

Government School Student Attendance 2016 (Semester 1)

Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation

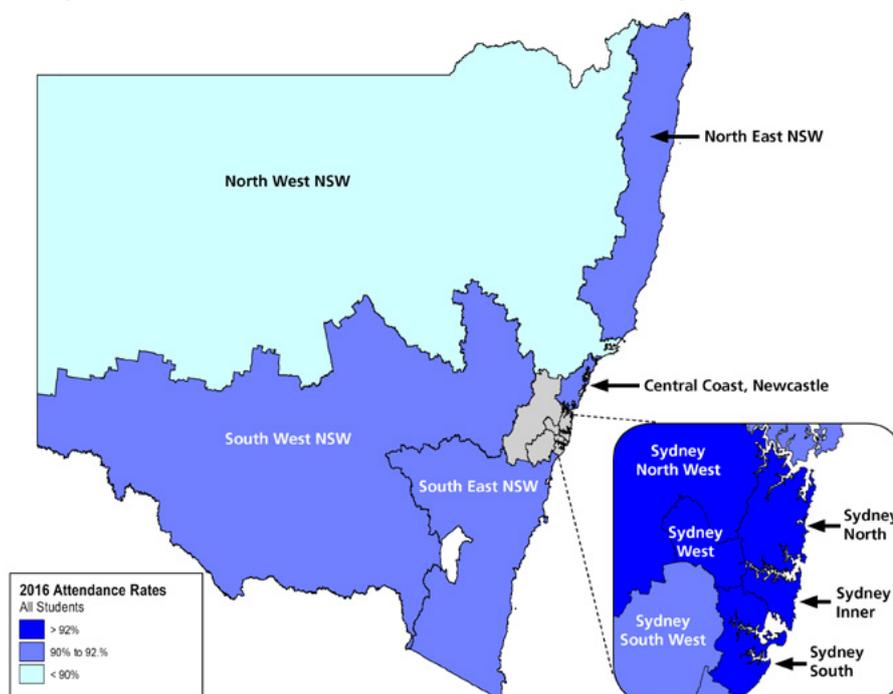
Research indicates a strong link between attendance and student achievement. Recording and monitoring student attendance is an important requirement as part of the school’s duty of care to all students in the school.

NSW government school attendance rates

Since 2006 the average attendance rate for NSW government schools has been broadly stable between 92.0 per cent and 92.9 per cent. In January 2015, a change to the recording of family holidays came into effect which required approved extended family holidays to be recorded as absences rather than exemption from attendance. This contributed to a decrease in the attendance rate from 92.9 per cent in 2014 to 92.2 per cent in 2015. It has since remained steady between 2015 and 2016 at 92.2 per cent. Attendance rates can be impacted by a number of factors such as sickness and weather events.

Map 1

Student attendance rate by Statistical Area 4 classification, Semester 1 2016: NSW government schools



Attendance rates by remoteness

Map 1 and Table 1 show attendance rates by remoteness. Over the last ten years the attendance rate at schools in metropolitan areas was more than 92.5 per cent on average. In 2016 the attendance rate was 92.8 per cent, marginally higher compared with 2015. In contrast, the attendance rate at provincial schools decreased by 0.3 percentage points in 2016 to 90.4 per cent. This resulted in a larger gap in attendance rates between metropolitan and provincial schools at 2.4 percentage points.

Table 1

Student attendance rate by remoteness level, Semester 1 2006-2016: NSW government schools

Remoteness	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Metropolitan	92.8	92.7	92.9	92.7	93.0	92.7	92.6	93.3	93.5	92.7	92.8
Provincial	91.2	91.2	91.0	90.6	90.9	90.2	90.2	90.8	91.1	90.7	90.4
Remote/Very Remote	85.2	85.5	85.8	85.6	86.4	86.0	85.7	86.9	86.9	86.1	85.4
NSW	92.3	92.3	92.3	92.1	92.4	92.1	92.0	92.6	92.9	92.2	92.2

Attendance at schools in remote/very remote NSW declined 0.7 percentage points from 86.1 per cent in 2015 to 85.4 per cent in 2016. Between 2006 and 2015, the gap in attendance rate between remote/very remote and metropolitan schools decreased by one percentage point from 7.6 percentage points to 6.6 percentage points in 2015. However, in 2016 this gap widened to 7.4 percentage points.

