



**Seirbhís Tacaíochta
Oideachais Tusla**

Tusla Education Support Service

**School Attendance Data
Primary and Post-Primary Schools
And
Student Absence Reports
Primary and Post-Primary Schools**

2022-2023

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1 Introduction

This report is the 16th publication of school attendance data in state-aided schools for the 2022/23 school year. The data in this report covers 20 years (2003–23). In line with the Education (Welfare) Act ,2000, all primary schools, including special schools, and post-primary schools must report annually on student non-attendance in primary and post-primary schools at an aggregated level. This data is collected using the Tusla Portal hosted by the Child and Family Agency, schools make two returns to Tusla; (i)the school Annual Attendance Report (AAR) and (ii) the School Absence Report (SAR).

Data from these two reports and for each school are extracted and combined into this national synthesis report. The Annual Attendance Report (AAR), which provides four pieces of data:

1. total days lost by all students,
2. total students absent for 20 or more days,
3. total students suspended and
4. total students expelled at the school level.

The School Absence Reports (SAR) includes information at a pupil level on the specific absences throughout the year and the recorded reason(s) for absence.

These reports provide data on those students aged over six and under 16 who were absent for a cumulative total of 20 or more days and include the reason for their absence. The SAR was first published for the 2017/18 school year.

This report is organised into three sections. Section 1 provides an introduction and executive summary of the main findings for primary and post-primary schools. Section 2 shows the result of the AAR, while section 3 shows the results of the SAR.

1.1 Executive Summary

Overall high levels of absences (number of days lost) and prolonged absences (20-plus days absent) remain within both primary and post-primary schools in 2022/23. The previous publication of the Annual Attendance Report and Student Absence Report covered the three school years, 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22 that were heavily impacted by the pandemic school closures and public health advice. While data from these years is presented in tables in this report alongside the data from the 2022/23 school year the report will not comment on comparisons between 2022/23 data and more recent years given the unprecedented circumstances schools operated in from March 2020 up to the end of the 2021/22 school year. Absences peaked in 2021/22 during the pandemic compared with previous periods. Suspensions and expulsions are increasing in 2022/23, returning to prepandemic levels.

Suspensions and expulsions were subdued during the pandemic years due to school closures and high levels of absenteeism.

1.1.1 Response

This report provides data from the single school year of 2022/23. The previous report presented data for the three school years of 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22. School attendance was heavily affected during the COVID-19 years in response to public health advice with school closures. The 2022/23 school year saw a return of schools to normal timetables. However, there are lower response rates from schools compared to pre-pandemic.

The numbers and percentages of schools responding to the AAR are presented below for 2018/19 through 2022/23 (Table 1.1). The response rate for primary schools for the 2022/23 school year was in line with the previous school year (~78%). The response rate for post-primary schools showed a marked improvement from 64.7% in 2021/22 to 71.4% in the 2022/23 school year. However, this remains below the response rate for primary schools, especially in light of the total number of schools operating across both levels. SAR submission rates, for both primary and post-primary schools, continue to surpass the response rate of AAR. .

Table 1.1 Response rates from primary and post-primary schools for the Annual Attendance Reports, 2018–22

School level	Measure	2018/19		2019/20		2020/21		2021/22		2022/23	
		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Primary	Total schools	3,230		3,230		3,231		3,230		3,221	
	- Responded	2,892	89.5	2,079	64.4	2,053	63.5	2,502	77.5	2,512	78.0
Post-primary	Total schools	717		723		730		728		727	
	- Responded	596	83.1	436	60.3	334	45.8	471	64.7	519	71.4

1.1.2 School Days Lost

A headline measure of absence is the total number of school days lost. Total school days are calculated by multiplying the total number of students in schools that responded by the total academic days in the school year. School days lost are represented as a percentage of the total school days.

The number of lost days has shown some improvement since the pandemic period, particularly in primary schools, but remains well above the pre-pandemic years.

For the 2022/23 school year, primary schools lost 6.86 million days (8.6%) out of a potential 79.8 million school days available. The number of days lost was lower than the previous year which had 8.7 million days lost (11.1%). The days lost in 2022/23 remain 2.7 percentage points above the 18-year average of 5.9% from 2003/04 to 2020/21.

For post-primary schools, 5.56 million days were lost (11.4%) out of 48.9 million school days available. The 2022/23 days lost is 3.5 percentage points above the 18-year average of 7.9% from 2003/04 to 2020/21.

1.1.3 Students 20-Plus Days Absences

Primary students' 20 or more absent days have significantly reduced in 2022/23 compared to post-primary, but both remain considerably above the long-term average.

For 2022/23, there were 110,151 primary students with 20 or more absent days. These students represent 25.1% of the 438,740 students in responding primary schools. This is more than double the expected 18-year average of 11.0%.

Post-primary had 65,883 students with 20 or more absent days out of the 295,005 students in responding post-primary schools. These students account for 22.3% in 2022/23, And the current rate remains 6.7 percentage points above the 18-year average of 15.6%.

1.1.4 Students Suspended

For primary schools, 1,135 students were suspended in 2022/23. The level of suspensions remains 117 students below the 15-year average of 1,252 primary students. The incomplete response rate (78.0%) from all primary schools may obscure the true number of suspensions, but the percentage of expelled students (0.26%) from the total of students in responding schools is slightly above the approximate rate for the 15-year average (0.25%). The margin of error based on a 95% confidence level is approximately $\pm 0.06\%$. Based on the sample returns, the number of suspensions is estimated between 1,056 and 1,214 (0.20% – 0.34%), across all schools.

A different pattern is present for post-primary students. Suspensions rose to 12,060 in 2022/23. This level of suspensions is still below the 15-year average of 13,732 and below the 15-year average percentage of 4.4%, at 4.1%. The 15-year average is used as a baseline as suspensions were only first reported in 2004/05.

1.1.5. Students Expelled

Similar to student suspensions, expulsions rose again but continued to be under the 16-year average count, which has been recorded since 2003/04. However, expulsion counts have returned to previous records in post-primary schools, reflected in the rate of students in responding schools similar to the 15-year average rate.

Just ten students were expelled from primary schools in 2022/23, While below the 15-year average of 16 students, the trend of expulsions has been upward since the first ten expulsions recorded in 2003/04 to the 28 before the pandemic. The rate of expulsion is 0.002% for primary students who were expelled in 2022/23, below the approximate 15-year average of 0.004%.

In post-primary schools, there were 134 expulsions in 2022/23. The 134 expulsions are only nine students below the 16-year average of 143 post-primary expulsions. The rate of 0.045% of post-primary students is just below the 16-year average of 0.051%

1.1.6 Breakdown by DEIS Status

An additional 322 schools, 284 primary and 38 post-primary, were included in the DEIS programme in 2022/23. The growth of DEIS did not change the pattern of higher metrics of absenteeism and suspensions being recorded in DEIS schools, for both primary and post-primary schools.

The percentage of total days lost in DEIS Urban Band 1 (UB1) primary schools is higher than all other DEIS status schools, standing at 11.9% in 2022/23, a decrease from 2021/22 at 15.1% but still above the 16-year average of 8.5% since DEIS was introduced in 2005. DEIS Urban Band 2 (UB2) is the second highest at 10.5%, followed by DEIS Rural at 8.9%. All DEIS schools are above the national average of 8.6% for 2022/23. At the post-primary level, days lost in DEIS was 13.9% for 2022/23, remaining above non-DEIS post-primary schools by 3.5 percentage points at 10.5%.

Primary DEIS schools have traditionally experienced higher rates of students absent for 20 or more days. In 2022/23, the rate of 20-plus day absences in DEIS UB1 stood at 42.9%, UB2 at 33.5%, and 28.2% for DEIS Rural, all higher than 25.1% for all primary schools.

In post-primary DEIS schools, the 20-plus day absence rate stood at 30.7% in 2022/23, compared to 19.5% for non-DEIS post-primary schools.

1.1.7 School Absence Reports

From the SAR data submitted, there were 97,441 students in primary schools with 20-plus absence days or 19.2% of all pupils from responding schools in 2022/23., 20-plus days remain above the four-year average of 7.9% excluding the peak year of 2021/22 during the pandemic years.

In post-primary schools, 49,238 students or 13.9% of the total pupils from responding pupils recorded 20-plus day absences in 2022/23. The 2022/23 rate was above the four-year average of 7.0%.

The SAR report has six categories of absences:

- | | |
|------------|----------------|
| 1. Illness | 4. Suspended |
| 2. Urgent | 5. Other |
| 3. Holiday | 6. Unexplained |

In 2022/23, the category of "illness" accounted for the highest number of absences in primary schools, representing 43.0% of days lost.

In post-primary schools, "unexplained" accounted for 52.7% of all absences in 2022/23, maintaining the same pattern of main reason since 2017/18. The absent reason of illness was recorded for 27.8% out of all absences in 2022/23, decreasing by only 0.4 percentage points from 28.2% in 2021/22.

2 School Non-Attendance

2.1 Response

The response rates of non-attendance from state-aided schools and the associated represented students for the last four years are shown in Table 2.1. The response rate has yet to return to pre-pandemic levels where response rates over 95% were regularly achieved at both primary and post-primary levels.

Figure 2.1 The percentage of schools that did respond was in line with the total student population. Therefore while the absolute numbers of absenteeism measures may be higher across the entire population, relative measures from the sample of schools that did respond will provide a representative measure of absenteeism.

Table 2.1 Response rates from primary and post-primary schools for Annual Attendance Reports, 2019–22

School level	Measure	2019/20		2020/21		2021/22		2022/23	
		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Primary	Total schools	3,230		3,231		3,230		3,221	
	- Responded	2,079	64.4	2,053	63.5	2,502	77.5	2,512	78.0
	Total students	567,430		561,101		554,464		557,823	
	- In responding schools	383,766	67.6	359,629	64.1	429,084	77.4	438,740	78.7
Post-primary	Total schools	723		730		728		727	
	- Responded	436	60.3	334	45.8	471	64.7	519	71.4
	Total students	371,450		379,184		391,698		406,392	
	- In responding schools	220,798	59.4	180,836	47.7	257,663	65.8	295,005	72.6

Since 2009/10, response rates above 95% were recorded

Figure 2.1) for both school levels before the interruption of the pandemic. The current response rates for 2022/23 are similar to the initial introduction of AAR back in 2003/04.

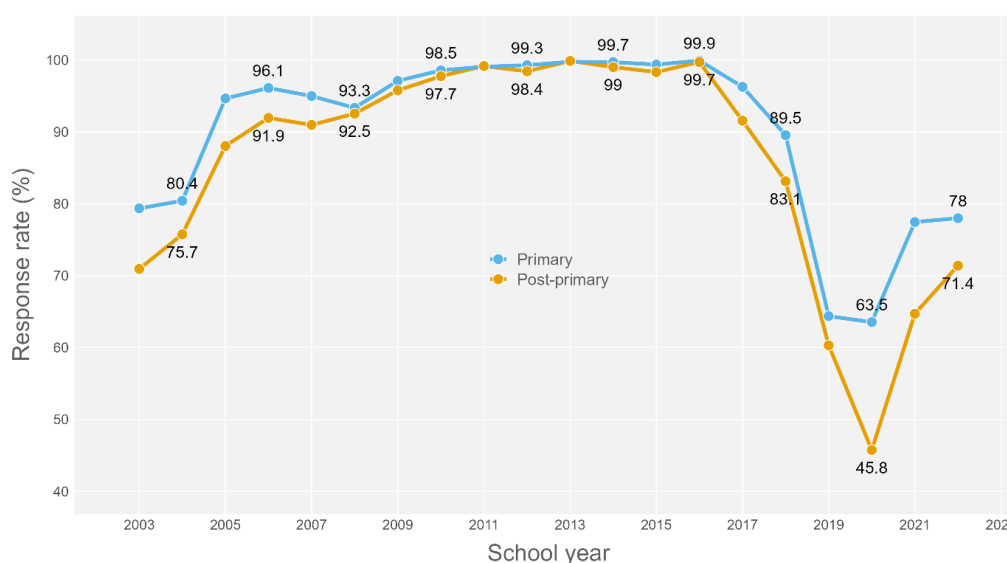


Figure 2.1 Response rates from primary and post-primary schools for Annual Attendance Reports, 2003–22

2.2 Summary Results

Schools report four measures as part of the non-attendance report. The four variables are:

1. the total number of non-attendance (days lost) through student absence in the school year,
2. the number of students who were absent for 20 days or more in the school year,
3. the total number of students who were suspended, and
4. the total number of students expelled for whom all appeal processes have been exhausted.

