

# Analysis of School Attendance Data at Primary and Post-Primary Levels for 2004/2005



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# Executive Summary

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This report presents findings from an analysis of attendance data for Primary and Post-Primary schools for the 2004/05 school year. The results are based on the School Attendance Reports submitted annually by schools to the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB).

## Key Findings

The overall consistency of attendance levels and responses rates in 2004/05 at primary and post-primary levels with 2003/04 provides NEWB with assurance of their reliability as benchmarks against which future progress can be measured.

## Response Rates

- ✚ Response rates at primary level are generally consistent with those recorded in 2003/04, regardless of school location.
- ✚ At primary level, the response rate was 83.9% in 2004/05, compared to 82.8% in 2003/04. In absolute terms, this is an increase from 2601 schools in 2003/04 to 2664 schools in 2004/05.
- ✚ At post-primary level, there has been an increase in the overall response rate of 5%, from 71.0% in 2003/04 to 76.0% this year. In absolute terms, this is an increase from 527 schools in 2003/04 to 562 in 2004/05.
- ✚ The response rate for Community and Comprehensive Schools is up 13.5%, from 67.8% (61 schools) in 2003/04 to 81.3% (74 schools) this year.

## Attendance

- Overall figures for attendance are consistent with 2003/04 at both levels.
- However, in many of the areas specifically targeted by NEWB, annual percentage attendance is higher compared to 2003/04.
  - ✚ Annual Percentage Attendance in the most disadvantaged urban primary schools is 90.5% in 2004/05, compared to 89.6% in 2003/04.
  - ✚ Annual Percentage Attendance in RAPID primary schools is 91.9% in 2004/05, compared to 90.8% in 2003/04.
  - ✚ Annual Percentage Attendance in the most disadvantaged post-primary schools is 87.0% in 2004/05, compared to 86.1% in 2003/04.
  - ✚ Annual Percentage Attendance in RAPID post-primary schools is 90.7% in 2004/05, compared to 87.8% in 2003/04.
- Furthermore, the mean percentage of students absent 20 days or more is lower in many of the areas targeted by NEWB, compared to 2003/04.
  - ✚ Mean percentage of students absent 20 days or more in the most disadvantaged urban primary schools is 24.2% in 2004/05, compared to 28.7% in 2003/04.
  - ✚ Mean percentage of students absent 20 days or more in RAPID primary schools is 19.0% in 2004/05, compared to 23.7% in 2003/04.

- ✚ Mean percentage of students absent 20 days or more in the most disadvantaged post-primary schools is 34.8% in 2004/05, compared to 38.0% in 2003/04.
- ✚ Mean percentage of students absent 20 days or more in RAPID post-primary schools is 22.0% in 2004/05, compared to 26.0% in 2003/04.

### Primary Schools

- ✚ In 2004/05, the average primary school student missed 11 school days. 1 in every 10 primary school students missed 20 or more school days every year.
- ✚ Almost 1 in every 7 urban primary students missed 20 or more school days every year, compared to almost 1 in every 13 rural primary school students.
- ✚ In 2004/05, the average primary student in the least disadvantaged<sup>1</sup> schools missed 10 school days compared to an average of 15 days missed by students in the most disadvantaged primary schools.
- ✚ In 2004/05, 1 in every 5 primary school students in the most disadvantaged primary schools missed 20 or more school days compared to one in every 16 primary school students in the least disadvantaged schools.

### Post-Primary Level

- ✚ The average post-primary student missed 14 days in 2004/05.
- ✚ Almost 1 in every 5 post-primary school students missed 20 days or more. Students in vocational schools missed on average 17 school days.
- ✚ Almost 1 in every 4 vocational school students missed 20 or more school days in 2004/05, compared to almost 1 in every 7 secondary students and 1 in every 5 community/comprehensive students.
- ✚ More than 1 in every 5 students in small post-primary schools missed 20 or more school days last year, compared to almost 1 in every 7 in large schools.
- ✚ In 2004/05, the average post-primary student in the least disadvantaged schools missed 10 school days compared to an average of over 21 days missed by students in the most disadvantaged post-primary schools.
- ✚ In 2004/05, 1 in every 3 post-primary students in the most disadvantaged schools missed 20 or more school days.

### Expulsions

- ✚ There were 5 recorded expulsions at primary level in 2004/05.
- ✚ There were 93 recorded expulsions at post-primary level in 2004/05.

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<sup>1</sup> Levels of 'Disadvantage' are measured by schools' scores on 'disadvantage' indices compiled by the Educational Research Centre on behalf of the Department of Education and Science. The index for primary schools was used to inform the allocation of additional resources to schools under the Giving Children an Even Break scheme and the index for post-primary schools was used to inform the 16:1 initiative, which proposed the allocation of additional teachers to schools in areas of concentrated disadvantage.

## Suspensions<sup>2</sup>

- ✚ There were 908 suspensions recorded by 2,641 primary schools in 2004/05, representing an average of almost 1 suspension for every three schools. Of the 2,641 primary schools that returned valid data relating to suspensions in 2004/05, 2,402 recorded no suspensions. Therefore, a total of 239 schools were responsible for the 908 suspensions recorded at primary level in 2004/05. Of these 239, 98 schools reported only 1 suspension. Two schools were responsible for a total of 87 suspensions.
- ✚ There were 11,746 suspensions recorded by 557 post-primary schools in 2004/05, representing an average of 21 suspensions per post-primary school. Of the 557 post-primary schools that returned valid data relating to suspensions in 2004/05, 78 recorded no suspensions. Therefore, a total of 479 schools were responsible for the 11,746 suspensions recorded at post-primary level in 2004/05. Of these 479, 10 schools reported over 100 suspensions each.

## Admissions Policy

- ✚ 97.6% of primary schools reported having an admissions policy, compared to 94.8% of post-primary schools.

## Code of Behaviour

- ✚ 99.3% of primary schools reported having an official code of behaviour, compared to 98.8% of post-primary schools.

## 100% Attendance

- ✚ There were a total of 15,336 primary school students with 100% attendance, representing an average of just fewer than 6 students per school. Of the 2,648 schools that returned valid data, 2,227 schools had at least 1 student with 100% attendance.
- ✚ There were 7,984 students at post-primary level with 100% attendance, based on data returned by 557 schools. 504 schools had at least one student with 100% attendance. Of these 504, 51 had only 1 or 2 students with 100% attendance. Secondary schools had an average of over 17 students with 100% attendance, compared to an average of 7 in Vocational schools.

## International Comparisons

- ✚ The levels of attendance reported here are comparable with those published by the Department for Education and Skills in their report *Pupil Absence in Schools in England 2003/04 (Revised)*. Primary School Percentage Annual Attendance in England is reported as 94.5%, compared to 94.2% in Ireland, Post-Primary School Percentage Annual Attendance is 91.9% in England, compared to 91.6% in Ireland.

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<sup>2</sup> Schools were asked to report the number of students suspended during the school year on their annual return of attendance data. The total of 908 suspensions refers, therefore, to 908 instances of suspension rather than the total number of days lost to suspension in primary schools.

