



# Learn Sheffield Insight Report: Attendance

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This Insight Report has been produced in response to trails in the [Sheffield Performance Analysis 2023](#). It seeks to respond to the three questions below:

- *What is the pattern of absence in Sheffield and how does this compare to national and Core City averages?*
- *How does absence vary between different pupil groups and localities?*
- *What is the relationship between attendance and attainment?*

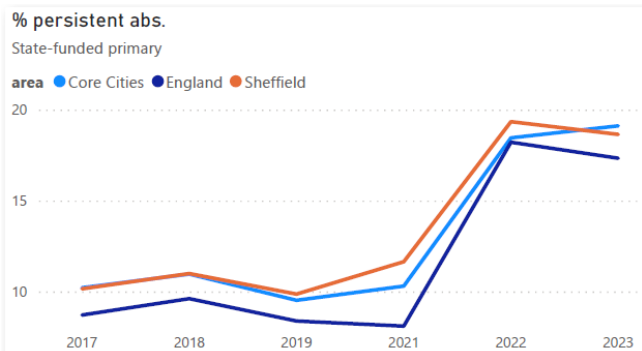
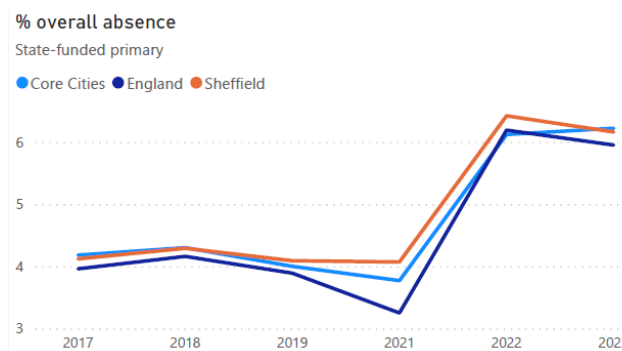
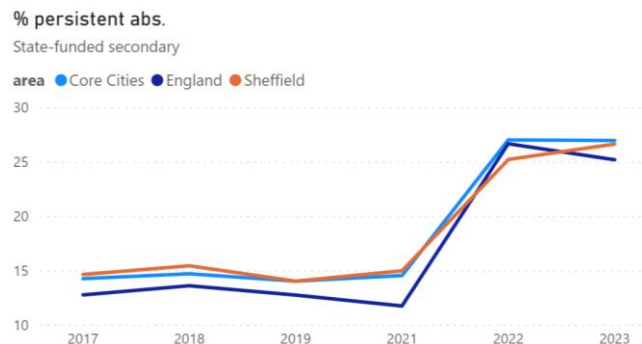
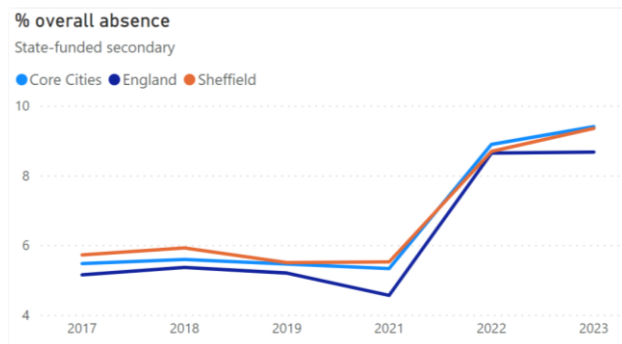
This paper is also, alongside the performance analysis, one of the supporting documents for the Learn Sheffield Independent Evaluation 2015-23, which can be found on the Learn Sheffield website:

<https://www.learnsheffield.co.uk/Projects/Learn-Sheffield-Evaluation>.

An early draft version of this Insight Report was shared with the Sheffield Strategic Partnership working group in November 2023. The working group also considered the Public First report [Listening to, and learning from, parents in the attendance crisis](#) (Dr Sally Burtonshaw and Ed Dorrell – September 2023).

## Introduction:

- The level of absence and persistent absence has increased since the Covid pandemic, both in Sheffield and nationally. The sharp post-Covid climb in both overall and persistent absence in primary and secondary can be seen below.



Autumn and Spring data 2022/23

- The significant rise in absence and persistent absence is extremely concerning, and we must not lose sight of the scale of this problem in analysing the finer details of it. When we consider the relative performance of Sheffield we should focus on overall absence (as what matters is whether a young person is in their setting or not) and the level of persistent absence. The table below demonstrates that almost 1 in 5 primary pupils and more than 1 in 4 secondary pupils nationally are persistently absent – and the position in Sheffield is slightly worse than this.

