

Insights into the current education data landscape

September 2024



Introducing Insight Inform

Insight Inform produces
informative evidence-informed
analysis on what is happening in
English schools

Insight Tracking manages student data for over 4,000 schools in England. We are always looking at ways to help those who use our systems to improve their use of data. Over the years we have produced blogs, supported podcasts and held countless events across the country focused on better understanding and use of education data.

In launching [Insight Inform](#), we aim to bring all of our work under one umbrella, from blogs, to events, to podcasts, to consultancy to help our schools to improve and refine their use of our systems and their data.

We hope that you enjoy this first report which we hope will encourage debate and discussion amongst all those working in and with our schools.

Richard Selfridge and James Pembroke

[Insight Inform](#)

HOW HAVE PRIMARY SCHOOLS RESPONDED TO THE END OF KS1 SATS?

End of KS1 assessments became non-statutory from the [2023/24 academic year onwards](#). The first cohort to take the statutory Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA) had reached the end of key stage 1 (KS1) and KS1 assessments were no longer need to create Value Added measures for this and future cohorts at key stage 2.

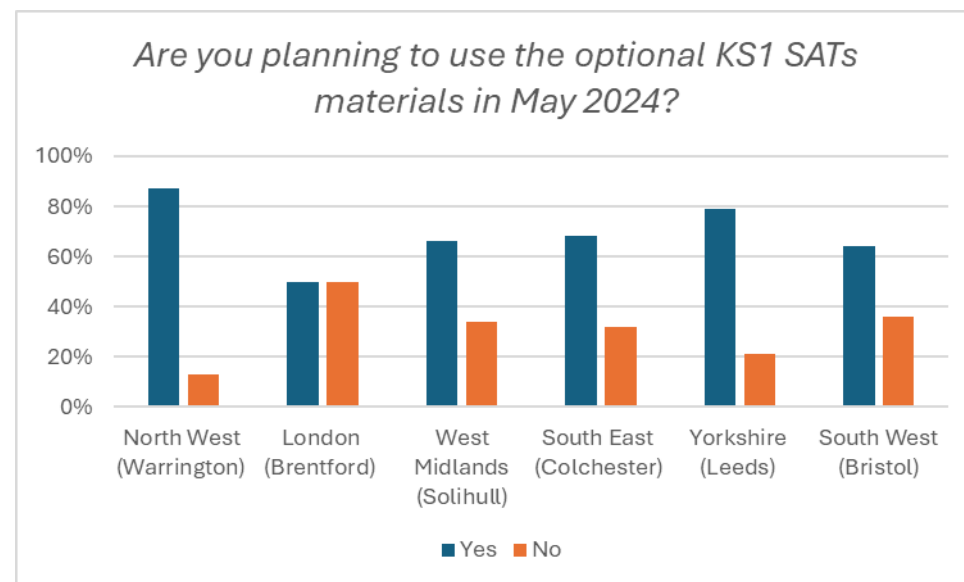
Whilst this change means that there is no statutory requirement to carry out end of KS1 teacher assessment, the Department for Education chose to continue to give schools the option to use now non-statutory KS1 teacher assessment framework materials.

Given the widespread criticism of the Y2 End of KS1 assessment framework prior to its withdrawal by many in the profession ([here](#), [here](#) and [here](#)), how have schools responded to the end of the statutory requirement to assess Year 2 pupils using KS1 teacher assessment framework materials?

Survey Data

Insight sponsors a series of Data in Schools Conferences, at which attendees were asked the following question during the 2023/24 academic year.

With the notable exception of schools in London, most schools were expecting to use the optional SATs materials in Summer 2024.



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In April 2024, [Schools Week](#) reported that, based on a Freedom of Information request, just **7 per cent** of primary schools opted out of receiving KS1 papers. Teacher Tapp, the online daily survey app, found that 60% of respondents reported that they were expecting to continue with KS1 SATs in Summer 2024.

In the same month, [TES](#) reported that a majority of schools (71%) were intending to run KS1 SATs. Of these schools, 33% said they would carry out the assessment as in previous years, with 28% saying that they would run the assessments at a different point.

At [Insight](#), we have regularly tracked the number of schools entering KS1 Assessments in order to create an estimate of the percentage of students reaching the national standard.

