Entitlement and Adherence in Schools

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Abstract

This paper explores the extent to which pupils, through non-attendance, do not take up their full entitlement to schooling. Using statistics from Scotland and elsewhere, the paper explores the nature and extent of the problem, reasons and measures used to address attendance in the United Kingdom. The paper also discusses different perspectives of non-adherence to the entitlement of schooling, including that of truancy as a form of 'opting out' of the mainstream education system.

Keywords: school attendance, truancy, unauthorised absence

Introduction

The focus of this paper is on the most common form of non-adherence, namely truancy and other unauthorised absence. Whilst other types of non-adherence, such as home-schooling, may be seen as a socially and legally acceptable decision on the part of parents regarding their children's education, poor or erratic attendance is seen as a negative and irresponsible reaction to school and learning. This paper explores the particular nature of entitlement and adherence in schools and looks at the problem of absence as a means to understanding why some young people and their parents choose not to take up their entitlement to mainstream schooling. It is then argued that measures taken to address non-attendance depend on whether absence and truancy are seen as delinquent behaviours to be punished or whether they are seen as indicators of a breakdown in the relationship between schools and pupils that requires to be addressed. A comparison of approaches throughout the various education systems within the UK suggests that measures taken to address poor absence and truancy are dependent on whether they are conceptualised as an issue in their own right or as an indicator of a more complex range of issues affecting young people's schooling.

Entitlement and adherence in schools

Non-attendance in schools is problematic, to varying degrees, in all 'western' countries. In the UK, the USA and most of Europe, for example, the state provides free education in nursery, primary and secondary schools. In Sweden, this entitlement begins at 1 year old, whilst in Scotland it begins at age 3 and continues until age18. In common with the rest of the UK, in Scotland, children between the ages of 5 years and 16 years are required by law to be in education, normally in schools, thus amounting to eleven years of compulsory education. The ages at which compulsory education begins and ends varies from country to country in Europe and across States in the USA where the start age ranges between five and eight years and the compulsory element can extend to anywhere between fourteen and eighteen years. Levels of truancy reported and non-adherence to entitlement range from a low of 1-2% of pupils in France reckoned to be truanting at any one time, to a more worrying 30% of American pupils who do not complete high school. Absence rates throughout the UK persist at less than 10% but within that range, the variation is informative.

[TABLE 1 NEAR HERE]

As shown in table 1, while Wales has the highest percentage of overall absence in primary schools, Scotland and Northern Ireland score 1.2% points less, and just 0.3% points above

England which has the lowest rate of absence for this sector. At secondary level, however, Scotland has the highest rate of overall absence. More significantly, whilst all four countries experience an increase in absence between primary and secondary schools, Scotland, at 2.9% points shows the biggest increase. Furthermore, whilst different ways of constructing unauthorised absence render inter-country comparison unreliable, unauthorised absence in Scottish secondary schools is almost double the rate of that in its primary schools. Significantly for the argument of this paper, unauthorised absence in Scottish statistics includes truancy (although it is recorded separately, see below). Within the UK, therefore, Scotland demonstrates a more pronounced level of absence at secondary level than elsewhere, and there may be a particular local issue with unauthorised absence, including truancy.

A consideration of rates of absence over time and by sector, however, indicates that the issues may be more complex than a simple divergence between primary and secondary pupils.

[CHART 1 NEAR HERE]

Scottish statistics for the period 2003-04 to 2012-13 show in chart 1 that over time absence in secondary schools fell from 9.6% to the 8.0% recorded in NISRA (2014, table 3), whilst both primary and special have experienced an increase of 0.4% points and 0.8% points, respectively. Perhaps significantly, although the overall percentage rise may appear low, the increase in special contexts (i.e. schools, support bases and units) is twice that in primary schools. Indeed, consideration of the supplementary data for 2012-13 shown in table 2, indicate a particular issue for the special sector:

[TABLE 2 NEAR HERE]

Table 2 shows that for 2012-13 attendance at 90.5% in the special sector was the lowest of the three sectors. At the same time, unauthorised absence, temporary exclusions and truancy are higher in the special sector. The most recent figures (Scottish Government, 2015) indicate a slight decrease in unauthorised absence (0.1% points) and truancy (0.2% points) in special contexts, there are increases of 0.4% points truancy and 0.3% points unauthorised absence in secondary schools. Whilst, the general level of absence is highest in the special sector, more significantly for the arguments of this paper, the level of unauthorised absence and truancy remain problematic in secondary and special contexts.

