



# **Pupil suspensions and expulsions in Northern Ireland 2024/25**

**Official Statistics in Development**

**April 2026**



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## **Key findings.**

The figures presented cover the 2024/25 academic year and relate to pupils of compulsory school age in primary, post-primary and special schools across Northern Ireland.

- In 2024/25, 4,756 pupils were suspended, representing 1.6% of all pupils, a decrease of 637 pupils (11.8%) from the 2023/24 academic year when 5,393 pupils, representing 1.8% of all pupils, were suspended.
- The 4,756 pupils were suspended a total of 7,904 times. The majority of suspended pupils (68.5%) were suspended once during the 2024/25 academic year.
- Persistent infringements of school rules was the most common reason for a pupil to be suspended. This reason was given by schools for 2,429 suspensions representing 30.7% of all suspensions.
- In 2024/25, 35 pupils were expelled in Northern Ireland an increase of seven pupils compared with the 2023/24 academic year.

## **1.0 Introduction.**

This report presents statistics on suspensions and expulsions during the 2024/25 academic year and relates to pupils of compulsory school age, for brevity referred to as pupils in the body of this report, in primary, post-primary and special schools across Northern Ireland.

The report includes:

- the number and percentage of pupils suspended
- characteristics of suspended pupils and the schools they attended
- reasons why pupils were suspended
- the number and percentage of expelled pupils.

The Education Authority (EA) collate the suspension and expulsion returns made by schools and the resultant data are shared with the Department of Education (DE) for processing and publication in this report.

During 2019/20 and 2020/21, while suspensions and expulsions were possible throughout the academic year, Covid-19 restrictions will have had an impact on the numbers presented and caution should be taken when comparing across years.

## 2.0 Pupil suspensions.

A suspension refers to when a pupil is excluded from a school for a set period of time. A pupil may be suspended on one or more occasions up to a maximum of 45 school days in a single academic year. This total includes suspensions from previous schools.

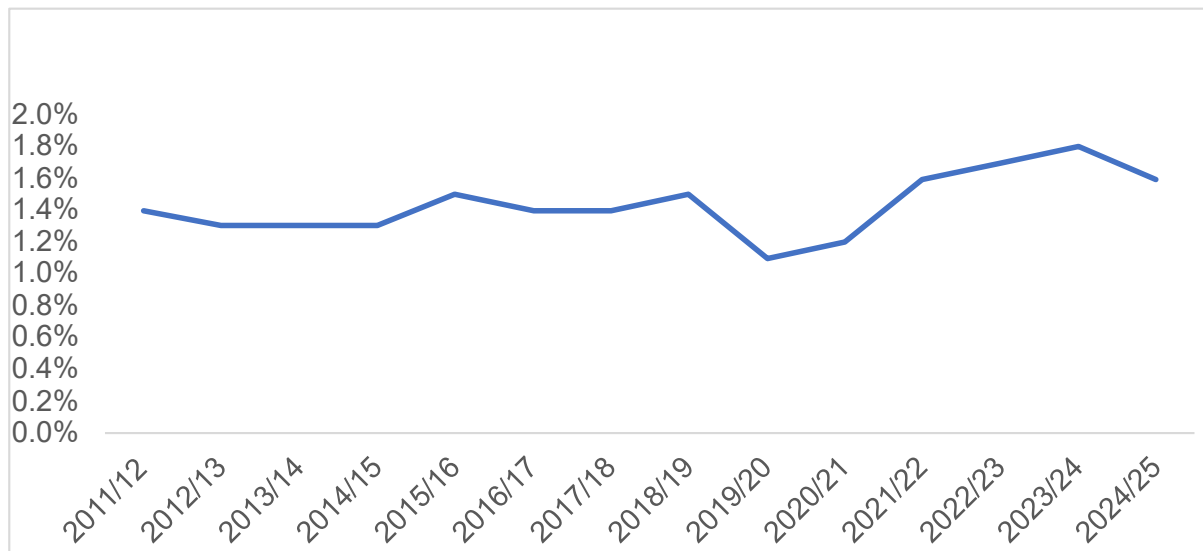
### 2.1 Total number of pupils suspended in the academic year 2024/25.

In the academic year 2024/25, 4,756 pupils were suspended, a decrease of 637 pupils (11.8%) from the 2023/24 academic year when 5,393 pupils were suspended.

### 2.2 The percentage of pupils suspended over time in Northern Ireland.

The 4,756 pupils suspended in 2024/25 represent 1.6% of all pupils ([Annex 1 Table 1](#)).

**Figure 1: Percentage of pupils suspended in Northern Ireland 2011/12 – 2024/25.**



Source Education Authority & the School Census

Note:

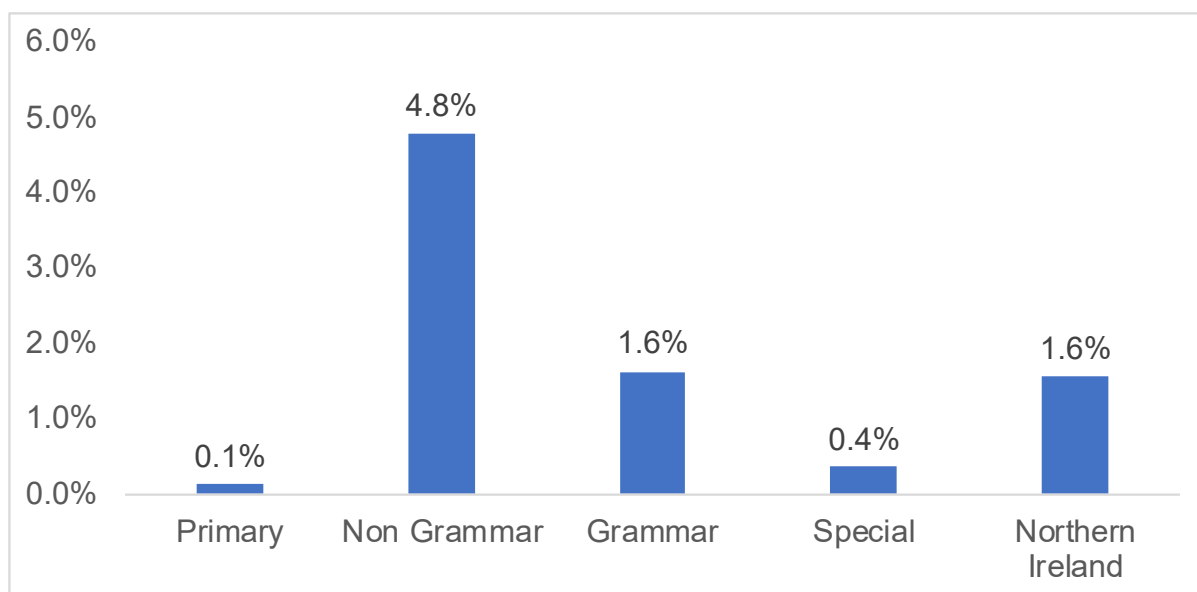
1. During 2019/20 and 2020/21, while suspensions and expulsions were possible throughout the academic year, Covid-19 restrictions will have had an impact on the numbers presented and caution should be taken when comparing across years.

In the years prior to Covid-19, 2011/12 to 2018/19, the percentage of pupils suspended was relatively stable ranging from 1.3% to 1.5%. The academic years 2019/20 and 2020/21 were both impacted by Covid-19 with periods of school closures resulting in lower percentages of pupils suspended than in any of the preceding eight years, 1.1% and 1.2% respectively. The 2021/22 academic year saw the percentage of pupils suspended increase to 1.6% and increase further to 1.7% in 2022/23 and 1.8% in 2023/24. In the 2024/25 academic the percentage of pupils suspended decreased to 1.6%

### **2.3 Suspended pupils and type of school.**

In 2024/25, 3,730 suspended pupils representing 78.4% of all suspended pupils were in non-grammar schools. A further 804 (16.9%) were in grammar schools, 200 (4.2%) were in primary schools and 22 (0.5%) were in special schools. ([Annex 1 Table 2](#)).

**Figure 2: Percentage of pupils suspended by school type in Northern Ireland 2024/25.**



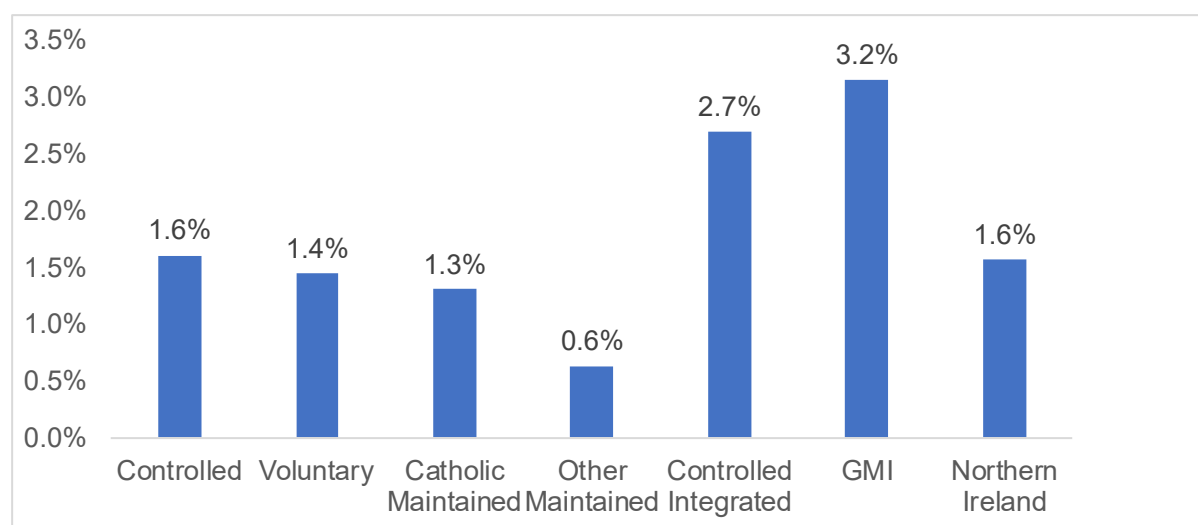
Source Education Authority & the School Census

In 2024/25, 4.8% of non-grammar school pupils were suspended as were 1.6% of grammar school pupils, 0.4% of special school pupils and 0.1% of primary school pupils were also suspended.

## **2.4 Suspended pupils and school management type.**

In 2024/25, 1,943 suspended pupils representing 40.9% of all suspended pupils were in controlled schools, 1,455 (30.6%) in Catholic maintained schools, 495 (10.4%) in Grant Maintained Integrated (GMI) schools, 256 (5.4%) in Controlled Integrated schools and 31 (0.8%) in Other maintained schools ([Annex 1 Table 3](#)).

