

# JSNA Health and Wellbeing Profile 2024/25

## Pupil Absence

### Summary points

- The Department for Education have published attendance data for academic year 2022/23.
- Attendance rates for Bristol continue to present a persistent challenge over time, when in comparison to the England and South-West averages
- The majority of absence was authorised absence, which accounted for 5.7% of possible sessions in 2022/23. Absence rates authorised for illness remain persistently high
- In 2022/23, the persistent absentees (10% or more sessions missed) rate was stubbornly high at 26%.
- High rates of illnesses, anxiety and mental health & wellbeing have continued to have a significant impact on school absence rates amongst pupils.
- The local authority continues to work routinely with the Department for Education to support improvements with attendance practice in line with government guidance “Working Together to improve School Attendance”. This guidance has been produced to help schools, trusts, governing bodies and local authorities maintain and develop high levels of attendance. The guidance has reinforced expectations placed on different stakeholders and outlines clear responsibilities for those involved.
- There are a significant number of local pressures that have impacted attendance related activity including but not limited to the availability of school places for certain phases and areas; the arrival and movement of refugee groups including families from Afghanistan and Ukraine in addition to other groups newly arrived to the city.

### Absence rates including by phase

Improving the overall school attendance rate remains a significant challenge post-pandemic and this is reflected in national data as well as in Bristol, based on the most recent published data. The gap between Bristol and national data has started to widen again across all phases. Overall, Bristol’s absence rates continue to track above the national trends and this is a long enduring persistent trend that pre-dates the pandemic.

#### Absence Rates: Bristol

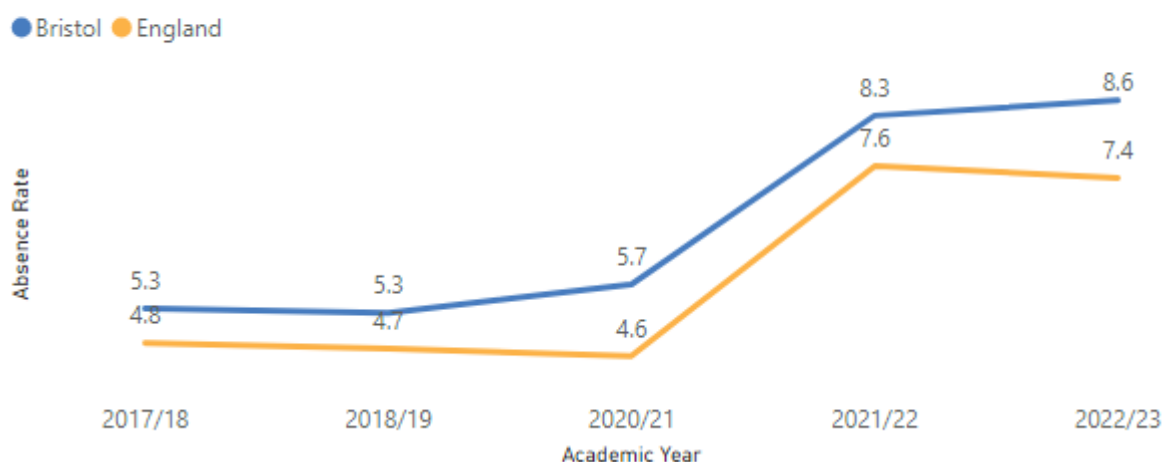


Figure 1: Absence rates: Bristol compared with England 2017/18 to 2022/23

### Persistent Absence

Persistent Absence (PA) is defined as the percentage of pupils attending fewer than 90% of possible sessions. The number of pupils who are PA remains high, the gap between national (England) and Bristol data has widened in the most recent published report from the Department for Education.

PA (<90%) Rates: Bristol

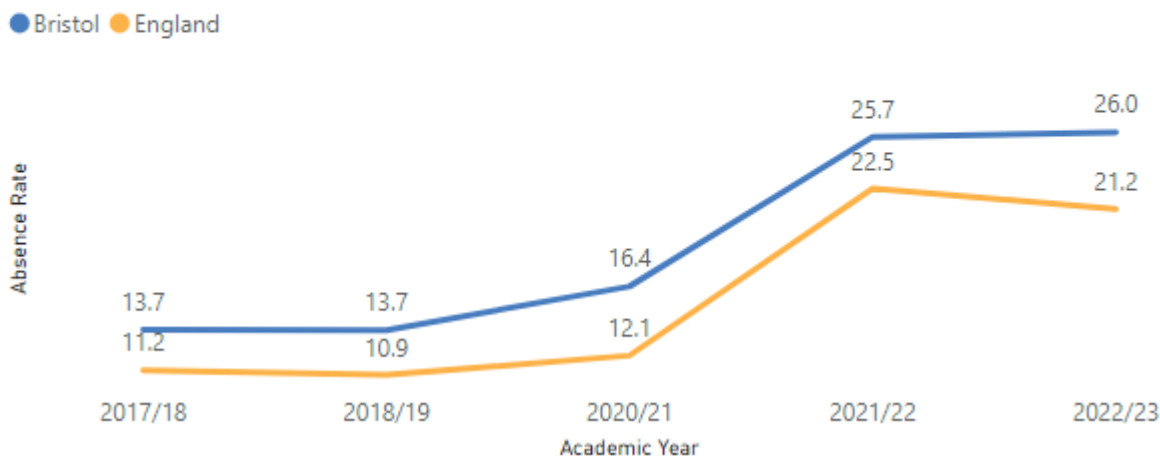


Figure 2: Persistent absence rate 2017/18 to 2022/23

### Statistical Neighbours

Bristol has the highest overall absence rate of all our statistical neighbours (Figure 3). Reading has the lowest, the gap between the two local authorities being 1.07%.