Overall Absence – Primary	Persistent Absence – Primary	Overall Absence – Secondary	Persistent Absence – Secondary
Sheffield 6.16%	Sheffield 18.64%	Sheffield 9.35%	Sheffield 26.62%
National 5.95%	National 17.33%	National 8.67%	National 25.18%
Gap 0.21% points	Gap 1.31% points	Gap 0.68% points	Gap 1.44% points
Trend (from same terms in 2021/22) of the gap to national –			
Narrowed by 0.02% points	Widened By 0.18% points	Widened by 0.63% points	Widened by 2.89% points

Autumn and Spring data 2022/23

- When Sheffield’s overall and persistent absence in primary and secondary is compared with (the 151) LAs nationally, the City is in the third quartile and broadly in line with deprivation rankings. Sheffield is also in the mid-range of Core Cities (4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> of 8) across primary and secondary measures.

Attendance ranks and rank change (all LAs)			
year phase	2023 rank	rank change from 2016	rank change from 2019
<b>State-funded secondary</b>			
% overall absence	116	↑	1
% auth. absence	2	↑	7
% unauth. absence	147	↓	-5
% persistent abs.	104	↑	12
<b>State-funded primary</b>			
% overall absence	105	↑	14
% auth. absence	6	↑	16
% unauth. absence	146	↓	-4
% persistent abs.	106	↑	31
<b>Special</b>			
% overall absence	141	↓	-8
% auth. absence	144	↓	-7
% unauth. absence	120	↓	-9
% persistent abs.	130	↓	-8

Attendance ranks and rank change (Core Cities)			
year phase	2023 rank	rank change from 2016	rank change from 2019
<b>State-funded secondary</b>			
% overall absence	5	→	0
% auth. absence	1	↓	1
% unauth. absence	7	→	0
% persistent abs.	4	↓	1
<b>State-funded primary</b>			
% overall absence	5	↓	1
% auth. absence	2	↓	2
% unauth. absence	7	↓	-1
% persistent abs.	4	↓	2
<b>Special</b>			
% overall absence	7	↓	-1
% auth. absence	8	↓	-1
% unauth. absence	2	→	0
% persistent abs.	6	→	0

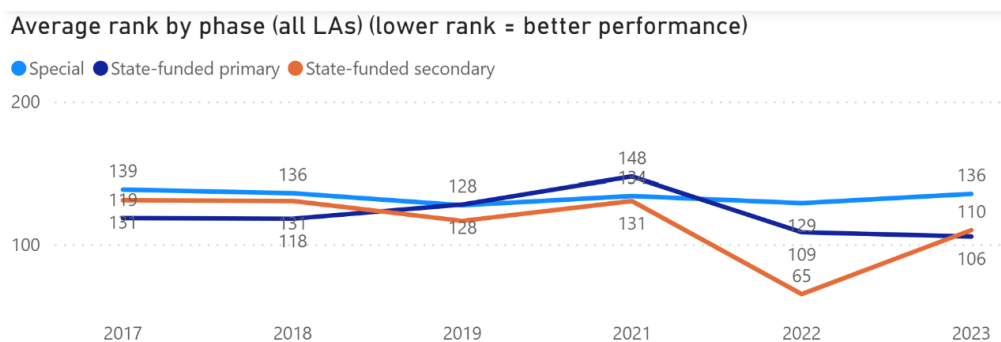
Autumn and Spring data 2022/23

## Attendance by pupil groups:

- Attendance for vulnerable groups is lower in Sheffield and the gaps with the national and Core Cities equivalent are larger.
- Attendance for pupils not eligible for FSM (free school meals) is better than the national average in primary and secondary. Attendance for pupils without SEN (special educational needs) and without EAL (English Additional Language) is close to or better than the national average in primary.
- Attendance for pupils from the majority of ethnic groups, pupils eligible for FSM, pupils with EAL and pupil with SEN is worse than the national and Core Cities average for the comparable group across all phases.

## Attendance in special schools:

- LA absence rankings for Sheffield's special sector (141 overall / 130 persistent of 151) and Core City rankings (7 overall and 6 persistent of 8) are lower. This is a consistent picture in recent years as shown in the graph below. We need to understand this better, given the variability of approaches to specialist provision (which would impact on attendance) across the country.



