

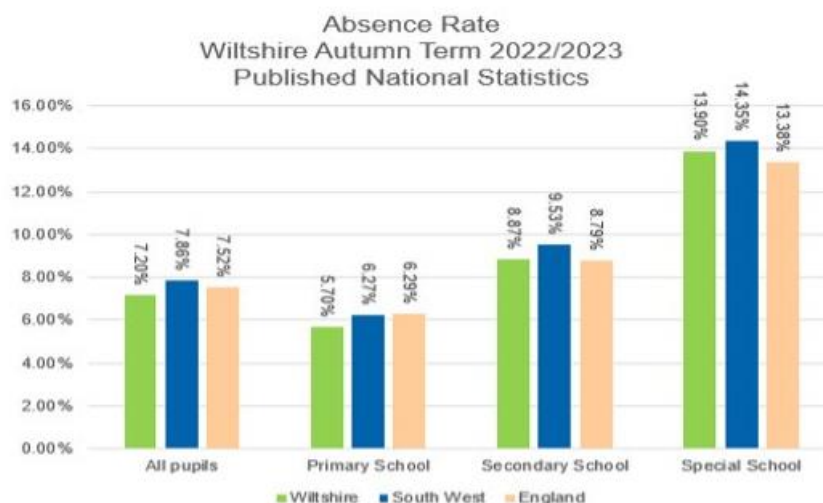
<b>Report to Children’s Select Committee</b>	
<b>TITLE:</b>	<b>Regular Written Update to Children’s Select Committee: Working Together to Improve School Attendance</b>
<b>DATE:</b>	<b>12<sup>th</sup> July 2023</b>
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**Context:**

The DfE Guidance document ‘working together to improve school attendance’ was published in May 2022 for implementation by schools and local authorities from September 2022. The guidance is not yet statutory, but it is the government’s intention for it to become so when parliamentary time allows.

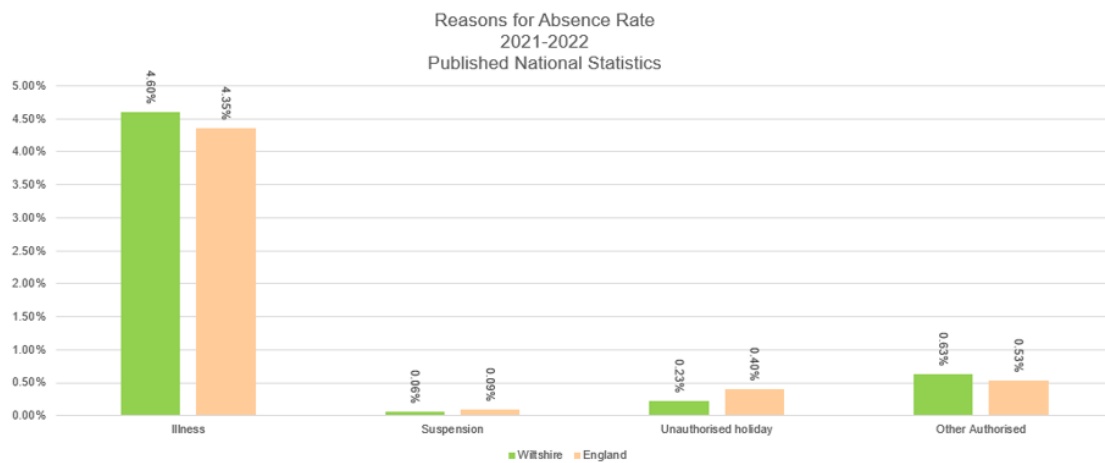
The last written attendance update was provided to Children’s Select Committee on 25<sup>th</sup> May 2023. No new data is available, however the committee members requested data on reasons for absence, in order to have a better understanding of the challenges.

**Absence Data**



The latest available published data is from the autumn term of this academic year. This shows that Wiltshire’s overall absence rate was lower than for children in the South West and nationally. Primary school absence was also lower than for children in the South West and nationally. Absence rates in Wiltshire secondary schools were lower than for children in the South West and 0.08% higher than for children nationally. Absence from Wiltshire special schools was lower than for children in the South West and 0.54% higher than for children nationally.

In 2021-22, Wiltshire’s absence rate for illness was 0.25% higher than the national figure. Absence due to suspension or unauthorised holiday absence was lower than the national figure. Absence for other authorised circumstances was 0.1% higher in Wiltshire than for children nationally.



Nationally, 7.5% of possible sessions were recorded as absence in Autumn term 2022/23, an increase from 6.9% in Autumn 2021/22, and having been consistently below 5% pre-pandemic. Although the absence rate increased, more pupils were attending school than in the Autumn 2021/22, when a further 1.6% of sessions were recorded as not attending in circumstances relating to coronavirus. The majority of national absence was due to illness, which accounted for 4.5% of possible sessions. Illness includes where positive COVID-19 cases were reported. In Wiltshire, authorised absence for illness is also consistently the most common reason for absence. This is true across all phases of education and all settings. Absence for illness in the Autumn term 2022/23 was 4.5%, which is in line with the national rate. Illness absence in Wiltshire was lower than for the South West, where the absence rate was 4.9%.

Nationally, 24.2% of pupils were persistently absent in the Autumn 2022/23 (i.e. missed 10% or more sessions). Again, this has been driven by illness, with 12.4% of all pupils missing 10% or more sessions due to illness alone. In Wiltshire, persistent absence was 22.34%.

In 2021 the DfE announced an intention to appoint new Attendance Advisers to work with Local Authorities to support implementation of expectations in the new attendance guidance. In July 2023, Wiltshire Council is pleased to be inviting an Adviser to visit us and work with colleagues in Education, Health and Children’s Social Care as we continue to work together to support improvements in school attendance.