Analysis of School Attendance Data in Primary and Post-Primary Schools, 2010/11

Report to the National Educational Welfare Board

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Executive Summary

Response of Schools to NEWB *Annual Attendance Report* rose to their highest levels for both primary and post-primary in 2010/11

- The response rates were in the high 90s for primary (98.5%) and post-primary (97.9%)

- Response rates were the highest yet recorded for the NEWB *Annual Attendance Report*.

- The data provided by the *Annual Attendance Report* continue to provide information that can be used to monitor non-attendance, expulsion, and suspension in all primary and post-primary schools at a national level.

Figures for General Non-Attendance lower for 2010/11

- The percentage of overall student/days lost through absence in a school year is running at just over 6% in primary schools and around 8% in post-primary schools. The figures at both levels for 2010/11 are lower than for 2009/10 and are at the lowest for the five year period 2006/07 – 2010/11.

- Approximately 56,000 students miss school each day, consisting of approximately 31,100 primary and 24,800 post-primary students. This equates to a loss of 11 school days per student per year in primary school and 13 days per year in post-primary school.

Figures for Twenty-Day Absences lower for 2010/11

- The figures for twenty-day absence have fallen in both primary and post-primary schools compared to 2009/10. The 2010/11 figure for post-primary schools was the lowest for the five year period.

- About 11% of primary school students and 16.5% of post-primary students were absent for 20 days or more during the school year. Based on population numbers this is approximately 56,500 primary school students, and 52,500 post-primary students.

Non-Attendance higher in Special Schools

- In the primary school sector non-attendance is substantially higher in special schools and in ordinary schools with special classes.

Non-Attendance in Primary School Higher in Urban Areas

- Rates of non-attendance in primary schools are higher in towns and cities than they are in rural areas. This is particularly apparent in terms of the percentage

of pupils absent for twenty days or more where rates of 20-day absences are almost double the rural rate. This pattern remains stable year-on-year.

Non-Attendance higher in disadvantaged schools

- In primary schools non-attendance is generally higher in schools involved in the School Support Programme (SSP). However, there is an important urban/rural dimension in non-attendance. General non-attendance and twenty-day absences are higher in non-disadvantaged urban schools than they are in disadvantaged rural schools. This pattern is stable year-on-year.

- In post-primary schools all forms of non-attendance were higher in disadvantaged schools. Just under 30% of students in disadvantaged schools were absent for twenty days or more in 2010/11. This figure is down 1% from 2009/10 and just over 3% from 2008/09. In non-disadvantaged schools the figure for 20-day absences was 14.6% for 2010/11, down slightly on the previous year.

Expulsions Still Rare

- Only 10 expulsions were reported in primary schools in 2009/10 and 16 in 2010/11. The corresponding figures at in post-primary schools were 148 and 136, accounting for less than 0.05% of students.

Suspensions Occur Mostly in Post-Primary Schools

- Less than 5% of post-primary students were suspended in 2010/11. This is the lowest percentage reported across the five year period 2006/07 – 2010/11. Just 0.2 % of primary pupils were suspended in 2010/11.

Higher Non-Attendance in Vocational and Community/Comprehensive Schools

- Rates of non-attendance are higher in vocational and community / comprehensive schools than in voluntary secondary schools.

Irish non-attendance figures similar to those in Northern Ireland and the UK

- Non-attendance in Irish primary schools was 5.3% of student/days in 2010/11 (removing data for special schools) compared to between 5.1% and 6.7% for Northern Ireland, England, Scotland and Wales. Non-attendance for Irish post-primary schools was 7.8% of student days, compared to between 6.5% and 8.8% in neighbouring jurisdictions.

Annual Attendance Reports 2009/10 and 2010/11: Main Statistics

Response Rate of Schools to the Annual Attendance Report

	2009/10	*2010/11*
Primary	**97.1%**	**98.5%**
Post-Primary	**95.9%**	**97.9%**

Non-Attendance

	2009/10	*2010/11*	
Primary	**6.2%**	**6.1%**	*Student-level*[1]
Post-Primary	**7.9%**	**7.8%**	

Twenty-Day Absences

	2009/10	*2010/11*	
Primary	**11.7%**	**11.1%**	*Student-level*
Post-Primary	**17.6%**	**16.5%**	

Expulsions

	2009/10	*2010/11*
Primary	10	16
	0.002%	**0.003%**
Post-Primary	148	136
	0.049%	**0.044%**

Suspensions

	2009/10	*2010/11*
Primary	1,051	1,210
	0.2%	**0.2%**
Post-Primary	14,162	13,869
	4.7%	**4.4%**

[1] Student-level figures, directly interpretable as percentages of students, are used in Section 1 of this report.

