

# Government School Student Attendance 2015 (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 schools attendance rates

The attendance rate for all students in NSW government schools decreased by 0.7 percentage points from 92.9 per cent in 2014 to 92.2 per cent in 2015, following two years of increased attendance. This is partly explained by a change to the recording of family holidays which came into effect in January 2015. In order to comply with the National Standards for Student Attendance Data Reporting, NSW now requires approved extended family holidays to be recorded as absences rather than exemption from attendance.

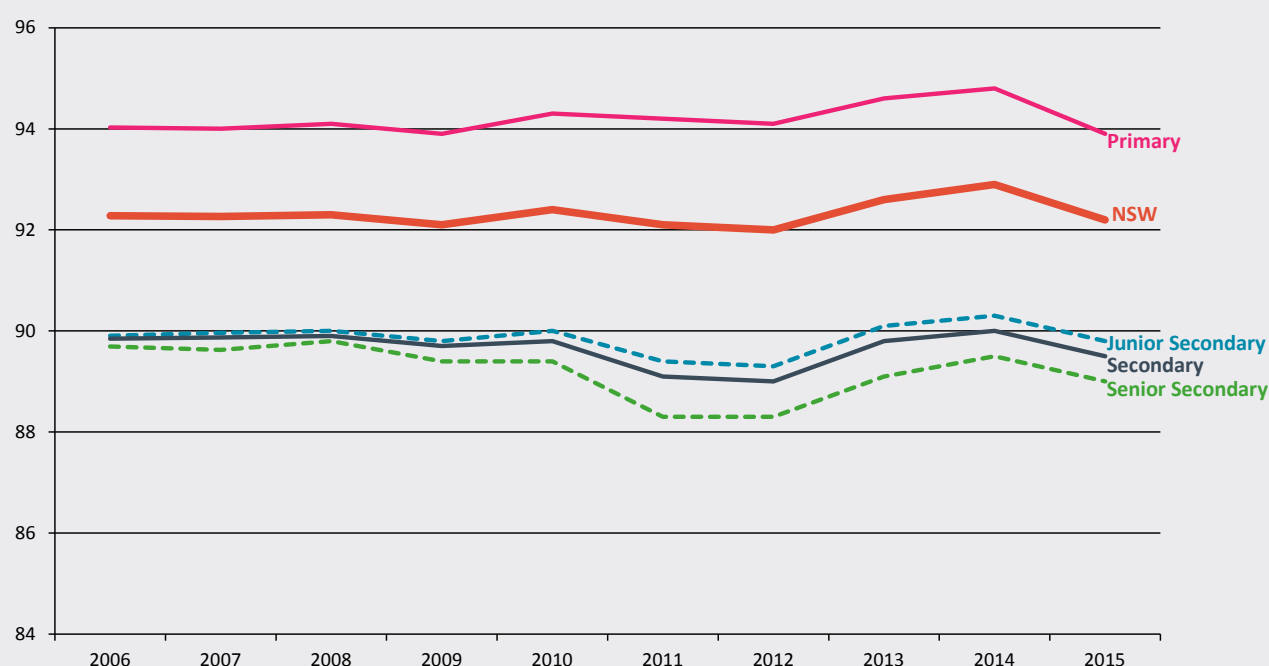
Attendance rates can be impacted by a number of factors such as sickness and weather events. Since 2006 the average attendance rate for NSW government schools has been between 92.0 per cent and 92.9 per cent.

## Attendance rates by level of education

Over the last ten years attendance rates for primary students have been consistently higher than secondary students. Figure 1 and Table 1 present attendance rates for all students by level of education. Primary attendance decreased by 0.9 percentage

Figure 1

Students attendance rate by education level, Semester 1 2006-2015: NSW government schools



points in 2015 compared with 2014 while secondary attendance decreased by only 0.5 percentage points.

However, secondary students' attendance rates remain almost five percentage points below primary school students. In 2015 primary attendance averaged 93.9 per cent compared with 89.5 per cent for secondary students.

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 for secondary students increased from 2012 to 2014 then decreased in 2015. The secondary attendance rate is now 0.3 percentage points lower than in 2006 (89.8 per cent).

