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More primary pupils miss school

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/education/7681666.stm>

Adapted from BBC News 21,10,2007 © BBC MMVIII

There has been an increase of 7,000 in the number of primary age pupils in England identified as "persistent absentees", the latest figures show.

More than 6% of secondary pupils also missed more than a fifth of lessons. The total **declined** by 14,800 but in seven local authorities more than one in 10 were **persistently** absent.

There was a slight decline in overall absenteeism, from 6.44% to 6.26%, prompted by a fall in authorised absences such as family holidays.



The Department for Schools, Children and Families figures, showing children missing school in autumn term 2007 and spring 2008 in England, **record** that almost 10 million half-day sessions were missed in unauthorised absences. However, the rate of unauthorised absences remained **unchanged** at 0.97% of all half-day sessions.

The absenteeism rate for primary schools rose to 0.56% of all sessions, up from 0.52% last year.

Regional differences

This more **detailed** breakdown of absenteeism shows the **impact** of pupils who are persistently missing on the overall figures - defined as those who miss more than 20% of school sessions.

They accounted for more than half of unauthorised absences.

There was a 7,000 increase in the number of primary pupils **classified** as persistent absentees to 81,530, representing 2.4% of enrolments.

In secondary school there were 191,240, which was 6.4% of the total.

MOST RECENT UK ABSENCE FIGURES

England

Secondary schools: 7.3% total absence, 1.43% unauthorised

Primary: 5.35% total, 0.56% unauthorised

Wales

Secondary: 9.3% total absence, 1.8% unauthorised

Primary: 6.9% total, 0.9% unauthorised

Scotland Primary, secondary and special: 6.74% total absence, 1.4% unauthorised

Northern Ireland

Post-primary: 7.7% total absence 2.4% unauthorised

Primary: statistics not collected centrally

The government figures reveal areas of the country which have a much greater **problem** with such persistent absenteeism.

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In Hull, 12.9% of secondary pupils are classified as persistently absent, 12.3% in Manchester and 10.1% in Southampton.

At the other end of the scale, in Redbridge only 4% were persistently absent and 4.3% in Barnet.

However the classification for "persistent absentee" also includes those who have been given permission to miss school, such as those with illnesses.

Elsewhere in the UK absenteeism is generally higher than in England.

'Toughest nut'

A spokesperson for the DCSF says: "Persistent absence in secondary schools remains ***the toughest nut to crack*** - with just 6% of children accounting for 77% of unauthorised absence.

"Today's statistics show that there were around 15,000 less persistent absentees in secondary schools and we have cut persistent absence by 20% in the 436 schools with the highest numbers of persistent absentees."

The figures for **overall** absenteeism include both those ***playing truant*** and those "authorised" to be away.

The most common reasons for missing school were illness and family holidays - with 86% of such family trips being approved by the school.

Academies, usually based in ***deprived areas***, continue to have above-average absenteeism rates, currently 8.55% on average - down from 9.52% for the same period last year.

The complete annual figures will not be available until February - but the projected annual absenteeism rate for primary and secondary schools is 6.26%.

"The ***vast majority*** of children have no unauthorised absence at all. The fact is that **weak** excuses ***no longer wash with schools*** - overall absence is going down because schools are taking on the persistent absentees," says Children's Minister Baroness Morgan.

The Conservatives' Schools Spokesman Nick Gibb said the figures were a "stubborn reminder that the government's multi-million pound strategy to tackle truancy has not succeeded".

"Most alarming of all is the significant increase in the number of persistent absentees in primary schools which has risen by over 10% since last year. It is the poorest pupils that are worst affected. Almost half of these children repeatedly skipping school are eligible for free school meals."

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A. Read the article and decide if the statements are true or false.

1. Absenteeism fell overall because of fewer children took time off through illness.
True/False
2. The absenteeism rate rose for all sessions in primary schools.
True/False
3. Secondary schools in Wales had worse absenteeism than in England.
True/False
4. Redbridge has a greater percentage of absenteeism than Barnet.
True/False
5. Truancy and authorised absences are included in the figures for overall absenteeism.
True/False
6. Absence rates in academies in deprived areas have increased.
True/False
7. Most children have no absences from school at all
True/False
8. The conservatives are happy with the Government figure.
True/False

B. Read the phrases that are in ***bold italics*** in the text. Put them in your own words.

the toughest nut to crack

playing truant

deprived areas

vast majority

no longer wash with schools

C. The following are all anagrams of single words found in the text.

All the words are proper nouns.

- | | |
|-----------------|----------------|
| 1. as wel | 5. same trench |
| 2. lend nag | 6. banter |
| 3. tan colds | 7. darn lie |
| 4. phantoms out | 8. bird greed |

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D. Answer these questions.

1. Which area has the highest absentees in secondary schools?
2. What are the primary school statistics for Northern Ireland?
3. What percentage of family trips was approved by schools?
4. What do the conservatives consider to be very worrying?
5. What is the decrease in round numbers of persistent absentees in secondary school?

E. Match the words in **bold** in the text (listed on the left below) with a word on the right that can replace them in the text. E.g. **declined** can be replaced by enable.

declined	—————>	fell
persistently		lame
record		disadvantaged
unchanged		classed
detailed		note
impact		constantly
classified		unaffected
problem		total
overall		comprehensive
deprived		predicament
weak		effect

ANSWERS

A.

1. **False** - it was because there was a fall in authorised absences
2. **True**
3. **True**
4. **False** – Barnet was higher than Redbridge
5. **True**
6. **False** – They are down from 9.52% to 8.55%
7. **False** – most have no unauthorised absence
8. **False** – they believe the government’s strategy has not succeeded

B.

the toughest nut to crack – the most difficult problem to solve

playing truant – taking time off school without permission

deprived areas – areas where there are poverty and need

vast majority - most

no longer wash with schools – are no longer acceptable

C.

- | | |
|----------------|---------------|
| 1. Wales | 5. Manchester |
| 2. England | 6. Barnet |
| 3. Scotland | 7. Ireland |
| 4. Southampton | 8. Redbridge |

D.

1. Hull
2. They are not collected
3. 86%
4. The increase in persistent absentees in primary schools
5. 15,000

E.

persistently	constantly
record	note
unchanged	unaffected
detailed	comprehensive
impact	effect
classified	classed
problem	predicament
overall	total
deprived	disadvantaged
weak	lame