In [2022-23](#), we found that every Y2 pupil in Insight had both a Phonics Screening Check score (from assessments taken in either Y1 or Y2) and a statutory Key Stage 1 Teacher Assessment (a 'KS1 Score'). This was the same for Year 2 pupils in Insight in 2021-22 and 2018-19 (pre-C19 pandemic).

The picture for [2023-24](#) is quite different. This year, just 48.6% of Year 2 pupils in Insight were recorded as having a (now non-statutory) Key Stage 1 Teacher Assessment.

This indicates that roughly half of pupils are in schools which have used the KS1 materials. Whilst there is a possibility that Insight schools may be different in some way to non-Insight schools, we think this gives us a good indication of the national picture: **In the first year the KS1 assessment framework became non-statutory, schools were in two very different minds whether to use the materials or not.**

THE SURPRISING FACTS ABOUT ABSENCES AND TERM TIME HOLIDAYS

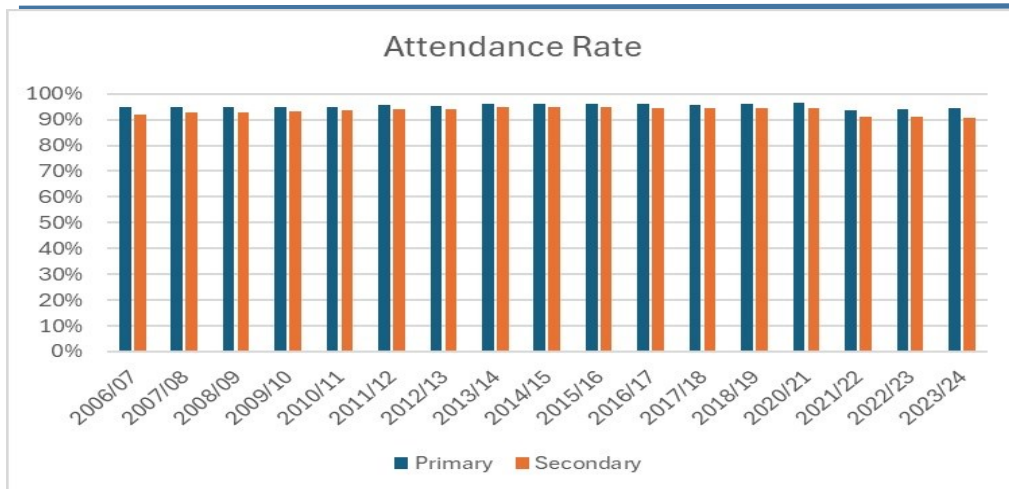
Much of the discourse about attendance in English schools focuses on [those students who are absent from school](#) and [what happens if families take children out of school during term time](#). Attendance has been subject to increasing government focus since 2017, when a Supreme Court ruling was interpreted by the Department of Education (DfE) to mean that 'regular attendance at school' meant [children should be expected to attend school for every session](#). The current DfE guidance (first introduced in September 2022) is '[Working together to improve school attendance](#)'; it emphasises the importance of school attendance and the expectation that schools will work to improve attendance.

We look here at patterns of attendance and absence to shine light on what we know based on the evidence available.

Attendance data has been collected centrally by the state in a number of ways since 2006. Schools [had to maintain registers](#) which could be inspected by outside bodies, but there was no central collation of the data. Prior to 2006, national attendance patterns were monitored via an Absence in Schools Survey introduced in 1993.

From 2006 until 2024, Inspectors and Local Authorities could '[make extracts](#)' of registers, and schools had to make a return including details of those students who failed to attend regularly or had been absent without authorisation for more than ten school days. This enabled the DfE to collect termly returns allowing them to create the data which is in the chart overleaf.