Autumn and Spring data 2022/23

## Attendance coding:

- The data and LA ranking of Sheffield in relation to authorised absence (which is amongst the lowest in the country) and unauthorised absence (which is amongst the highest) should be considered, as this situation could only come about through advice about coding absence locally.
- Sheffield typically has significantly lower illness rates (primary and secondary) compared to the national average and higher rates of 'other' unauthorised absence. This suggests that either Sheffield is coding genuine illness as unauthorised absence or perhaps that practice in Sheffield is more rigorous than elsewhere. The total absence due to holidays is slightly higher in Sheffield than elsewhere (0.15% in primary and 0.17% in secondary) the main difference being that the majority of holidays in Sheffield are coded as unauthorised.

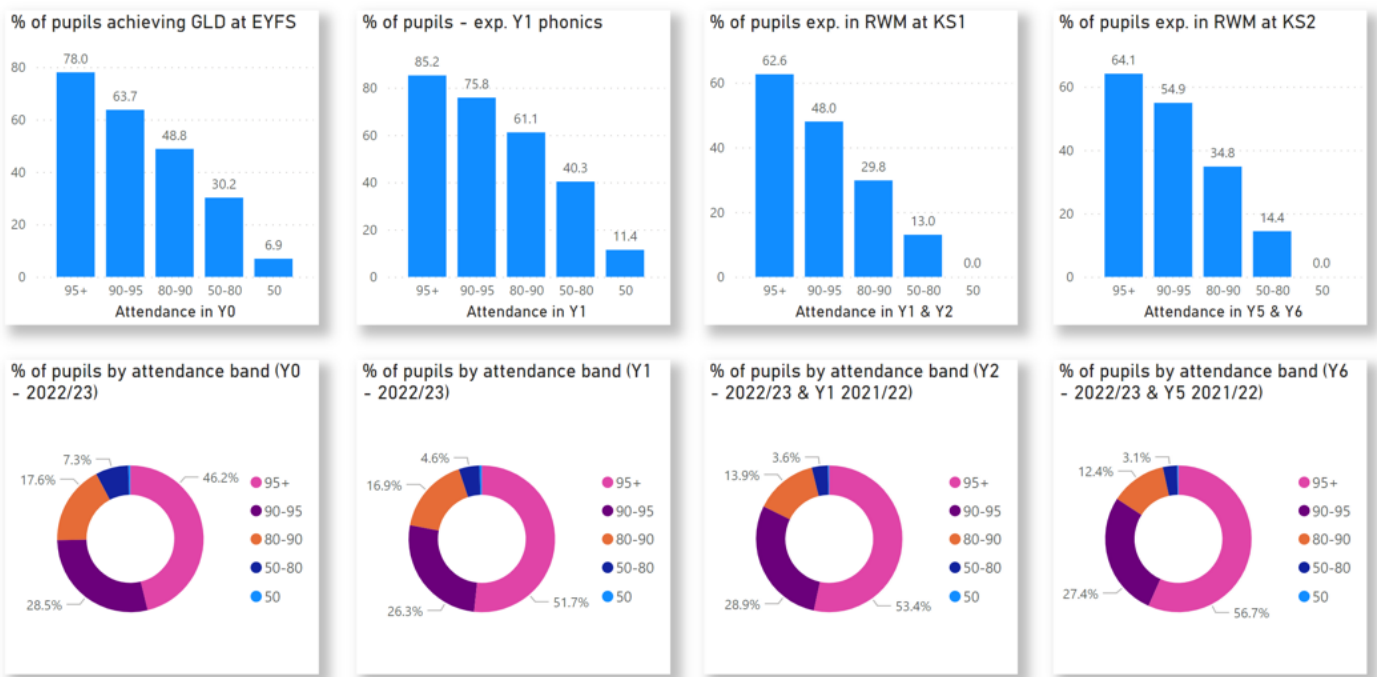
Phase Reason for absence	Special Sheffield	diff w.		State-funded primary			State-funded secondary		
		national	Core Cities	Sheffield	diff w. national	diff w. Core Cities	Sheffield	diff w. national	diff w. Core Cities
% overall absence	16.79	3.59	1.50	6.16	0.21	-0.06	9.35	0.68	-0.05
% auth. absence	12.83	2.60	2.33	3.80	-0.72	-0.36	3.68	-1.96	-1.09
% unauth. absence	3.96	0.99	-0.82	2.36	0.93	0.30	5.67	2.64	1.04
% covid	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
% excluded (auth)	0.20	0.04	0.05	0.03	0.01	0.01	0.38	0.13	-0.01
% holiday (auth)	0.21	-0.05	0.05	0.04	-0.01	0.01	0.01	-0.01	-0.01
% holiday (unauth)	0.51	0.27	0.11	0.63	0.16	0.05	0.46	0.18	0.08
% illness (auth)	6.36	0.25	0.24	3.16	-0.62	-0.41	2.49	-1.91	-1.04
% late (unauth)	0.03	-0.14	-0.17	0.14	0.01	-0.02	0.13	-0.04	-0.09
% medical (auth)	1.11	0.17	0.21	0.23	0.01	0.02	0.24	-0.10	-0.03
% no reason yet (unauth)	0.06	-0.03	-0.04	0.03	-0.01	-0.02	0.20	0.11	0.09
% other (auth)	4.90	2.24	1.74	0.34	0.02	0.02	0.56	-0.04	0.01
% other (unauth)	3.36	0.92	-0.72	1.56	0.80	0.29	4.87	2.38	0.96
% religious (auth)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	-0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
% study (auth)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	-0.01	-0.01
% tot. holiday	0.72	0.22	0.16	0.67	0.15	0.05	0.47	0.17	0.07
% traveller (auth)	0.06	0.06	0.05	0.00	-0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Note: the secondary phase includes primary age pupils in through schools (around 2.5% of all primary age pupils in Sheffield)