It would appear, therefore, that, whilst on the whole the problem of truancy remains consistently at a relatively low level, there is nevertheless an enduring issue to be addressed for the small core of pupils responsible for most incidences of truancy. For example, as shown in chart 2, Scottish statistics indicate most instances of truancy are attributable to a small percentage of pupils.

CHART 2 NEAR HERE

Definition and recording

Defining what exactly constitutes problematic non-attendance at school is difficult, complex and complicated by a number of factors, some of which pertain to schools and others that lie beyond the school. Historically, truancy has been broadly understood as students absenting

themselves from school without reasonable excuse or permission (Dahl, 2016; Wilson, Malcolm, Edwards and Davidson, 2008). Increasingly, though, understanding of why students are absent from school whilst not ill and having no apparently legitimate reason has led to more nuanced and complex ways of conceptualising truancy. Shute and Cooper (2015) argue that in-school truancy, the skipping of individual lessons is much more prevalent and problematic than instances of whole day absenteeism; Dahl (2016) offers a typology of truants from, skipping class, through moderate (4-9 days) to chronic truancy (more than 10 days); and Wilson et al (2008) highlight the problem of deciding what kinds of absence may be considered as authorised (and by definition not truancy) and unauthorised.

For example, some authorities and schools consider term-time holidays as absence. Other schools might issue head teacher authorisation for holidays during the school term. Furthermore, Malcolm, Wilson, Davidson and Kirk's (2003) report indicates that a head teacher's decision on whether or not to authorise term-time holidays might depend on the time of year and whether or not exams were imminent. The matter can be further complicated by parental attitudes where parents consider it quite legitimate to take family holidays when they can, even if this is during the school term. Guidelines in England and Wales offer apparently clear definitions:

> Authorised absence is where the head teacher has either given
> approval in advance for a pupil of compulsory school age to be
> away, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as
> satisfactory justification for absence. All other absences, including persistent lateness,
> must be treated as unauthorised.

> (DCSF, 2008, p. 5)

In June 2003, the then Scottish Executive Education Department (SEED) issued a circular on non-attendance that included definitions of what constituted attendance, authorised absence and unauthorised absence in Scotland. Attendance was defined as 'participation in a programme of educational activities arranged by the school' (SEED, 2003, p. 2). In addition to attendance at school itself, this definition allowed for work experience, educational visits, study-leave during exam times, other events organized in conjunction with the school and education through outreach services or hospital teachers. Within the same circular, guidance on what constituted authorised absence included sickness and medical and dental treatment, bereavement, religious and short-term domestic circumstances, legal proceedings including children's hearings and care reviews, weddings of immediate members of the family, extended absence related to the way of life of travelling families and other broadly cultural events agreed by but not arranged by the school. Unauthorised absence in Scotland, therefore, remains simply any unexplained absence, truancy and family holidays during term time. Truancy is described as 'unauthorised absence from school for any period as a result of premeditated or spontaneous action on the part of pupil, parent or both' (SEED, 2003, p. 4). These definitions were confirmed in the latest issue on attendance and absence statistics for Scottish schools (Scottish Government, 2008).