The results from the four measures are displayed in Table 2.2 for primary and post-primary levels for the last three years. The summary results are reported on a national level of the total represented student population, with percentages reflecting total national measures recorded based on data collected from individual schools.

Table 2.2 Summary of non-attendance measures for primary and post-primary schools, 2020–22

School level	Measure	2020/21		2021/22		2022/23	
		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Primary	Total students in responding schools	359,629		429,084		438,740	
	Total school days in a full school year	157		182		182	
	- Total school days of students	56,461,753		78,093,288		79,850,680	
	- Total days lost	3,395,506	6.0	8,689,829	11.1	6,866,145	8.6
	Students who lost 20-plus days	39,879	11.1	173,072	40.3	110,151	25.1
	Students suspended	701	0.19	979	0.23	1,135	0.26
	Students expelled	8	0.002	7	0.002	10	0.002
Post-primary	Total students in school that responded	180,836		257,663		295,005	
	Total school days in a full school year	139		166		166	
	- Total school days of students	25,136,204		42,772,058		48,970,830	
	- Total days lost	2,316,234	9.2	5,378,078	12.6	5,569,447	11.4
	Students who lost 20-plus days	21,687	12.0	69,097	26.8	65,883	22.3
	Students suspended	5,269	2.9	8,658	3.4	12,060	4.1
	Students expelled	55	0.030	85	0.033	134	0.045

2.2.1 Days Lost

The percentage of days lost is calculated based on the number of days lost divided by the total number of represented student days. Student days are calculated based on students represented from responding schools (Table 2.1) multiplied by the number of days a school is open in the school year. School closures during the pandemic reduced the total number of school days for the 2019/20 and 2020/21 school years. An additional bank holiday was introduced in spring 2022, reducing school days by one from previous non-pandemic years for 2021/22 onwards.

Days lost remain high, for both school levels, compared to the previous school years of 2003/04 to 2020/21.

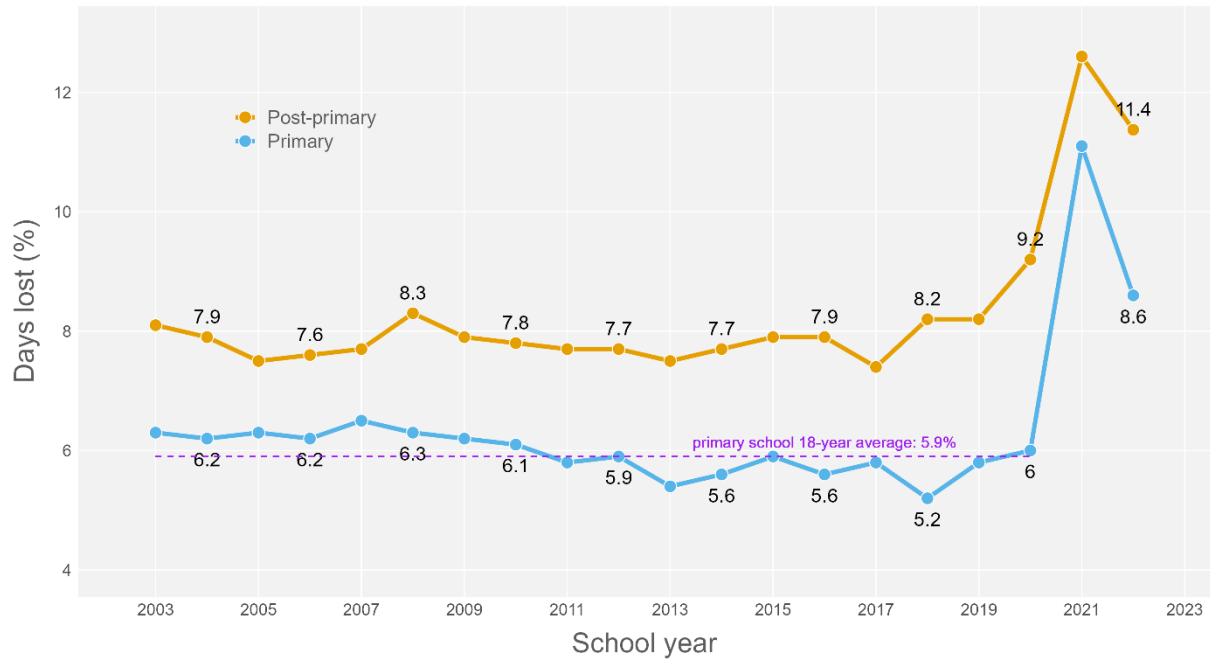


Figure 2.2). The full reopening of schools in 2021/22 after two years of reduced school days led to an increase in days lost, coinciding with a large number of COVID-19 cases in the winter of 2021/22 (Figure 4.1).

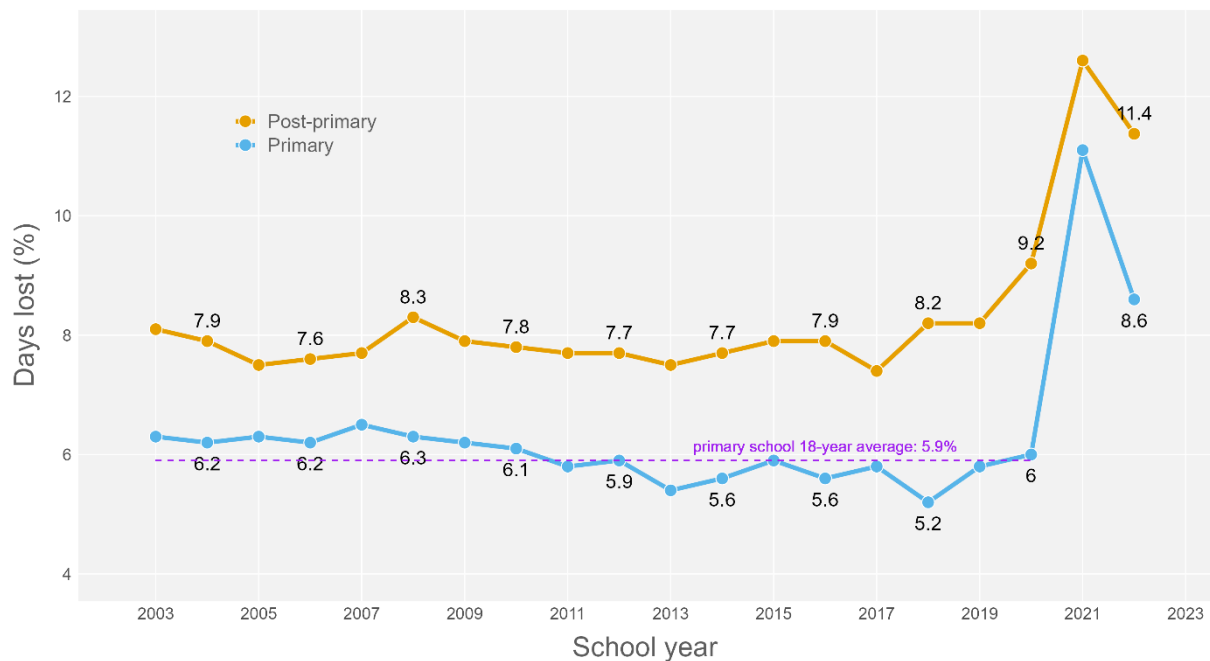


Figure 2.2 Percentage of days lost for primary and post-primary schools, 2003–22

The high percentage rates of days lost from 2021/22 have persisted for post-primary schools in 2022/23 with a 1.0 percentage point reduction from a maximum of 12.6%. For primary schools, the decrease was 2.5 percentage points from 11.1% to 8.6%. However, days lost in 2022/23 remain 2.7 percentage points above the 18-year average of 5.9% from 2003/04 to 2020/21,.

2.2.2 20-Plus Day Absences

Schools submit the number of students absent for 20 days or more (Table 2.2). The numbers are presented as a percentage of the number of represented students. The 18-average for the 2003/20 period was 11.0% and 15.6% for primary and post-primary, respectively. The percentages for both school levels in 2022/23 were the second highest recorded (Figure 2.3), with 2021/22 being the highest recorded, corresponding to the peak of Ireland's COVID-19 cases over winter in 2021/22 (Figure 4.1).

Primary schools had a significant drop in 20-plus day absences from the previous school year, from 40.3% to 25.1%, but remain considerably above the 18-year average by 14.1 percentage points. Post-primary schools, while lower than primary schools for the past two school years, had a only 4.5 percentage point reduction but only 6.7 percentage points above the 18-year average.

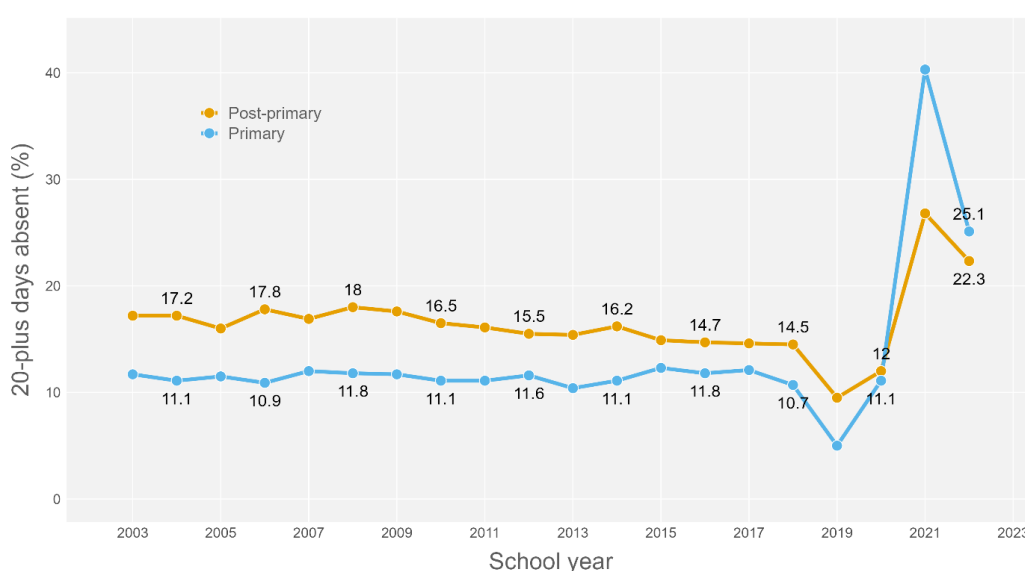


Figure 2.3 Percentage of 20-plus days absent for primary and post-primary schools, 2003–22

2.2.3 Suspensions

The reduction of physical school days in 2019/20 and 2020/21, and the high incidents of absenteeism in 2021/22 suppressed the occurrence of suspensions during the pandemic years. The suspension percentage rates show a return to expected values for both school levels in 2022/23. However, suspensions in primary schools, similar to expulsions, should be read with caution when comparing yearly trends. Percentage rates and absolute averages are very sensitive to small changes (increases or decreases) as there are very small numbers involved in this category, this number is especially small when viewed as a proportion of overall enrolments at the primary level.