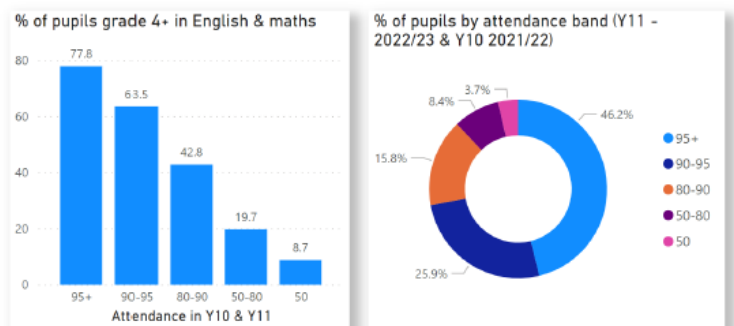
Autumn and Spring data 2022/23

**Impact of attendance on attainment:**

- Sheffield is the second strongest Core City in relation to Ofsted outcomes (i.e. the proportion of all schools which are good or better). When we consider attainment, Sheffield is 5<sup>th</sup> ranked Core City in secondary (both for attainment 8 and progress 8) and 5<sup>th</sup> ranked Core City in primary (combined measure in KS2). When we consider attendance, Sheffield is the 5<sup>th</sup> Core City (overall absence in primary and secondary) or 4<sup>th</sup> Core City (persistent absence in primary and secondary).
- When we analyse attainment by bands of attendance (see graphic below which covers the primary phase), we can see both the breakdown of each cohort by bands and the decreasing likelihood of reaching the required standard for each stage as the band of attendance reduces. The graphic also shows that the proportion of primary children with 95%+ attendance is lowest in the youngest age groups.



- A similar pattern is seen at KS4. Once attendance drops below 90%, the chance of achieving a 4+ in English and maths drops significantly. Nearly 28% of the KS4 cohort in 2023 had average attendance below 90% in Y10 and Y11.

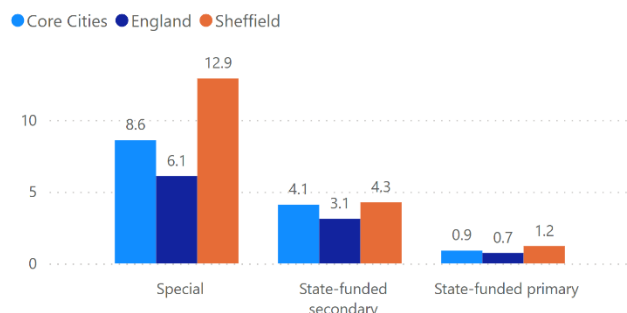


- Similarly, analysis of the factors which are determinants of lower attainment demonstrates that prior attainment and level of attendance are the two most significant factors. When controlling for other characteristics, we find that when a young person drops from 95%+ to the 90-95% attendance band their likelihood of achieving the expected standard for their age drops by approximately 50%.

## Persistent absence below 90% and 50%:

- Nearly 28% of the KS4 cohort in 2023 had average attendance below 90% in Y10 and Y11. Once attendance drops below 90% the chance of achieving a grade 4+ in English and maths drops significantly.
- The proportion of young people whose attendance is below 50% in Sheffield is significantly higher than both national and Core Cities in all sectors and this has been the case since 2020/21.

