

Government School Student Attendance 2014 (Semester 1)

Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation

Research indicates a strong link between attendance and student achievement. Recording and monitoring student attendance is an important requirement as part of the school's duty of care to all students in the school.

NSW government schools attendance rates

The attendance rate for all students in NSW government schools increased by 0.3 percentage points from 92.6 per cent in 2013 to 92.9 per cent in 2014. This is the highest attendance rate recorded over the past 10 years. Although this change appears small, 0.3 percentage points is approximately 210,000 extra days attended in Semester 1.

Since 2005 the average attendance rate for NSW government schools has been between 92.0 per cent and 92.9 per cent.

Attendance rates by remoteness

Over the last ten years student attendance rates at schools in metropolitan areas have been over 92.5 per cent and in 2014 were 93.5 per cent. Figure 1 shows that attendance at provincial schools declined from 91.1 per cent in 2005 to 90.2 per cent in 2011, then increased to 91.1 per cent in 2014. The gap between metropolitan and provincial schools is larger than ten years ago.

Attendance at schools in remote / very remote NSW was lowest in 2006, at only 85.2 per cent. In 2014 attendance had risen to 86.9 per cent, however this is still 6.6 percentage points lower than metropolitan schools.

Figure 1

Students attendance rate by remoteness, Semester 1 2005-2014: NSW government schools



Attendance rates by student level of education

Figure 2 and Table 1 present attendance rates for all students by level of education. Primary attendance increased by 0.2 percentage points in 2014 compared with 2013, and secondary attendance increased by the same amount.

However, secondary students' attendance rates remain almost five percentage points below primary school students. In 2014 primary attendance averaged 94.8 per cent compared with 90.0 per cent for secondary students.

Attendance data was collected separately for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students for the first time in 2006, so Figures 2, 3 and 4 present data from 2006 to 2014.

Figure 2

Students attendance rate by education level, Semester 1 2006-2014: NSW government schools