Junior secondary attendance decreased by 0.5 percentage points, from 90.3 per cent in 2014 to 89.8 per cent in 2015.

Senior secondary attendance decreased by 0.5 percentage points between 2014 and 2015, the same rate of decline as junior secondary attendance. However it remains 0.8 percentage points lower than the junior secondary attendance rate.

**Table 1**

**Students attendance rate by education level, Semester 1 2006-2015: NSW government schools**

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

## Attendance rates by remoteness

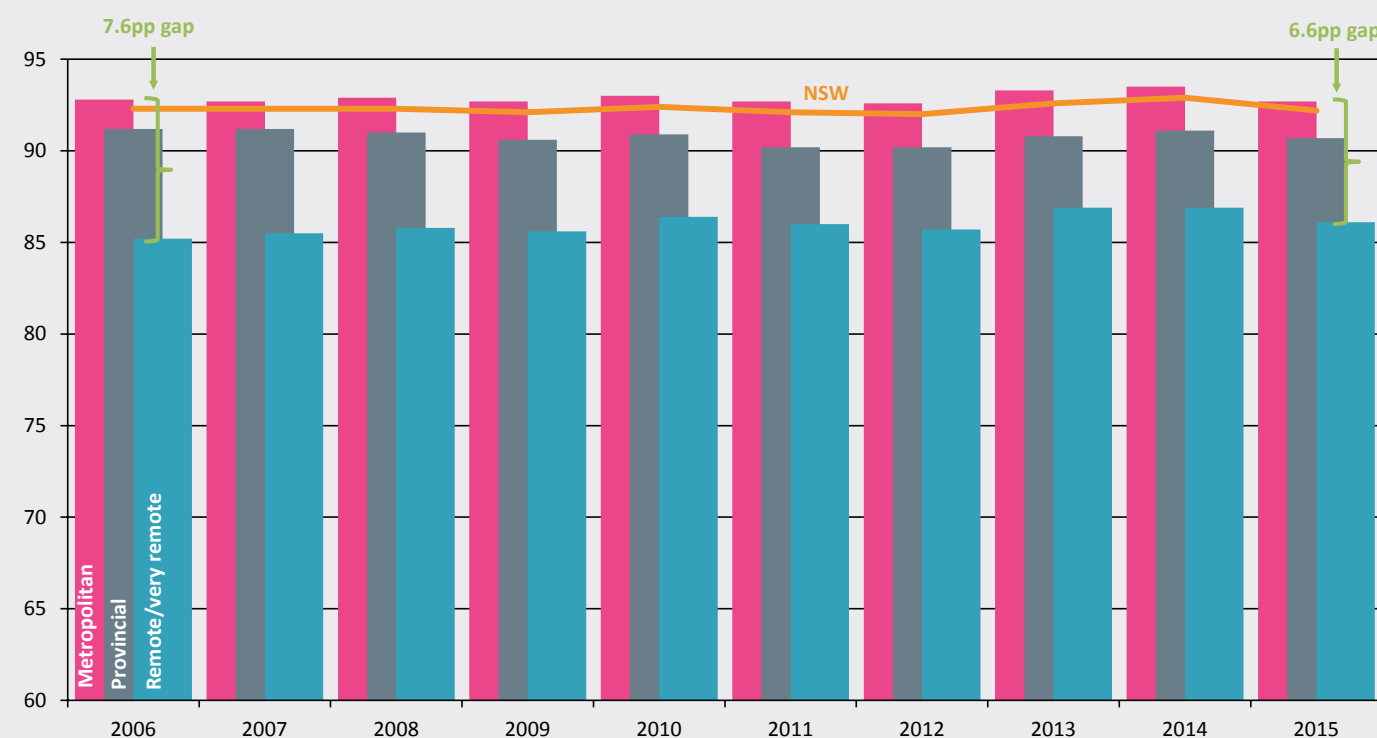
Figure 2 and Table 2 show attendance rates by remoteness. Over the last ten years the attendance rate at schools in metropolitan areas was more than 92.5 per cent on average. In 2015 the attendance rate was 92.7 per cent, a fall of 0.8 percentage points compared with 2014. The attendance rate at provincial schools was two percentage points lower than at metropolitan schools, at 90.7 per cent. However attendance

at provincial schools declined less in 2015 than at metropolitan schools, falling by only 0.4 percentage points.