In England and Wales, examples of authorised absence include sickness, authorised holidays, exceptional domestic circumstances and 'other' absence authorised by the school. Unauthorised absence might include unauthorised holidays, unauthorised exceptional domestic circumstances, truancy and 'other' unauthorised absence. Consequently, this leads to difficulty in how levels of absence are calculated and how research and literature are

interpreted (Attwood and Croll, 2006; Davies and Lee, 2006; dcsf, 2008; Hilton, 2006; McKinney, 2014; Reid, 2004a; Wilson et al, 2008). The one context that remains within a 'grey' area is absence as a result of exclusion. Whilst it is recognised that exclusion is 'imposed by the school and not the action of a pupil or parent' (SEED, 2003, p. 4) and, therefore does not constitute unauthorised absence, it nevertheless remains a contested area and is reported separately from other absence.

Impact of truancy and absenteeism

Within a schools context, Charlton, Panting and Willis (2004) argue that there is a close relationship between truancy and exclusion and their negative impact on behaviour and the relationships among pupils and teachers. Hilton's (2006) Scottish study found similar relationships among long periods of truancy, exclusion from school and pupil disaffection. The impact of repeated and lengthy absence on truants, therefore, may be cumulative and detrimental to academic attainment, continuity of learning and the development of social relationships with their peers (Wilson et al., 2008; Dahl, 2016). Wilson et al., (2008) also reported frustration among non-truanting children at attention being diverted from them towards returning absentees, about truants asking them for help to catch up, and at the effects on friendship between themselves and potential friends who truant. Teachers similarly report resentment at the attention demanded by returning truants, with consequent disruption to their professional lives (teaching time, providing extra materials) and personal circumstances (lunches and breaks spent supporting truants).

Despite the possible consequences and in the face of a considerable number of initiatives aimed at reducing absenteeism in schools, Reid (2004b) argues that, in his experience, there are schools that have inordinately high levels of non-attendance and that, for many, this has been the case for at least thirty years. Moreover, he goes on to point out that in some schools, attendance has been highlighted as either the most important or second most important issue in OfStEd reports. Indeed, elsewhere (Reid, 2006) he claims that the National Audit Office and OfStEd have given prominence to attendance issues in recent reports (NAO, 2005; OfStEd, 2003). He further argues, however, that despite the high profile accorded to non-attendance, by and large most schools and local authorities have little idea how to address the problem of high levels of absenteeism. There is a clear inference that issues of non-attendance at schools are complex and confusing and that measures taken to address pupil absence have been largely ineffective and have lacked coherence, coordination and a common understanding of the problem. Recent available figures from the Scottish Government, shown in table 2, offer an example of the levels of attendance and absence and the range of reasons responsible.

Reasons

As with other aspects of non-attendance at school, the reasons for absence and the main barriers to regular attendance depend on the individual perspectives of pupils, parents, teachers, social workers and para-professionals.

Research has highlighted the connections between poverty, deprivation, low socio-economic class and non-attendance at school (McKinney, 2014; Wilson et al., 2008). Studies have highlighted the relationships among attendance and a number of other general educational factors such as the negative correlation between absence and attainment (Attwood and Croll, 2006; McKinney 2014), although no causal link has been established. These same researchers established three sets of influences that encompass the range of reasons for non-attendance. These are home influences, school factors and pupil perspectives (Attwood and Croll, 2006; Dahl, 2016; Shute and Cooper, 2015).

Home influences

Home influences include family problems, attitudes towards school and cultural and neighbourhood influences. Bimler and Kirkland (2001), Dahl (2016), Charlton, et al., (2004), and Reid (2004a, 2004b, 2005) also identify home background as a crucial influence on attendance. Several factors related to home situations have been seen as contributing to truancy, namely, lack of parental monitoring, parental condoning of absence, caring for family members, (un-)employment, possible drugs and alcohol issues, and low expectations of educational outcomes (Dahl, 2016; McKendrick, 2015). Home contexts were seen to be the most influential factors by teachers and schools. In addition, Davies and Lee (2006) found that, depending on family history and academic performance, teachers held low expectations of students. Possibly the most contentious and frustrating factor for teachers and schools is parentally condoned absence. Reid (2004a) found that the vast majority of unauthorised absence in primary schools was parentally condoned. Teachers believe that a pattern of parentally condoned absence, related to poor parenting skills and drug and alcohol abuse, is the reason behind most non-attending behaviour.

