

# JSNA Health and Wellbeing Profile 2025/26

## Pupil Absence (based on data from The Department for Education for academic year 2023/24)

### National Overview (England)

- Overall absence rates slightly decreased compared to the same period the previous year: 7.1% (↓ from 7.4% in 2022/23)
- Persistent absence rate (10%+ sessions missed): dropped to 20.0% (↓ from 21.2%)
- Severe absence rate (50%+ sessions missed): increased to 2.3% (↑ from 2.0%)
- Main reason for absence: Illness (3.5%)
- Authorised absence decreased nationally (from 5.0% to 4.7%), while unauthorised absence slightly increased in secondary and special schools
- Severe absence was highest in special schools (7.2%)

### Bristol Specific Insights

- Bristol's overall absence rate is above the national average, reflecting ongoing pre and post-pandemic challenges.
- Bristol's attendance rates remain below national and South-West averages, with a widening gap.
- Higher absence rates locally are driven by underlying actors such as deprivation and the prevalence of special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).
- Deprivation is strongly correlated with higher absence rates. Bristol has a higher proportion of pupils in the most deprived areas compared to statistical neighbours.
- SEND and FSM eligible pupils in Bristol have significantly higher absence and persistent absence rates than their peers.
- Challenges identified include high illness-related authorised absences and mental health and anxiety continue to impact attendance.
- We recognise that some pupil groups, including Gypsy Roma Traveller (GRT), Black Caribbean, and White and Black Caribbean children, experience higher levels of absence. While the number of GRT pupils is relatively small, it's important that we continue to understand and address the unique challenges faced by all communities, so that every child feels supported and included in their education.

### Absence rates, including by phase

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 (Figure 1). Local trends show Bristol absence rates remain **above national averages**, especially in deprived areas. The gap between Bristol and national data has started to widen again across all phases.

