

2024 Semester 1 student attendance fact sheet



Introduction

This fact sheet provides an overview of student attendance in NSW Government schools from Kindergarten to Year 12 in Semester 1, 2024. It contains information on different cohorts of students, including observations on student attendance by multiple education levels, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students and geolocations.

There are two different measures of student attendance: attendance rate and attendance level. The **attendance rate** is the percentage of days students attended school, compared to student enrolled days. The **attendance level** is the proportion of students attending 90% or more of the time. This measure was introduced in 2018 and is more variable than the attendance rate as it is binary (that is, a student attending less than 90% of the time or a student attending 90% or more of the time). For most students, their attendance rate is concentrated around 90%. Therefore, a small shift in their attendance will likely mean changes in their attendance position to below / at or above the 90% threshold, resulting in a larger variation in the attendance level.

The attendance rates and levels in the fact sheet are different to the nationally published My School figures, due to the inclusion of Kindergarten, Year 11 and Year 12 students. The attendance calculation methodology was revised in 2020 to align with the third edition of ACARA's 'National standards for student attendance data and reporting'. The nationally published My School figures includes data for students in Year 1 to Year 10.

While there were no COVID-19 lockdowns or learning from home periods in Semester 1, 2024, the prevalence of COVID-19 and general illness in the community continued to cause large variability in attendance data.

Summary of attendance

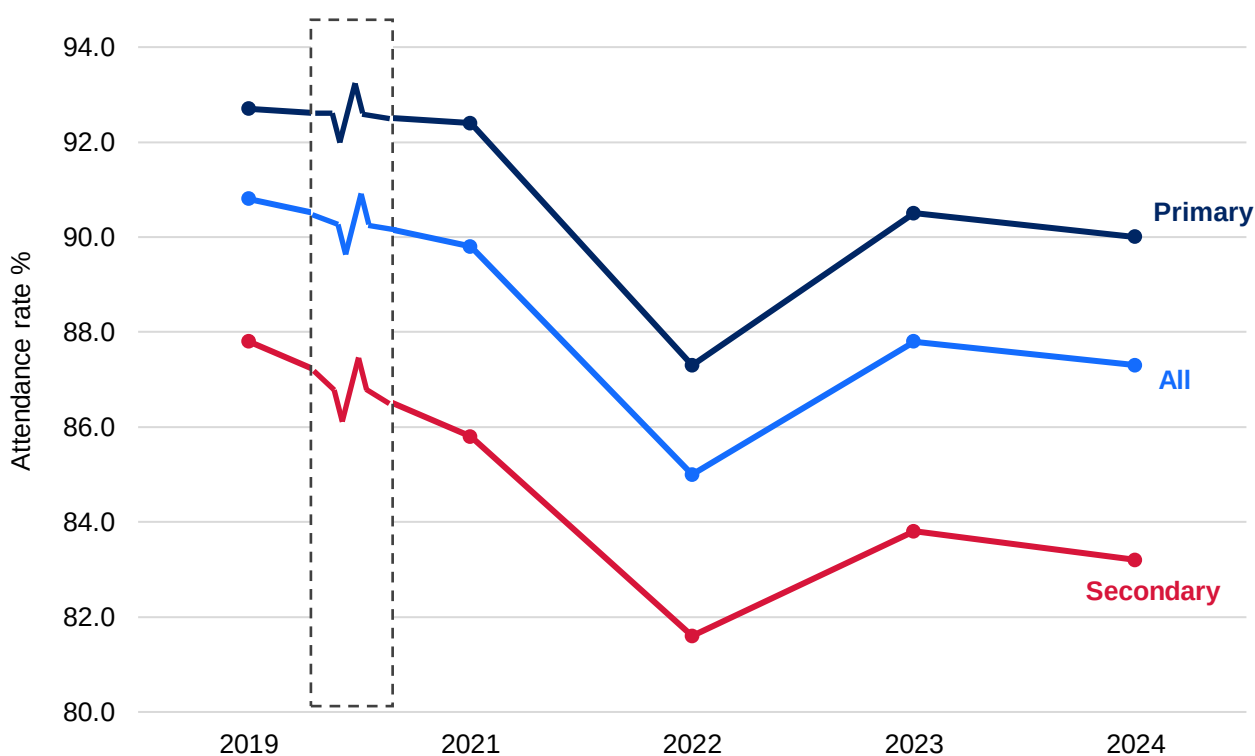
The overall attendance rate for NSW Government schools decreased by 0.5 percentage points (from 87.8% in 2023 to 87.3% in 2024) but it remains 2.3 percentage points higher than the rate reported in 2022 (85.0%). Primary attendance rate also declined by 0.5 percentage points from 90.5% in 2023 to 90.0% in 2024, and secondary attendance rate declined by 0.6 percentage points from 83.8% in 2023 to 83.2% in 2024 over the same period.

The decrease in attendance rate from 2023 to 2024 was similar across both primary education sub-levels: 0.3 percentage points for Kindergarten to Year 2 (90.8% in 2023 to 90.5% in 2024) and 0.6 percentage points for Year 3 to Year 6 (90.3% in 2023 to 89.7% in 2024).

At the secondary education sub-level, the Year 7 to Year 10 attendance rate decreased by 0.7 percentage points (from 83.9% in 2023 to 83.2% in 2024), greater than the 0.2 percentage points decrease in Year 11 and Year 12 from 83.4% in 2023 to 83.2% in 2024.

