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# **ATTENDANCE AT GRANT-AIDED PRIMARY, POST-PRIMARY AND SPECIAL SCHOOLS 2007/08: DETAILED STATISTICS**

**April 2009**

<b>CONTENT</b>	<b>PAGE NUMBER</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Key Findings – All schools</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>ALL SCHOOLS BY SECTOR</b>	
<b>Key findings</b>	<b>5</b>
Table 1 Attendance at school, 2007/08	5
Chart 1 Absence in primary, post-primary and special schools, 2007/08	5
Table 2 Absence in schools by reason, 2007/08	6
Table 3 Comparison with England, Scotland and Wales, 2007/08	7
Chart 2 Comparison with England, Scotland and Wales – overall absence, 2007/08	7
<b>PRIMARY SCHOOLS</b>	
<b>Key findings</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>School Level Analysis</b>	
Table 4 Attendance at primary school by management type, 2007/08	9
Chart 3 Absence at primary school by management type, 2007/08	9
Table 5 Attendance at primary school by Education and Library Board, 2007/08	9
Chart 4 Absence at primary school by Education and Library Board, 2007/08	10
Table 6 Attendance at primary school by location of school, 2007/08	10
Table 7 Attendance at primary school by free school meal entitlement, 2007/08	10
Chart 5 Absence at primary school by free school meal entitlement, 2007/08	11
<b>Pupil Level Analysis</b>	
Table 8 Attendance at primary school by gender, 2007/08	11
Table 9 Attendance at primary school by year group, 2007/08	11
Table 10 Attendance at primary school by ethnicity, 2007/08	12
Table 11 Percentage of enrolments at primary school by average number of days absence, 2007/08	12
Chart 6 Absence at primary school by average number of days absence, 2007/08	12
Table 12 Percentage of enrolments at primary school by overall absence rates, 2007/08	13
Table 13 Characteristics of primary school pupils enrolled with absence levels of more than 15% in 2007/08	13
<b>POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS</b>	
<b>Key findings</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>School Level Analysis</b>	
Table 14 Attendance at post-primary school by school type, 2007/08	15
Chart 7 Absence at post-primary school by school type, 2007/08	15
Table 15 Attendance at post-primary school by management type, 2007/08	15
Chart 8 Absence at post-primary school by management type, 2007/08	16
Table 16 Attendance at post-primary school by Education and Library Board, 2007/08	16
Table 17 Attendance at post-primary school by location of school, 2007/08	16
Table 18 Attendance at post-primary school by free school meal entitlement, 2007/08	17
Chart 9 Absence at post-primary school by free school meal entitlement, 2007/08	17

<b>Pupil Level Analysis</b>	
Table 19 Attendance at post-primary school by gender, 2007/08	17
Table 20 Attendance at post-primary school by year group, 2007/08	18
Chart 10 Absence at post-primary school by year group, 2007/08	18
Table 21 Attendance at post-primary school by ethnicity, 2007/08	18
Table 22 Percentage of enrolments at post-primary school by average number of days absence, 2007/08	19
Chart 11 Absence at post-primary school by average number of days absence, 2007/08	19
Table 23 Percentage of enrolments at post-primary school by overall absence rates, 2007/08	20
Table 24 Characteristics of post-primary pupils enrolled with absence levels of more than 15% in 2007/08	20
<b>SPECIAL SCHOOLS</b>	
<b>Key findings</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>School Level Analysis</b>	
Table 25 Attendance at special school by Education and Library Board, 2007/08	22
Chart 12 Absence at special school by Education and Library Board, 2007/08	22
<b>Pupil Level Analysis</b>	
Table 26 Attendance at special school by gender, 2007/08	22
Table 27 Percentage of enrolments at special school by average number of days absence, 2007/08	23
Chart 13 Percentage of enrolments at special school by average number of days absence, 2007/08	23
Table 28 Percentage of enrolments at special school by overall absence rates, 2007/08	23
<b>NOTES TO EDITORS</b>	<b>24-26</b>

## **INTRODUCTION**

Attendance data for all grant-aided primary, post-primary and special schools was collected at pupil level for the first time in the school census in October 2008.

Initial findings for 2007/08 were published in a Statistical First Release on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2009. This Statistical Press Release updates and supplements that information and includes analysis of attendance data by school characteristics such as management type and pupil characteristics, for example, gender and ethnicity.

## **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 2007/08 was 93.6%.
- In 2007/08, 6.4% of the total half days were missed due to absence in primary, post-primary and special schools.
- Of the total half days, 4.7% were recorded as authorised absence.
- Unauthorised absence accounted for 1.7% of the total half days in primary, post-primary and special schools throughout 2007/08.

## ALL SCHOOLS BY SECTOR

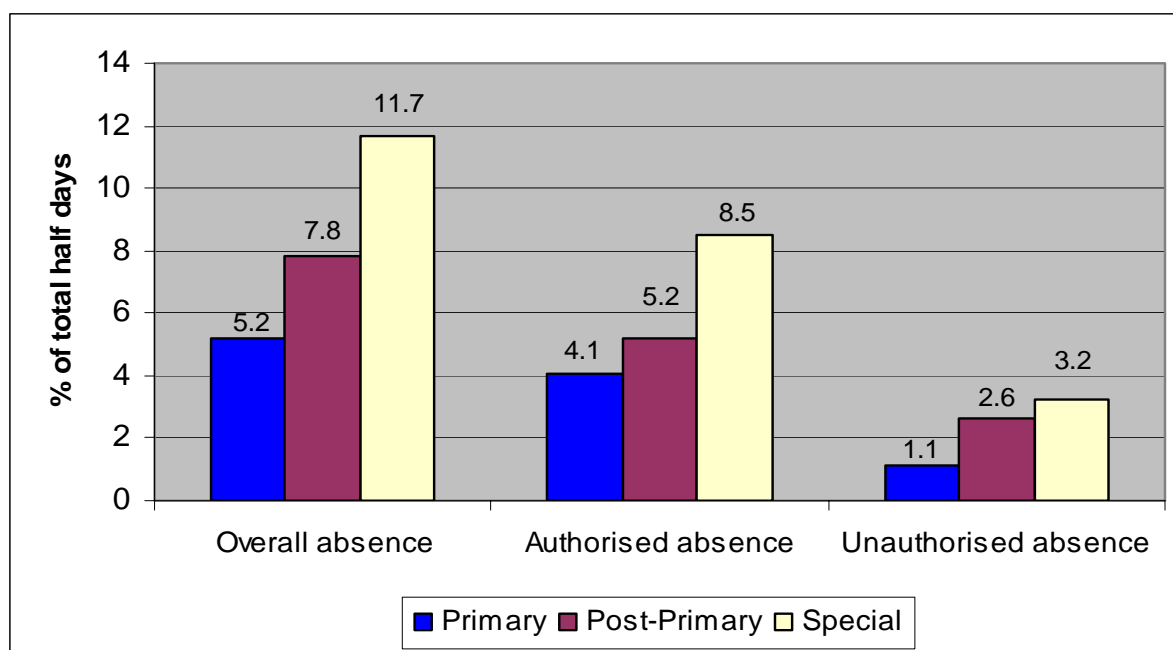
### Key findings

- In primary schools in 2007/08, 5.2% of all half days were missed due to absence. The figure for post-primary schools was 7.8% and for special schools was 11.7%.
- Unauthorised absence accounted for 1.1% of all half days missed in primary schools, 2.6% in post-primary schools and 3.2% in special schools.
- The most common reason for absence in all schools in 2007/08 was illness, which is an authorised absence. Illness accounted for 3.5% of the total half days in primary schools, 4.3% in post-primary schools and 4.8% in special schools. This equates to 66.6%, 54.7% and 40.8% of all absent half days respectively.
- The highest overall absence rates were recorded in Wales – 6.7% of the total half days in primary schools and 9.1% of the total half days in post-primary schools. This compares with 5.2% and 7.8% respectively in Northern Ireland.

