

# JSNA Health and Wellbeing Profile 2023/24

## Pupil Absence

### Summary points

- Winter illnesses including Covid-19, flu and strep-A have had a significant impact on school absence rates amongst pupils. Winter illnesses have also impacted on the availability of school staff and in extreme circumstances resulted in partial class closures.
- There have been a number of issues that have disrupted attendance including industrial action, additional bank holidays and severe weather. This can create broken weeks making it harder for children to establish and maintain routines around regular attendance.
- The Department of Education have published attendance data for academic year 2021/22.
- 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.
- Schools in Bristol are participating in a data trial with the Department for Education and a software company WONDE to obtain and share live attendance data to inform decision making and practice.
- There are a significant number of pressures that have impacted attendance related activity including but not limited to the availability of school places for certain phases and areas; the arrival of refugee groups including families from Afghanistan and Ukraine in addition to other groups newly arrived to the city.
- Schools are reporting higher rates of fatigue, anxiety and mental health concerns amongst pupils. This has been notable since the pandemic. The Department for Education have published new guidance to help schools, trusts, governing bodies and local authorities with this “Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools”.

### 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. However, the gap between Bristol and national data has narrowed.

Absence rates in primary schools continue to rise in line with national trends. However, the rate between national and local data are narrowing. This pattern is also reflected at secondary level, although the gap between Bristol and national levels remains consistent. For specialist settings, there has been an overall improvement in the rate of attendance based on the latest published data. However, the gap between Bristol and national data has widened.

Overall, Bristol continues to track above the national trends.

### Absence Rates: Bristol Compared with England

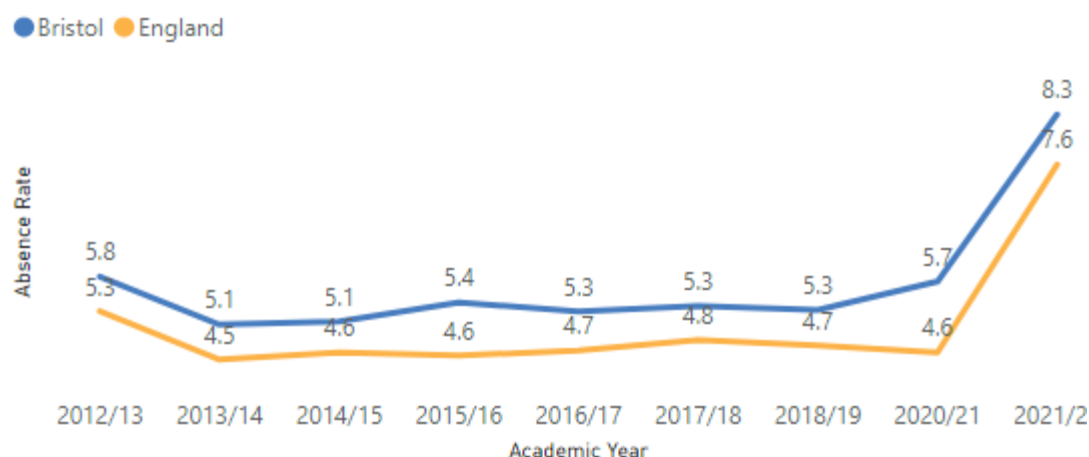


Figure 1: Absence rates: Bristol compared with England

### 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, although the gap between national (England) and Bristol data has reduced in the most recent published report from the Department for Education. The overall rate of PA pupils shows a reduction in Bristol (2021/22). Note the most effective comparison of PA data is to utilise figures for a complete academic year as PA is significantly dependant on the timescale over which it is measured.

