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Agency

ATTENDANCE AT GRANT-AIDED PRIMARY, POST-PRIMARY AND SPECIAL SCHOOLS 2008/09: DETAILED STATISTICS

31 March 2010

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INTRODUCTION

Attendance data for the 2008/09 academic year was collected from all grant-aided primary, post-primary and special schools via the school census in October 2009.

Initial findings for 2008/09 were published in a Statistical First Release on 28th January 2010. This statistical release supplements that information and includes analysis of attendance data by school characteristics such as management type and pupil characteristics, for example, gender and ethnicity.

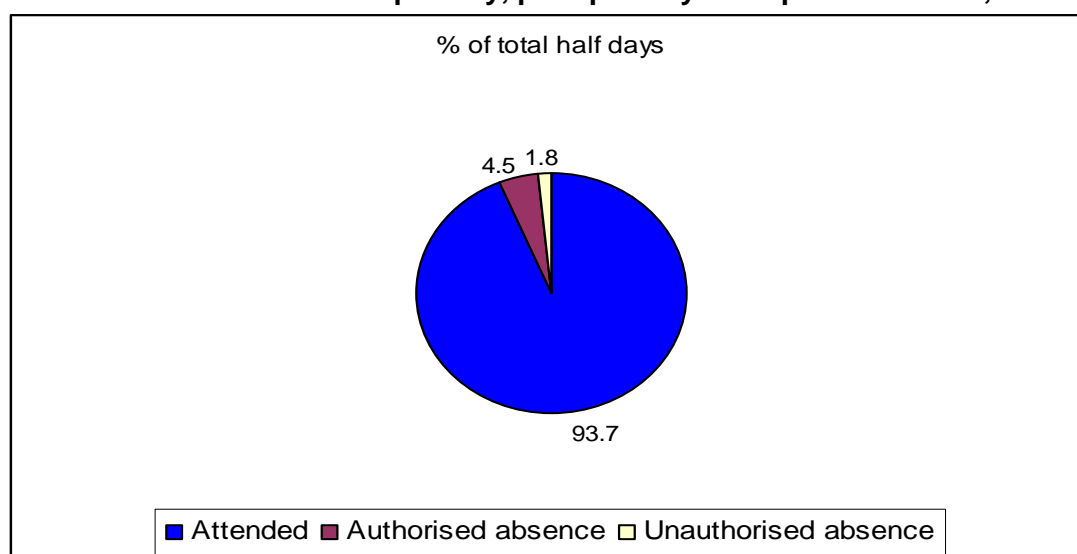
Attendance data are required by a range of organisations for a variety of purposes. Schools, Education and Library Boards and the Department use the data for benchmarking, performance monitoring and policy making. Responsibility for attendance policy lies with Pupil Support Branch in DE which monitors non-attendance and provides guidance to schools in relation to attendance. Attendance data are used for monitoring other Departmental policies for example, Achieving Belfast and Derry Bright Futures. The statistics are also used by other departments when developing and monitoring policies, for example, attendance is an indicator in the Education Domain of the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure as well as OFMDFM's 10 Year Strategy for Children and Young People.

KEY FINDINGS - ALL SCHOOLS

Absence is reported by schools in half day sessions and recorded as authorised or unauthorised.

- The overall attendance rate for primary, post-primary and special schools in 2008/09 was 93.7%.
- In 2008/09, 6.3% of the total half days in primary, post-primary and special schools were missed due to absence.
- Of the total half days, 4.5% were recorded as authorised absence.
- Unauthorised absence accounted for 1.8% of the total half days in primary, post-primary and special schools throughout 2008/09.

Chart 1 Attendance at primary, post-primary and special schools, 2008/09



ALL SCHOOLS BY SECTOR

KEY FINDINGS

Absence rates

In primary schools in 2008/09, 5.1% of all half days were missed due to absence, comprising 3.9% authorised and 1.2% unauthorised absence. These figures are similar to 2007/08 when overall absence accounted for 5.2% of the total half days (4.1% authorised and 1.1% unauthorised).

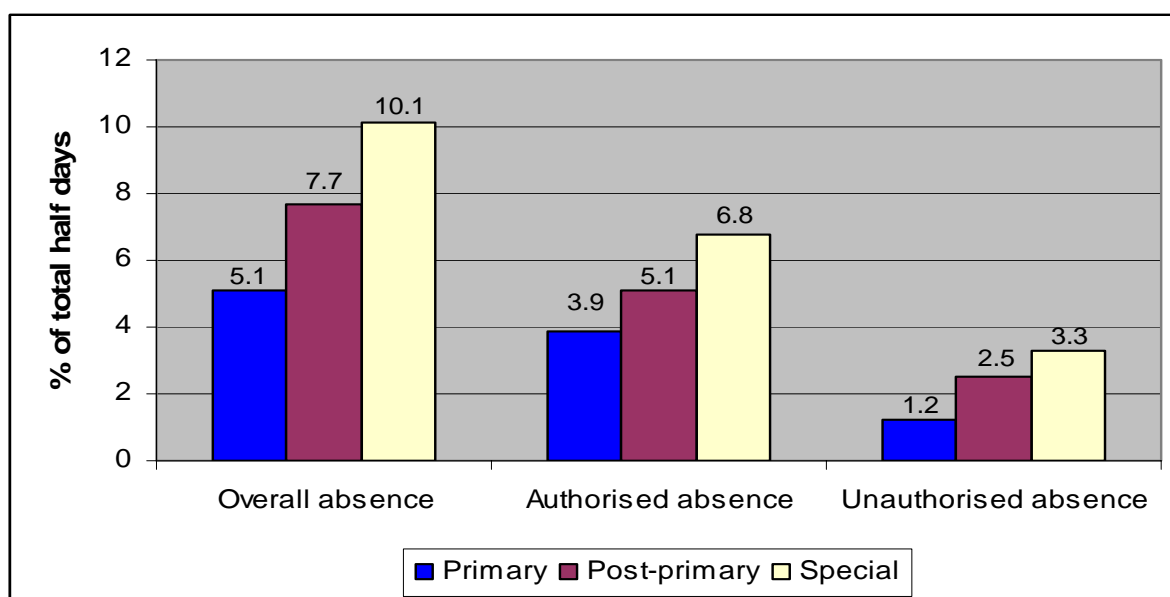
In post-primary schools in 2008/09, 7.7% of all half days were missed due to absence, 5.1% was authorised absence and 2.5% was unauthorised absence. Similarly, in 2007/08, overall absence represented 7.8% of the total half days, 5.2% authorised and 2.6% unauthorised.

In special schools in 2008/09, 10.1% of all half days were missed due to absence, comprising 6.8% authorised and 3.3% unauthorised absence. Overall absence has decreased since 2007/08, when it was 11.7%. This has been driven by a fall in the proportion of authorised absence, from 8.5% in 2007/08 to 6.8% in 2008/09. Unauthorised absence showed very slight increase, from 3.2% of the total half days.

Table 1 Attendance at school, 2008/09

| | % of total half days | | |
|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| | Primary Schools | Post-primary Schools | Special Schools |
| Attended | 94.9 | 92.3 | 89.9 |
| Not attended | 5.1 | 7.7 | 10.1 |
| <i>Comprising:</i> | | | |
| Authorised absence | 3.9 | 5.1 | 6.8 |
| Unauthorised absence | 1.2 | 2.5 | 3.3 |

Chart 2 Absence from primary, post-primary and special schools, 2008/09



Reasons for absence

The most common reason for absence in all schools was illness, which is an authorised absence. Illness accounted for 65.0% of all absent half days in primary schools, 54.8% in post-primary schools and 46.7% in special schools. This equates to 3.3%, 4.2% and 4.7% of the total half days respectively.

Table 2 Absence from schools by reason and school type, 2008/09

| | Primary Schools | | Post-Primary Schools | | Special Schools | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| | % of absent half days | % of total half days | % of absent half days | % of total half days | % of absent half days | % of total half days |
| Authorised absence | | | | | | |
| Bereavement | 1.0 | 0.1 | 1.4 | 0.1 | 0.6 | 0.1 |
| Suspended | 0.1 | 0.0 | 1.5 | 0.1 | 1.0 | 0.1 |
| Family holiday agreed | 3.3 | 0.2 | 0.8 | 0.1 | 3.2 | 0.3 |
| Illness | 65.0 | 3.3 | 54.8 | 4.2 | 46.7 | 4.7 |
| Medical / dental appointments | 2.3 | 0.1 | 4.1 | 0.3 | 5.5 | 0.6 |
| Other exceptional circumstances | 4.1 | 0.2 | 4.1 | 0.3 | 10.0 | 1.0 |
| Religious observance | 0.1 | 0.0 | 0.1 | 0.0 | 0.1 | 0.0 |
| Traveller absence | 1.3 | 0.1 | 0.3 | 0.0 | 0.1 | 0.0 |
| Total authorised absence | 77.2 | 3.9 | 67.0 | 5.1 | 67.2 | 6.8 |
| Unauthorised absence | | | | | | |
| Family holiday not agreed | 4.4 | 0.2 | 1.9 | 0.1 | 1.4 | 0.1 |
| Other | 10.1 | 0.5 | 16.4 | 1.3 | 14.7 | 1.5 |
| No reason yet provided | 7.8 | 0.4 | 14.3 | 1.1 | 16.6 | 1.7 |
| Late after registration closed | 0.5 | 0.0 | 0.4 | 0.0 | 0.1 | 0.0 |
| Total unauthorised absence | 22.8 | 1.2 | 33.0 | 2.5 | 32.8 | 3.3 |
| Total overall absence | 100.0 | 5.1 | 100.0 | 7.7 | 100.0 | 10.1 |

