

Government School Student Attendance 2013 (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 school attendance rate trends

The attendance rate for all students in NSW government schools increased by 0.6 percentage points in 2013; from 92.0 per cent in 2012 to 92.6 per cent in 2013. This is just 0.1 percentage point lower than the highest attendance rate recorded over the past 10 years, which was 92.7 per cent in 2003. Since 2005 the average attendance rate for NSW government schools has been between 92.0 per cent and 92.6 per cent. Although these changes appear small, 0.1 percentage point is equal to approximately 70,000 extra days attended in semester 1.

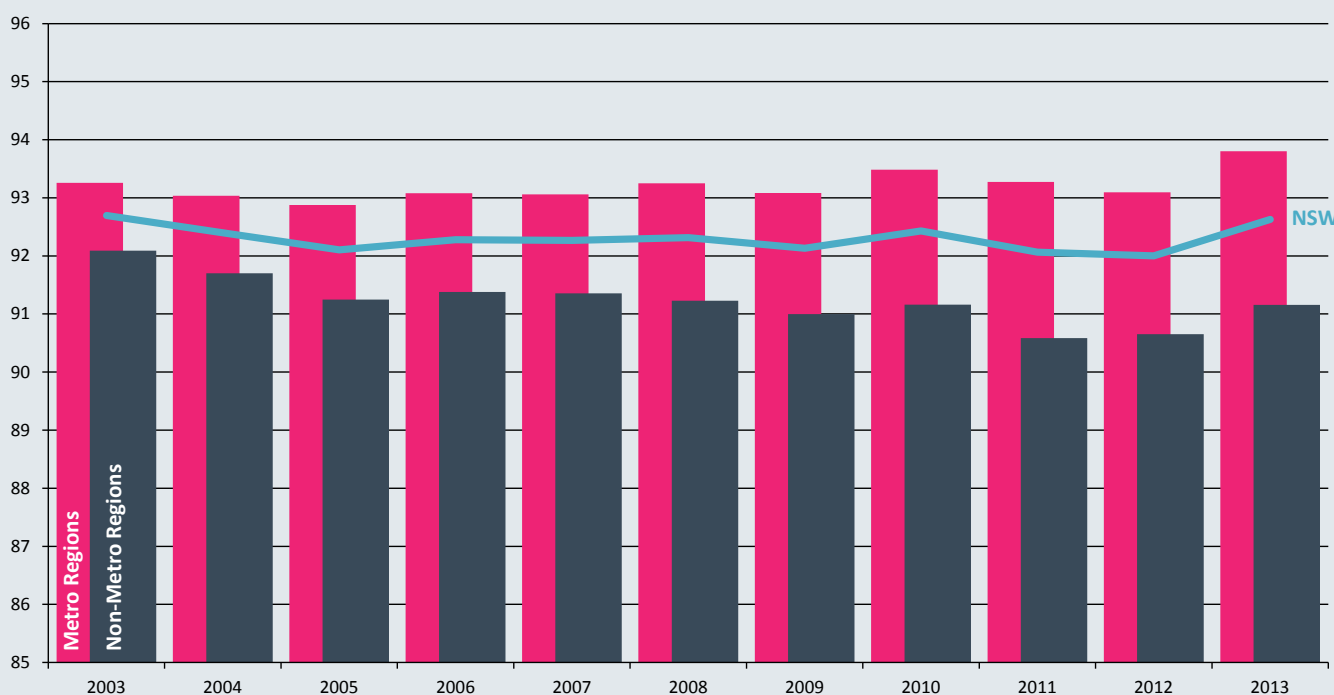
Attendance rate by metro and non-metro regions

Over the last ten years student attendance rates in metro regions have been consistently higher than in non-metro regions. Figure 1 shows that the gap has widened since 2003, from 1.2 percentage points to a high of 2.6 percentage points in 2013.

The attendance rates for both metro and non-metro regions have increased since 2012. Metro regions increased from 93.1 per cent in 2012 to 93.8 per cent in 2013 and non-metro regions increased from 90.7 per cent in 2012 to 91.2 per cent in 2013.