Introduction

Data on non-attendance in primary and post-primary schools are collected by NEWB through the *Annual Attendance Report* (AAR). Data for the years 2003/04 through to 2009/10 are the focus of the earlier reports (Weir (2004), Ó Briain (2006), Mac Aogáin (2008), Millar (2010, 2011, 2012)). This report deals with data for the academic year 2010/11 and links to the data reported previously.

The report is in three sections:

1 *Non-Attendance from 2006/07 to 2010/11*, integrating the 2010/11 NEWB data with summary statistics for the five-year period, and a discussion of issues relating to the data set as a whole.

2 *Non-Attendance in Primary Schools in 2010/11*, which provides data for non-attendance by school location (urban / rural), disadvantaged status of the school, and county by county figures.

3 *Non-Attendance in Post-Primary Schools in 2010/11*, which provides data for non-attendance by school type (community / comprehensive, secondary, vocational), and county by county figures.

Section 1

Non-Attendance Data, 2006/07 to 2010/11

1.1 Response Rate

Table 1.1 shows the number of primary and post-primary schools in the state, together with the number of pupils in those schools for the years 2006/07 to 2010/11. Data for 2006/07 through 2010/11 were provided directly to the Educational Research Centre (ERC) by DES Statistics Section. Post-primary figures exclude schools that cater for post-Leaving Certificate (PLC) students only and PLC students in other post-primary schools[2]. There has been a year-on-year increase in the number of pupils in the primary school sector since 2006/07, although the rate of growth is decreasing. In post-primary schools the number of students has increased by 14,000 over the period.

Table 1.1
Number of Primary and Post-Primary Schools and Students, 2006/07 to 2010/11

Primary	*2006/07*	*2007/08*	*2008/09*	*2009/10*	*2010/11*
Schools	3,284	3,282	3,303	3,295	3,304
Students	471,519	486,444	498,914	505,998	509,652
Post-Primary					
Schools	714	709	710	708	708[3]
Students	303,496	305,114	307,503	312,159	317,432

Table 1.2 shows the numbers and percentages of schools responding to the *AAR* for 2006/07 through 2010/11. Response rates for 2010/11 are the highest recorded for both primary and post-primary and up markedly on 2008/09 and 2009/10. Only 48 primary and 15 post-primary schools failed to return data.

Table 1.2
Response to the Annual Attendance Report, 2006/07 to 2010/11

Primary	*2006/07*	*2007/08*	*2008/09*	*2009/10*	*2010/11*
Schools	3,284	3,282	3,303	3,295	3,304
Schools Responding	3,156	3,117	3,083	3,199	3,256
Response Rate	**96.1%**	**95.0%**	**93.3%**	**97.1%**	**98.5%**
Post-Primary					
Schools	714	708	709	707	707
Schools Responding	673	664	657	678	692
Response Rate	**94.3%**	**93.8%**	**92.7%**	**95.9%**	**97.9%**

[2] In 2010/11 there were 21 post-primary schools that catered for PLC students only (n=17,918). A further 22,109 PLC students were in 167 other post-primary schools. The 21 schools and 40,027 PLC students were excluded from the analyses.
[3] Although the DES data list 708 schools, enrolment data are only available for 707. In all later tables 707 is taken as the base.

1.2 Results of the *Annual Attendance Report*

The core of the NEWB data-set consists of four variables. They record

(1) 'Total number of days lost through student absence in the entire school year',

(2) 'number of students who were absent for 20 days or more in the school year',

(3) 'total number of students expelled in respect of whom all appeal processes have been exhausted', and

(4) 'total number of students who were suspended'.

The numbers of schools listed in the tables below sometimes differ slightly from one table to the next. This is because schools providing data for one form of non-attendance may have had missing or unusable data for another.

1.2.1 Non-Attendance

The data provided by the first item *AAR* are referred to as 'non-attendance' in this report, in order to distinguish it from the more specific forms of non-attendance associated with 20-day absences, expulsions and suspensions. It is always expressed as the percentage of available student/days that are lost through absence. Non-attendance figures for 2006/07 to 2010/11 are presented in bold type in Table 1.3. Above them, are the numbers of students, student/days, days in the school year, and student/days lost, from which they are calculated, together with the number of schools providing data.