% of young people missing more than 50% of sessions



Autumn and Spring data 2022/23

## Attendance and attainment by locality:

- The tables below show attainment across headline outcome measures by attendance band and locality.
- The proportion of students in each attendance band is not uniform across the different key stages. For example, students in localities B and C are less likely than other localities to have attendance above 95% in younger cohorts whilst locality A has the lowest proportion in the Y11 cohort.
- The proportion of students achieving the expected standard also differs considerably by locality for pupils in the same attendance band. There tends to be less variation in the younger age groups, by KS4 there is a 20% point difference in attainment between locality F (highest) and locality B (lowest) for students with attendance above 95%.

### Attendance & attainment (2023)

Locality	50	50-80	80-90	90-95	95+
A	0.0	29.6	54.4	62.0	79.3
B	20.0	28.8	50.5	59.0	71.8
C	0.0	28.4	47.4	60.6	70.0
D	0.0	38.6	49.6	65.4	77.4
E	0.0	29.5	44.7	60.0	76.0
F	0.0	29.5	47.0	69.6	82.5
G	0.0	35.3	44.4	68.7	80.7
Sheffield	6.9	30.2	48.8	63.7	78.0

Locality	50	50-80	80-90	90-95	95+
A	0.1%	7.5%	15.9%	30.7%	45.8%
B	1.0%	13.2%	26.9%	29.5%	29.4%
C	0.8%	11.2%	24.7%	30.1%	33.2%
D	0.3%	4.9%	15.3%	28.7%	50.8%
E	0.4%	6.1%	14.2%	29.6%	49.8%
F	0.3%	4.4%	13.3%	25.8%	56.2%
G	0.4%	3.0%	11.0%	25.7%	59.9%
Sheffield	0.5%	7.3%	17.6%	28.5%	46.2%

Locality	50	50-80	80-90	90-95	95+
A	14.3	32.0	65.5	76.1	86.5
B	11.1	39.5	57.3	75.3	81.1
C	12.5	43.5	57.2	71.3	77.9
D	20.0	45.9	64.2	77.2	83.7
E	0.0	34.2	66.1	78.8	86.4
F	0.0	53.1	61.6	78.6	89.6
G	0.0	16.7	64.5	71.9	84.7
Sheffield	11.4	40.5	61.1	75.8	85.2

Locality	50	50-80	80-90	90-95	95+
A	1.0%	3.6%	17.0%	26.8%	51.6%
B	0.9%	7.3%	25.0%	29.0%	37.9%
C	0.9%	7.9%	23.7%	28.7%	38.8%
D	0.5%	3.9%	15.8%	27.6%	52.2%
E	0.4%	5.2%	15.3%	25.1%	54.0%
F	0.1%	2.2%	11.3%	22.4%	63.9%
G	0.2%	2.0%	10.1%	26.1%	61.7%
Sheffield	0.6%	4.5%	16.9%	26.3%	51.7%

The tables above show the % of pupils achieving each threshold measure by locality and attainment band.

Data source: SCC local attainment and attendance data, Performance & Analysis Service

The tables above show the % of pupils in each attendance band in the academic year prior to the assessment.

Data source: SCC local attainment and attendance data, Performance & Analysis Service

## Attendance & attainment (2023)

% of pupils achieving the expected standard in RWM at KS1 by attendance band

Locality	50	50-80	80-90	90-95	95+
A	0.0	16.7	28.4	48.9	62.1
B	0.0	11.5	24.3	44.2	55.0
C	0.0	7.9	26.4	39.7	58.3
D	0.0	12.0	39.9	48.4	60.1
E	0.0	18.2	28.9	48.0	59.8
F	0.0	20.0	32.0	56.9	68.4
G	0.0	0.0	36.4	47.3	68.3
Sheffield	0.0	13.0	29.8	48.0	62.6

% of pupils achieving the expected standard in RWM at KS2 by attendance band

Locality	50	50-80	80-90	90-95	95+
A	0.0	10.7	33.3	53.6	64.4
B	0.0	11.7	24.2	43.0	51.0
C	0.0	5.6	24.6	45.7	57.0
D	0.0	20.0	43.5	57.7	63.9
E	0.0	25.0	36.9	52.9	62.5
F	0.0	21.7	51.9	65.2	72.9
G	0.0	12.5	42.4	62.2	73.1
Sheffield	0.0	14.4	34.8	54.9	64.1

The tables above show the % of pupils achieving each threshold measure by locality and attainment band.