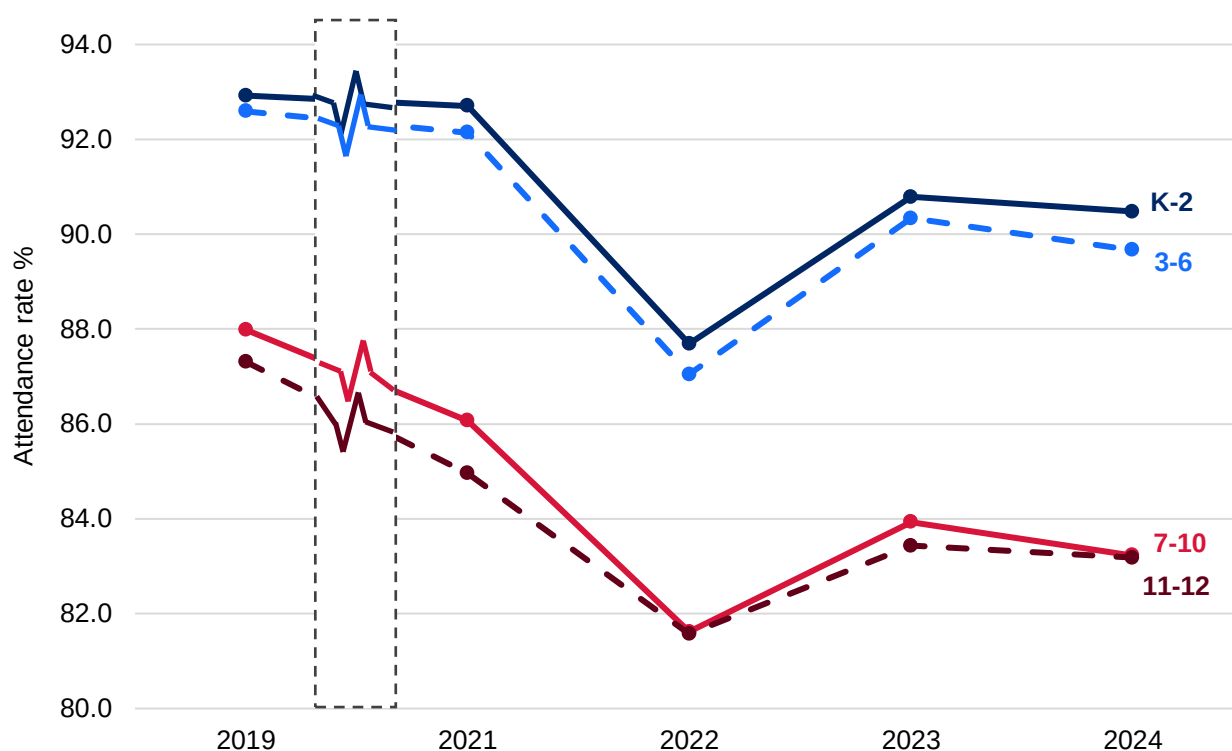
Throughout this report, the term 'Aboriginal' is inclusive of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students. In 2024, the attendance rate for primary Aboriginal students decreased by 0.9 percentage points (from 85.3% in 2023 to 84.4% in 2024). The attendance rates for secondary Aboriginal students also decreased by 0.8 percentage points (from 69.6% in 2023 to 68.8% in 2024).

Figure 1: Semester 1 2019 to 2024 attendance rate (%) by education level



Note: 2020 figures were excluded as they were a break in series due to the impact of COVID-19.

Figure 2: Semester 1 2019 to 2024 attendance rate (%) by education sub-level



Note: 2020 figures were excluded as they were a break in series due to the impact of COVID-19.

The overall proportion of students attending 90% or more of the time (attendance level) decreased by 3.8 percentage points (from 59.6% in 2023 to 55.8% in 2024). At the education level, primary attendance level decreased by 3.9 percentage points (from 66.7% in 2023 to 62.8% in 2024), and secondary attendance level decreased by 3.4 percentage points (from 48.9% in 2023 to 45.5% in 2024).

At the education sub-level, the decrease was slightly different in both primary education sub-levels. Kindergarten to Year 2 had a decrease of 2.7 percentage points (from 68.0% in 2023 to 65.3% in 2024), and Year 3 to Year 6 decreased by 4.7 percentage points (from 65.8% in 2023 to 61.1% in 2024).

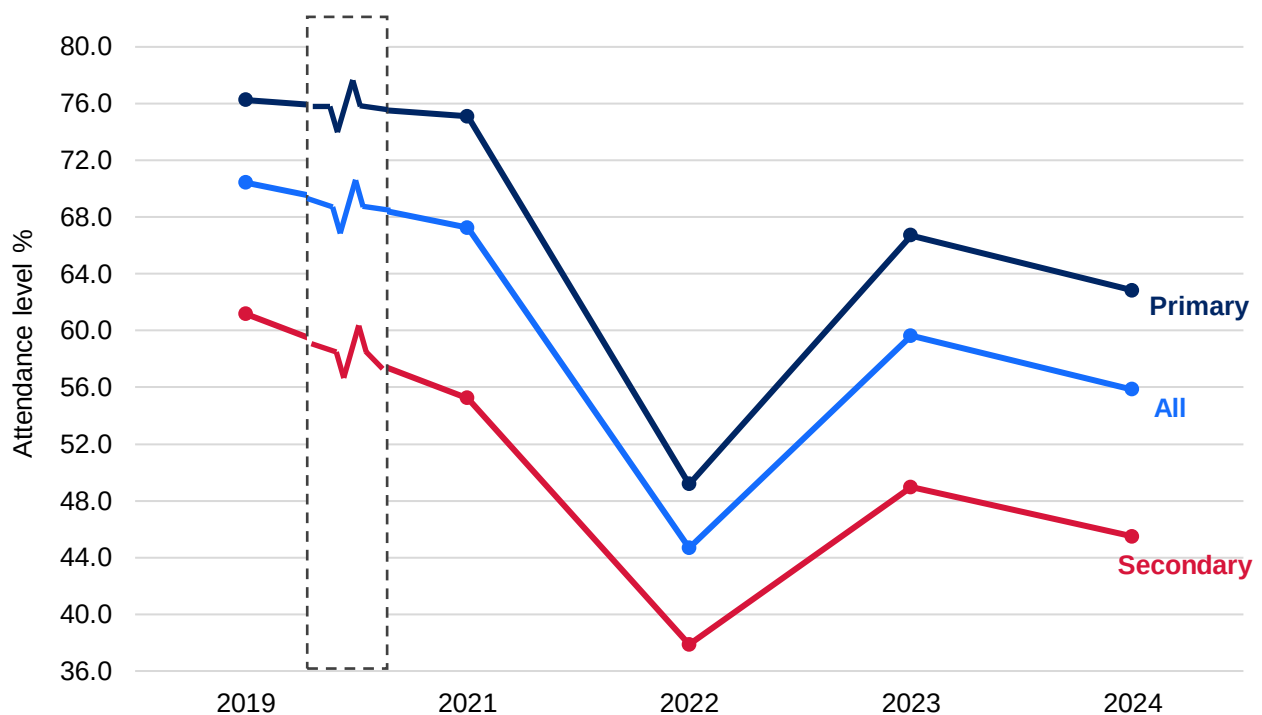
At the secondary education sub-level, Year 7 to Year 10 attendance level decreased by 3.7 percentage points (from 48.2% in 2023 to 44.5% in 2024), greater than the 2.8 percentage points decrease for Year 11 and Year 12 (from 50.7% in 2023 to 47.9% in 2024). For the third consecutive year, the Year 7 to Year 10 attendance level was below the Year 11 and Year 12 attendance level.