# 1. Introduction

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## 1.1 Introduction

In 2003/04, the Education Research Centre undertook, on behalf of the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB), the first analysis of school attendance at a national level in Ireland. The importance of this exercise was that it provided a reliable measure against which future progress could be measured and could be used to inform the policy recommendations and strategic direction of the Board. In light of the board's advisory and research role in the formulation of Government policy on school attendance, the availability of a reliable evidence-base is of considerable importance.

Equally, given current national initiatives on tackling educational disadvantage and early school-leaving, and the link between poor attendance and subsequent early school-leaving, this emphasis on school attendance is well-advised. Early school leaving impacts economically, educationally, and socially on both the individual student and society, generally. Poor attendance is also often an early indicator of difficulties, educational or otherwise, that students may be experiencing.

The Education Research Centre's 2004 report revealed the level of non-attendance in Ireland for the first time. Two core themes were emphasised throughout, namely that absenteeism is prevalent throughout the country, and that absenteeism is significantly worse in disadvantaged areas. The strong association between social and economic disadvantage and attendance was seen to support NEWB's strategic decision to prioritise towns and cities designated disadvantaged, such as those included in the RAPID programme<sup>3</sup>, in terms of providing an intensive service.

## 1.2 Methodology

The methodological considerations employed for the purpose of this report broadly reflect the Education Research Centre's 2004 analysis of school attendance data at primary and post-primary levels for 2003/2004. This analysis concentrated on two key variables, derived from the School Attendance Reports submitted by schools to NEWB. These variables were *annual percentage attendance*<sup>4</sup> and *percentage of students absent for 20 days or more*<sup>5</sup>. This report is also primarily concerned with the analysis of these two variables for primary and post-primary schools.

Attendance data was also related to a number of indicators of educational disadvantage. These indicators included participation in schemes such as the *School Completion Programme (SCP)*, *Disadvantaged Areas Scheme (DAS)*, and schools' individual scores on indices of disadvantage. The index of disadvantage for Primary Schools was based on surveys collected by the Education Research Centre to inform the allocation of resources under the *Giving Children an Even Break (GCEB)* scheme.

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<sup>3</sup> The RAPID (Revitalising Areas by Planning, Investment and Development) programme is a government initiative to target the most disadvantaged areas in the country through increased investment and enhanced opportunities.

<sup>4</sup> *Annual Percentage Attendance* is the percentage of total student days (number of students multiplied by the number of school days) attended in each school.

<sup>5</sup> *Percentage of Students Absent 20 Days or More* is the number of students absent 20 days or more expressed as a percentage of the school's total enrolment.

For post-primary schools, the index of disadvantage was based on a range of educational and socio-economic indicators devised as part of the identification procedure for the *16:1 Initiative*. This initiative, announced in 2002, proposed the allocation of additional teachers to post-primary schools where disadvantage was most concentrated.

### **1.2.1 Data Collection**

The data analysed in this report is based on the School Attendance Reports which are prepared by individual schools at primary and post-primary level and submitted by schools to the National Educational Welfare Board. The reports record the following information:

- Total enrolment for 2003/04
- Sum of all individual student absences over the entire school year up to and including the date the school closes;
- Number of students with 100% attendance;
- Number of students missing 20 days or more;
- Number of students expelled;
- Number of students suspended;
- Confirmation of availability of Code of Behaviour to parents and students;
- Confirmation of availability of Admissions Policy to parents and students.

Schools can complete their attendance reports in physical format or via NEWB's dedicated [www.schoolreturn.ie](http://www.schoolreturn.ie) website. The self-completion aspect of the survey presents a number of problems, in terms of data quality, which are discussed in greater detail in section 2.

### **1.3 Reporting**

The format of the report broadly follows that established by the original report. However, as an initial attempt to provide a reliable measure of attendance at a national level, considerable attention was given to ensuring the reliability of the dataset in the 2003/04 report. This involved a detailed examination of the characteristics of schools that returned data and schools that did not. The Education Research Centre concluded that there were no significant differences at an overall level between the two groups and that the data, therefore, was sufficiently reliable to provide a measure of attendance at a national level. Given the consistency in terms of response rates and overall scores between the 2003/04 and 2004/05 report, this report does not examine the differences between responders and non-responders in the same level of detail.

## 2. The Data

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an initial description of the data returned, including an initial comparison of response rates compared to those recorded in 2003/04. A more detailed analysis of response rates for each sector is provided in the chapters examining attendance at Primary and Post-Primary Level. In addition to the overview of response rates, this chapter will also describe the data received in terms of the considerations involved in preparing it for analysis.

### 2.1 Headline Response Rates 2004/05

Section 21 of the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000 requires all schools to submit a report on attendance to NEWB. Despite the legal requirement to do so, reports were not received from all schools by NEWB. Nonetheless, the analysis by the Education Research Centre confirmed that the level of response was sufficient to provide NEWB with a reliable measure of school attendance in Ireland. As indicated in the table below, analysis of the 2004/05 response rates shows an increase of 0.9% and 5% for primary and post-primary schools, respectively. Analysis of response rates by school level is presented in greater detail later in this report.

**Figure 2.1: Primary and Post-Primary Response Rates**

<b>Note:</b> Figures in parentheses indicate the values recorded in 2003/04.	<b>Returned</b>		<b>Did not Return</b>	
	Number	%	Number	%
<b>Primary</b>	<b>2664 (2601)</b>	<b>83.9 (82.8%)</b>	<b>510 (538)</b>	<b>16.1% (17.2%)</b>
<b>Post-Primary</b>	<b>562 (527)</b>	<b>76% (71%)</b>	<b>177 (215)</b>	<b>24% (29%)</b>
Secondary	318 (308)	78.5% (75.9%)	87 (98)	21.5% (24.1%)
Vocational	170 (158)	70% (64.2%)	73 (88)	30% (35.8%)
Community/Comprehensive	74 (61)	81.3% (67.8%)	17 (29)	18.7% (32.2%)

### 2.2. Data Quality Issues

Given the self-completed nature of the Annual Attendance Reports, the 2003/04 analysis raised a number of issues regarding the integrity of the data. However, it was confirmed that the final dataset, after cleaning, was of sufficient quality to provide a reliable measure of attendance at a national level for primary and post-primary schools. Certainly, the data contained in the Annual Attendance Reports is not sufficiently comprehensive to allow for the conclusive identification of individual schools for targeting of NEWB resources. For the purposes of identifying individual schools to be targeted for these resources, examination of Student Absence Reports submitted by schools at the same time as the Annual Attendance Reports is recommended.

For the most part, examination of the data reveals an improvement compared to 2003/04, in terms of the extent of missing data on returned attendance reports. There are fewer missing responses on all of the principal variables compared to 2003/04. This is likely to be a result of the comprehensive guidelines issued to schools by NEWB in the 2004/05 school year.

### **2.2.1 Cleaning the Data**

For the purposes of cleaning the data, the recommendations of the Education Research Centre were followed. These included, but were not restricted to, ensuring:

- that the total number of absences recorded during the school year did not exceed the maximum number of student days in the school year;
- that the total number of students absent for 20 days or more did not exceed the school's total enrolment;
- that the total number of absences recorded during the school year was not less than the number of individual students absent for 20 days or more multiplied by twenty;
- that the total number of students with 100% attendance did not exceed the school's total enrolment.