### Absence Rates: Bristol

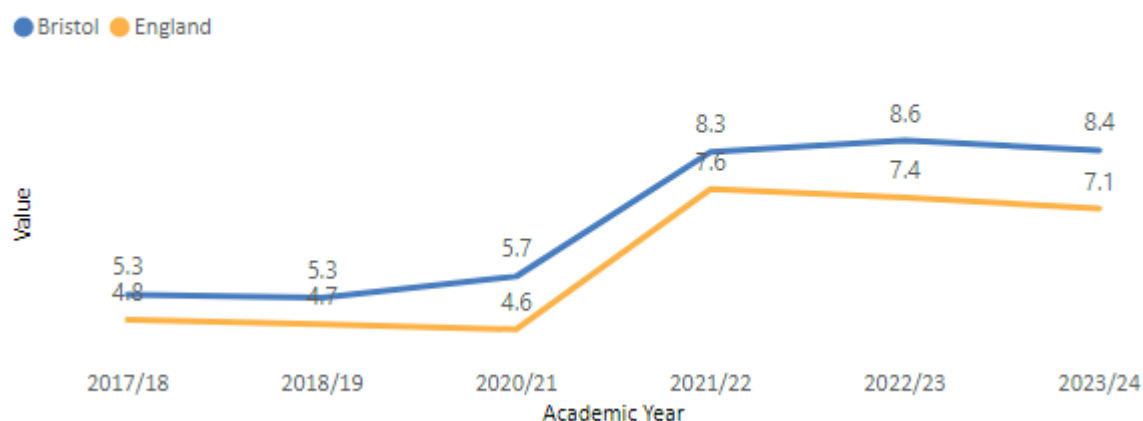


Figure 1: Absence rates: Bristol compared with England 2017/18 to 2023/24

### 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 remained the same as the previous academic year (Figure 2).

### PA (<90%) Rates: Bristol

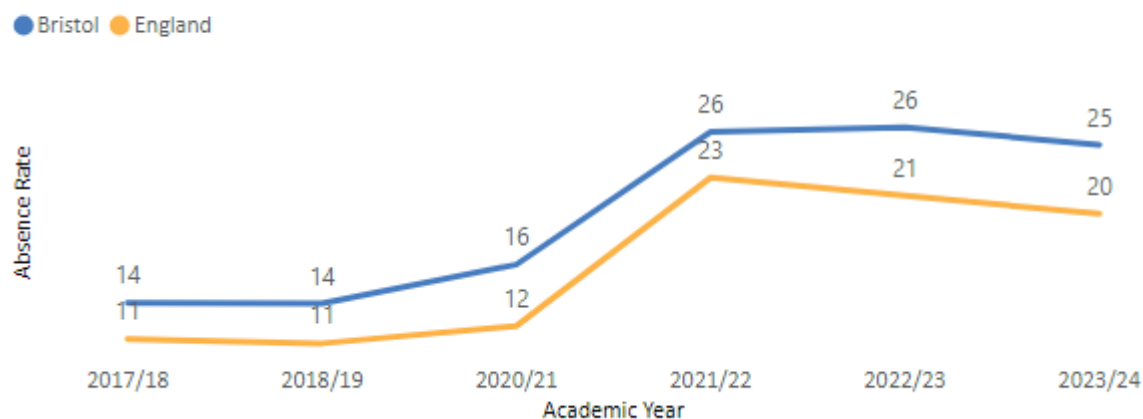


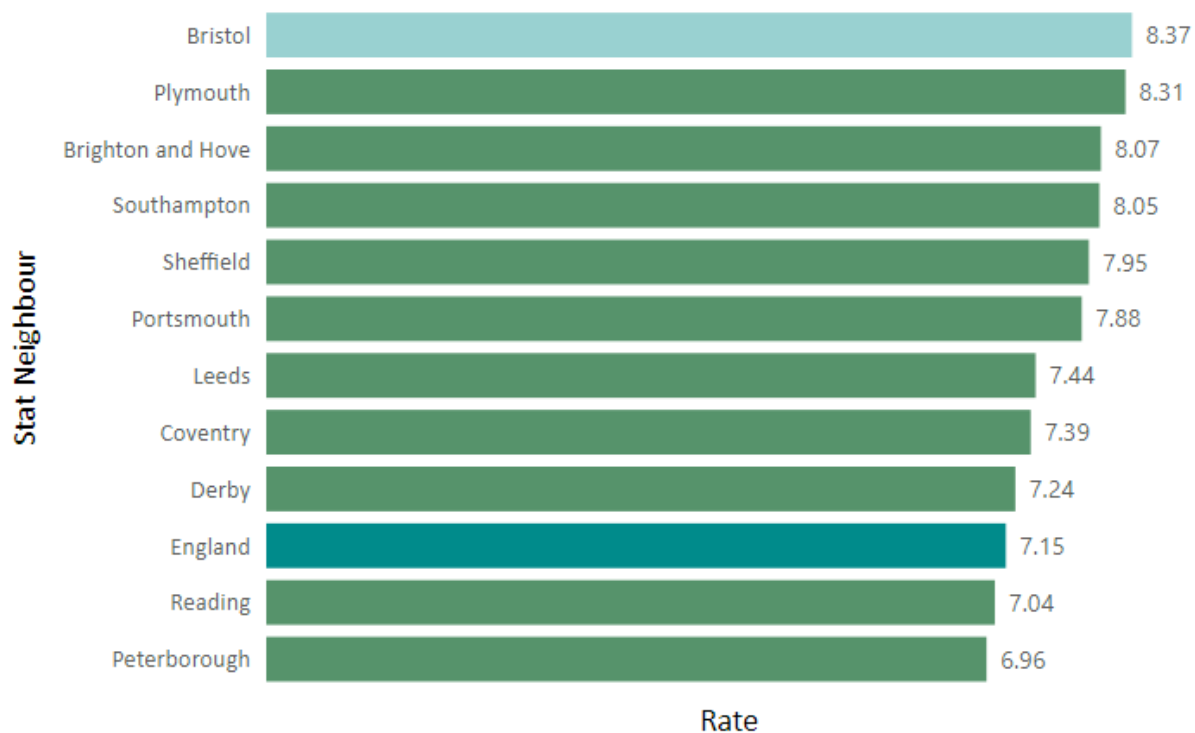
Figure 2: Persistent absence rate 2017/18 to 2023/24

