

Variation in pupil absence rates in Autumn 2020 - addendum

Introduction

This report forms an addendum to work completed for Reconnect London on pupil absence in mainstream schools in Autumn term 2020.

This additional analysis considers pupil absence in special and state-funded Alternative Provision (AP) schools over the same time period.

Research questions

1. How did attendance vary by year group in the autumn term?
2. How did attendance vary in the autumn term for the following groups:
 - a. pupils eligible for free school meals anytime in the last six years (FSM6),
 - b. those with special educational needs (SEN), either with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) or receiving other additional support (K), and
 - c. those who have ever been referred for a Children in Need assessment (ever CIN) or have ever been under a Child Protection Plan (ever CPP).
3. How did attendance vary by ethnic background in the autumn term?

About the data

Absence data for the Autumn term 2020/21 is linked to Autumn and Spring School Censuses for 2020/21 and Children in Need Census data from 2009 to 2020.

Because CIN data is only available from 2009 onwards, numbers of ever CIN and ever CPP pupils will be undercounted in older year groups.

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A summary of pupil numbers

Pupils by school type and region

Table A1 Number of pupils by region and school type. Numbers and proportions of pupils attending a mainstream, special, and alternative provision (AP) school are shown. Pupil numbers are rounded to the nearest 10.

	Number of pupils			% of pupils		
	Special	AP	Mainstream	Special	AP	Mainstream
North East	7,230	1,310	316,810	2.22%	0.40%	97.38%
West Midlands	14,740	2,180	767,950	1.88%	0.28%	97.84%
North West	16,590	3,750	936,560	1.73%	0.39%	97.87%
South East	19,380	2,530	1,090,110	1.74%	0.23%	98.03%
South West	9,500	2,260	638,930	1.46%	0.35%	98.19%
London	15,470	2,810	1,033,350	1.47%	0.27%	98.26%
East of England	11,370	1,980	773,790	1.44%	0.25%	98.30%
East Midlands	8,770	1,290	594,760	1.45%	0.21%	98.34%
Yorkshire & Humber	9,400	2,440	695,640	1.33%	0.35%	98.33%
Total	112,430	20,540	6,847,910	1.61%	0.29%	98.10%

Table A1 shows the numbers of pupils in our dataset in each region of England, and the proportion of pupil enrolments in special and AP schools.

London had a below average proportion of pupils enrolled at special and AP schools (1.47% at special schools in London vs 1.61% nationally and 0.27% at AP schools vs 0.29%). The North East had the greatest proportion at both AP and special schools, while Yorkshire & Humber had the lowest proportion at special schools, and the East Midlands the lowest at AP schools.

Pupils by school type, vulnerable group and region

Table A2 Number of pupils by school type and pupil group. Proportions of pupils who were eligible for free school meals anytime in the last 6 years (FSM6), with an Education, Health and Care Plan (SEN EHCP), and who have ever been referred for a Children in Need assessment (CIN) or been under a Child Protection Plan (CPP) are shown. Pupil numbers are rounded to the nearest 10.

School type	Region	No. pupils	% FSM6	% SEN EHCP	% ever CIN	% ever CPP
Special	National	112,430	51.2%	99.1%	44.4%	7.9%
	London	15,470	55.1%	99.0%	47.1%	6.7%
AP	National	20,540	67.4%	20.6%	52.9%	17.6%
	London	2,810	68.1%	16.6%	52.0%	16.4%
Mainstream	National	6,847,910	26.5%	2.2%	9.2%	2.1%
	London	1,033,350	30.3%	2.9%	9.0%	1.8%

Table A2 shows the proportion of pupils enrolled in special and AP schools by vulnerable group. A comparison between all schools in England and London schools is provided.

Unsurprisingly, a much higher proportion of pupils in AP and special schools belonged to vulnerable groups than in mainstream schools. Nationally, 9.2% of pupils enrolled at mainstream schools had been referred for a CIN assessment, whereas 44.4% of pupils in special schools and 52.9% of pupils in AP schools had. Similarly, only 2.1% of pupils in mainstream schools had ever been under a CPP, while 7.9% of pupils in special schools and 17.6% of pupils in AP schools had. (As the vast majority of pupils in AP schools are in Years 10 and 11, the ever CIN and ever CPP figures will be undercounted.)

London had a below average proportion of pupils with an EHCP in AP schools, and an above average proportion in mainstream schools.

