



Antisocial behaviour in Children & Young People

**Pupil
Wellbeing
Survey
2026**

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Introduction

The Metropolitan Police state **“Antisocial behaviour is defined as ‘behaviour by a person which causes, or is likely to cause, harassment, alarm or distress to persons not of the same household as the person’”**¹

They identify 3 types of anti-social behaviour:

- **Personal antisocial behaviour** is when a person targets a specific individual or group, which could be described as bullying, hate crime or relationship abuse.
- **Nuisance antisocial behaviour** is when a person causes trouble, annoyance or suffering to a community.
- **Environmental antisocial behaviour** is when a person’s actions affect the wider environment, such as public spaces or buildings.

There are likely to be many contributing factors to why a student partakes in antisocial behaviour such as peer rejection, peer pressure, uncomfortable social situations and other outside factors.

Antisocial behaviour in children and young people can include; verbally and physically harming other people, violating social expectations, engaging in behaviours such as delinquency, vandalism, theft, and truancy, or having disturbed interpersonal relationships. This could range from simple friendship issues and how they form positive peer relationships, right up to abusive or violent behaviour within relationships, some of which can be very serious.

Recent analysis of a German study² concluded,

“...worse family climate were related to stronger antisocial behaviour. Longitudinal data revealed that more severe parental mental health problems, worse family climate at baseline, deteriorating family climate over time,

and more social support were each associated with increasing antisocial behaviour over time.”

Antisocial behaviour in children and young people is therefore likely to be a warning flag that there are significant challenges in a student’s life and that their home life may be exposing them to harmful behaviours and/or multiple disadvantage.

Pupil Wellbeing Survey

The Pupil Wellbeing Survey (PWS) and Online Pupil Survey™ (OPS) is a biennial survey that has been undertaken with Gloucestershire school children since 2006. Students participate in Years 4, 5 and 6 in primary schools; Years 8 and 10 in secondary schools; and Years 12 and 13 in post-16 settings such as sixth forms and colleges. A large proportion of mainstream, special and independent schools, colleges and educational establishments take part, representing approximately 70.0% of students in participating year groups in 2026. The PWS asks a wide variety of questions about student’s characteristics, behaviours and lived experience that could have an impact on their overall wellbeing. The 2026 PWS was undertaken between January and April 2026.

Limitations and caveats of the survey

Not all children and young people who are resident in Gloucestershire attend educational establishments in the county and similarly not all students attending educational establishments in Gloucestershire are residents in the county. It is therefore important to remember this analysis is based on the student population not the resident population.

Gloucestershire is a grammar authority and has a number of notable independent schools, and several mainstream schools very close to the county’s boundary; these all attract students from out of county. This results in the school/college population (particularly at secondary phase) having slightly different characteristics, especially ethnicity, to the resident young people’s population. 12.3% of Gloucestershire’s resident population (2021 Census) were estimated to be

¹ Antisocial Behaviour Act 2003 and Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011.
<https://www.met.police.uk/>

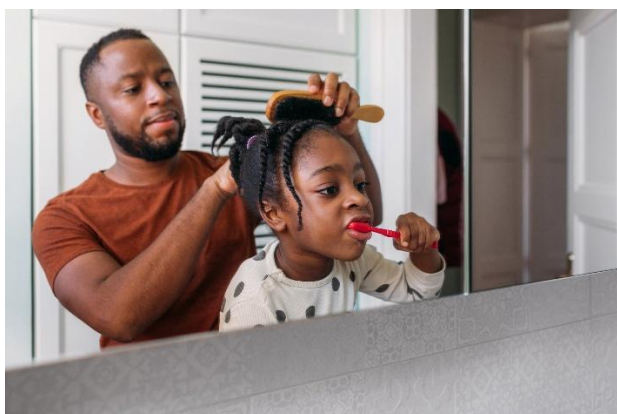
² Risk and resource factors of antisocial behaviour in children and adolescents: results of the longitudinal

BELLA study 2021

<https://capmh.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s13034-021-00412-3>

from diverse ethnic communities; however, 23.1% of Gloucestershire's student population were from diverse ethnic communities in January 2026 and 23.4% of the PWS cohort were students from diverse ethnic communities in the 2026 survey.

Although a large proportion of the county's educational establishments took part in the survey, some only had low numbers of students completing the survey; in contrast, others had high numbers. Although this doesn't impact the overall county analysis, as demographics are represented as expected at this geography, analysis by district and education phase might only have certain demographic groups represented due to low student take-up (for example, low numbers completing the survey in Tewkesbury at post-16 phase). Where post-16 provision is situated also impacts the survey, as older students travel further to access post-16 provision.