In 2024, primary Aboriginal student attendance levels experienced a decline of 3.9 percentage points from the previous year (from 47.8% in 2023 to 43.9% in 2024). Secondary Aboriginal student attendance levels also decreased by 2.7 percentage points (from 24.3% in 2023 to 21.6% in 2024).

Table 1: Semester 1 2023 and 2024 attendance rate and attendance level by education sub-level (all students)

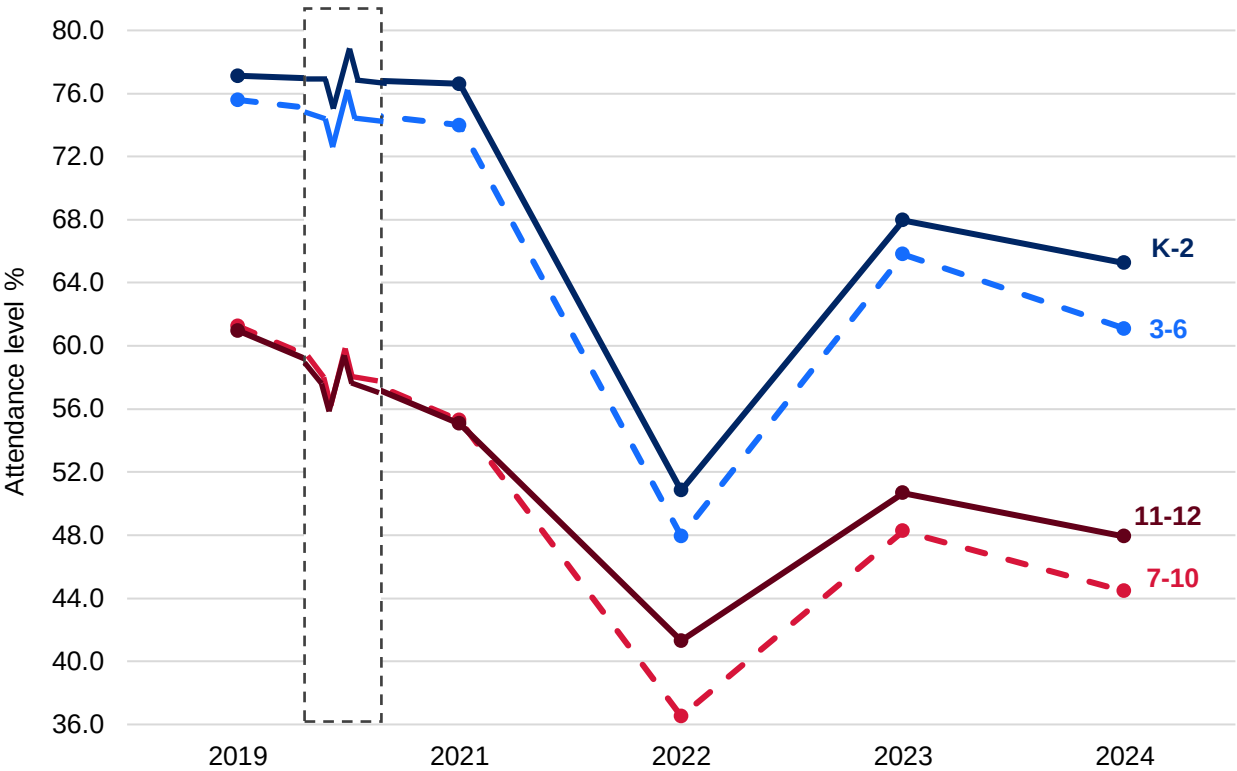
Education level	Attendance rate (%)			Attendance level (%)		
	2023	2024	Change	2023	2024	Change
K-2	90.8	90.5	-0.3	68.0	65.3	-2.7
3-6	90.3	89.7	-0.6	65.8	61.1	-4.7
Primary	90.5	90.0	-0.5	66.7	62.8	-3.9
7-10	83.9	83.2	-0.7	48.2	44.5	-3.7
11-12	83.4	83.2	-0.2	50.7	47.9	-2.8
Secondary	83.8	83.2	-0.6	48.9	45.5	-3.4
All	87.8	87.3	-0.5	59.6	55.8	-3.8

Figure 3: Semester 1 2019 to 2024 attendance level (%) by education level



Note: 2020 figures were excluded as they were a break in series due to the impact of COVID-19.

Figure 4: Semester 1 2019 to 2024 attendance level (%) by education sub-level



Note: 2020 figures were excluded as they were a break in series due to the impact of COVID-19.

Attendance by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander status

The overall attendance rate for Aboriginal students declined by 0.9 percentage points, from 79.1% in 2023 to 78.2% in 2024. The term 'Aboriginal' used in this report is inclusive of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students. This decrease was seen in both primary and secondary levels: Aboriginal primary students' attendance dropped by 0.9 percentage points from 85.3% in 2023 to 84.4% in 2024. Similarly, Aboriginal secondary students' attendance fell by 0.8 percentage points, from 69.6% in 2023 to 68.8% in 2024. It is notable that attendance rate for Years 11 to 12 students increased by 0.4 percentage points from 2023 to 2024.

The proportion of Aboriginal students attending 90% or more of the time in Semester 1 2024 decreased by 3.5 percentage points (from 38.5% in 2023 to 35.0% in 2024). For Aboriginal primary students, the attendance level declined by 3.9 percentage points (from 47.8% in 2023 to 43.9% in 2024). The decrease was smaller for Aboriginal secondary students, at 2.7 percentage points (from 24.3% in 2023 to 21.6% in 2024).

At the education sub-level for Aboriginal primary students, the attendance level for Kindergarten to Year 2 decreased by 3.1 percentage points (from 49.7% in 2023 to 46.6% in 2024) and Year 3 to Year 6 decreased by 4.6 percentage points (from 46.5% in 2023 to 41.9% in 2024).

The attendance level for Year 7 to Year 10 students decreased by 2.7 percentage points (from 24.3% in 2023 to 21.6% in 2024), which was the same as the 2.7 percentage point decrease for Year 11 and Year 12 students, whose attendance level dropped from 24.4% in 2023 to 21.7% in 2024.