School factors

As indicated above, school factors include the ethos, leadership, curriculum and systems. Perhaps surprisingly, however, whilst teachers may have considered the academic aspect of school as a factor precipitating truancy, it was not universally seen as being problematic by young people (Attwood and Croll, 2006; Davis and Lee, 2006). In those studies where school work was cited by pupils as an influencing factor, it was not so much the curriculum itself but how it was taught that was identified as being an issue. In these instances, pupils identified teaching as instruction and teachers' perceived lack of interest in them as individuals as contributing towards feelings of disaffection and subsequent truancy. Moreover, assessment driven learning, league tables, and lack of adequate support for learning were considered to be significant influencing factors (Hilton, 2006; Reid, 2006).

In Hilton's (2006) study in Scotland, difficulties with school work included large class sizes, the formal academic nature of the curriculum and lack of support for learning. Moreover, she reported that the constant focus on assessment undermined enjoyment of practical and creative activities. Hilton (2006, p. 310) further argues that, in some instances, the problem may lie with teaching and the curriculum and not the pupil:

> …the narrowed academic focus of the current curriculum
> and formalized pedagogy has led some scholars to interpret
> truancy as an entirely rational and understandable choice for
> pupils who see little relevance in it for their own working lives.

In Reid's (2006) study of educational social workers, his participants also identified the inflexibility of the national curriculum in England and Wales and the consequent lack of an appropriate alternative curriculum with an emphasis on practical activities as significant. Shute and Cooper (2015) argue that students don't choose to truant because they cannot cope with the intellectual demands of the curriculum but because they experience it as unengaging, dull and boring.

In all of the UK studies discussed in this article, bullying (especially being bullied) was cited by pupils as a reason for absenting themselves from school. This appears to have been exacerbated by a perception that some schools' pastoral care systems were inadequate for dealing with issues between pupils. Peer relations were powerful factors, especially for girls: bullying, friendships and behaviour in classes and around the school were factors taken into consideration prior to absenting from school. Other school-related reasons given for non-attendance were illness (particularly in cases where the school was perceived to be unconcerned) and exclusion or suspension which was equally interpreted as a sign of lack of concern on the school's part (Attwood and Croal, 2006; Charlton, et al., 2004; Hilton, 2006; Reid, 2006):

> At the heart of the disaffection the young people expressed was
> their sense of alienation from the key adults who embodied the
> values and priorities of mainstream school (Hilton, 2006, p. 307).

Pupil perspectives

Pupils with high levels of non-attendance acknowledge the school based factors as influencing decisions to absent themselves from school, but from the pupil perspective, other factors were more significant. For example the general school atmosphere and poor relationships with teachers were the main reasons for non-attendance (Attwood and Croll, 2006).

Relationships with other pupils were also cited as significant factors. Bullying, lack of friends, unruly behaviour and peer-group pressure were cited in a number of studies as having a strong influence on pupils' decisions to truant (Attwood and Croll, 2006; Bimler and Kirkland, 2001; Dahl, 2016; Hilton, 2006). Indeed, the school as a social setting rather than its role as an academic institution would appear to be a much more noteworthy factor. The social nature of school was particularly highlighted in Dahl (2016), Davies and Lee (2006) and Shute and Cooper (2015). The young people involved in their research were clear that the social aspects of schooling were the major factors affecting their attendance and were able to project the impact of these factors on their lives beyond school. For them, their relationships with teachers depended on the professional stance and personal traits of individual teachers; how they taught and their attitudes towards young people. Appropriate classroom interaction for them was based on mutual respect and being treated in an adult fashion, and teaching was about generating insight and understanding rather than instruction. Neither the subject being taught nor the content of the curriculum were problematic for students in the UK studies.

A significant number of participants in Attwood and Croll's (2006) study were able to

articulate the social aspect as individual experience and to identify a precipitating event or series of events prior to withdrawing from school. This is similar to Head and Jamieson's (2006) finding where the 'perceived constant surveillance by school, teacher and peers' (p. 38) contributed towards the creation and reinforcing of an identity related to students' reasons for not attending school.