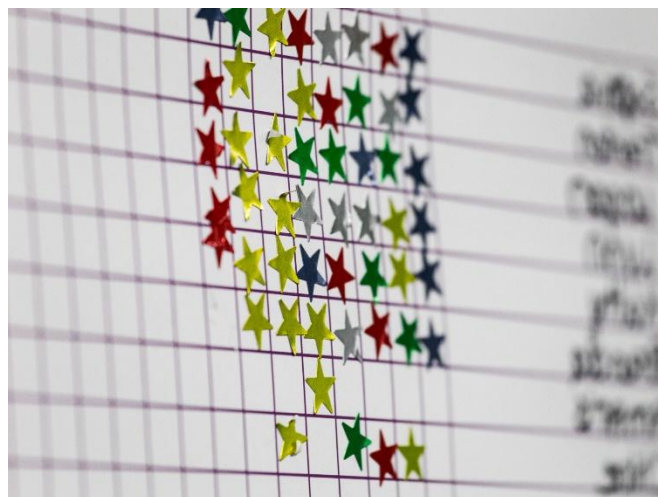
Analysis of deprivation

Educational settings have been categorised into statistical neighbour groups which cluster settings with students of a similar socio-economic profile within the same type of setting (a similar level of deprivation, affluence or personal/family characteristics).

We use Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) to determine the relative deprivation of students. The IMD is based on the home postcode of students (collected in the School Census). This is aggregated to give an overall IMD score for the setting, reflecting the deprivation levels experienced by students. The settings are then split into quintiles based on their scores: quintile 1 is the most deprived and quintile 5 is the least deprived in Gloucestershire.

In addition:

- Grammar/selective schools are compared to other grammar/selective schools in their phase without reference to the IMD.
- Independent schools are compared to other independent schools in their phase without reference to the IMD.
- Post-16 only/Further Education (FE) colleges are compared to all other post-16 only colleges without reference to the IMD.
- Special schools are compared to all other schools of this type in the same phase without reference to the IMD.
- Vocational and alternative settings/schools are compared to other settings/schools in the same phase without reference to IMD.
-



Personal antisocial behaviour

Key takeaways

Bullying: Regular bullying has continued to decline since 2018, but nearly one in four students still reported experiencing serious bullying in the past year, with younger pupils and those in more deprived settings most affected.

Types of bullying: Verbal bullying remains the most common form of regular bullying, while cyberbullying is least common, although reports of verbal bullying and social isolation increased between 2024 and 2026.

Perceived reasons for bullying: Students most attributed bullying to "other" e.g. not good at sport, and personal characteristics and appearance. LGBTQ+, ethnic minority and disabled students were more likely to report bullying related to their identity or protected characteristics.

Benchmarking bullying: Gloucestershire's reported bullying levels are broadly in line with other local authorities and national estimates, although rates appear slightly higher than some comparator areas.

Violence: Self-reported aggression and violence has halved since 2016, but remain strongly associated with deprivation, poor mental wellbeing and exposure to domestic abuse.

Carrying a weapon: Weapon carrying fell significantly in 2026 to 2.3% of students, with knives the most reported weapon, although a notable minority of weapon carriers reported having carried a gun.

Running away from home: The proportion of students reporting running away from home has decreased since 2016, but rates remain substantially higher among students known to social care and neurodivergent students.

Joining a gang: Gang membership remains uncommon at 1.3% of students but is considerably more prevalent among vulnerable groups such as those known to social care, neurodivergent students and young carers.

Sexting: Both receiving and sending sexual messages or images have continued to decline, although around one in six students still reported receiving sexual content.

Consent: Understanding of sexual consent is now very high and has improved significantly since 2020, although lower levels of understanding persist among males and some vulnerable groups.

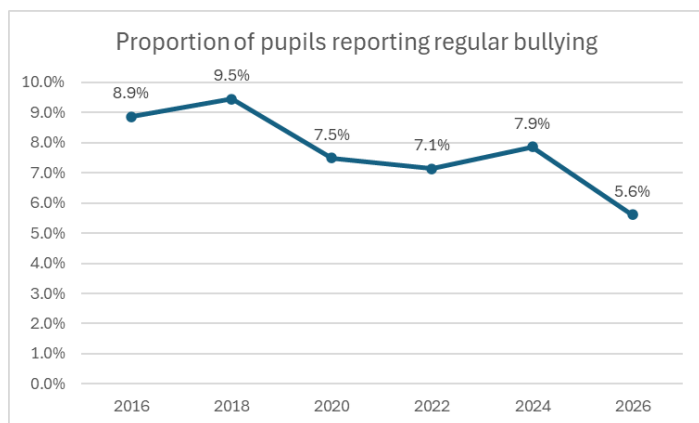
Early sexual debut: The proportion of students reporting sex before the age of consent has fallen since 2024, but more than half of sexually active students still reported an early sexual debut.