Attendance at schools in remote/very remote NSW declined 0.8 percentage points from 86.9 per cent in 2014 to 86.1 per cent in 2015. This was the same fall observed in metropolitan schools. Since 2006, the gap in attendance rate between remote/very remote and metropolitan schools has decreased by one percentage point from 7.6 percentage points to 6.6 percentage points in 2015.

**Figure 2**

**Students attendance rate by remoteness, Semester 1 2006-2015: NSW government schools**



**Table 2**

**Students attendance rate by education level, Semester 1 2006-2015: NSW government schools**

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

### Aboriginal students' 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 Australians.

Figure 3 shows attendance rates for Aboriginal students attending NSW government schools by remoteness from 2006 to 2015. The highest student attendance rates were recorded

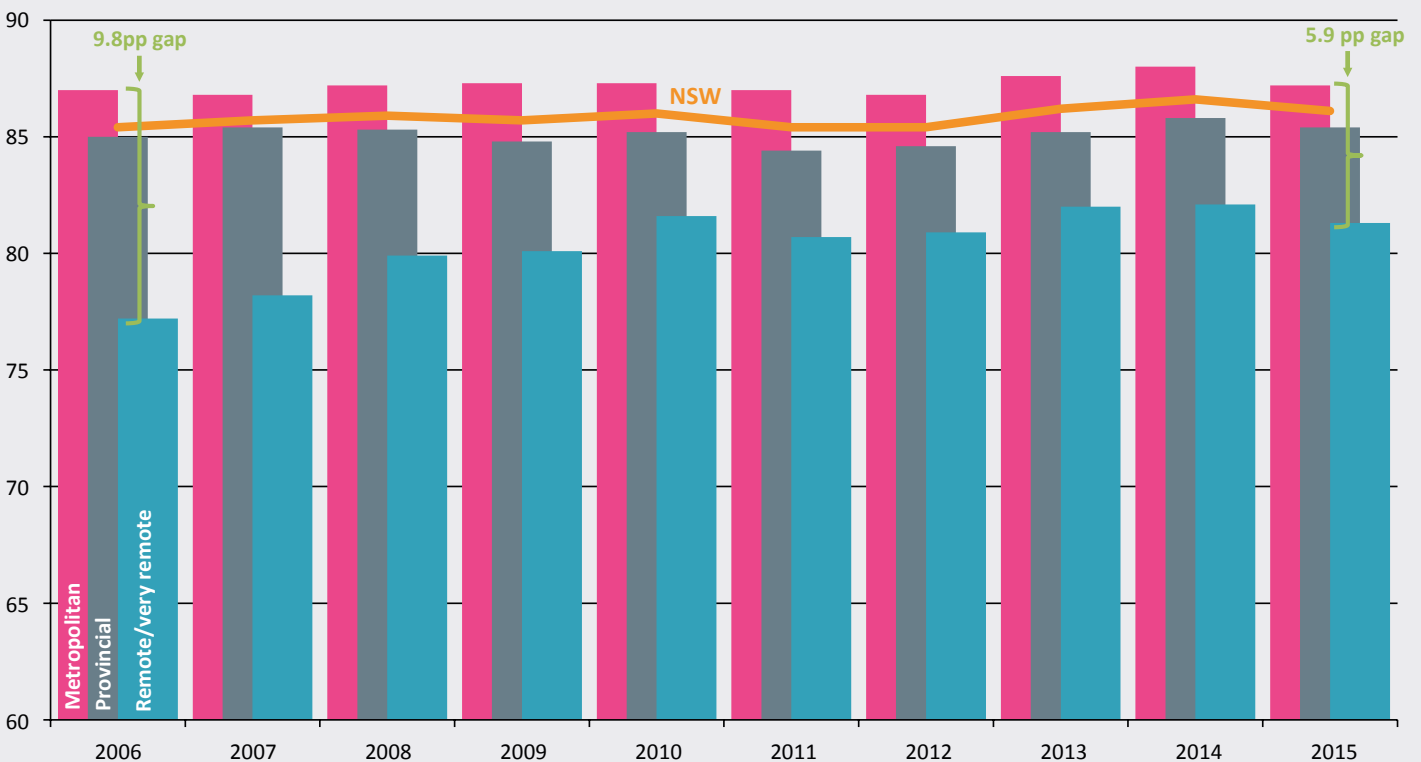
at schools in the metropolitan area, followed by provincial and then remote/very remote areas.

