

Research Bulletin: Primary Attendance

Purpose: This Research Bulletin has been produced jointly by Information & Research Services and Education Welfare to enable the dissemination of recent research findings to Primary School Heads and Staff.

Subject: Attendance, Broken Weeks and Performance - South Gloucestershire Primary Schools - Analysis of Key Stage 2 Data for the 2005/6 Cohort.

Summary of Key Findings

In common with other national research, this research did not find a causal link between higher levels of attendance and higher levels of performance at KS2. However, the following findings were considered to be of significance:

- On average, lower rates of absence are associated with higher levels of **attainment**. This relationship is strongest for those pupils who attain level 5 in Maths and Science. However, analysing actual pupil level data shows that attendance on its own has very little impact on **attainment**. This would seem to suggest that the relationship found is potentially circular, i.e. highly motivated and potentially high achieving pupils are more likely to attend school and display higher levels of **attainment**.
- Increased levels of attendance has little or no effect on a pupil's **progress** in Reading and Writing. However, there is evidence of an association between attendance and the levels of **progress** pupils make between KS1 and KS2 in Maths.
- Those pupils who **underachieved** by more than one sub-level below their FFT estimate displayed, on average, significantly higher levels of absence than those pupils who either met their FFT estimate or exceeded their FFT estimate by more than one sub-level.
- Pupils eligible for **Free School Meals** and **SEN** pupils, on average, displayed significantly higher absence rates than the average for all pupils. Furthermore, there was a significantly high proportion of SEN pupils who also **underachieved** by more than one sub-level below their FFT estimate in English, Maths and Science. Therefore, it is probable that these pupils would benefit most from a strategy to improve attendance. However, this is unlikely to work on its own as their behaviour and motivation are probably areas that need to be addressed alongside their poor attendance.
- It would appear that once a critical level of attendance has been reached there is no significant benefit to be gained from improving attendance further, this is particularly true for English. Whilst it is difficult to say with precision what this critical level is, it is likely that most benefit could be gained from identifying and improving the attendance of those pupils who have **11 or more Broken Weeks** (only attendance data for the first five terms were considered in the analysis).

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