Table 1.3
Non-Attendance, 2006/07 to 2010/11

Primary	*2006/07*	*2007/08*	*2008/09*	*2009/10*	*2010/11*
Schools	3,152	3,116	3,075	3,160	3,235
Students	456,589	464,951	468,612	487,504	500,678
School Days per Year	183	183	183	183	183
Student/Days	83,555,787	85,086,033	85,755,996	89,213,232	91,624,074
Student/Days Lost	5,155,060	5,497,895	5,421,565	5,547,529	5,614353
	6.2%	**6.5%**	**6.3%**	**6.2%**	**6.1%**
Post-Primary					
Schools	669	664	655	670	685
Students	289,042	288,520	287,627	297,777	310,380
School Days per Year	167	167	167	167	167
Student/Days	48,270,014	48,182,840	48,033,709	49,728,759	51,833,460
Student/Days Lost	3,831,729	3,895,214	3,984,782	3,938,033	4,031,629
	7.9%	**8.1%**	**8.3%**	**7.9%**	**7.8%**

The information contained in the rows of the table is as follows:

Schools refers to the number schools providing usable data. The figure is therefore slightly smaller than the figure for *Schools Responding* (to the questionnaire) in Table 1.2. Note that the latter, in turn, is smaller than the *Schools* figure reported in Table 1.1, which refers to every school in the country.

Students gives the official DES enrolment figures for the schools in question, in the year in question.

School Days per Year is 183 in primary schools and 167 in post-primary schools.

Student/Days is the product of *Number of Students* and *School Days per Year*. In a primary school with 100 students it would be 18,300. It gives the maximum number of daily attendances that could be recorded in the school for the year. This figure would be achieved only if every student was present on every school day. *Student/Days Lost* is the figure requested by the first item on the *Annual Attendance Report*, 'individual student absences'. Ideally, it would correspond to the number of zeros recorded in an error-free roll-book for that year.

Non-Attendance is the same as *Student/Days Lost*, except that it is now expressed as a percentage of *Total Student/Days*, the maximum attendance that is possible. Thus *Non-Attendance* is *Student/Days Lost* divided by *Total Student/Days*, multiplied by 100 to convert the resulting proportion to a percentage.

The data show that 6.1% of pupil days were lost due to absence in primary schools in 2010/11 and that 7.8% of student days were lost in post-primary schools. Both the primary and post-primary figures are lower than for 2009/10 and are the lowest recorded over the five years.

1.2.2 Twenty-Day Absences

The number and percentage of 'students who were absent for 20 days or more' during the 2010/11 school year are summarised in Table 1.4, along with corresponding figures from 2006/07 to 2009/10.

Table 1.4
Twenty-Day Absences, 2006/07 to 2010/11

Primary	*2006/07*	*2007/08*	*2008/09*	*2009/10*	*2010/11*
Schools	3,156	3,117	3,079	3,198	3,256
Students	456,866	465,047	469,085	493,259	504,606
20-Day Absences	49,982	55,795	55,259	57,739	56,183
	10.9%	**12.0%**	**11.8%**	**11.7%**	**11.1%**
Post-Primary					
Schools	673	662	657	678	691
Students	290,723	287,835	288,986	301,548	312,240
20-Day Absences	54,005	50,893	52,096	52,992	51,621
	18.6%	**17.7%**	**18.0%**	**17.6%**	**16.5%**

The percentage of pupils who were absent for twenty-days or more lies in the range of approximately 11-12% in primary schools over the five year period. The 2010/11 figure lies at the lower end of this range and is down 0.6% on the previous year. For post-primary the figure is 1.1% lower than for 2009/10 and is the lowest figure for the period.

1.2.3 Expulsions

The numbers of expulsions reported by primary and post-primary schools are shown in Table 1.5. Expulsions are rare, particularly in primary schools. To give some context the figure represents less than 1 in every 2000 post-primary students and less than 1 in every 30,000 pupils in primary.

Table 1.5
Expulsions, 2006/07 to 2010/11

Primary	*2006/07*	*2007/08*	*2008/09*	*2009/10*	*2010/11*
Schools	3,155	3,117	3,081	3,199	3,256
Students	456,643	465,124	469,794	493,435	504,606
Expulsions	12	15	14	10	16
	0.003%	**0.003%**	**0.003%**	**0.002%**	**0.003%**
Post-Primary					
Schools	672	664	657	678	692
Students	290,222	288,520	288,986	301,548	312,603
Expulsions	151	136	128	148	136
	0.052%	**0.047%**	**0.044%**	**0.049%**	**0.044%**

1.2.4 Suspensions

The numbers of suspensions reported for 2010/11 are shown in Table 1.6, with equivalent figures for 2006/07 to 2009/10. Suspensions are rare in primary schools when compared to post-primary schools (0.2% in primary and 4.4% in post-primary). In percentage terms the figures in primary schools have remained fairly constant. However, the numbers of suspensions in post-primary schools is lowest in 2010/11 for the five-year period for which data are shown.