Unsafe sex: Almost one quarter of sexually active students reported using no contraception the last time they had sex, continuing an upward trend in unprotected sex since the pandemic.

Bullying

Questions around bullying are asked to pupils in all phases and year groups.

In 2026, a quarter (23.9%) of all students said they had experienced serious bullying in the past year, and 5.6% of students reported being a regular victim of bullying in the previous year. This has declined since 2018 when it was 9.5%.

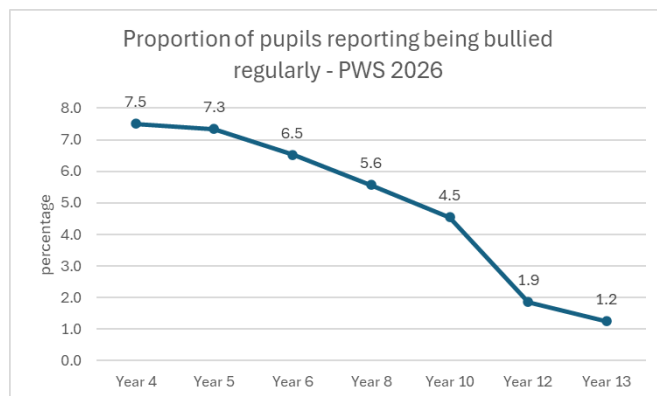


Students who were bullied regularly were significantly more likely to report LMW than those who weren't bullied (43.5% vs. 21.9%).

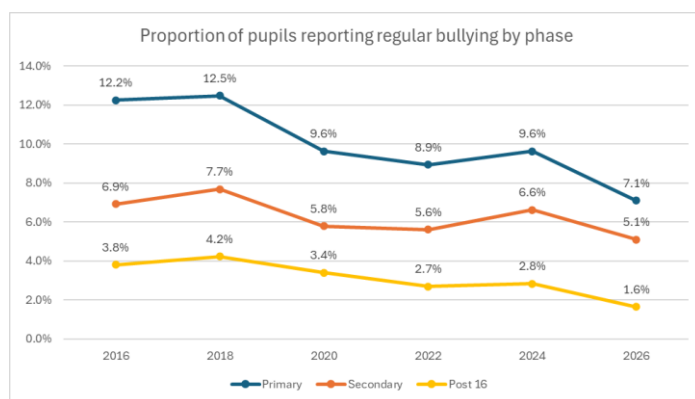


In 2026, there was no significant difference between numbers of male and female students reporting being regularly bullied.

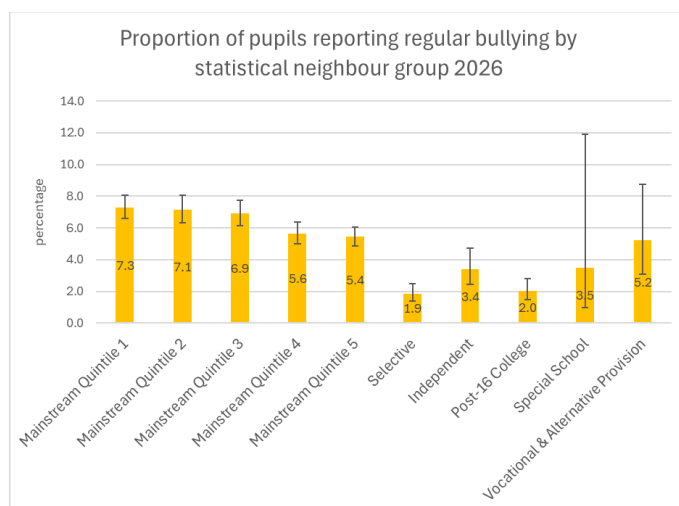
Younger students are most likely to report being regularly bullied with the proportion reducing as they get older. In 2026, students in Year 4 were the most likely to report regular bullying.



Since 2016, there has been a reduction in reported regular bullying in all phases, this trend has continued in 2026.



