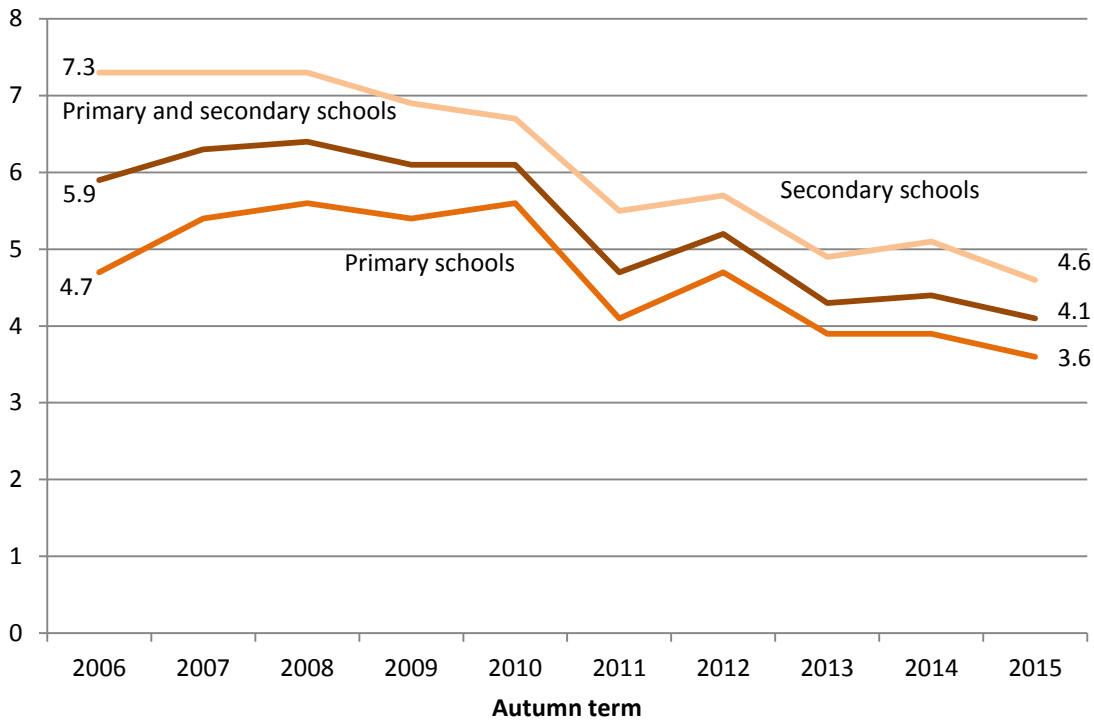




SFR 13/2016, 19 May 2016

Overall absence rates have decreased



The overall absence rate for state-funded primary and state-funded secondary schools has decreased from 4.4 per cent in autumn 2014 to 4.1 per cent in autumn 2015.

Overall absence rates have followed a general downwards trend since autumn 2008, when the overall absence rate was 6.4 per cent.

The decrease in overall absence is mainly due to a decrease in absence due to illness

Absence due to illness has decreased from 2.8 per cent in autumn 2014 to 2.4 per cent in autumn 2015. Illness remains the most common reason for absence, accounting for 58.8 per cent of all sessions missed.

The way persistent absence is measured has changed from September 2015

In September 2015, a revised persistent absence measure was introduced where a pupil enrolment is classified as a persistent absentee if they miss 10% or more of their own possible sessions.

The percentage of enrolments in state-funded primary and state-funded secondary schools that were classified as persistent absentees in autumn 2015 was 10.3 per cent. This is lower than the equivalent figure of 11.8 per cent in autumn 2014.

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About this release

This Statistical First Release reports on absence in state-funded primary and secondary schools and pupil referral units during the autumn 2015 term.

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 2015/16 school year are intended for publication in March 2017.

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.

In this publication

The following tables are included in the SFR:

- SFR13_2016_National_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 at schools.statistics@education.gsi.gov.uk.

1. Absence rates (Table 1, 2, 3 & 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 rates across state-funded primary and secondary schools decreased

The overall absence rate across state-funded primary and secondary schools decreased from 4.4 per cent in autumn term 2014 to 4.1 per cent in autumn term 2015. The overall absence rate in primary schools decreased from 3.9 per cent in autumn 2014 to 3.6 per cent in autumn 2015, and in secondary schools decreased from 5.1 per cent in autumn 2014 to 4.6 per cent in autumn 2015.