Table 1.6
Suspensions, 2006/07 to 2010/11

Primary	*2006/07*	*2007/08*	*2008/09*	*2009/10*	*2010/11*
Schools	3,156	3,117	3,081	3,199	3,256
Students	456,866	465,124	469,794	493,435	504,606
Suspensions	1,146	1,143	1,086	1,051	1,210
	0.3%	**0.2%**	**0.2%**	**0.2%**	**0.2%**
Post-Primary					
Schools	673	664	657	678	692
Students	290,723	288,520	288,986	301,548	312,603
Suspensions	15,857	15,915	14,235	14,162	13,878
	5.5%	**5.5%**	**4.9%**	**4.7%**	**4.4%**

1.3 Aspects of Non-Attendance

Non-attendance, defined as the percentage of all student/days lost through absence, needs to be discussed briefly. Twenty-day absences do not require any further discussion here, and neither do expulsions and suspensions.

1.3.1 Non-Attendance in the Population and in Schools

Firstly, non-attendance for the entire population of students, which has just been reported on, needs to be distinguished from non-attendance in a particular school. In this section of the report, non-attendance has in all cases been treated as feature of the population of students nationally, and the statistic is computed and presented accordingly, as shown above in Table 1.3. Schools don't enter the picture, except for their role in providing the data. Numbers of student/days lost through non-attendance are added up school by school, and only when the total number of student/days lost nation-wide has been calculated is non-attendance expressed as a percentage, by dividing through by the maximum student/days achievable nationwide in the year in question.

In Sections 2 and 3 of the report, on the other hand, non-attendance is calculated as a separate figure for each school. These figures are close to 0% in some schools and can be 20% or more in others. This rescaling, relative to the size of the school, provides an index that shows to what extent each school is affected by the phenomenon of non-attendance. Such school-based indices of non-attendance are essential in establishing relationships between non-attendance and other school-based measures of educational disadvantage, such as retention rates and academic achievement. They are also needed to link non-attendance to aspects of disadvantage described only at school level, as will be done in the following two sections of this report. In this Section, however, non-attendance refers to the percentage of students absent from school each day.

1.3.2 Precision of Non-Attendance Figures

Non-attendance is rounded to one decimal place in this report. This is the usual practice in the international literature, consistent with the view that two decimal places would overstate the level of precision that is to be expected in national non-attendance data. Nonetheless, Table 1.7 shows that a difference of even one tenth of one percent in non-attendance nationally amounts to a very substantial numbers of student/days saved or lost. Thus the reported figure of 6.1% for non-attendance in primary schools in 2010/11 suggests a decrease of 0.1% in the figure of 6.2% reported for 2009/10 (Table 1.3), implying a gain of 93,000 additional student days in attendance. The decrease in non-attendance of 0.1% in post-primary from 2009/10 implies an additional 53,000 student days in attendance.

The question arises whether the data are accurate enough to be interpreted in this way, or whether changes of the magnitude of 0.1% should be treated as random fluctuations due to error in the data. Analyses by Mac Aogáin (2008) and Millar (2010) suggest that error in the data due to inconsistency is considerable and therefore changes of this size are likely to be attributable only to error. Annual data are now checked for year-on-year consistency within schools and where abnormally large changes occur NEWB contact the school to confirm or correct the return. This process should, in time, reduce inconsistency and improve the accuracy of attendance data.

Table 1.7
Differences in Percentage Non-Attendance Nationally, Expressed as Changes in Numbers of Student/Days, 2010/11

	Primary	*Post-Primary*
Non-Attendance (NA)	6.1	7.8
Population of Students	509,652	317,432
School Days	183	167
Student/Days	93,266,316	53,011,144
0.1% gain/loss in NA as Student/Days	93,266	53,011

1.3.3 Other Formulations of Non-Attendance Rates

Since non-attendance is reported as a percentage of student/days, where the latter is the product of Total Students and Total School Days, it can be applied directly to either of these figures, as is done in Table 1.8 for the 2010/11 data. When applied in this way, the non-attendance percentage returns figures for

(1) students absent per day, and

(2) days lost per student per year .

Table 1.8
Re-Expressions of Non-Attendance, 2010/11

	Primary	Post-Primary
Non-Attendance	6.1	7.8
Total Students	509,652	317,432
Students Absent per Day	31,100	24,800
Total School Days	183	167
Days Lost per Student	11	13

Section 2

Non-Attendance in Primary Schools, 2010/11

2.1. Non-Attendance by School Type

Irish pupils with special educational needs may attend special schools or special classes and ordinary classes within 'mainstream' schools. Table 2.1 shows the percentage of available student/days lost through absence for mainstream schools, mainstream schools with special classes, and special schools. The total figures are directly comparable to those shown in Table 1.3, above.