The highest proportion of students reporting regular bullying was seen in the settings with students living in the most deprived areas. As deprivation levels reduced, so did the proportion of students. Students at selective settings were significantly less likely to report regular bullying than almost all other groups.

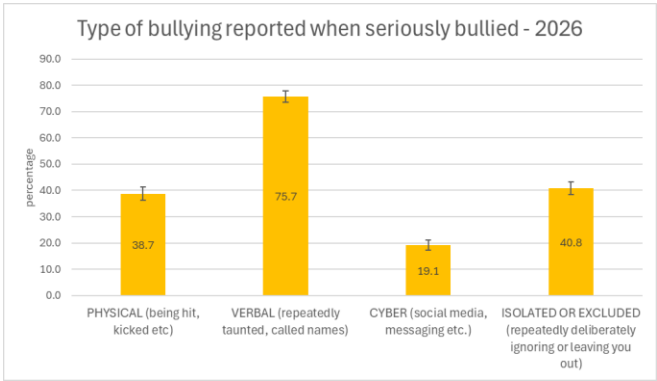


There is no significant difference between students in settings in most districts reporting regular bullying. Between 2024 and 2026 there has also been a reduction in reported regular bullying across all districts. Since 2016 regular bullying has reduced by an average of -3.2 percentage points,

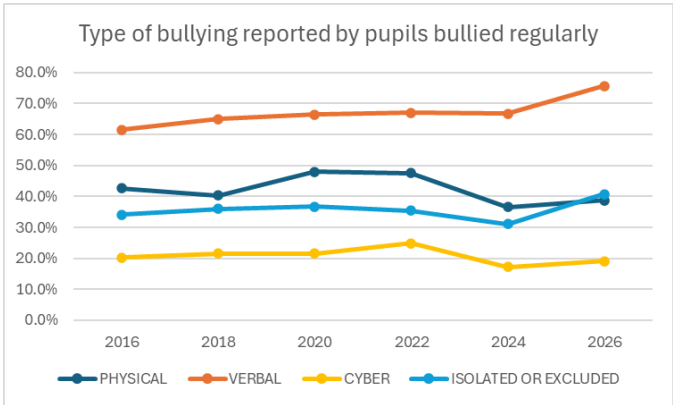
although a smaller reduction was observed in Cheltenham (-2.6 percentage points), and Tewkesbury (-2.7 percentage points). Since 2016, students in the Gloucester district have reported the greatest reduction in regular bullying.

Types of bullying

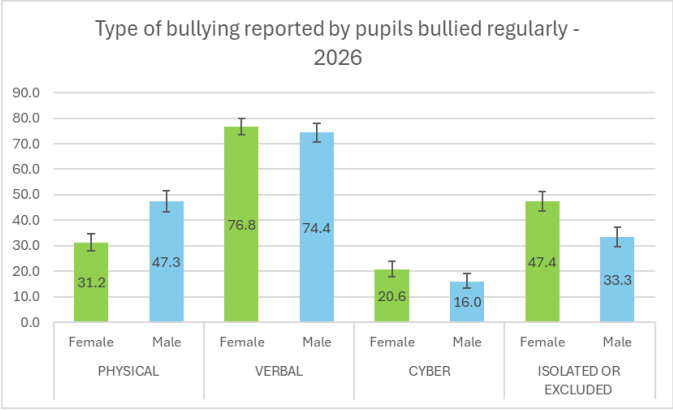
Students who were regularly bullied were most likely to report verbal bullying and least likely to report being a victim of cyber bullying. Students could select multiple types of bullying; therefore, values will not sum to 100%.



Between 2024 and 2026 the proportion of students experiencing either physical and cyber bullying have remained stable. However, in 2026 the proportion experiencing verbal bullying and isolation increased for the first time since 2016.



In 2026, females were significantly more likely to say they were victims of isolating bullying than males. Males were significantly more likely to report being a victim of physical bullying.