The average attendance rate for Aboriginal students was 86.1 per cent in 2015, which is 0.5 percentage points lower than 2014. Attendance rates for Aboriginal students did not fall by as much as all students between 2014 and 2015.

In metropolitan schools, the Aboriginal attendance rate was 87.2 per cent in 2015, similar to the attendance rate observed from 2008 to 2010. This was a 0.8 percentage point decrease from 2014.

**Figure 3**

**Aboriginal students attendance rate by remoteness, Semester 1 2006-2015: NSW government schools**



The Aboriginal attendance rate at schools in provincial NSW was 85.4 per cent in 2015. This was 0.4 percentage point decrease from 2014 but a 0.2 percentage point increase from 2013. In remote/very remote areas the student attendance rate in 2015 was 81.3 per cent, a 0.8 percentage point decrease from 2014.

It is clear from Figure 3 that the gap between Aboriginal attendance rates at remote/very remote and metropolitan schools has narrowed over the period. In 2006 the difference was almost ten percentage points, 77.2 per cent in remote/very remote schools compared with 87.0 per cent in

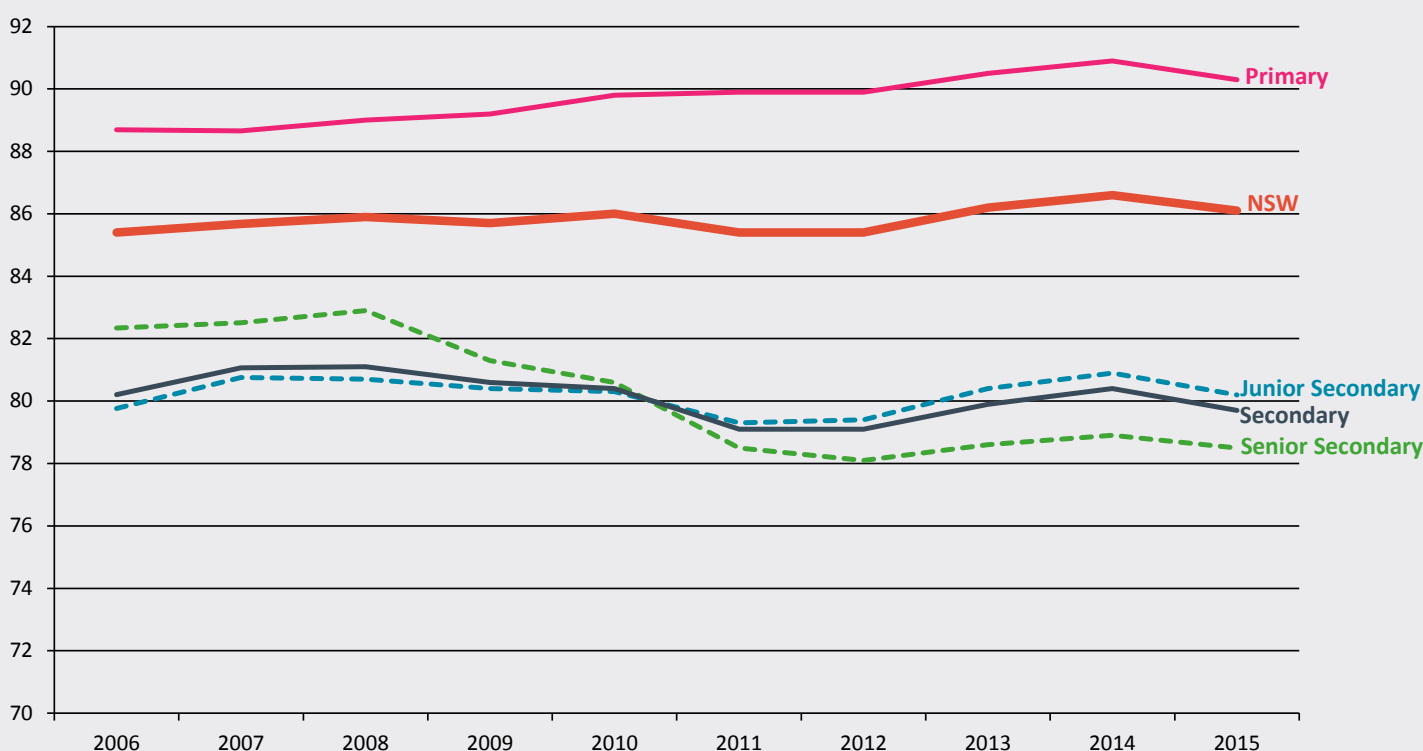
metropolitan schools. By 2015 the gap had narrowed to 5.9 percentage points, with 81.3 per cent attendance at remote/very remote schools and 87.2 per cent at metropolitan schools.