Table 2.1
Percentage of Available Student/Days Lost Through Absence by School Type, 2009/10 and 2010/11

	2009/10		*2010/11*	
	Non-Attendance	*Schools*	*Non-Attendance*	*Schools*
Ordinary	5.6	2,505	5.5	2,513
Ordinary with special classes	7.5	549	7.3	601
Special	11.3	106	11.5	121
Total	6.2	3,160	6.1	3,235

Pupils in mainstream primary schools were absent for 5.5% of the available days in 2010/11. The percentage days lost was higher for mainstream schools with special classes (7.3%) and highest in special schools (11.5%). These figures are similar to those for the previous year.

2.2. Non-Attendance in Urban and Rural Schools

NEWB non-attendance data gathered from primary schools were merged with data maintained by the ERC on the same schools. The ERC data are based on a nationwide survey of disadvantage in all mainstream[4] primary schools conducted in 2005. The ERC data include details on school location and level of disadvantage. Special schools were not included in the survey and these schools are not included in the following analysis. A total of 2,960 schools (94.4% of the 3,134 mainstream schools that returned AAR data) were matched for 2010/11. Table 2.2 gives averages for non-attendance, 20-day absences, and suspensions in urban and rural primary schools. Expulsions have not been included because of the low numbers.

[4] Including mainstream schools with special classes.

Table 2.2
Non-Attendance in Urban and Rural Primary Schools, 2009/10 and 2010/11

	2009/10			*2010/11*		
Non Attendance	*Mean*	*N Schools*	*SD*	*Mean*	*N Schools*	*SD*
Rural Schools	4.99	1,880	1.46	5.00	1,911	1.46
Urban Schools	6.96	1,013	2.69	6.83	1,030	2.95
Total	5.68	2,893	2.19	5.64	2,941	2.28
20-Day Absences	*Mean*	*N Schools*	*SD*	*Mean*	*N Schools*	*SD*
Rural Schools	7.62	1,899	6.38	7.34	1,919	6.38
Urban Schools	14.84	1,027	9.28	14.12	1,041	9.13
Total	10.15	2,926	8.28	9.73	2,960	8.13
Suspensions	*Mean*	*N Schools*	*SD*	*Mean*	*N Schools*	*SD*
Rural Schools	.05	1,899	.36	.05	1,919	.37
Urban Schools	.33	1,028	1.13	.36	1,041	1.30
Total	.15	2,927	.74	.16	2,960	.84

*Rural location is defined as "A village or rural community – population less than 1499".

Non-attendance in all forms is higher in urban schools. This is in line with the findings for 2009/10. Twenty-day absences distinguish urban from rural schools much more sharply than general non-attendance does. Suspensions, while uncommon in either school type, are more common in urban schools.

In looking at table 2.2 it should be remembered that data on absenteeism are here reported at the school level (see section 1.3.1 above). For example, for the 2,960 matched schools in 2010/11 the percentage of days lost was calculated for each school. Then the mean and standard deviation for all schools was calculated. Thus for the 1,911 rural schools the mean percentage of student days lost per school was 5.00%. The mean percentage of pupil days lost for the 1,030 urban schools was higher, 6.83%. However, there was some variation within each school type (as measured by the standard deviation), with this spread being greater for urban schools. Much the same is true for the twenty-day absences and suspensions. For the 2,960 schools for which we have data for 2010/11, the mean school figure for the percentage of pupils missing twenty days' schooling was just under 10%. However, there were considerable differences between schools as shown by the large standard deviation (8.13). This means that some schools will have had no pupils absent for twenty or more days while others will have more than one fifth (20%) of pupils missing this number of days.

2.3 DEIS Categories and Non-Attendance

In addition to information on school location, the *AAR* data were linked to levels of disadvantage in schools. The DEIS categories can be equated with the amount of assistance received by schools in the School Support Programme (SSP). This yields five categories: (1) Rural not in SSP, (2) Rural in SSP, (3) Urban not in SSP, (4)

Urban in SSP Band 2, and (5) Urban in SSP Band 1. SSP schools experience higher levels of disadvantage than non-SSP schools. For urban schools there are two SSP bands, with schools in band 1 experiencing greater levels of disadvantage.

Figures for non-attendance in the DEIS classification of schools are presented in Tables 2.3, 2.4 and 2.5.