Figure 1

Government students attendance rates by metro and non-metro regions, Semester 1 2003-2013



Attendance rates by student level of education

Figure 2 presents attendance rates by student level of education. Primary student attendance rates remain on average 5.0 percentage points higher than secondary student attendance rates. In 2013, primary attendance averaged 94.6 per cent while secondary attendance averaged 89.8 per cent. Over the period displayed in Figure 2, primary attendance rates increased by 0.6 percentage points, from 94.0 per cent in 2007 to 94.6 per cent in 2013. This is the highest rate since 2007.

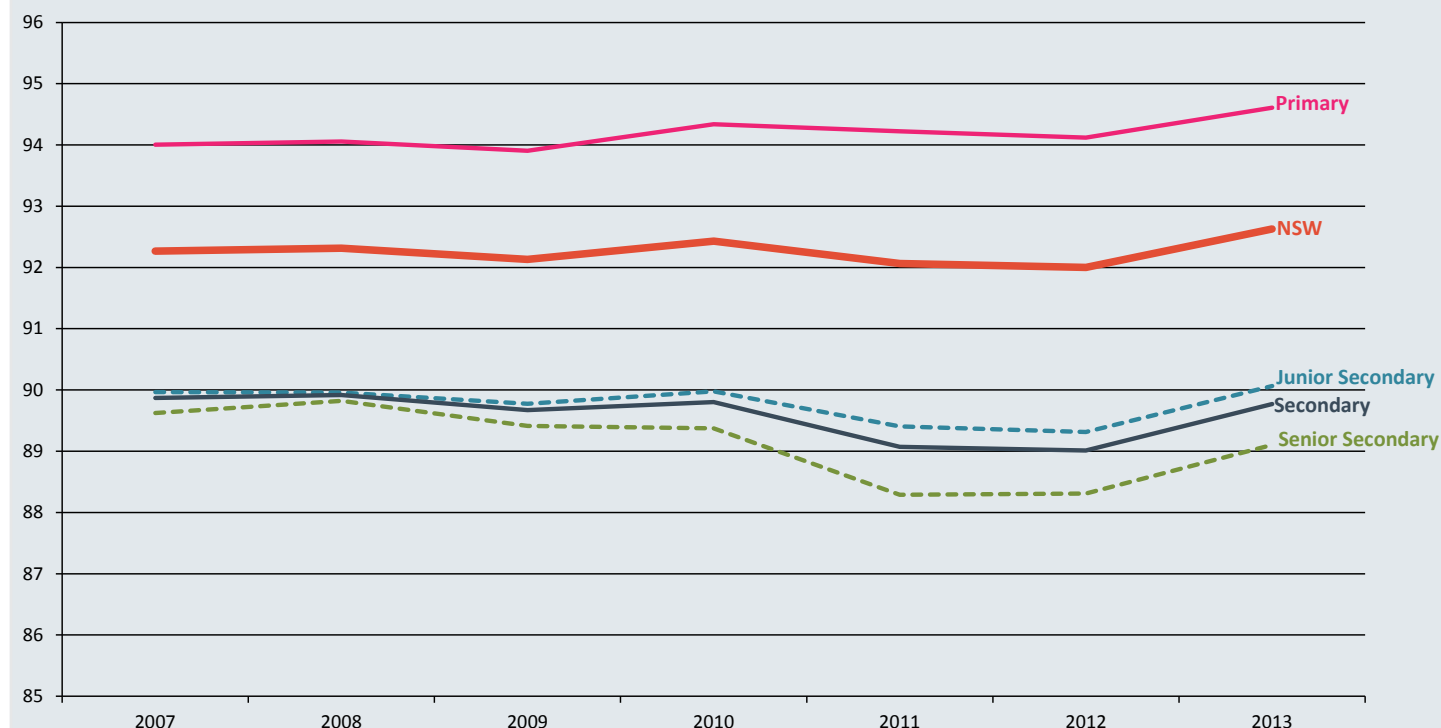
Secondary attendance rates also increased, by 0.8 percentage points from 89.0 per cent in 2012 to 89.8 per cent in 2013. This is the first increase since the decline in 2011 and 2012 following

the raising of the school leaving age in 2010. Whether this is the beginning of an upward trend in attendance rates or a temporary increase will become evident when future years' data are available.