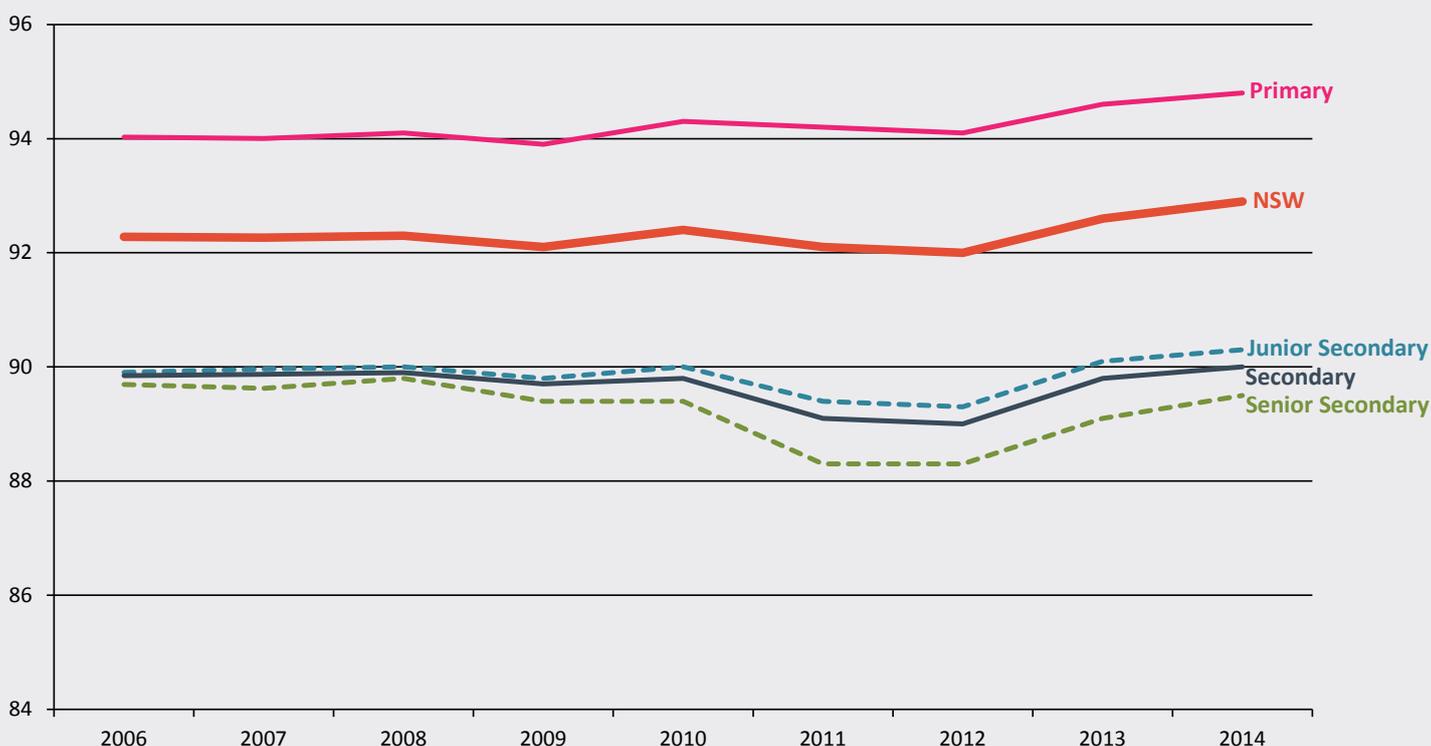


Figure 2 shows that primary attendance rates increased by 0.8 percentage points, from 94.0 per cent in 2006 to 94.8 per cent in 2014.

Secondary attendance rates declined between 2010 and 2012, probably as a result of raising the school leaving age at the beginning of 2010. Previously students could leave school before the end of Year 10, however they must now remain enrolled at school until age 17, unless they have gained work or enrolled in other study. Some of these students are likely to have low attendance rates.

Attendance rates have since increased, and are now 0.2 percentage points higher than in 2006 (89.8 per cent).

Junior secondary attendance increased by 0.2 percentage points, from 90.1 per cent in 2013 to 90.3 per cent in 2014. This is in line with the trend for secondary attendance figures, and is the highest rate since 2003.

Senior secondary attendance increased by more than junior secondary and primary attendance between 2013 and 2014. Attendance increased by 0.4 percentage points, from 89.1 per cent in 2013 to 89.5 per cent in 2014. However it remains 0.8 percentage points lower than the junior secondary attendance rate.

Table 1

Students attendance rate by education level, Semester 1 2006-2014: NSW government schools

Education Level	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Primary	94.0	94.0	94.1	93.9	94.3	94.2	94.1	94.6	94.8
Secondary	89.8	89.9	89.9	89.7	89.8	89.1	89.0	89.8	90.0
Junior Secondary	89.9	90.0	90.0	89.8	90.0	89.4	89.3	90.1	90.3
Senior Secondary	89.7	89.6	89.8	89.4	89.4	88.3	88.3	89.1	89.5
NSW	92.3	92.3	92.3	92.1	92.4	92.1	92.0	92.6	92.9

Aboriginal students' attendance rates

In November 2013 the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed to a range of measures to improve Aboriginal school attendance. This included new initiatives and monitoring of attendance rates, with the aim of closing the gap in attendance between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians.

Figure 3 illustrates attendance rates for Aboriginal students attending NSW government schools by remoteness from 2006 to 2014. Attendance rates were not recorded by Aboriginality until 2006. The data illustrates that remoteness has an impact on attendance rate for Aboriginal students. The highest student attendance rates were recorded at schools in the metropolitan area, followed by provincial and then remote / very remote areas.

The average attendance rate for Aboriginal students was 86.6 per cent in 2014, the highest rate since 2006.

In metropolitan schools, Aboriginal attendance rate was 88.0 per cent. This was a 0.4 percentage point increase from 2013 and a 1.2 percentage point increase from 2012.

