children in need and all children, 2013 to 2015

Local authority and regional tables

- LA1 Eligibility and performance of children who have been looked after continuously for at least 12 months at key stage 1, 2015
- LA2 Eligibility and performance of children who have been looked after continuously for at least 12 months at key stage 2, 2011 to 2015
- LA3 Eligibility and performance of children who have been looked after continuously for at least 12 months at key stage 4, 2011 to 2015
- LA4 Children who have been looked after continuously for at least 12 months by special educational needs (SEN), 2015
- LA5 Exclusions from school of children who have been looked after continuously for at least 12 months, 2010 to 2014
- LA6 Absence from school of children who have been looked after continuously for at least 12 months, 2013 to 2015

Experimental statistics on children adopted from care

- A Key stage 2 eligibility and performance of former looked after children who have been adopted, have left care by a special guardianship order or a child arrangements order, by gender
- B Key stage 4 eligibility and performance of former looked after children who have been adopted, have left care by a special guardianship order or a child arrangements order, by gender

When reviewing the tables, please note that:

Rounding Conventions

The National Statistics Code of Practice requires that reasonable steps should be taken to ensure that all published or disseminated statistics produced by the Department for Education protect confidentiality. National and regional figures have been rounded to the nearest 10 and Local Authority figures have been rounded to the nearest 5. For confidentiality purposes, numbers from one to five inclusive have been replaced in the published tables by a cross (x). To ensure the suppressed number cannot be identified by simple arithmetic secondary suppression may be required. In this case the next smallest number is also suppressed. In national tables, where any number is shown as zero (0), the original figure submitted was zero (0). In attainment local authority tables, where the original figure was zero we have suppressed the value with a cross (x). In addition, the following convention has been used:

‘.’ means not applicable

‘-‘ means negligible – used to represent a percentage below 0.5%

10. Further information is available

Children looked after in England, including adoption

Information about [looked-after children in England for the year ending 31 March 2015](#) was published on 1 October 2015. It includes the number of looked after children, the reasons why children are looked after, their legal status and type of placement, and the number of children who started to be, or ceased to be, looked after during the year ending 31 March 2015. It also covers the number of looked after children who were placed for adoption, the number of looked after children adopted and the average time between different stages of the adoption process.

Children in need and child protection statistics for England

Information on referrals, assessments and children who were the subject of a child protection plan (taken from the Children in Need census) is available for 2015 on the [children in need statistics website](#).

Information on care proceedings in England

The Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS) publish information on [care proceedings applications](#) made by local authorities where CAFCASS has been appointed by the court to represent the interests of children.

Local authority children in care and adoption statistics

Children in care and adoption [performance tables](#) and adoption scorecards show how local authorities and looked after children's services compare with others in England.

Local authority expenditure

Information on local authority [planned expenditure](#) on schools, education, children and young people's services is available for the financial year 2014-15. This data is returned to DfE by local authorities via the Section 251 Budget Return.

Ofsted statistics

[Ofsted](#) publish inspection outcomes for local authority children's services and children's social care providers in England as well as data on the placements of children looked after.

11. 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.

12. Technical information

A quality and methodology information document accompanies this SFR. This provides further information on the data sources, their coverage and quality and explains the methodology used in producing the data, including how it is validated and processed.

13. Get in touch

Media enquiries

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Department
for Education



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