### PA (<90%) Rates: Bristol Compared with England

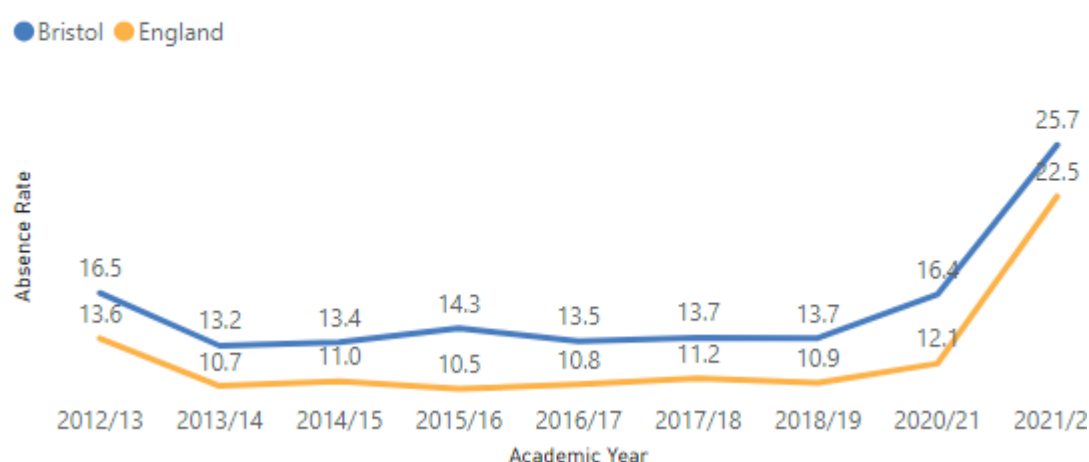


Figure 2: Persistent absence rate 2012/13 to 2020/21

## Statistical Neighbours

Bristol has the second highest overall absence rate of all our statistical neighbours (Figure 3). Leeds, which is also a Core City, has the lowest, the gap between the two local authorities being 0.82%.

Bristol is in the same position (second 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 highest rate in comparison with its statistical neighbours.