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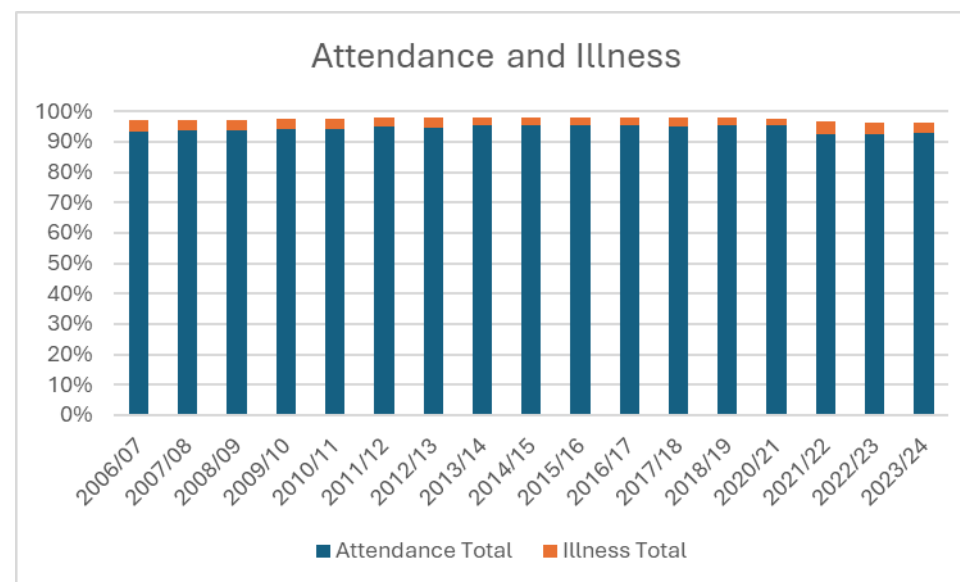
As is clear from the chart above, the vast majority of students are in school when they should be.

Attendance has not fallen below 92% overall since 2006, with attendance in Primary schools not falling below 94% in any year. Attendance in Secondary has always been above 90%.

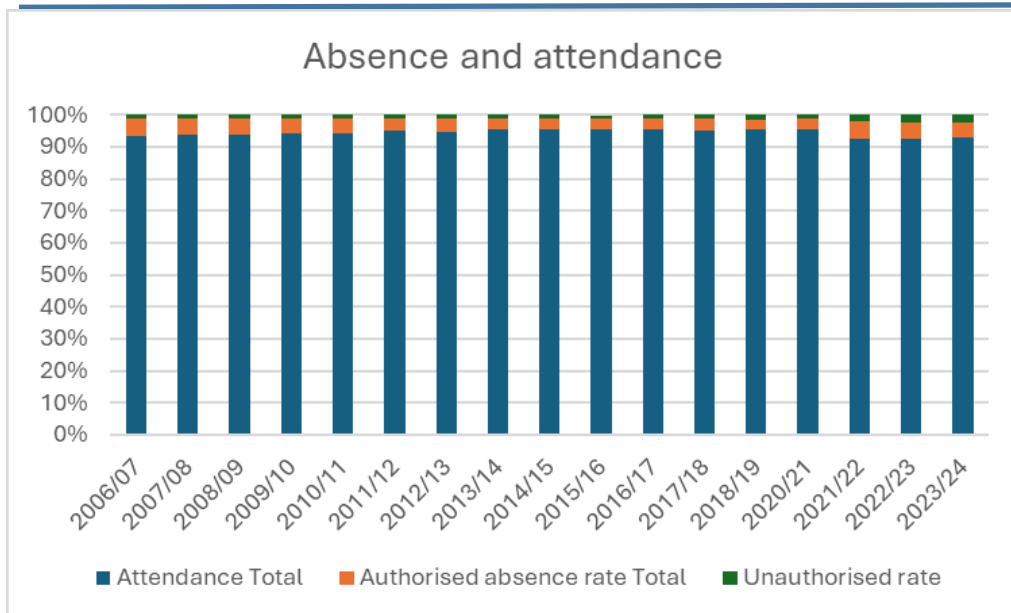
Since 1996, by law, schools have had to categorise those students who are not in school using a series of codes which have developed over the years. One of these codes records when a student has been registered as being ill. **The majority of absence is due to illness**, as per the chart to the right.

Students can be registered as being absent for reasons which are either classified as **authorised** or **not authorised**. Illness is recorded as authorised absence, as are several other categories including work experience, medical appointments, religious observance and so on.

Attendance plus authorised absence has not fallen below 97.5% since 2006.