The Aboriginal attendance rate at schools in provincial NSW was 85.8 per cent in 2014. This was an increase of 0.6 percentage points from 2013 and 1.2 percentage points from 2012. In remote and very remote areas the student attendance rate in 2014 was 82.1 per cent, a 0.1 percentage point increase from 2013 and 1.2 percentage point increase from 2012.

It is clear from Figure 3 that the gap between Aboriginal attendance rates at remote / very remote and metropolitan schools has narrowed over the period. In 2006 the difference was almost ten percentage points, 77.2 per cent in remote / very remote schools compared with 87.0 per cent in metropolitan schools. By 2014 the gap had narrowed to 5.9 percentage points, with 82.1 per cent attendance at remote / very remote schools and 88.0 per cent at metropolitan schools.

Figure 3

Aboriginal students attendance rate by remoteness, Semester 1 2006-2014: NSW government schools

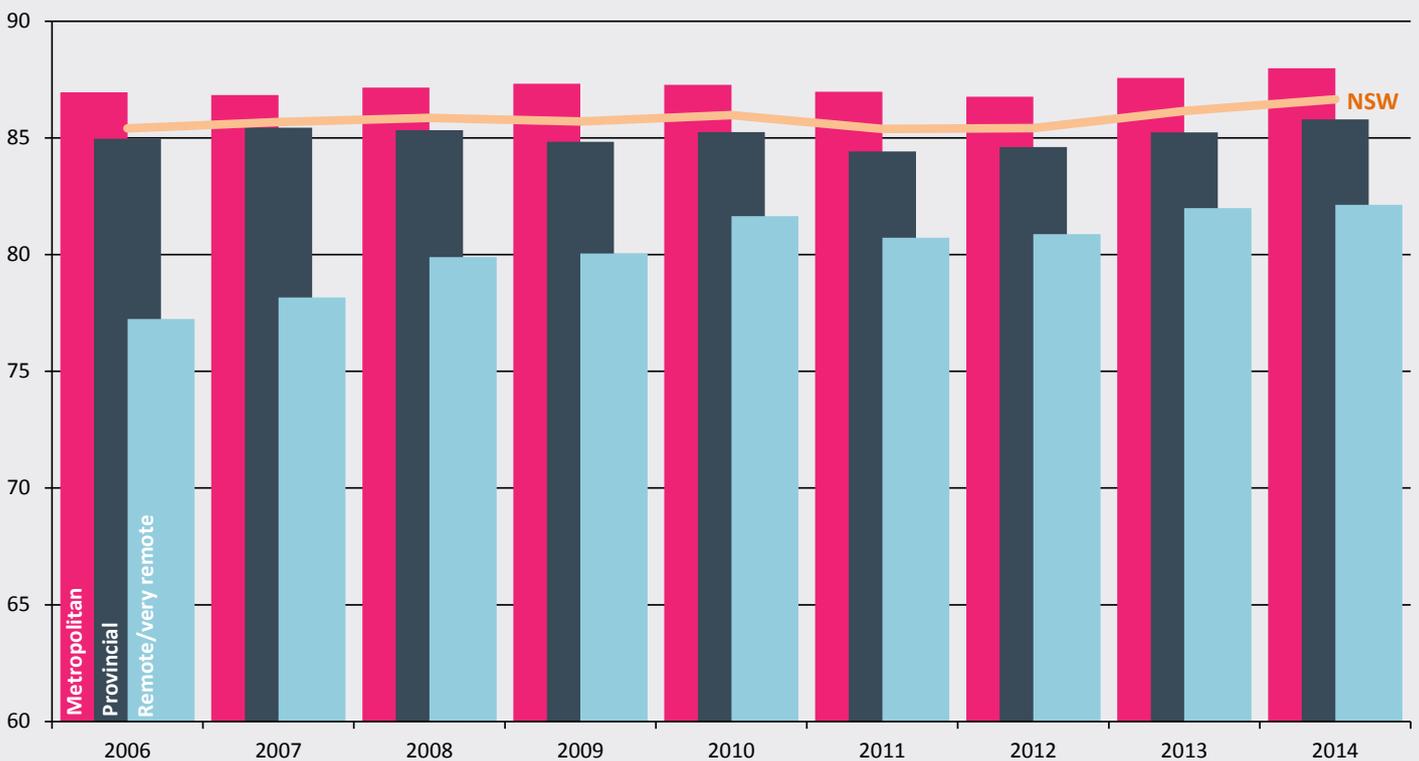
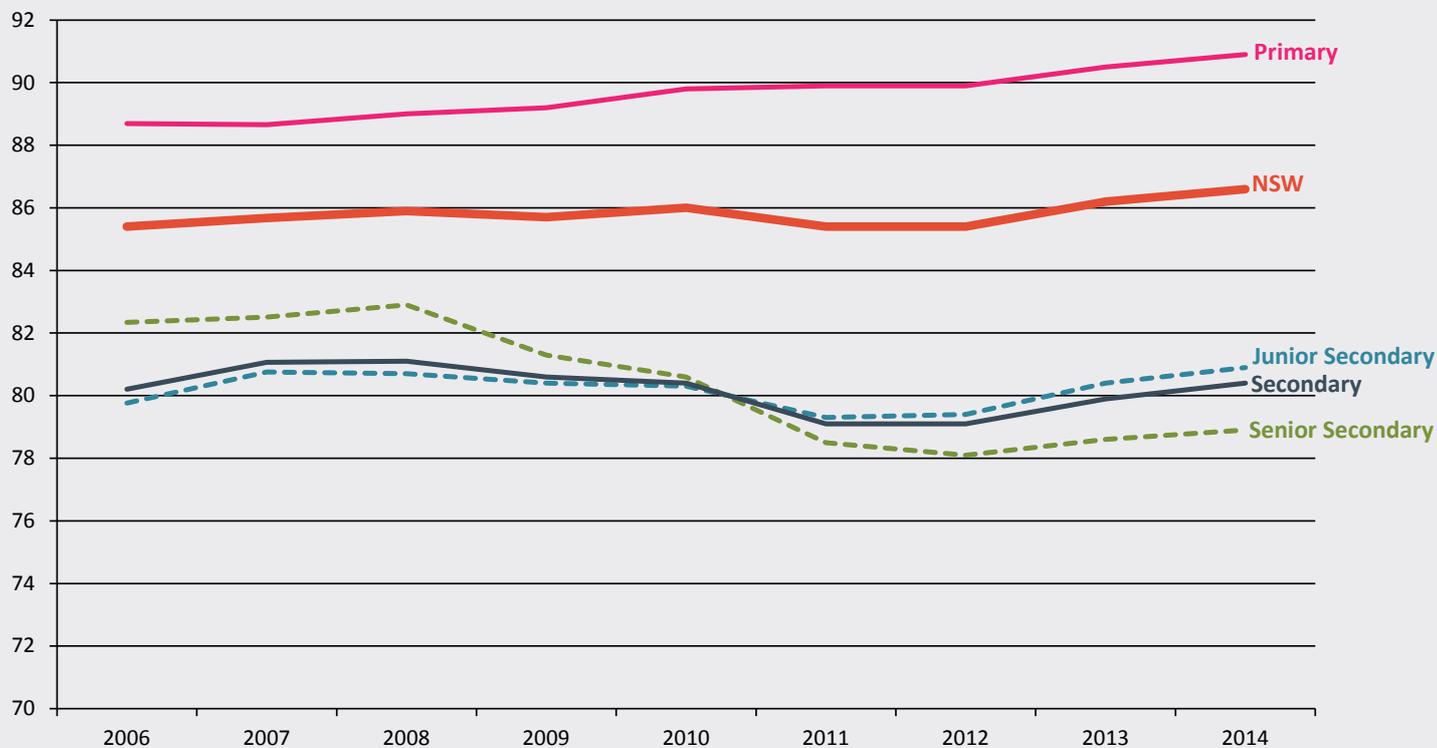


Figure 4 and Table 2 show attendance rates for Aboriginal students by level of education. Primary attendance increased by 0.4 percentage points in 2014 compared with 2013, while secondary attendance increased by 0.5 percentage points.