**Table 1 Attendance at school, 2007/08**

	% of total half days		
	Primary Schools	Post-primary Schools	Special Schools
Attended	94.8	92.2	88.3
Not attended	5.2	7.8	11.7
<i>Comprising:</i>			
Authorised absence	4.1	5.2	8.5
Unauthorised absence	1.1	2.6	3.2

**Chart 1 Absence in primary, post-primary and special schools, 2007/08**



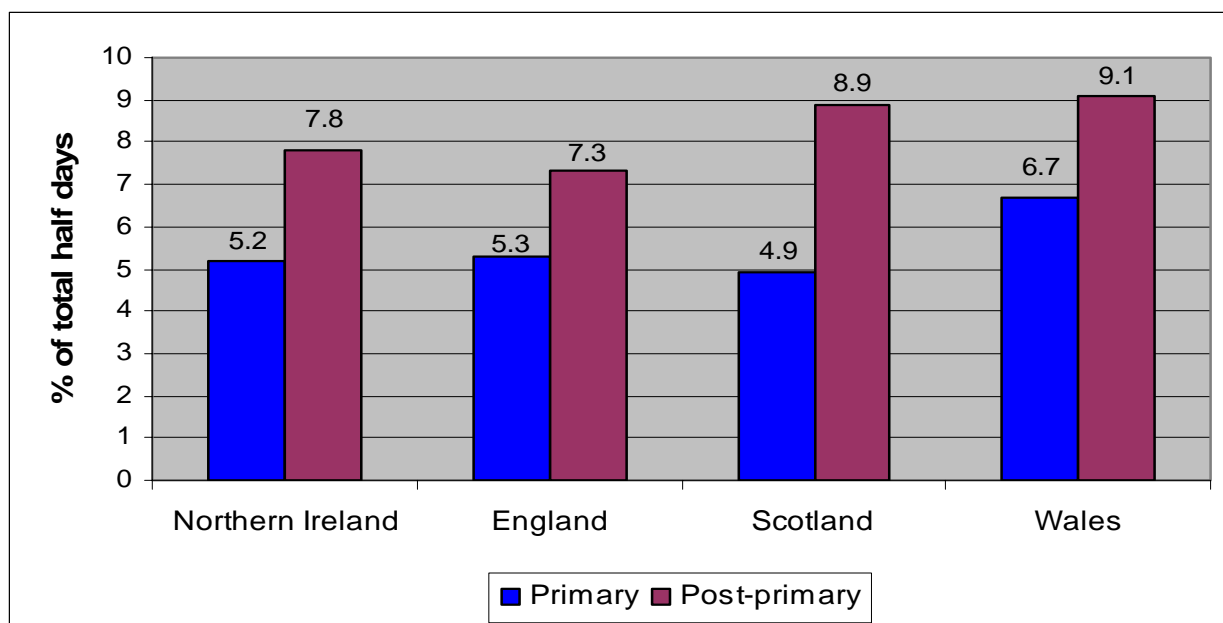
**Table 2 Absence in schools by reason, 2007/08**

	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
<b>Authorised absence</b>						
Bereavement	0.9	0.0	1.4	0.1	0.5	0.1
Suspended	0.1	0.0	1.5	0.1	1.0	0.1
Family holiday agreed	3.8	0.2	0.9	0.1	2.7	0.3
Illness	66.6	3.5	54.7	4.3	40.8	4.8
Medical / dental appointments	2.0	0.1	3.7	0.3	4.0	0.5
Other exceptional circumstances	4.7	0.2	4.6	0.4	22.7	2.7
Religious observance	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0
Traveller absence	1.2	0.1	0.3	0.0	0.6	0.1
<b>Total authorised absence</b>	<b>79.4</b>	<b>4.1</b>	<b>67.2</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>72.5</b>	<b>8.5</b>
<b>Unauthorised absence</b>						
Family holiday not agreed	3.6	0.2	2.0	0.2	1.4	0.2
Other	14.8	0.8	26.5	2.1	23.1	2.7
No reason yet provided	1.8	0.1	4.0	0.3	3.0	0.3
Late after registration closed	0.5	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.1	0.0
<b>Total unauthorised absence</b>	<b>20.6</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>32.8</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>27.5</b>	<b>3.2</b>
<b>Total overall absence</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>7.8</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>11.7</b>

**Table 3 Comparison with England, Scotland and Wales, 2007/08**

	% of total half days			
	Primary Schools		Post-primary Schools	
	Unauthorised absence	Overall absence	Unauthorised absence	Overall absence
Northern Ireland	1.1	5.2	2.6	7.8
England	0.6	5.3	1.4	7.3
Scotland	N/A	4.9	N/A	8.9
Wales	0.9	6.7	1.8	9.1

**Chart 2 Comparisons with England, Scotland and Wales – overall absence, 2007/08**



## **PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

### **Key findings**

#### **Overall**

- In primary schools in 2007/08, 5.2% of all half days were missed due to absence, comprising 4.1% authorised and 1.1% unauthorised absence.
- The most common reason for absence in primary schools was illness, which is an authorised absence and accounted for 3.5% of the total half days or 66.6% of all absent half days in 2007/08.

#### **School level**

- Controlled integrated primary schools had the highest levels of average overall absence (5.6% of the total half days) while voluntary schools had the lowest at 3.2% of the total half days.
- At 6.2% 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 4.7% of the total half days missed.
- Overall absence was higher for urban primary schools (5.7% of the total half days) than for rural primary schools (4.4% of the total half days).
- 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 4.0% of the total half days. This compares with 8.3% 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.

#### **Pupil level**

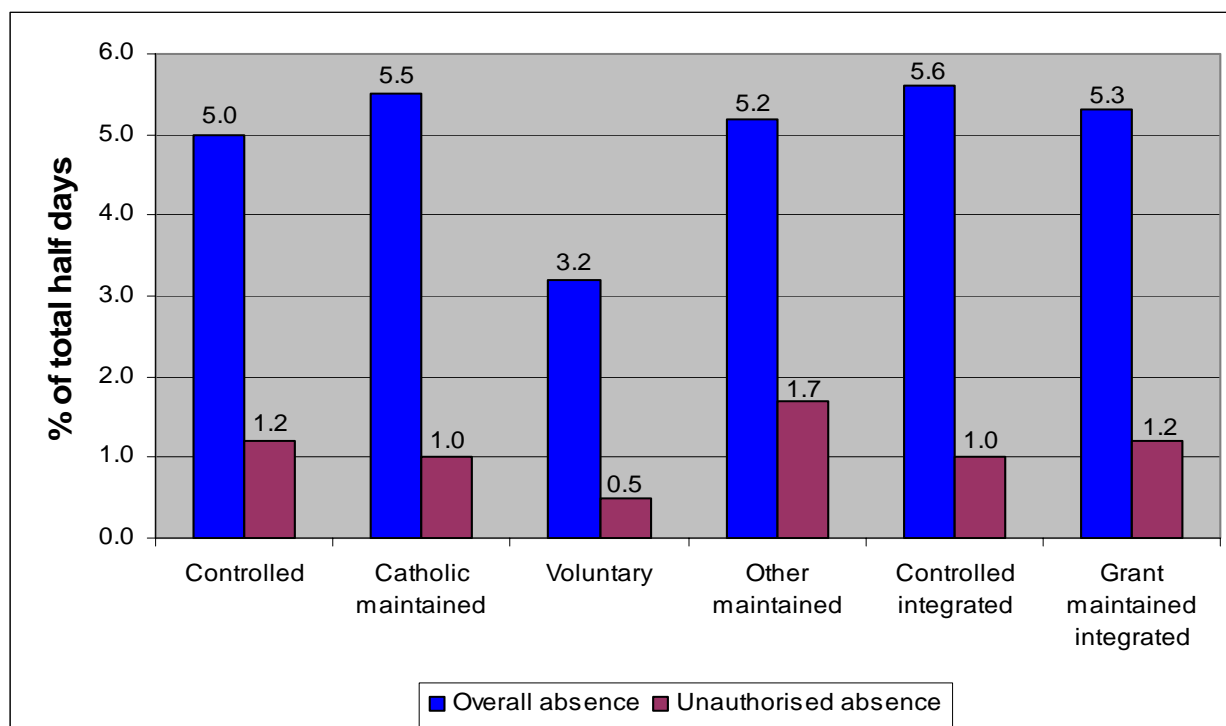
- Average overall absence rates were the same for boys and girls of primary school age (5.2% of the total half days).
- The highest average overall absence occurred in Year 1 of primary school when 5.9% of the total half days are missed. It generally decreased over the next few years, reaching the lowest level by Year 6 (4.9% of the total half days).
- Traveller children attending primary school had a higher average overall absence rate than any other ethnic group. They missed 29.9% of the total half days, compared with 5.1% for white children and 7.2% for children from a minority ethnic background.
- Of all pupils enrolled in primary schools in 2007/08, 6.7% had no absence throughout the year. The majority (35.7%) were absent between 0.5 and 5 days in 2007/08. Just over 6% of pupils enrolled were absent for more than 25 days.
- The highest proportion of pupils enrolled (51.4%) missed between 0.1% and 4% of the total days while the lowest proportion (5.2%) missed more than 15% of the total half days.
- Looking at the characteristics of the pupils with absence levels of more than 15%, around half were from Catholic maintained schools and almost one-quarter (23.5%) from the Belfast Education and Library Board. The largest proportion of pupils with absence levels of more than 15% were in Year 1.