Attendance rates by student level of education

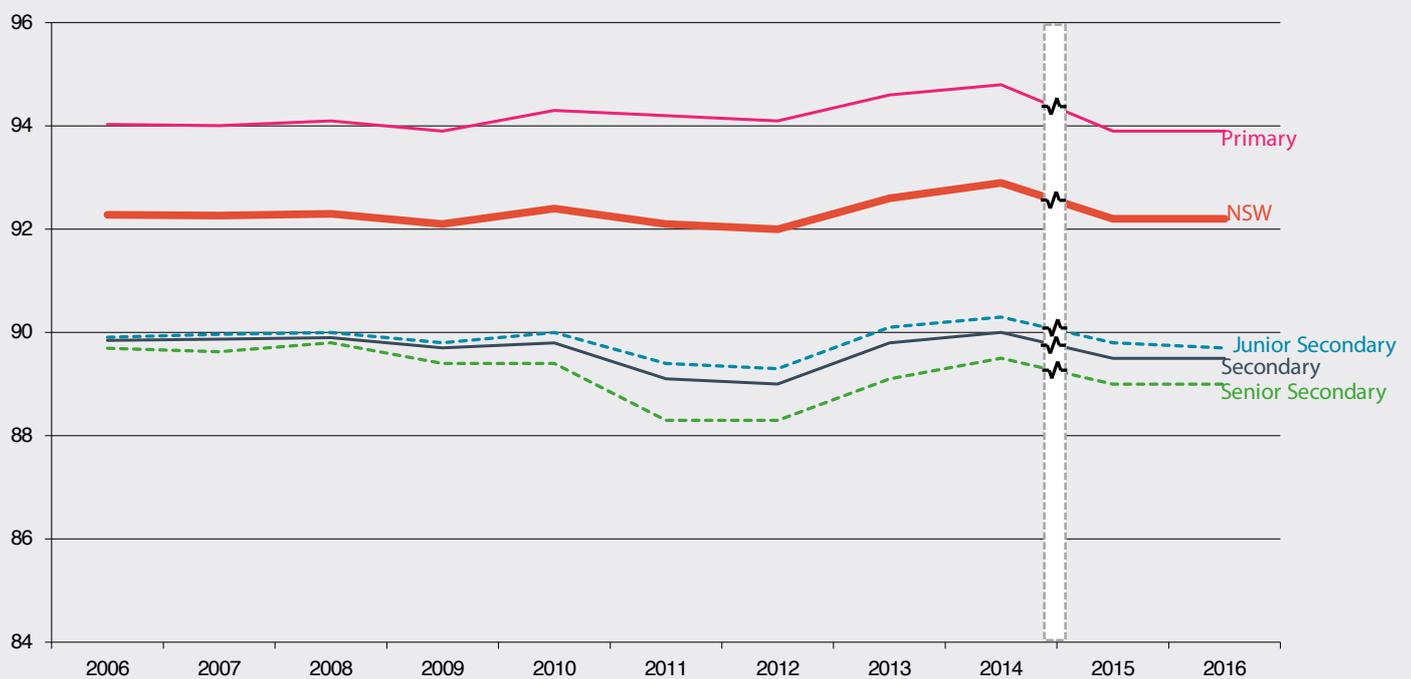
Over the last ten years attendance rates for primary students have been consistently higher than secondary students. Figure

2 and Table 2 present attendance rates for all students by level of education. Both primary and secondary attendance remained constant between 2015 and 2016 at 93.9 per cent and 89.0 per cent respectively. 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 increased from 2012 to 2014 and remained constant between 2015 and 2016.