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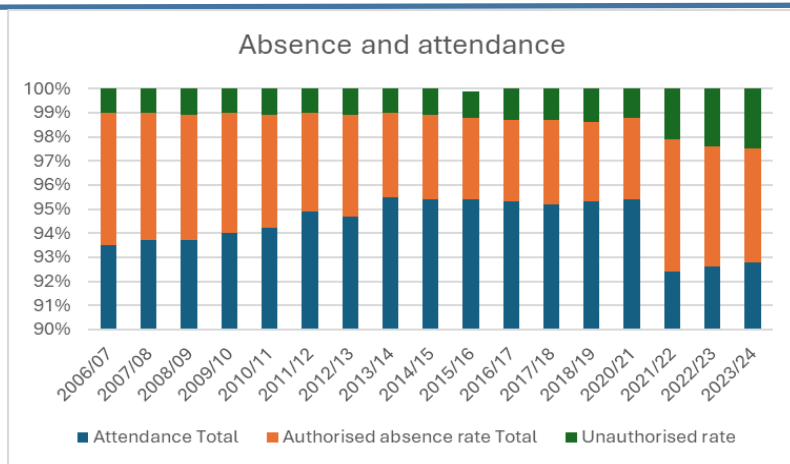
The school system had progressively reduced the rate of authorised absence between 2006/7 and 2020/21, partly as a result of directive to classify non-illness absence as unauthorised absence and partly as a result of an increased focus on attendance as a driver of success at school.

As a result of the impact of the Covid pandemic, however, the rate of authorised absence increased substantially between 2020/21 and 2021/22, from 3.4% to 5.5% (a 60% increase). There is some suggestion that this might be because the rate of authorised absence due to illness has increased (students appear to be taking longer to return to school after periods of illness compared to pre-pandemic).

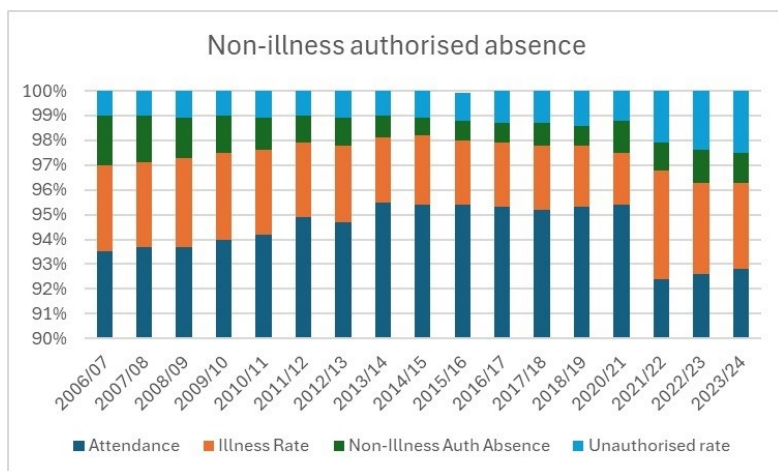
Authorised absence has been decreasing steadily since 2021/22 and is currently at the same level as it was in 2010/11.

The rate of unauthorised absence had increased from 1% in 2010/11 to 1.4% in 2018/19. This is likely to be due to schools classifying some absence as unauthorised where it may previously have been classified as authorised. Unauthorised absence improved slightly during 2020/21 (the year immediately after the initial Covid 19 outbreak) before deteriorating from 2.1% in 2021/22 to 2.5% in 2023/24.

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By separating out illness from other authorised absence, we can look more clearly at the 'non-illness authorised rate' of absence. This reduced from 2006/7 to 2018/19 – from 2% to under 1% - and, after a slight rise in 2020/21 - has begun to reduce again.