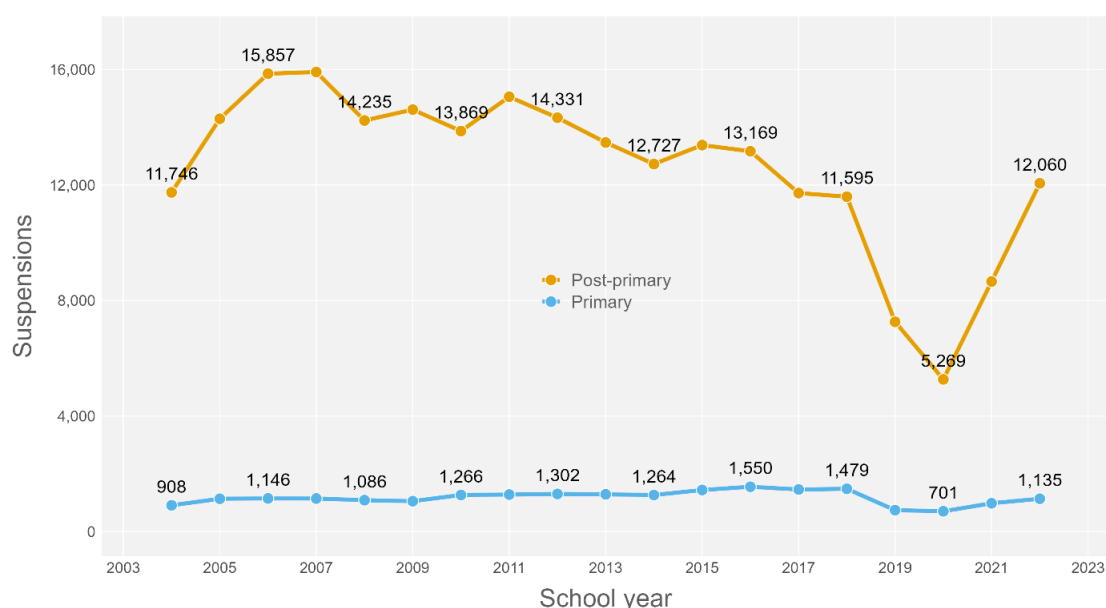


Figure 2.4 Number of student suspensions for primary and post-primary schools, 2004–22

Primary schools reported 0.26% suspensions from responding schools (Table 2.2), 0.01 percentage points above the 15-year average, excluding the pandemic years and 2003/04 when suspensions were not recorded). In absolute terms, where true suspensions may be underreported as 22.0% of schools did not respond for 2022/23.

Based on those who did respond, there were 1,135 students suspended in 2022/23. The level of suspensions remains 117 students below the 15-year average of 1,252 primary students but should be interpreted with caution. Identifying the 1,829 schools that have responded consistently from 2010/11 to 2018/19 and in 2022/23, the nine-year average would be 695 students. These core responders have 821 students suspended in 2022/23.

A different pattern is present for post-primary students. Suspensions rose to 12,060 in 2022/23. This level of suspensions was still below the 15-year average of 13,732 and the 15-year average percentage of 4.4%, at 4.1%. However, 28.6% of post-primary pupils did not submit AAR with the potential of undocumented suspensions.

2.2.4 Expulsions

The number of expulsions followed the same trend as suspensions, returning to expected values, but need to be interpreted with caution, similar to suspensions, due to incomplete response rates (Table 2.2). Expulsions remain rare among primary students with ten being recorded or 0.002% in 2022/23 . The seven-year average from 2010/11 to 2016/17, with over 98.5% response rate had an average of 26 students.

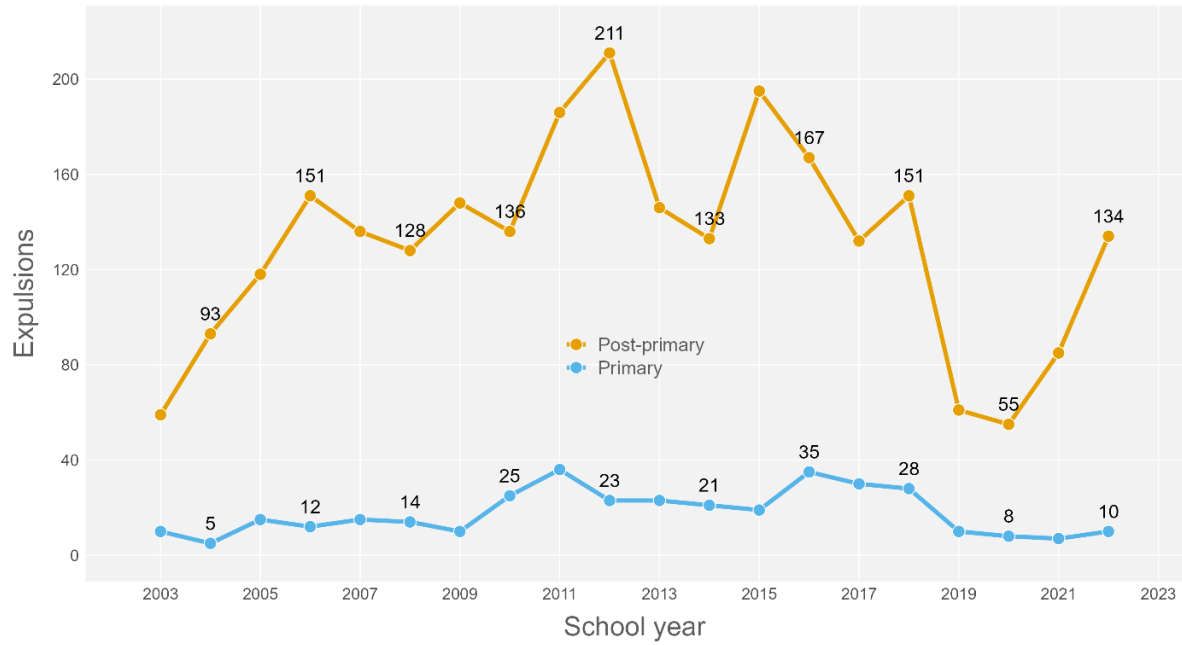


Figure 2.5 Number of student expulsions for primary and post-primary schools, 2003–22

For post-primary, 134 students were expelled in the fully opened school year. The equivalent seven-year average from 2010/11 to 2016/17, with over 97.5% response rate had an average of 168 students.

2.3 Primary Schools

The following section examines primary schools across three sub-categories: school type, DEIS status, and county. The percentages of the four main measures (days lost, 20-plus day absences, suspended and expelled) presented relate to the mean of the population of individual schools compared to the total population of represented students in section 2.2.

2.3.1 School Type

The Irish education system has three main primary school types: mainstream schools, mainstream with special classes, and dedicated special schools. As percentages, the trend of all four measures rises from mainstream schools to mainstream schools with special classes, with special education schools having the highest rates (Table 2.3).

Table 2.3 Summary of non-attendance measures for primary schools by school types, 2020–22

School type	Measure	2020/21		2021/22		2022/23	
		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Mainstream	Total schools	2,584		2,579		2,245	
	- Responded	1,657	64.1	2,012	78.0	1,782	79.4
	Students in responding schools	258,437	64.3	305,100	76.9	256,510	79.3
	- Total school days of students	40,574,609		55,528,200		46,684,820	
	- Total days lost	2,239,033	5.5	5,912,910	10.6	3,777,055	8.1
	Students who lost 20-plus days	24,614	8.6	116,365	37.0	57,001	22.8
	Students suspended	353	0.1	450	0.1	382	0.1
	Students expelled	7	0.006	3	0.001	0	0.000
Mainstream with special classes	Total schools	523		525		850	
	- Responded	327	62.5	410	78.1	655	77.1
	Students in responding schools	96,731		118,896		176,866	78.4
	- Total school days of students	15,186,767		21,639,072		32,189,612	
	- Total days lost	1,050,711	6.9	2,612,164	12.1	2,939,175	9.1
	Students who lost 20-plus days	13,674	14.3	53,770	45.3	50,720	28.7
	Students suspended	233	0.3	404	0.4	563	0.4
	Students expelled	0	0.0	2	0.001	5	0.009
Special education	Total schools	124		126		126	
	- Responded	69	55.7	80	63.5	75	59.5
	Students in responding schools	4,461		5,088		5,364	62.2
	- Total school days of students	700,377		926,016		976,248	
	- Total days lost	105,762	15.1	164,755	17.8	149,915	15.4
	Students who lost 20-plus days	1,591	34.7	2,937	56.4	2,430	44.8
	Students suspended	115	2.8	125	2.8	190	4.0
	Students expelled	1	0.012	2	0.035	5	0.100

The trend among primary school types was present in previous years, most evident in 2021/22 due to the impact of COVID-19. For 2022/23, the rates have yet to return to pre pandemic

levels. For special education schools, where the response rate was lowest at 59.5%, expulsions and suspensions increased since 2021/22.

2.3.2 DEIS Status

For 2022/23, DEIS urban and rural schools have the highest percentage rates for the two measures of days lost and 20-plus day absences (Table 2.4). Amongst non-DEIS schools, urban schools have higher rates than rural schools for the two metrics of absenteeism. The percentage of days lost for urban DEIS schools has remained consistently high for the past 18 years but was narrowing by the 2018/19 school year before the interruption of the pandemic (Figure 2.6). DEIS rural schools had attendance at higher rates than non-DEIS urban schools, with fewer days lost. For 2022/23, non-DEIS urban schools have fewer days lost compared to rural DEIS schools.

Suspensions are highest in urban schools, with DEIS Band 1 being the highest at 0.9% (438 students), non-DEIS schools at 0.6% (427 students), and DEIS Band 2 lowest at 0.3% (89 students). For rural schools, suspensions were equivalent at 0.1% for rural DEIS schools (45 students) and rural non-DEIS (136 students). Expulsions remain rare.

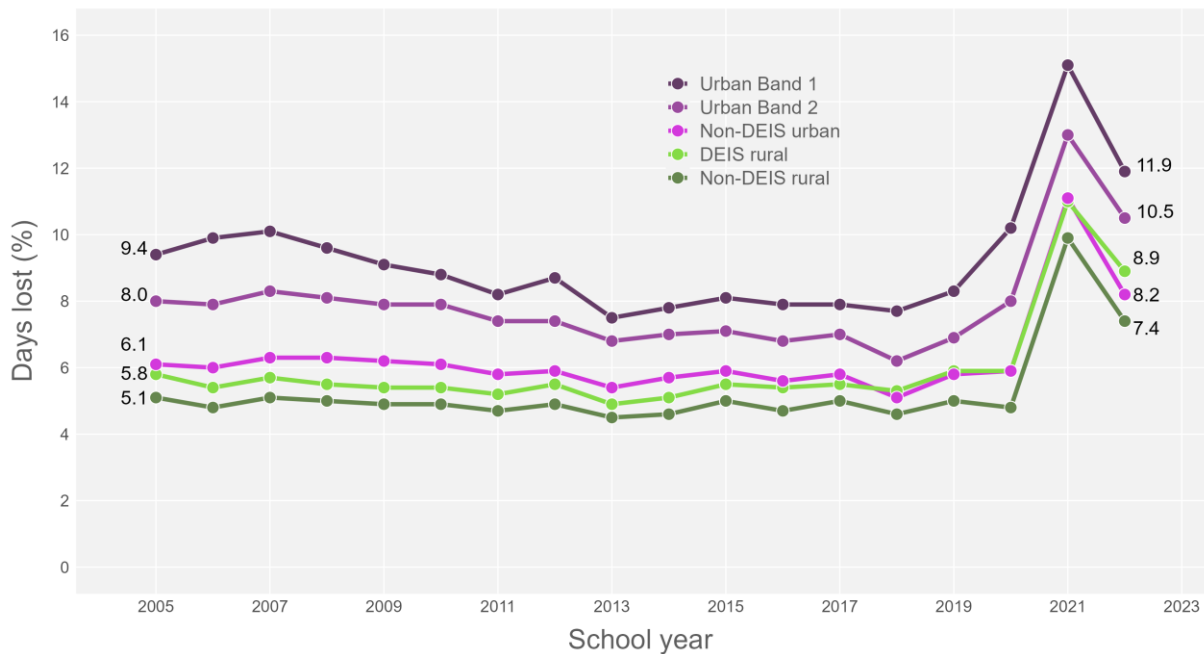


Figure 2.6 Percentage of days lost for primary schools by DEIS status, 2005–22

Table 2.4 Summary of non-attendance measures for primary schools by DEIS status, 2020–22

School type	DEIS status	Measure	2020/21		2021/22		2022/23	
			<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Urban	Band 1	Total schools	229		229		306	
		- Responded	133	58.1	159	69.4	221	72.2
		Total days lost	489,485	10.2	989,464	15.1	1,099,380	11.9
		Students who lost 20-plus days	8,060	27.2	20,617	57.6	21,511	42.9
		Students suspended	212	0.9	332	1.0	438	0.9
		Students expelled	2	0.004	2	0.004	1	0.005
	Band 2	Total schools	104		104		151	
		- Responded	62	59.6	80	76.9	120	79.5
		Total days lost	229,546	8.0	556,708	13.0	646,261	10.5
		Students who lost 20-plus days	3,328	18.9	11,753	50.7	11,633	33.5
		Students suspended	68	0.6	119	0.8	89	0.3
		Students expelled	0	0.0	1	0.018	0	0.000
	Non-DEIS	Total schools	915		914		795	
		- Responded	578	63.2	688	75.3	605	76.1
		Total days lost	1,589,524	5.9	4,004,620	11.1	2,730,589	8.2
		Students who lost 20-plus days	18,182	13.0	79,818	42.0	42,955	25.9
		Students suspended	303	0.4	393	0.5	427	0.6
		Students expelled	3	0.003	3	0.002	8	0.017
Rural	DEIS	Total schools	356		356		509	
		- Responded	230	64.6	278	78.1	407	80.0
		Total days lost	164,629	5.9	419,647	11.0	549,233	8.9
		Students who lost 20-plus days	1,757	7.9	8,097	37.4	8,797	28.2
		Students suspended	12	0.1	20	0.1	45	0.1
		Students expelled	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
	Non-DEIS	Total schools	1,627		1,627		1,460	
		- Responded	1,050	64.5	1,297	79.7	1,159	79.4
		Total days lost	922,322	4.8	2,719,390	9.9	1,840,682	7.4
		Students who lost 20-plus days	8,552	6.9	52,787	34.7	25,255	19.1
		Students suspended	106	0.1	115	0.1	136	0.1
		Students expelled	3	0.008	1	0.002	1	0.001

2.3.3 County

Table 2.5 presents the mean percentages at the county level for days lost and 20-plus day absences. More populated counties have higher rates, with Carlow top in 2022/23, followed by Galway, Kildare, and Dublin having the most days lost. Dublin returned to the highest percentage of 20-plus day absences, after Offaly in 2021/22, followed by Galway, Westmeath and Roscommon.