Figure 2

Student attendance rate by education level, Semester 1 2006-2016: NSW government schools



Note: The chart includes a transparent bar to denote a break in series between 2014 to 2015, as a result of the change to the recording of family holidays that came into effect in January 2015.

Table 2

Student attendance rate by education level, Semester 1 2006-2016: NSW government schools

School Level	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Primary	94.0	94.0	94.1	93.9	94.3	94.2	94.1	94.6	94.8	93.9	93.9
Secondary	89.8	89.9	89.9	89.7	89.8	89.1	89.0	89.8	90.0	89.5	89.5
Junior Secondary	89.9	90.0	90.0	89.8	90.0	89.4	89.3	90.1	90.3	89.8	89.7
Senior Secondary	89.7	89.6	89.8	89.4	89.4	88.3	88.3	89.1	89.5	89.0	89.0
NSW	92.3	92.3	92.3	92.1	92.4	92.1	92.0	92.6	92.9	92.2	92.2

Aboriginal student 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 students.

Under eight per cent of students in NSW government schools identified as Aboriginal from 2006 to 2016. As a result, attendance rates for non-Aboriginal students are very similar to the rates for all students, shown in Table 1, Table 2 and Figure 2.

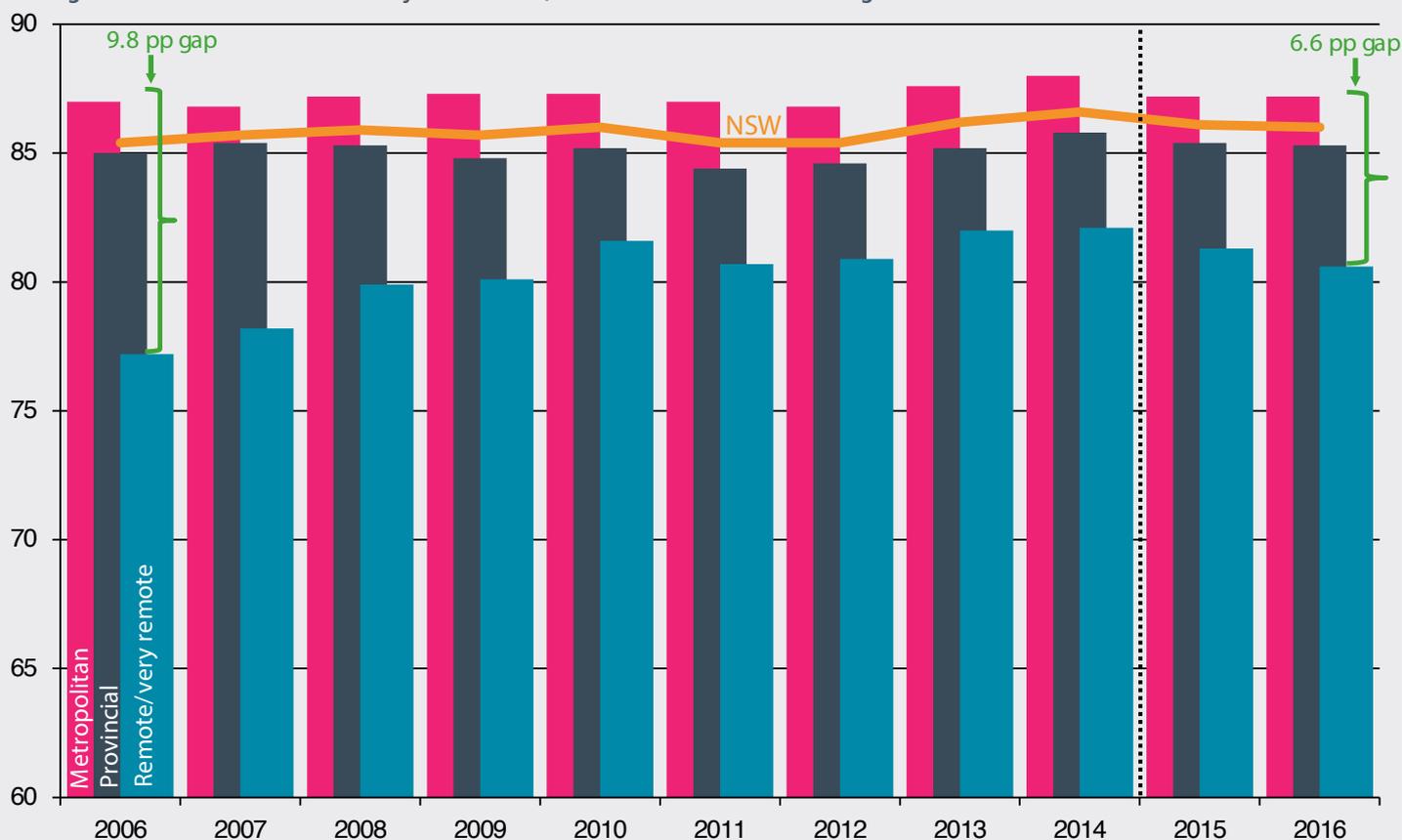
Figure 3 shows attendance rates for Aboriginal students attending NSW government schools by remoteness from 2006 to 2016. The highest student attendance rates were recorded at schools in the metropolitan area, followed by provincial and then remote/very remote areas.

