

Appendix 1a

Absence

Year	Overall Absence (%)		Persistent Absence (%)	
	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary
2006/07	5.22	8.19	1.7	6.8
2007/08	5.32	7.69	1.7	6.0
2008/09	5.34	7.63	1.8	5.5
2009/10	5.28	7.53	1.7	5.4

Source: DfE (formerly DCSF) Annual Statistical First Release

Overall Absence

- National comparisons are not yet available from DfE for the year 2009/10, so the last full year comparisons are for 2008/09.
- The national average for the rate of overall absence in secondary schools in 2008-09 was 7.21%. Kent's secondary schools ranked 10th out of the 11 statistical neighbours for overall absence in secondary schools in 2008/09. However between 2007/08 and 2008/09 Kent secondary schools' overall absence improved by a greater amount than 5 of the 10 statistical neighbours with whom a comparison can be made (Bedford is a new LA). This greater rate of improvement than all but 4 statistical neighbours can also be seen when tracked over the 4 year period from 2005/06 to 2008/09.
- The national average for the rate of overall absence in primary schools in 2008-09 was 5.30%. Kent's primary schools ranked 10th out of the 11 statistical neighbours for overall absence in primary schools. Although the trend of absence in primary schools has been rising in Kent and nationally, the rise from 2007/08 to 2008/09 in Kent was less than that measured in 6 of the 10 statistical neighbours with whom a comparison can be made, and less than the national rise.

Persistent Absence

- Persistent absence refers to absence of 20% or more over a school year, whether authorised by the Headteacher or unauthorised. This therefore includes absence for medical reasons and for holidays taken in term time, as well as for absence which is not authorised by a school.
- The DCSF agreed Kent's targets for 2008/09 of 6% persistent absence in secondary schools and for 2009/10 of 5.5% persistent absence in secondary schools. Kent achieved the target of 5.5% in 2008/09, a year early. Primary persistent absence has never had a National Indicator set by DfE (DCSF), although the benchmark for 2009/10 was 2.5%.
- Attendance Leaders, District Managers and Education Welfare Officers in the Attendance and Behaviour Service act on behalf of the LA to fulfil the statutory

responsibility of ensuring regular attendance of pupils. They work closely with pupils, families, schools, services and agencies. This includes direct involvement with families as well as support to schools with their policies and procedures. It is worth noting that in this work in Kent, as the largest LA in both the South East and amongst comparator 'statistical neighbour' authorities, size does matter.

- In order to improve persistent absence in secondary schools by 0.01% Kent EWOs must influence the often entrenched behaviour of 78 pupils and their families. In Hampshire the number is 70, and in all other LAs significantly lower – Surrey (53), W Sussex (40), Oxfordshire (30), E Sussex (27).
- Among Kent's 11 statistical neighbours only Essex, Northamptonshire and Swindon have improved their PA figures by a greater amount than Kent over the period 2005/06 to 2008/09.