Table 2: Semester 1 2023 and 2024 attendance rate and attendance level by education sub-level, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students

Education level	Attendance rate (%)			Attendance level (%)		
	2023	2024	Change	2023	2024	Change
K–2	85.9	85.2	-0.7	49.7	46.6	-3.1
3–6	84.9	83.9	-1.0	46.5	41.9	-4.6
Primary	85.3	84.4	-0.9	47.8	43.9	-3.9
7–10	70.6	69.5	-1.1	24.3	21.6	-2.7
11–12	66.0	66.4	0.4	24.4	21.7	-2.7
Secondary	69.6	68.8	-0.8	24.3	21.6	-2.7
All	79.1	78.2	-0.9	38.5	35.0	-3.5

Figure 5: Semester 1 2023 and 2024 attendance rate by education sub-level, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students

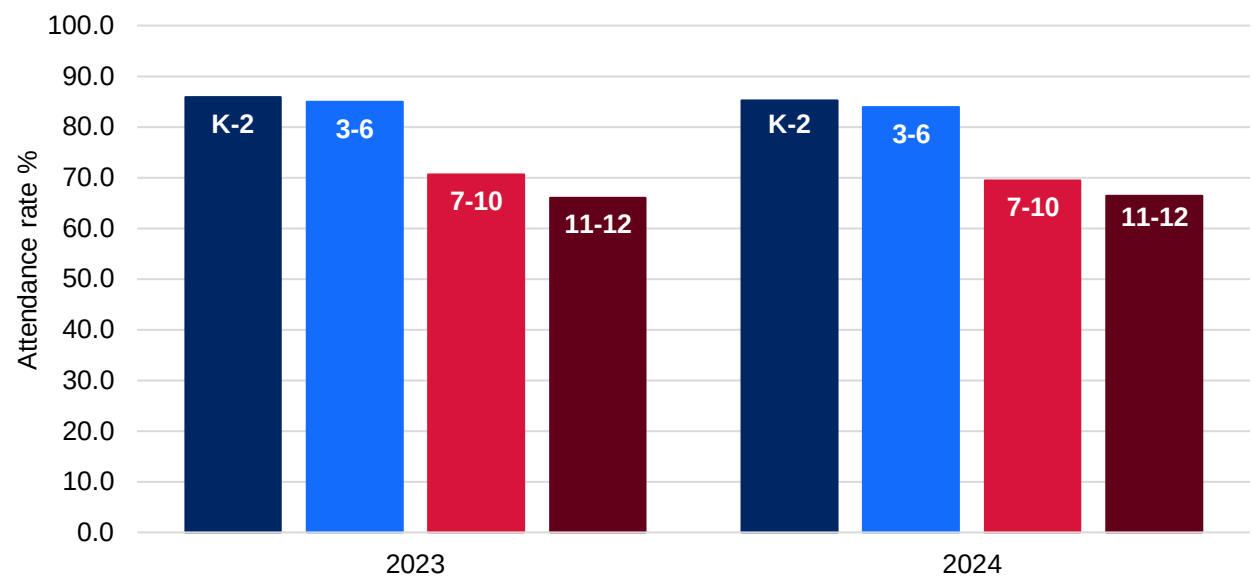
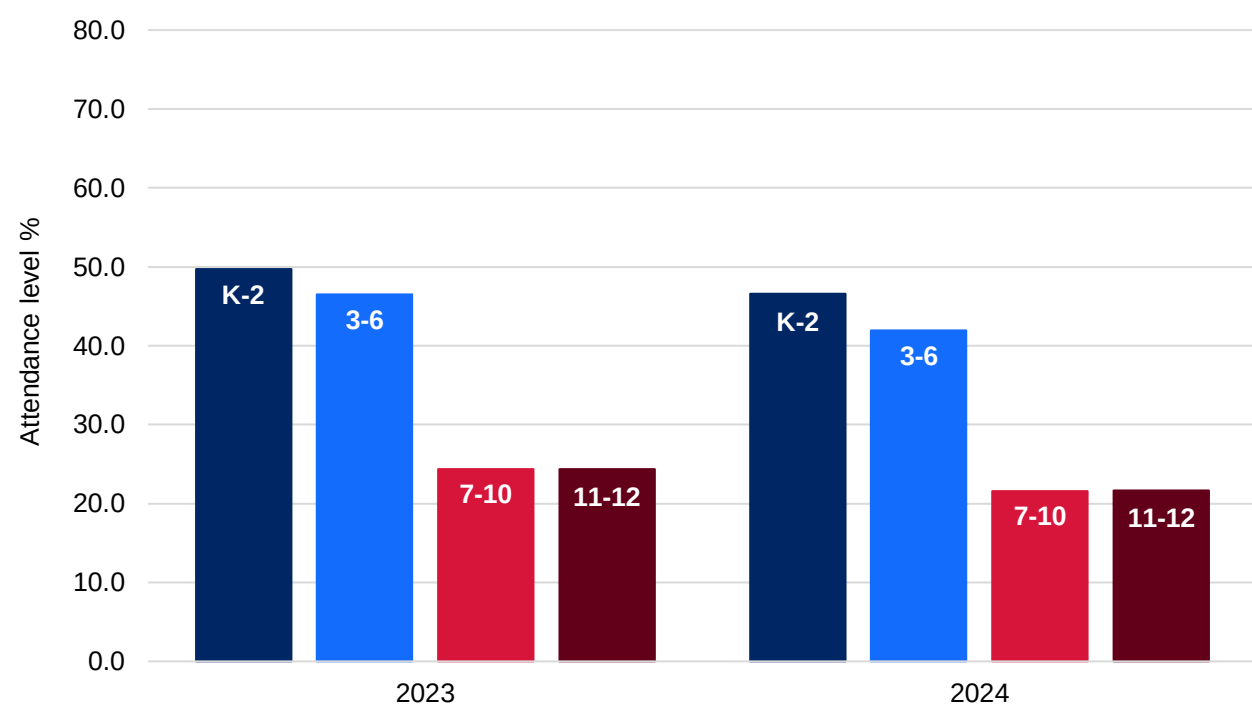


Figure 6: Semester 1 2023 and 2024 attendance level by education sub-level, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students



The attendance rate for non-Aboriginal students also declined from 2023 to 2024, decreasing by 0.4 percentage points, which is slightly less than the decrease for Aboriginal students. However, when comparing the attendance levels, the decrease for non-Aboriginal students is slightly greater than for Aboriginal students, with a decline of 3.7 percentage points compared to 3.5.