The average attendance rate for Aboriginal students was 86.0 per cent in 2016, slightly lower than 2015. This is consistent with the attendance rate pattern for all students between 2015 and 2016.

In metropolitan schools, the Aboriginal attendance rate remained constant at 87.2 per cent in 2016, similar to the attendance rate observed from 2008 to 2010.

Figure 3

Aboriginal student attendance rate by remoteness, Semester 1 2006-2016: NSW government schools



Note: The chart includes a striped line to denote a break in series between 2014 to 2015, as a result of the change to the recording of family holidays that came into effect in January 2015.

The Aboriginal attendance rate at schools in provincial NSW was 85.3 per cent in 2016, a marginal decrease from 2015. In remote and very remote areas the student attendance rate in 2016 was 80.6 per cent, a 0.7 percentage point decrease from 2015.

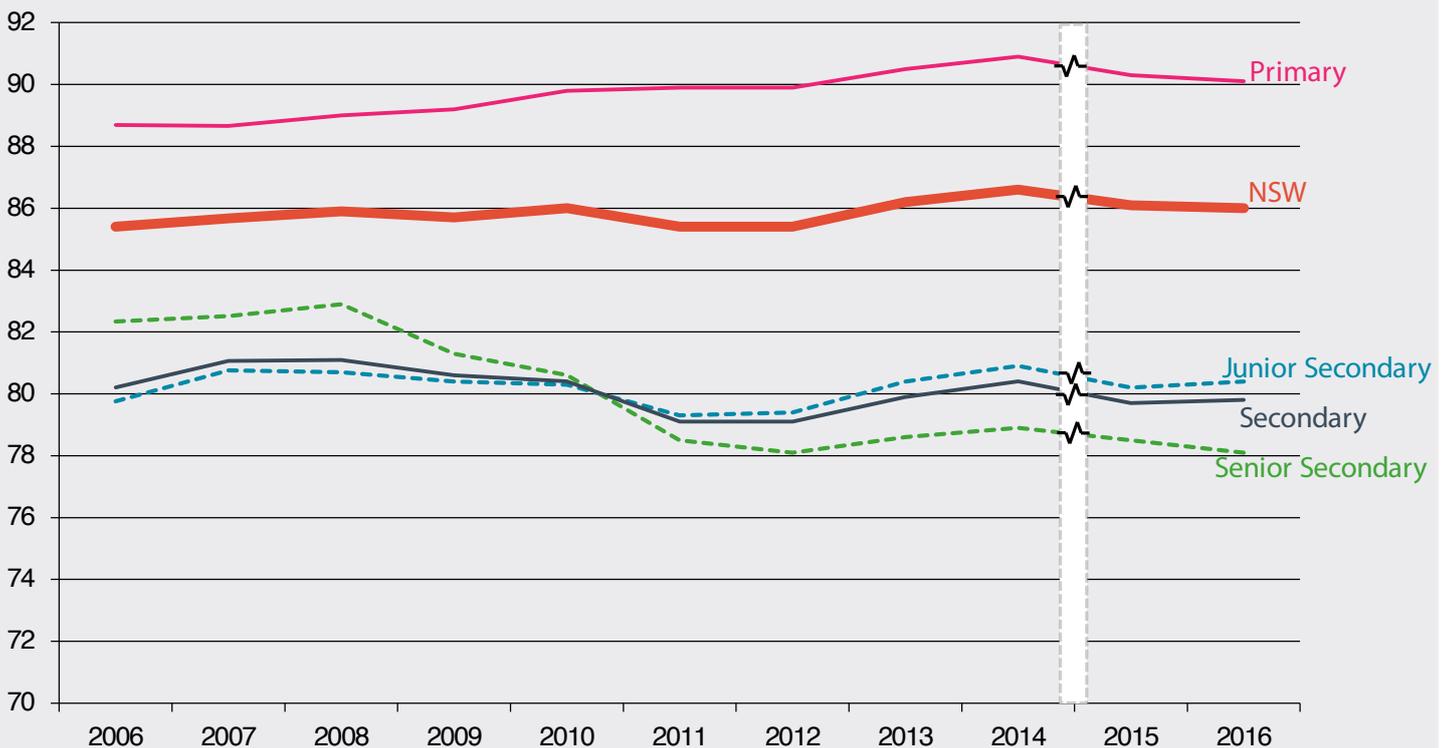
Although the gap between Aboriginal attendance rates at remote/very remote and metropolitan schools has narrowed since 2006, it increased between 2015 and 2016 as a result of the fall in the student attendance rate in remote and very remote areas.

Figure 4 and Table 3 show attendance rates for Aboriginal students by level of education. Primary attendance rates increased from 88.7 per cent in 2006 to 90.9 per cent in 2014, but declined slightly from 90.3 per cent in 2015 to 90.1 per cent in 2016.

Secondary student attendance rates remain over ten percentage points below primary school students. In 2016, primary attendance averaged 90.1 per cent compared with 79.8 per cent for Aboriginal secondary students.

Figure 4

Aboriginal student attendance rate by education level, Semester 1 2006-2016: NSW government schools