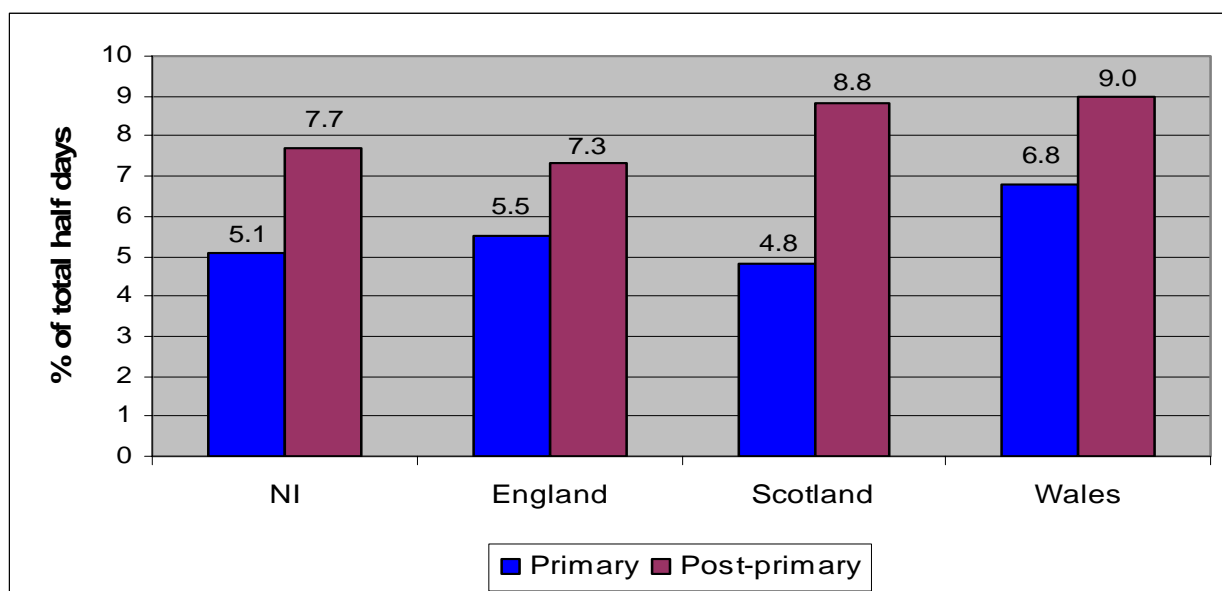
Comparisons with England, Scotland and Wales

The highest overall absence rates were recorded in Wales – 6.8% of the total half days in primary schools and 9.0% of the total half days in post-primary schools. This compares with 5.1% and 7.7% respectively in Northern Ireland.

Table 3 Comparison with England, Scotland and Wales, 2008/09

| | % of total half days | | | |
|----------|----------------------|-----------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| | Primary Schools | | Post-Primary Schools | |
| | Unauthorised absence | Overall absence | Unauthorised absence | Overall absence |
| NI | 1.2 | 5.1 | 2.5 | 7.7 |
| England | 0.7 | 5.5 | 1.5 | 7.3 |
| Scotland | N/A | 4.8 | N/A | 8.8 |
| Wales | 1.0 | 6.8 | 1.7 | 9.0 |

Chart 3 Comparisons with England, Scotland and Wales – overall absence, 2008/09



PRIMARY SCHOOLS

KEY FINDINGS

OVERALL

In primary schools in 2008/09, 5.1% of all half days were missed due to absence, comprising 3.9% authorised and 1.2% unauthorised absence (Table 1).

The most common reason for absence in primary schools was illness, which is an authorised absence and accounted for 3.3% of the total half days or 65.0% of all absent half days in 2008/09 (Table 2).

SCHOOL LEVEL ANALYSIS

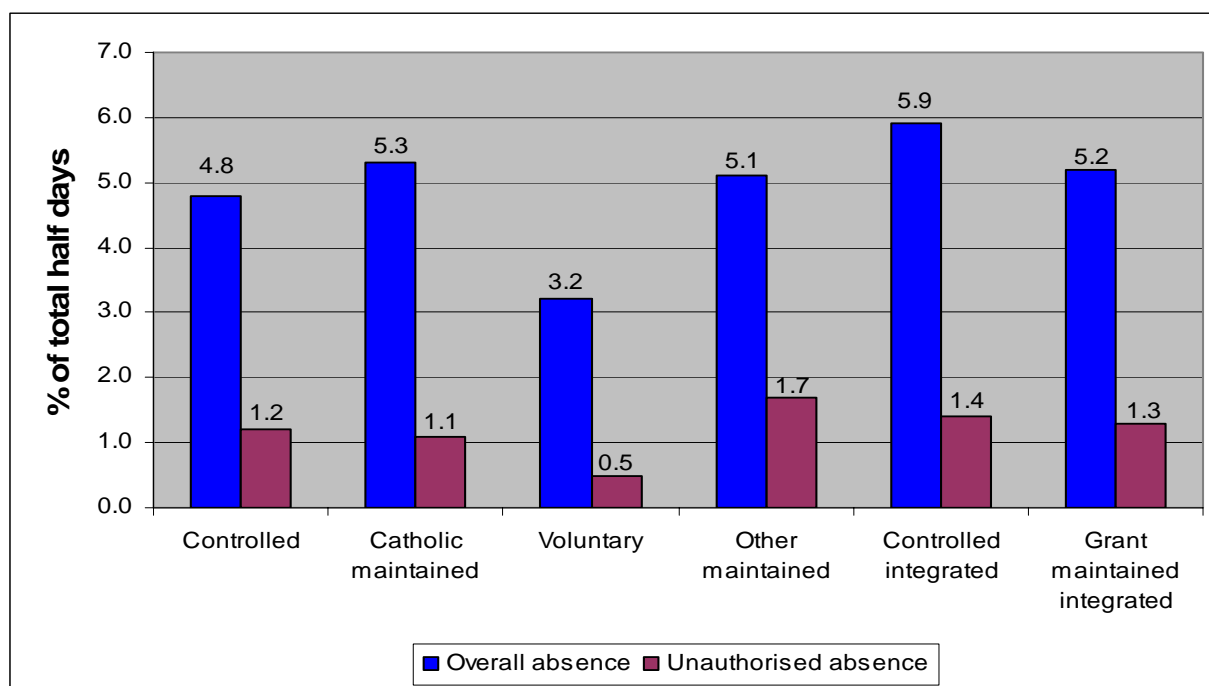
Management Type

Controlled integrated primary schools had the highest levels of average overall absence (5.9% of the total half days) while voluntary schools had the lowest at 3.2% of the total half days.

Table 4 Attendance at primary school by management type, 2008/09

| Management Type | % of total half days | | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| | Total attended | Total not attended | Total authorised absence | Total unauthorised absence |
| Controlled | 95.2 | 4.8 | 3.6 | 1.2 |
| Catholic maintained | 94.7 | 5.3 | 4.3 | 1.1 |
| Voluntary | 96.8 | 3.2 | 2.6 | 0.5 |
| Other maintained | 94.9 | 5.1 | 3.4 | 1.7 |
| Controlled Integrated | 94.1 | 5.9 | 4.5 | 1.4 |
| Grant Maintained Integrated | 94.8 | 5.2 | 3.8 | 1.3 |
| Primary average | 94.9 | 5.1 | 3.9 | 1.2 |