Hilton's (2006) study in Scotland revealed a similar focus on relationship issues, especially those between pupils and teachers, rather than curricular matters.   In addition, there was a perception among her participants that where relationships among pupils were difficult and problematic, teachers were unwilling to interfere. When pupil relationships were dealt with as a matter of school discipline, this was perceived as a mechanistic response that did not attempt to address the root of the problem and was symptomatic of teachers' and schools' lack of real concern for their pupils' welfare.

Even when school was spoken of in educational terms, participants expressed dissatisfaction with the problems of obtaining adequate support. This led to a growing sense of isolation and not being valued, which in turn impacted on students' behaviour, including non-attendance.

For these young people and those in other studies, there was a real sense of disappointment with school and school systems which they perceived to have failed them as people:

> There was a general sense from the respondents that most teachers had failed to engage with them or show any real care or concern about their experiences. The respondents felt that these adults had relied on a framework of rules and procedures for dealing with disciplinary problems rather than flexible and understanding involvement with pupils to find a helpful way forward for them individually. This belief that their teachers were not properly engaging with them appeared to contribute to the breakdown of relationships with teachers and so to disruption and hostility in schools (Hilton, 2006, p. 306).

For pupils, therefore, unlike the perceptions of their teachers and other professionals, it is school as a social setting and especially the relationships between pupils and teachers that are the most persuasive and powerful factors that precipitate a decision not to attend school.

Addressing non-attendance and truancy

Approaches to addressing truancy and non-attendance can be understood in three categories: punitive where truancy is conceptualised as delinquent behaviour; welfarist where truancy is seen as related to social issues (including those in school); and pedagogic where it is argued that the decision to absent oneself from school is seen as a reaction to curriculum and teaching. Whilst the first of these suggests an entirely negative perspective on truancy, the welfarist and pedagogic approaches recognise that truants and other absentees may well be making a positive choice by removing themselves from a context which at best is uncomfortable and at worst may be hostile (Dahl, 2016; Shute and Cooper, 2015)

Within the UK regimes, parents can be prosecuted if their children do not attend compulsory education either in school or at home. For example, under section 7 of the Education Act 1996 in the UK, parents are responsible for ensuring that their child attends appropriate full time education or is educated at home. Since early 2007, procedures have been set up in England requiring local authorities to identify those children who have not been receiving adequate education. A range of subsequent procedures are then followed beginning with the issue of an attendance order and ending in the possibility of a fine of up to £1250 or imprisonment being imposed on parents (DCSF, 2006). In Scotland, local authorities have statutory responsibilities to provide appropriate education for children and young people. Pupils who do not attend can be referred to a children's panel (the hearings system in Scotland for supporting children and young people at risk) and sent to segregated provision e.g. a special school or unit. In addition, under the terms of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, parents of children who do not attend school and who have not made other appropriate arrangements for their education (e.g. home schooling) can be reported to the Procurator Fiscal. A range of measures can be taken against parents who do not ensure that their children attend schools including a fine of up to £1,000 and/or 1 month in prison (Scottish Government, 2007b).

Punitive measures, however, have not been the sole means of addressing non-attendance. For example, Broadhurst, et al., (2005, p. 106) argue:

> Who or what is at fault in relation to the persistent disengagement of children and young people from schooling? There is concern that discourses [which] place greater emphasis on strategies to enhance individual agency… are more punitive than pupil-centred or family-centred methods… failing to account for the deeply intractable nature of school disengagement and alienation from formal systems…

Sheppard (2011) argues that considering non-attendance in isolation from other factors in the complex relationships that entail a young person's experience of school results in the narrow, punitive solutions exemplified above. Moreover, she questions the validity of measures that fail to take into account wider personal, cultural, social and economic circumstances. Indeed, she challenges the drive to raise attendance as being founded on associations between poor attendance and low academic achievement and anti-social behaviour that are worthy of a more critical questioning.