Note: The chart includes a transparent bar to denote a break in series between 2014 to 2015, as a result of the change to the recording of family holidays that came into effect in January 2015.

Table 3 shows that Aboriginal secondary student attendance rates increased slightly from 79.7 per cent in 2015 to 79.8 per cent in 2016.

However, Aboriginal senior secondary attendance rates declined from 78.5 per cent in 2015 to 78.1 per cent in 2016. This continues a steady decline from 2008 when senior secondary attendance rates were 82.9 per cent.

Junior secondary attendance increased by 0.2 percentage points, from 80.2 per cent in 2015 to 80.4 per cent in 2016.

Over the period from 2006 to 2016, the gap between primary and secondary attendance rates for Aboriginal students widened from 8.5 percentage points in 2006 to 10.3 percentage points in 2016.

Table 3

Aboriginal student attendance rate by education level, Semester 1 2006-2016: NSW government schools

School Level	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Primary	88.7	88.7	89.0	89.2	89.8	89.9	89.9	90.5	90.9	90.3	90.1
Secondary	80.2	81.1	81.1	80.6	80.4	79.1	79.1	79.9	80.4	79.7	79.8
Junior Secondary	79.8	80.8	80.7	80.4	80.3	79.3	79.4	80.4	80.9	80.2	80.4
Senior Secondary	82.3	82.5	82.9	81.3	80.6	78.5	78.1	78.6	78.9	78.5	78.1
NSW	85.4	85.7	85.9	85.7	86.0	85.4	85.4	86.2	86.6	86.1	86.0

Attendance rates by Term

Student attendance rates for Terms 1 and 2 for Aboriginal and all students from 2006 to 2016 are presented in Figure 5. Attendance rates are consistently 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 2016 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. Term 1 2016 attendance rate was 92.6 per cent, which was 0.3 percentage points lower than in 2015.