Table 2.3
Non-Attendance and DEIS Categories

		2009/10			*2010/11*		
		Mean	*Schools*	*SD*	*Mean*	*Schools*	*SD*
Rural	Not in SSP	4.91	1,568	1.36	4.92	1,600	1.36
Rural	In SSP	5.44	312	1.83	5.41	311	1.84
Urban	Not in SSP	6.21	697	1.98	6.11	714	1.98
Urban	In SSP Band 2	7.92	130	2.10	7.91	134	2.34
Urban	In SSP Band 1	9.08	186	3.81	8.84	182	4.78
	Total	5.68	2,893	2.19	5.64	2,941	2.28

Table 2.4
Twenty-Day Absences and DEIS Categories

		2009/10			*2010/11*		
		Mean	*Schools*	*SD*	*Mean*	*Schools*	*SD*
Rural	Not in SSP	7.17	1,582	5.80	6.97	1,606	5.87
Rural	In SSP	9.84	317	8.35	9.25	313	8.26
Urban	Not in SSP	11.64	708	7.57	11.12	722	7.07
Urban	In SSP Band 2	19.36	132	8.05	19.58	135	9.39
Urban	In SSP Band 1	23.77	187	8.83	21.90	184	9.68
	Total	10.15	2,929	8.28	9.73	2,960	8.13

A comparison of tables 2.3 and 2.4, for non-attendance and 20-day absences, shows that both are linked to the DEIS categories. However, 20-day absences display the link more graphically. The two tables also show an important urban/rural dimension to non-attendance. Table 2.3 shows that non-disadvantaged urban schools (*Urban Not in SSP*) in both 2009/10 and 2010/11 had higher levels of non-attendance than disadvantaged rural school (*Rural in SSP*). Table 2.4 shows a substantial difference in twenty-day absences between DEIS and non-DEIS schools. These differences are more pronounced in urban schools.

The figures for suspensions and DEIS categories are given in Table 2.5.
As noted above, suspensions are too infrequent in primary schools to give this variable a substantial association with other disadvantage variables. Just under one percent of pupils (or 1 in 100) were suspended in Urban SSP Band 1 schools in 2010/11. In Urban Band 2 schools the figure was about 1 in 200 pupils. In the other groups it is of the order of 1 in 1000 or fewer. This pattern is the same for 2008/09 and earlier (Millar, 2011).

Table 2.5
Suspensions and DEIS Categories

		2009/10			*2010/11*		
		Mean	*Schools*	*SD*	*Mean*	*Schools*	*SD*
Rural	Not in SSP	0.04	1,582	0.34	0.04	1,606	0.31
Rural	In SSP	0.09	317	0.46	0.08	313	0.59
Urban	Not in SSP	0.12	709	0.37	0.17	722	0.82
Urban	In SSP Band 2	0.37	132	1.04	0.54	135	1.26
Urban	In SSP Band 1	1.08	187	2.25	0.96	184	2.29
	Total	0.15	2,927	0.74	0.16	2,960	0.84

2.4. Non-Attendance by Province and County

Table 2.6 shows the data for mean non-attendance, 20-day absences, expulsions and suspensions by area. As elsewhere in this section, the data in table 2.6 are calculated at the school level and then the average non-attendance is reported for all schools in a particular province or county. Absenteeism data are directly comparable although the absolute numbers of students differ between regions. Thus the mean percentage of school days lost is 6.3 in Leinster schools and 5.2 in schools in Ulster (Part of). This difference represents just over 2 school days per year per child. Again from table 2.6 we see that the mean percentage of pupils per school who were absent twenty-days or more (Abs20) was 11.9% for Leinster and 8.4% for Ulster.

From tables 2.6 it is apparent that expulsions (Exp) and suspensions (Sus) are very unlikely for any particular school. This reflects the data reported earlier which showed that the number of expulsions and suspensions in primary schools was very low.

Table 2.6 *Non-Attendance by County for Primary Schools 2010/11*

	Abs.	Abs20	Exp.	Sus.
LEINSTER	6.3	11.9	0.01	0.53
Carlow	5.5	9.8	0.02	0.18
Dublin	7.2	15.2	0.02	1.14
Kildare	6.0	10.6	0.00	0.25
Kilkenny	5.3	7.7	0.00	0.30
Laois	6.2	11.6	0.00	0.20
Longford	6.0	12.3	0.00	0.14
Louth	6.5	12.7	0.01	0.14
Meath	5.2	8.9	0.00	0.06
Offaly	5.9	11.0	0.00	0.08
Westmeath	5.6	9.3	0.00	0.23
Wexford	5.5	9.7	0.00	0.23
Wicklow	6.0	9.7	0.00	0.24
MUNSTER	5.8	10.0	0.00	0.39
Clare	5.6	10.0	0.00	0.21
Cork	5.7	9.8	0.01	0.40
Kerry	5.6	9.1	0.00	0.06
Limerick	7.0	13.0	0.00	0.72
Tipperary N.R.	5.2	8.6	0.01	0.15
Tipperary S.R.	5.4	8.7	0.00	0.85
Waterford	5.7	9.5	0.00	0.26
CONNACHT	5.7	10.0	0.00	0.13
Galway	6.0	11.0	0.00	0.15
Leitrim	5.5	8.5	0.00	0.16
Mayo	5.6	9.2	0.00	0.12
Roscommon	5.4	9.1	0.00	0.03
Sligo	5.7	10.9	0.00	0.22
ULSTER (part of)	5.2	8.4	0.00	0.07
Cavan	5.7	10.9	0.00	0.03
Donegal	5.0	7.6	0.00	0.09
Monaghan	5.0	7.8	0.00	0.06
STATE	5.9	10.6	0.00	0.37