Chart 4 Absence from primary school by management type, 2008/09



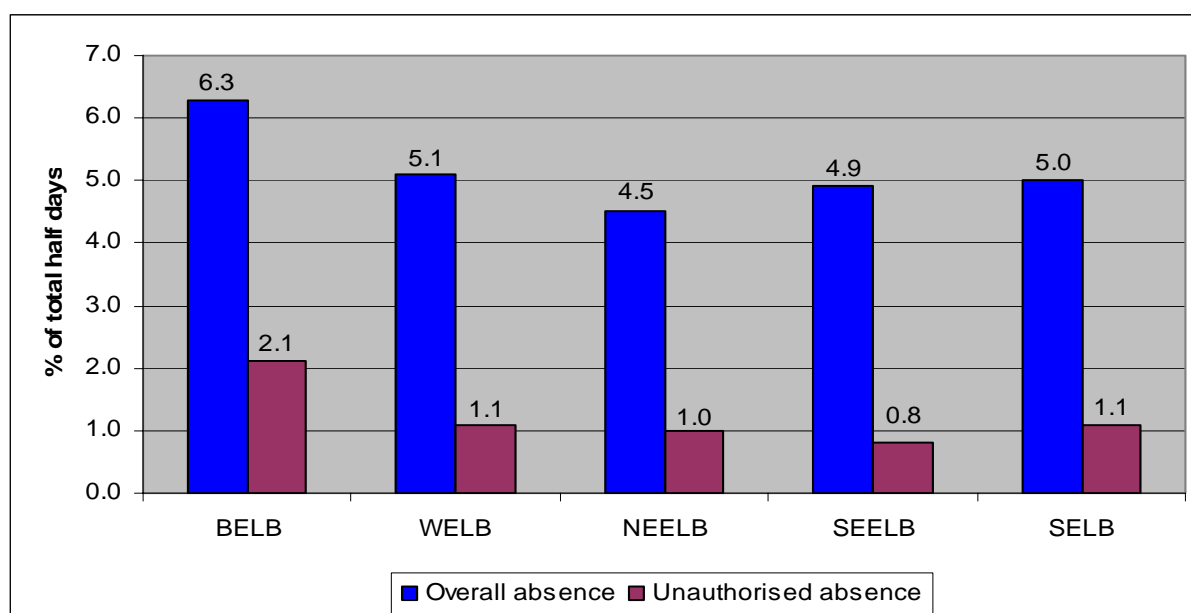
Education and Library Board

At 6.3% of the total half days, the highest average overall absence for primary schools was recorded by the Belfast Education and Library Board. The North Eastern Education and Library Board reported the lowest average overall absence, with 4.5% of the total half days missed.

Table 5 Attendance at primary school by Education and Library Board, 2008/09

| ELB | % of total half days | | | |
|------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| | Total attended | Total not attended | Total authorised absence | Total unauthorised absence |
| BELB | 93.7 | 6.3 | 4.2 | 2.1 |
| WELB | 94.9 | 5.1 | 4.0 | 1.1 |
| NEELB | 95.5 | 4.5 | 3.5 | 1.0 |
| SEELB | 95.1 | 4.9 | 4.1 | 0.8 |
| SELB | 95.0 | 5.0 | 3.9 | 1.1 |
| Primary average | 94.9 | 5.1 | 3.9 | 1.2 |

Chart 5 Absence from primary school by Education and Library Board, 2008/09



Location

Overall absence was higher for urban primary schools (5.6% of the total half days) than for rural primary schools (4.2% of the total half days).

Table 6 Attendance at primary school by location of school, 2008/09

| Location | % of total half days | | | |
|------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| | Total attended | Total not attended | Total authorised absence | Total unauthorised absence |
| Urban | 94.4 | 5.6 | 4.1 | 1.4 |
| Rural | 95.8 | 4.2 | 3.5 | 0.7 |
| Primary average | 94.9 | 5.1 | 3.9 | 1.2 |

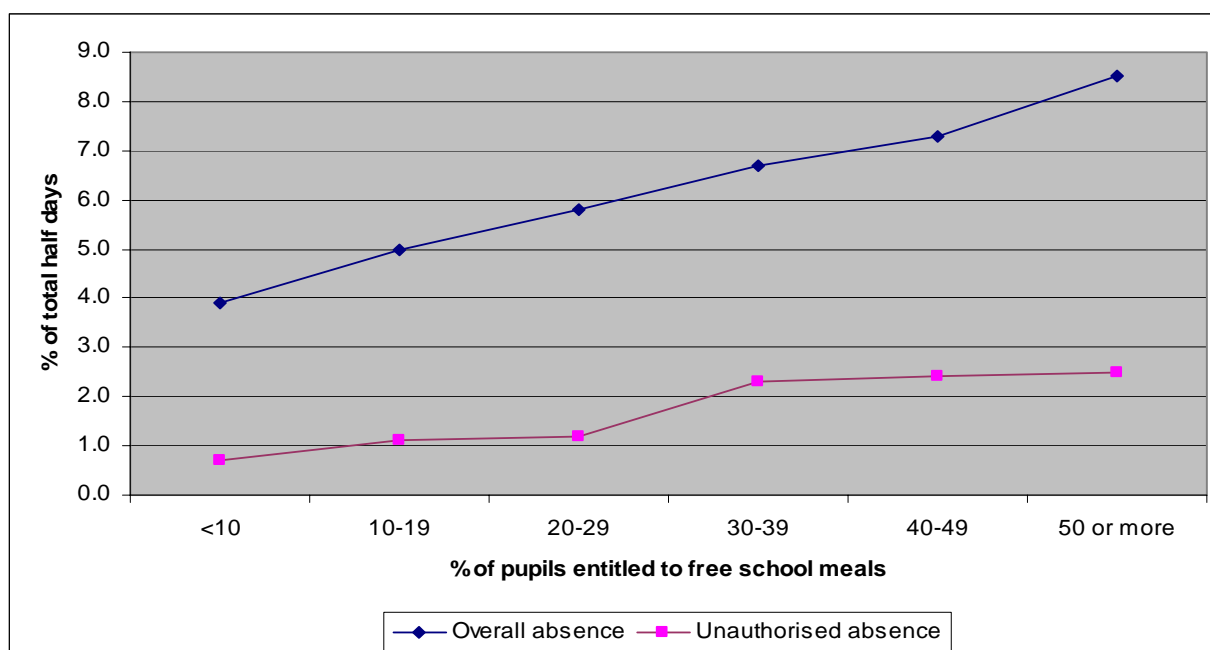
Free school meal entitlement

The figures show that average overall absence levels generally increase in line with the percentage of pupils enrolled who are eligible for free school meals. In schools where less than 10% of pupils enrolled were eligible for free school meals, the average overall absence level was 3.9% of the total half days. This compares with 8.5% of the total half days for schools with more than 50% of pupils enrolled eligible for free school meals. Since the level of free school meal eligibility is indicative of levels of deprivation, the data suggest that absence tends to be higher in more disadvantaged areas.

Table 7 Attendance at primary school by free school meal entitlement, 2008/09

| Percentage of pupils entitled to Free School Meals | % of total half days | | | |
|--|----------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| | Total attended | Total not attended | Total authorised absence | Total unauthorised absence |
| 0.00 - 9.99% | 96.1 | 3.9 | 3.2 | 0.7 |
| 10.00 – 19.99% | 95.0 | 5.0 | 3.9 | 1.1 |
| 20.00 – 29.99% | 94.2 | 5.8 | 4.5 | 1.2 |
| 30.00 – 39.99% | 93.3 | 6.7 | 4.4 | 2.3 |
| 40.00 – 49.99% | 92.7 | 7.3 | 4.9 | 2.4 |
| 50% or more | 91.5 | 8.5 | 6.0 | 2.5 |
| Primary average | 94.9 | 5.1 | 3.9 | 1.2 |

Chart 6 Absence from primary school by free school meal entitlement, 2008/09



PUPIL LEVEL ANALYSIS

Gender

Average overall absence rates were similar for boys and girls of primary school age (5.2% and 5.1% of the total half days respectively).

Table 8 Attendance at primary school by gender, 2008/09

| Gender | % of total half days | | | |
|------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| | Total attended | Total not attended | Total authorised absence | Total unauthorised absence |
| Male | 94.8 | 5.2 | 4.2 | 1.1 |
| Female | 94.9 | 5.1 | 3.9 | 1.2 |
| Primary average | 94.9 | 5.1 | 3.9 | 1.2 |

Year group

The highest average overall absence occurred in Year 1 of primary school when 5.7% of the total half days are missed.

Table 9 Attendance at primary school by year group, 2008/09

| Year Group | % of total half days | | | |
|------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| | Total attended | Total not attended | Total authorised absence | Total unauthorised absence |
| 1 | 94.3 | 5.7 | 4.6 | 1.1 |
| 2 | 94.7 | 5.3 | 4.1 | 1.2 |
| 3 | 95.1 | 4.9 | 3.7 | 1.2 |
| 4 | 95.2 | 4.8 | 3.6 | 1.1 |
| 5 | 95.1 | 4.9 | 3.7 | 1.2 |
| 6 | 95.1 | 4.9 | 3.8 | 1.1 |
| 7 | 94.9 | 5.1 | 3.9 | 1.2 |
| Primary average | 94.9 | 5.1 | 3.9 | 1.2 |

Ethnicity

Traveller children attending primary school had a higher average overall absence rate than any other ethnic group. They missed 32.0% of the total half days, compared with 4.9% for white children and 7.5% for children from a minority ethnic background.

Table 10 Attendance at primary school by ethnicity, 2008/09

| Gender | % of total half days | | | |
|----------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| | Total attended | Total not attended | Total authorised absence | Total unauthorised absence |
| White | 95.1 | 4.9 | 3.8 | 1.1 |
| Minority Ethnic Background | 92.5 | 7.5 | 4.9 | 2.6 |
| Traveller | 68.0 | 32.0 | 24.9 | 7.1 |
| Primary average | 94.9 | 5.1 | 3.9 | 1.2 |

Note: Ethnicity was not provided for 169 enrolments at primary schools, representing 0.1% of the total.

Looked after children

Looked after children in primary schools have a slightly lower overall absence rate (4.6%) than those who are not in care (5.1%), however levels of unauthorised absence are slightly higher.