Figure 4 and Table 3 show attendance rates for Aboriginal students by level of education. Primary attendance decreased by 0.6 percentage points in 2015 compared with 2014, while secondary attendance decreased by 0.7 percentage points.

Aboriginal secondary students' attendance rates remain over ten percentage points below primary school students. In 2015 primary attendance averaged 90.3 per cent compared with 79.7 per cent for Aboriginal secondary students.

**Figure 4**

**Aboriginal students attendance rate by education level, Semester 1 2006-2015: NSW government schools**



Over the period shown in Figure 4, primary attendance rates increased by 1.6 percentage points, from 88.7 per cent in 2006 to 90.3 per cent in 2015.

Table 3 shows that Aboriginal students' attendance rates decreased by 0.5 percentage points, from 86.6 per cent in 2014 to 86.1 per cent in 2015. The secondary attendance rate decreased by 0.7 percentage points from 80.4 per cent in 2014 to 79.7 per cent in 2015.

Aboriginal senior secondary attendance rates declined markedly from 82.9 per cent in 2008 to 78.1 per cent in 2012 as the raised school leaving age was implemented.

Attendance rates increased to 78.9 per cent in 2014 before falling by 0.4 percentage points in 2015 to 78.5 per cent. The secondary attendance rate is still 3.8 percentage points lower than in 2006 (82.3 per cent).

Junior secondary attendance decreased by 0.7 percentage points, from 80.9 per cent in 2014 to 80.2 per cent in 2015.

Over the period from 2006 to 2015, the gap between primary and secondary attendance rates for Aboriginal students has widened from 8.5 percentage points in 2006 to 10.6 percentage points in 2015.

**Table 3**

**Aboriginal students attendance rate by education level, Semester 1 2006-2015: NSW government schools**

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

### Attendance rates by FOEI and region

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.

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>.