Pupils by school type and year group

Figure A1 (overleaf) shows the pupil population by year group for special and AP schools compared with mainstream schools.

Special schools have a higher proportion of pupils in year groups 7-11 than 1-6. The biggest increase is between Year 6 and Year 7, reflecting the transition point from primary to secondary school. This pattern is broadly the same in London as nationally.

The vast majority of pupils in AP schools are in Years 10 and 11: 64% of AP pupils nationally and 70% in London belong to one of these two year groups. 39% of pupils nationally and 40% in London are in Year 11, the highest proportion of any year group.

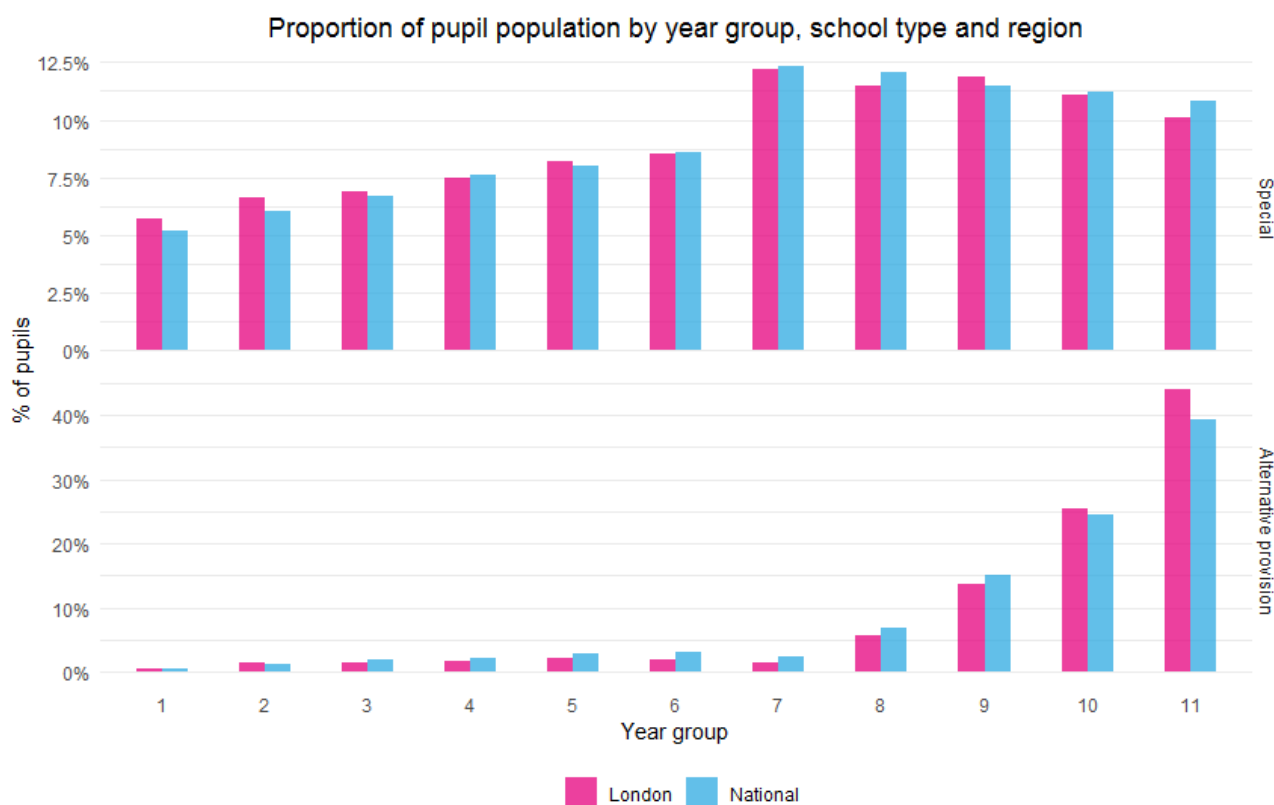


Figure A1 A chart showing the proportion of pupils attending each school type by year group. London percentages are compared with national.

Results

Metrics

We summarise pupil absence in two ways:

1. **Absence, % sessions missed:** the percentage of possible sessions recorded as absences. Sessions missed for Covid-related reasons are included as absences and as possible sessions (NB: this is in contrast to the [DfE definition](#) which does not treat these as absences).
2. **Persistent absence, % of pupils persistently absent:** the percentage of pupils who were absent for at least 10% of possible sessions. Sessions missed for Covid-related reasons are not included as absences but are included as possible sessions. This is in line with the DfE definition.