**Figure 3: Percentage of pupils suspended by school management type in Northern Ireland 2024/25.**



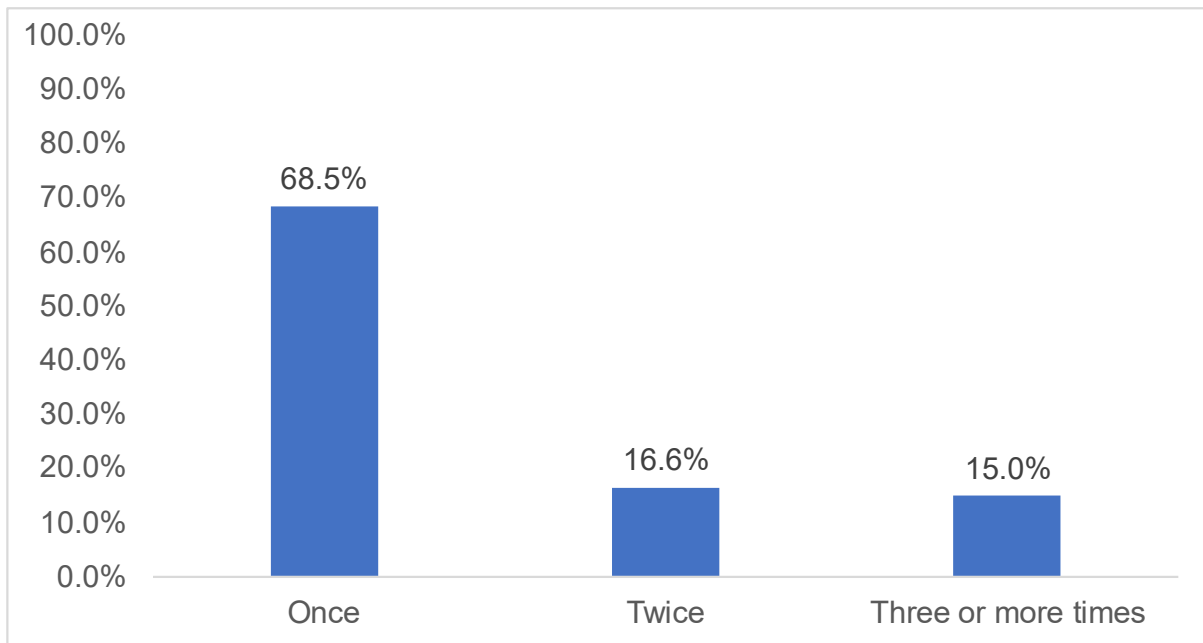
Source Education Authority & the School Census

In GMI schools and Controlled Integrated schools 3.2% and 2.7% of pupils respectively were suspended, the highest across management types and above the Northern Ireland average (1.6%). In Voluntary schools 1.4% of pupils were suspended, 1.6% in Controlled schools and 1.3% in Catholic maintained schools. The lowest percentage of pupils suspended (0.6%) was in Other maintained schools.

## **2.5 Pupils with one or more suspension occasion.**

In 2024/25, 3,256 pupils were suspended once, 788 were suspended twice and 712 were suspended on three or more occasions ([Annex 1 Table 4](#)).

**Figure 4: Number of times pupils were suspended in Northern Ireland 2024/25.**



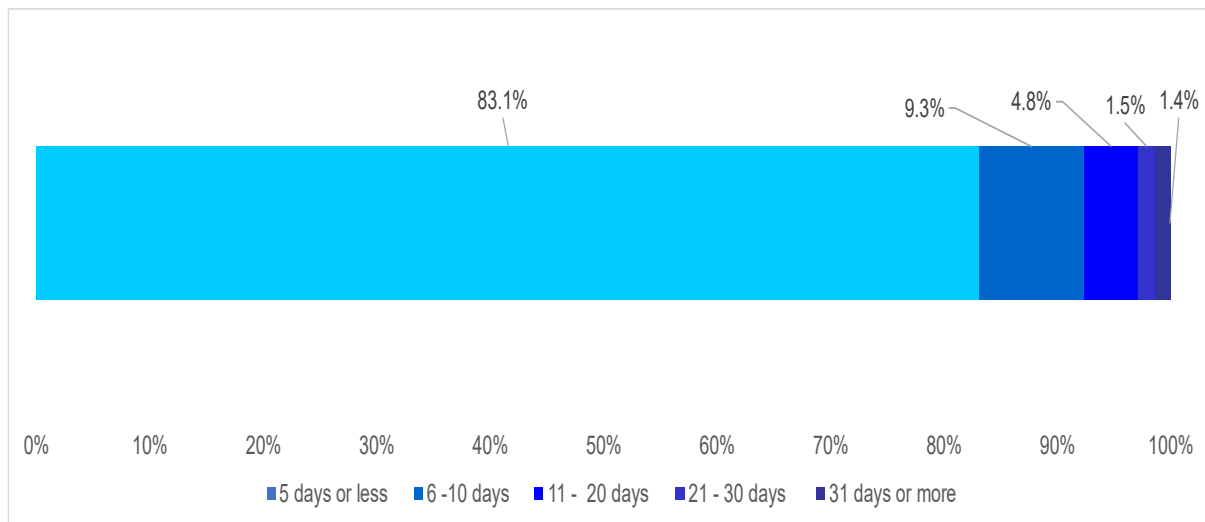
Source Education Authority

Pupils that were suspended once accounted for 68.5% of all suspended pupils, pupils suspended twice accounted for 16.6% and pupils that were suspended on three or more occasions accounted for 15.0% of all suspended pupils.

### ***2.6 Duration of pupils' suspensions.***

A pupil may be suspended for a maximum of 45 days in an academic year. A school may initially suspend a pupil for up to five days, informing the EA that they have done so as soon as possible. If a school extends the suspension beyond five days the EA must be informed of this continuation with the process repeated for each continuation of five days or less until the suspension is completed ([Annex 1 Table 5](#)).