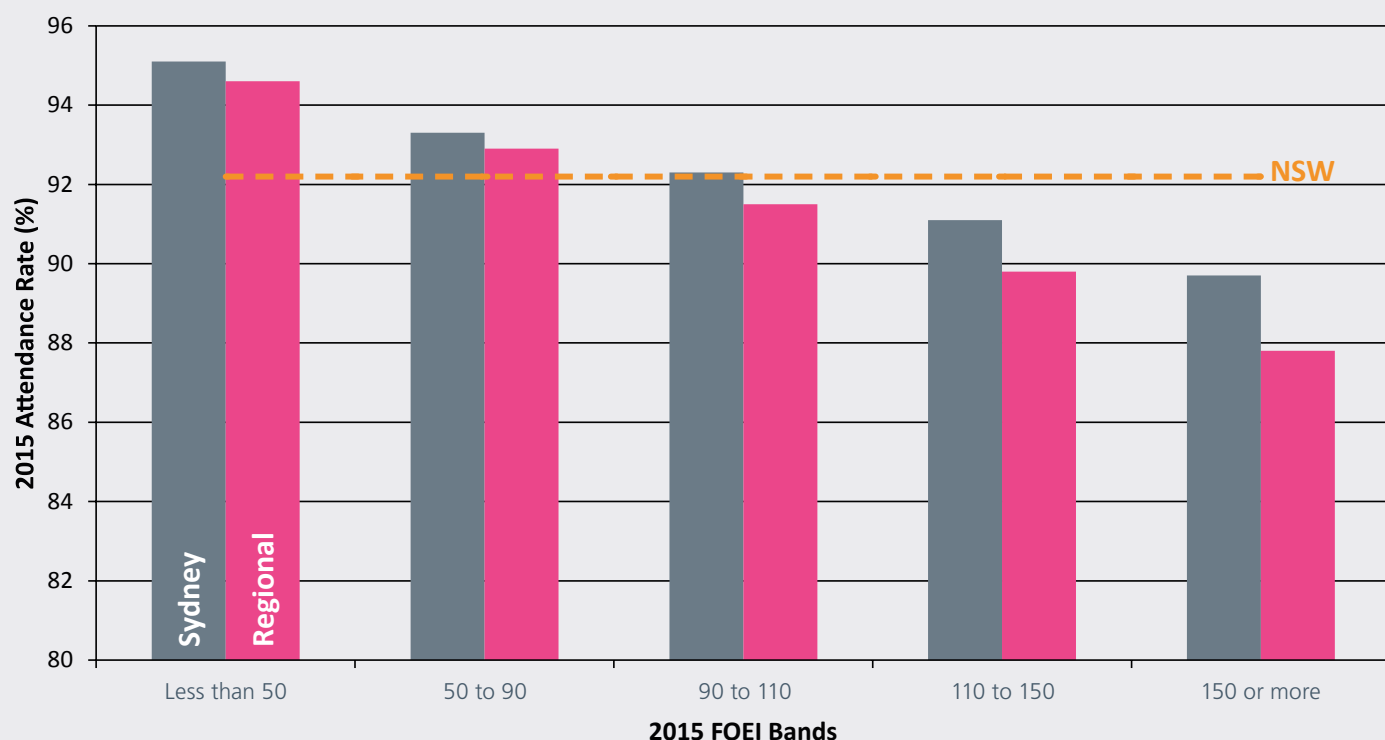
FOEI is a score ranging from 0 to approximately 300, with a mean of 100 and a standard deviation of 50. Higher FOEI scores indicate higher levels of need (i.e. lower socio-economic status).

Figure 5 presents attendance rates for all students by FOEI bands and also provides a Sydney / regional split. The chart shows that attendance rates are higher at schools with lower FOEI scores i.e. with a higher socio-economic status.

For FOEI scores of up to 90, there is only a small difference between attendance at schools in Sydney compared with regional schools. However schools in Sydney with a FOEI score of 110 or more recorded attendance rates at least 1.3 percentage points higher than schools in regional areas.

**Figure 5**

**Students attendance rate by FOEI and Sydney / regional split, Semester 1 2015: NSW government schools**



## Attendance rates by Term

Figure 6 presents student attendance rates for Terms 1 and 2 for Aboriginal and all students from 2006 to 2015. 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 2015 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 2015 attendance rate was 92.9 per cent, which was 0.4 percentage points lower than in 2014.

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 2015 attendance rate was 91.4