In addition to the recommendations of the Education Research Centre, outlined above, a number of additional logical checks were performed on the data.

### **2.2.2 Other Possible Errors**

One particular area of confusion seems to lie in the recording of suspensions both at primary and post-primary levels. The Annual Attendance Reports asks schools to record the number of individual pupils suspended over the school year. However, it would appear that this category may have been misinterpreted. For example, a number of schools had recorded a figure for suspensions in excess of their total enrolment, suggesting that this was interpreted as the number of student days lost to suspension over the school year, rather than the number of individual suspensions.

Given the necessity of repeating this exercise annually, it would be useful to establish a set of guidelines for cleaning the attendance data, consisting of tests of logic and 'reasonableness'. These could easily be incorporated into the online submission form and could then also be discovered and corrected when physical forms are data entered by NEWB.

## 3: Attendance at Primary Level

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the analysis of attendance for the school year 2004/05 for primary schools. As noted earlier, the analysis primarily concentrates on two variables derived from the attendance data submitted by schools, namely *mean annual percentage attendance* and *mean percentage of students absent 20 days or more*. For the most part, the analysis reveals a remarkable consistency with the results of the 2003/04 report.

**Figure 3.1A: Mean Annual Percentage Attendance - Primary**

	2004/05	2003/04
Number Valid	2606	2430
Number Missing	58	171
Mean	94.2%	94.1%
Minimum	60.4%	48.1%
Maximum	100.0%	100.0%

Mean Annual Percentage Attendance for primary schools in 2003/04 was 94.1%. Thus, this figure for 2004/05 represents a 0.1% increase on that figure. There is little that can be inferred from this statistic. The positive interpretation is that it confirms the 2003/04 figure, suggesting that an approximate figure of 94% represents a reliable benchmark against which future progress in combating non-attendance can be measured. **A mean annual percentage attendance figure of 94.2% means that the average primary school student misses eleven school days a year.**

**Figure 3.1B: Mean Percentage of Students Absent 20 Days or More - Primary**

	2004/05	2003/04
Number Valid	2661	2572
Number Missing	3	29
Mean	10.0%	10.7%
Minimum	0	0
Maximum	88.9%	77.8%

Mean Percentage of Students absent 20 days or more for primary schools in 2003/04 was 10.7%. Thus, this figure for 2004/05 represents a 0.7% decrease on that figure. Again, this would seem to confirm the reliability of the 2003/04 figures, underlining policy recommendations made on the basis of those figures. It confirms NEWB's position that **one in every ten primary school students misses 20 or more school days every year.**

## 3.2 Response Rates

Following the format of the 2003/04 report, this section analyses primary school response rates, with respect to a number of relevant variables, for example, school location and membership of schemes to address disadvantage, such as the *Designated Areas Schemes (DAS)* and the *School Completion Programme (SCP)*. Overall, response rates for 2004/05 are very much in line with those reported for 2003/04. This would confirm the reliability and representativeness of the dataset and, thus, its suitability for measuring future progress in relation to attendance and as an evidence-base for informing policy recommendations and priorities.

### 3.2.1 Response by School Location

Looking specifically at the school's location, urban and rural primary schools do not differ significantly in terms of their response rates. However, it is worth noting that information on location was not available for a number of schools.

By comparison with 2003/04, there is a slightly lower response from urban schools, 84.9% compared to 85.6% in 2003/04. This represents five fewer urban primary schools returning data for this year. For rural schools, this is reversed. The 2004/05 figure of 85.5% shows an increase from 84.5%. Ten more schools returned data in 2004/05 compared to 2003/04 from a decreased population of rural schools.

**Figure 3.2.1: Response Rates by School Location - Primary**

Note: Figures in parentheses indicate the values recorded in 2003/04.	School Location		Total
	Urban <sup>6</sup>	Rural <sup>7</sup>	
Returned	737 (742)	1412 (1402)	2149 (2144)
%	84.9% (85.6%)	85.5% (84.5%)	85.3% (84.8%)
Did Not Return	131 (125)	240 (258)	371 (383)
%	15.1% (14.4%)	14.5% (15.5%)	14.7% (15.2%)
Total	868 (867)	1652 (1660)	2520 (2527)

### 3.2.2 Response by Designation of Disadvantage

Response rates were also measured by schools' status as designated disadvantaged. The response rate from designated disadvantaged schools is 1% lower than the response rate from non-designated primary schools.

**Figure 3.2.2: Response Rates by Designation of Disadvantage - Primary**

Note: Figures in parentheses indicate the values recorded in 2003/04	DAS		Total
	Designated	Not Designated	
Returned	254 (264)	2407 (2830)	2661 (2601)
%	83.0% (86.0%)	84.0% (82.5%)	83.9% (82.8%)
Did Not Return	52 (43)	458 (495)	510 (538)
%	17.0% (14.0%)	16.0% (17.5%)	16.1% (17.2%)
Total	306 (307)	2865 (2830)	3171 (3137)

<sup>6</sup> Urban schools are thus classified because they are located in areas of over 1,500 populations

<sup>7</sup> Rural schools are thus classified because they are located in areas of 1,500 population or fewer

### 3.2.3 Response by Location in Rapid Area

Comparing RAPID and non-RAPID schools, fifteen fewer RAPID schools returned data in 2004/05 compared to 2003/04.

**Figure 3.2.3: Response Rates by RAPID Status – Primary**

<b>Note:</b> Figures in parentheses indicate the values recorded in 2003/04.	<b>RAPID Status</b>		<b>Total</b>
	In RAPID	Non-RAPID	
Returned	184 (199)	2477 (2400)	2661 (2599)
%	80.7% (85.0%)	84.2% (82.7%)	83.9% (82.8%)
Did not Return	44 (35)	466 (503)	510 (538)
%	19.3% (15.0%)	15.8% (17.3%)	16.1% (17.2%)

### 3.2.4 Response by Participation in the School Completion Programme

Finally, in terms of examining response rates, we examine the difference in response rates between primary schools participating in the School Completion Programme and those not participating in the School Completion Programme. As with the other indicators reviewed previously, we see a slightly lower response rate from those schools involved in schemes targeting areas of disadvantage.

**Figure 3.2.4: Response Rates by Participation in SCP - Primary**

<b>Note:</b> Comparative figures for 2003/04 not available.	<b>School Completion Programme</b>		<b>Total</b>
	In SCP	Not in SCP	
Returned	229	2432	2661
% within SCP	81.2%	84.2%	83.9%
Did Not Return	53	457	510
% within SCP	18.8%	15.8%	16.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>282</b>	<b>2889</b>	<b>3171</b>

### 3.3 Analysis of Attendance

This next section turns to the analysis of attendance itself. Again, attendance at primary level is measured by a number of variables, such as school location and membership of schemes to address educational disadvantage.