Table 2.5 Summary of total days lost and 20-plus day absences for primary schools by county, 2019–22

Region	Total days lost				Students who lost 20-plus days			
	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Carlow	6.7	6.1	11.5	10.7	6.3	11.2	42.3	25.0
Cavan	5.4	5.2	10.1	7.7	4.2	8.3	33.1	18.9
Clare	5.6	4.9	9.7	8.5	5.0	8.4	32.8	24.3
Cork	5.4	5.2	10.8	7.9	4.4	8.3	36.7	21.8
Donegal	5.1	6.1	10.4	8.4	3.2	10.4	36.1	23.4
Dublin	6.7	7.6	12.3	10.1	7.7	16.5	45.5	31.2
Galway	5.4	4.9	10.0	10.6	4.4	7.5	34.6	29.7
Kerry	5.8	5.6	10.8	9.0	4.9	9.0	37.0	25.4
Kildare	6.1	6.6	12.4	9.9	5.3	10.5	43.5	26.6
Kilkenny	6.1	5.0	10.2	7.4	3.8	8.1	36.8	18.5
Laois	5.7	6.9	12.1	9.3	3.8	12.3	45.2	26.1
Leitrim	5.9	5.9	10.9	8.6	5.5	8.0	36.2	22.9
Limerick	5.6	6.8	11.4	8.3	4.8	13.6	40.1	22.2
Longford	6.3	7.2	11.3	8.6	6.3	14.9	43.6	25.1
Louth	6.0	6.6	11.9	8.8	5.2	11.8	44.3	26.3
Mayo	5.9	4.8	11.2	8.4	4.4	6.3	39.7	23.3
Meath	5.5	5.5	10.6	8.5	3.8	8.9	37.4	23.2
Monaghan	4.3	4.8	9.1	7.0	2.4	6.3	28.5	15.9
Offaly	6.1	6.0	11.1	8.4	5.4	11.1	46.1	24.3
Roscommon	6.1	6.2	11.2	8.9	5.5	10.0	36.6	26.9
Sligo	5.7	5.6	9.9	8.3	4.8	8.3	34.2	22.0
Tipperary	5.4	5.0	10.1	8.4	4.2	7.8	36.0	22.3
Waterford	5.8	5.5	10.3	8.2	4.6	9.3	37.0	23.1
Westmeath	6.2	6.2	11.1	8.6	6.0	11.9	41.1	28.3
Wexford	5.9	5.9	11.4	9.1	5.5	10.8	41.5	26.0
Wicklow	5.3	5.3	11.4	8.2	3.6	8.4	42.2	23.3
State	5.8	5.9	11.0	8.9	5.0	10.4	39.0	25.0

Suspensions and expulsions are rare events at the county level. The highest suspension rates were in Dublin, Limerick, and Carlow for 2022/23. For expulsions, only six counties were affected in 2022/23: Dublin, Cork, Carlow, Cavan, Westmeath, and Wexford.

2.4 Post-Primary Schools

This section follows the same format as primary schools with three sub-categories: school type, DEIS status, and county. The percentages of the four main non-attendance measures presented relate to the mean population of individual schools.

2.4.1 School Type

At the post-primary level, there are three groupings of schools: voluntary secondary, community and comprehensive, and education and training boards (ETBs). Voluntary secondary schools in 2022/23 continue to have the lowest percentages for non-attendance measures but the highest number of students and schools (Table 2.6). Community and comprehensive schools have similar non-attendance figures to ETBs, but fewer students and schools. Suspensions and expulsions have risen across all three school types.

Table 2.6 Summary of non-attendance measures for post-primary schools by school type, 2020–22

School type	Measure	2020/21		2021/22		2022/23	
		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Voluntary secondary	Total schools	383		385		384	
	- Responded	170	44.4	249	64.7	270	70.3
	Students in responding schools	95,287	46.5	140,789	67.0	152,816	70.8
	- Total school days of students	13,244,893		23,370,974		25,367,456	
	- Total days lost	1,062,407	8.0	2,622,590	11.2	2,612,650	10.3
	Students who lost 20-plus days	9,034	10.0	33,101	24.0	29,413	19.9
	Students suspended	1,885	2.2	3,418	2.6	4,669	3.3
	Students expelled	27	0.030	27	0.027	52	0.043
Community & comprehensive	Total schools	96		96		96	
	- Responded	55	57.3	66	68.8	69	71.9
	Students in responding schools	34,208	55.2	41,850	66.2	47,573	73.0
	- Total school days of students	4,754,912		6,947,100		7,897,118	
	- Total days lost	494,299	10.4	987,077	14.2	1,041,124	13.2
	Students who lost 20-plus days	5,168	15.8	12,280	31.1	11,886	26.7
	Students suspended	1,327	3.7	1,973	4.7	2,641	5.9
	Students expelled	8	0.018	17	0.049	20	0.047
Education and training boards	Total schools	251		247		247	
	- Responded	109	43.4	156	63.2	180	72.9
	Students in responding schools	51,341	45.7	75,024	63.4	94,616	75.5
	- Total school days of students	7,136,399		12,453,984		15,706,256	
	- Total days lost	759,528	10.6	1,768,411	14.2	1,915,673	12.2
	Students who lost 20-plus days	7,485	17.0	23,716	33.2	24,584	27.0
	Students suspended	2,057	4.3	3,267	4.9	4,750	5.2
	Students expelled	20	0.042	41	0.055	62	0.070

2.4.2 DEIS Status

schools with DEIS status at the post-primary level have the highest mean percentages of all four non-attendance measures (Table 2.7). While non-DEIS status post-primary schools have more absolute counts of days lost, 20-plus day absences and suspensions, this is disproportionately higher in DEIS schools.

Table 2.7 Summary of non-attendance measures for post-primary schools by DEIS status, 2020–22

DEIS status	Measure	2020/21		2021/22		2022/23	
		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
DEIS	Total schools	198		197		235	
	- Responded	88	44.4	136	69.0	171	72.8
	Students in responding schools	36,941	47.5	56,747	70.0	77,156	74.4
	- Total school days of students	5,134,799		9,420,002		12,807,896	
	- Total days lost	641,341	12.5	1,462,896	15.5	1,786,395	13.9
	Students who lost 20-plus days	7,681	23.1	20,663	36.8	23,665	30.7
	Students suspended	2,085	6.3	3,257	6.2	5,054	6.8
	Students expelled	20	0.060	49	0.087	81	0.113
Non-DEIS	Total schools	532		531		492	
	- Responded	246	46.2	335	63.1	348	70.7
	Students in responding schools	143,895	47.7	200,916	64.7	217,849	71.9
	- Total school days of students	20,001,405		33,352,056		36,162,934	
	- Total days lost	1,674,893	8.4	3,915,182	11.7	3,783,052	10.5
	Students who lost 20-plus days	14,006	9.7	48,434	24.5	42,228	19.5
	Students suspended	3,184	2.0	5,401	2.6	7,006	3.1
	Students expelled	35	0.022	36	0.020	53	0.023

2.4.3 County

Leitrim has been the county with the highest mean percentage of days lost in post-primary schools for the past three years; 21.7% for 2022/23, 19.5% for 2021/22, and 17.8% for 2020/21 (Table 2.8). For mean percentages of 20-plus day absences, Laois was the highest county with 39.0% in 2022/23.

For suspensions, Laois had the highest at 8.2% in 2022/23, followed by Longford (6.9%) and Clare (6.2%). For recorded expulsions, Dublin remains the highest at 39 for 2022/23, followed by Cork at 15, and Tipperary at 10. Leitrim, Mayo, Roscommon, Sligo, Kilkenny, and Longford had no expulsions for 2022/23.

Table 2.8 Summary of total days lost and 20-plus day absences for post-primary schools by county, 2019–22

Region	Total days lost				Students who lost 20-plus days			
	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Carlow	10.7	11.7	15.2	12.9	13.1	15.9	24.0	25.8
Cavan	8.0	8.2	11.9	12.4	14.4	11.0	24.6	20.1
Clare	6.5	8.5	11.5	13.0	6.4	11.2	24.0	20.6
Cork	8.0	8.5	11.4	11.4	8.3	10.8	21.4	20.9
Donegal	9.0	12.4	14.1	11.1	11.0	17.7	33.6	27.0
Dublin	8.8	10.0	13.4	11.0	11.4	14.6	28.1	22.4
Galway	8.5	10.0	12.9	12.4	11.1	14.2	30.2	23.5
Kerry	8.5	10.0	13.3	12.4	10.9	14.6	28.6	25.0
Kildare	7.6	7.0	10.7	10.3	9.4	9.0	28.5	22.2
Kilkenny	7.9	8.7	10.6	9.6	10.3	12.8	26.1	20.6
Laois	11.7	10.4	12.1	13.1	11.0	23.7	44.6	39.0
Leitrim	9.5	17.8	19.5	21.7	8.5	15.8	18.9	26.6
Limerick	8.1	7.3	14.3	11.4	9.7	9.4	33.5	22.9
Longford	10.1	16.8	15.8	16.0	10.3	26.3	32.9	33.7
Louth	5.6	9.0	9.4	11.1	5.0	10.6	24.1	22.1
Mayo	9.6	9.0	13.5	12.5	10.9	12.2	31.0	27.7
Meath	5.4	6.4	12.5	12.0	6.6	7.9	29.0	26.3
Monaghan	7.4	6.4	11.4	9.0	9.8	13.4	30.8	14.8
Offaly	8.8	7.3	11.0	14.4	11.9	4.4	22.9	22.1
Roscommon	8.4	9.6	11.2	12.9	9.4	15.0	25.8	23.2
Sligo	8.4	11.9	17.2	14.2	9.9	18.0	30.9	25.7
Tipperary	8.4	6.6	10.9	9.2	8.1	7.4	24.2	16.4
Waterford	8.3	9.4	12.8	10.7	12.2	12.0	23.9	22.3
Westmeath	9.4	9.5	14.3	14.1	10.0	17.6	35.2	25.8
Wexford	11.3	10.0	14.6	13.5	16.5	14.5	34.5	30.0
Wicklow	8.6	9.6	13.8	12.7	12.1	14.2	31.5	27.4
State	8.5	9.5	12.9	11.7	10.4	13.3	28.0	23.3

3 Student Absences

This section presents data on students' reasons for 20-plus day absences supplied by schools through their SAR. SARs are restricted to only students over 6 and below 16 years of age, making the results similar but not directly comparable to the 20-plus day absences reported in the AAR. SARs are submitted twice within a school year. The first period is September to December, and the second is January to May/June. A SAR is submitted within either of the two periods when a pupil reaches a cumulative total of 20 days absent or more. If this occurs in the first period and additional days accrue in the second period, a second SAR is submitted to account for the extra days on top of period one. The reason for the duration of absences is recorded using six measures: illness, urgent, holidays, suspensions, other and unexplained.