Data source: SCC local attainment and attendance data, Performance & Analysis Service

% of pupils by attendance band (Y2 - 2022/23 & Y1 2012/22)

Locality	50	50-80	80-90	90-95	95+
A	0.1%	3.2%	14.5%	29.3%	52.9%
B	0.5%	7.1%	21.3%	31.0%	40.2%
C	0.6%	4.6%	17.3%	31.6%	45.9%
D	0.1%	2.6%	14.9%	33.0%	49.4%
E	0.8%	4.3%	12.5%	25.8%	56.6%
F	0.1%	1.7%	8.8%	25.4%	64.0%
G	0.2%	1.3%	7.1%	26.8%	64.7%
Sheffield	0.3%	3.6%	13.9%	28.9%	53.4%

% of pupils by attendance band (Y6 - 2022/23 & Y5 2012/22)

Locality	50	50-80	80-90	90-95	95+
A	0.5%	3.5%	12.3%	27.1%	56.6%
B	0.4%	5.6%	17.1%	25.5%	51.4%
C	0.1%	4.0%	15.7%	28.1%	52.1%
D	0.3%	3.0%	13.1%	27.5%	56.1%
E	0.4%	3.0%	13.2%	26.0%	57.3%
F	0.3%	1.6%	7.3%	28.2%	62.7%
G	0.2%	1.2%	9.1%	30.2%	59.4%
Sheffield	0.3%	3.1%	12.4%	27.4%	56.7%

The tables above show the % of pupils in each attendance band in the two academic years prior to the assessment.

Data source: SCC local attainment and attendance data, Performance & Analysis Service

## Attendance & attainment (2023)

% of pupils achieving grade 4+ in English & maths by attendance band

Locality	50	50-80	80-90	90-95	95+
A	0.0	13.3	32.2	60.1	72.9
B	4.3	7.8	31.4	49.2	68.4
C	9.7	14.3	35.1	53.3	69.9
D	5.9	14.9	40.7	57.9	72.7
E	20.6	23.5	45.3	63.5	69.4
F	28.6	50.8	60.4	76.6	89.3
G	3.2	23.3	56.3	67.3	81.4
Sheffield	8.7	19.7	42.8	63.5	77.8

The tables above show the % of pupils achieving each threshold measure by locality and attainment band.

Data source: SCC local attainment and attendance data, Performance & Analysis Service

% of pupils by attendance band (Y11 - 2022/23 & Y10 2012/22)

Locality	50	50-80	80-90	90-95	95+
A	5.0%	14.5%	21.2%	22.0%	37.2%
B	2.8%	9.4%	19.0%	23.8%	45.1%
C	3.8%	9.4%	18.0%	27.3%	41.6%
D	6.1%	10.3%	16.1%	25.7%	41.9%
E	6.2%	9.2%	15.6%	22.8%	46.2%
F	0.9%	4.0%	11.8%	29.0%	54.4%
G	5.2%	7.2%	13.4%	26.2%	47.9%
Sheffield	3.7%	8.4%	15.8%	25.9%	46.2%

The tables above show the % of pupils in each attendance band in the two academic years prior to the assessment.

Data source: SCC local attainment and attendance data, Performance & Analysis Service

## Next steps:

It has been determined, through the Sheffield Strategic Partnership working group, that attendance should be a priority for a task and finish group. This is because:

- The impact of improved attendance would lead to improved attainment and improved life chances for children and young people in Sheffield.
- This improvement requires a wider partnership response. Each partner (including education settings) can always improve their practice, but unless all partners contribute a significant improvement in attendance outcomes will not be realised.

We propose that this task and finish group should (in line with the performance analysis trails) prioritise further analysis and discussion of:

- The characteristics of young people with attendance below 50% and below 90% to explore the root causes of Sheffield's attendance challenges.

- The bottom quartile attendance in Sheffield special schools to consider the impact of the nature of provision and cohort, and attendance practice.
- The extreme rankings of authorised and unauthorised absence, and whether this consistent approach to coding reflects good practice.
- What we can learn from other LAs that have implemented city-wide cross remit attendance drives, including the impact of attendance fines.
- What the strongest setting outcomes (relative to context) locally tell us about what works.
- What impact raised attendance would have on attainment.
- The strategic impact of larger numbers of persistently absent pupils on the ability of settings to deliver granular approaches to impact on attendance.