#### 3.3.1 Attendance by School Location

As the table below shows, the patterns of attendance between rural and urban primary schools seen in 2003/04 remain consistent<sup>8</sup>. Urban schools perform worse than rural schools in terms of the derived variables, mean annual percentage attendance and mean percentage of students absent 20 days or more. In the case of the mean percentage of students absent 20 days or more, urban schools have almost twice as many students absent 20 days or more as rural schools. **Almost one in every seven urban primary school students misses 20 or more school days every year compared to almost one in every thirteen rural primary school students.**

**Figure 3.3.1: Attendance by School Location - Primary**

<b>Note:</b> Figures in parentheses indicate the values recorded in 2003/04.		
<b>School Location</b>	<b>Mean Annual Percentage Attendance</b>	<b>Mean Percentage of Students Absent 20 Days or More</b>
Urban	92.8% (92.6%)	14.9% (15.6%)
Number	717 (677)	736 (724)
Rural	94.9% (94.8%)	7.8% (8.8%)
Number	1388 (1323)	1410 (1393)

#### 3.3.2 Attendance by Designated Disadvantaged Status

Looking at attendance by designated disadvantaged status, the rates reported below would suggest that current targeting of disadvantaged schools by NEWB is appropriate. Primary schools designated as disadvantaged report significantly higher levels of non-attendance than those not designated disadvantaged across both derived variables. **In fact, more than one in every five primary school students in designated disadvantaged schools misses 20 or more school days every year compared to one in every eleven primary school students in non-designated schools.**

**Figure 3.3.2: Attendance by Designation of Disadvantage - Primary**

<b>Note:</b> Figures in parentheses indicate the values recorded in 2003/04		
<b>DAS</b>	<b>Mean Annual Percentage Attendance</b>	<b>Mean Percentage of Students Absent 20 Days or More</b>
Designated	91.4% (90.7%)	21.0% (23.1%)
Number	244 (246)	253 (257)
Not Designated	94.5% (94.5%)	8.8% (9.4%)
Number	2359 (2182)	2405 (2313)

<sup>8</sup> Due to the large difference between this year and last year in the number of schools who returned data for which no urban/rural classification was available (156 in 2004/05 compared to 455 in 2003/04), this statistic was not included.

### 3.3.3 Attendance by Location in RAPID area and non-RAPID area

The table below would suggest that current targeting of NEWB resources to RAPID areas is appropriate. **Primary school students in RAPID areas miss on average 15 school days every year compared to an average of 10 school days a year missed by school students in non-RAPID areas.**

**Figure 3.3.3: Attendance by RAPID Status - Primary**

<b>Note:</b> Figures in parentheses indicate the values in 2003/04	<b>Mean Annual Percentage Attendance</b>	<b>Mean Percentage of Students Absent 20 Days or More</b>
<b>RAPID<sup>9</sup></b>		
RAPID	91.9% (90.8%)	19.0% (23.7%)
Number	177 (184)	183 (195)
Non-RAPID	94.4% (94.3%)	9.3% (9.9%)
Number	2426 (2244)	2475 (2375)

### 3.3.4 Attendance by Participation in the School Completion Programme

The School Completion Programme (SCP) aims to develop local strategies to ensure maximum participation levels in the education process. This programme subsumes the previous *8 to 15 Early School Leaver Initiative* and the *"Stay in School" Retention Initiative*. It entails targeting individual young people of school going age, both in and out of school. **Just less than one in every five primary school students in schools participating in the School Completion Programme misses 20 or more school days every year compared to almost one in every eleven primary school students in schools that do not participate.**

**Figure 3.3.4: Attendance by Participation in the SCP - Primary**

<b>Note:</b> Comparative figures for 2003/04 not available.	<b>Mean Annual Percentage Attendance</b>	<b>Mean Percentage of Students Absent 20 Days or More</b>
<b>SCP</b>		
In SCP	91.8%	18.4%
Number	222	228
Not in SCP	94.4%	9.2%
Number	2381	2430

<sup>9</sup> The identification of schools by RAPID 1 and RAPID 2 area status was not available to allow for their separate comparison and analysis.

### 3.3.5 Attendance by Level of Disadvantage (GCEB Points)

For the following analysis, primary schools were grouped into equal deciles based on their score on an index of disadvantage constructed by the Education Research Centre for the *Giving Children an Even Break* scheme. The scores were calculated according to the level of concentration in each school of pupils who have background characteristics that are associated with educational disadvantage and early school leaving: such as medical card possession, living in local authority housing and families headed by lone parents or unemployed breadwinners. As such, one might expect to see the lowest levels of attendance in the most disadvantaged schools and this is the case.

As illustrated in the table overleaf, the greater the level of disadvantage, as represented by the index of disadvantage, the lower the school's mean percentage attendance and the higher the mean percentage of students absent twenty days or more. **In fact, one in every five primary school students in the most disadvantaged primary schools misses 20 or more school days every year compared to one in every sixteen primary school students in the least disadvantaged schools. Furthermore, primary school students in the most disadvantaged schools miss on average 15 school days every year compared to an average of 10 school days a year missed by school students in the least disadvantaged schools.**

**Figure 3.3.5: Attendance by Level of Disadvantage - Primary**

Note: Comparative figures for 2003/04 not available.		
<b>Giving Children an Even Break (Schools grouped in Deciles)</b>	<b>Mean Annual Percentage Attendance</b>	<b>Mean Percentage of Students Absent 20 Days or More</b>
Least Disadvantaged Schools	95.2%	6.2%
Number	218	221
2 <sup>nd</sup> Decile	94.9%	7.2%
Number	206	211
3 <sup>rd</sup> Decile	94.9%	7.2%
Number	219	224
4 <sup>th</sup> Decile	94.5%	8.6%
Number	208	214
5 <sup>th</sup> Decile	94.4%	8.3%
Number	206	209
6 <sup>th</sup> Decile	94.4%	10.0%
Number	211	212
7 <sup>th</sup> Decile	94.0%	11.3%
Number	206	207
8 <sup>th</sup> Decile	93.8%	11.4%
Number	210	213
9 <sup>th</sup> Decile	93.6%	13.6%
Number	202	210
Most Disadvantaged Schools	91.9%	19.4%
Number	202	208

### 3.3.6 Attendance in Urban Primary Schools by NEWB Region

The table below shows attendance in urban primary schools for each of the five NEWB regions. As expected, urban schools in all five regions report *mean annual percentage attendance* lower than the national average and *mean percentage of students absent 20 days or more* scores in excess of the national average. However, there is disparity between the scores reported for primary schools in the Dublin City region compared to the other four regions. Dublin City urban primary schools show the lowest *mean annual percentage attendance* and the highest *mean percentage of students absent 20 days or more*.

**Figure 3.3.6: Attendance in Urban Primary Schools by NEWB Region**

<b>Note:</b> Comparative figures for 2003/04 not available.		
<b>NEWB Region</b>	<b>Mean Annual Percentage Attendance</b>	<b>Mean Percentage of Students Absent 20 Days or More</b>
<b>Dublin City</b>	<b>92.0%</b>	<b>18.1%</b>
<b>Number</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>139</b>
Leinster North	92.6%	14.9%
Number	130	133
Leinster South	93.2%	14.0%
Number	201	207
Munster	93.1%	13.7%
Number	178	180
North / North West	93.0%	14.8%
Number	74	77

### 3.3.7 Attendance in Rural Primary Schools by NEWB Region

Turning to an examination of attendance in rural schools by NEWB region, the table below shows that rural schools in Leinster South have the lowest *mean annual percentage attendance* and the highest *mean percentage of students absent 20 days or more*. Nationally, one in every thirteen primary school children in rural primary schools is absent for twenty days or more. **In Leinster South, one in every eleven rural primary school children is absent for twenty days or more.**

**Figure 3.3.7: Attendance in Rural Primary Schools by NEWB Region**

<b>Note:</b> Comparative figures for 2003/04 not available.		
<b>NEWB Region</b>	<b>Mean Annual Percentage Attendance</b>	<b>Mean Percentage of Students Absent 20 Days or More</b>
Leinster North	95.0%	7.5%
Number	207	208
<b>Leinster South</b>	<b>94.4%</b>	<b>9.2%</b>
<b>Number</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>245</b>
Munster	95.0%	6.8%
Number	395	399
North / North West	94.9%	8.1%
Number	546	557
Dublin City	N/A	N/A
Number	N/A	N/A

### 3.4 Admissions Policy in Primary Schools

The Annual Attendance Reports returned indicate that 97.6% of primary schools reported having an admissions policy in their school.