3.1 Submissions

The submissions of SARs for the past six years (Figure 3.1) follow the same pattern as the non-attendance measure of 20-plus day absences (Figure 2.3) from the AAR, with disruption during the pandemic and delayed return to expected levels of pre-pandemic submissions. The submission of SARs increased significantly when schools fully reopened in 2021/22. Submissions have remained high for 2022/23, for both primary and post-primary schools, following 2021/22 (Table 3.1). Primary school submissions have reduced by 43,399 since 2021/22, but remain high at 97,441. Post-primary submissions have remained elevated, compared to 2020/21, at 49,238 SARs in 2022/23, a drop of 3,844 reports.

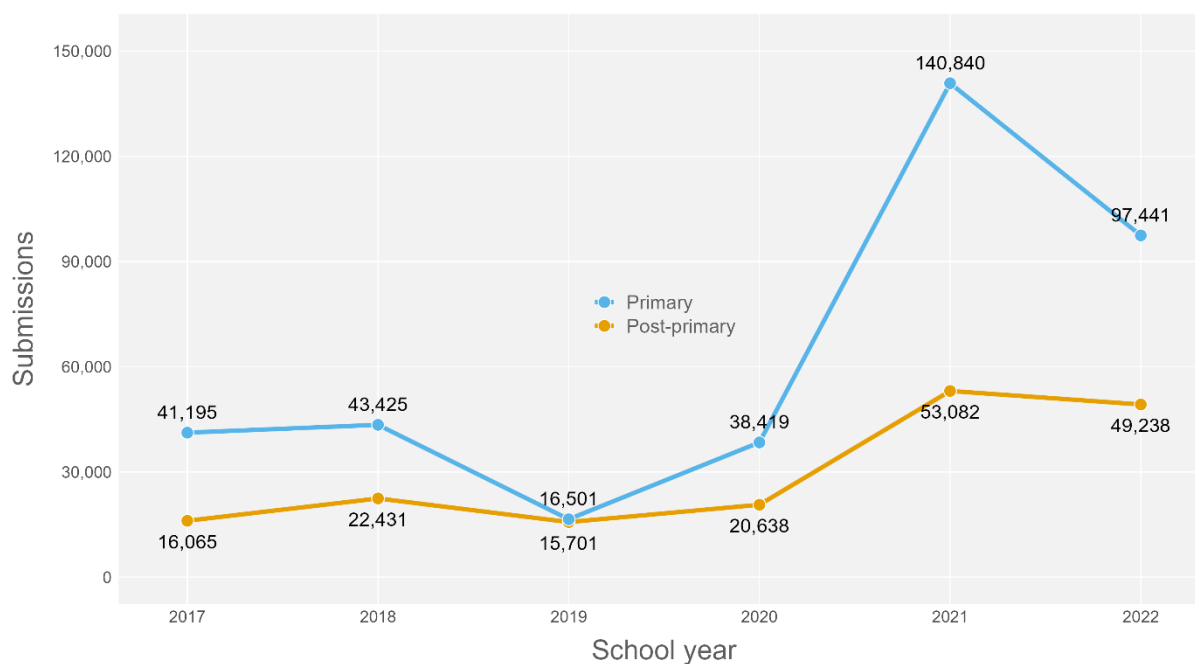


Figure 3.1 Number of submissions from primary and post-primary schools for School Absence Reports, 2017–22

Table 3.1 Submission rates from primary and post-primary schools for School Absence Reports, 2020–22

School level	Measure	2020/21		2021/22		2022/23	
		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Primary	Total schools	3,231		3,230		3,221	
	- Responded	2,312	71.6	2,749	85.1	2,846	88.4
	Total students	561,101		554,464		557,823	
	- In responding schools	448,123	79.9	476,729	86.0	507,284	90.9
	- Who lost 20-plus days	38,419	8.6	140,840	29.5	97,441	19.2
Post-primary	Total schools	730		728		727	
	- Responded	551	75.5	572	78.6	624	85.8
	Total students	379,184		391,698		406,392	
	- In responding schools	297,296	78.4	313,672	80.1	355,232	87.4
	- Who lost 20-plus days	20,638	6.9	53,082	16.9	49,238	13.9

The submission rate from schools has steadily increased from the initial introduction of the SAR submission through the Tusla Portal in the school year 2017/18 (Figure 3.2). Submissions of SAR have been received from 88.4% of all primary schools and 85.8% from all post-primary schools in 2022/23. This rate was 10.4 percentage points above AAR response for primary schools and 14.4 percentage points response above AAR for post-primary schools in 2022/23.

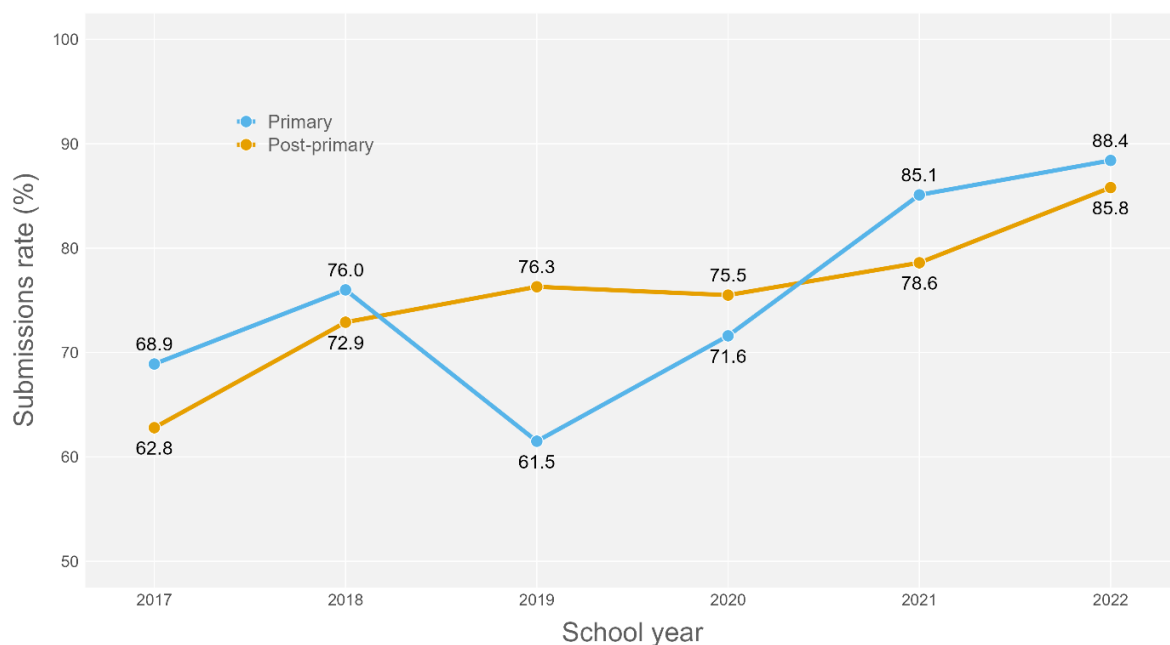


Figure 3.2 Submission rates from primary and post-primary schools for School Absence Reports, 2017–22

3.2 Summary Results

The results from the SAR are presented in Table 3.2. At the primary level, illness absences accounted for the highest number of total days in 2021/22 (42.1%). This reason increased in 2022/23 to 43.0%, followed by “unexplained” at 29.6% and “other” at 12.1%. The “unexplained” reason absences of students in post-primary schools, at 52.7% in 2022/23, continued to account for the most days lost since the initial year of SAR in 2017/18.

Table 3.2 Summary of reasons for student absences from primary and post-primary schools, 2020–22

School level	Measure	2020/21		2021/22		2022/23	
		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Primary	Total schools	3,231		3,230		3,221	
	- Responded	2,312	71.6	2,749	85.1	2,846	88.4
	Total students	561,101		554,464		557,823	
	- In responding schools	448,123	79.9	476,729	86.0	507,284	90.9
	- Who lost 20-plus days	38,419	8.6	140,840	29.5	97,441	19.2
	Total days lost	1,385,331		4,581,690		3,173,325	
	- Illness	372,188	26.9	1,929,426	42.1	1,364,841	43.0
	- Urgent	57,505	4.2	141,582	3.1	116,824	3.7
	- Holiday	38,604	2.8	350,474	7.6	366,159	11.5
	- Suspended	2,165	0.2	1,968	0.0	3,134	0.1
	- Other	388,413	28	981,532	21.4	383,639	12.1
	- Unexplained	526,456	38	1,176,708	25.7	938,728	29.6
Post-primary	Total schools	730		728		727	
	- Responded	551	75.5	572	78.6	624	85.8
	Total students	379,184		391,698		406,392	
	- In responding schools	297,296	78.4	313,672	80.1	355,232	87.4
	- Who lost 20-plus days	20,638	6.9	53,082	16.9	49,238	13.9
	Total days lost	797,367		2,052,811		1,940,720	
	- Illness	146,931	18.4	578,363	28.2	538,934	27.8
	- Urgent	15,234	1.9	40,896	2.0	47,507	2.4
	- Holiday	1,259	0.2	12,127	0.6	26,949	1.4
	- Suspended	7,116	0.9	13,180	0.6	16,886	0.9
	- Other	134,459	16.9	345,043	16.8	287,688	14.8
	- Unexplained	492,368	61.7	1,063,202	51.8	1,022,756	52.7

The first SAR report in 2017/18 had three reasons for 20-plus days of absences: explained, “unexplained”, and holidays. Explained reasons were further subdivided in 2018/19 into illness, suspensions, “other”, and urgent. The school year of 2022/23 recorded the second-highest total of days lost for five categories in primary schools, with “other” below the figure recorded in 2020/21 being the exception (Figure 3.3).

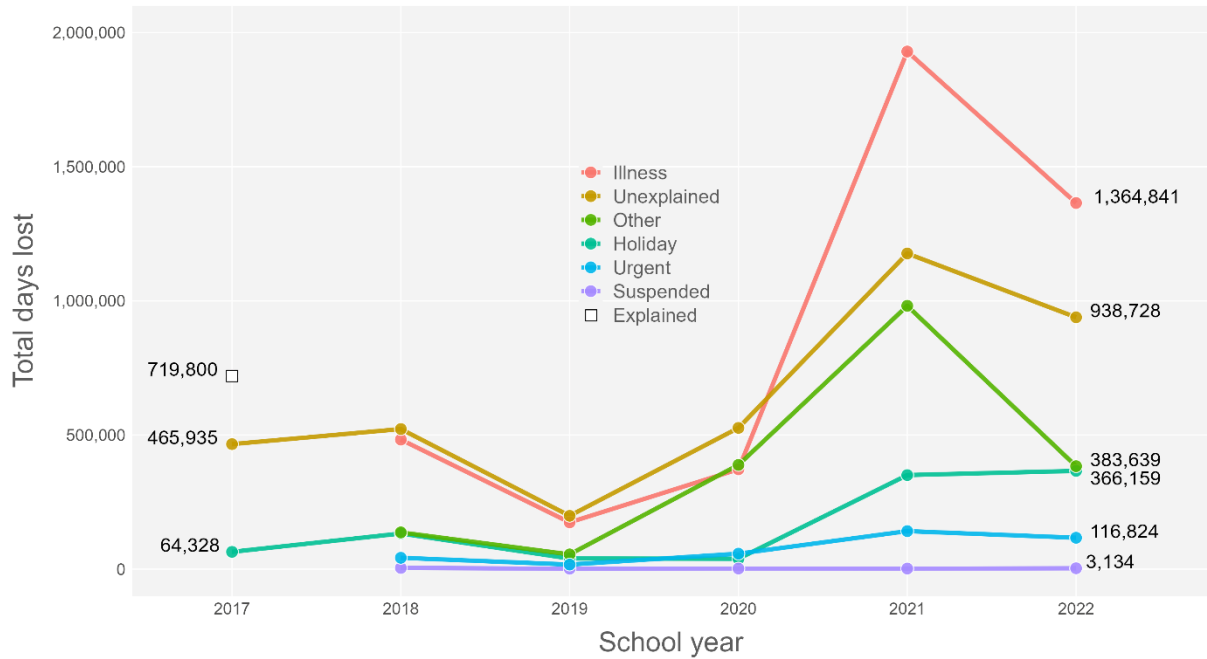


Figure 3.3 Number of total days lost for primary schools by reason, 2017–22

For post-primary, the order of reasons for 20-plus day absences of SAR has remained relatively consistent for the past five years (Figure 3.4). The impact of the pandemic amplified absences when schools fully reopened in 2021/22 and continued to elevate total days lost in 2022/23 to a higher degree compared to primary schools.