There are some circumstances in which an absence we might think of as being “Covid-related” is not recorded as such. In particular, [DfE guidance](#) asks schools to record absences for pupils with a positive Covid test as sickness rather than as “Covid-related”. Results should be interpreted with this caveat in mind.

Overall levels of absence in Autumn 2020

Table A3 (overleaf) shows much higher absence levels in AP than special schools. Nationally, pupils missed 39.2% of sessions in AP schools compared with 19.8% in special schools, while 68.5% of pupils in AP schools were persistently absent compared with 29.0% in special schools.

Pupils in special schools in London missed a greater percentage of sessions and were more likely to have been persistently absent than nationally (20.4% of sessions missed in London vs 19.8% nationally, and 30.5% of pupils persistently absent vs 29.0% nationally). The opposite was true for AP

schools, with pupils in London missing fewer sessions and less likely to have been persistently absent (34.8% of sessions missed in London vs 39.2% nationally, and 61.6% of pupils persistently absent vs 68.5% nationally).

Table A3 Percentage of sessions missed and percentage of pupils who were persistently absent by school region and type, Autumn 2020/21. Sessions missed includes those missed for Covid-related reasons. Pupils are classed as persistently absent if they missed 10% or more of sessions for non-Covid-related reasons. Years 1 – 11, special and AP schools, any enrolment status. Pupil numbers are rounded to the nearest 10.

	Pupils		% sessions missed		% pupils persistently absent (@10%)	
	Special	AP	Special	AP	Special	AP
Yorkshire & Humber	9,400	2,440	22.7%	36.2%	29.0%	59.4%
West Midlands	14,740	2,180	20.5%	40.4%	27.8%	68.6%
East Midlands	8,770	1,290	20.4%	34.0%	27.7%	57.4%
London	15,470	2,810	20.4%	34.8%	30.5%	61.6%
North West	16,590	3,750	20.2%	44.7%	28.6%	76.4%
North East	7,230	1,310	20.0%	39.3%	24.5%	71.2%
South East	19,380	2,530	19.1%	41.3%	29.5%	72.0%
East of England	11,370	1,980	17.5%	41.5%	31.4%	75.8%
South West	9,500	2,260	17.1%	34.7%	29.8%	68.1%
Total	112,430	20,540	19.8%	39.2%	29.0%	68.5%

Within London, absence varied as follows:

- % sessions missed, special: Redbridge, 30.8% (among 490 pupils) to Kensington & Chelsea, 7.9% (among 40 pupils)
- % pupils persistently absent, special: Newham, 45.4% (of 150 pupils) to Kensington & Chelsea, 15.3% (of 40 pupils)

Research question 1: how did absence vary by year group?

Table A1 Percentage of sessions missed and percentage of pupils who were persistently absent by national curriculum year group and school region and type, Autumn 2020/21. Sessions missed includes those missed for Covid-related reasons. Pupils are classed as persistently absent if they missed 10% or more of sessions for non-Covid-related reasons. Years 1 – 11, special and AP schools, any enrolment status. Pupil numbers are rounded to the nearest 10. Figures are suppressed (“supp”) where they concern fewer than 10 pupils.

School type	Year group	Pupils		% sessions missed		% pupils persistently absent (@10%)	
		National	London	National	London	National	London
Special	1	5,850	880	19.7%	22.0%	30.4%	32.9%
	2	6,690	1,020	18.9%	19.8%	26.3%	28.0%
	3	7,580	1,070	17.6%	18.9%	24.7%	27.9%
	4	8,540	1,160	18.1%	18.7%	25.1%	24.9%
	5	9,040	1,270	18.2%	18.5%	25.7%	28.3%
	6	9,630	1,310	18.4%	18.4%	26.2%	29.5%
	7	13,870	1,880	18.1%	20.3%	25.9%	30.2%
	8	13,560	1,780	19.7%	21.0%	28.8%	30.5%
	9	12,980	1,840	20.6%	21.0%	30.8%	31.4%
	10	12,610	1,710	22.5%	22.5%	34.4%	35.2%
	11	12,100	1,560	23.4%	22.0%	36.1%	33.1%
Special total		112,430	15,470	19.8%	20.4%	29.0%	30.5%
AP	1	110	20	19.5%	17.1%	33.3%	supp
	2	240	40	18.4%	19.7%	29.5%	supp
	3	390	40	19.4%	15.2%	37.1%	26.2%
	4	450	50	19.7%	15.6%	34.9%	25.5%
	5	580	60	22.6%	20.7%	40.4%	37.1%
	6	650	60	23.3%	20.1%	40.1%	31.6%
	7	520	50	29.2%	25.7%	55.3%	46.7%
	8	1,430	160	35.4%	36.2%	61.8%	55.8%
	9	3,090	390	38.9%	34.3%	70.6%	64.9%
	10	5,020	720	42.3%	38.3%	75.3%	69.7%
	11	8,060	1,240	43.1%	35.8%	74.8%	63.9%
AP total		20,540	2,810	39.2%	34.8%	68.5%	61.6%