Table 3: Semester 1 2023 and 2024 attendance rate and attendance level by education sub-level, non-Aboriginal students

Education level	Attendance rate (%)			Attendance level (%)		
	2023	2024	Change	2023	2024	Change
K–2	91.3	91.1	-0.2	69.9	67.3	-2.6
3–6	90.9	90.3	-0.6	67.8	63.1	-4.7
Primary	91.1	90.6	-0.5	68.7	64.9	-3.8
7–10	85.4	84.9	-0.5	50.9	47.2	-3.7
11–12	84.8	84.5	-0.3	52.7	50.0	-2.7
Secondary	85.3	84.8	-0.5	51.5	48.0	-3.5
All	88.7	88.3	-0.4	61.8	58.1	-3.7

Attendance by geolocation

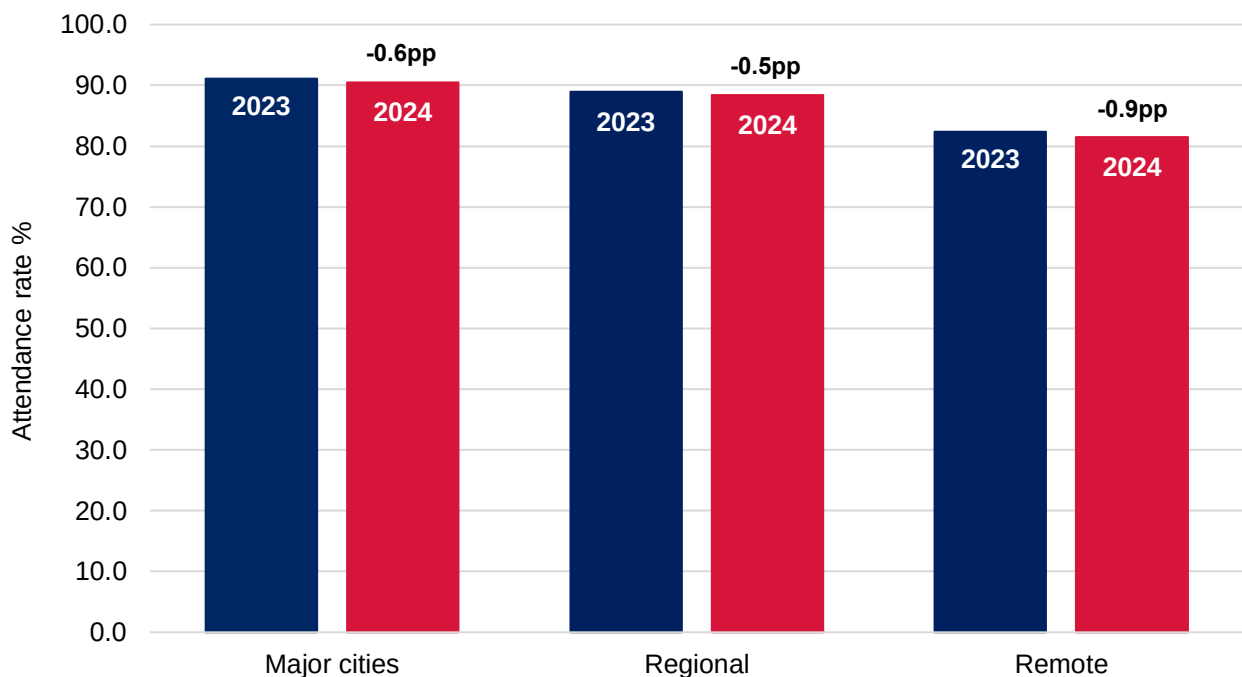
Table 4: Semester 1 2023 and 2024 attendance rate and attendance level by NSW geolocation

Remoteness	Attendance rate (%)			Attendance level (%)		
	2023	2024	Change	2023	2024	Change
Major cities	88.8	88.3	-0.5	62.5	58.6	-3.9
Regional	84.8	84.2	-0.6	50.6	47.3	-3.3
Remote	76.4	75.4	-1.0	36.5	31.5	-5.0
All	87.8	87.3	-0.5	59.6	55.8	-3.8

Table 4 shows that attendance rates declined more for students attending schools in remote areas of NSW than those in major cities or regional areas of NSW. In remote areas, the attendance rate decreased by 1.0 percentage point (from 76.4% in 2023 to 75.4% in 2024), compared to 0.6 percentage points decrease in regional schools (from 84.8% in 2023 to 84.2% in 2024), and a decrease of 0.5 percentage points for schools in major cities (from 88.8% in 2023 to 88.3% in 2024).

In addition, the attendance levels by school geolocation highlights regional disparities. The largest decline in attendance level was from remote areas, which decreased by 5.0 percentage points (from 36.5% in 2023 to 31.5% in 2024). This was followed by major cities, which decreased by 3.9 percentage points (from 62.5% in 2023 to 58.6% in 2024), and regional areas, which experienced a 3.3 percentage point decline (from 50.6% in 2023 to 47.3% in 2024).

Figure 7: Semester 1 2023 and 2024 attendance rate (%) by NSW geolocation, primary students



Note: pp = percentage points.

Figure 8: Semester 1 2023 and 2024 attendance rate (%) by NSW geolocation, secondary students