Section 3

Non-Attendance in Post-Primary Schools, 2010/11

3.1. Secondary, Vocational, and Community/Comprehensive Schools

Non-Attendance data for secondary, vocational, and community/comprehensive schools are shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1
Non-Attendance and Type of School

	2009/10			*2010/11*		
Type of School	*Mean*	*Schools*	*SD*	*Mean*	*Schools*	*SD*
Non-Attendance						
Secondary	7.30	369	2.70	7.30	374	3.04
Comm. / Comp.	8.67	85	2.93	8.21	89	2.50
Vocational	10.49	216	4.58	10.07	222	4.36
Total	8.50	670	3.73	8.32	685	3.68
20-Day Absences						
Secondary	15.52	372	10.07	14.53	379	10.71
Comm. / Comp.	19.45	88	10.82	18.95	90	9.99
Vocational	25.87	218	15.43	24.68	222	14.31
Total	19.36	678	12.99	18.37	691	12.74
Expulsions						
Secondary	0.06	372	0.19	0.04	379	0.14
Comm. / Comp.	0.08	88	0.25	0.04	90	0.12
Vocational	0.06	218	0.20	0.09	223	0.33
Total	0.06	678	0.20	0.05	692	0.22
Suspensions						
Secondary	3.69	372	3.89	3.73	379	4.15
Comm. / Comp.	6.29	88	5.78	6.08	90	5.81
Vocational	8.31	218	9.97	7.25	222	7.14
Total	5.51	678	6.99	5.16	691	5.72

All forms of non-attendance are generally lowest in secondary schools and higher in community/comprehensive schools and vocational schools. The pattern of results is broadly similar to 2009/10. However, all measures of non-attendance are lower for 2010/11 than for the previous year.

3.2 DEIS and Non-Attendance

Non-attendance data in DEIS and all other schools are summarised in Table 3.2. The numbers of schools providing data are given in brackets.

Table 3.2
Non-Attendance in DEIS Schools

	2009/10		*2010/11*	
	DEIS	*Other*	*DEIS*	*Other*
Non-Attendance	11.59 (188)	7.30 (482)	11.17 (189)	7.23 (496)
20-Day Absences	29.60 (191)	15.34 (487)	28.39 (189)	14.60 (502)
Expulsions	0.13 (191)	0.04 (487)	0.11 (190)	0.03 (502)
Suspensions	10.80 (191)	3.44 (487)	10.16 (190)	3.27 (501)

DEIS schools show higher figures for all forms of non-attendance. The mean number of student per school missing twenty days or more is roughly twice as high in DEIS schools as compared to non-DEIS schools. Overall, about 30% of students in DEIS post-primary schools were absent for more than 20 days. However, this figure is down by 1% on 2009/10 and is 3% lower than in 2008/09 (Millar 2011). All forms of non-attendance were lower in 2010/11 than in the previous year in both DEIS and other schools.

3.3. Non-Attendance by Province and County

Table 3.3 shows the data for mean non-attendance, 20-day absences, expulsions and suspensions across schools by area. Absenteeism rates are directly comparable although the absolute numbers of students differ between regions.

As with the other tables in this section, the data in tables 3.3 are calculated at the school level and then the average non-attendance is reported for all schools in a particular category. Thus in table 3.3 the mean percentage of school days lost is 8.2% in Leinster schools and 8.6% in schools in Ulster (Part of). Again from table 3.3 we see that the mean percentage of pupils per school who were absent twenty-days or more (Abs20) was 18.8% for Leinster and 19.7% for Ulster (Part of).