Table A4 shows absence was generally higher in secondary Years 7-11 than primary Years 1-6 in special and AP schools.

Among pupils in primary year groups in special schools, sessions missed and persistent absence were highest in Year 1, both nationally and in London. Among pupils in secondary year groups, sessions missed and persistent absence were highest in Year 11 nationally, and in Year 10 in London.

In AP schools, sessions missed and persistent absence among pupils in primary year groups tended to be highest in Years 5 and 6 (remembering that the number of pupils in these year groups is very small). Among pupils in secondary year groups, sessions missed and persistent absence were highest in Years 10 and 11.

Overall, pupils in younger year groups in AP schools tended to have missed similar percentages of sessions as pupils in the same year groups in special schools, but had higher rates of persistent absence. Older year groups tended to miss a much higher percentage of sessions and have much higher rates of persistent absence in AP schools compared with special.

Research question 2: how did absence vary by pupil group?

Table A5 Percentage of sessions missed and percentage of pupils who were persistently absent by vulnerable group and school region and type, Autumn 2020/21. Sessions missed includes those missed for Covid-related reasons. Pupils are classed as persistently absent if they missed 10% or more of sessions for non-Covid-related reasons. Years 1 – 11, special and AP schools, any enrolment status. Pupil numbers are rounded to the nearest 10. Figures are suppressed (“supp”) where they concern fewer than 10 pupils.

		Pupils		% sessions missed		% pupils persistently absent (@10%)	
		National	London	National	London	National	London
Special	All pupils	112,430	15,470	19.8%	20.4%	29.0%	30.5%
	fsm6	57,620	8,520	21.7%	21.6%	33.9%	34.9%
	not fsm6	54,820	6,950	17.7%	19.0%	23.9%	25.1%
	SEN E	111,410	15,320	19.7%	20.4%	28.8%	30.3%
	SEN K + N	1,020	160	32.6%	23.7%	54.2%	42.9%
	ever CIN	49,970	7,290	21.8%	22.2%	32.8%	34.4%
	ever CPP	8,860	1,040	23.4%	24.6%	37.5%	40.4%
	never CIN	62,460	8,180	18.2%	18.8%	26.0%	26.9%
AP	All pupils	20,540	2,810	39.2%	34.8%	68.5%	61.6%
	fsm6	13,850	1,910	40.6%	36.5%	70.7%	65.3%
	not fsm6	6,690	900	36.0%	30.8%	63.8%	53.9%
	SEN E	4,230	470	33.1%	28.2%	57.9%	54.9%
	SEN K	10,820	1,560	41.3%	38.0%	71.2%	67.3%
	SEN N	5,490	780	39.8%	31.4%	71.3%	54.2%
	ever CIN	10,860	1,460	41.4%	38.5%	71.6%	67.1%
	ever CPP	3,610	460	43.5%	42.7%	73.1%	72.0%
	never CIN	9,680	1,350	36.4%	30.3%	64.9%	55.7%

Table A5 summarises absence by pupil group.

In special and AP schools, FSM6 pupils, ever CIN and ever CPP pupils missed more sessions and were more likely to have been persistently absent than peers in the relevant comparison group. Ever CPP pupils had the highest absence rates of these groups: nationally, ever CPP pupils in special schools missed 23.4% of sessions with 37.5% persistently absent, and in AP schools missed 43.5% of sessions with 73.1% persistently absent).

In AP schools nationally, SEN pupils with an EHCP missed fewer sessions and were less likely to have been persistently absent than those receiving other SEN support or those with no identified SEN. In London AP schools, pupils with an EHCP missed fewer sessions, but were just as likely to be persistently absent compared with pupils with no identified SEN.

Research question 3: how did absence vary by ethnicity?

