

Benchmarking data to assist with the monitoring of pupil attendance

1. Pupil attendance continues to be very challenging in many settings and DE, EA and schools are continuing to work together to identify and promote effective practice.
2. The Department has produced guidance over the years to help schools use their data to help manage pupil attendance. In August 2022 (updated January 2023) produced [Guidance for Schools – Attendance reporting using absence tiers](#). In August 2024, the department, in conjunction with the Education Authority produced the [Attendance Matters - Practical guidance to improve attendance together](#) which provides a self-reflection guide and examples of strategies that were identified as having been effective in improving pupil attendance at school.
3. There remains a considerable amount of work to do, both in school and outside school, to address pupil absence levels and consequently, attendance should remain a priority for everyone both inside and outside school.
4. The following table sets out the attendance levels for the previous five academic years:

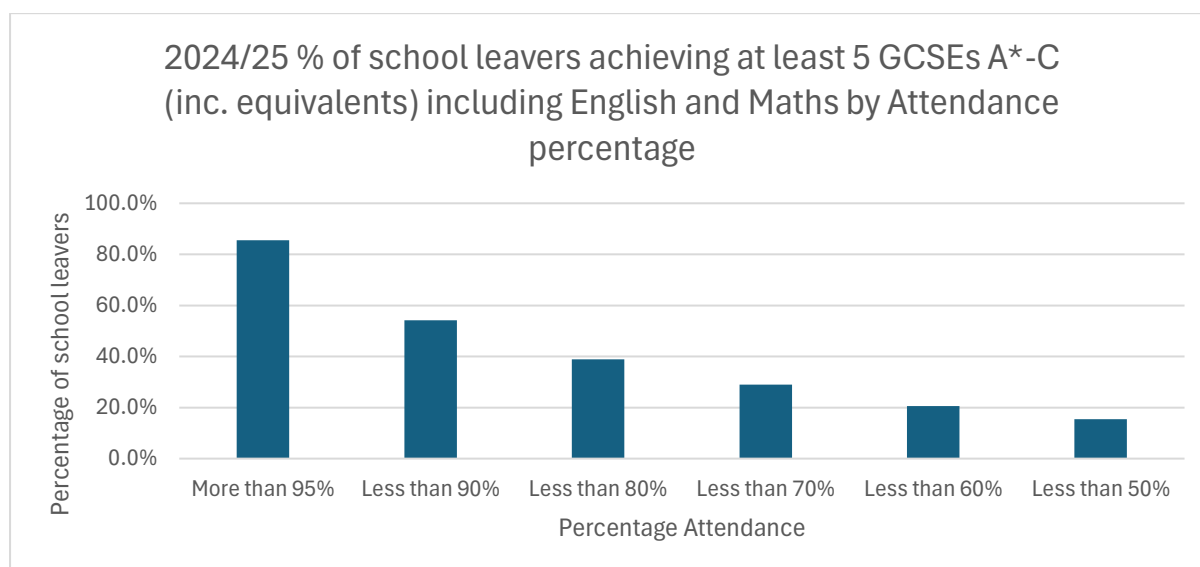
School Sector	2018/19	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Primary	94.7%	92.5%	93.0%	93.5%	93.5%
Secondary & Grammar	92.7%	90.1%	90.2%	90.5%	89.9%
Special	89.0%	85.3%	85.1%	87.2%	86.9%

5. The following table sets out the main reasons for pupil absence in the previous academic year:

Main Reasons for Absence (2025/26) – Percentage of total half days¹

Absence Reason	Primary	Post-Primary	Special
Authorised Absences			
Code I1- Illness	2.8%	4.2%	4.9%
Code I4 - EBSNA	0.1%	0.6%	0.7%
Unauthorised Absences			
Code D - No Reason Provided	1.5%	2.2%	2.6%
Code G - Family Holiday Not Agreed	1.0%	0.4%	0.8%
Code H - Other	0.3%	1.0%	1.1%
Total Absence	5.7%	8.4%	10.1%

6. Attending school regularly is important for all children and young people because of the link between attendance and attainment. The bar chart below demonstrates the link between educational attainment and attendance. If pupil attendance is low, educational attainment will also be low.



7. The Department will continue to publish a summary of the levels of pupil attendance and pupil absence for Primary, Post-Primary and Special School settings, broken down by Free School Meal Entitlement (FSME) bands.

¹ Source: Unverified figures collated monthly from SIMS Absence Report. Post Primary percentages excludes EOTAS figures.

8. This information is issued for the attention of all Principals and Chairs of Boards of Governors and can be [accessed online on the DE website](#) and allows settings to compare their own performance against the benchmark data.
9. See below for 2025/26 figures:

Pupil Absence Data by Free School Meal Bands - September 2025 to June 2026											
Primary Schools - September 2025 to June 2026 (Cumulative)											
Absence Tiers											
FSM Band	% Present	% Absent	% Authorised Absence	% Unauthorised Absence	Authorised as % of Total Absence	Unauthorised as % of Total Absence	% Regular	% At Risk	% Chronic	% Severe Chronic	
0.00 - 9.99	95.7%	4.3%	2.6%	1.7%	60.9%	39.1%	69.8%	21.7%	6.8%	1.7%	
10.00 - 19.	94.7%	5.3%	3.1%	2.2%	58.8%	41.2%	61.9%	25.1%	10.1%	2.9%	
20.00 - 29.	93.3%	6.7%	3.6%	3.1%	53.1%	46.9%	51.5%	28.3%	15.1%	5.2%	
30.00 - 39.	91.0%	9.0%	4.2%	4.8%	46.7%	53.3%	41.2%	28.6%	19.7%	10.5%	
40.00 - 49.	90.8%	9.2%	4.1%	5.1%	44.4%	55.6%	38.2%	29.2%	22.4%	10.2%	
50.00 - 59.	90.0%	10.0%	4.8%	5.2%	48.3%	51.7%	38.0%	26.7%	23.0%	12.4%	
60+	90.0%	10.0%	4.7%	5.3%	46.8%	53.2%	37.1%	28.3%	22.8%	11.8%	
Total	93.6%	6.4%	3.4%	3.0%	53.5%	46.5%	55.6%	25.9%	13.3%	5.1%	
Non Grammar - September 2025 to June 2026 (Cumulative)											
FSM Band	% Present	% Absent	% Authorised Absence	% Unauthorised Absence	Authorised as % of Total Absence	Unauthorised as % of Total Absence	% Regular	% At Risk	% Chronic	% Severe Chronic	
0.00 - 9.99	93.2%	6.8%	4.6%	2.2%	67.0%	33.0%	49.9%	30.9%	14.9%	4.3%	
10.00 - 19.	91.1%	8.9%	4.9%	4.0%	55.4%	44.6%	39.6%	31.0%	20.8%	8.5%	
20.00 - 29.	88.1%	11.9%	6.3%	5.6%	53.1%	46.9%	30.7%	28.7%	24.9%	15.7%	
30.00 - 39.	87.2%	12.8%	6.8%	6.0%	53.3%	46.7%	28.7%	27.3%	26.1%	18.0%	
40.00 - 49.	86.4%	13.6%	7.7%	5.9%	56.5%	43.5%	33.3%	23.0%	23.2%	20.5%	
50.00+	83.5%	16.5%	8.8%	7.8%	53.0%	47.0%	23.8%	23.2%	26.8%	26.3%	
Total	87.9%	12.1%	6.6%	5.5%	54.2%	45.8%	32.1%	27.5%	24.0%	16.3%	
Grammar - September 2025 to June 2026 (Cumulative)											
FSM Band	% Present	% Absent	% Authorised Absence	% Unauthorised Absence	Authorised as % of Total Absence	Unauthorised as % of Total Absence	% Regular	% At Risk	% Chronic	% Severe Chronic	
0.00 - 4.99	94.9%	5.1%	3.9%	1.2%	76.7%	23.3%	65.0%	24.3%	8.3%	2.4%	
5.00 - 9.99	93.6%	6.4%	4.7%	1.7%	73.6%	26.4%	51.6%	30.9%	14.0%	3.5%	
10.00 - 14.	92.4%	7.6%	4.6%	3.1%	60.0%	40.0%	44.6%	32.0%	17.7%	5.7%	
15.00 +	89.9%	10.1%	6.3%	3.8%	62.3%	37.7%	32.2%	31.0%	25.7%	11.1%	
Total	93.0%	7.0%	4.8%	2.2%	68.9%	31.1%	49.7%	29.9%	15.5%	5.0%	
Post Primary - September 2025 to June 2026 (Cumulative)											
FSM Band	% Present	% Absent	% Authorised Absence	% Unauthorised Absence	Authorised as % of Total Absence	Unauthorised as % of Total Absence	% Regular	% At Risk	% Chronic	% Severe Chronic	
0.00 - 9.99	93.9%	6.1%	4.5%	1.6%	73.9%	26.1%	55.0%	29.2%	12.5%	3.3%	
10.00 - 19.	91.4%	8.6%	4.9%	3.7%	56.8%	43.2%	40.8%	31.3%	20.1%	7.8%	
20.00 - 29.	88.5%	11.5%	6.3%	5.1%	55.3%	44.7%	31.1%	29.2%	25.0%	14.6%	
30.00 - 39.	87.2%	12.8%	6.8%	6.0%	53.3%	46.7%	28.7%	27.3%	26.1%	18.0%	
40.00 - 49.	86.4%	13.6%	7.7%	5.9%	56.5%	43.5%	33.3%	23.0%	23.2%	20.5%	
50.00+	83.5%	16.5%	8.8%	7.8%	53.0%	47.0%	23.8%	23.2%	26.8%	26.3%	
Total	90.1%	9.9%	5.8%	4.1%	58.7%	41.3%	39.5%	28.5%	20.5%	11.5%	
Special Schools - September 2025 to June 2026 (Cumulative)											
FSM Band	% Present	% Absent	% Authorised Absence	% Unauthorised Absence	Authorised as % of Total Absence	Unauthorised as % of Total Absence	% Regular	% At Risk	% Chronic	% Severe Chronic	
0.00 - 39.9	87.7%	12.3%	8.0%	4.3%	65.2%	34.8%	32.8%	27.6%	22.4%	17.1%	
40.00+	86.9%	13.1%	8.1%	5.0%	61.5%	38.5%	32.6%	26.1%	23.6%	17.7%	
Total	87.3%	12.7%	8.0%	4.7%	63.1%	36.9%	32.7%	26.8%	23.1%	17.4%	
Source: DF SIMS											

Should you have any queries in respect of any of this data please contact the Tackling Educational Team by email on attendance@education-ni.gov.uk