**Figure 5: Duration of pupils' suspension(s) in Northern Ireland 2024/25**



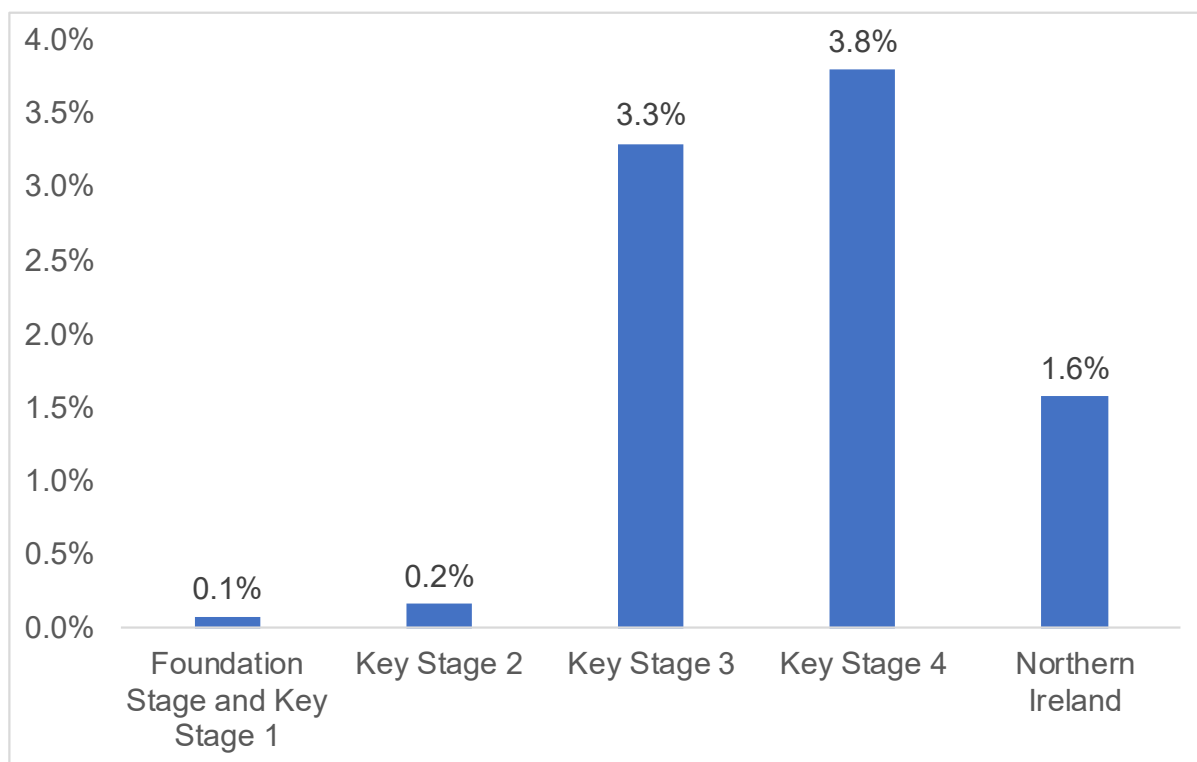
Source Education Authority

In 2024/25, 3,954 pupils were suspended for five days or less representing 83.1% of all suspended pupils. A further 440 pupils (9.3%) were suspended for 6-10 days, 226 pupils (4.8%) were suspended for 11-20 days, 70 pupils (1.5%) were suspended for 21-30 days and 66 pupils (1.4%) were suspended for 31 days or more.

### ***2.7 Suspended pupils and Key Stage of study.***

In 2024/25, 76 suspended pupils were in the Foundation Stage or Key Stage 1 representing 1.6% of all suspended pupils. A further 127 suspended pupils (2.7%) were in Key Stage 2, 2,580 suspended pupils (54.2%) were in Key Stage 3 and 1,973 suspended pupils (41.5%) were in Key Stage 4 ([Annex 1 Table 6](#)).

**Figure 6: Percentage of pupils suspended by Key Stage in Northern Ireland 2024/25.**



Source Education Authority & the School Census

Note:

1. The Foundation Stage is Years 1 and 2; Key Stage 1 is Years 3 and 4; Key Stage 2 is Years 5 to 7; Key Stage 3 is Years 8 to 10; and Key Stage 4 is Years 11 and 12.

In the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, 0.1% of pupils were suspended as were 0.2% of pupils in Key Stage 2. In Key Stage 3, 3.3% of pupils were suspended and 3.8% of pupils in Key Stage 4 were suspended.

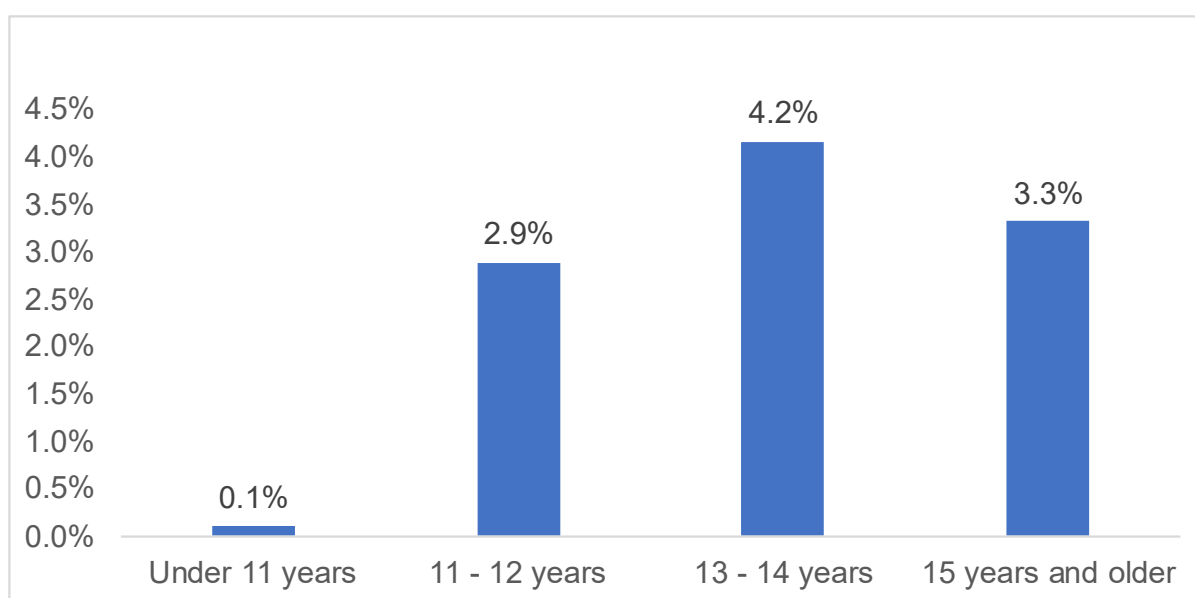
### ***2.8 The sex of suspended pupils.***