Table 11 Attendance of looked after children at primary school, 2008/09

| Status | % of total half days | | | |
|------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| | Total attended | Total not attended | Total authorised absence | Total unauthorised absence |
| Looked after children | 95.4 | 4.6 | 3.3 | 1.4 |
| Other | 94.9 | 5.1 | 3.9 | 1.2 |
| Primary average | 94.9 | 5.1 | 3.9 | 1.2 |

Neighbourhood Renewal Areas (NRA)

At 7.4%, the overall absence rate for pupils living in Neighbourhood Renewal Areas is 2.8 percentage points higher than for pupils who do not live in an NRA.

Table 12 Attendance at primary schools in Neighbourhood Renewal Areas, 2008/09

| Area | % of total half days | | | |
|----------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| | Total attended | Total not attended | Total authorised absence | Total unauthorised absence |
| Neighbourhood Renewal Area | 92.6 | 7.4 | 5.2 | 2.2 |
| Other | 95.4 | 4.6 | 3.9 | 1.0 |
| Primary average | 94.9 | 5.1 | 3.9 | 1.2 |

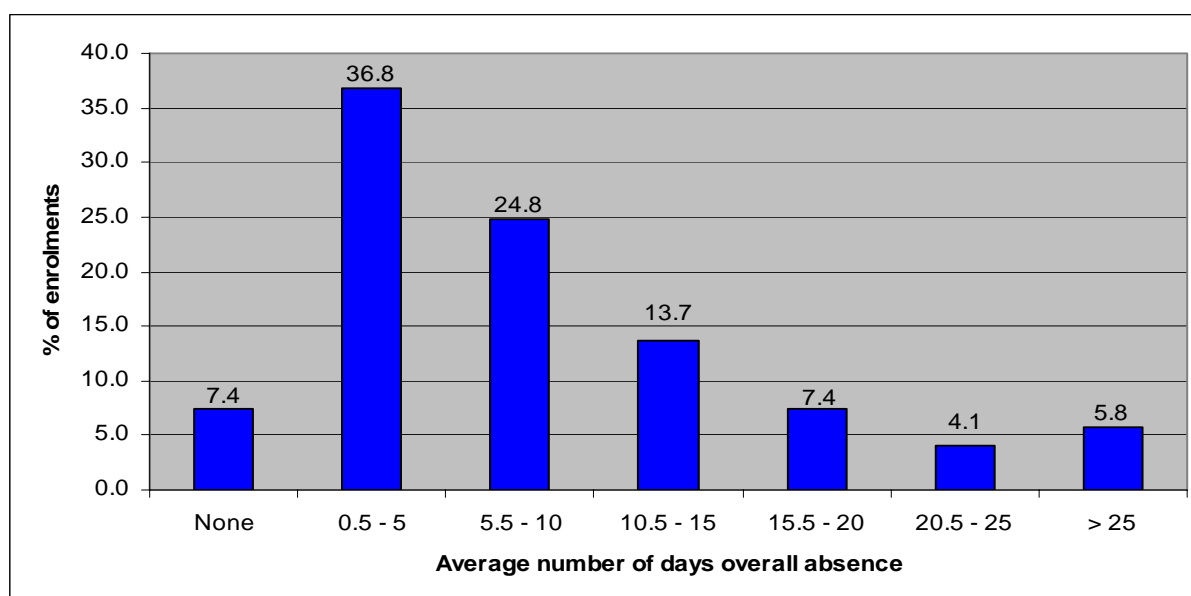
Duration of absence

Of all pupils enrolled in primary schools in 2008/09, 7.4% had no absence throughout the year. Most of those who were absent from school (36.8%) were absent for between 0.5 and 5 days in 2008/09. Just under 6% of pupils enrolled were absent for more than 25 days.

Table 13 Percentage of enrolments at primary school by average number of days overall absence, 2008/09

| Average number of days overall absence | Percentage of enrolments |
|--|--------------------------|
| No absence | 7.4 |
| 0.5 – 5 days | 36.8 |
| 5.5 – 10 days | 24.8 |
| 10.5 – 15 days | 13.7 |
| 15.5 – 20 days | 7.4 |
| 20.5 – 25 days | 4.1 |
| >25 days | 5.8 |

Chart 7 Absence from primary school by average number of days absence, 2008/09



Levels of absence

More than half of pupils enrolled at primary school (56.7%), had an absence rate of between 0.01% and 5.00% of the total days while 5.3% missed more than 15% of the total half days. Schools tend to consider referral of pupils to the Education Welfare Service for non-attendance if absence is more than 15% however, the final decision is at the discretion of the school on consideration of individual circumstances.

Table 14 Percentage of enrolments at primary school by overall absence rates, 2008/09

| Overall absence rate | Percentage of enrolments |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| No absence | 7.4 |
| 0.01% to 5.00% of total half days | 56.7 |
| 5.01% to 10.00% of total half days | 22.8 |
| 10.01% to 15.00% of total half days | 7.8 |
| More than 15% of total half days | 5.3 |

Less than 85% attendance

Table 15 provides an analysis of those pupils with absence levels of more than 15%, along with a profile of all pupils for comparative purposes. As explained previously, this is a point when schools may consider referring a child to the Education Welfare Service for non-attendance. Looking at the characteristics of the pupils with absence levels of more than 15%, almost half were from Catholic maintained schools and almost one-quarter (24.5%) from the Belfast Education and Library Board. The largest proportion of pupils with absence levels of more than 15% were in Year 1.

Table 15 Characteristics of primary school pupils enrolled with absence levels of more than 15% in 2008/09

| Characteristics | % of pupils enrolled with absence levels of more than 15% | % of total pupils enrolled |
|------------------------------------|---|----------------------------|
| SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS: | | |
| Management Type | | |
| Controlled | 44.4 | 46.4 |
| Catholic maintained | 48.6 | 46.0 |
| Voluntary | 0.4 | 1.4 |
| Other maintained | 1.0 | 1.3 |
| Controlled Integrated | 2.5 | 1.7 |
| Grant Maintained Integrated | 3.2 | 3.3 |
| Education and Library Board | | |
| BELB | 24.5 | 15.1 |
| WELB | 17.2 | 17.8 |
| NEELB | 16.7 | 22.9 |
| SEELB | 19.6 | 23.1 |
| SELB | 22.0 | 21.1 |
| PUPIL CHARACTERISTICS: | | |
| Gender | | |
| Male | 52.7 | 51.1 |
| Female | 47.3 | 48.9 |
| Year Group | | |
| 1 | 19.0 | 14.2 |
| 2 | 14.9 | 13.9 |
| 3 | 12.4 | 13.9 |
| 4 | 11.6 | 13.9 |
| 5 | 13.2 | 14.3 |
| 6 | 13.9 | 14.9 |
| 7 | 14.9 | 15.0 |
| Ethnicity | | |
| White | 89.0 | 97.1 |
| Minority ethnic background | 5.8 | 2.4 |
| Traveller | 5.2 | 0.4 |

Note: Ethnicity was not provided for 51 enrolments with absence levels of 15% or more, representing 0.6% of the total. Ethnicity was not provided for 169 enrolments overall, representing 0.1% of the total.

POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS

KEY FINDINGS

OVERALL

In post-primary schools in 2008/09, 7.7% of all half days were missed due to absence, comprising 5.1% authorised and 2.5% unauthorised absence (Table 1).

The most common reason for absence in post-primary schools was illness, which is an authorised absence and accounted for 4.2% of the total half days (54.8% of all absent half days). (Table 2)

SCHOOL LEVEL ANALYSIS

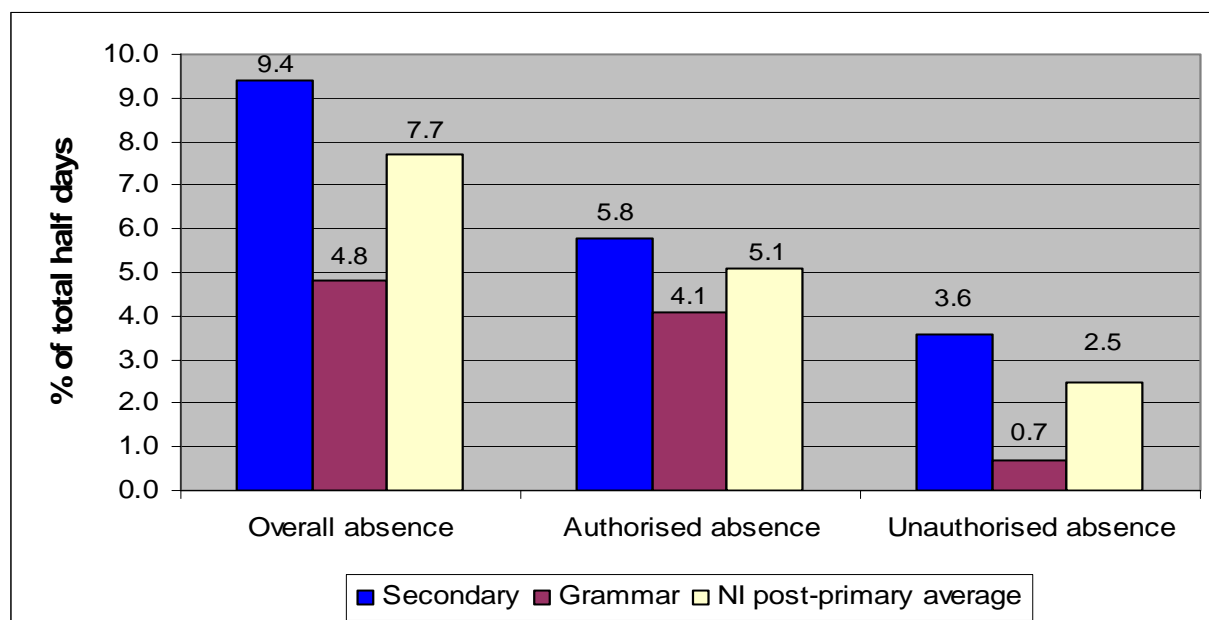
School type

At 9.4% of the total half days, average levels of overall absence in secondary schools were higher than in grammar schools (4.8%). There was a marked difference in the levels of unauthorised absence in secondary and grammar schools (3.6% and 0.7% of the total half days respectively).