Junior secondary attendance increased by 0.8 percentage points, from 89.3 per cent in 2012 to 90.1 per cent in 2013. Senior secondary also increased by the same figure, 0.8 percentage points, from 88.3 per cent in 2012 to 89.1 per cent in 2013. However it remains 1.0 percentage point lower than junior secondary attendance rates.

Figure 2

Government students attendance rates by school student level of education, Semester 1 2007-2013



Aboriginal students' attendance rates

Aboriginal students' attendance rates have increased by 0.8 percentage point since 2012, from 85.4 per cent, to 86.2 per cent in 2013. The attendance rates in metro regions increased by 1.3 percentage points, from 86.5 per cent in 2012 to 87.8 per cent in 2013, however attendance rates in non-metro regions did not increase by the same amount. The gap between metro and non-metro widened to 2.1 percentage points in 2013.

Figure 4 shows that Aboriginal primary attendance rates have been increasing steadily for the last six years. This trend continued in 2013, increasing by a further 0.6 percentage points, with an overall increase of 1.8 percentage points since 2006.

Aboriginal secondary attendance rates in 2013 were higher than in 2011 and 2012. The secondary attendance rate increased by 0.8 percentage points since 2012, from 79.1 per cent to 79.9 per cent in 2013. Junior secondary increased by 1.0 percentage

Figure 3

Government Aboriginal students attendance rates by metro and non-metro regions, Semester 1 2007-2013