In 2024/25, 3,929 suspended pupils were male, representing 72.9% of all suspended pupils, and 1,464 suspended pupils (27.1%) were female. These numbers of males and females suspended represent 2.5% of male and 1.0% of female pupils of compulsory school age. ([Annex 1 Table 7](#)).

## **2.9 The age of suspended pupils.**

In 2024/25, 203 suspended pupils, representing 4.3% of all suspended pupils, were aged under 11 years, 1,502 suspended pupils (31.6%) were aged 11-12 years, 2,168 suspended pupils (45.6%) were aged 13-14 years and 883 suspended pupils (18.6%) were aged 15 years or older ([Annex 1 Table 7](#)).

**Figure 7: Percentage of pupils suspended by age in Northern Ireland 2024/25.**



Source Education Authority & School Census

Note:

1. Age is as of 1 July 2024.

Across pupils' age groups those aged 13–14 years had the largest percentage suspended (4.2%) of all pupils aged 13–14 years. Those aged under 11 years had the smallest percentage suspended (0.1%). Of all pupils aged 15 years or older 3.3% were suspended as were 2.9% of pupils aged 11–12 years.

## **2.10 The ethnicity of suspended pupils.**

In 2024/25, 4,451 suspended pupils were white, representing 93.6% of all suspended pupils and 305 suspended pupils (6.4%) were from a minority ethnic

background[1]. These numbers of pupils suspended represent 1.6% of white pupils and 1.4% of pupils from a minority ethnic background ([Annex 1 Table 7](#)).

### ***2.11 The Children Looked After status of suspended pupils.***

In 2024/25, 181 suspended pupils, representing 3.8% of all suspended pupils, were Children Looked After (CLA)[2] and 4,575 suspended pupils (96.2%) were not CLA. These numbers of pupils suspended represent 6.2% of all pupils who were CLA and 1.5% of children that were not CLA ([Annex 1 Table 7](#)).

### ***2.12 The Special Educational Needs status of suspended pupils.***

In 2024/25, 1,891 suspended pupils, representing 39.8% of all suspended pupils, had Special Educational Needs (SEN) and 2,865 suspended pupils (60.2%) did not have SEN. These numbers of pupils suspended represent 2.3% of pupils with SEN, and 1.3% for pupils with no SEN ([Annex 1 Table 7](#)).

### ***2.13 The religion of suspended pupils.***

In 2024/25, 2,125 suspended pupils, representing 44.8% of all suspended pupils, were Roman Catholic, 1,582 suspended pupils (33.4%) were Protestant and 1,033 suspended pupils (21.8%) were from another religion or had no religion. These numbers of pupils suspended represent 1.4% of Catholic pupils, 1.8% of Protestant pupils and 1.6% of pupils from another or no religion[3] ([Annex 1 Table 7](#)).

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1 Minority ethnic includes Traveller pupils.

2 'Children looked after' includes children defined in 'The Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995', i.e., 'a child who is looked after by an authority is a reference to a child who is: (a) in the care of the authority; or (b) provided with accommodation by the authority.' This includes children who are fostered.

<sup>3</sup> This characteristic is not collected by the EA and is sourced by matching the pupil's suspension record to their School Census record. In 2024/25 this match was not possible for 16 pupils who were suspended. See Notes for Readers for further details.

### **2.14 The Newcomer status of suspended pupils.**

In 2024/25, 242 suspended pupils, representing 5.1% of all suspended pupils, were Newcomer pupils and 4,498 suspended pupils (94.9%) were not Newcomers. These numbers of suspended pupils represent 1.2% of Newcomer pupils and 1.6% of pupils that were not[3] ([Annex 1 Table 7](#)).