## PRIMARY SCHOOLS - SCHOOL LEVEL ANALYSIS

**Table 4 Attendance at primary school by management type, 2007/08**

Management Type	% of total half days			
	Total attended	Total not attended	Total authorised absence	Total unauthorised absence
Controlled	95.0	5.0	3.8	1.2
Catholic maintained	94.5	5.5	4.5	1.0
Voluntary	96.8	3.2	2.7	0.5
Other maintained	94.8	5.2	3.6	1.7
Controlled Integrated	94.4	5.6	4.6	1.0
Grant Maintained Integrated	94.7	5.3	4.1	1.2
<b>Primary average</b>	<b>94.8</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>4.1</b>	<b>1.1</b>

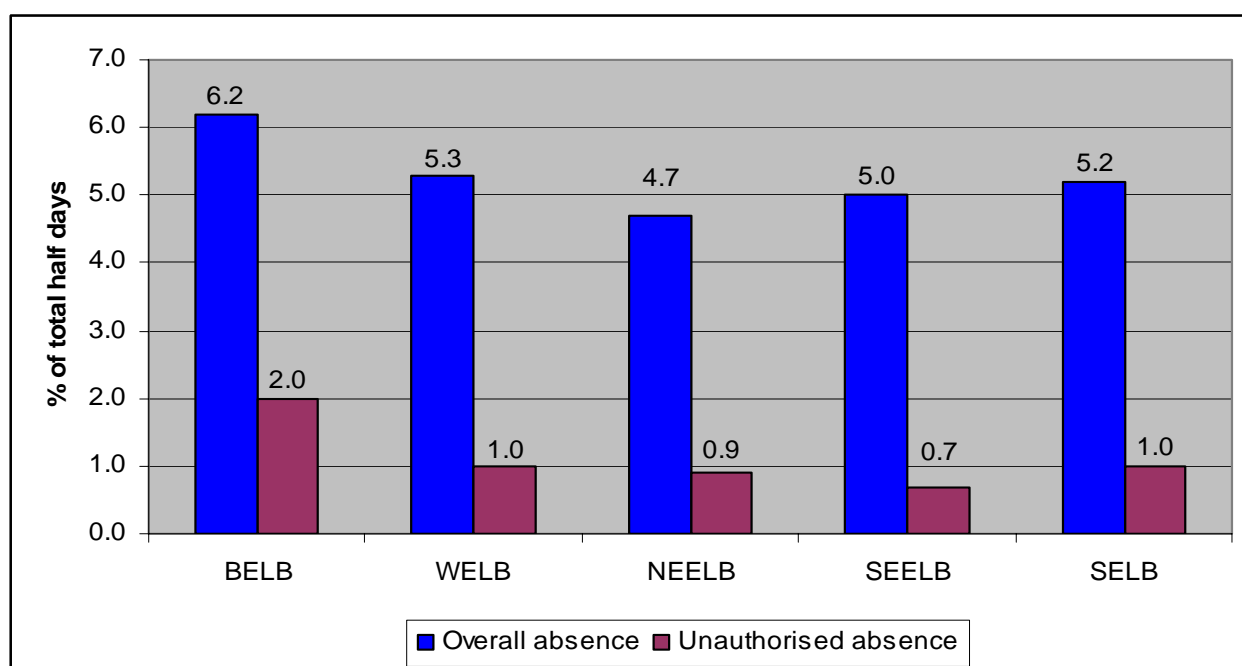
**Chart 3 Absence at primary school by management type, 2007/08**



**Table 5 Attendance at primary school by Education and Library Board, 2007/08**

ELB	% of total half days			
	Total attended	Total not attended	Total authorised absence	Total unauthorised absence
BELB	93.8	6.2	4.2	2.0
WELB	94.7	5.3	4.3	1.0
NEELB	95.3	4.7	3.8	0.9
SEELB	95.0	5.0	4.2	0.7
SELB	94.8	5.2	4.2	1.0
<b>Primary average</b>	<b>94.8</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>4.1</b>	<b>1.1</b>

**Chart 4 Absence at primary school by Education and Library Board, 2007/08**



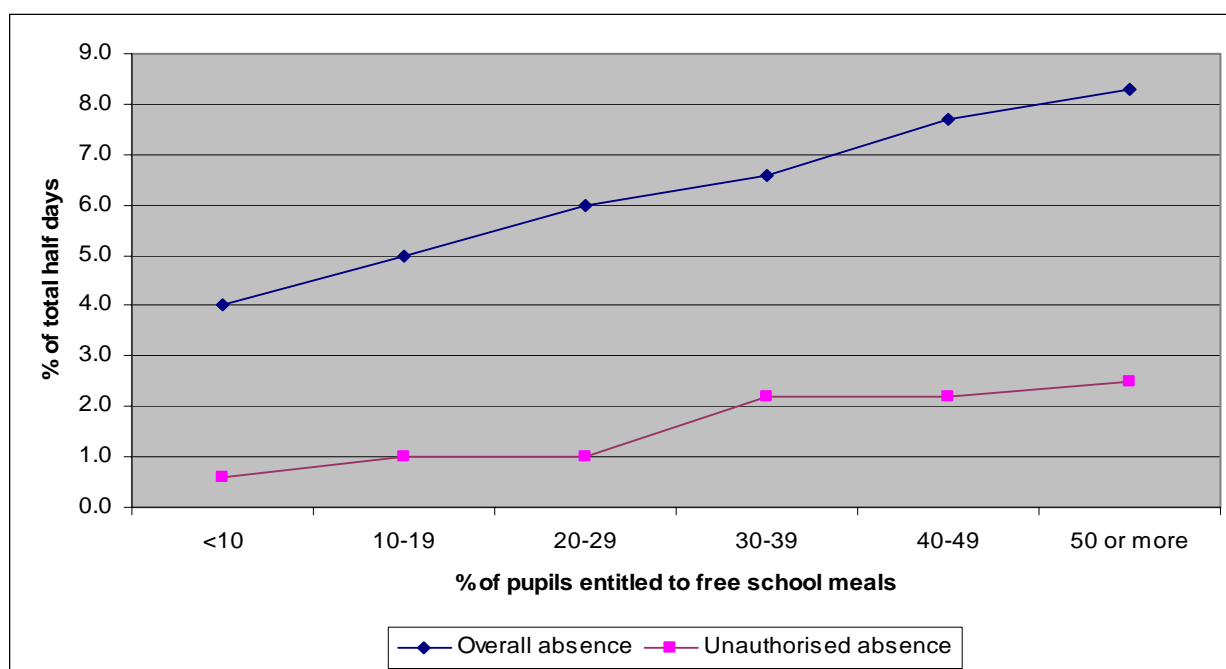
**Table 6 Attendance at primary school by location of school, 2007/08**