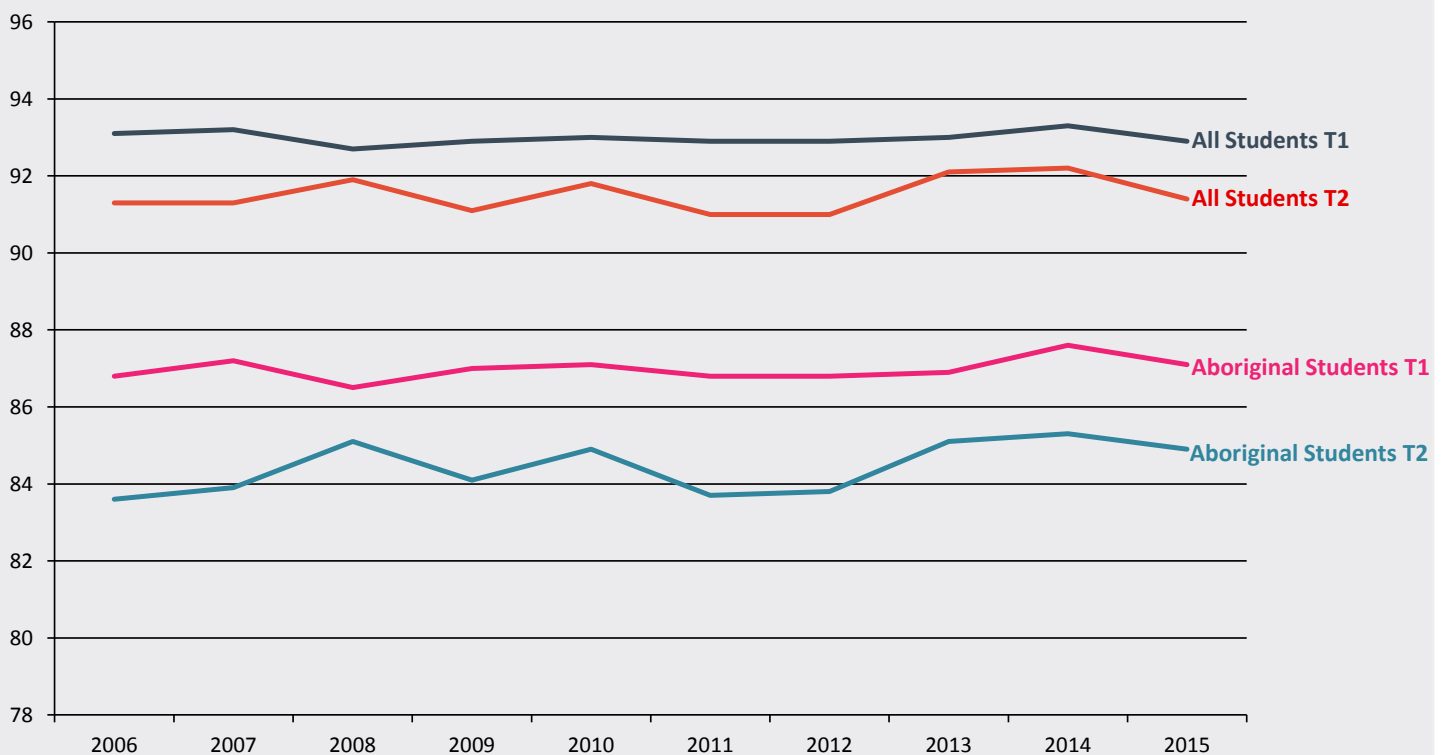
per cent, which was 0.8 percentage points lower than Term 2 2014.

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 2015 Term 1 attendance was 1.5 percentage points higher than Term 2 for all students, at 92.9 per cent in Term 1 compared with 91.4 per cent in Term 2. For Aboriginal students, Term 1 attendance was 2.2 percentage points higher than Term 2, at 87.1 per cent in Term 1 compared with 84.9 per cent in Term 2.

Over the period from 2006 to 2015, 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 6**

**Aboriginal and all students attendance rates, Terms 1 and 2 2006-2015: NSW government 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 data collection in National Education Agreements between the Commonwealth and state and territory governments. Schools for Special Purposes' attendance data is not currently collected.

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, Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation. Semester 1 data extracted from the corporate data cubes in October 2015.

### 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 as part of the implementation of the National Standards for Student Attendance Data Reporting, 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 the absences did not count for national 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).

## Why collect attendance data?

Students' 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 talent and capacities 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.

In 2010, as part of the Keep Them Safe initiatives, changes to child protection legislation made educational neglect grounds for reporting risk of significant harm to the Family and Community Services child protection helpline. At the same time in NSW, additional Home School Liaison Officer and Aboriginal Student Liaison Officer positions were established to reduce the number of students with chronic attendance issues.

### 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.

## Contact Details

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