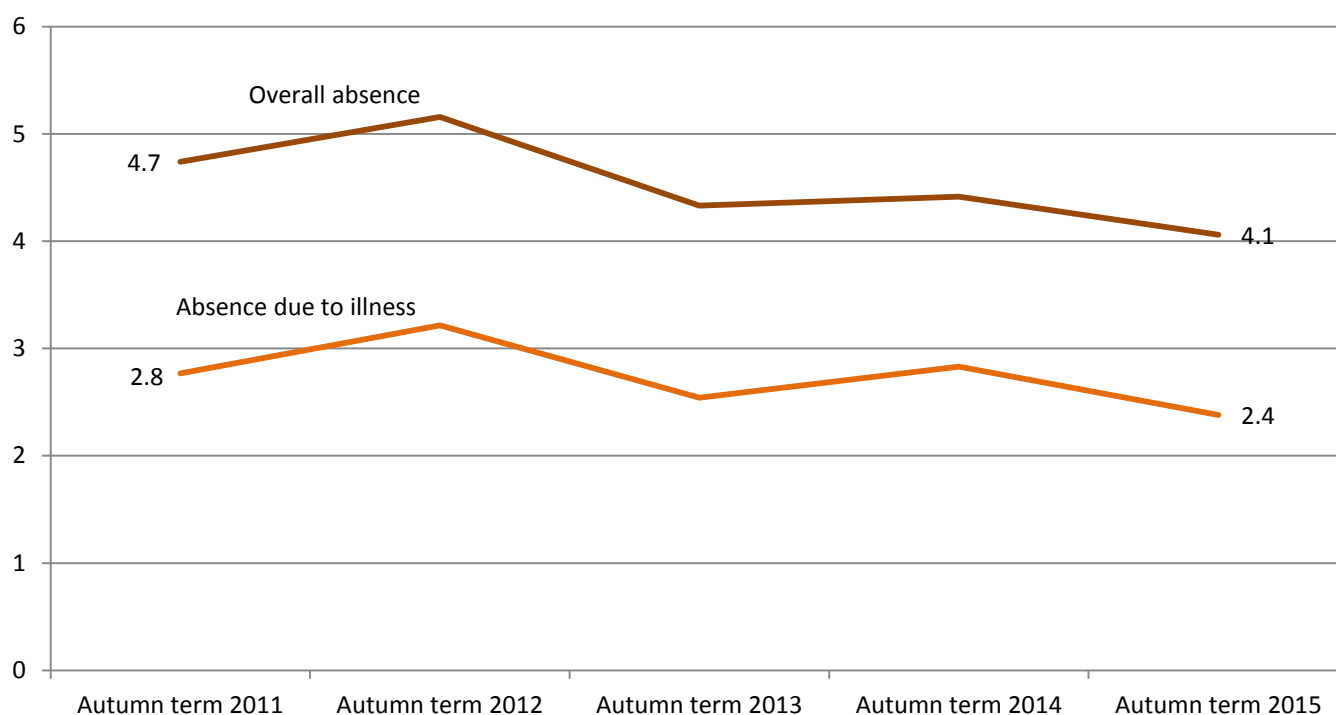
Fewer days were missed due to absence

The total number of days missed due to overall absence decreased from 19.8 million in autumn 2014 to 18.1 million in autumn 2015.

The decrease in overall absence is due to a decrease in absence due to illness

The decrease in overall absence is due to a lower rate of authorised absence, particularly absence due to illness. Illness remains the most common reason for absence and heavily influences overall absence rates (see figure 1).

Figure 1: Comparison of the trend in overall and illness absence rates
England, Autumn term 2011 to autumn term 2015



2. Persistent absence (Table 1 and underlying data)

Persistent absence definition

From September 2015, pupils are identified as persistent absentees if they miss 10 per cent or more of their own possible sessions.

For more information on this and on the methodologies used in previous years, please see the [“Guide to absence statistics”](#).

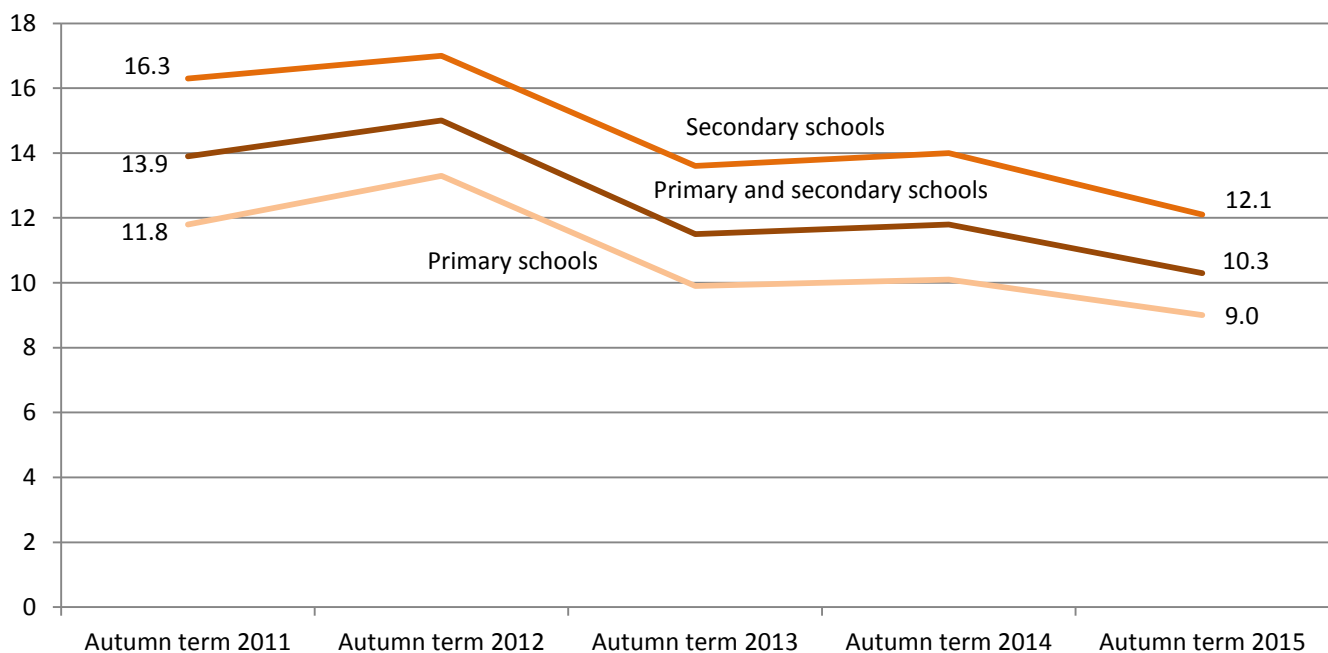
The persistent absence measure changed in September 2015