However, secondary students' attendance rates remain over ten percentage points below primary school students. In 2014 primary attendance averaged 90.9 per cent compared with 80.4 per cent for Aboriginal secondary students.

Figure 4

Aboriginal students attendance rate by education level, Semester 1 2006-2014: NSW government schools



Over the period shown in Figure 4, primary attendance rates increased by 2.2 percentage points, from 88.7 per cent in 2006 to 90.9 per cent in 2014. This is more than twice the increase in attendance of all primary students shown in Figure 1

Table 2 shows that Aboriginal students' attendance rates increased by 0.4 percentage points since 2013, from 86.2 per cent to 86.6 per cent in 2014. Aboriginal secondary attendance rates in 2014 were the highest recorded since 2006. The secondary attendance rate increased by 0.5 percentage points from 79.9 per cent in 2013 to 80.4 per cent in 2014.

Aboriginal senior secondary attendance rates declined markedly from 82.9 per cent in 2008 to 78.1 per cent in 2012

as the raised school leaving age was implemented. Attendance rates have since increased to 78.9 per cent in 2014, however this is still 3.4 percentage points lower than in 2006 (82.3 per cent).

Junior secondary attendance increased by 0.5 percentage points, from 80.4 per cent in 2013 to 80.9 per cent in 2014.

Over the period from 2006 to 2014, the gap between primary and secondary attendance rates for Aboriginal students widened from 8.5 percentage points in 2006 to 10.5 percentage points in 2014.

Table 2

Aboriginal students attendance rate by education level, Semester 1 2006-2014: NSW government schools

Education Level	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Primary	88.7	88.7	89.0	89.2	89.8	89.9	89.9	90.5	90.9
Secondary	80.2	81.1	81.1	80.6	80.4	79.1	79.1	79.9	80.4
Junior Secondary	79.8	80.8	80.7	80.4	80.3	79.3	79.4	80.4	80.9
Senior Secondary	82.3	82.5	82.9	81.3	80.6	78.5	78.1	78.6	78.9
NSW	85.4	85.7	85.9	85.7	86.0	85.4	85.4	86.2	86.6

Attendance rates by Term

Figure 5 presents student attendance rates for Terms 1 and 2 for Aboriginal and all students from 2006 to 2014. Attendance rates are higher in Term 1 than in Term 2 for both Aboriginal and all students. This is likely to be due to a combination of factors, including increased sickness in the late autumn and winter months of Term 2.

From 2006 to 2014 attendance rates for Term 1 have tended to be more stable than for Term 2. The Term 1 attendance rates varied between 92.7 in 2008 and 93.3 per cent in 2014, a variation of 0.6 percentage points. By contrast, Term 2 attendance rates varied between 91.0 in 2011 and 2012 and 92.2 per cent in 2014, a variation of 1.2 percentage points.