Table A6 Percentage of sessions missed and percentage of pupils who were persistently absent by ethnicity and school region and type, Autumn 2020/21. Sessions missed includes those missed for Covid-related reasons. Pupils are classed as persistently absent if they missed 10% or more of sessions for non-Covid-related reasons. Years 1 – 11, special and AP schools, any enrolment status. Pupil numbers are rounded to the nearest 10. Figures are suppressed (“supp”) where they concern fewer than 10 pupils.

	Ethnicity	Pupils		% sessions missed		% pupils persistently absent (@10%)	
		National	London	National	London	National	London
Special	All pupils	112,430	15,470	19.8%	20.4%	29.0%	30.5%
	Traveller of Irish heritage	120	20	37.3%	40.1%	53.2%	supp
	Gypsy/Roma	410	50	32.8%	36.3%	49.1%	supp
	Pakistani	4,850	660	26.5%	25.4%	35.3%	32.7%
	White - Irish	270	70	25.9%	28.2%	42.9%	57.5%
	Bangladeshi	1,920	780	23.5%	24.1%	35.5%	37.8%
	Information not yet obtained	1,250	170	22.2%	23.3%	35.8%	37.1%
	Any other ethnic group	1,970	870	21.5%	21.0%	31.6%	31.5%
	Any other Asian background	2,110	740	21.4%	22.6%	30.1%	32.5%
	White and Black Caribbean	2,180	550	21.1%	20.6%	33.1%	32.6%
	Any other mixed	2,780	820	20.7%	21.1%	30.0%	32.8%
	Refused	650	160	20.6%	20.9%	30.0%	30.2%
	Indian	2,100	630	20.2%	20.7%	27.6%	28.3%
	Black - Caribbean	1,410	850	19.9%	18.6%	30.4%	30.2%
	White and Asian	1,320	230	19.6%	21.3%	30.3%	29.5%
	Chinese	360	90	19.5%	19.3%	24.2%	23.5%
	Any other white background	4,710	1,350	19.3%	20.1%	29.0%	28.6%
	White - British	76,640	4,020	19.1%	20.4%	28.3%	31.0%
	White and Black African	1,080	260	19.0%	18.4%	28.4%	29.3%
	Any other black background	1,200	520	18.6%	18.6%	28.1%	29.3%
	Black - African	5,120	2,650	17.9%	17.4%	23.6%	25.4%
AP	All pupils	20,540	2,810	39.2%	34.8%	68.5%	61.6%
	Traveller of Irish heritage	40	supp	60.7%	supp	supp	supp
	Gypsy/Roma	200	supp	49.7%	supp	supp	supp
	Refused	110	20	45.3%	41.6%	72.8%	supp
	Information not yet obtained	600	70	44.3%	29.3%	69.5%	47.9%
	White - Irish	60	20	41.2%	41.2%	70.5%	supp
	White and Asian	210	20	39.9%	37.5%	71.2%	supp
	White - British	15,290	1,010	39.6%	39.6%	69.7%	69.5%
	Bangladeshi	160	110	39.1%	42.0%	56.4%	58.2%
	Pakistani	360	50	39.0%	27.1%	66.5%	58.0%
	White and Black Caribbean	730	190	38.9%	36.8%	69.8%	68.9%
	Any other white background	610	220	37.1%	30.1%	63.2%	52.1%
	White and Black African	200	40	36.3%	29.5%	68.3%	58.5%
	Any other Asian background	120	60	35.3%	32.2%	60.0%	50.0%
	Any other mixed	540	210	35.1%	32.6%	64.3%	58.3%
	Any other ethnic group	240	140	34.3%	34.6%	57.2%	59.2%
	Black - Caribbean	470	280	31.4%	27.1%	57.4%	54.0%
	Indian	60	30	31.2%	23.1%	56.7%	44.0%
	Any other black background	160	90	30.0%	26.4%	54.9%	49.4%
	Black - African	370	230	29.8%	28.9%	55.4%	55.0%

Table A6 summarises absence by ethnicity.

In special and AP schools nationally, Travellers of Irish heritage missed the most sessions (37.3% of sessions for pupils in special schools and 60.7% in AP schools) and Black African pupils the fewest (17.9% in special schools and 29.8% in AP schools).

Gypsy/Roma and White Irish pupils also had high rates of absence in special and AP schools, both nationally and in London. Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils had high rates of absence in special schools, nationally and in London. In AP schools they missed a similar percentage of sessions to the AP population as a whole nationally.