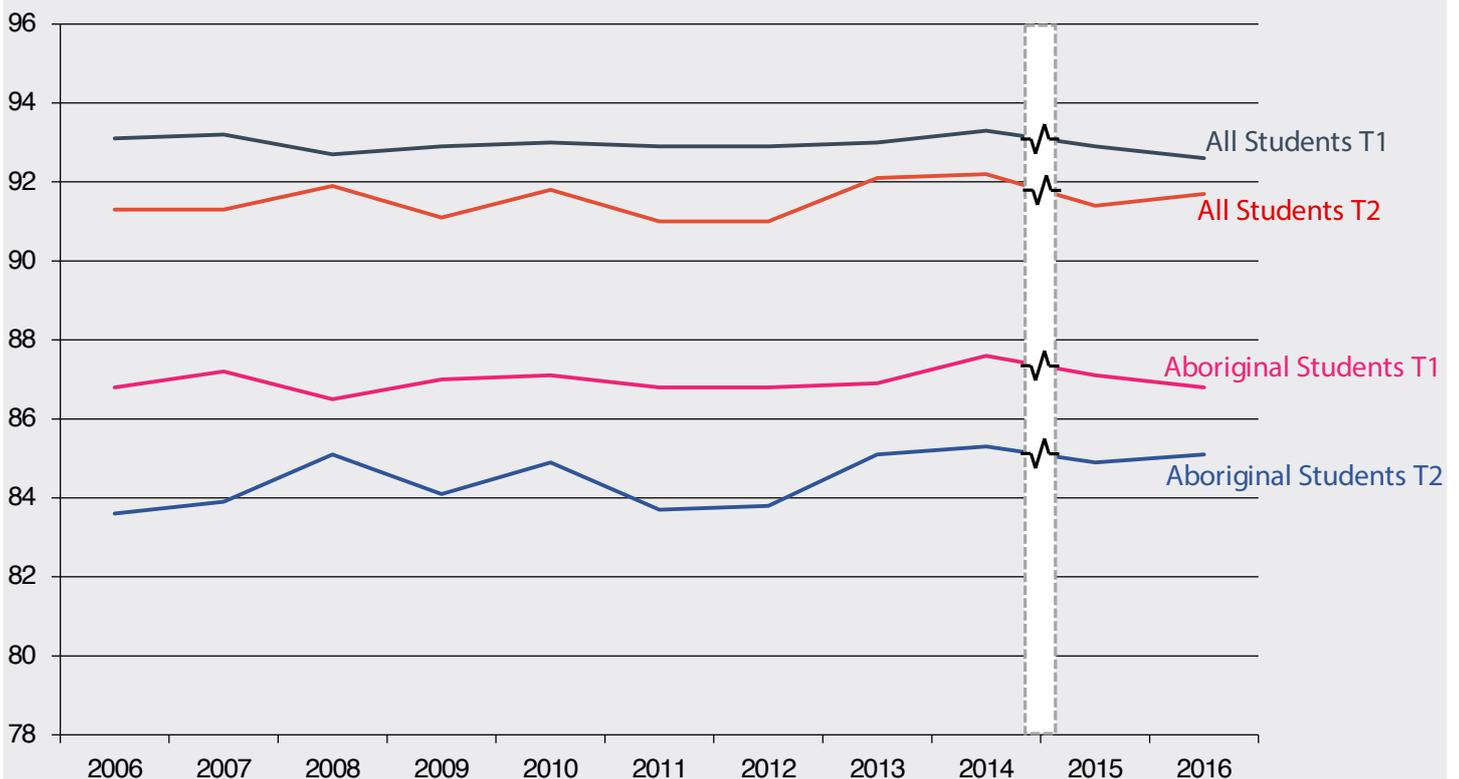
By contrast, Term 2 attendance rates varied between 91.0 in 2011 and 2012 and 92.2 per cent in 2014, a variation of 1.2 percentage points. The Term 2 2016 attendance rate was 91.7 per cent, which was 0.3 percentage points higher than Term 2 2015.