Bristol is in the same position (highest) in relation to persistent absence (children with below 90% attendance). However, when considering severely absence children (children with below 50% attendance) Bristol has the second highest rate in comparison with its statistical neighbours, with Sheffield having the highest rate.

Statistical Neighbour Rates. Year: 2022/23, Absence, All Phases, Total



Figure 3: Absence rate compared to statistical neighbours 2022/23

**Equalities data:**

At a local level we continue to collect and analyse attendance and pupil absence data based on protected characteristics including gender and ethnicity, to allow comparison with national data where available (Figure 4). Data in relation to absence rates for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) is also collected and analysed.

SEND: There is a wide disparity between the absence rates of those with SEND and those without.

Year: 2022/23, Absence, All Phases

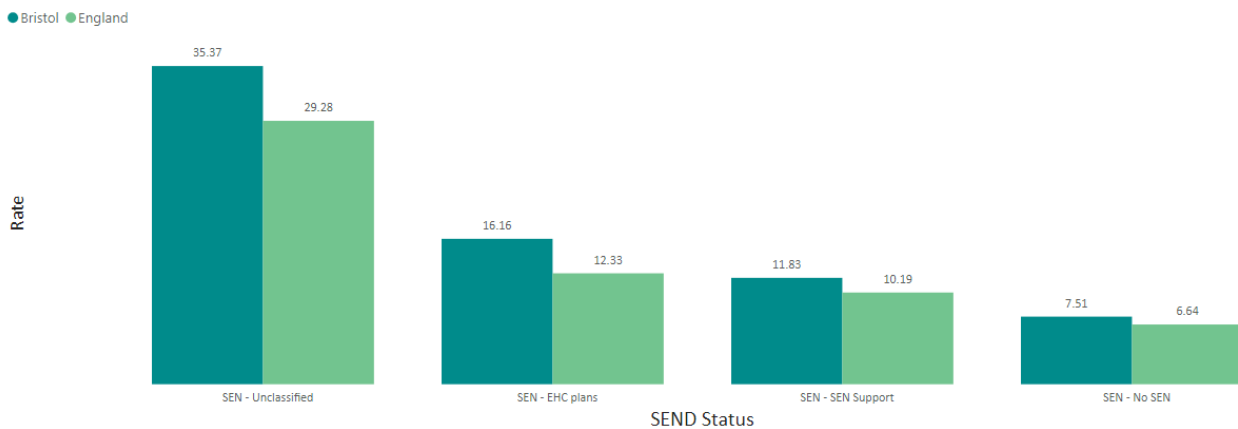


Figure 4: Absence rate by SEN categories 2022/23

Ethnicity: The absence rates amongst certain ethnic groups is disproportionately high especially amongst children and young people identified as Gypsy Roma Traveller (Figure 5). Work continues to understand the factors that underpin absence rates amongst the different groups to ensure the development policies and practices to address these issues.

Year: 2022/23, Absence, All Phases



Figure 5: Absence rates by ethnicity 2022/23

To understand the factors underpinning attendance and absence further analysis has taken place locally to examine key factors including deprivation.

Deprivation: There is a clear correlation between deprivation and high rates of absence (Figure 6). The measure of deprivation being used here is the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI). Decile 1 (0-10%) is the most deprived area, 10 (90-100%) the least. This is based on the pupils' residence rather than the location of the school.

Absence Rate by IDACI

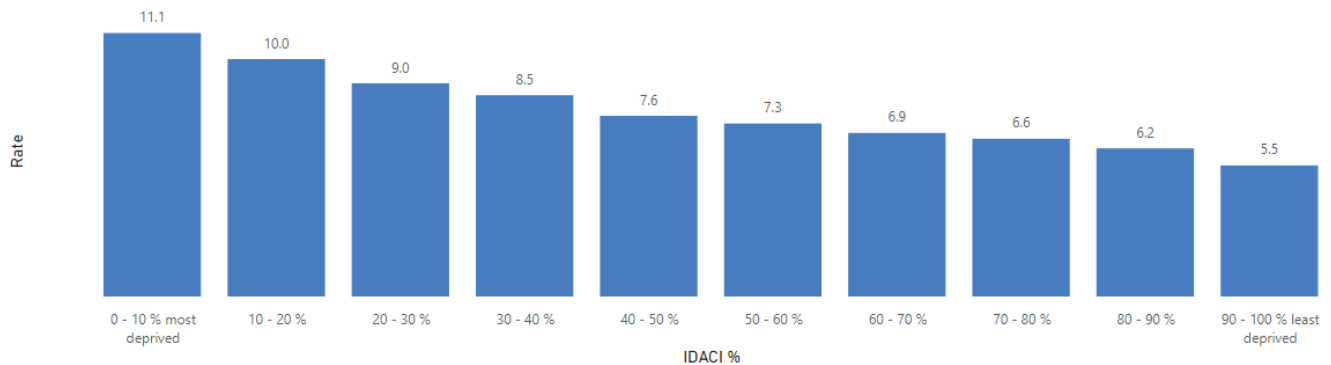


Figure 6: Absence rates by IDACI deprivation 2022/23

The current cost of living crisis has meant that poverty has worsened, though this is affecting the whole of the country. However, Bristol has a higher than most proportion of pupils living in the bottom IDACI decile, when compared to our statistical neighbours. Looking at all statistical neighbours and the absence rates for those living in the bottom 10% areas of deprivation shows that Bristol has the highest absence rate.

## Strategic Developments

Work has already commenced to address the attendance concerns identified in the most recent figures released by the Department for Education. The Local Authority is continuing to work in partnership with the Department for Education.

### Further data / links / consultations:

Links to published data set:

- <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/pupil-absence-in-schools-in-england>

**Date updated:** May 2024

**Next update due:** May 2025