### Statistical Neighbours

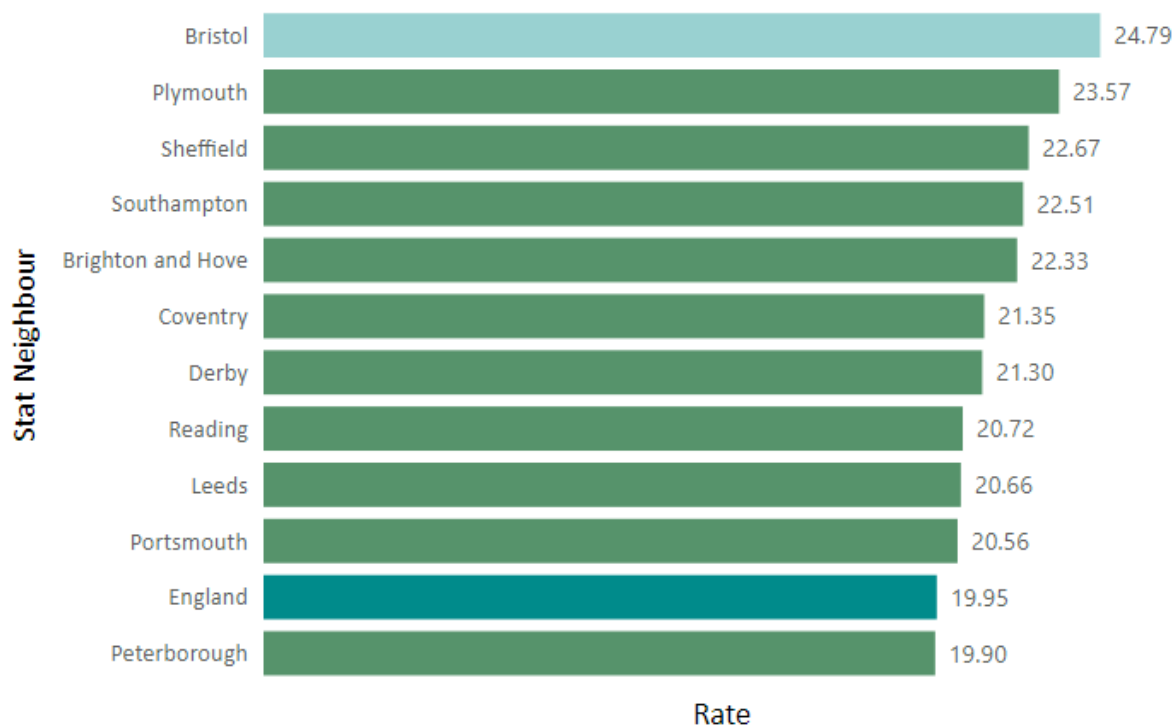
Bristol has the highest overall absence rate of all our statistical neighbours (Figures 3a,b,c). Peterborough has the lowest, the gap between the two local authorities being 1.41%.

