

ANALYSIS OF SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AT PRIMARY AND POST PRIMARY SCHOOLS FOR 2003/2004 SCHOOL YEAR

Summary of findings

- High response (83% - Primary; 71% - Post Primary)
- Attendance is lower at Post Primary than at Primary. At Primary, every student misses 11 days on average out of 183. At Post Primary, every student misses 15 days out of 167.
- 1 in ten students is absent for 20 days or more at Primary. Almost 1 in 5 students is absent for 20 days or more at Post Primary. These rates are similar to those in England.
- Attendance is lower in more disadvantaged areas. In the RAPID city areas, every Post Primary student is absent for 20 days on average. 1 in 4 Post Primary students misses 20 days or more. In areas outside of RAPID, every Post Primary student is absent for 14 days and almost 1 in 5 miss 20 days or more.

In RAPID city areas, every primary student is absent for 17 days on average. Almost 1 in 4 misses 20 days or more. In other areas, the average absence is 10 days and 1 in 10 miss 20 days or more.

- Average attendance in the most disadvantaged Post Primary schools is 86.1% (or 23 days absence) and 94.6% (9 days absence) at the least disadvantaged schools, a difference of 8.5%. This difference is also evident in relation to the number of children who miss 20 days or more, 38% of students in the most disadvantaged schools and 8.5% in the least disadvantaged areas, a difference of 29.9%.
- Children from disadvantaged backgrounds attending rural Primary schools attend school more regularly than children attending urban schools with similar levels of disadvantage. Average attendance in the least disadvantaged schools in urban areas is at nearly 95% (9 days absence) compared to 89.6% (19 days absence) in the most disadvantaged schools – a difference of over 5%. In rural areas, however, the attendance levels at the least and most disadvantaged schools stand at 95.3% and 94.3% respectively – a difference of less than 1%. The urban/rural difference is even more pronounced in relation to the percentage of students absent for 20 days or more. In urban areas, the difference between the least and most disadvantaged schools is 21.4%, while in rural areas; the difference is just 5%.

- Attendance levels at Post Primary vary by sector where Secondary schools have the highest levels at 92.5%, followed by Community and Comprehensive schools at 90.9% and Vocational schools 89.8%. This trend is also evident in the numbers of students who miss 20 days or more.
- The study concludes that there is a strong relationship between the levels of disadvantage and both the level of attendance and the number of children who miss 20 days or more. Schools with larger numbers of children from disadvantaged backgrounds tend to have greater problems with attendance.
- The study confirms the findings of other research that attendance rates influence school retention rates and average performance in the Junior Certificate.
- All schools have a code of behavior that is available to parents.
- Student expulsions are rare.

**This summary is based upon a report prepared by the
Education Research Centre, Dublin for the National Educational
Welfare Board.**