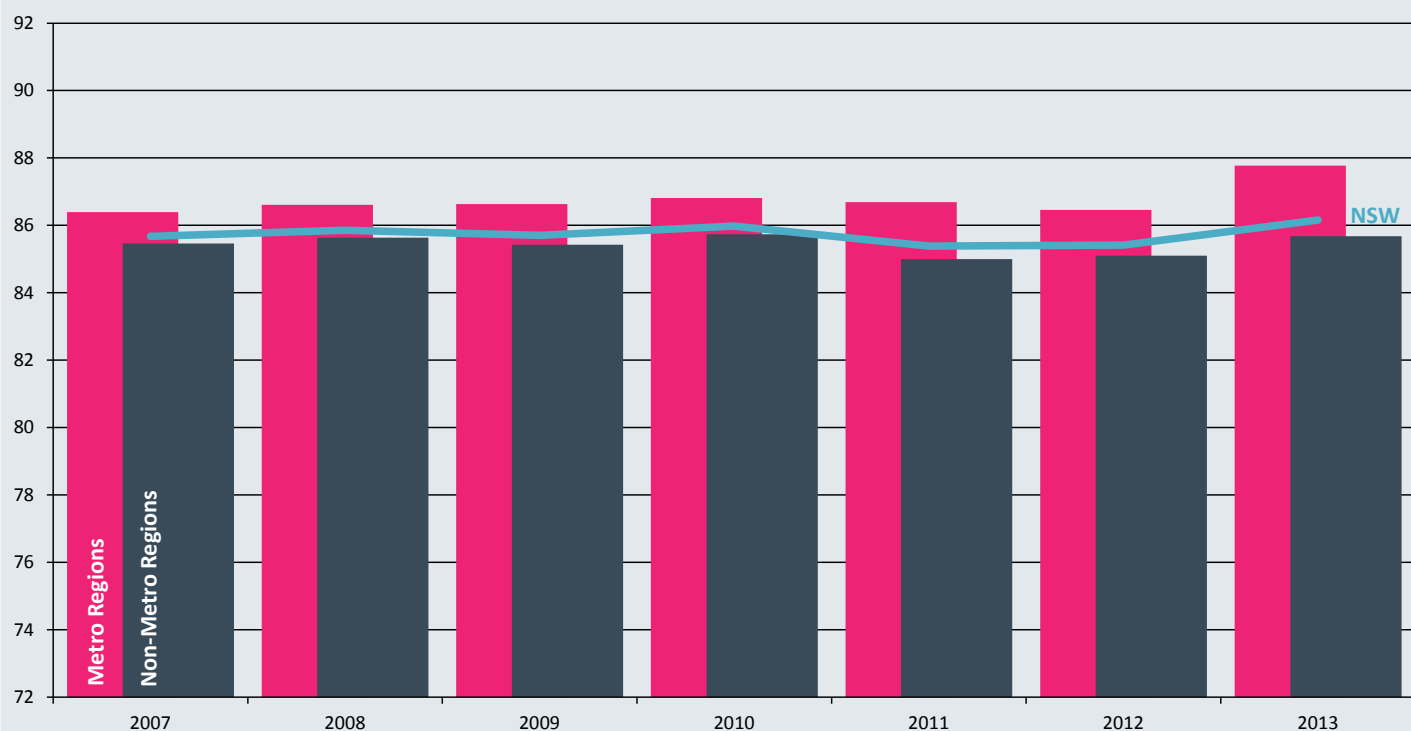
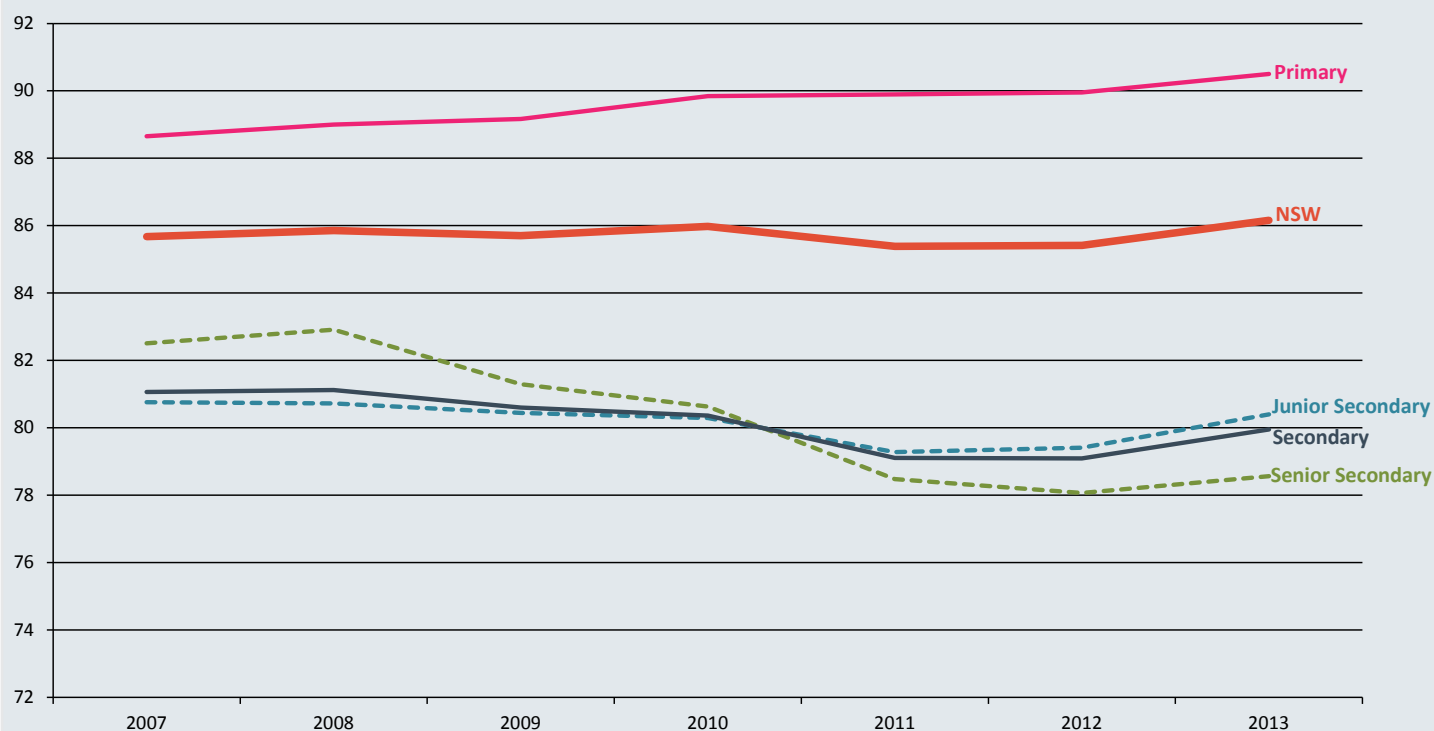


Figure 4

Government Aboriginal students attendance rates by school level, Semester 1 2007-2013



point from 79.4 per cent in 2012 to 80.4 per cent in 2013, while senior secondary increased by 0.5 percentage point over the same period. However, since 2008 senior secondary attendance rates have fallen by 4.3 percentage points, from 82.9 in 2008 to 78.6 in 2013. This may be the result of the raising of the school leaving age where students who previously might have left school at the end of Year 10, remain at school until age 17, but not attending regularly.