Table 3.3 *Non-Attendance by County for Post-Primary Schools 2010/11*

	Abs.	Abs20	Exp.	Sus.
LEINSTER	8.2	18.8	0.07	6.17
Carlow	8.1	19.4	0.25	3.89
Dublin	8.1	18.1	0.08	6.67
Kildare	8.6	21.8	0.02	6.70
Kilkenny	7.9	15.1	0.02	3.87
Laois	10.1	24.9	0.02	5.53
Longford	10.6	28.2	0.05	7.63
Louth	7.9	17.5	0.02	4.81
Meath	6.8	14.2	0.03	5.62
Offaly	8.7	21.7	0.02	5.37
Westmeath	8.6	21.7	0.00	5.12
Wexford	9.7	20.3	0.15	7.56
Wicklow	7.1	16.1	0.05	5.37
MUNSTER	8.1	16.8	0.05	4.30
Clare	8.1	15.9	0.01	5.09
Cork	8.0	15.8	0.02	3.84
Kerry	9.0	19.6	0.00	3.60
Limerick	8.5	19.3	0.13	4.75
Tipperary N.R.	8.4	19.0	0.03	3.93
Tipperary S.R.	7.5	15.5	0.16	4.73
Waterford	6.9	12.8	0.07	5.81
CONNACHT	8.9	19.6	0.03	4.03
Galway	8.7	20.5	0.04	3.39
Leitrim	8.5	13.5	0.00	4.16
Mayo	9.3	22.0	0.02	3.88
Roscommon	9.5	14.8	0.00	4.04
Sligo	8.5	17.8	0.07	6.47
ULSTER (part of)	8.6	19.7	0.02	4.26
Cavan	9.0	24.5	0.04	5.65
Donegal	8.3	19.4	0.02	4.35
Monaghan	9.1	16.5	0.00	3.02
STATE	8.3	18.4	0.05	5.16

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Appendix

Comparison with Northern Irish and British Rates of Non-attendance

Table 1 shows data non-attendance in Ireland and the nations of the UK for 2010/11.

Table 1 *Total Absence in Primary and Secondary Schools in Ireland and the UK 2010/11*

	Primary		Post-primary	
	Unauthorised	Overall	Unauthorised	Overall
Ireland	-	6.1%	-	7.8%
Northern Ireland	1.4%	5.1%	2.8%	7.4%
England	0.7%	5.1%	1.4%	6.5%
Scotland	1.2%	5.2%	2.7%	8.8%
Wales	0.9%	6.7%	1.5%	8.6%

Non-attendance rates for 2010/11 were about 1% higher in Irish primary schools than schools in Northern Ireland, England and Scotland, and 0.6% lower than for Wales. At post-primary England and Northern Ireland had a lower rate of non-attendance than Ireland, although the rate for Northern Ireland was closer to the Irish figure.

Two things are worth noting when comparing the data. First, Northern Ireland, England and Wales provide data on unauthorised (and authorised) absences. The UK data on authorised and unauthorised absences are quite detailed (Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, 2012) and lists eight reasons for authorised and four for unauthorised absence. Such information is not currently collected on the AAR.

As noted by Mac Aogáin (2008), there are obvious difficulties with the notion of unauthorised absence as a variable in a national data-base. Subjective judgments about the reasons for absence are inevitably involved in deciding whether or not it is authorised. In addition, authorisation may be easier to get in some schools than in others. And even if reasonably objective criteria for unauthorised absence could be established and implemented nation-wide, it does not follow, in any case, that fully authorised absence, complete with letters, certificates, etc., can be treated as if it were not a problem.

The second point to be taken into consideration is that the UK data differentiate between special schools and mainstream schools in the primary sector. The Irish data in Table 1 and in previous tables treat special and ordinary primary schools together. This approach is in line with that taken by Mac Aogáin (2008) but differs from the two previous NEWB attendance reports (Weir, 2004; Ó Briain, 2006) where data for special schools was not reported on at all. Table 2 shows Irish primary data by school type together with Northern Irish data

Table 2
Total Absence in Primary and Special Schools in Ireland and Northern Ireland 2010/11

	Ireland	Northern Ireland
Primary	5.3%	5.1%
Primary with special class(es)	7.4%	-
Special	12.4%	10.2%

Two things can be taken from Table 2. First, while non-attendance in primary schools is still higher in Ireland than in Northern Ireland, the difference is in the order of 0.2% rather than 1.0%. Second, the rate of non-attendance is higher in primary schools with special classes and special schools. Indeed, the rate of absenteeism in special schools is twice the figure for mainstream schools. Given this, and given the desire to understand and deal with certain aspects of non-attendance, it is perhaps not the best policy to treat the primary school sector as an homogenous whole. This is not done in other jurisdictions. Neither are data at post-primary taken as a whole, either in previous NEWB reports or here. In the case of post-primary schools, for example, mention has previously been made of higher rates of non-attendance in vocational schools compared to secondary schools (Weir, 2004; Ó Briain, 2006 and Mac Aogáin, 2008).