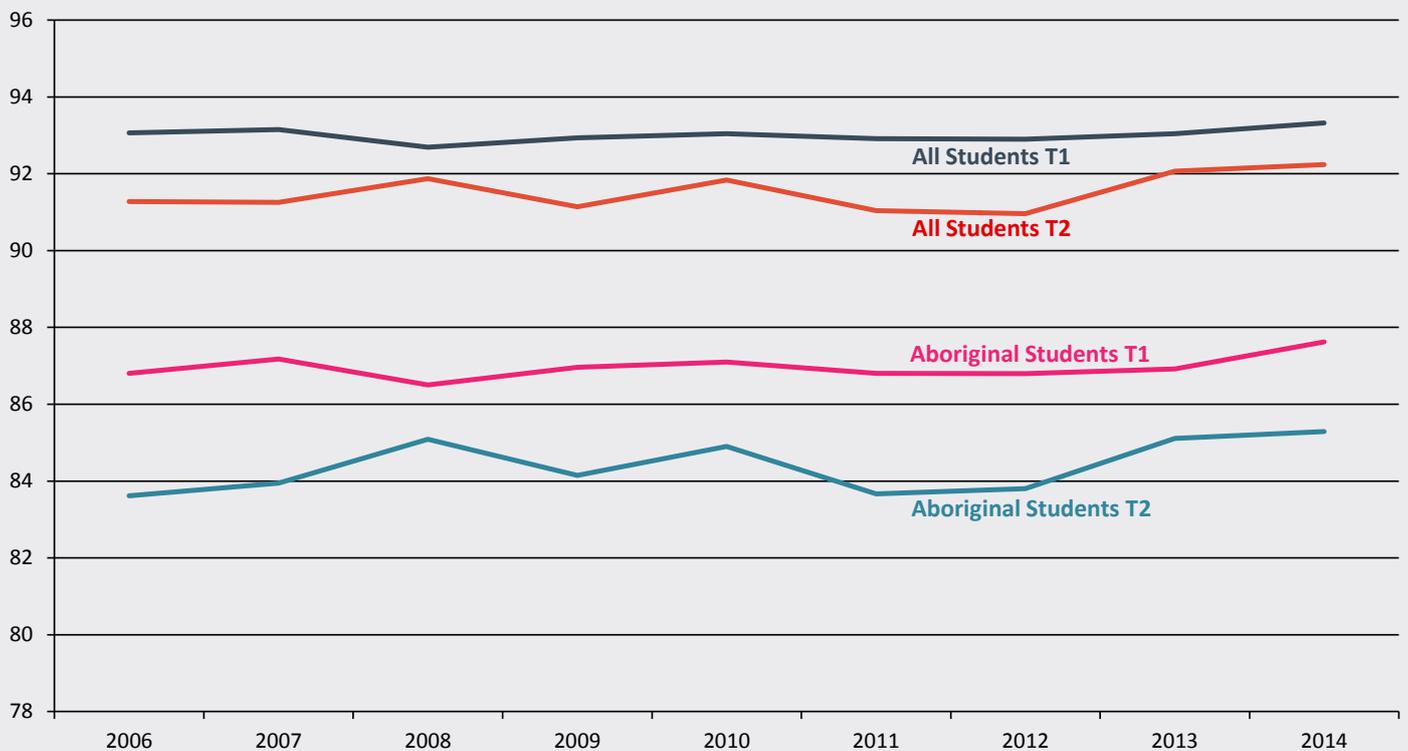
Aboriginal student attendance patterns for Terms 1 and 2 followed the same pattern as all students, with higher and

more stable attendance in Term 1. However the gap between Term 1 and Term 2 attendance rates is greater for Aboriginal students. For example, in 2014 Term 1 attendance was 1.1 percentage points higher than Term 2 for all students, at 93.3 per cent in Term 1 compared with 92.2 per cent in Term 2. However, Term 1 attendance was 2.3 percentage points higher than Term 2 for Aboriginal students, at 87.6 per cent in Term 1 compared with 85.3 in Term 2. This results in a larger gap in attendance rates in Term 2 for all students and Aboriginal students than in Term 1.

Over the period from 2006 to 2014, the gap between all students and Aboriginal students has averaged around six percentage points in Term 1. The average attendance rate gap for Term 2 was around seven percentage points.

Figure 5

Aboriginal and all students attendance rates, Terms 1 and 2 2006-2014: NSW government schools



Distribution of attendance rates by school type

Presenting average attendance rates can suggest that schools all experience similar attendance rates. In fact attendance is affected by the location of the school, school size and various other factors. Illness in a community can result in one school having a much lower attendance rate than other similar schools, particularly if it is a small school. Similarly weather conditions can affect attendance: for example, flooding in remote areas may prevent a school bus from collecting students who are then unable to attend school for a few days.

Table 3 shows attendance rates in Semester 1 2014 by school type and attendance rate bands. Most primary schools

recorded attendance rates over 90 per cent, with over 40 per cent of primary schools recording attendance rates of 95 per cent or more.

Around 80 per cent of secondary schools recorded attendance rates between 85 and 95 per cent, with a similar number of schools in the 85% to < 90% band and the 90% to < 95% per cent band. Around 13 per cent of secondary schools recorded attendance under 85 per cent. The most common attendance rate for Central and Community schools was 90 to < 95 per cent, with none of these schools recording attendance of 95 per cent and over.