Attendance rates by scholastic year and gender

Figure 5 shows the attendance rates by scholastic year and gender in 2013 for Aboriginal and all students. The horizontal axis shows the scholastic year from Kindergarten to Year 12.

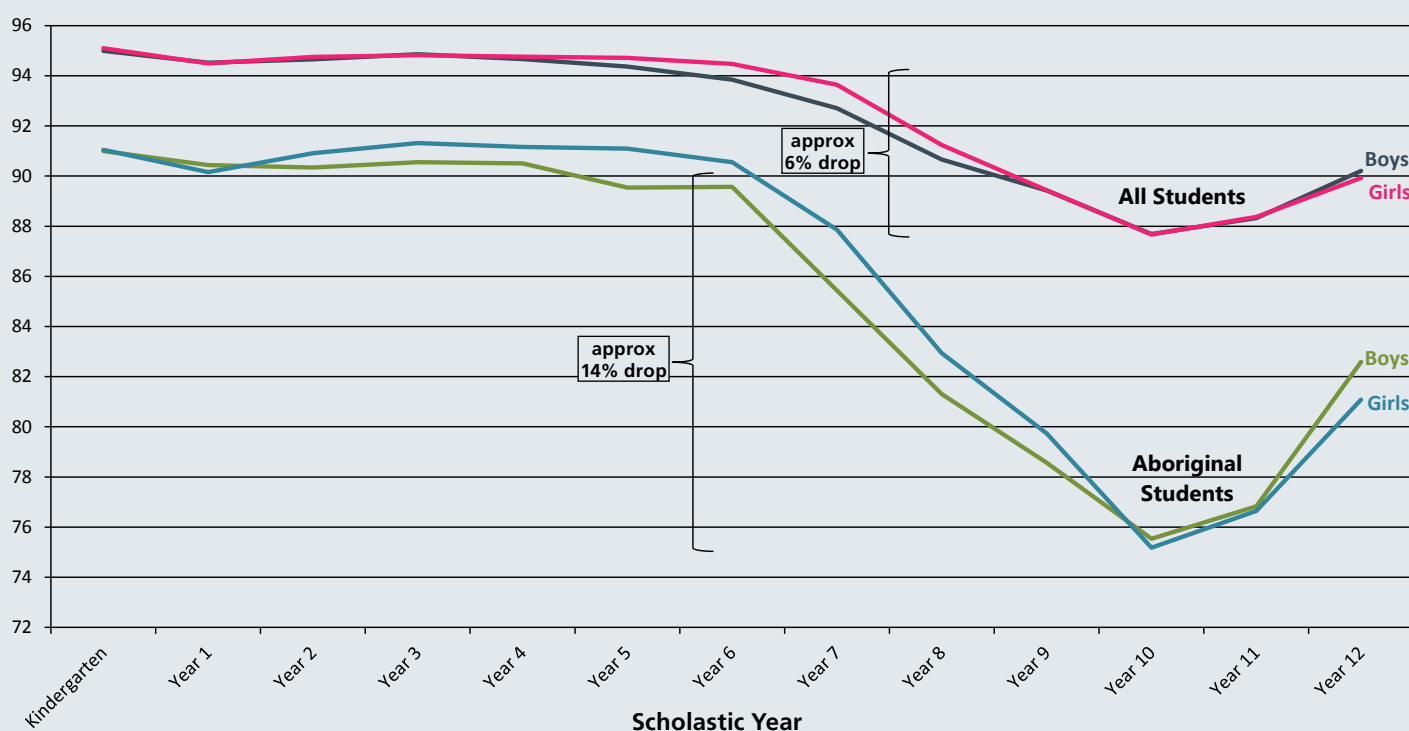
Attendance rates for all students only declined by around 1 percentage point between Kindergarten and Year 6. However attendance dropped by approximately 6.0 percentage points during junior secondary years.