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

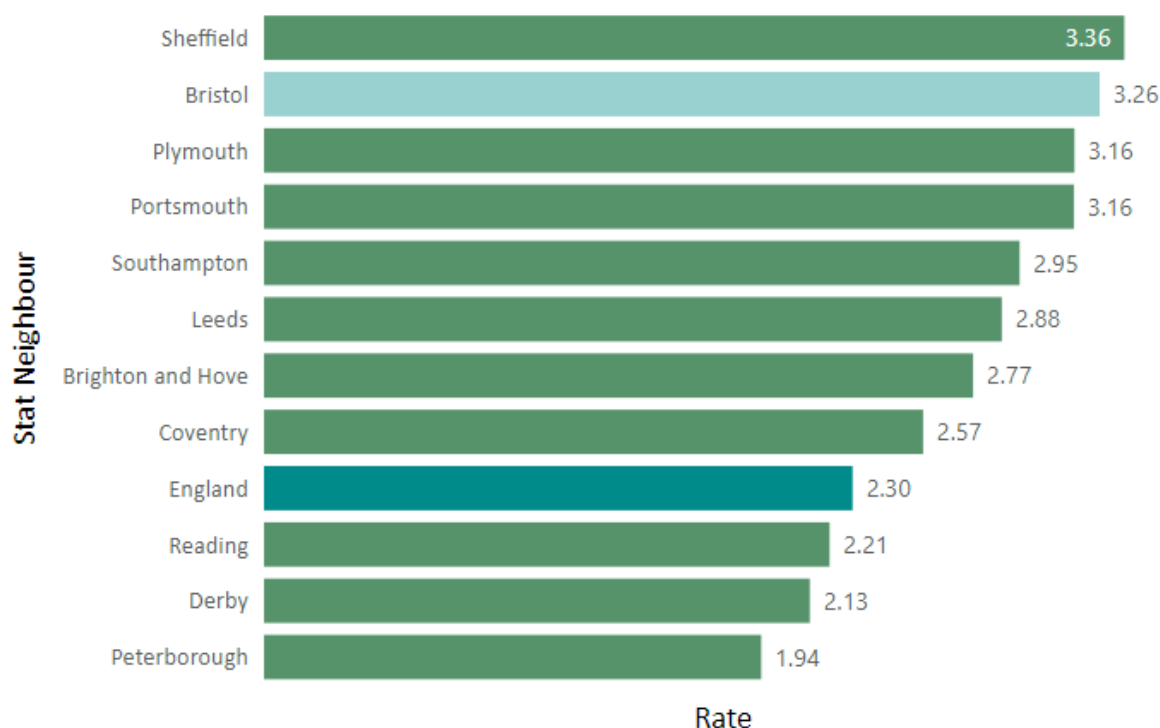
Statistical Neighbour Rates. Year: 2023/24, Absence, All Phases, Total



Statistical Neighbour Rates. Year: 2023/24, Persistent Abs (&lt;90%), All Pha...



Statistical Neighbour Rates. Year: 2023/24, Severe Abs (<50%), All Phases...



Figures 3a,b,c: Absence rate, PA rate and SA rate compared to statistical neighbours 2023/24

### 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 pupils with SEND and those without.

Year: 2023/24, Absence, All Phases

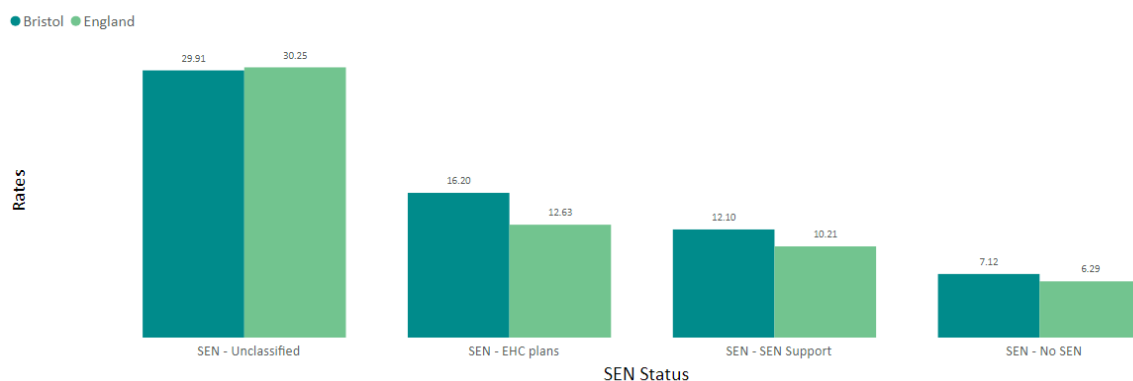


Figure 4: Absence rate by SEN categories 2023/24

**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 there are development policies and practices to address these issues.