**Figure 3.4: Admissions Policy - Primary**

Note: Comparative figures for 2003/04 year not available.	Admissions Policy	
	Frequency	Percent
YES	2600	97.6%
NO	64	2.4%
Total	2664	100

### 3.5 Code of Behaviour in Primary Schools

99.3% of schools reported having an official Code of Behaviour in their school.

**Figure 3.5: Code of Behaviour - Primary**

Note: Figures in parentheses indicate the values recorded in 2003/04.	Code of Behaviour	
	Frequency	Percent
YES	2645	99.3% (99.5%)
NO	19	0.7% (0.5%)
Total	2664	100

### 3.6 Suspensions

There were 908 suspensions recorded across 2,641 primary schools in 2004/05, representing an average of almost 1 suspension for every three schools. Of the 2,641 primary schools that returned valid data relating to suspensions in 2004/05, 2,402 recorded no suspensions. Therefore, a total of 239 schools were responsible for the 908 suspensions recorded at primary level in 2004/05. Of these 239, 98 schools reported only 1 suspension. Two schools were responsible for a total of 87 suspensions. Leinster South primary schools accounted for more than one-third of this total.

**Figure 3.6: Suspensions by NEWB Region- Primary**

Note: Figures not available for 2003/04.	Suspensions by NEWB Region
Dublin City	197
Munster	151
Leinster North	163
Leinster South	338
West/ North West	59
Total	908

### 3.7 Expulsions

A total of 5 students were expelled at primary level in 2004/05, 3 of whom were from schools in the Leinster North region.

**Figure 3.7: Expulsions by NEWB Region - Primary**

<b>Note:</b> Figures in parentheses indicate the values recorded in 2003/04.	<b>Expulsions by NEWB Region</b>
Dublin City	0
Munster	0
Leinster North	3
Leinster South	1
West/ North West	1
Total	5 (10)

It is interesting to note that the lack of expulsions in the Dublin City region in 2004/05, despite its chronic attendance problems at primary level. This might suggest that the higher concentration of Educational Welfare Officers serving this area means a greater likelihood of intervention in cases where expulsion is a possibility.

### 3.8 100% Attendance

2,648 Primary schools returned data relating to students with 100% attendance. There were a total of 15,336 students with 100% attendance, representing an average of 5.79 students per school. Of these 2,648 schools, 2,227 schools had at least 1 student with 100% attendance.

**Figure 3.8: Students with 100% Attendance**

<b>Note:</b> Comparative figures for 2003/04 not available.	<b>Students with 100% Attendance</b>
Mean	5.79
Total (n=2648)	15,336

## 4: Attendance at Post-Primary Level

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the analysis of attendance for the school year 2004/05 for post-primary schools. As noted earlier, the analysis primarily concentrates on two variables derived from the attendance data submitted by schools, namely *mean annual percentage attendance* and *mean percentage of students absent 20 days or more*.

**Figure 4.1A: Mean Annual Percentage Attendance – Post-Primary**

	2004/05	2003/04
Number Valid	539	383
Number Missing	23	144
Mean	91.6%	91.4%
Minimum	64.0%	57.9%
Maximum	99.9%	99.6%

For the most part, the analysis reveals a remarkable consistency with the results of the 2003/04 report. Mean Annual Percentage Attendance for post-primary schools in 2003/04 was 91.4%. Thus, this figure for 2004/05 represents a 0.2% increase on that figure. Again, the consistency with the 2003/04 figure suggests that an approximate figure of 91.5% represents a reliable benchmark against which future progress in combating non-attendance can be measured. **A mean annual percentage attendance figure of 91.6% means that the average post-primary school student misses fourteen school days a year.**

**Figure 4.1B: Mean Percentage of Students Absent 20 Days or More – Post-Primary**

	2004/05	2003/04
Number Valid	558	512
Number Missing	4	15
Mean	18.8%	18.9%
Minimum	0%	0%
Maximum	77.3%	87.5%

Mean Percentage of Students absent 20 days or more for post-primary schools in 2003/04 was 18.9%. Thus, this figure for 2004/05 represents a 0.1% decrease on that figure. Again, this would seem to confirm the reliability of the 2003/04 figures, underlining policy recommendations made on the basis of those figures. This figure means that **almost one in every five post-primary school students misses 20 or more school days every year.**

## 4.2 Response Rates

Following the format of the 2003/04 report, this section analyses post-primary school response rates, with respect to a number of relevant variables, for example, school type, size and membership of schemes to address disadvantage, such as the *Designated Areas Scheme (DAS)* and the *School Completion Programme (SCP)*.

### 4.2.1 Response Rates by School Type

A total of 562 post-primary schools returned data in 2004/05, compared to 527 in 2003/04. 2004/05 saw a substantially higher response from post-primary schools, particularly vocational and comprehensive schools. In 2003/04, 158 vocational schools and 61 comprehensive schools returned data. In 2004/05, the figures are 170 and 74, proportional increases of 5.8% and 13.5%, respectively. For secondary schools, in absolute terms, ten more schools returned data in 2004/05 compared to 2003/04.

**Figure 4.2.1: Response Rates by School Type – Post-Primary**

Note: Figures in parentheses indicate the values recorded in 2003/04	School Type			Total
	Secondary	Vocational	Community / Comprehensive	
Returned	318 (308)	170 (158)	74 (61)	562 (527)
%	78.5% (75.9%)	70.0% (64.2%)	81.3% (67.8%)	76.0% (71.0%)
Did Not Return	87 (98)	73 (88)	17 (29)	177 (215)
%	21.5% (24.1%)	30.0% (35.8%)	18.7% (32.2%)	24.0% (29.0%)
Total	405 (406)	243 (246)	91 (90)	739 (742)

### 4.2.2 Response by Designation of Disadvantage

Response rates were also measured by schools' status as designated disadvantaged. As the table below shows, there was a higher response rate from designated disadvantaged schools, compared to non-designated post-primary schools, and compared to the national average.

**Figure 4.2.2 Response by Designation of Disadvantage – Post-Primary**

Note: Figures in parentheses indicate the values recorded in 2003/04.	DAS		Total
	Designated	Not Designated	
Returned	159 (149)	400 (378)	559 (527)
%	77.6% (72.3%)	75.3% (70.5%)	76.0% (71.0%)
Did not Return	46 (57)	131 (158)	177 (215)
%	22.4% (27.7%)	24.7% (29.5%)	24.0% (29.0%)
Total	205 (206)	531 (536)	736 (742)

### 4.2.3 Response by Location in Rapid Area

Comparing RAPID and non-RAPID post-primary schools, the pattern of response illustrated above is repeated. There was a higher response rate from RAPID schools, compared to non-RAPID schools, and compared to the national average.