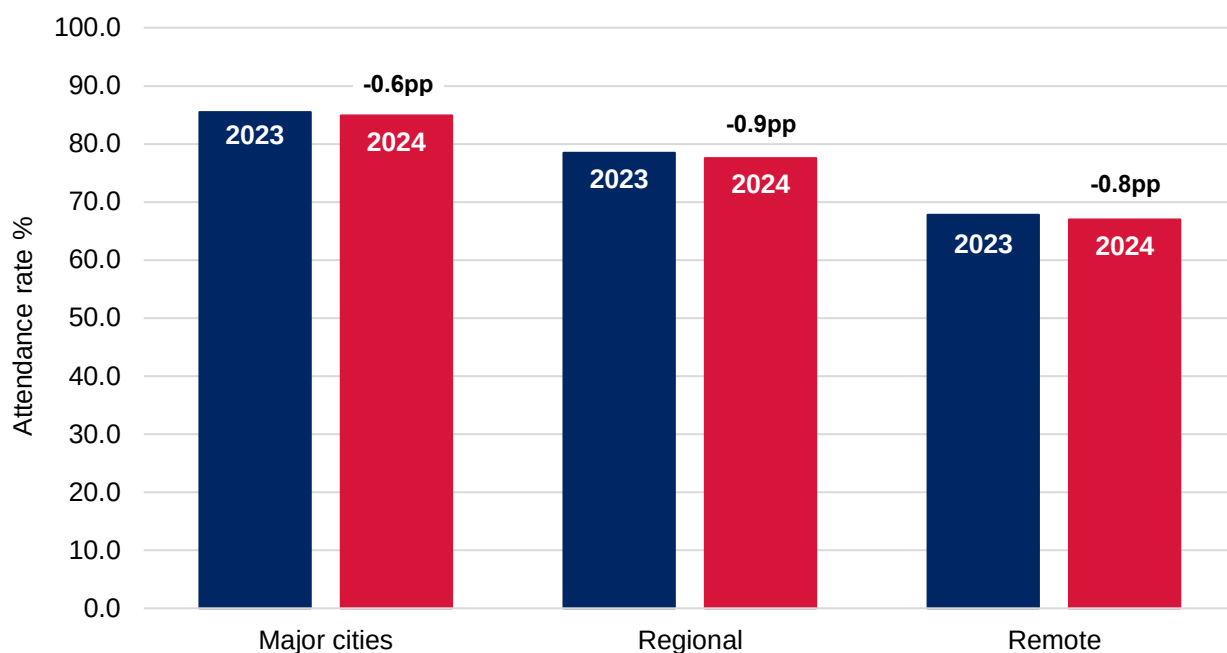


Figure 7 shows primary students in remote NSW experienced the greatest decline, with a decrease of 0.9 percentage points (82.4% in 2023 to 81.5% in 2024). This was followed by a 0.6 percentage point decrease in primary students in major cities (from 91.1% in 2023 to 90.5% in 2024), while primary students in regional areas declined by 0.5 percentage points (from 88.9% in 2023 to 88.4% in 2024).

Similarly, Figure 8 shows the attendance rates of secondary students from major cities also decreased by 0.6 percentage points (from 85.5% in 2023 to 84.9% in 2024). Secondary students in regional areas experienced a larger decrease of 0.9 percentage points (from 78.5% in 2023 to 77.6% in 2024), and there was a decline of 0.8 percentage points in remote NSW (from 67.8% in 2023 to 67.0% in 2024).

Figure 9: Semester 1 2023 and 2024 attendance level (%) by NSW geolocation, primary students

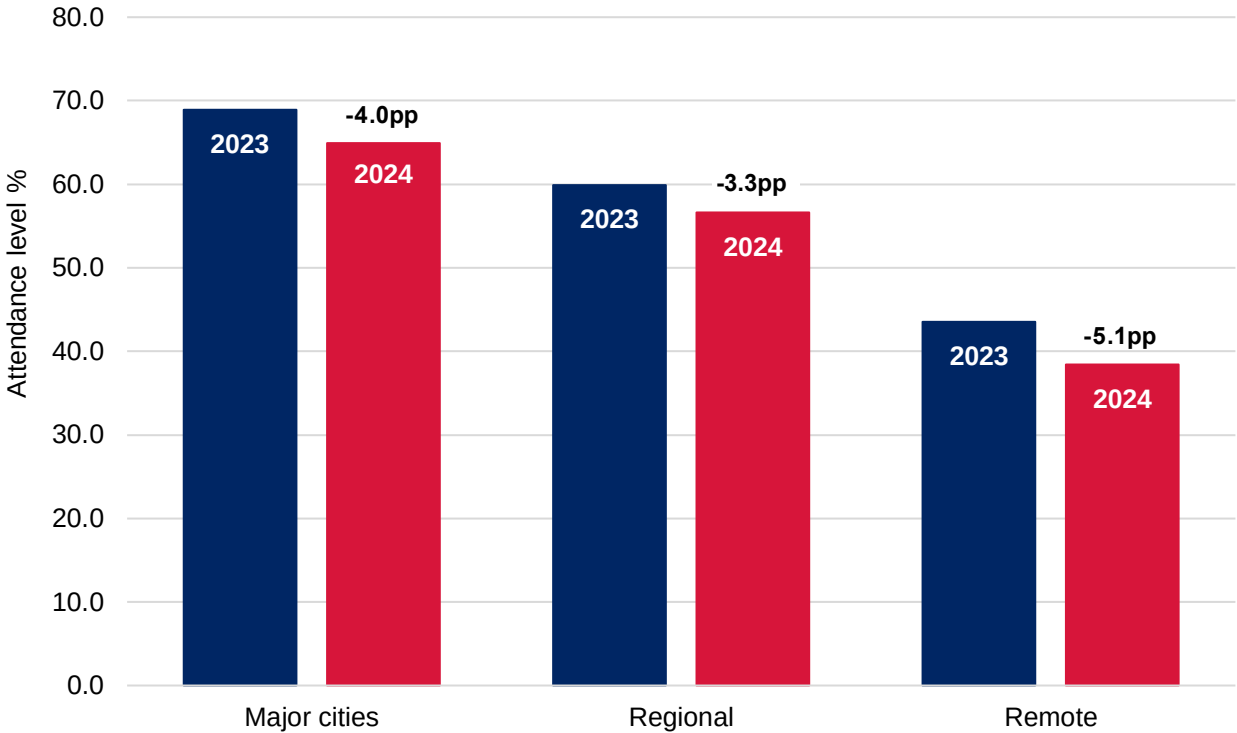


Figure 10: Semester 1 2023 and 2024 attendance level (%) by NSW geolocation, secondary students