For all students, the attendance rates for boys and girls are quite similar in Kindergarten to Year 4 but the boys' attendance rates begin to fall below the girls' attendance rate in Year 5 and remains lower in Years 6 to 8. In the later grades, Years 9 to 12, the attendance rates of boys and girls converge, with boys attendances being slightly higher than girls in Year 12.

Aboriginal students follow a similar pattern to all students except boys' attendance rates begin to fall below girls' in Year 2. Furthermore, the decline in the attendance rate for Aboriginal students (14 percentage points) from Years 6 to 10 is more than double the decline of all students (6 percentage points).

Figure 5

Government Aboriginal and all students attendance rates by scholastic year and gender, Semester 1 2013



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 each school day. While there is a legal obligation for schools to record attendance and absences, there is also a parental obligation for students to 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 Government Services 2011, Part 4, 4.18).

'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 Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood (SCSEEC).

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 child protection hotline. 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;
- recognised religious festivals or ceremonial occasions;
- other absences not explained by parents or the principal does not accept the explanation offered for the absence.

The Department of Education and Communities IT systems do not currently permit analysis by absence reason, therefore all these categories are included in this bulletin.

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.

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 collected.

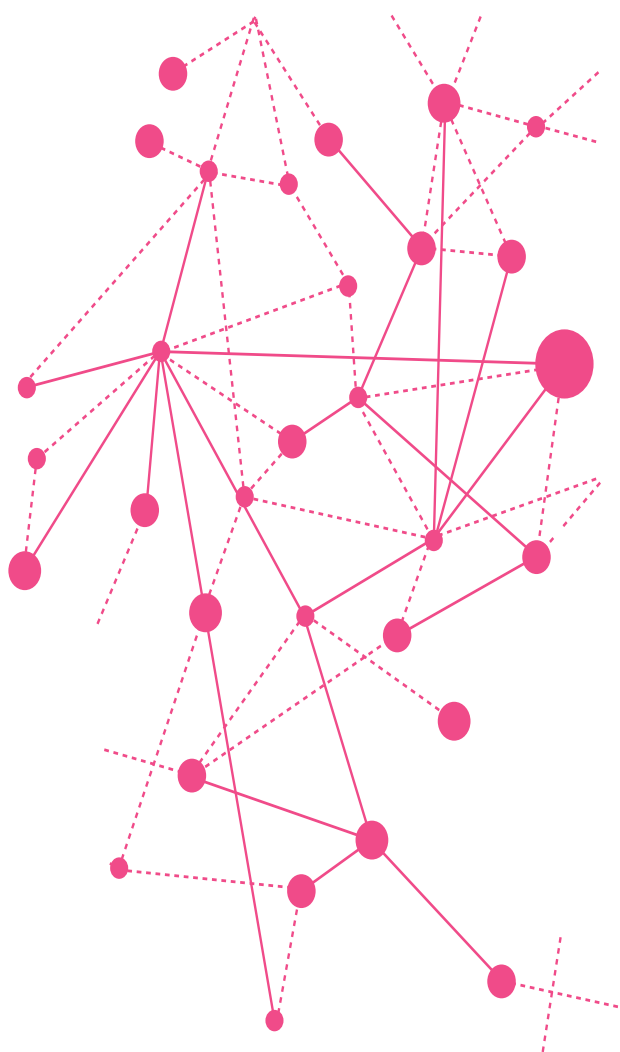
Nationally, the attendance rate is defined as the number of actual full-time equivalent 'student days attended' over the collection period as a percentage of the total number of possible student days attended over the collection period (Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia KPM 7(b)).

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'.

$$\text{Attendance Rate} = \left(1 - \frac{\text{absences}}{\text{enrolled days}}\right) \times 100$$

Source: Statistics Unit, Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation. Semester 1 data extracted from the corporate data cubes in November 2013.



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April 2014
NSW Department of Education and Communities