**Figure 4.2.3 Response by Location in Rapid Area – Post-Primary**

<b>Note:</b> Figures in parentheses indicate the values recorded in 2003/04.	<b>RAPID</b>		<b>Total</b>
	<b>In RAPID</b>	<b>Non-RAPID</b>	
Returned	101 (95)	458 (418)	559 (513)
%	79.5% (74.8%)	75.2% (72.1%)	76.0% (72.6%)
Did not Return	26 (32)	151 (162)	177 (194)
%	20.5% (25.2%)	24.8% (27.9%)	24.0% (27.4%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>127 (127)</b>	<b>609 (580)</b>	<b>736 (707)</b>

### 4.2.4 Response by Participation in School Completion Programme (SCP)

Finally, in terms of examining response rates, we examine the difference in response rates between post-primary schools participating in the School Completion Programme and those not participating in the School Completion Programme. Although this is a small number of schools in absolute terms, we see a lower response rate from those schools involved in the School Completion Programme at post-primary level.

**Figure 4.2.4 Response by Participation in SCP – Post-Primary**

<b>Note:</b> Figures in parentheses indicate the values recorded in 2003/04.	<b>School Completion Programme</b>		<b>Total</b>
	<b>In SCP</b>	<b>Not in SCP</b>	
Returned	72 (75)	487 (438)	559 (513)
%	69.9% (72.8%)	76.9% (72.5%)	76.0% (72.6%)
Did not Return	31 (28)	146 (166)	177 (194)
%	30.1% (27.2%)	23.1% (27.5%)	24.0% (27.4%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>103 (103)</b>	<b>633 (604)</b>	<b>736 (707)</b>

## 4.3 Analysis of Attendance

This next section turns to the analysis of attendance itself. Attendance at post-primary level is measured by a number of relevant variables, such as school type, size, membership of schemes to address educational disadvantage, and index of disadvantage score.

### 4.3.1 Attendance by School Type

As the table below shows, the patterns of attendance by school type identified in 2003/04 remain consistent. Vocational schools perform the worst on both derived variables, *mean annual percentage attendance* and *mean percentage of students absent 20 days or more*. **Students in vocational schools miss on average 17 school days every school year. Almost one in every four vocational school students misses 20 or more school days every year compared to almost one in every seven secondary school students, and one in every five community/comprehensive students.**

**Figure 4.3.1 Attendance by School Type – Post-Primary**

<b>Note:</b> Figures in parentheses indicate the values recorded in 2003/04.		
<b>School Type</b>	<b>Mean Annual Percentage Attendance</b>	<b>Mean Percentage of Students Absent 20 Days or More</b>
<b>Secondary</b>	92.7% (92.5%)	15.1% (14.7%)
Number	304	316
<b>Vocational</b>	89.6% (89.8%)	24.9% (25.8%)
Number	164	168
<b>Community / Comprehensive</b>	91.5% (90.9%)	20.7% (22.5%)
Number	71	74
<b>Total</b>	91.6% (91.3%)	18.8% (18.9%)
Number	539	558 (510)

As reported above, there is a higher response rate from Community/Comprehensive post-primary schools compared to 2003/04. It is also worth the improvement in the mean percentage of students absent 20 days or more from this same school type from 22.5% in 2003/04 to 20.7% in 2004/05. It should be encouraging for NEWB to see the improvement in both the response rate and in the number of students absent 20 days or more in the Community/Comprehensive sector.

### 4.3.2 Attendance by School Size<sup>10</sup>

Although not examined in 2003/04, the patterns of attendance by school size shown below suggest an interesting hypothesis in the context of rationalisation projects in post-primary provision. Overall, large schools perform significantly better than small school in terms of *mean annual percentage attendance* and *mean percentage of students absent 20 days or more*. Students in large post-primary schools also perform better than the national average on both of these variables. **More than one in every five students in small post-primary schools misses 20 or more school days every year compared to almost one in seven students in large schools.**

**Figure 4.3.2 Attendance by School Size – Post-Primary**

<b>Note:</b> Comparative figures for 2003/04 not available..		<b>Mean Annual Percentage Attendance</b>	<b>Mean Percentage of Students Absent 20 Days or More</b>
<b>School Size</b>			
Small		90.7%	21.8%
Number		199	203
Medium		91.3%	19.5%
Number		179	190
Large		92.9%	14.3%
Number		160	164

### 4.3.3 Attendance for Vocational and Comprehensive Schools by Size

Looking in greater detail at school size, specifically in relation to Vocational and Comprehensive schools, the patterns of attendance suggested above are clearly evident. The table below presents an overview of the two principal variables for vocational and comprehensive schools, categorised by size. The results are interesting. Firstly, more than one in every four students in **small Vocational schools** misses 20 or more school days every year. **Large Comprehensive schools** perform better than the national average on both variables, with one in six students missing 20 or more school days every year, compared to the national average of one in five.

**Figure 4.3.3 Attendance for Vocational and Comprehensive Schools by Size**

<b>Note:</b> Comparative figures for 2003/04 not available.		<b>School Size</b>	<b>Mean Annual Percentage Attendance</b>	<b>Mean Percentage of Students Absent 20 Days or More</b>
<b>Type</b>				
<b>Vocational</b>	<i>Small</i>		89.2%	26.1%
	<i>Medium</i>		89.3%	24.8%
	<i>Large</i>		92%	20.2%
<b>Community / Comprehensive</b>	<i>Small</i>		91%	23.6%
	<i>Medium</i>		90.2%	26.2%
	<i>Large</i>		92.5%	15.9%

<sup>10</sup> As in 2003/04, school size is defined as follows: Small (<335), Medium (336-543), Large (544-1,559)

#### 4.3.4 Attendance by Designated Disadvantaged Status

Looking at attendance by designated disadvantaged status, the rates reported below would suggest that current targeting of disadvantaged schools is appropriate. Post-primary schools designated disadvantaged report significantly higher levels of non-attendance than those not designated disadvantaged across both derived variables. The figure of 89.6% for *mean annual percentage attendance* for designated schools is exactly the same figure as was recorded in 2003/04. **More than one in every four post-primary school students in designated disadvantaged schools misses 20 or more school days every year compared to one in every six post-primary school students in non-designated schools.**

**Figure 4.3.4 Attendance by Designated Disadvantaged Status – Post-Primary**

<b>Note:</b> Figures in parentheses indicate the values recorded for 2003/04.	<b>Mean Annual Percentage Attendance</b>	<b>Mean Percentage of Students Absent 20 Days or More</b>
<b>Designated Areas Scheme</b>		
Designated	89.6% (89.6%)	25.1% (25.5%)
Number	152	158
Not Designated	92.4% (92.0%)	16.3% (16.3%)
Number	384	397

#### 4.3.5 Attendance by Location in RAPID Area<sup>11</sup>

The table below would suggest that current targeting of NEWB resources to RAPID areas is appropriate. **Post-Primary school students in RAPID areas miss on average 15 school days every year compared to an average of 13 school days a year missed by school students in non-RAPID areas.**

**Figure 4.3.5 Attendance by Location in RAPID Area – Post-Primary**

<b>Note:</b> Comparative figures for 2003/04 not available.	<b>Mean Annual Percentage Attendance</b>	<b>Mean Percentage of Students Absent 20 Days or More</b>
<b>RAPID</b>		
In RAPID	90.7% (87.8%)	22.0% (26.0%)
Number	99	101
Not in RAPID	91.8% (91.5%)	18.1% (18.6%)
Number	437	454

<sup>11</sup> See footnote pg. 13 regarding availability of RAPID status identification.