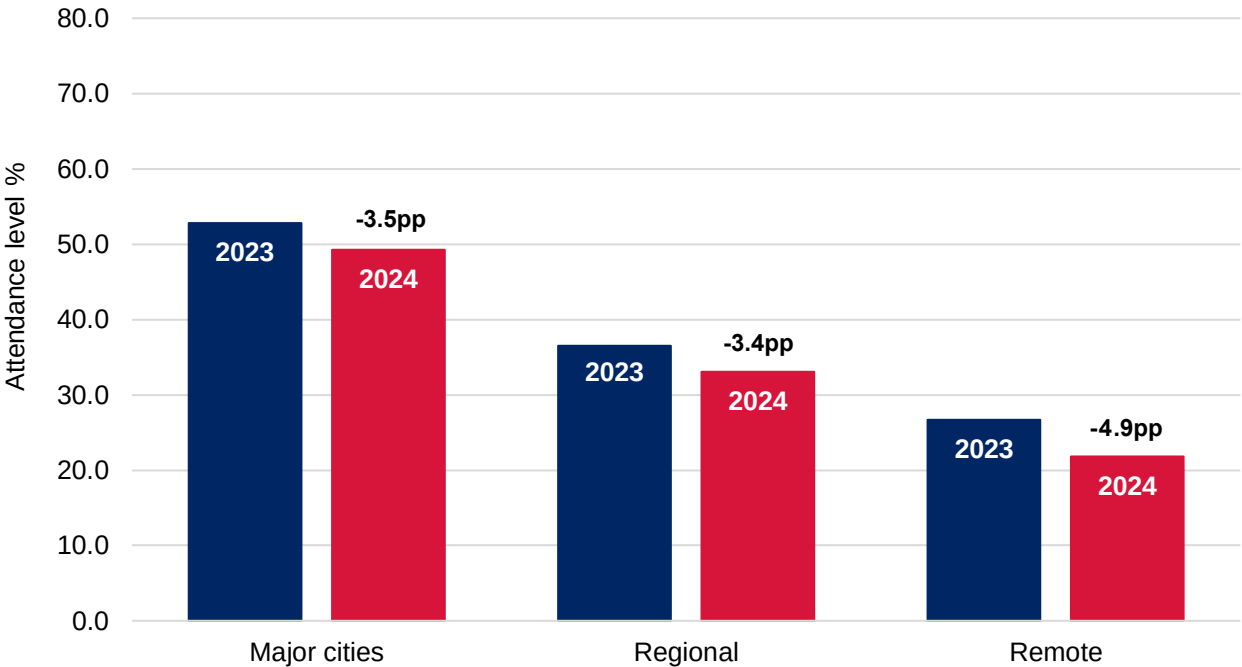


Figure 9 shows attendance levels for primary students from remote areas decreased by 5.1 percentage points (from 43.5% in 2023 to 38.4% in 2024), followed by primary students in major cities, which declined by 4.0 percentage points (68.9% in 2023 to 64.9% in 2024). Attendance levels for primary students in regional schools decreased by 3.3 percentage points (from 59.9% in 2023 to 56.6% in 2024).

Figure 10 shows NSW secondary students in remote NSW experienced the largest decline of 4.9 percentage points (from 26.7% in 2023 to 21.8% in 2024). Next are major cities with a decrease of 3.5 percentage points (from 52.8% in 2023 to 49.3% in 2024), followed by regional secondary students where attendance levels decreased by 3.4 percentage points (from 36.5% in 2023 to 33.1% in 2024).

The declining trend was consistent at both primary and secondary education levels. Attendance levels remained highest in major cities, followed by regional and remote areas.

Analysis of absence reasons

The attendance codes provide insight into the reasons behind changes in attendance measures. There are 2 sets of measures: total absence days; and absence days per 1,000 enrolled days. Total absence days can be misleading because it does not account for variation in the number of enrolled days between Semester 1 2023 and Semester 1 2024. In contrast, absence days per 1,000 enrolled days offers a more reliable way to compare attendance over time and between primary and secondary students.

Table 5 shows the total number of absence days across all NSW Government schools increased by 669,404 days, rising from 9,060,496 days in 2023 to 9,729,900 days in 2024.

Table 5: Semester 1 total absence days by reason, 2023 and 2024 by education level

Reason	Primary		Secondary		Total	
	2023	2024	2023	2024	2023	2024
Leave	757,556	783,032	566,002	535,124	1,323,558	1,318,156
Sick	2,032,254	2,303,430	1,765,317	1,967,384	3,797,570	4,270,813
Other	22,424	29,002	117,799	140,662	140,223	169,664
Unexplained / pending explanation	969,252	947,048	1,977,591	2,054,957	2,946,843	3,002,004
Unjustified explanation received	468,407	523,314	383,896	445,951	852,303	969,264
All	4,249,892	4,585,825	4,810,604	5,144,076	9,060,496	9,729,900

Note: Due to rounding, the total number of absence days may not equal the sum of absence days for primary and secondary students.

For both primary and secondary students, the increase in student absences from 2023 to 2024 was due to an increase in sickness, unjustified explanation received, and other. There was a notable (12.5%) increase in absences related to sickness, with the total number of sick days for both primary and secondary increasing by 473,243 days (from 3,797,570 days in 2023 to 4,270,813 days in 2024).

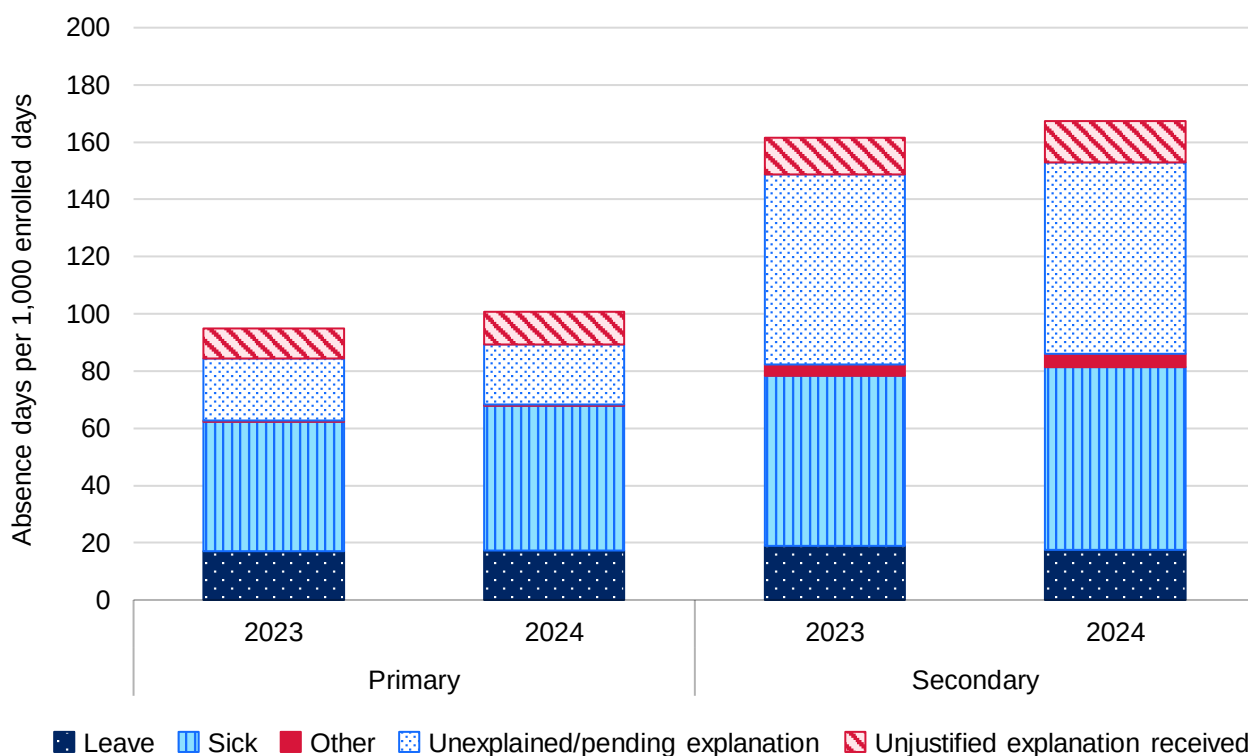
The number of unjustified explanations increased (16.2%) for secondary students by 62,055 days (from 383,896 days in 2023 to 445,951 in 2024) and increased by 54,907 days (11.7%) for primary students (from 468,407 in 2023 to 523,314 in 2024). From 2023 to 2024, the number of other absence days increased by 6,578 days for primary students, and by 22,863 days for secondary students.