Table 16 Attendance at post-primary school by school type, 2008/09

| School Type | % of total half days | | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| | Total attended | Total not attended | Total authorised absence | Total unauthorised absence |
| Secondary | 90.6 | 9.4 | 5.8 | 3.6 |
| Grammar | 95.2 | 4.8 | 4.1 | 0.7 |
| Post-primary average | 92.3 | 7.7 | 5.1 | 2.5 |

Chart 8 Absence from post-primary school by school type, 2008/09



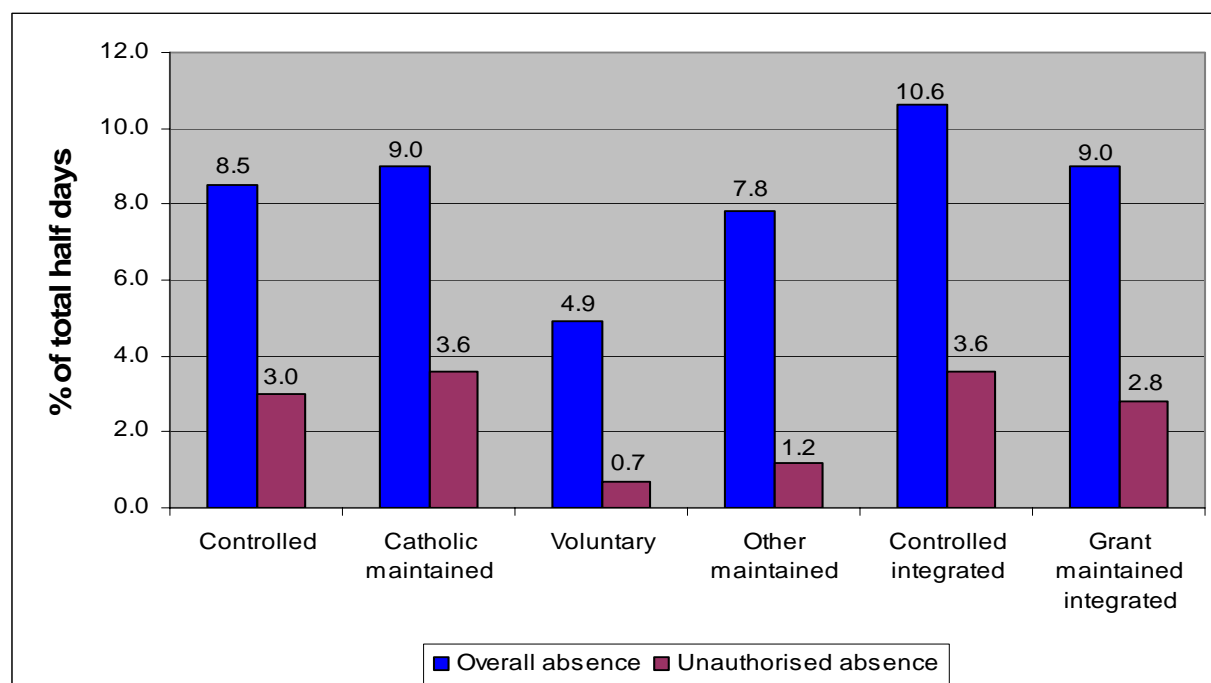
Management type

Controlled integrated schools had the highest levels of overall absence (10.6% of the total half days) while voluntary schools had the lowest at 4.9% of the total half days.

Table 17 Attendance at post-primary school by management type, 2008/09

| Management Type | % of total half days | | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| | Total attended | Total not attended | Total authorised absence | Total unauthorised absence |
| Controlled | 91.5 | 8.5 | 5.4 | 3.0 |
| Catholic maintained | 91.0 | 9.0 | 5.4 | 3.6 |
| Voluntary | 95.1 | 4.9 | 4.1 | 0.7 |
| Other maintained | 92.2 | 7.8 | 6.7 | 1.2 |
| Controlled Integrated | 89.4 | 10.6 | 7.0 | 3.6 |
| Grant Maintained Integrated | 91.0 | 9.0 | 6.2 | 2.8 |
| Post-primary average | 92.3 | 7.7 | 5.1 | 2.5 |

Chart 9 Absence from post-primary school by management type, 2008/09



Education and Library Board

At 8.1% of the total half days, average overall absence was highest in the South Eastern Education and Library Board post-primary schools. The North Eastern Education and Library Board reported the lowest level of overall absence (7.2% of the total half days).

Table 18 Attendance at post-primary school by Education and Library Board, 2008/09

| ELB | % of total half days | | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| | Total attended | Total not attended | Total authorised absence | Total unauthorised absence |
| BELB | 92.5 | 7.5 | 5.4 | 2.1 |
| WELB | 92.1 | 7.9 | 4.9 | 3.0 |
| NEELB | 92.8 | 7.2 | 5.0 | 2.2 |
| SEELB | 91.9 | 8.1 | 5.6 | 2.5 |
| SELB | 92.3 | 7.7 | 4.8 | 2.9 |
| Post-primary average | 92.3 | 7.7 | 5.1 | 2.5 |

Location of school

Only one-fifth of post-primary schools are located in a rural area however, the overall and unauthorised attendance rates are slightly lower for these schools.

Table 19 Attendance at post-primary school by location of school, 2008/09

| Location | % of total half days | | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| | Total attended | Total not attended | Total authorised absence | Total unauthorised absence |
| Urban | 92.2 | 7.8 | 5.1 | 2.6 |
| Rural | 92.9 | 7.1 | 5.1 | 1.9 |
| Post-primary average | 92.3 | 7.7 | 5.1 | 2.5 |

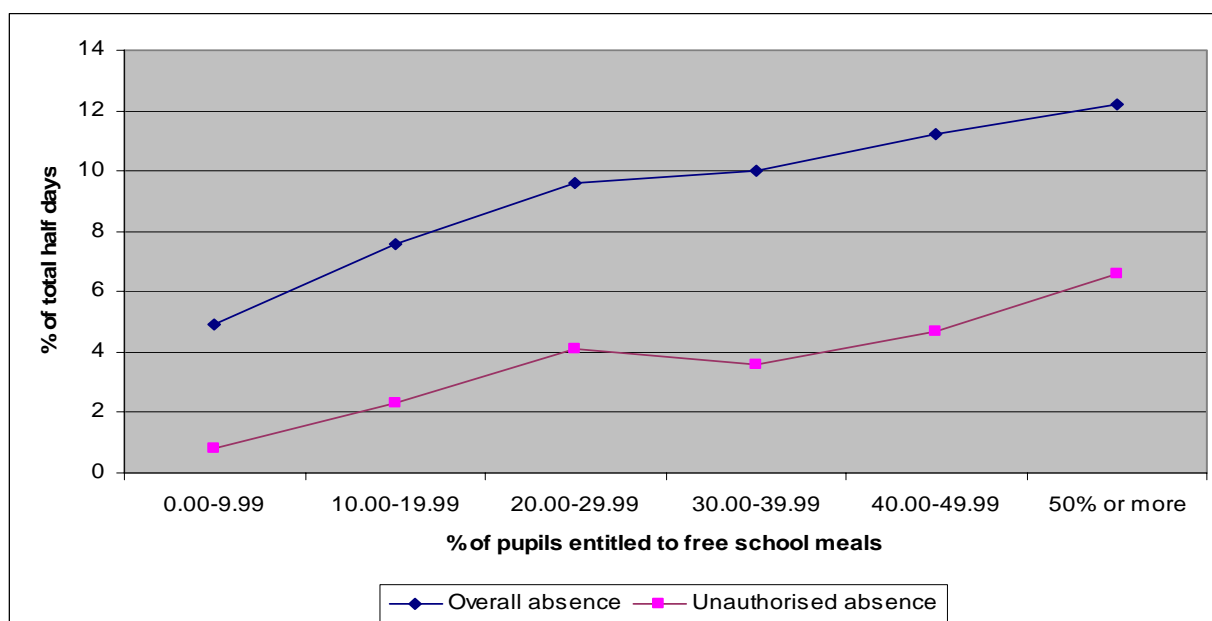
Free school meal entitlement

The figures indicate that generally, absence levels increase in line with the percentage of pupils enrolled who are eligible for free school meals. In schools where less than 10% of pupils enrolled were eligible for free school meals, the average overall absence level was 4.9% of the total half days. This compares with 12.2% of the total half days for schools with more than 50% of pupils enrolled eligible for free school meals. Since the level of free school meal eligibility is indicative of levels of deprivation, the data suggest that absence tends to be higher in more disadvantaged areas.