Table 3

Number of schools by student attendance rates and school type, Semester 1 2014: NSW government schools

School Type	< 85%	85% to < 90%	90% to < 95%	95% and over	Total
Primary schools	4	41	861	692	1598
Central / Community schools	6	15	45	0	66
Secondary schools	50	167	149	29	395
All schools	60	223	1055	721	2059

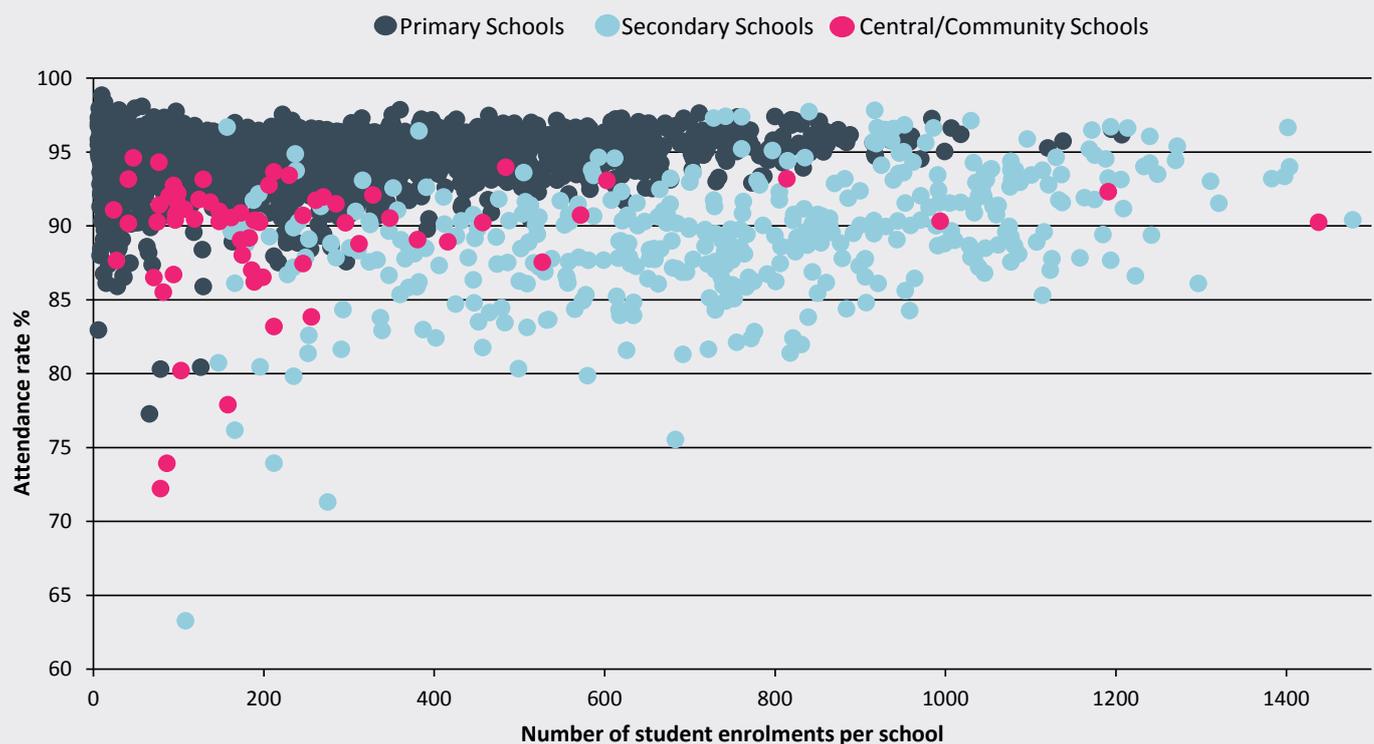
Note: Excluding 14 schools with five or fewer enrolments.

Figure 6 illustrates the distribution of Semester 1 2014 attendance rates by student enrolments and school type for NSW government schools. Attendance rates were generally highest for primary schools (grey dots) although some secondary schools (blue dots) recorded attendance rates above 95 per cent.