On a more positive approach, some local authorities are encouraging better attendance at schools as part of strategies to address social inclusion (Reid, 2004a). However, the same author points out that his research reveals that where multi-disciplinary measures are in place, it is often the case that teachers are unaware of the other professionals involved and that headteachers may, in fact, prefer resources to be entirely school based rather than belonging to the central authority (Reid, 2004a), and that the processes involved have come to be seen as problematic and frustrating (Reid, 2004b; 2006). Reid (2012) indicates a more holistic approach based on school standards and effectiveness and which addresses matters of deprivation, social disadvantage and pupils' additional learning needs has been adopted in Wales.

Consequently what could be described as a more welfarist approach has also been adopted.

Welfarist approaches mostly centre around measures aimed at reducing school exclusions and absences through addressing the educational and social needs of young people. For example, Charlton, et al., (2004) evaluated an alternative curriculum approach. They found that *inter alia* the young people involved appreciated and responded to being treated like adults, the more relaxed atmosphere and better relationships with teachers and, most importantly, having control over their lives. They reported that some participants in the scheme chose to start attending school again as a direct result of their experience on the programme. Davies and Lee (2006) similarly argue that responding to non-attendance would require addressing the quality of relationships between teachers and pupils.

The interface of student, their peers and teachers is, of course, curriculum and pedagogy. It is also the intersection of education and those issues such as poverty, deprivation and disaffection which has proven troublesome for schools, teachers and pupils. McKinney (2014, p. 210) argues that where teacher competence is based on control of students, the learning context becomes one of 'manipulation of learning activities through selected compliance and resistance'. Both Shute and Cooper (2015 and Dahl (2016) argue that in such circumstances, when students choose to remove themselves from classes, educators must question the nature of those classes in terms of curriculum and pedagogy. Picking up on studies from Australia and USA, McKinney (2014) argues for learning environments that enhance the learning of all children through collectivist approaches entailing intellectual quality, social competence, problem solving and a supportive classroom environment (ibid, p. 211). Shute and Cooper (2015) also advocate a collectivist approach through bringing students, parent and together to discuss all relevant issues including making curriculum-related decisions. Hulme, McKinney, Hall and Cross (2011) also advocate a participatory model but warn that where it is tokenistic or contrived this will be perceived by students and can deepen disaffection. They observe that there is a high level of participation in consultative activities in Scotland but that students have little or no influence on curriculum and pedagogy. In this way, they argue, participation through consultation 'can work to obscure rather than address inequities in power' (Hulme et al., 2011, p. 139).

Conclusions

Whilst non-attendance may be a problem for schools, self-withdrawal, that is, a pupil deliberately and possibly openly choosing not to attend school may, in fact, be a solution for some non-attenders who find school difficult for a number of reasons (Dahl, 2016; Davies and Lee, 2006; Head and Jamieson, 2006; Shute and Cooper, 2015). In these instances, Davies and Lee (2006) argue that the pupils' decisions to disengage with school amount to the articulation of a critique of school and the educational system.

Truancy is also a social problem with social costs and, therefore, cannot be considered in isolation. Reid (2004b, p. 57) cites evidence from the 1998 Social Inclusion Report in England which indicates that 65% of crime committed in shopping centres during daytime can be attributed to young people who should otherwise have been at school. Bimler and Kirkwood (2001) similarly associate truancy with other social issues such as drinking, minor crime and other forms of antisocial behaviour. Reid (2006) also points out that longitudinal studies indicate that there may be links between poor attendance and a range of social factors that have an impact into later adult life.

Moreover, there also appears to be a possible dichotomy between the views of parents and those held by teachers, social workers and other adults. Parents see the main causes of non-attendance as in-school matters including bullying and teachers' attitudes towards children. Teachers and other professionals, by way of contrast, appear to view the home environment and the influence of parents as having a greater influence on attendance (Davies and Lee, 2006).