Table 20 Attendance at post-primary school by free school meal entitlement, 2008/09

| Percentage of pupils entitled to Free School Meals | % of total half days | | | |
|--|----------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| | Total attended | Total not attended | Total authorised absence | Total unauthorised absence |
| 0.00 - 9.99% | 95.1 | 4.9 | 4.1 | 0.8 |
| 10.00 – 19.99% | 92.4 | 7.6 | 5.3 | 2.3 |
| 20.00 – 29.99% | 90.4 | 9.6 | 5.5 | 4.1 |
| 30.00 – 39.99% | 90.0 | 10.0 | 6.4 | 3.6 |
| 40.00 – 49.99% | 88.8 | 11.2 | 6.5 | 4.7 |
| 50% or more | 87.8 | 12.2 | 5.7 | 6.6 |
| Post-primary average | 92.3 | 7.7 | 5.1 | 2.5 |

Chart 10 Absence from post-primary school by free school meal entitlement, 2008/09



PUPIL LEVEL ANALYSIS

Gender

At 7.8% and 7.5% of total half days respectively, average overall absence was similar for males and females. While the predominant cause of absence for both genders was illness, females missed a greater proportion of the total half days for this reason than males. The proportion of total half days missed due to suspension from school was more than three times higher for males than for females.

Table 21 Attendance at post-primary school by gender, 2008/09

| Gender | % of total half days | | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| | Total attended | Total not attended | Total authorised absence | Total unauthorised absence |
| Male | 92.2 | 7.8 | 5.0 | 2.7 |
| Female | 92.5 | 7.5 | 5.2 | 2.3 |
| Post-primary average | 92.3 | 7.7 | 5.1 | 2.5 |

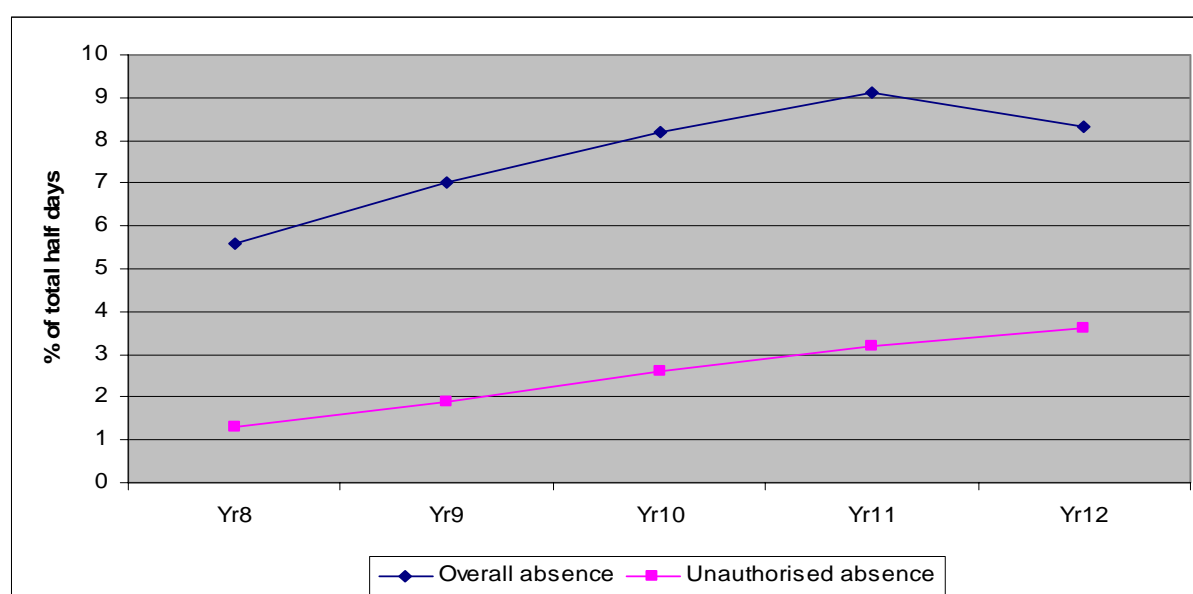
Year group

Average absence levels increased steadily between Year 8 and Year 11 (from 5.6% to 9.1% of the total half days), before decreasing to 8.3% of the total half days in Year 12. Levels of unauthorised absence generally increased in line with year group, from 1.3% of all half days in Year 8 to 3.6% in Year 12.

Table 22 Attendance at post-primary school by year group, 2008/09

| Year Group | % of total half days | | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| | Total attended | Total not attended | Total authorised absence | Total unauthorised absence |
| 8 | 94.4 | 5.6 | 4.3 | 1.3 |
| 9 | 93.0 | 7.0 | 5.1 | 1.9 |
| 10 | 91.8 | 8.2 | 5.6 | 2.6 |
| 11 | 90.9 | 9.1 | 5.9 | 3.2 |
| 12 | 91.7 | 8.3 | 4.8 | 3.6 |
| Post-primary average | 92.3 | 7.7 | 5.1 | 2.5 |

Chart 11 Absence from post-primary school by year group, 2008/09



Ethnicity

At 47.1% of their total half days, average level of overall absence was higher for Traveller children than for any other ethnic group. This compares with 7.6% for white children and 7.2% for children from a minority ethnic background.

Table 23 Attendance at post-primary school by ethnicity, 2008/09

| Gender | % of total half days | | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| | Total attended | Total not attended | Total authorised absence | Total unauthorised absence |
| White | 92.4 | 7.6 | 5.1 | 2.5 |
| Minority Ethnic Background | 92.8 | 7.2 | 4.4 | 2.8 |
| Traveller | 52.9 | 47.1 | 25.6 | 21.6 |
| Post-primary average | 92.3 | 7.7 | 5.1 | 2.5 |

Note: Ethnicity was not provided for 29 enrolments at post-primary schools, 0.02% of the total.

Looked after children

Absence rates are generally higher for looked after children in post-primary schools, particularly unauthorised absence (6.2% of that total half days compared with 2.5%) which in turn impacts on the overall absence (12.2% compared with 7.6%).

Table 24 Attendance of looked after children at post-primary school, 2008/09

| Status | % of total half days | | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| | Total attended | Total not attended | Total authorised absence | Total unauthorised absence |
| Looked after children | 87.8 | 12.2 | 6.0 | 6.2 |
| Other | 92.4 | 7.6 | 5.1 | 2.5 |
| Post-primary average | 92.3 | 7.7 | 5.1 | 2.5 |

Neighbourhood Renewal Areas (NRA)

At 11.1%, the overall absence rate for pupils living in Neighbourhood Renewal Areas is 4.1 percentage points higher than for pupils who do not live in an NRA.

Table 25 Attendance at post-primary schools in Neighbourhood Renewal Areas, 2008/09

| Area | % of total half days | | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| | Total attended | Total not attended | Total authorised absence | Total unauthorised absence |
| Neighbourhood Renewal Area | 88.9 | 11.1 | 6.6 | 4.5 |
| Other | 93.0 | 7.0 | 4.9 | 2.1 |
| Post-primary average | 92.3 | 7.7 | 5.1 | 2.5 |

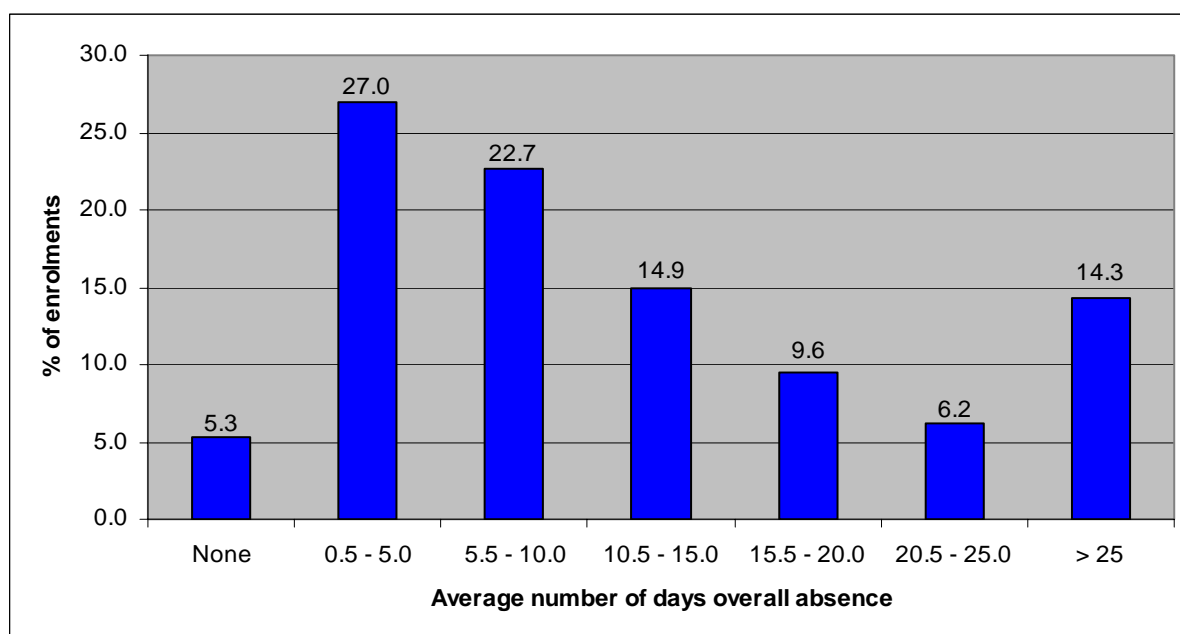
Duration of absence

Over 5% of pupils enrolled in Year 8 to Year 12 at post-primary schools had no absence during 2008/09. Most pupils enrolled (27.0%) were absent from school for between 0.5 and 5.0 days in 2008/09; 14.3% of pupils enrolled were absent for more than 25 days.