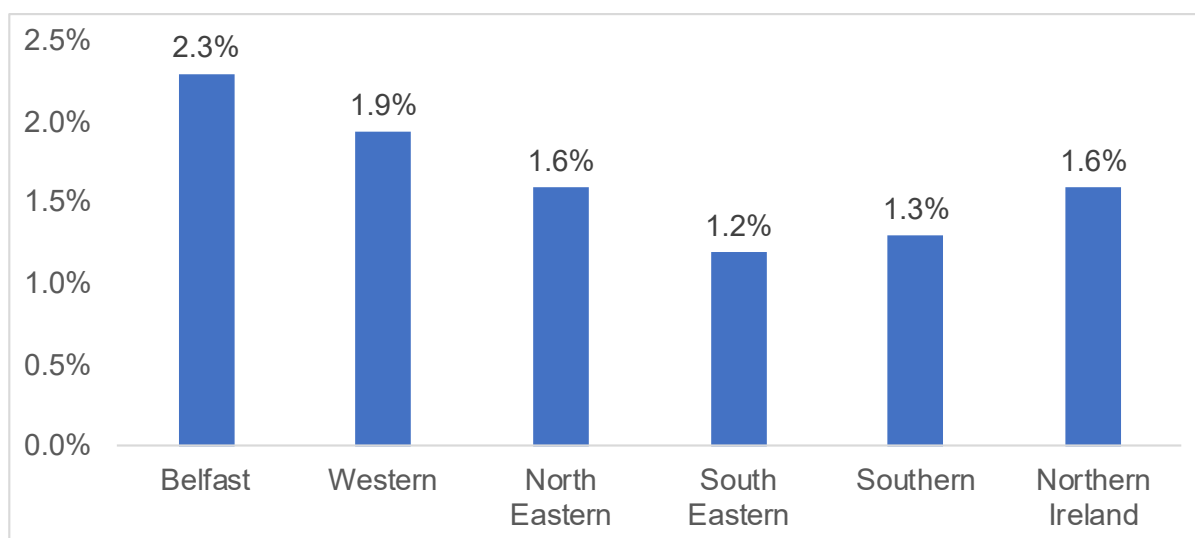
### **2.15 The Free School Meals Entitlement status of suspended pupils.**

In 2024/25, 2,340 suspended pupils, representing 49.4% of all suspended pupils, were entitled to Free School Meals (FSME) and 2,400 suspended pupils (50.6%) were not FSME. These numbers of suspended pupils represent 2.9% of FSME pupils and 1.1% of pupils who were not FSME[3] ([Annex 1 Table 7](#)).

### **2.16 Pupils suspended in Education Authority regions.**

In 2024/25, 990 suspended pupils, representing 20.8% of all suspended pupils, were enrolled in schools in EA's Belfast region. A further 966 suspended pupils (20.3%) were in the Southern region, 1,065 suspended pupils (22.4%) were in the North Eastern region, 925 suspended pupils (19.4%) were in the Western region and 810 suspended pupils (17.0%) were in the South Eastern region ([Annex 1 Table 8](#)).

**Figure 8: Percentage of pupils suspended by Education Authority region in Northern Ireland 2024/25.**



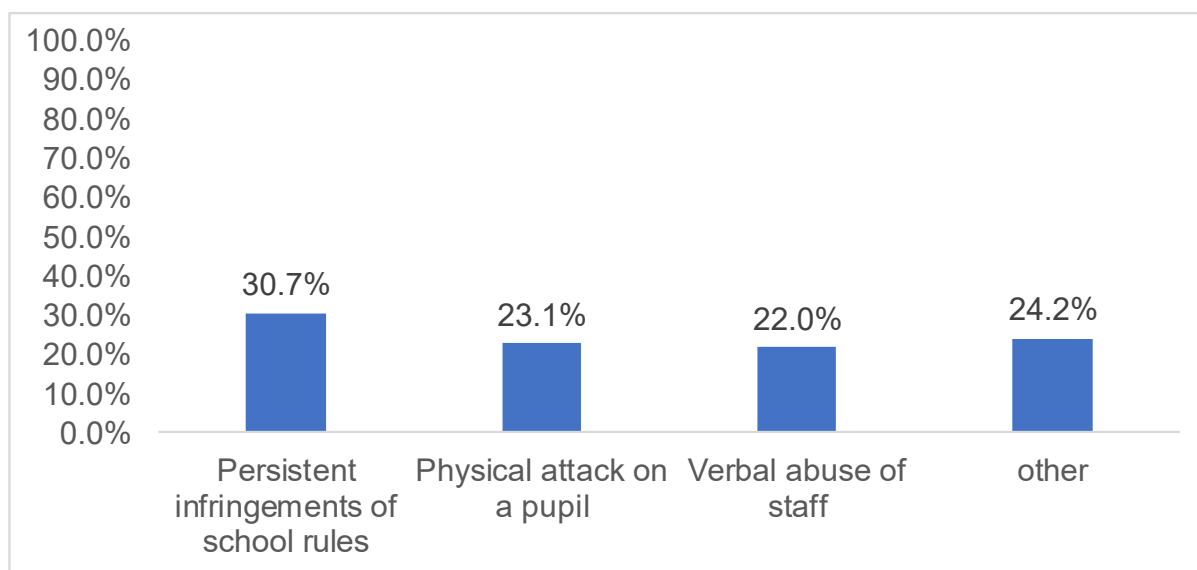
Source Education Authority & the School Census

In the Belfast region 2.3% of pupils were suspended, 1.9% in the Western region, 1.6% in the North Eastern region, 1.3% in the Southern region and 1.2% in the South Eastern region.

### **2.17 The reasons reported by schools for suspending pupils.**

In 2024/25, 4,756 pupils were suspended on a total of 7,904 occasions. Schools record one of 11 reasons for each suspension occasion. Where a pupil has been suspended for more than one of these reasons only the most serious reason is recorded and the school may include additional explanatory information ([Annex 1 Table 9](#)).

**Figure 9: Reasons for pupils being suspended in Northern Ireland 2024/25.**



Source Education Authority

Persistent infringements of school rules was the reason for a suspension most frequently reported by schools. This reason was given for 2,429 suspensions representing 30.7% of all suspensions. Physical attack on a pupil was the reason for 1,829 suspensions (23.1%) and verbal abuse of staff was the reason for a further 1,738 suspensions (22.0%). The remaining eight reasons in total account for 1,908 suspensions (24.2%).