### 4.3.6 Attendance by Participation in School Completion Programme

The School Completion Programme (SCP) operates at both primary and post-primary levels. The figures reported below are comparable to the figures reported in the 2003/04 analysis. Students attending post-primary schools participating in the School Completion Programme report significantly higher levels of non-attendance across both derived variables. **Just less than one in every three students attending post-primary schools in the School Completion Programme misses 20 or more school days every year compared to one in every six in schools that do not participate.**

**Figure 4.3.6 Attendance by Participation in SCP – Post-Primary**

<b>Note:</b> Figures in parentheses indicate the values recorded in 2003/04.		<b>Mean Percentage of Students Absent 20 Days or More</b>
<b>School Completion Programme</b>	<b>Mean Annual Percentage Attendance</b>	
In SCP	88.1% (88.5%)	30.6% (29.3%)
Number	71	71
Not in SCP	92.1% (91.8%)	17.1% (17.2%)
Number	465	484

### 4.3.7 Relating Attendance to Disadvantage

For the following analysis, schools were grouped into equal deciles based on their score on an index of disadvantage constructed for the 16:1 initiative, as described earlier. The scores were calculated according to the percentage of medical cards in the school, retention rate to junior certificate and the schools' average achievements in the Junior Certificate Examination.

As illustrated below, the greater the level of disadvantage, as represented by the index score, the lower the school's mean percentage attendance and the higher the mean percentage of students absent twenty days or more. **In fact, more than one in every three post-primary school students in the most disadvantaged schools misses 20 or more school days every school year compared to less than one in ten students in the least disadvantaged. Post -primary school students in the most disadvantaged schools miss over 21 school days every year on average compared to an average of 10 days a year missed by school students in the least disadvantaged schools.**

**Figure 4.3.7: Attendance by Level of Disadvantage – Post-Primary**

<b>Note:</b> Figures in parentheses indicate the values recorded in 2003/04.		
16:1 Index of Disadvantage	Mean Annual Percentage Attendance	Mean Percentage of Students Absent 20 Days or More
Most disadvantaged	86.9% (86.1%)	34.8% (38.0%)
Number	50	52
2 <sup>nd</sup> Decile	88.9% (89.0%)	26.4% (27.1%)
Number	56	56
3 <sup>rd</sup> Decile	90.7% (90.9%)	22.5% (22.7%)
Number	56	58
4 <sup>th</sup> Decile	90.7% (90.3%)	22.8% (21.4%)
Number	51	53
5 <sup>th</sup> Decile	92.9% (92.1%)	16.6% (17.3%)
Number	53	55
6 <sup>th</sup> Decile	92.4% (91.7%)	16.0% (17.5%)
Number	48	50
7 <sup>th</sup> Decile	92.2% (92.6%)	15.3% (14.1%)
Number	53	56
8 <sup>th</sup> Decile	92.9% (93.1%)	13.9% (13.2%)
Number	51	51
9 <sup>th</sup> Decile	93.5% (93.7%)	11.8% (11.4%)
Number	51	54
Least disadvantaged	94.2% (94.6%)	9.2% (8.4%)
Number	54	55

It is worth noting that there has been an improvement in the mean percentage of students absent 20 days or more in the most disadvantaged schools in 2004/05 compared to 2003.04.

#### 4.3.9 Attendance by NEWB Region

The table below shows attendance in post-primary schools for each of the five NEWB regions. As expected, post-primary schools in Dublin City report *mean annual percentage attendance* lower than the national average and *mean percentage of students absent 20 days or more* scores in excess of the national average.

**Figure 4.3.9 Attendance by NEWB Region – Post-Primary**

<b>Note:</b> Comparative figures for 2003/04 not available.	<b>Mean Annual Percentage Attendance</b>	<b>Mean Percentage of Students Absent 20 Days or More</b>
<b>NEWB_Region</b>		
Dublin City	90.9%	22.7%
Number	66	66
Leinster North	91.3%	18.9%
Number	77	78
Leinster South	91.0%	19.7%
Number	140	144
Munster	92.4%	15.7%
Number	145	154
West / North West	91.9%	19.5%
Number	111	116

#### 4.4 Admissions Policy in Post-Primary Schools

94.8% of post-primary schools returning data reported having an admissions policy in their school.

**Figure 4.4: Admissions Policy – Post-Primary**

<b>Note:</b> Comparative figures for 2003/04 not available.	<b>Admissions Policy</b>	
	Frequency	Percent
YES	533	94.8%
NO	29	5.2%
Total	562	100

#### 4.5 Code of Behaviour in Post-Primary Schools

Almost 99% of post-primary schools reported having an official Code of Behaviour in their school.

**Figure 4.5: Code of Behaviour**

<b>Note:</b> Figures in parentheses indicate the values recorded in 2003/04.	<b>Code of Behaviour</b>	
	Frequency	Percent
YES	555	98.8% (98.7%)
NO	7	1.2% (1.3%)
Total	562	100%

## 4.6 Suspensions

According to the returns submitted by schools, there were 11,746 suspensions recorded by 557 schools, representing an average of 21 suspensions per post-primary school. Of the 557 post-primary schools that returned valid data relating to suspensions in 2004/05, 78 recorded no suspensions. Therefore, a total of 479 schools were responsible for the 11,746 suspensions recorded at post-primary level in 2004/05. Of these 479, 10 schools reported over 100 suspensions each.

When we compare suspensions across school types, we see that Secondary schools had an average of 18 suspensions per school, compared to over 33 suspensions per school for Community/Comprehensive schools.

**Figure 4.6A: Suspensions by School Type- Post-Primary**

<b>Note:</b> Comparative figures for 2003/04 not available.	<b>Students Suspended</b>
<b>School Sector</b>	
Secondary	5714
Number	315
Vocational	3590
Number	169
Community / Comprehensive	2442
Number	73

Looking at post-primary suspensions by NEWB region<sup>12</sup>, where a region classification is available, post-primary schools in Munster and the West/North West region appear to have a significantly lower average number of suspensions compared to schools in other NEWB regions.

**Figure 4.6B: Suspensions by NEWB Region- Post-Primary**

<b>Note:</b> Figures not available for 2003/04.	<b>Suspensions by NEWB Region</b>
Dublin City	1507
Number	66
Munster	2671
Number	153
Leinster North	2050
Number	79
Leinster South	3677
Number	142
West/ North West	1773
Number	113

<sup>12</sup> The discrepancy between the total of suspensions recorded at post-primary level, when looking at suspensions by school type, compared to the total when looking at suspensions by NEWB region is because a region classification was not available for a small number of schools.