Table 26 Percentage of enrolments at post-primary school by average number of days absence, 2008/09

| Average number of days overall absence | Percentage of enrolments |
|--|--------------------------|
| No absence | 5.3 |
| 0.5 – 5 days | 27.0 |
| 5.5 – 10 days | 22.7 |
| 10.5 – 15 days | 14.9 |
| 15.5 – 20 days | 9.6 |
| 20.5 – 25 days | 6.2 |
| >25 days | 14.3 |

Chart 12 Absence from post-primary school by average number of days absence, 2008/09



Levels of absence

Looking at absence rates (number of half days absent as a proportion of all half days), 45.3% of post-primary pupils had an absence rate of between 0.01% and 5.00% of total half days. Almost 13% of pupils enrolled were absent for more than 15% of the total half days. Schools tend to consider referral of pupils to the Education Welfare Service for non-attendance if absence is more than 15% however, the final decision is at the discretion of the school on consideration of individual circumstances.

Table 27 Percentage of enrolments at post-primary school by overall absence rates, 2008/09

| Overall absence rate | Percentage of enrolments |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| No absence | 5.3 |
| 0.01% to 5.00% of total half days | 45.3 |
| 5.01% to 10.00% of total half days | 25.4 |
| 10.01% to 15.00% of total half days | 11.3 |
| More than 15% of total half days | 12.7 |

Less than 85% attendance

Table 28 provides an analysis of those pupils with absence levels of more than 15%, along with a profile of all pupils for comparative purposes. As explained previously, this is a point when schools may consider referring a child to the Education Welfare Service for non-attendance. Analysis of pupils with more than a 15% overall absence rate highlights that almost nine out of ten attended secondary schools. There were slightly more males than females and the largest group were Year 11 pupils.

Table 28 Characteristics of post-primary pupils enrolled with absence levels of more than 15% in 2008/09

| Characteristics | % of pupils enrolled with absence levels of more than 15% | % of total pupils enrolled |
|------------------------------------|---|----------------------------|
| SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS: | | |
| School type | | |
| Secondary | 88.1 | 62.3 |
| Grammar | 11.9 | 37.7 |
| Management Type | | |
| Controlled | 42.0 | 33.8 |
| Catholic maintained | 36.9 | 28.9 |
| Voluntary | 9.1 | 28.7 |
| Other maintained | 0.3 | 0.4 |
| Controlled Integrated | 3.2 | 1.7 |
| Grant Maintained Integrated | 8.4 | 6.6 |
| Education and Library Board | | |
| BELB | 18.5 | 19.2 |
| WELB | 18.0 | 17.7 |
| NEELB | 20.5 | 22.5 |
| SEELB | 20.4 | 17.8 |
| SELB | 22.6 | 22.8 |
| PUPIL CHARACTERISTICS: | | |
| Gender | | |
| Male | 52.2 | 50.9 |
| Female | 47.8 | 49.1 |
| Year Group | | |
| 8 | 11.0 | 20.3 |
| 9 | 16.4 | 19.5 |
| 10 | 22.0 | 19.7 |
| 11 | 27.1 | 20.5 |
| 12 | 23.5 | 20.0 |
| Ethnicity | | |
| White | 97.3 | 98.2 |
| Minority ethnic background | 1.5 | 1.6 |
| Traveller | 1.2 | 0.2 |

Note: Ethnicity was not provided for 10 enrolments with absence levels of more than 15%, representing 0.1% of the total. Ethnicity was not provided for 29 enrolments overall, representing 0.02% of the total.

SPECIAL SCHOOLS

KEY FINDINGS

OVERALL

In special schools in 2008/09, 10.1% of all half days were missed due to absence, comprising 6.8% authorised and 3.3% unauthorised absence (Table1).

The most common reason for absence in special schools was illness, which is an authorised absence and accounted for 4.7% of the total half days (46.7% of all absent half days). (Table 2)

SCHOOL LEVEL ANALYSIS

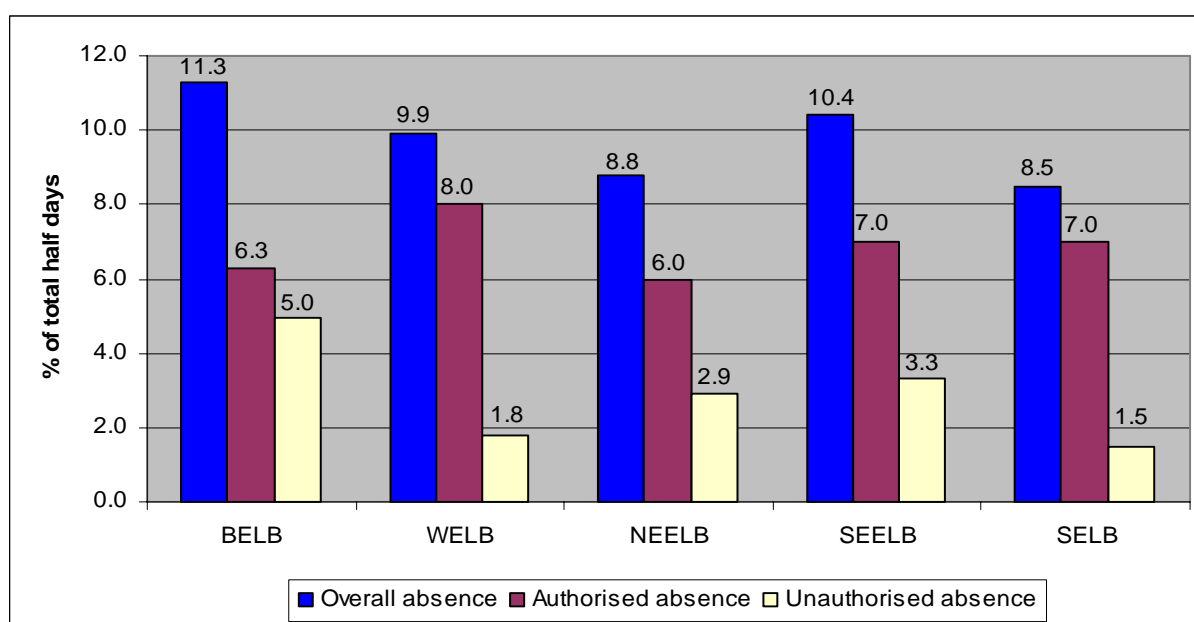
Education and Library Board

Average overall absence was highest (11.3% of total half days) in Belfast Education and Library Board in 2008/09 and lowest in the Southern Education and Library Board (8.5% of total half days).

Table 29 Attendance at special school by Education and Library Board, 2008/09

| ELB | % of total half days | | | |
|------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| | Total attended | Total not attended | Total authorised absence | Total unauthorised absence |
| BELB | 88.7 | 11.3 | 6.3 | 5.0 |
| WELB | 90.1 | 9.9 | 8.0 | 1.8 |
| NEELB | 91.2 | 8.8 | 6.0 | 2.9 |
| SEELB | 89.6 | 10.4 | 7.0 | 3.3 |
| SELB | 91.5 | 8.5 | 7.0 | 1.5 |
| Special average | 89.9 | 10.1 | 6.8 | 3.3 |

Chart 13 Absence from special school by Education and Library Board, 2008/09



PUPIL LEVEL ANALYSIS

Gender

Overall absence rates were slightly higher for females attending special schools than for males (10.5% and 9.8% of total half days respectively).