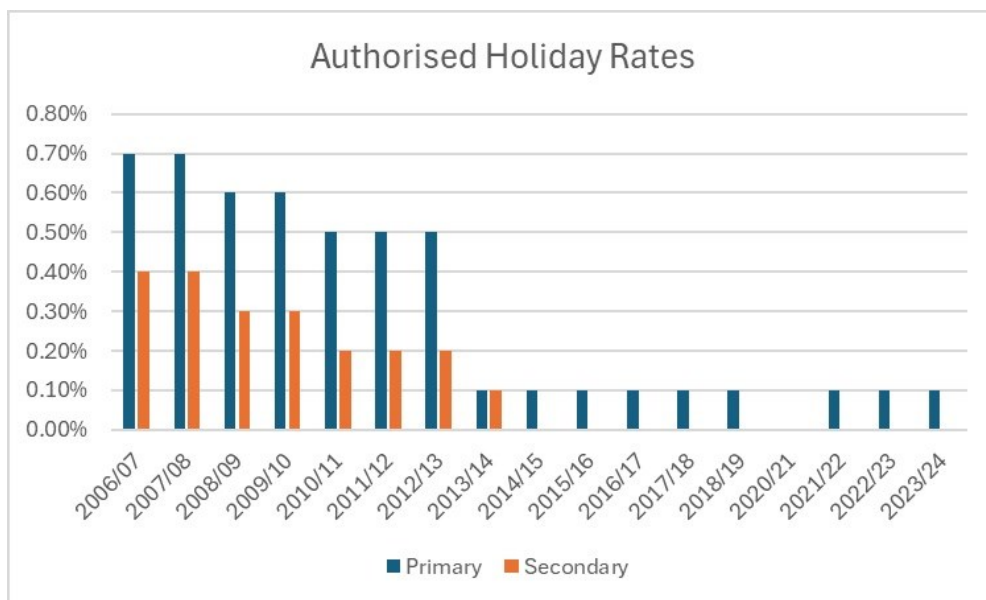
One key talking point regarding attendance has been number of families taking holidays during term time. Demand for family holidays reduces dramatically outside of school holidays, which appears to have encouraged some families to take children out of school to take advantage of lower cost holidays offered during term time.

Additionally, legislation introduced in 2006 tacitly accepted that families were taking children out of school during term time, and attempted to limit these periods of absence to [no more than ten school days](#) in any school year. In 2007, fines for absence of £50 per parent per child, at a school's discretion, [were introduced](#). In 2013, the DfE amended the legislation to clarify that ['leave of absence shall not be granted by schools unless there are "exceptional circumstances"'](#), claiming that 'parents and some schools have interpreted this law as an automatic entitlement to an annual two-week term time holiday'. Additionally, fines were increased to £60.

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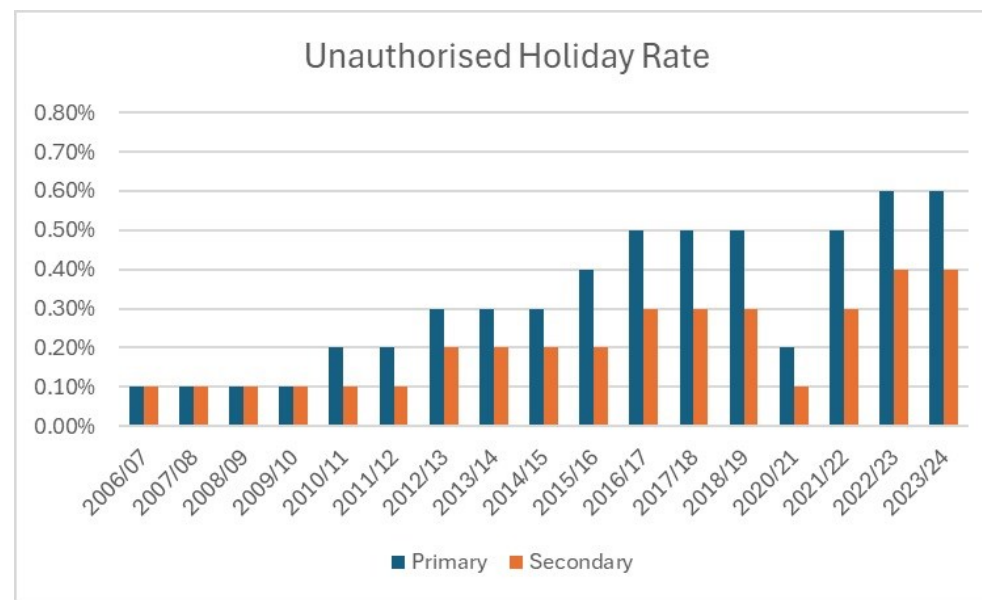
In effect, the change in 2013 meant that schools could not authorise leave of absence for family holidays during term time.

These changes are reflected in the graph below. Secondary schools unanimously stopped authorising family holiday absence from 2013. Primary schools stopped authorising the majority of requests for family holiday absence.