Location	% of total half days			
	Total attended	Total not attended	Total authorised absence	Total unauthorised absence
Urban	94.3	5.7	4.3	1.4
Rural	95.6	4.4	3.8	0.6
<b>Primary average</b>	<b>94.8</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>4.1</b>	<b>1.1</b>

**Table 7 Attendance at primary school by free school meal entitlement, 2007/08**

Percentage of pupils entitled to Free School Meals	% of total half days			
	Total attended	Total not attended	Total authorised absence	Total unauthorised absence
<10%	96.0	4.0	3.4	0.6
10-19%	95.0	5.0	4.0	1.0
20-29%	94.0	6.0	5.0	1.0
30-39%	93.4	6.6	4.4	2.2
40-49%	92.3	7.7	5.5	2.2
50% or more	91.7	8.3	5.8	2.5
<b>Primary average</b>	<b>94.8</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>4.1</b>	<b>1.1</b>

**Chart 5 Absence at primary school by free school meal entitlement, 2007/08**



**PRIMARY SCHOOLS - PUPIL LEVEL ANALYSIS**

**Table 8 Attendance at primary school by gender, 2007/08**

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	94.8	5.2	4.1	1.1
<b>Primary average</b>	<b>94.8</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>4.1</b>	<b>1.1</b>

**Table 9 Attendance at primary school by year group, 2007/08**

Year Group	% of total half days			
	Total attended	Total not attended	Total authorised absence	Total unauthorised absence
1	94.1	5.9	4.8	1.1
2	94.5	5.5	4.4	1.1
3	94.9	5.1	4.0	1.1
4	95.0	5.0	3.9	1.1
5	94.9	5.1	4.0	1.1
6	95.1	4.9	3.9	1.0
7	94.9	5.1	4.0	1.1
<b>Primary average</b>	<b>94.8</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>4.1</b>	<b>1.1</b>

**Table 10 Attendance at primary school by ethnicity, 2007/08**

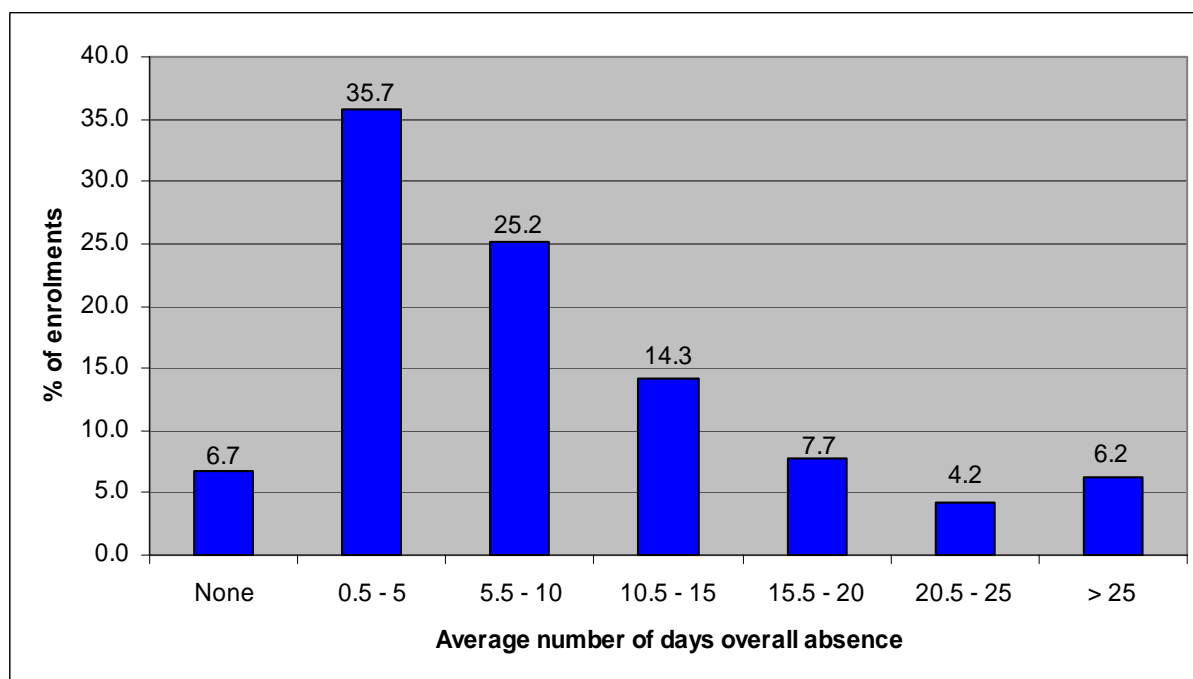
Gender	% of total half days			
	Total attended	Total not attended	Total authorised absence	Total unauthorised absence
White	94.9	5.1	4.1	1.0
Minority Ethnic Background	92.8	7.2	5.1	2.1
Traveller	70.1	29.9	22.1	7.7
<b>Primary average</b>	<b>94.8</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>4.1</b>	<b>1.1</b>

Note: Ethnicity was not provided for 233 enrolments at primary schools, representing 0.1% of the total.

**Table 11 Percentage of enrolments at primary school by average number of days overall absence, 2007/08**

Average number of days overall absence	Percentage of enrolments
No absence	6.7
0.5 – 5 days	35.7
5.5 – 10 days	25.2
10.5 – 15 days	14.3
15.5 – 20 days	7.7
20.5 – 25 days	4.2
>25 days	6.2

**Chart 6 Absence at primary school by average number of days absence, 2007/08**



**Table 12 Percentage of enrolments at primary school by overall absence rates, 2007/08**

<b>Overall absence rate</b>	<b>Percentage of enrolments</b>
No absence	6.7
0.1% to 4% of total half days	51.4
5% to 10% of total half days	29.4
11% to 15% of total half days	7.3
>15% of total half days	5.2

**Table 13 Characteristics of primary school pupils enrolled with absence levels of more than 15% in 2007/08**

<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>% of pupils enrolled with absence levels of more than 15%</b>	<b>% of total pupils enrolled</b>
<b>SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS:</b>		
<b>Management Type</b>		
Controlled	44.3	46.9
Catholic maintained	50.1	46.1
Voluntary	0.2	1.3
Other maintained	1.0	1.2
Controlled Integrated	1.6	1.4
Grant Maintained Integrated	2.8	3.1
<b>Education and Library Board</b>		
BELB	23.5	14.9
WELB	16.5	18.0
NEELB	17.4	22.8
SEELB	19.7	21.2
SELB	22.8	23.1
<b>PUPIL CHARACTERISTICS:</b>		
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	51.7	51.0
Female	48.3	49.0
<b>Year Group</b>		
1	18.6	14.1
2	14.9	13.7
3	12.5	13.6
4	12.3	14.0
5	13.0	14.7
6	13.8	14.8
7	14.8	15.1
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
White	88.7	97.2
Minority ethnic background	5.0	2.2
Traveller	5.3	0.4

Note: Ethnicity was not provided for 91 enrolments with absence levels of more than 15%, representing 1.1% of the total. Ethnicity was not provided for 233 enrolments overall, representing 0.1% of the total.

## POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS

### Key findings

#### Overall

- In post-primary schools in 2007/08, 7.8% of all half days were missed due to absence, comprising 5.2% authorised and 2.6% unauthorised absence.
- The most common reason for absence in post-primary schools was illness, which is an authorised absence and accounted for 4.3% of the total half days (54.7% of all absent half days). (Table 2)

#### School level

- At 9.7% of the total half days, average levels of overall absence in secondary schools were higher than in grammar schools (4.7%).
- Controlled integrated schools had the highest levels of overall absence (11.0% of the total half days) while voluntary schools had the lowest at 4.7% of the total half days.
- At 8.4% of the total half days, average overall absence was highest in the Southern Education and Library Board post-primary schools. The North Eastern and South Eastern Education and Library Boards reported lower levels of overall absence (7.6% of the total half days) than the other Education and Library Boards.
- 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 4.8% of the total half days. This compares with 13.3% 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.

#### Pupil level

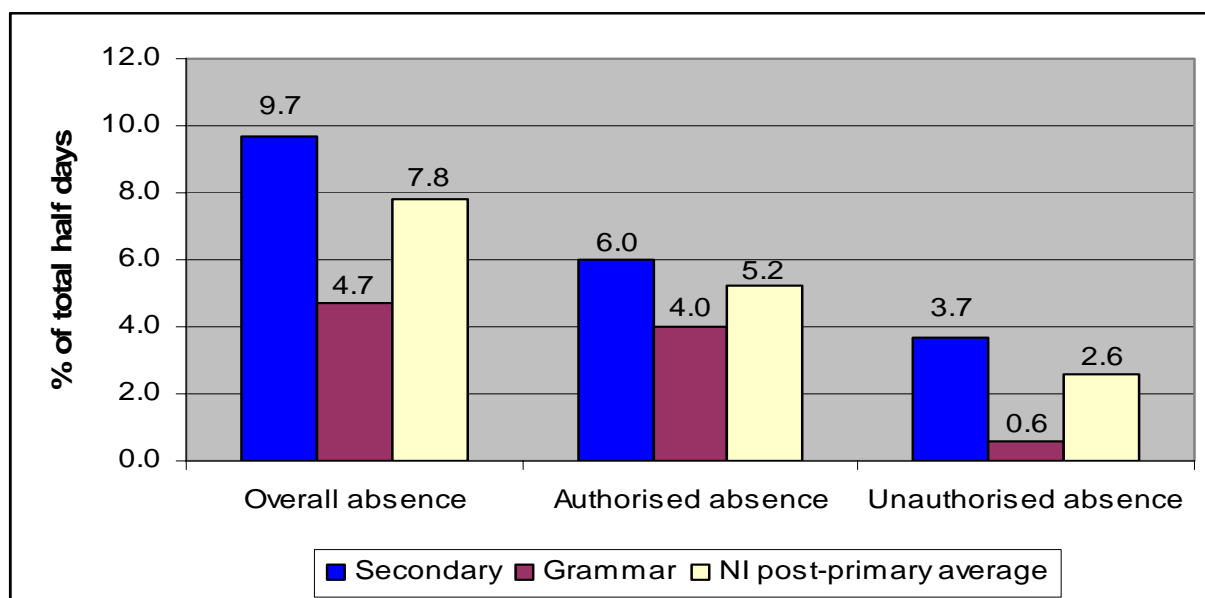
- At 7.9% and 7.7% of total half days respectively, average overall absence was similar for males and females. While the predominant cause of absence for both genders was illness, females missed a greater proportion of the total half days for this reason than males. For males, the proportion of total half days missed due to suspension from school was four times the rate for females.
- Average absence levels increased steadily between Year 8 and Year 11 (from 5.7% to 9.3% of the total half days), before decreasing to 8.6% of the total half days in Year 12.
- At 45.2% of their total half days, average level of overall absence was higher for Traveller children than for any other ethnic group. This compares with 7.7% for white children and 7.1% for children from a minority ethnic background.
- Over 5% of pupils enrolled in Year 8 to Year 12 at post-primary schools had no absence during 2007/08. Almost 28% of pupils enrolled were absent between 0.5 and 5 days in 2007/08, while 14.9% of pupils enrolled were absent for more than 25 days.
- The absence rate for the majority of pupils enrolled (41.5%) was between 0.1% and 4% of total half days. Almost 13% of pupils enrolled were absent for more than 15% of the total half days.
- In terms of pupils with more than a 15% overall absence rate, around nine out of ten attended secondary schools and 43.6% attended controlled schools. There were slightly more females than males and the largest group were from Year 11.

## POST-PRIMARY – SCHOOL LEVEL ANALYSIS

**Table 14 Attendance at post-primary school by school type, 2007/08**

School Type	% of total half days			
	Total attended	Total not attended	Total authorised absence	Total unauthorised absence
Secondary	90.3	9.7	6.0	3.7
Grammar	95.3	4.7	4.0	0.6
<b>Post-primary average</b>	<b>92.2</b>	<b>7.8</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>2.6</b>

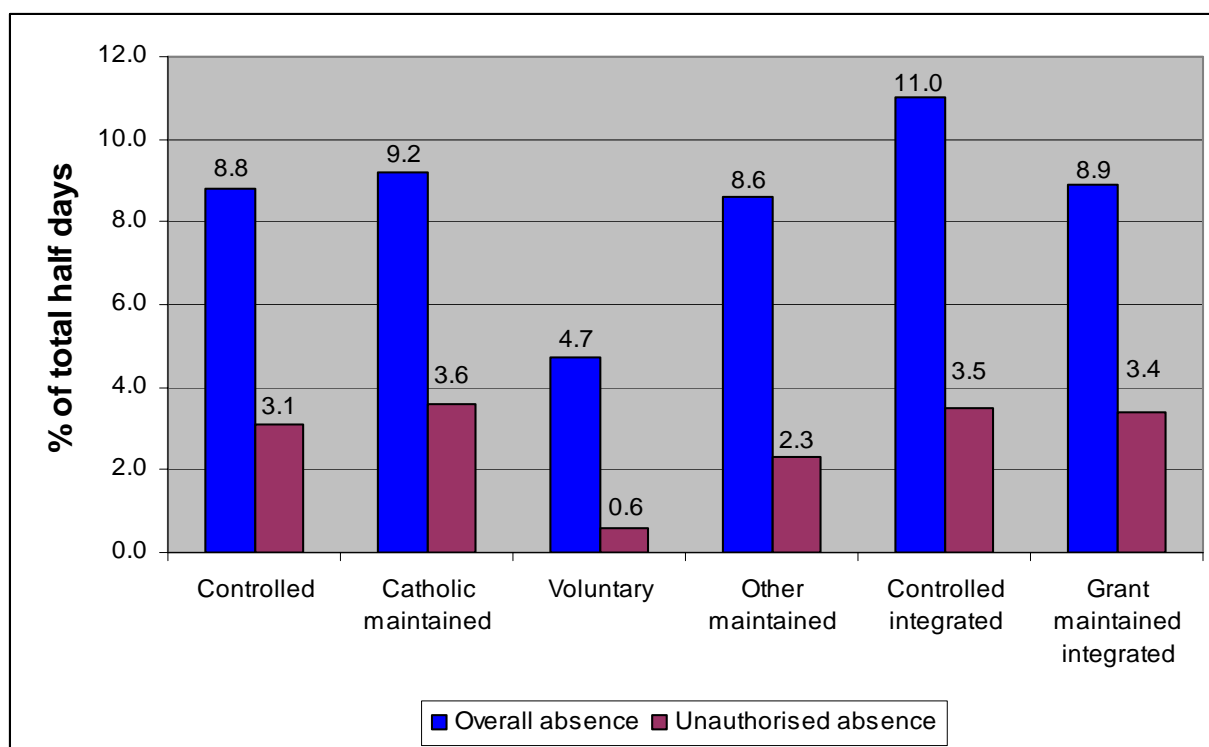
**Chart 7 Absence at post-primary school by school type, 2007/08**