Nearly all primary schools with 300 or more students recorded attendance rates over 90 per cent in Semester 1 2014.

Figure 6

Students attendance rate by school and school type, Semester 1 2014: NSW government schools



Why collect attendance data?

Students' attendance is recorded by schools for various reasons such as meeting legislative requirements to determine the whereabouts of each student each school day. While there is a legal obligation for schools to record attendance and absences, there is also a parental obligation to ensure their children attend school.

National and international research substantiates a link between attendance and student achievement, although numerous interrelated factors influence attendance and achievement in complex ways (Report on Government Services 2011, Part 4, 4.18).

'Attendance' is used as a key indicator of governments' objective to develop fully the talent and capacities of young people through equitable access to education and learning.

Enrolment and attendance are specified as performance indicators within the National Education Agreement and as Key Performance Measures in the Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia approved by the Education Council.

In 2010, as part of the Keep Them Safe initiatives, changes to child protection legislation made educational neglect grounds for reporting risk of significant harm to the Family and Community Services child protection helpline. At the same time in NSW, additional Home School Liaison Officer and Aboriginal Student Liaison Officer positions were established to reduce the number of students with chronic attendance issues.

Reasons for absences

Students may be absent from school for a number of reasons, including sickness, suspension, truancy or a range of explained absences. For example:

- misadventure or unforeseen event;
- participation in special events not related to the school;
- domestic necessity such as serious illness of an immediate family member;
- attendance at funerals;
- recognised religious festivals or ceremonial occasions;
- other absences not explained by parents or the principal does not accept the explanation offered for the absence.

In particular communities, attendance rates can be affected by a number of factors including the level of sickness in the community and natural events such as floods.

The Department of Education and Communities IT systems do not currently permit analysis by absence reason, therefore all these categories are included in this bulletin.

Notes

Government school systems in Australia measure attendance rates throughout the first semester (terms 1 and 2). This is the time period specified for data collection in National Education Agreements between the Commonwealth and state and territory governments. Schools for Special Purposes' attendance data is not collected.

Nationally, the attendance rate is defined as the number of actual full-time equivalent 'student days attended' over the collection period as a percentage of the total number of possible student days attended over the collection period (Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia KPM 7(b)).

In NSW government schools, attendance is calculated as (1 minus absences divided by enrolled days) multiplied by 100, where:

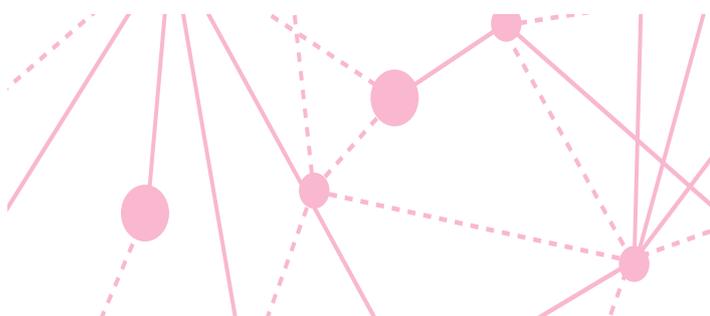
- Absences equals 'all full day absences for the period in question'
- Enrolled days equals 'enrolments multiplied by days open'
- Enrolments equals 'all students enrolled at any time during the period'
- Days open equals 'any day that the school was open for teaching during the period'
- Period equals 'Semester 1 comprised of Term 1 and Term 2'

$$\text{Attendance Rate} = \left(1 - \frac{\text{absences}}{\text{enrolled days}} \right) \times 100$$

Source: Statistics Unit, Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation. Semester 1 data extracted from the corporate data cubes in December 2014.

Remoteness

Location refers to the region where a school is situated. There are four possible locations: metropolitan, provincial, remote and very remote. For the purposes of this bulletin the remote and very remote categories have been combined. The locations mentioned in this bulletin are determined according to the Schools Geographic Location Classification Scheme of the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA).



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