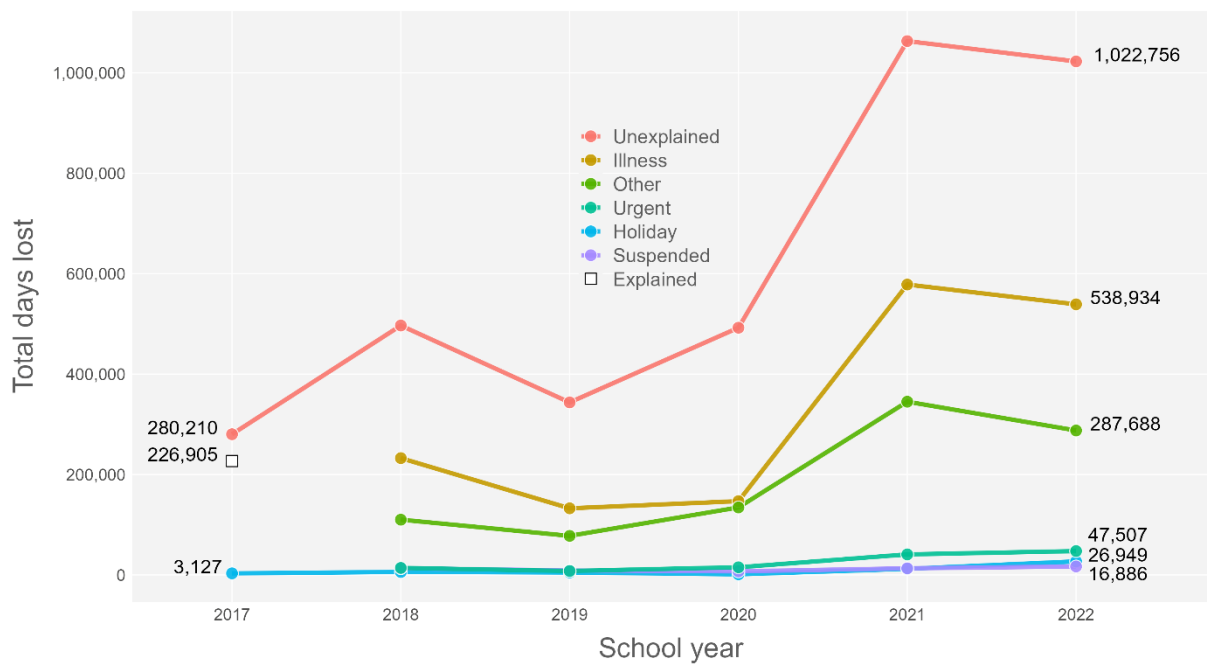


Figure 3.4 Number of total days lost for post-primary schools by reason, 2017–22

3.3 Primary Schools

This section follows the same structure as section 2.3, providing reasons for 20 or more day absences by school type, DEIS status and county, but with the addition of the student's class year. Class year relates to individual standards within a school, from junior infants to sixth class.

3.3.1 School Type

For mainstream schools, those with special classes, and special education schools, the main reason for 20-plus days of absences was illness in the 2022/23 school year (

Table 3.3). Illness increased for all three school types since 2021/22 (Figure 3.5). The “unexplained” reason was the second highest cause of absenteeism provided for all three school types in 2022/23.

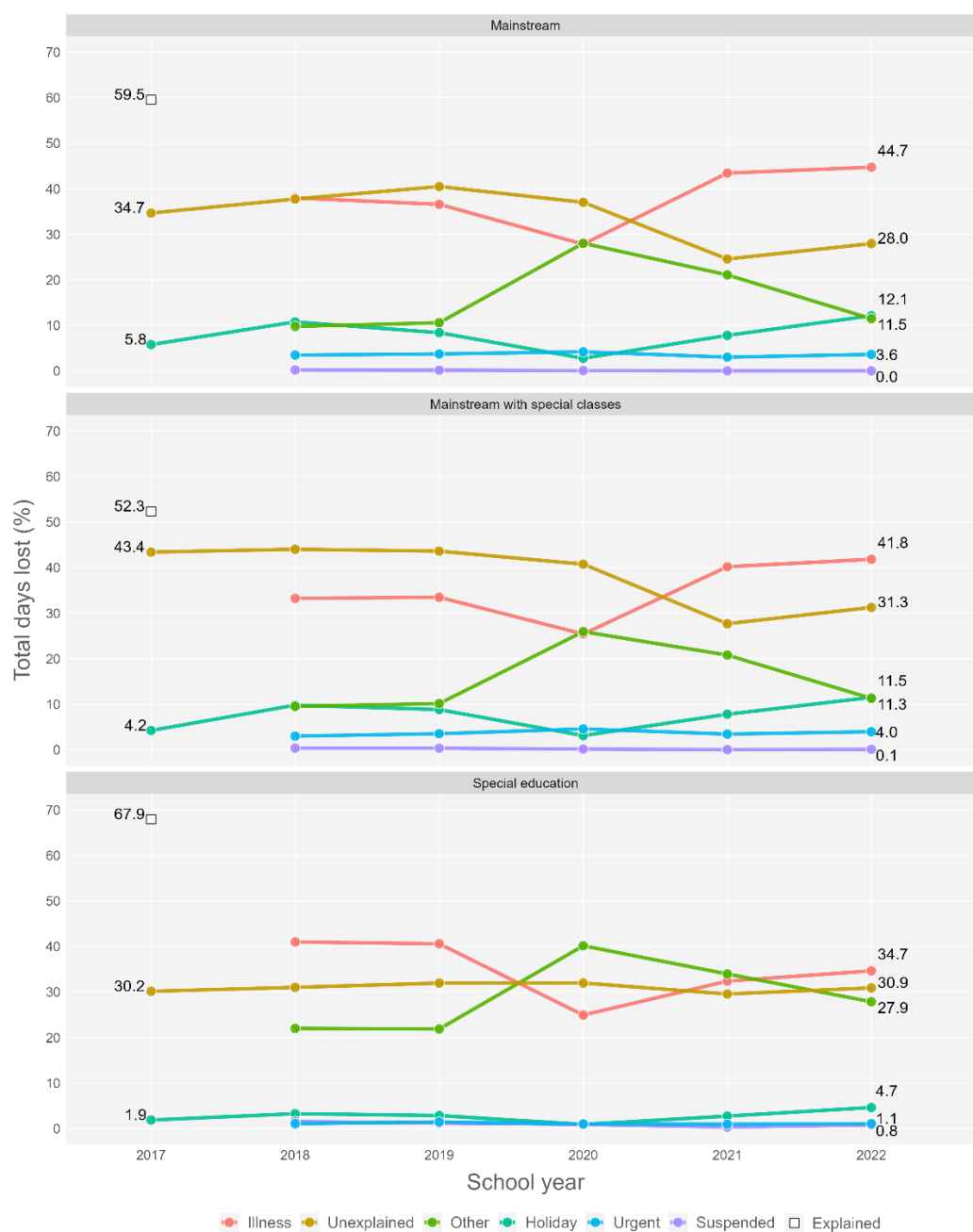


Figure 3.5 Number of total days lost for post-primary schools by reason, 2017–22

Table 3.3 Summary of reasons for student absences from primary schools by school type, 2020–22

School type	Measure	2020/21		2021/22		2022/23	
		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Mainstream	Total schools	2,584		2,579		2,245	
	- Responded	1,792	69.3	2,193	85.0	1,985	88.4
	Students in responding schools	315,032		340,364		296,161	
	- Who lost 20-plus days	23,733	7.5	96,000	28.2	51,082	17.2

Mainstream with special classes	Total days lost	838,954		3,045,480		1,610,055	
	- Illness	233,603	27.8	1,323,407	43.5	720,308	44.7
	- Urgent	35,291	4.2	92,200	3.0	58,560	3.6
	- Holiday	23,327	2.8	237,949	7.8	195,287	12.1
	- Suspended	686	0.1	897	0.0	649	0.0
	- Other	235,287	28.0	642,382	21.1	184,890	11.5
	- Unexplained	310,760	37.0	748,645	24.6	450,361	28.0
	Total schools	523		525		850	
	- Responded	428	81.8	455	86.7	763	89.8
	Students in responding schools	127,126		129,699		204,105	
	- Who lost 20-plus days	13,127	10.3	41,688	32.1	43,626	21.4
	Total days lost	466,299		1,388,140		1,430,345	
	- Illness	118,604	25.4	558,053	40.2	598,467	41.8
	- Urgent	21,390	4.6	47,940	3.5	56,816	4.0
	- Holiday	14,522	3.1	108,450	7.8	164,687	11.5
	- Suspended	729	0.2	569	0.0	1,392	0.1
	- Other	120,969	25.9	288,854	20.8	161,708	11.3
	- Unexplained	190,085	40.8	384,274	27.7	447,275	31.3
Special education	Total schools	124		126		126	
	- Responded	92	74.2	101	80.2	98	77.8
	Students in responding schools	5,965		6,666		7,018	
	- Who lost 20-plus days	1,559	26.1	3,152	47.3	2,733	38.9
	Total days lost	80,078		148,070		132,925	
	- Illness	19,981	25.0	47,966	32.4	46,066	34.7
	- Urgent	824	1.0	1,442	1.0	1,448	1.1
	- Holiday	755	0.9	4,075	2.8	6,185	4.7
	- Suspended	750	0.9	502	0.3	1,093	0.8
	- Other	32,157	40.2	50,296	34.0	37,041	27.9
	- Unexplained	25,611	32.0	43,789	29.6	41,092	30.9

3.3.2 DEIS status

For 2022/23, the main reason for absenteeism in UB1 DEIS schools continues to be “unexplained”, accounting for 41.5% of total absences (Table 3.4). This reason contrasts with all other school types and DEIS status, where “illness” was the main reason for the 2022/23 school year.

Table 3.4 Summary of reasons for student absences of total days lost from primary schools by DEIS status, 2020–22

School type	DEIS status	Measure	2020/21		2021/22		2022/23	
			<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%

Urban	Band 1	Illness	55,442	19.4	182,690	30.9	222,420	35.8
		Urgent	8,969	3.1	16,585	2.8	20,993	3.4
		Holiday	6,782	2.4	30,980	5.2	55,398	8.9
		Suspended	373	0.1	489	0.1	919	0.1
		Other	66,751	23.4	109,896	18.6	63,765	10.3
		Unexplained	146,966	51.5	250,616	42.4	257,880	41.5
	Band 2	Illness	26,883	22.7	114,906	38.0	145,520	41.8
		Urgent	5,323	4.5	10,979	3.6	16,199	4.7
		Holiday	5,307	4.5	24,951	8.2	40,856	11.7
		Suspended	136	0.1	213	0.1	197	0.1
		Other	30,524	25.8	61,732	20.4	40,311	11.6
		Unexplained	50,127	42.4	89,871	29.7	104,788	30.1
	Non-DEIS	Illness	180,188	28.6	895,952	42.5	545,839	44.1
		Urgent	27,929	4.4	74,087	3.5	50,527	4.1
		Holiday	18,419	2.9	186,709	8.9	162,904	13.2
		Suspended	1,086	0.2	1,012	0.0	1,532	0.1
		Other	178,581	28.4	462,873	22.0	157,588	12.7
		Unexplained	223,224	35.5	486,162	23.1	318,035	25.7
Rural	DEIS	Illness	18,478	29.4	106,194	46.6	111,373	44.1
		Urgent	2,963	4.7	6,290	2.8	8,344	3.3
		Holiday	968	1.5	11,534	5.1	22,548	8.9
		Suspended	17	0.0	53	0.0	132	0.1
		Other	18,529	29.4	44,365	19.5	31,641	12.5
		Unexplained	21,967	34.9	59,601	26.1	78,532	31.1
	Non-DEIS	Illness	91,197	31.5	629,684	46.5	339,689	47.5
		Urgent	12,321	4.3	33,641	2.5	20,761	2.9
		Holiday	7,128	2.5	96,300	7.1	84,453	11.8
		Suspended	553	0.2	201	0.0	354	0.0
		Other	94,028	32.5	302,666	22.4	90,334	12.6
		Unexplained	84,172	29.1	290,458	21.5	179,493	25.1

3.3.3 County

The number of students with 20-plus days and their days lost was proportional to the population of the county in 2022/23. Dublin had the highest amount of students with days lost, followed by County Cork, and the counties around Dublin. In contrast, the percentage as a proportion of students with 20-plus days from total students within responding schools was higher in lower populated counties of Longford at 26.4%, Louth at 25.2%, and Leitrim at 23.7% (Appendix: Table 0.1).