**Table 15 Attendance at post-primary school by management type, 2007/08**

Management Type	% of total half days			
	Total attended	Total not attended	Total authorised absence	Total unauthorised absence
Controlled	91.2	8.8	5.7	3.1
Catholic maintained	90.8	9.2	5.6	3.6
Voluntary	95.3	4.7	4.1	0.6
Other maintained	91.4	8.6	6.3	2.3
Controlled Integrated	89.0	11.0	7.5	3.5
Grant Maintained Integrated	91.1	8.9	5.5	3.4
<b>Post-primary average</b>	<b>92.2</b>	<b>7.8</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>2.6</b>

**Chart 8 Absence at post-primary school by management type, 2007/08**



**Table 16 Attendance at post-primary school by Education and Library Board, 2007/08**

ELB	% of total half days			
	Total attended	Total not attended	Total authorised absence	Total unauthorised absence
BELB	92.2	7.8	5.4	2.4
WELB	92.3	7.7	4.7	2.9
NEELB	92.5	7.6	5.2	2.4
SEELB	92.4	7.6	5.0	2.6
SELB	91.6	8.4	5.9	2.5
<b>Post-primary average</b>	<b>92.2</b>	<b>7.8</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>2.6</b>

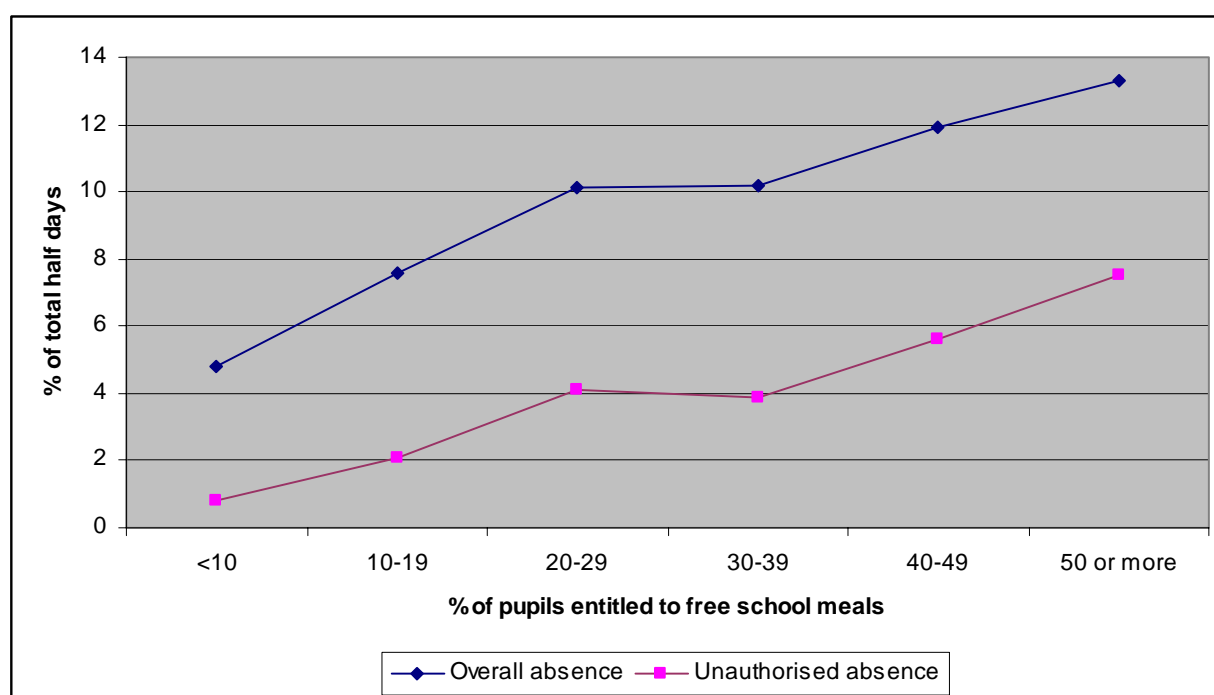
**Table 17 Attendance at post-primary school by location of school, 2007/08**

Location	% of total half days			
	Total attended	Total not attended	Total authorised absence	Total unauthorised absence
Urban	92.1	7.9	5.3	2.6
Rural	92.8	7.2	5.1	2.1
<b>Post-primary average</b>	<b>92.2</b>	<b>7.8</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>2.6</b>

**Table 18 Attendance at post-primary school by free school meal entitlement, 2007/08**

Percentage of pupils entitled to Free School Meals	% of total half days			
	Total attended	Total not attended	Total authorised absence	Total unauthorised absence
<10%	95.2	4.8	4.0	0.8
10-19%	92.4	7.6	5.5	2.1
20-29%	89.9	10.1	6.0	4.1
30-39%	89.8	10.2	6.3	3.9
40-49%	88.1	11.9	6.3	5.6
50% or more	86.7	13.3	5.8	7.5
<b>Post-primary average</b>	<b>92.2</b>	<b>7.8</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>2.6</b>

**Chart 9 Absence at post-primary school by free school meal entitlement, 2007/08**



**POST PRIMARY - PUPIL LEVEL ANALYSIS**

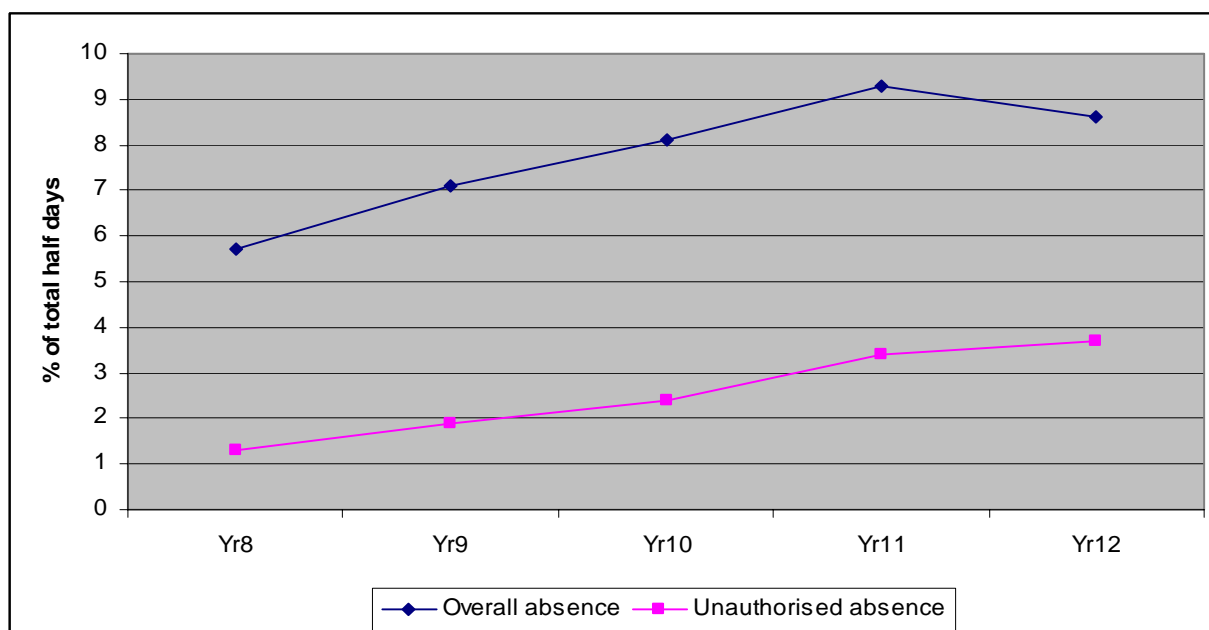
**Table 19 Attendance at post-primary school by gender, 2007/08**

Gender	% of total half days			
	Total attended	Total not attended	Total authorised absence	Total unauthorised absence
Male	92.1	7.9	5.1	2.7
Female	92.3	7.7	5.3	2.4
<b>Post-primary average</b>	<b>92.2</b>	<b>7.8</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>2.6</b>