However, regardless of the conceptualisation, certain factors emerge as common. These can be thought of as belonging to one or more of three strands: the relationships between home and school; what happens in school itself; and school as a social institution, especially the relationships between pupils and teachers. Each of these strands can be addressed in terms of systems, with, for example, schools having policy statements on dealing with non-attendance and sharing information (DCFS, 2008; Reid, 2004) and working towards greater cohesion in multi- and inter-agency initiatives (Reid, 2004).

Alternatively or in parallel, the strands can be addressed in-school. These include the curriculum (Charlton, et al.,. 2004) and measures that address non-attendance as part of a strategy aimed at something else e.g. safer schools (Reid, 2004) or support for learning and behaviour support (Head, 2007). For example the *Connexions* initiative in England and Wales (Charlton, et al., 2004) sought to introduce a practical or vocational element into the curriculum for particular groups of young people, and to offer this through attendance in both school and college.

Finally, measures that address the third strand could include encouraging teachers to adopt a more optimistic view of their pupils (Head, 2007) and to have higher expectations of them in terms of their learning (Davies and Lee, 2006; Hilton, 2006), but especially interventions aimed at improving the relationships between pupils and teachers (Davies and Lee, 2006; Head and Jamieson, 2006; Reid, 2006).

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Tables and figures

Table 1: Comparison with England, Scotland and Wales, 2012/13 Per cent of total half days

| Primary Schools			Post-Primary Schools	
Unauthorised absence	**Overall absence**		**Unauthorised absence**	**Overall absence**
NI	1.4	5.1	2.6	7.1
England	0.7	4.8	1.2	5.8
Scotland	1.3	5.1	2.5	8.0
Wales	0.9	6.3	1.3	7.4

Source: Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (2014 table 3).

Table 2: Percentage attendance and absence by detailed reason, by sector, 2012/13

|	Primary	Secondary	Special	Total
Attendance	**94.9**	**91.9**	**90.5**	**93.6**
In school	93.8	89.0	89.8	91.7
Late	1.1	2.5	0.4	1.7
Work experience	-	0.4	0.2	0.2
Sickness with education provision	-	-	0.1	-
Authorised absence	**3.8**	**5.4**	**6.2**	**4.5**
Sickness without education provision	3.1	4.4	3.4	3.7
Very late	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Authorised holidays	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.1
Exceptional domestic circumstances	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
Other authorised	0.5	0.8	2.4	0.7
Unauthorised absence	**1.3**	**2.5**	**3.2**	**1.8**
Unauthorised holidays	0.6	0.4	0.3	0.5
Truancy, including unexplained absence	0.6	1.9	2.5	1.2
Exceptional domestic circumstances (unauthorised)	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0
Other unauthorised	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.1
Temporary Exclusions	**0.0**	**0.1**	**0.2**	**0.0**

Source: Scottish Government (2013 table 1.2).

Chart 1: Absence rate, by sector 2003-04 to 2012-13
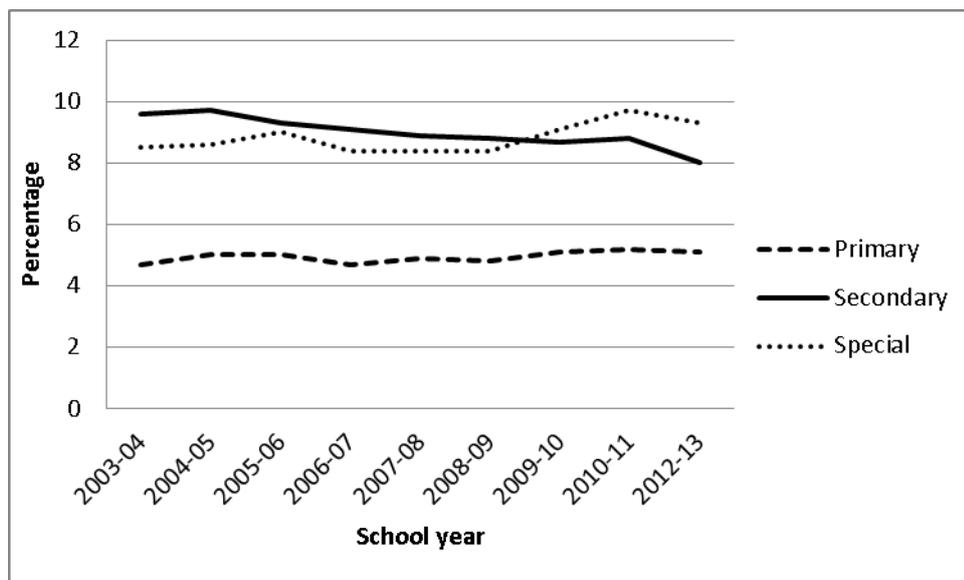
Source: Scottish Government (2013) *Attendance and Absence in Scottish Schools* , annual reports.