### **3.0 Pupil expulsions.**

In 2024/25, 35 pupils were expelled in Northern Ireland, an increase of seven pupils compared with the 2023/24 academic year. These numbers, after rounding of the figures, represent 0.012% of pupils in 2024/25 and 0.009% in 2023/24.

All pupils expelled were in Year 8 or above and the majority were males (23) and 12 were females. Twenty-one expelled pupils (60.0%) had SEN and 14 (40.0%) did not have SEN.

Persistent infringements of school rules was the most common reason for a pupil to be expelled. Seven pupils, representing 20.0% of all expelled pupils, were expelled for this reason. A further six pupils (17.1%) were expelled due to a physical attack on another pupil and six pupils (17.1%) were expelled for verbal abuse of staff.

### **4.0 Country comparisons.**

This section of the report compares suspensions and expulsions across the countries of the UK. In England and Wales, the most recent annual data relates to the 2023/24 academic year. For comparative purposes, in Northern Ireland in the 2023/24 academic year 1.8% of compulsory school age pupils were suspended and 0.009% were expelled.

In England the Department for Education publishes statistics on permanent exclusions (expulsions in Northern Ireland) and suspensions. In 2023/24 there were 954,952 suspensions and 10,885 permanent exclusions meaning 11.3% of pupils were suspended and 0.13% were expelled. These figures for England relate to all pupils. Equivalent figures for Northern Ireland relate to pupils in Years 1-12, which aligns with compulsory school age<sup>[4]</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Source: [Release home - Suspensions and permanent exclusions in England - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK](#)

In Wales[5], the most recent figures relating to 2023/24 show that 14,218 pupils of all ages in maintained primary, middle, secondary and special schools were excluded for a fixed period (suspended in Northern Ireland), representing 3.1% of all pupils; 456 pupils were permanently excluded (expelled in Northern Ireland), representing 1.0% of all pupils.

In Scotland the most recent data relates to 2024/25. Figures[6] show that 10,647 pupils were temporarily excluded (suspended in Northern Ireland), representing 1.5% of all pupils. No pupils were removed from the register (expelled in Northern Ireland). For comparative purposes, in Northern Ireland in 2024/25, 1.6% of compulsory school age pupils were suspended and 0.009% were expelled. Figures for Scotland relate to pupils in P1 to S6 which corresponds to Years 1 – 14 in Northern Ireland.

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<sup>5</sup> Source: [Permanent and fixed-term exclusions from schools: September 2023 to August 2024 \(provisional\) | GOV.WALES](#)

<sup>6</sup> Source: [School exclusion statistics - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

## Annex 1: Data tables

Table 1: The number and percentage of pupils of compulsory school age suspended 2011/12 – 2024/25.

Year	Number of pupils suspended	Percentage of pupils
2011/12	3879	1.4%
2012/13	3556	1.3%
2013/14	3677	1.3%
2014/15	3647	1.3%
2015/16	4156	1.5%
2016/17	4048	1.4%
2017/18	4069	1.4%
2018/19	4549	1.5%
2019/20	3342	1.1%
2020/21	3506	1.2%
2021/22	4714	1.6%
2022/23	5129	1.7%
2023/24	5393	1.8%
2024/25	4756	1.6%

Source Education Authority & the School Census

Note:

During 2019/20 and 2020/21, while suspensions and expulsions were possible throughout the academic year, Covid-19 restrictions will have had an impact on the numbers presented and caution should be taken when comparing across years.

Table 2: The number and percentage of pupils of compulsory school age suspended by school type 2024/25.

School Type	Number of pupils suspended	Percentage of suspended pupils	Percentage of pupils
Primary	200	4.2%	0.1%
Non Grammar	3730	78.4%	4.8%
Grammar	804	16.9%	1.6%
Special	22	0.5%	0.4%
Northern Ireland	4756	100.0%	1.6%

Source Education Authority & the School Census

Table 3: The number and percentage of pupils of compulsory school age suspended by school management type 2024/25.

Management type	Number of pupils suspended	Percentage of suspended pupils	Percentage of pupils
Controlled	1943	40.9%	1.6%
Voluntary	576	12.1%	1.4%
Catholic Maintained	1455	30.6%	1.3%
Other Maintained	31	0.7%	0.6%
Controlled Integrated	256	5.4%	2.7%
GMI	495	10.4%	3.2%
Northern Ireland	4756	100.0%	1.6%

Source Education Authority & the School Census

Table 4: Pupils of compulsory school age with one or more suspensions 2024/25.

Number of times suspended	Number of pupils suspended	Percentage of all suspended pupils
Once	3256	68.5%
Twice	788	16.6%
Three or more times	712	15.0%
Northern Ireland	4756	100.0%

Source Education Authority

Table 5: Length of time pupils of compulsory school age were suspended 2024/25.

Duration	Number of pupils suspended	Percentage of all suspended pupils
5 days or less	3954	83.1%
6 -10 days	440	9.3%
11 - 20 days	226	4.8%
21 - 30 days	70	1.5%
31 days or more	66	1.4%
Northern Ireland	4756	100.0%

Source Education Authority

Table 6: The number and percentage of pupils of compulsory school age suspended by Key Stage 2024/25.

Key Stage	Number of pupils suspended	Percentage of suspended pupils	Percentage of pupils
Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1	76	1.6%	0.1%
Key Stage 2	127	2.7%	0.2%
Key Stage 3	2580	54.2%	3.3%
Key Stage 4	1973	41.5%	3.8%
Northern Ireland	4756	100.0%	1.6%

Source Education Authority & School Census

Table 7: The number and percentage of pupils of compulsory school age suspended by pupil characteristic 2024/25.