**Table 20 Attendance at post-primary school by year group, 2007/08**

Year Group	% of total half days			
	Total attended	Total not attended	Total authorised absence	Total unauthorised absence
8	94.3	5.7	4.4	1.3
9	92.9	7.1	5.1	1.9
10	91.9	8.1	5.7	2.4
11	90.7	9.3	6.0	3.4
12	91.4	8.6	4.9	3.7
<b>Post-primary average</b>	<b>92.2</b>	<b>7.8</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>2.6</b>

**Chart 10 Absence at post-primary school by year group, 2007/08**



**Table 21 Attendance at post-primary school by ethnicity, 2007/08**

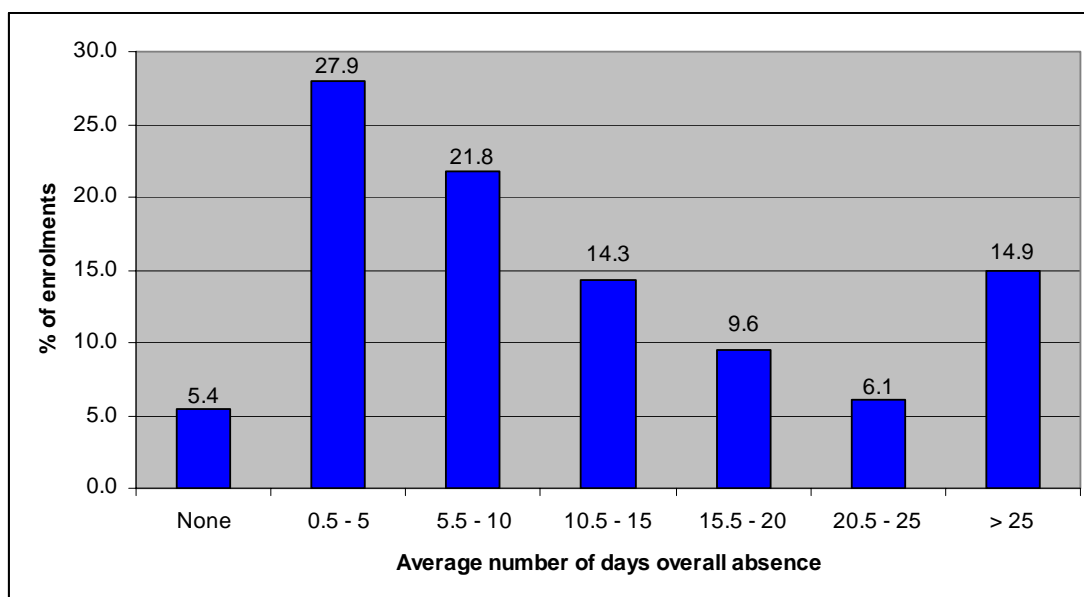
Gender	% of total half days			
	Total attended	Total not attended	Total authorised absence	Total unauthorised absence
White	92.3	7.7	5.2	2.5
Minority Ethnic Background	92.9	7.1	4.3	2.7
Traveller	54.8	45.2	25.0	20.2
<b>Post-primary average</b>	<b>92.2</b>	<b>7.8</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>2.6</b>

Note: Ethnicity was not provided for 26 enrolments at post-primary schools, 0.02% of the total.

**Table 22 Percentage of enrolments at post-primary school by average number of days absence, 2007/08**

Average number of days overall absence	Percentage of enrolments
No absence	5.4
0.5 – 5 days	27.9
5.5 – 10 days	21.8
10.5 – 15 days	14.3
15.5 – 20 days	9.6
20.5 – 25 days	6.1
>25 days	14.9

**Chart 11 Absence at post-primary school by average number of days absence, 2007/08**



**Table 23 Percentage of enrolments at post-primary school by overall absence rates, 2007/08**

<b>Overall absence rate</b>	<b>Percentage of enrolments</b>
No absence	5.4
0.1% to 4% of total half days	41.5
5% to 10% of total half days	30.0
11% to 15% of total half days	10.4
>15% of total half days	12.6

**Table 24 Characteristics of post-primary pupils enrolled with absence levels of more than 15% in 2007/08**

<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>% of pupils enrolled with absence levels of more than 15%</b>	<b>% of total pupils enrolled</b>
<b>SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS:</b>		
<b>School type</b>		
Secondary	89.7	62.5
Grammar	10.3	37.5
<b>Management Type</b>		
Controlled	43.6	34.2
Catholic maintained	37.2	28.8
Voluntary	7.9	28.6
Other maintained	0.4	0.4
Controlled Integrated	3.2	1.7
Grant Maintained Integrated	7.8	6.3
<b>Education and Library Board</b>		
BELB	19.3	19.3
WELB	17.0	17.9
NEELB	21.1	22.3
SEELB	22.2	22.8
SELB	20.4	17.6
<b>PUPIL CHARACTERISTICS:</b>		
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	47.7	50.9
Female	52.3	49.1
<b>Year Group</b>		
8	10.8	19.3
9	16.4	19.6
10	21.1	20.1
11	27.5	20.3
12	24.3	20.8
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
White	97.5	98.3
Minority ethnic background	1.4	1.5
Traveller	1.1	0.2

Note: Ethnicity was not provided for 12 enrolments with absence levels of more than 15%, representing 0.1% of the total. Ethnicity was not provided for 26 enrolments overall, representing 0.02% of the total.

## **SPECIAL SCHOOLS**

### **KEY FINDINGS**

#### **Overall**

- In special schools in 2007/08, 11.7% of all half days were missed due to absence, comprising 8.5% authorised and 3.2% unauthorised absence.
- The most common reason for absence in special schools was illness, which is an authorised absence and accounted for 4.8% of the total half days (40.8% of all absent half days). (Table 2)

#### **School level**

- Average overall absence was highest (13.6% of total half days) in the South Eastern Education and Library Board in 2007/08 and lowest in the North Eastern Education and Library Board (9.0% of total half days).

#### **Pupil level**

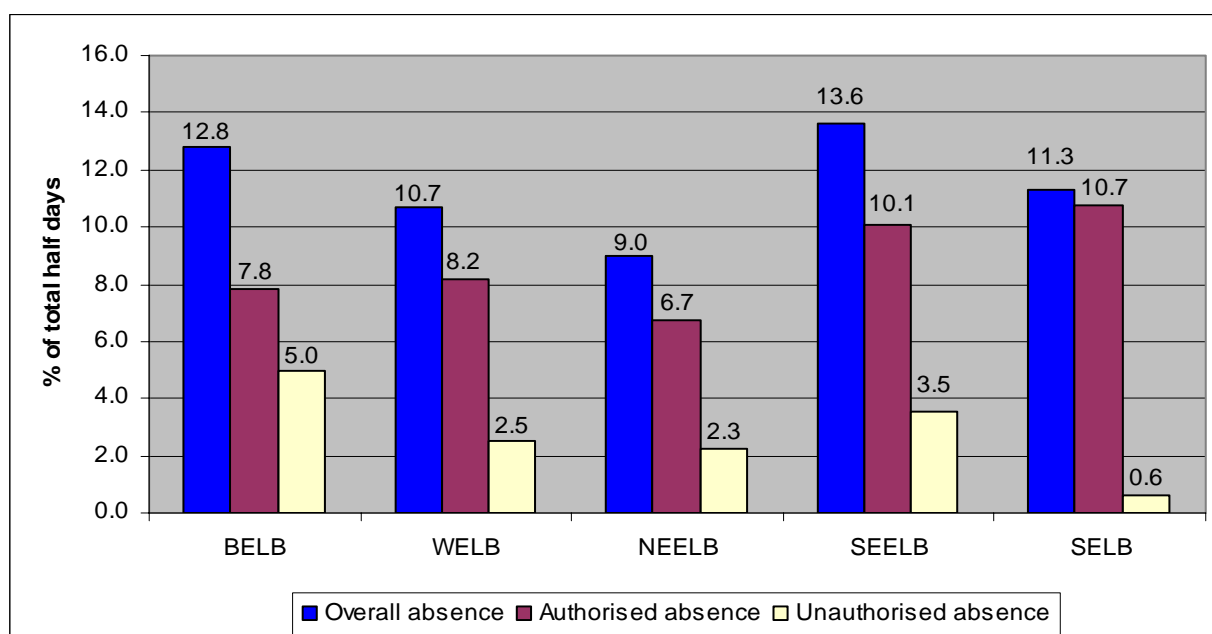
- Overall absence rates were slightly higher for females attending special schools than for males (12.2% and 11.5% of total half days respectively).
- Three per cent of pupils enrolled at special schools had no absence throughout 2007/08. In terms of days missed, just under one quarter of pupils enrolled (24.6%) were absent for more than 25 days in 2007/08.
- Almost one third (31%) of pupils enrolled had an overall absence rate of between 5% and 10% of the total half days. Almost one quarter (23.6%) were absent for more than 15% of the total half days.