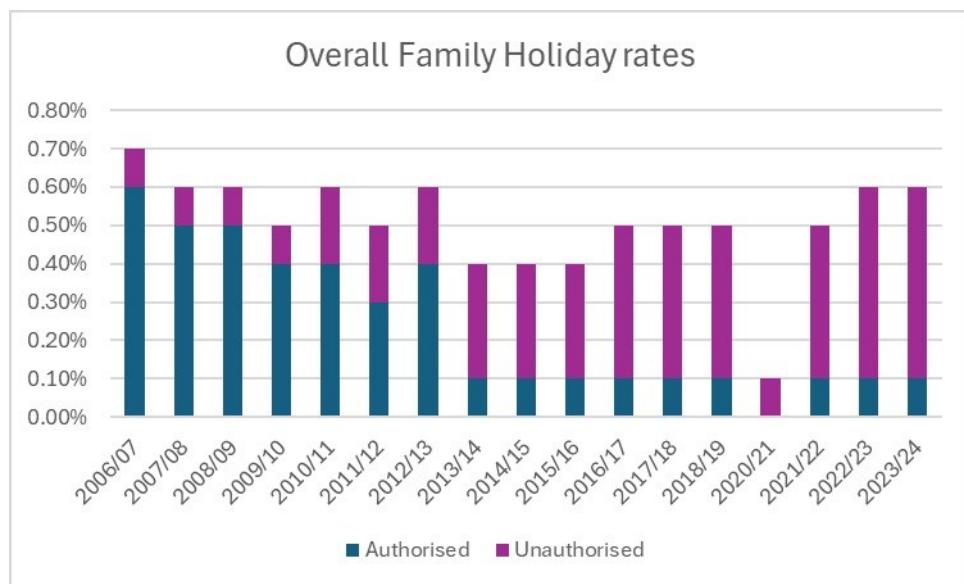


The impact of these changes on unauthorised holiday rates are shown below.

Looking at both authorised and unauthorised holiday absences, an interesting picture emerges.

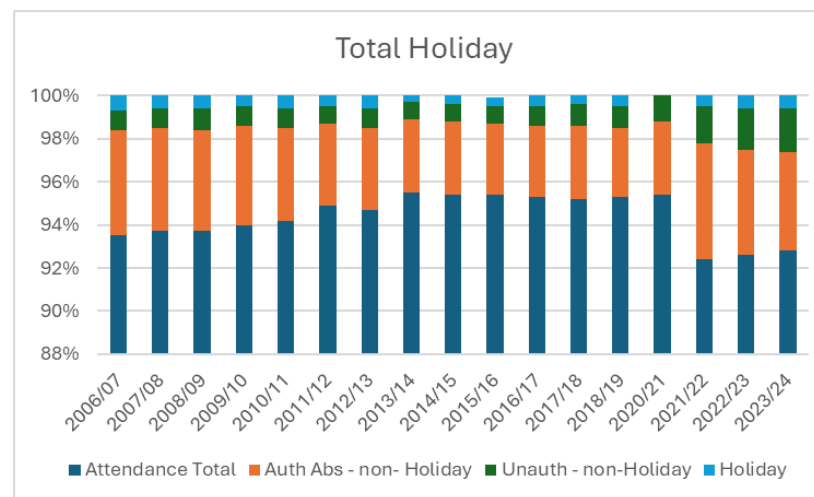


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It seems that the rate at which families take children out of school during term time has not altered a great deal since 2006/7. Whilst the change in legislation made a small difference to the overall holiday rates in 2013 to 2016, current rates are broadly similar to those of 2007 to 2013. A small but notable number of families continue to take holidays in term time. **The difference between now and the 2000s is that this holiday is now unauthorised and parents are fined for term time holidays.**

When seen in the context of other authorised and unauthorised absence, holiday rates count for a consistently small proportion of overall absence.



Whilst every day out of school represents a day's lost learning, we should recognise that **most students are in school most of the time, most absence is due to illness and family holidays during term time represent a small but consistent rate of overall absence.**



Insight Inform
Unit G, Pattern Shop
Trevoarn
Hayle
Cornwall
TR27 4EZ

e: contact@insightinform.co.uk