Table 6: Semester 1 absence days per 1,000 enrolled days by reason, 2023 and 2024, primary and secondary

Reason	Primary		Secondary		Total		
	2023	2024	2023	2024	2023	2024	Change
Leave	16.9	17.2	19.0	17.4	17.8	17.3	-0.5
Sick	45.4	50.6	59.3	64.0	51.0	56.0	5.0
Other	0.5	0.6	4.0	4.6	1.9	2.2	0.3
Unexplained / pending explanation	21.7	20.8	66.4	66.9	39.5	39.4	-0.1
Unjustified explanation received	10.5	11.5	12.9	14.5	11.4	12.7	1.3
All	95.0	100.7	161.6	167.4	121.6	127.6	6.0

Table 6 presents the number of absence days per 1,000 enrolled days for primary and secondary students, and shows the overall absence days has increased by 6.0 days per 1,000 enrolled days (from 121.6 days in 2023 to 127.6 days in 2024). Absences due to sickness saw the largest increase of 5.0 days per 1,000 enrolled days (from 51.0 days in 2023 to 56.0 days in 2024). This was followed by an increase of 1.3 absence days per 1,000 enrolled days for unjustified explanation, and a smaller increase for other absences. In contrast, absence days due to leave and unexplained/pending explanation showed very small decreases.

Figure 11: Semester 1 absence days per 1,000 enrolled days by reason, 2023 and 2024, primary and secondary



The frequency of sick days per 1,000 enrolled days has increased overall for both primary and secondary students in 2024. Notably, sick days for primary students saw a higher increase of 5.2 days per 1,000 enrolled days (from 45.4 days in 2023 to 50.6 days in 2024), while secondary students had a lower increase of 4.7 days (from 59.3 in 2023 to 64.0 in 2024).

Absence days for unjustified explanation for primary students increased by 1.0 day (from 10.5 per 1,000 enrolled days in 2023 to 11.5 days in 2024). In comparison, secondary students experienced a larger increase of 1.6 days (from 12.9 days per 1,000 enrolled days in 2023 to 14.5 days in 2024).

Absences due to leave increased for primary students by 0.3 days per 1,000 enrolled days (from 16.9 days in 2023 to 17.2 days in 2024). In contrast, there was a decrease of 1.6 days per 1,000 enrolled days for secondary students over the same period (from 19.0 days in 2023 to 17.4 days in 2024).

Conversely, unexplained absences decreased for primary students and increased for secondary students from 2023 to 2024. For primary students, unexplained absences decreased by 0.9 days per 1,000 enrolled days (from 21.7 days to 20.8 days), and for secondary students, there was an increase of 0.5 days (from 66.4 days in 2023 to 66.9 days in 2024).

Notes

Government school systems in Australia measure attendance rates and levels throughout the first semester, which includes Term 1 and Term 2. This is the period of data collection as specified in National Education Agreements between the Commonwealth and state and territory governments. Attendance data from NSW schools for specific purposes was collected for the first time in 2020.

Nationally, the **attendance rate** is defined as the number of actual full-time equivalent student days attended by full-time students in Years 1 to 10 in Semester 1 as a percentage of the number of possible student-days attended in Semester 1 (Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia – Key Performance Measure 1(b)).

The **attendance level** is defined as the proportion of full-time students in Years 1 to 10 whose attendance rate in Semester 1 is equal to or greater than 90% (Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia – Key Performance Measure 1(c)).

National student attendance data for Years 1 to 10 is published annually on the National Report on Schooling in Australia (ANR) data portal. The data portal includes more information on the Measurement Framework for Schooling Australia and Key Performance Measures previously mentioned. 2020 attendance data was not published due to the impact of COVID-19 on student attendance.

The attendance rates and levels in the fact sheet are different to the nationally published figures, due to the inclusion of Kindergarten, Year 11 and Year 12 students.

Locations in this fact sheet are determined according to Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) – 2021 Remoteness Structure. This standard outlines five possible location areas: major cities, inner regional, outer regional, remote and very remote. This fact sheet combines inner regional and outer regional into one regional location, and combines remote and very remote into one remote location.

Explanatory notes

1. National standards for student attendance data reporting

Since 2018, NSW Government schools have reported attendance data in accordance with the National Standards published on the [ACARA website](#).

ACARA published the '[National standards for student attendance data reporting – third edition](#)' [PDF 374KB] in July 2020. As a result, in 2021 the following changes to attendance calculations were made:

- no rounding to determine whether a student's attendance rate meets the 90% threshold for attendance level calculations
- including the final week of Term 2
- treating partial absences over 120 minutes as a half-day absence instead of their actual value as a proportion of a 6-hour day.

2. Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students

Students are included in the reporting as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander if they or their parents/carers identified them on the school enrolment form. Throughout this report, the term 'Aboriginal' is inclusive of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students.

3. Reasons for absences

Students may be absent from school for a variety of reasons, including sickness, truancy, or other circumstances. Some other reasons include:

- 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 the principal does not accept the provided explanation.
- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students may also be absent from school when they are engaging in cultural practices/obligations. Note: There are currently no attendance codes that reflect cultural obligations as a justified reason for a student to be absent from school.

In certain communities, attendance rates can also be affected by other factors, such as the level of sickness within the community or natural events like floods.