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 2016 Term 1 attendance was 0.9 percentage points higher than Term 2 for all students, at 92.6 per cent in Term 1 compared with 91.7 per cent in Term 2. For Aboriginal students, Term 1 attendance was 1.7 percentage points higher than Term 2, at 86.8 per cent in Term 1 compared with 85.1 per cent 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 2016, 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 student attendance rates, Terms 1 and 2 2006-2016: NSW government schools



Note: The chart includes a transparent bar to denote a break in series between 2014 to 2015, as a result of the change to the recording of family holidays that came into effect in January 2015.

Attendance rates by selective school status and FOEI

The Family Occupation and Education Index (FOEI) is a school-level index of educational disadvantage related to socio-economic background. It is used as the basis of the equity loading for socio-economic background in the Department's Resource Allocation Model. Higher FOEI scores indicate higher levels of need (i.e. lower socio-economic status).

Figure 6 presents attendance rates for all secondary students by selective school status and FOEI band. The chart shows that attendance rates are higher at schools with lower FOEI scores (i.e. more advantaged schools). Excluding fully selective schools, attendance rates are affected more by the FOEI score than by whether the school is selective or not. Fully selective schools are only represented in the lowest FOEI band presented in the chart (i.e. FOEI scores of up to 90), whereas both non-selective and partially selective schools are found in all four FOEI bands.

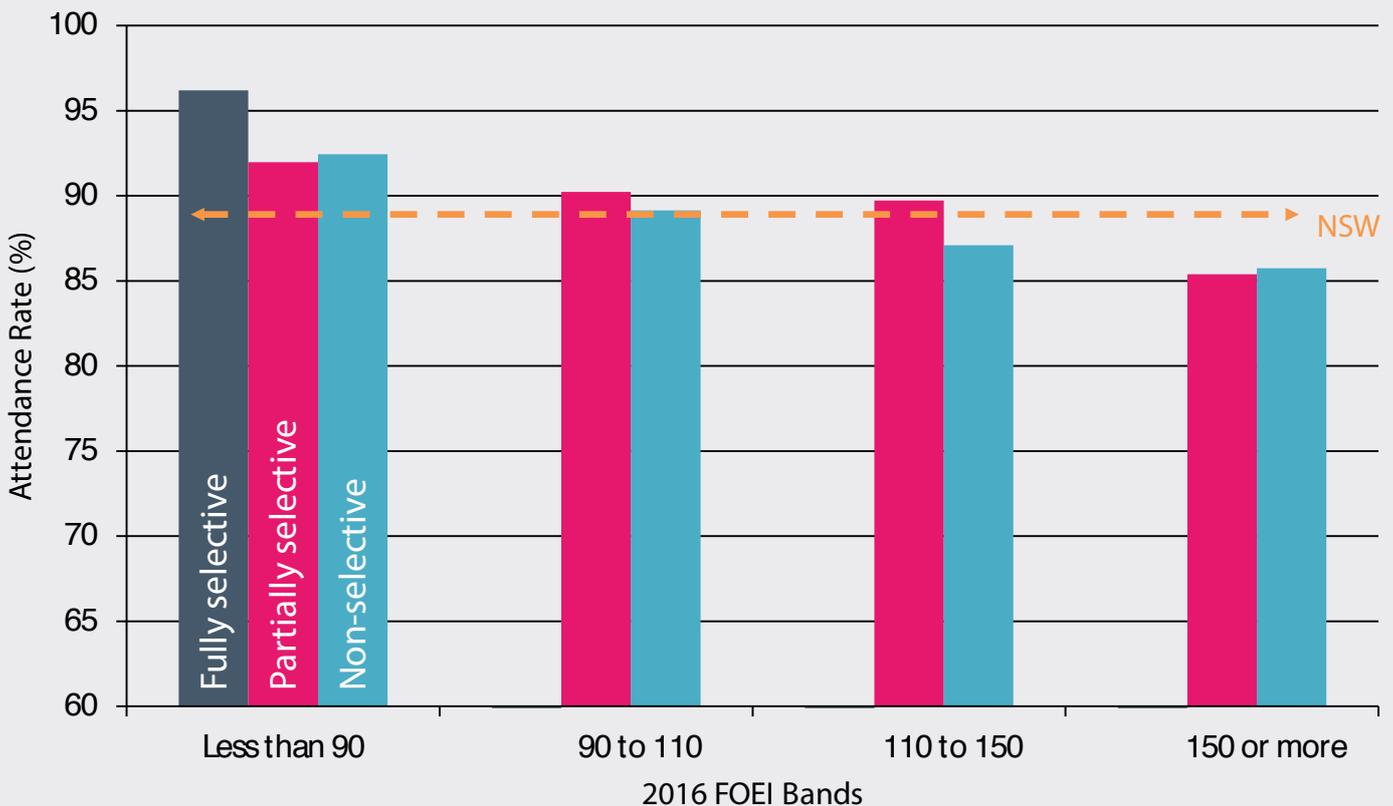
For FOEI scores up to 90, average attendance rates were highest amongst fully selective schools. These schools recorded attendance rates 3.8 percentage points higher than non-selective schools in the same band, and 4.2 percentage points higher than partially selective schools.