## SPECIAL SCHOOLS – SCHOOL LEVEL ANALYSIS

**Table 25 Attendance at special school by Education and Library Board, 2007/08**

ELB	% of total half days			
	Total attended	Total not attended	Total authorised absence	Total unauthorised absence
BELB	87.2	12.8	7.8	5.0
WELB	89.3	10.7	8.2	2.5
NEELB	91.0	9.0	6.7	2.3
SEELB	86.4	13.6	10.1	3.5
SELB	88.7	11.3	10.7	0.6
<b>Special average</b>	<b>88.3</b>	<b>11.7</b>	<b>8.5</b>	<b>3.2</b>

**Chart 12 Absence at special school by Education and Library Board, 2007/08**



## SPECIAL SCHOOLS - PUPIL LEVEL ANALYSIS

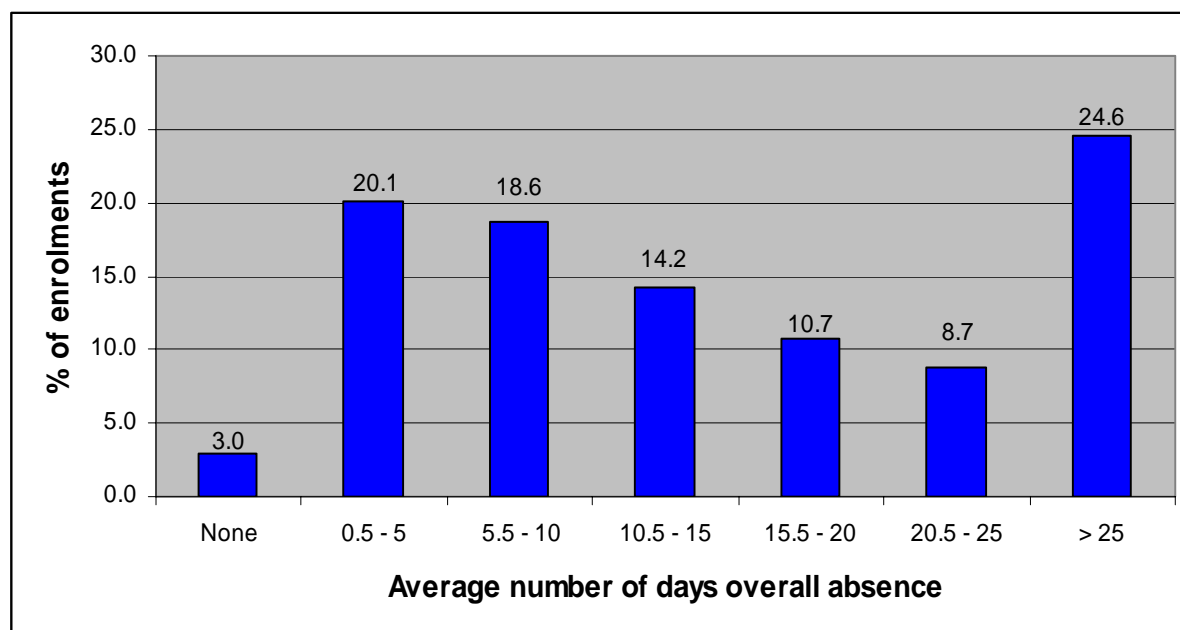
**Table 26 Attendance at special school by gender, 2007/08**

Gender	% of total half days			
	Total attended	Total not attended	Total authorised absence	Total unauthorised absence
Male	88.6	11.5	8.1	3.4
Female	87.8	12.2	9.3	2.9
<b>Special average</b>	<b>88.3</b>	<b>11.7</b>	<b>8.5</b>	<b>3.2</b>

**Table 27 Percentage of enrolments at special school by average number of days absence, 2007/08**

Average number of days overall absence	Percentage of enrolments
No absence	3.0
0.5 – 5 days	20.1
5.5 – 10 days	18.6
10.5 – 15 days	14.2
15.5 – 20 days	10.7
20.5 – 25 days	8.7
>25 days	24.6

**Chart 13 Percentage of enrolments at special school by average number of days absence, 2007/08**



**Table 28 Percentage of enrolments at special school by overall absence rates, 2007/08**

Overall absence rate	Percentage of enrolments
No absence	3.0
0.1% to 4% of total half days	27.9
5% to 10% of total half days	31.0
11% to 15% of total half days	14.6
>15% of total half days	23.6

## Notes to Editors:

1. 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)
2. 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. In Northern Ireland, schools are advised to record unexplained absence initially as 'no reason yet provided', however, if a reason is not provided within a specified period of time, these are changed to 'other'. It is possible that these are automatically changed to 'other' at the end of the academic year or are overlooked / not followed up, thereby inflating the rate of unauthorised absence. Both figures have been provided, however limitations in comparing rates of unauthorised and authorised absence should be noted.

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

3. 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 2007/08.
4. Attendance information was not available for 32 primary schools, which accounts for 3.6% of the total primary schools and 1.0% of all primary school pupils in Years 1 to 7 in 2007/08. Of the 32 schools, 17 closed just prior to the information being collected and the remaining 15 either did not have access to the electronic schools management information system or did not yet use it to record pupil attendance.
5. It has not been possible to include attendance data for four post-primary schools which closed prior to the data being collected in 2008/09. This equates to 1.8% of all post-primary schools and 0.4% of all Year 8 to 12 pupils in 2007/08.
6. It has not been possible to include attendance data for two special schools which closed prior to the data being collected in 2008/09. This equates to 4.7% of all special schools and 1.8% of all pupils in special schools in 2007/08.
7. Comparative data was obtained from the following sources:

Pupil Absence in Schools in England, Autumn Term 2007 and Spring Term 2008  
 Absenteeism from Primary Schools, 2007/08 (Wales)  
 Absenteeism from Secondary Schools, 2007/08 (Wales)  
 Attendance and Absence in Scottish Schools, 2007/08

It should be noted that England revised the overall absence rate for primary schools from 5.35% to 5.26% between issue of their first and supplementary releases. In addition, the provision of reasons for absence, which is not compulsory in England, increased from 91% of schools to 99% of schools over the same period. Northern Ireland's Statistical First Release, published in February 2009, quotes the first figures while this supplementary press release uses the revised figures.

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, in Wales, the primary 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 schools. In Northern Ireland, attendance data are collected as part of the annual school census.

8. 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.
9. 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.

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

11. Requests for further information should be addressed to:

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Statistics and Research Branch  
Department of Education  
Rathgael House  
Balloo Road  
Bangor  
Co. Down  
BT19 7PR  
Telephone: 028 9127 9438  
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Special analyses of the attendance information can be undertaken on request.