Table 30 Attendance at special school by gender, 2008/09

| Gender | % of total half days | | | |
|------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| | Total attended | Total not attended | Total authorised absence | Total unauthorised absence |
| Male | 90.2 | 9.8 | 6.4 | 3.4 |
| Female | 89.5 | 10.5 | 7.5 | 3.0 |
| Special average | 89.9 | 10.1 | 6.8 | 3.3 |

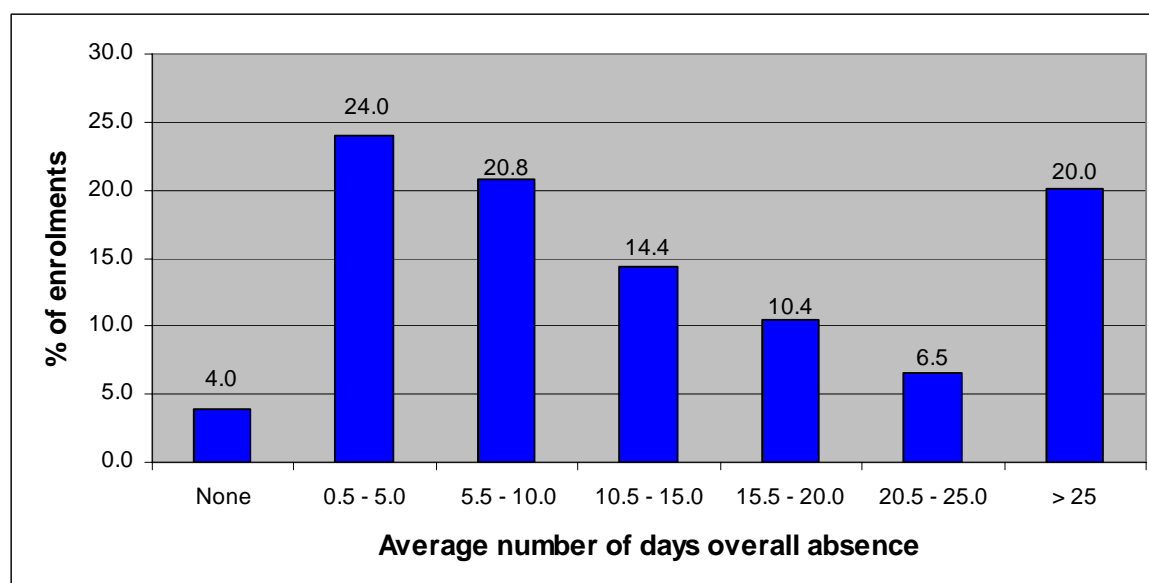
Duration of absence

Four per cent of pupils enrolled at special schools had no absence throughout 2008/09. In terms of days missed, just under one quarter of pupils enrolled (24.0%) were absent for between 0.5 and 5.0 days. One fifth of pupils missed more than 25 days in the same year.

Table 31 Percentage of enrolments at special school by average number of days absence, 2008/09

| Average number of days overall absence | Percentage of enrolments |
|--|--------------------------|
| No absence | 4.0 |
| 0.5 – 5.0 days | 24.0 |
| 5.5 – 10.0 days | 20.8 |
| 10.5 – 15.0 days | 14.4 |
| 15.5 – 20.0 days | 10.4 |
| 20.5 – 25.0 days | 6.5 |
| >25 days | 20.0 |

Chart 14 Percentage of enrolments at special school by average number of days absence, 2008/09



Levels of absence

Almost 40% of pupils enrolled had an overall absence rate of between 0.01% and 5.00% of the total half days. Almost one fifth (19.7%) were absent for more than 15% of the total half days.

Table 28 Percentage of enrolments at special school by overall absence rates, 2008/09

| Overall absence rate | Percentage of enrolments |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| No absence | 4.0 |
| 0.01% to 5.00% of total half days | 38.9 |
| 5.01% to 10.00% of total half days | 25.2 |
| 10.01% to 15.00% of total half days | 12.2 |
| More than 15% of total half days | 19.7 |

Notes to readers:

1. More detail about the collection of school attendance statistics may be found at: http://www.deni.gov.uk/school_attendance_statistics_-_data_collection.doc
2. The 2008/09 figures in this statistical release are based on information as at 9th October 2009. They may be subject to minor revision and these will be notified in accordance with our revisions policy. This can be accessed at: http://www.deni.gov.uk/de_statement_on_statistical_revisions-2.doc.
3. Attendance or absence of pupils should be recorded at the beginning of the morning and afternoon registration sessions therefore, is measured for every pupil in half day sessions (am and pm). It does not include absence by pupils outside the two daily registrations for example, if a pupil is recorded as present at registration but subsequently misses some of the session, this will be recorded as 'present'.

The terms used in this report are defined in the Department of Education's guidance to schools (Circular 2006/14, School Attendance: Absence Recording by Schools) and summarised below for information:

Attendance

In addition to actual attendance within the school premises, attendance also includes:

- Pupils who are educated off site
- Late (before registration closed)
- Approved sporting activities
- Study leave
- Educational visits
- Work experience

Authorised absence

An authorised absence is absence with permission from an authorised school representative on provision of a satisfactory explanation. This includes:

- Bereavement
- Suspension
- Agreed family holiday (in very exceptional circumstances)
- Illness
- Medical / dental appointments
- Other exceptional circumstances (includes an exceptional event outside control of the school, for example, severe weather conditions, court appearance)
- Religious observance
- Traveller absence

Unauthorised absence

An unauthorised absence is absence without permission from an authorised school representative due to unexplained or unjustified absence. This includes:

- Family holiday not agreed
 - Other absence (includes absence not covered by any other code or a reason which is not acceptable to the school, for example, pupil's / parent's or sibling's birthday).
 - No reason provided for absence
 - Late (after registration closed)
4. As with the data for England, Scotland and Wales, overall absence is considered to be a more reliable measure of absence than authorised or unauthorised absence. Prior to September 2009, schools were advised to record unexplained absence initially as 'no reason yet provided', however, if a reason was not provided within a specified period of time, these should be changed to 'other'. From September 2009 onwards, schools were instructed that, if a reason was never provided, the code should remain as 'no reason yet provided'. This has resulted in higher levels of

unauthorised absence being recorded as 'no reason yet provided' and lower figures for 'other' than in previous years.

For those absences which are not directly covered by a specific code, the decision to allocate the absence as authorised or unauthorised is ultimately taken by the school.

Both figures have been provided, however limitations in comparing rates of authorised or unauthorised absence should be noted.

5. Primary and post-primary data refer to pupil enrolments in Years 1 to 12 only, which aligns with the compulsory school age in Northern Ireland. Figures for special schools include all pupils attending special schools in 2008/09.
6. Attendance information was not available for 20 primary schools, which accounts for 2.3% of the total primary schools and 1.0% of all primary school pupils in Years 1 to 7 in 2008/09. Of the 20 schools, 9 closed just prior to the information being collected and 11 did not have access to the electronic schools management information system or did not yet use it to record attendance.
7. It has not been possible to include attendance data for four post-primary schools which closed prior to the data being collected in October 2009. This equates to 1.8% of all post-primary schools and 0.4% of all Year 8 to 12 pupils in 2008/09.
8. It has not been possible to include attendance data for two special schools which closed prior to the data being collected. This equates to 4.8% of all special schools and 0.8% of all special school pupils in 2008/09.
9. Comparative data were obtained from the following sources:

Pupil Absence in Schools in England, Autumn Term 2008 and Spring Term 2009
Absenteeism from Primary Schools, 2008/09 (Wales)
Absenteeism from Secondary Schools, 2008/09 (Wales)
Attendance and Absence in Scottish Schools, 2008/09

There are slight differences in definitions between the regions, for example, England statistics include study leave in authorised absence while the DENI statistics categorise it as present.

There are also methodological differences in collecting the information. For example, it is not compulsory for schools in England to provide a reason for absence, however over 99.4% of schools provided reasons for the majority of their pupil's absence in 2008/09 and the figures have been reported. In Wales, the information is collected via a survey of all primary, special and independent schools with children of primary school age. Responses were received from all primary and secondary schools.

10. For the purpose of this analysis, urban and rural are defined according to the findings of the Inter-Departmental Urban-Rural Definition Group which can be accessed using the following link:
http://www.ninis.nisra.gov.uk/mapxtreme_towns/Reports/ur_report.pdf
11. Pupil level information refers to the number of pupil enrolments rather than the number of pupils. A pupil can move schools during the year and will therefore have an attendance record at more than one school.
12. Comparison of the number of looked after children recorded in the school census and the number recorded by the DHSSPS Children Order Statistical Tables suggests some under-reporting of looked after children in the school census. It is possible that schools are unaware of the child's looked after status. Despite this, attendance rates for looked after children have been included in this publication since there are sufficient numbers recorded to produce indicative figures.

13. As stated earlier, attendance is measured for each pupil in half day sessions. In order to provide information on the actual number of school days missed, these totals have been divided by two. While this is useful to provide an indication of school days missed, it is generally more accurate to report in terms of half days.

Schools are required to be in operation for 190 days in the school year, less any School Development Days (SDDs). Schools can apply for up to five SDDs, which can produce slight variations between the numbers of days individual schools are open to pupils.

14. In some cases, percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

15. Requests for further information should be addressed to:

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Special analyses of the attendance information can be undertaken on request.

DE Statistical Releases can be accessed on the DE website (www.deni.gov.uk) under the Statistics and Research section.

If you have any comments or suggestions in relation to attendance data or this release, please let us know via the short questionnaire at the following link:
http://www.deni.gov.uk/attendance_statistics_user_questionnaire.doc