## 4.7 Expulsions

According to the reports returned by post-primary schools to NEWB, there were 93 expulsions in all five NEWB regions (where a region classification was available). This is a significant increase on the 57 expulsions recorded in 2003/04. Of particular concern should be the discrepancies between regions. For example, only 3 expulsions were recorded in the West/North West region, compared to 11 times that amount in the Munster region.

**Figure 4.7: Expulsions by NEWB Region – Post-Primary**

<b>Note:</b> Figures in parentheses indicate the values recorded in 2003/04	<b>NEWB Region</b>	<b>Total</b>
	Dublin City	17
	Leinster North	21
	Leinster South	19
	Munster	33
	North / North West	3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>93 (57)</b>

## 4.8 100% Attendance

There were 7,984 students at post-primary level with 100% attendance, based on data returned by 557 schools. 504 schools had at least one student with 100% attendance. Of these 504, 51 had only 1 or 2 students with 100% attendance. Secondary schools had an average of over 17 students with 100% attendance, compared to an average of 7 in Vocational schools.

**Figure 4.8: 100% Attendance – Post-Primary**

<b>School Sector</b>	<b>Students with 100% Attendance</b>
Secondary	5541
Number	314
Vocational	1224
Number	169
Community / Comprehensive	1219
Number	74
Mean	14.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,984</b>

## 5: Conclusions & Recommendations

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This brief section presents an overview of the main conclusions to be drawn from this report and the analysis of attendance data for 2004/05. It also presents a number of recommendations based on the exercise.

### 5.1 Conclusions

- ✚ For the most part, current targeting of NEWB resources can be considered appropriate. Attendance is worst in those areas currently receiving the greatest levels of support: areas of economic disadvantage.
- ✚ Encouragingly, targeting also seems to be effective. In many of the sectors targeted, such as the most disadvantaged primary and post-primary schools, there are improvements in key attendance variables, compared to 2003/04.
- ✚ While there are consistent general trends, such as lower levels of attendance at post-primary level compared to primary level, these patterns do not hold for all subgroups. For example, primary schools in Dublin City report higher levels of non-attendance than the least disadvantaged post-primary schools. This highlights the need for detailed, evidence-based targeting of its resources by NEWB.
- ✚ The consistency of the data with the 2003/04 report, in terms of response rates and attendance levels, confirms the dataset's reliability. In turn, this suggests that key attendance variables represent reliable benchmarks for informing future policy and against which future progress can be measured.
- ✚ For a number of subgroups, their mean annual percentage attendance value shows that an average student misses in excess of 20 school days annually. As this is above NEWB's threshold for intervention, it is suggested that alternatives to the threshold of 20 days be considered, to formally distinguish between the levels of support required in cases of 20, 40 or 60 days absence.

### 5.2 Recommendations

#### 5.2.1 Continuing to Benchmark Attendance

Given the utility of the exercise to NEWB at a strategic level, it is recommended that this analysis of attendance data be repeated, where possible, on an annual basis.

#### 5.2.2 Data Quality

Given concerns over data quality, it is recommended that a set of rules for cleaning the data be developed and established for future exercises, based on criteria of logic and 'reasonableness'. These could be developed from within NEWB, with input from relevant sources, such as the Education Research Centre.

#### 5.2.3 Maximising the Return on Data

In addition to the Annual Attendance Reports, NEWB has a comprehensive set of data in the Student Absence Reports, submitted by schools at the same time. These represent an incredibly rich source of data, which could be used to identify individual schools needing most support. Therefore, it is recommended that the Student Absences Reports, where possible, are also analysed on an annual basis.

## APPENDIX: SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AT PRIMARY AND POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Summary of findings from the Annual Attendance Reports submitted by schools for the 2004/2005 school year

**Table 1: Response Rates from Schools**

Response Rates from Schools		
	2004/05	2003/04
Primary	83.9%	82.8%
Post-Primary	76%	71%

**Table 2: Levels of Attendance Nationally**

	Primary		Post-Primary	2003/04
	2004/05	2003/04	2004/05	
Annual Percentage Attendance	94.2% or 11 days absence on average for each student	94.1%	91.6% or 14 days absence on average for each student	91.3%
Percentage of Students absent 20 days or more	10% or 1 in 10	10.7%	18.8% or almost 1 in 5	18.9%

**Table 3: Difference between Levels of Attendance in the least Disadvantaged Post-Primary Schools and the most Disadvantaged Post-Primary Schools**

Post-Primary Schools	Least Disadvantaged		Most Disadvantaged	
	2004/05	2003/04	2004/05	2003/04
Attendance	94.2% or 10 days absence on average for each student	94.6%	87.0% or 21 days absence on average for each student	86.1%
Percentage of Students absent 20 days or more	9.2% or 1 in 11	8.5%	34.8% or more than 1 in 3	38%

**Table 4: Difference between Levels of Attendance in Post-Primary Schools in RAPID Areas and those in Non-RAPID Areas**

Post-Primary Schools	RAPID Areas		Non-RAPID Areas	
	2004/05	2003/04	2004/05	2003/04
Attendance	90.7% or 15.5 days absence on average for each student	87.8%	91.8% or 13.5 days absence on average for each student	91.5%
Percentage of Students absent 20 days or more	22% or 1 in 4.5	26%	18.1% or 1 in 5.5	18.6%

**Table 5: Difference between Levels of Attendance in Schools Participating in the School Completion Programme and those not Participating.**

Post-Primary Schools	School Completion Programme		Not in School Completion Programme	
	2004/05	2003/04	2004/05	2003/04
Attendance	88.1% or 20 days absence on average for each student	n/a	92.1% or 13 days absence on average for each student	n/a
Percentage of Students absent 20 days or more	30.6% or almost 1 in 3	n/a	17.1% or 1 in 6	n/a

**Table 6: Difference between Levels of Attendance in Primary Schools in RAPID Areas and those in Non-RAPID Areas**

Primary Schools	RAPID Areas		Non-RAPID Areas	
	2004/05	2003/04	2004/05	2003/04
Attendance	91.9% or 15 days absence on average for each student	90.8%	94.4% or 10 days absence on average for each student	94.3%
Percentage of Students absent 20 days or more	19.0% or almost 1 in 5	23.7%	9.3% or almost 1 in 11	9.9%

**Table 7: Difference between Levels of Attendance in Urban Primary Schools**

Primary Schools	Least Disadvantaged		Most Disadvantaged	
	2004/05	2003/04	2004/05	2003/04
Attendance	94.9% or 9 days absence on average for each student	94.9%	90.5% or 17 days absence on average for each student	89.6%
Percentage of Students absent 20 days or more	6.9% or 1 in 14	7.3%	24.2% or almost 1 in 4	28.7%

**Table 8: Difference between Levels of Attendance in Rural Primary Schools**

Primary Schools	Least Disadvantaged		Most Disadvantaged	
	2004/05	2003/04	2004/05	2003/04
Attendance	95.2% or 9 days absence on average for each student	95.3%	94.5% or 10 days absence on average for each student	94.3%
Percentage of Students absent 20 days or more	5.9% or 1 in 16	6.3%	9.4% or almost 1 in 11	9.9%