### Statistical Neighbour Rates. Year: 2021/22, Absence, All Phases, Total



Figure 3: Absence rate compared to statistical neighbours 2021/22

## 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: 2021/22, Absence, All Phases

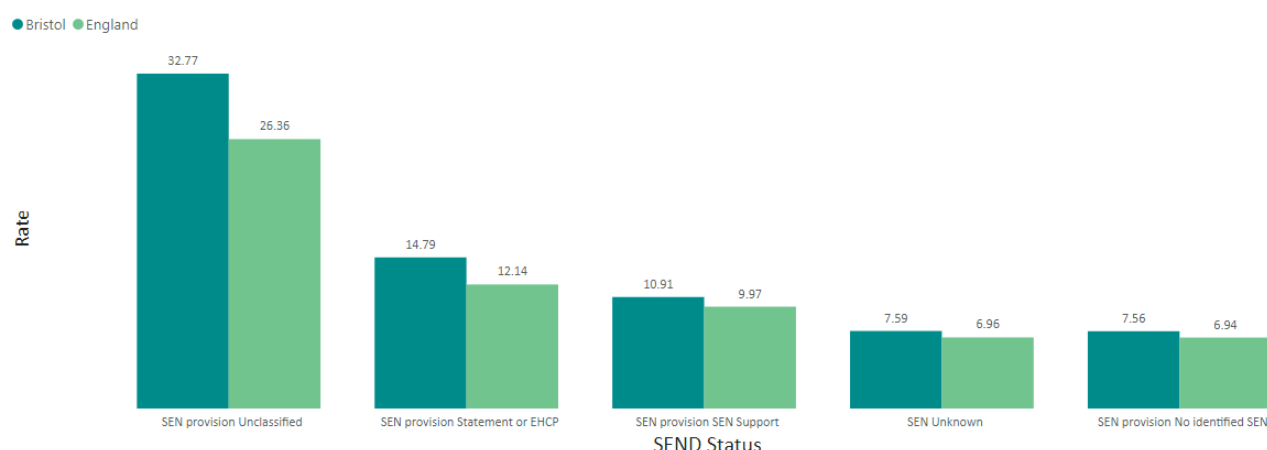


Figure 4: Absence rate by SEN categories 2021/22

**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: 2021/22, Absence, All Phases

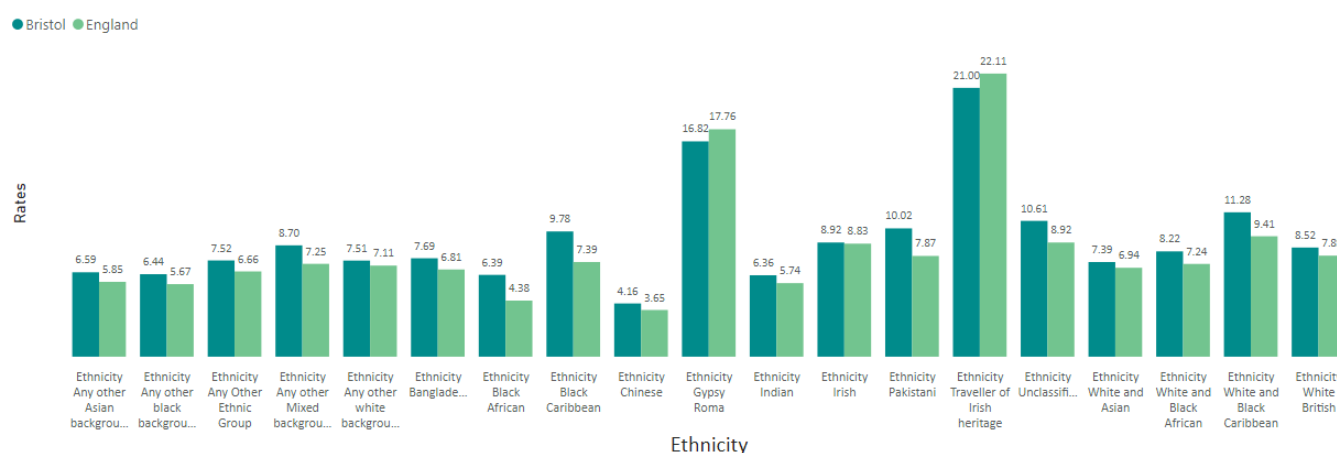


Figure 5: Absence rates by ethnicity 2020/21

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 poor school attendance (Figure 6). The measure of deprivation being used here is the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI). Decile 1 is the most deprived area, 10 the least. This is based on the pupils' residence rather than the location of the school.

Current Attendance Rate by IDACI Decile

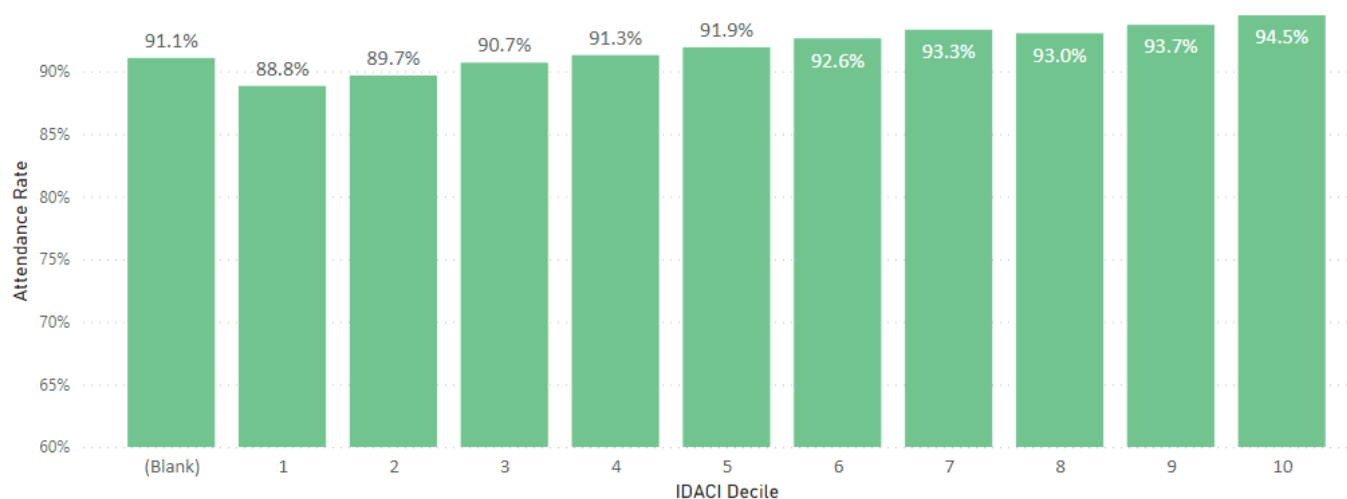


Figure 6: Absence rates by deprivation

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 working in partnership with the Department for Education resulting in the completion of a detailed self-evaluation and the development of an extensive action plan.

## Further data / links / consultations:

Links to published data set:

- [Pupil absence in schools in England, Academic year 2021/22 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/)
- [IDACI - GOV.UK \(education.gov.uk\)](https://education.gov.uk/)

**Date updated:** May 2023

**Next update due:** May 2024