In September 2015, a revised persistent absence measure was introduced where a pupil enrolment is classified as a persistent absentee if they miss 10 per cent or more of their own possible sessions.

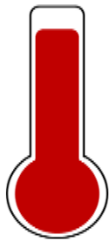
The percentage of enrolments in state-funded primary and state-funded secondary schools that were classified as persistent absentees in autumn 2015 was 10.3 per cent. This is lower than the equivalent figure of 11.8 per cent in autumn 2014 (see Figure 2 which presents figures for the new measure for earlier years).

Figure 2: Percentage of pupils classified as persistent absentees (new measure – based on a pupil missing 10 per cent or more of their own possible sessions)

England, Autumn term 2011 to autumn term 2015



3. Reasons for absence (Tables 2 & 3)



Illness (not medical or dental appointments) accounted for 58.8 per cent of all absences compared to 64.2 per cent in autumn 2014. 2.4 per cent of all possible sessions were missed due through illness, compared to 2.8 per cent in autumn 2014.

In autumn 2015, 56.4 per cent of pupils had a least one session of absence due to illness, a decrease from 62.6 per cent in autumn 2014.



The percentage of all possible sessions missed due to family holidays (authorised and unauthorised) has remained the same as in autumn 2014, at 0.3 per cent. Though due to levels of absence for other reasons (mainly illness) decreasing, the proportion of absence that family holidays (authorised and unauthorised) account for has increased, from 6.6 per cent of all absence in autumn 2014 to 7.6 per cent in autumn 2015.

The percentage of pupils who missed at least one session due to a family holiday in autumn 2015 was 5.2 per cent, compared with 4.9 per cent in autumn 2014.

4. Absence for four year olds (Underlying data)

The overall absence rate for four year olds decreased from 5.1 per cent in autumn 2014 to 4.9 per cent in autumn 2015.

5. Absence in pupil referral units (Table 4 & underlying data)

The overall absence rate for pupils in pupil referral units (PRUs) has increased slightly from 30.2 per cent in autumn 2014 to 30.5 per cent in autumn 2015. This is primarily due to an increase in the rate of unauthorised absence which has increased from 12.4 per cent to 12.9 per cent. This is partly driven by an increase in the percentage of sessions missed due to being late.

The percentage of enrolments in PRUs that were classified as persistent absentees under the new measure was 68.1 per cent.

6. Accompanying tables

The following tables are available in Excel format on the department's statistics website (hyperlink to gov.uk collection):

National tables

Charts

- 1 Overall absence rates by type of school
- 2 Percentage of pupil enrolments that are persistent absentees

Tables

- 1 Pupil absence and pupil enrolments that are persistent absentees by type of school
- 2 Pupil absence by reason
- 3 Pupil enrolments with one or more sessions of absence by reason
- 4 Pupil absence, persistent absence and pupil absence by reason for pupil referral units

Note that this release has been reviewed following the consultation on improvements to pupil absence statistics (and the [response](#) to it published in October 2015). We are no longer publishing local authority tables as part of this release, but all the data that was previously in these tables can be found in the accompanying underlying data.

When reviewing the tables, please note that:

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 Departmental statistical policy .
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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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7. Further information is available

Want previously published figures?

For the previous full year pupil absence figures visit: [Pupil Absence in Schools in England, 2014 to 2015](#)

For the previous autumn term pupil absence figures visit: [Pupil Absence in Schools in England, Autumn term 2014](#)

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 or [Welsh Government - Statistics and Research](#)

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

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

For related publications

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

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](#).

8. 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.

9. 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.
 - 4 sponsor-led academies opened part way through the term and incorrectly returned absence data for their predecessor school. As the combined absence data would then be related to both the academy and the 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 6 enrolments aged between five and fifteen are removed from our analysis. For this release, 20 schools were removed from the main five to fifteen year old analysis.

10. Get in touch

Media enquiries

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Tel: 020 7783 8300

Other enquiries/feedback

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Email: schools.statistics@education.gsi.gov.uk



Department
for Education



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

Reference: [SFR 13/2016]



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