For FOEI scores of 90 to 110 and 150 or more, attendance rates for non-selective schools and partially selective schools were very similar. Partially selective schools with FOEI scores of 110 to 150 recorded average attendance rates of 2.6 percentage points higher than non-selective schools in the same FOEI band.

Due to system limitations, it is not possible to calculate attendance rates for selective students separately from non-selective students in partially selective schools.

Figure 6

Student attendance rates in 2016 by selective school status and FOEI: NSW government secondary schools



Notes

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

Nationally, the attendance rate is defined as the number of actual full-time equivalent student days attended by full-time students in Years 1–10 in semester 1 as a percentage of the total number of possible student-days attended in semester 1 (Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia KPM 1(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'

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

Ongoing data quality improvements can result in changes to the business rules in reports and affect the comparability of data with previous years.

Source: Statistics and Analysis, CESE. Semester 1 data extracted from the corporate data cubes in October 2016.

National standards for student attendance data reporting

The standards were agreed to by education authorities in October 2012. NSW government schools do not yet comply fully with the national standards as partial day absences are not included in attendance rate calculations.

Family holidays

From 2015 holidays taken by students during school term time are now included as absences. Previously parents/carers could apply for students to be exempt from attending school which meant that the absences did not count for reporting purposes.

Remoteness

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

Selective Schools

There are 47 fully or partially selective schools in NSW. For more information refer to the CESE DataHub or Statistical Bulletin.

Family Occupation and Education Index (FOEI)

The FOEI is constructed from parental education and occupation information collected from student enrolment forms. FOEI uses a statistical regression model to produce a weighted combination of school-level parental education and occupation variables based on the extent to which each variable uniquely predicts average school performance.

The technical report about the construction of FOEI can be accessed at <http://www.cese.nsw.gov.au/publications>. FOEI is a score ranging from 0 to approximately 300, with a mean of 100 and a standard deviation of 50.

Why collect attendance data?

Student attendance is recorded by schools for various reasons such as meeting legislative requirements to determine the whereabouts of each student on 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 Gov't Services 2015, Chapter 4, 4.19).

'Attendance' is used as a key indicator of governments' objective to develop fully the capabilities and talents 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.

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;
- travel in Australia and overseas;
- recognised religious festivals or ceremonial occasions;
- other absences not explained by parents or where 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 IT systems do not currently permit analysis by absence reason, therefore all these categories are included in this bulletin.

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