3.3.4 Class Year

Within primary schools, the general trend was for absences to increase as the standard progressed for students in 2022/23. A SAR is submitted for pupils over six years of age. Seven-year-olds are generally enrolled in senior infants and first class, with the most in the latter. Subsequently, junior infants have the lowest number of 1,477 total absences for days lost (2.5%) compared to 15,125 sixth class students, which was the highest (23.1%). Students in special classes within mainstream schools have a greater rate of 20-plus days at 47.3% outside of the class year linear structure (Appendix: Table 0.2).

The reasons for suspended, “other”, and “unexplained” by class year generally follow the trend of increasing percentages from senior infants to sixth class. While illness, urgent, and holiday run counter, being generally highest amongst senior infants decreasing towards sixth class.

3.4 Post-Primary Schools

This section provides reasons for 20 or more day absences by school type, DEIS status, county, and class year within post-primary schools. The divisions of a class year within post-primary schools are from first year to sixth year. SAR is only required for students under 16, typically enrolled in the Junior Cycle programme or transition year (fourth year). Later class years are included in this report but a SAR was not required. Therefore, the senior cycle class years of fifth and sixth counts of students, days lost and percentages need to be treated with caution.

3.4.1 School Type

The main reason for 20-plus day absences in 2022/23 for all three school types was “unexplained”. Voluntary secondary schools have the lowest record of “unexplained” at 46.6%, followed by community and comprehensive schools at 55.1%, and ETBs at 58.1% (Table 3.5). The second highest reason for absences was illness across school types. The inverse order occurs for illness, where the reason for 20-plus days lost was 23.3% in ETB schools, 28.2% in community and comprehensive schools, and 31.8% in voluntary secondary schools. The reason “other” was the third highest reason for 20-plus day absences across the three school types.

Table 3.5 Summary of reasons for student absences from post-primary schools by school type, 2020–22

School type	Measure	2020/21		2021/22		2022/23	
		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Voluntary secondary	Total schools	383		385		384	
	- Responded	297	77.5	301	78.2	331	86.2
	Students in responding schools	161,221		169,014		189,438	
	- Who lost 20-plus days	8,686	5.4	23,303	13.8	21,645	11.4
	Total days lost	326,649		862,983		823,473	
	- Illness	71,279	21.8	278,025	32.2	261,897	31.8

Community & comprehensive	- Urgent	8,232	2.5	21,477	2.5	25,223	3.1
	- Holiday	935	0.3	6,222	0.7	13,854	1.7
	- Suspended	2,117	0.6	3,957	0.5	6,167	0.7
	- Other	59,362	18.2	149,852	17.4	132,652	16.1
	- Unexplained	184,724	56.6	403,450	46.8	383,680	46.6
	Total schools	96		96		96	
	- Responded	77	80.2	82	85.4	84	87.5
	Students in responding schools	48,684		53,510		56,826	
	- Who lost 20-plus days	3,918	8.0	9,849	18.4	8,487	14.9
	Total days lost	152,876		383,467		339,536	
	- Illness	25,421	16.6	109,212	28.5	95,898	28.2
	- Urgent	2,849	1.9	7,675	2.0	9,135	2.7
	- Holiday	110	0.1	2,218	0.6	4,771	1.4
	- Suspended	1,892	1.2	3,116	0.8	2,656	0.8
	- Other	23,227	15.2	61,416	16.0	40,141	11.8
	- Unexplained	99,377	65.0	199,830	52.1	186,935	55.1
Education and training boards	Total schools	251		247		247	
	- Responded	177	70.5	189	76.5	209	84.6
	Students in responding schools	87,391		91,148		108,968	
	- Who lost 20-plus days	8,034	9.2	19,930	21.9	19,106	17.5
	Total days lost	317,842		806,361		777,711	
	- Illness	50,231	15.8	191,126	23.7	181,139	23.3
	- Urgent	4,153	1.3	11,744	1.5	13,149	1.7
	- Holiday	214	0.1	3,687	0.5	8,324	1.1
	- Suspended	3,107	1.0	6,107	0.8	8,063	1.0
	- Other	51,870	16.3	133,775	16.6	114,895	14.8
	- Unexplained	208,267	65.5	459,922	57.0	452,141	58.1

3.4.2 DEIS Status

DEIS schools at the post-primary level have the highest level of “unexplained” reason at 46.5% for student non-attendance, 15.6 percentage points above non-DEIS schools at 62.1%, in 2022/23 (Table 3.6). Illness is the second main reason for absences, recorded at 31.9% in non-DEIS schools and 21.6% in DEIS schools, a difference of 10.3 percentage points.

Table 3.6 Summary of reasons for student absences from post-primary schools by DEIS status, 2020–22

DEIS status	Measure	2020/21		2021/22		2022/23	
		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
DEIS	Total schools	198		197		235	
	- Responded	151	76.3	154	78.2	200	85.1

	Students who lost 20-plus days	7,574		16,678		18,351	
	Total days lost	305,249		685,442		774,691	
	- Illness	42,043	13.8	147,430	21.5	167,508	21.6
	- Urgent	4,809	1.6	9,001	1.3	14,324	1.8
	- Holiday	274	0.1	3,461	0.5	9,521	1.2
	- Suspended	4,190	1.4	6,491	0.9	9,243	1.2
	- Other	45,075	14.8	110,599	16.1	93,103	12
	- Unexplained	208,858	68.4	408,460	59.6	480,992	62.1
Non-DEIS	Total schools	532		531		492	
	- Responded	400	75.2	418	78.7	424	86.2
	Students who lost 20-plus days	13,064		36,404		30,887	
	Total days lost	492,118		1,367,369		1,166,029	
	- Illness	104,888	21.3	430,933	31.5	371,426	31.9
	- Urgent	10,425	2.1	31,895	2.3	33,183	2.8
	- Holiday	985	0.2	8,666	0.6	17,428	1.5
	- Suspended	2,926	0.6	6,689	0.5	7,643	0.7
	- Other	89,384	18.2	234,444	17.1	194,585	16.7
	- Unexplained	283,510	57.6	654,742	47.9	541,764	46.5

3.4.3 County

At the county level, populated regions with large urban areas have the highest amount of 20-plus students, and accompanying days lost, with Dublin, Cork, Galway and Kildare in the top four in 2022/23. A disproportionately amount of students from Leitrim, at 20.4%, are recorded as students who lost 20 or more days, followed by Longford at 18.0%, and Donegal at 17.1%. The principal reason for the loss of days for 2022/23 was recorded as “unexplained” for all counties except Kilkenny (Appendix: Table 0.3).

3.4.4 Class Year

Within post-primary class years, most 15-year-olds are found in the third year or transition year (fourth year), with a smaller proportion in the first years of the Leaving Certificate programmes (fifth year). SAR is only required if a pupil is aged under 16. While some 15-year-olds are found in other class year groupings up to and including sixth year, they are extremely rare. The figures beyond third year should be treated with caution.

The number of students with 20 or more days of absences peaked in third year, possibly due to the criteria for under 16 years of age for a SAR submission. The main reason for absences was “unexplained” across all class years, equal to or above 48.3%, in 2022/23 (Appendix: Table 0.4). The percentage of “explained” reasons increases from first year to sixth year, while the inverse occurs for illness, decreasing as a reason for absenteeism.

4 Methodology

4.1 Data

The legal reason for data collection and reporting are outlined in the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000, Section 21(1/6) which states that:

“(1) The principal of a recognised school shall cause to be maintained in respect of each school year a record of the attendance or non-attendance on each school day of each student registered at that school...(2)(b) where a student fails to so attend, the fact of his or her failure and the reasons for such failure...(4) Where—(a) a student is suspended from a recognised school for a period of not less than 6 days, (b) the aggregate number of school days on which a student is absent from a recognised school during a school year is not less than 20,...(d) a student is, in the opinion of the principal of the recognised school at which he or she is registered, not attending school regularly,...(6) The board of management of a recognised school shall, not later than 6 weeks after the end of each school year, submit a report to“ the educational welfare officer and the parents’ association of the recognised school.

Unlike previous data before 2019/20, no prior proxy data has been used for anomalous data due to the impact of the pandemic in 2019 and continued disruption since. Earlier years are not representative of the current situation of elevated absenteeism.

The data collection process of late school returns of the AAR, initially affected late responders for the 2017/18 data collection in 2019.

4.2 Schools

Hospital schools and schools with only children younger than seven are excluded at the primary level. Post-primary schools where students are all over 15 years of age were also excluded.

The excluded post-primary schools provide only Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses or Repeat Leaving Certificate programmes.

4.2.1 COVID-19

The graph below (Figure 4.1) shows daily confirmed cases of COVID-19 based on polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests. School closures correspond to periods of low positive tests during 2020 and 2021. The high number of positive cases during the 2021/22 school year corresponds to the high number of days lost and 20-plus day absences when schools were fully open. For the school year 2022/23, COVID-19 cases were still recorded but not to the same extent as peaks in the previous years.

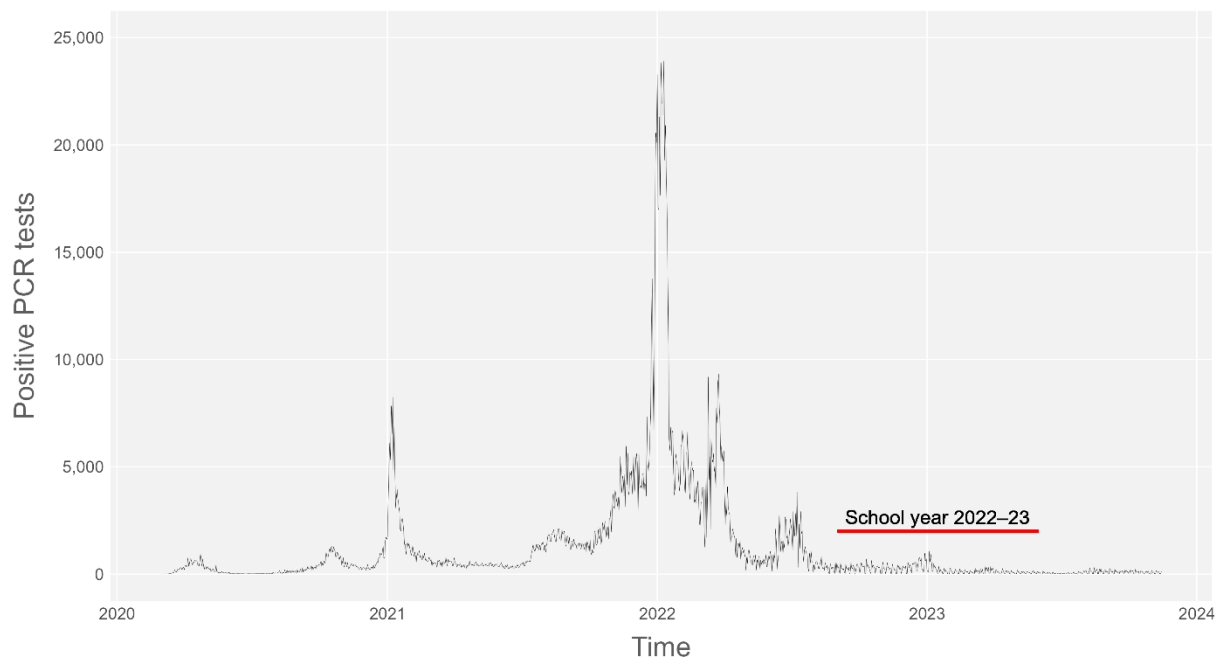


Figure 4.1 Number of daily confirmed COVID-19 cases, 2020–24

Appendix

Only mainstream schools were used in the analysis, with special schools excluded, concerning class year.