Chart 2: Percentage of pupils responsible for truancy, including unexplained absence(1) (2)
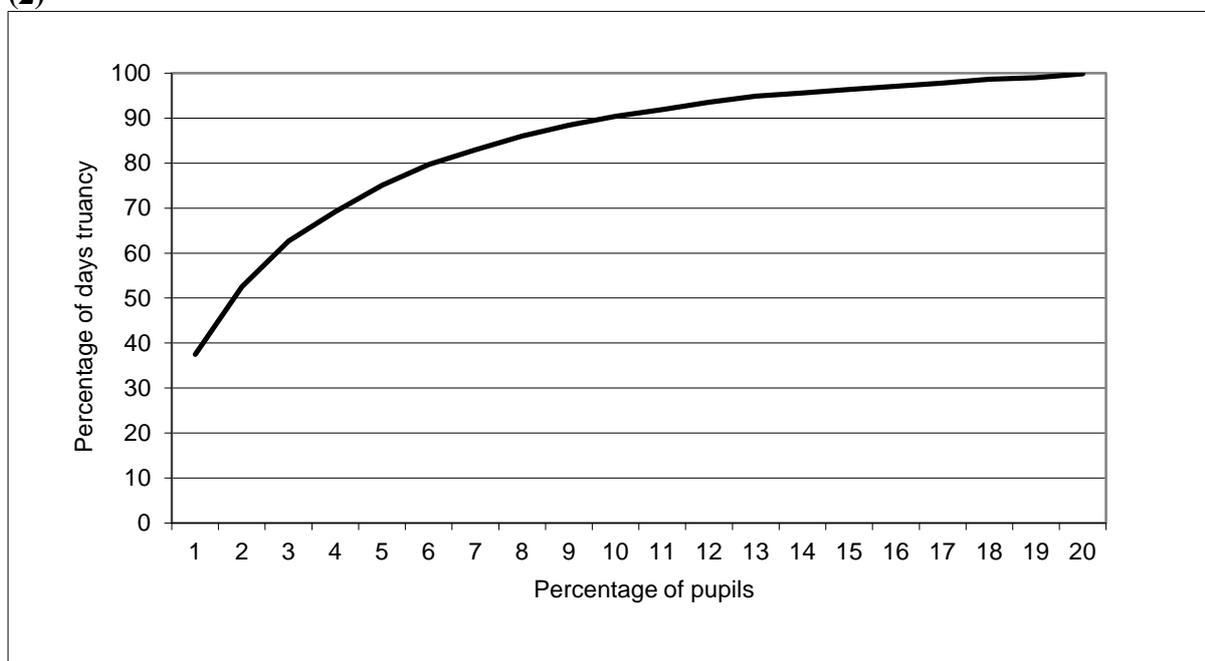
(1) The chart shows how much of the truancy is the responsibility of how many pupils. So for example reading up from the values on the horizontal axis, one per cent of pupils are responsible for 38 per cent of the truancy, or ten per cent of pupils are responsible for 91 per cent of truancy.
(2)   including S6. This information will be affected by differing reporting practices across local authorities.

Source: Scottish Government 2007a Chart 1.5.