Pupil characteristic	Number of pupils suspended	Percentage of suspended pupils	Percentage of pupils
<b>Sex</b>			
Male	3633	76.4%	2.4%
Female	1123	23.6%	0.8%
<b>Age</b>			
Under 11 years	203	4.3%	0.1%
11 - 12 years	1502	31.6%	2.9%
13 - 14 years	2168	45.6%	4.2%
15 years and older	883	18.6%	3.3%
<b>Ethnicity</b>			
White	4451	93.6%	1.6%
Minority Ethnic <sup>1</sup>	305	6.4%	1.4%
<b>Children looked after</b>			
Yes	181	3.8%	6.2%
No	4575	96.2%	1.5%
<b>Special Educational Needs</b>			
Yes	1891	39.8%	2.3%
No	2865	60.2%	1.3%
<b>Religion<sup>2</sup></b>			
Protestant	1582	33.4%	1.8%
Roman Catholic	2125	44.8%	1.4%
Other including no religion	1033	21.8%	1.6%
<i>Total</i>	<i>4740</i>	<i>100.0%</i>	
<b>Newcomer<sup>2</sup></b>			
Yes	242	5.1%	1.2%
No	4498	94.9%	1.6%
<i>Total</i>	<i>4740</i>	<i>100.0%</i>	
<b>Free School Meals Entitlement<sup>2</sup></b>			
Yes	2340	49.4%	2.9%
No	2400	50.6%	1.1%
<i>Total</i>	<i>4740</i>	<i>100.0%</i>	
Northern Ireland	4756	100.0%	1.6%

Source Education Authority & School Census

Notes:

1. Minority ethnic includes Traveller pupils.
2. This characteristic is not collected by the EA and is sourced by matching the pupil's suspension record to the School Census. In 2024/25 this match was not possible for 16 pupils who were suspended.

Table 8: The number and percentage of pupils of compulsory school age suspended by Education Authority region of school 2024/25.

Education Authority Region	Number of pupils suspended	Percentage of suspended pupils	Percentage of pupils
Belfast	990	20.8%	2.3%
Western	925	19.4%	1.9%
North Eastern	1065	22.4%	1.6%
South Eastern	810	17.0%	1.2%
Southern	966	20.3%	1.3%
Northern Ireland	4756	100.0%	1.6%

Source Education Authority & School Census

Table 9: Reasons for suspension occasions for pupils of compulsory school age 2024/25.

Reason for suspension occasion	Number	Percentage
Persistent infringements of school rules	2429	30.7%
Physical attack on a pupil	1829	23.1%
Verbal abuse of staff	1738	22.0%
Disruptive behaviour in class	487	6.2%
Substance abuse	308	3.9%
Verbal abuse of a pupil	295	3.7%
Significant damage to property	270	3.4%
Physical attack on staff	267	3.4%
Bullying of a pupil	174	2.2%
Stealing	73	0.9%
Alcohol abuse	34	0.4%
Northern Ireland	7904	100.0%

Source Education Authority

Note:

1. A pupil may be suspended for more than one occasion and therefore the number of pupils suspended in any year will be less than the number of suspension occasions.

## Notes for readers.

The statistics presented in this publication are classified Official Statistics in Development which may not fully meet the standards of the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#) (the Code). Methods to comply fully with the Code are being developed.

[The Schools \(Suspension and Exclusion of Pupils\) Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 1995](#) requires schools to immediately inform the Education Authority (EA) and in the case of Catholic maintained schools the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) when a pupil has been suspended or expelled.

The statistics presented in this publication are derived from schools' returns to the Education Authority (EA) using [Suspension Form \(002\).pdf \(education-ni.gov.uk\)](#). Guidance on completion is provided [notes.pdf \(education-ni.gov.uk\)](#). Subsequently the returns are provided to the Department's Statistical Analysis Team for processing and publication of this report.

The data are produced at aggregate level only therefore individual pupils cannot be identified. DE's [Statistical policies | Department of Education](#) include a statement of [confidentiality and access](#).

Coverage of the data: The suspensions and expulsions data presented in this publication cover pupils of compulsory school age, pupils in Year 1 to Year 12, in Northern Ireland attending primary, post-primary or special schools. Pupil's age in this publication is as at 1 July 2025 and calculated from the pupil's date of birth collected in their school's return.

The school's management type is derived from the school's Department reference number. Definitions of school management types are as follows:

- **Controlled:** Schools are managed and funded by the Education Authority (EA) through Boards of Governors (BoG). Primary and post-primary school BoGs consist of representatives of transferors - mainly the Protestant churches - along with representatives of parents, teachers and the EA.

- Voluntary: Self-governing schools, generally of long standing, originally established to provide an academic education at post primary level on a fee paying basis. Now funded by the Department and managed by Boards of Governors. The BoGs are constituted in accordance with each school's scheme of management - usually representatives of foundation governors, parents, teachers and in most cases, the Department or EA representatives. The BoGs is the employing authority and is responsible for the employment of all staff in its school.
- Maintained schools are managed by Boards of Governors which consist of members nominated by trustees, along with representatives of parents, teachers and the Education Authority. These schools are funded through the Education Authority for their running costs and directly by the Department in relation to capital building works. For Catholic Maintained schools, the Employing Authority is the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS). Other maintained schools are any schools that are not Catholic maintained. They are typically, but not exclusively, Irish medium schools.
- Controlled integrated: Controlled schools which have acquired integrated status.
- Grant Maintained integrated: Self-governing schools with integrated education status, funded directly by the Department and managed by Boards of Governors. The BoG is the employing authority and responsible for employing staff.

The pupil characteristics of religion, Newcomer status and Free School Meals Entitlement are not recorded in a school's suspension return and are sourced by matching the return to the School Census 2024/25. This was not possible for 16 suspended pupils.

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