Table 0.1 Summary of reasons for student absences from primary schools by county, 2022/23 ([return to text](#))

Region	Total students			Total days lost												
	In responding schools	Lost 20-plus days		Total	Illness		Urgent		Holiday		Suspended		Other		Unexplained	
		<i>n</i>	%		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Carlow	6,679	1,545	23.1	49,031	25,358	51.7	1,940	4.0	4,903	10	119	0.2	7,108	14.5	9,603	19.6
Cavan	9,320	1,829	19.6	59,188	27,583	46.6	2,598	4.4	6,666	11.3	37	0.1	6,376	10.8	15,928	26.9
Clare	12,440	2,492	20.0	80,158	35,670	44.5	2,793	3.5	9,223	11.5	115	0.1	10,995	13.7	21,362	26.6
Cork	56,377	9,590	17.0	308,970	135,504	43.9	11,912	3.9	36,004	11.7	381	0.1	41,697	13.5	83,472	27.0
Donegal	17,445	3,636	20.8	114,084	51,402	45.1	3,867	3.4	10,908	9.6	106	0.1	14,812	13.0	32,989	28.9
Dublin	127,252	24,939	19.6	829,506	329,368	39.7	32,980	4.0	109,487	13.2	1,087	0.1	91,935	11.1	264,649	31.9
Galway	25,592	4,209	16.4	133,443	57,798	43.3	4,955	3.7	14,787	11.1	67	0.1	17,784	13.3	38,052	28.5
Kerry	15,096	3,451	22.9	117,534	44,436	37.8	3,794	3.2	11,780	10	60	0.1	18,408	15.7	39,056	33.2
Kildare	26,862	5,231	19.5	166,407	77,118	46.3	6,435	3.9	20,895	12.6	67	0.0	19,497	11.7	42,395	25.5
Kilkenny	10,954	1,687	15.4	52,172	24,103	46.2	2,070	4.0	6,608	12.7	19	0.0	6,138	11.8	13,234	25.4
Laois	9,457	2,029	21.5	67,433	28,669	42.5	2,429	3.6	6,854	10.2	77	0.1	8,904	13.2	20,500	30.4
Leitrim	3,632	862	23.7	29,890	10,994	36.8	1,122	3.8	2,429	8.1	49	0.2	3,627	12.1	11,669	39.0
Limerick	21,339	3,446	16.1	109,343	49,908	45.6	3,898	3.6	11,878	10.9	128	0.1	14,241	13.0	29,290	26.8
Longford	4,946	1,306	26.4	43,992	16,068	36.5	1,662	3.8	4,276	9.7	16	0.0	4,714	10.7	17,256	39.2
Louth	17,218	4,331	25.2	146,646	64,912	44.3	4,983	3.4	15,234	10.4	146	0.1	15,796	10.8	45,575	31.1
Mayo	12,276	2,329	19.0	73,290	34,123	46.6	2,740	3.7	7,151	9.8	40	0.1	9,528	13.0	19,708	26.9
Meath	25,708	4,674	18.2	147,016	69,611	47.3	5,298	3.6	18,869	12.8	22	0.0	17,499	11.9	35,717	24.3
Monaghan	6,901	945	13.7	29,827	13,196	44.2	1,067	3.6	2,637	8.8	1	0.0	3,066	10.3	9,860	33.1
Offaly	8,821	1,714	19.4	56,391	25,628	45.4	1,538	2.7	5,425	9.6	30	0.1	6,163	10.9	17,607	31.2
Roscommon	7,748	1,643	21.2	54,930	22,533	41.0	2,022	3.7	5,341	9.7	9	0.0	6,701	12.2	18,324	33.4
Sligo	6,600	1,125	17.0	34,899	14,099	40.4	790	2.3	3,871	11.1	29	0.1	3,959	11.3	12,151	34.8
Tipperary	16,686	2,753	16.5	87,127	40,098	46.0	2,754	3.2	8,717	10.0	118	0.1	10,623	12.2	24,817	28.5
Waterford	13,097	2,661	20.3	86,401	39,053	45.2	3,057	3.5	9,912	11.5	77	0.1	9,666	11.2	24,636	28.5
Westmeath	10,820	2,264	20.9	76,798	30,757	40.0	2,973	3.9	8,467	11.0	88	0.1	7,790	10.1	26,723	34.8
Wexford	16,236	3,235	19.9	106,607	45,720	42.9	3,533	3.3	10,667	10.0	39	0.0	12,575	11.8	34,073	32.0
Wicklow	17,782	3,515	19.8	112,242	51,132	45.6	3,614	3.2	13,170	11.7	207	0.2	14,037	12.5	30,082	26.8
State	507,284	97,441	19.2	3,173,325	1,364,841		116,824		366,159		3,134		383,639		938,728	

Table 0.2 Summary of reasons for student absences from primary schools by class year, 2022/23 ([return to text](#))

Class year	Total students			Total days lost												
	In responding schools	Lost 20-plus days		Total	Illness		Urgent		Holiday		Suspended		Other		Unexplained	
		<i>n</i>	%		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Junior infants	58,529	1,477	2.5	51,063	21,458	42	2,280	4.5	3,891	7.6	17	0.0	4,748	9.3	18,669	36.6
Senior infants	59,884	11,493	19.2	360,700	171,968	47.7	14,772	4.1	45,143	12.5	49	0.0	32,821	9.1	95,947	26.6
First class	59,844	12,456	20.8	390,110	177,686	45.5	15,341	3.9	51,667	13.2	63	0.0	39,439	10.1	105,914	27.1
Second class	61,455	12,405	20.2	391,169	168,409	43.1	15,983	4.1	49,041	12.5	94	0.0	42,227	10.8	115,415	29.5
Third class	61,888	12,322	19.9	389,611	165,881	42.6	15,092	3.9	49,970	12.8	194	0.0	43,959	11.3	114,515	29.4
Fourth class	62,170	12,762	20.5	404,674	171,483	42.4	15,987	4.0	49,180	12.2	278	0.1	45,513	11.2	122,233	30.2
Fifth class	63,306	13,426	21.2	433,332	181,549	41.9	16,095	3.7	48,786	11.3	391	0.1	50,794	11.7	135,717	31.3
Sixth class	65,426	15,125	23.1	496,766	206,682	41.6	15,961	3.2	48,904	9.8	607	0.1	66,919	13.5	157,693	31.7
Special class	7,764	3,670	47.3	122,975	53,659	43.6	3,865	3.1	13,392	10.9	348	0.3	20,178	16.4	31,533	25.6
Total	500,266	95,136	19.0	3,040,400	1,318,775		115,376		359,974		2,041		346,598		897,636	

Table 0.3 Summary of reasons for student absences from post-primary schools by county, 2022/23 ([return to text](#))

Region	Total students			Total days lost												
	In responding schools	Who lost 20-plus days		Total <i>n</i>	Illness		Urgent		Holiday		Suspended		Other		Unexplained	
		<i>n</i>	%		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Carlow	4,770	635	13.3	24,029	7,505	31.2	421	1.8	210	0.9	421	1.8	3,546	14.8	11,926	49.6
Cavan	5,403	647	12.0	23,778	9,458	39.8	1,133	4.8	330	1.4	172	0.7	2,832	11.9	9,853	41.4
Clare	7,049	708	10.0	29,724	9,158	30.8	308	1.0	279	0.9	233	0.8	3,606	12.1	16,140	54.3
Cork	39,623	5,116	12.9	203,668	68,311	33.5	5,393	2.6	2,148	1.1	1,503	0.7	31,301	15.4	95,012	46.7
Donegal	14,092	2,404	17.1	88,469	26,939	30.5	2,003	2.3	1,577	1.8	478	0.5	11,455	12.9	46,017	52.0
Dublin	88,900	12,437	14.0	504,279	120,287	23.9	11,404	2.3	8,151	1.6	5,507	1.1	75,057	14.9	283,873	56.3
Galway	19,496	2,859	14.7	106,771	29,922	28.0	2,738	2.6	2,376	2.2	783	0.7	13,018	12.2	57,934	54.3
Kerry	11,237	1,574	14.0	61,115	17,134	28.0	1,895	3.1	803	1.3	424	0.7	9,902	16.2	30,957	50.7
Kildare	19,807	2,787	14.1	108,154	30,163	27.9	1,091	1.0	877	0.8	1,006	0.9	17,046	15.8	57,971	53.6
Kilkenny	7,476	681	9.1	25,602	11,039	43.1	2,378	9.3	834	3.3	151	0.6	3,423	13.4	7,777	30.4
Laois	6,203	707	11.4	27,888	6,105	21.9	942	3.4	246	0.9	372	1.3	2,940	10.5	17,283	62.0
Leitrim	2,855	582	20.4	21,615	6,435	29.8	717	3.3	256	1.2	68	0.3	3,366	15.6	10,773	49.8
Limerick	15,699	2,369	15.1	93,135	24,112	25.9	2,910	3.1	898	1.0	793	0.9	13,978	15.0	50,444	54.2
Longford	3,240	582	18.0	22,450	4,794	21.4	441	2.0	308	1.4	99	0.4	2,385	10.6	14,423	64.2
Louth	13,627	1,746	12.8	68,007	20,622	30.3	1,090	1.6	1,841	2.7	536	0.8	6,500	9.6	37,418	55.0
Mayo	9,639	1,502	15.6	55,799	16,327	29.3	1,881	3.4	726	1.3	280	0.5	8,814	15.8	27,771	49.8
Meath	14,328	1,813	12.7	69,435	27,993	40.3	1,946	2.8	856	1.2	543	0.8	9,837	14.2	28,260	40.7
Monaghan	4,638	485	10.5	17,459	3,956	22.7	153	0.9	88	0.5	104	0.6	3,798	21.8	9,360	53.6
Offaly	5,593	932	16.7	38,727	11,129	28.7	1,676	4.3	289	0.7	222	0.6	3,859	10.0	21,552	55.7
Roscommon	4,056	358	8.8	13,004	4,773	36.7	666	5.1	311	2.4	59	0.5	1,557	12.0	5,638	43.4
Sligo	5,628	893	15.9	32,171	8,770	27.3	743	2.3	506	1.6	129	0.4	5,723	17.8	16,300	50.7
Tipperary	12,351	1,442	11.7	56,057	18,068	32.2	1,113	2.0	443	0.8	389	0.7	4,219	7.5	31,825	56.8
Waterford	8,010	967	12.1	38,677	7,606	19.7	237	0.6	230	0.6	520	1.3	4,780	12.4	25,304	65.4
Westmeath	7,842	1,180	15.0	49,062	8,971	18.3	162	0.3	494	1.0	737	1.5	12,218	24.9	26,480	54.0
Wexford	12,188	1,954	16.0	80,793	17,433	21.6	1,119	1.4	841	1.0	479	0.6	18,487	22.9	42,434	52.5
Wicklow	11,482	1,878	16.4	80,852	21,924	27.1	2,947	3.6	1,031	1.3	878	1.1	14,041	17.4	40,031	49.5
State	355,232	49,238	13.9	1,940,720	538,934		47,507		26,949		16,886		287,688		1,022,756	

Table 0.4 Summary of reasons for student absences from post-primary schools by class year, 2022/23 [\(return to text\)](#)

Class year	Total students				Total days lost											
	In responding schools	Who lost 20-plus days		Total	Illness		Urgent		Holiday		Suspended		Other		Unexplained	
		<i>n</i>	%		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
First year	64,808	9,576	14.8	349,611	109,973	31.5	9,228	2.6	5,870	1.7	3,794	1.1	51,839	14.8	168,907	48.3
Second year	65,446	13,313	20.3	521,534	157,984	30.3	12,791	2.5	8,262	1.6	5,781	1.1	73,908	14.2	262,808	50.4
Third year	63,975	13,810	21.6	564,261	161,072	28.5	12,607	2.2	7,116	1.3	5,176	0.9	76,861	13.6	301,429	53.4
Fourth year	48,039	7,005	14.6	256,990	61,665	24.0	8,231	3.2	3,688	1.4	815	0.3	51,709	20.1	130,882	50.9
Fifth year	58,150	3,288	5.7	141,534	31,065	21.9	3,245	2.3	1,427	1.0	729	0.5	19,482	13.8	85,586	60.5
Sixth year	54,811	1,482	2.7	66,598	13,208	19.8	1,050	1.6	388	0.6	163	0.2	9,858	14.8	41,931	63.0
Other		820		40,192	3,967	9.9	355	0.9	198	0.5	428	1.1	4,031	10.0	31,213	77.7
Total	355,229	49,294	13.9	1,940,720	538,934		47,507		26,949		16,886		287,688		1,022,756	