Year: 2023/24, Absence, All Phases

● Bristol ● England



Figure 5: Absence rates by ethnicity 2023/24

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

**Deprivation:** Historical data shows 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

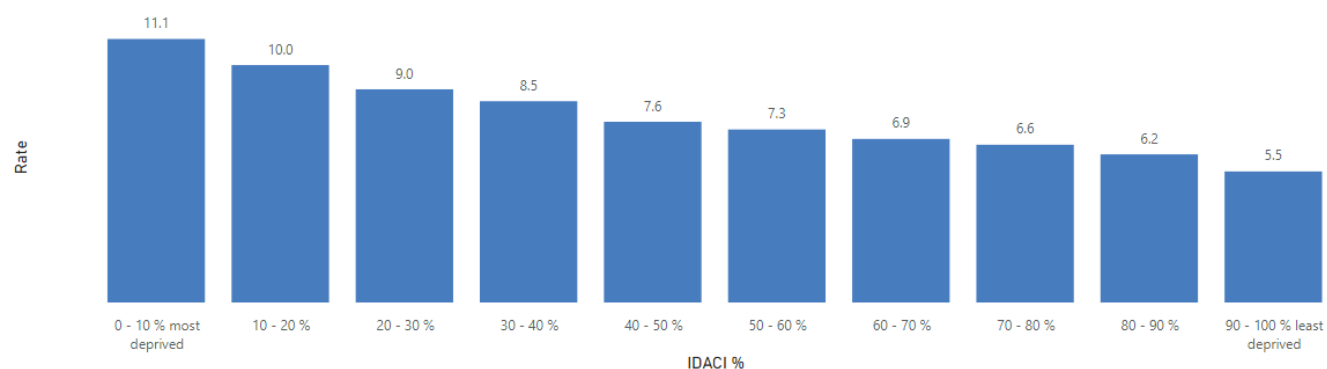


Figure 6: Absence rates by IDACI deprivation 2022/23

The ongoing cost of living crisis has deepened poverty across the country. However, Bristol is disproportionately affected, with a higher proportion of pupils living in the bottom decile of the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) compared to its statistical neighbours. Analysis of absence rates among pupils in the most deprived 10% of areas shows that Bristol has the highest rate of absence among all statistical neighbours.

## Local Strategies and Support

- Bristol City Council is working in partnership with the DfE, to deliver the responsibilities outlined in statutory school attendance guidance “Working Together to Improve School Attendance”.
- Schools are encouraged to use DfE tools like the Attendance Toolkit for Schools, daily attendance reports, and data comparison dashboards.
- Schools are encouraged to make use of BCC attendance resources - including DfE daily attendance reports, and data comparison dashboards to support attendance monitoring and improvement.
- Partnership and guidance – Bristol aligns its local strategy with national DfE guidance which outlines clear roles for schools, trusts and local authorities
- Targeted focus areas – Mental health, deprivation and pupils with SEND
- Bristol Inclusion panel – supports schools in addressing complex cases of persistent absence, often linked to safeguarding or social issues.
- Bristol City Council Attendance team offers direct support and training to schools.
- Your Holiday Hub offers summer activities for FSM-eligible pupils aimed at boosting engagement and supporting their wellbeing to.

### Further links:

Links to published data set:

[Explore education statistics service - pupil absence in schools in England 2023-24](#)

**Date updated:** August 2025

**Next update due:** May 2026