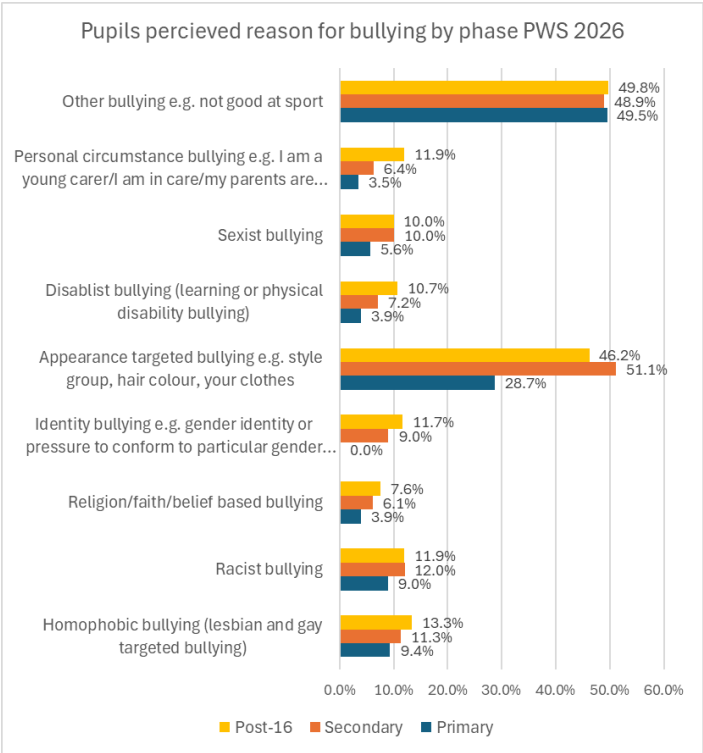
Perceived reasons for bullying

In 2024, the questions relating to why students thought they were bullied were changed and as such there are only two years of results to compare.

Students were able to choose multiple perceived reasons for bullying; therefore, values will not sum 100%.

Survey results from 2024 and 2026 were incredibly similar in the proportion of perceived reasons for bullying being reported by students.

Around half of all students said they experienced ‘other bullying, e.g. not good at sport’. The next most commonly perceived reason was individual appearance with half of secondary and post-16 students reporting this.



Whilst around 1 in 10 secondary and post-16 students perceived that they experienced homophobic bullying, almost half (42.5%) of bullied

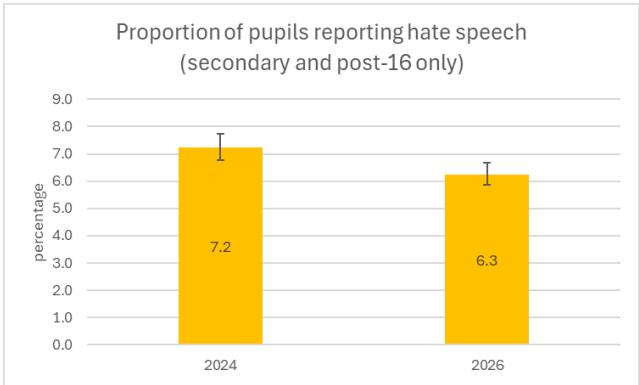
LGBTQ+ students and 12.3% of all LGBTQ+ students reported experiencing bullying due to homophobia.

Around 1 in 10 students reported gender identity-related bullying. 25.5% of LGBTQ students who were seriously bullied were more likely to experience identity bullying.

A quarter (27.7%) of students from diverse ethnic communities who were bullied reported experiencing racist bullying, which is a slight increase on 2024, and equates to 6.0% of all students from diverse ethnic communities.

A quarter of students with a disability who were bullied and 1 in 13 of all students with a disability perceived it was due to their disability.

In the survey the proportion of students reporting being a victim of hate speech/crime³ has significantly reduced since 2024.



National estimates of Police reported hate crimes in Gloucestershire⁴ suggest this is much higher than the reported level.

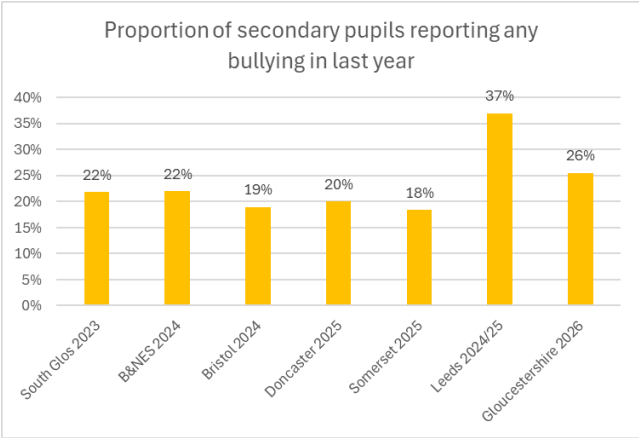


³ Experiencing regular serious bullying perceived to be; homophobic, racist, religious, gender identity, disablist or sexist. Secondary and FE pupils only.

⁴ [CBP-8537.pdf \(parliament.uk\)](#)

Benchmarking bullying

The graph below gives some comparison between Gloucestershire and other LAs, suggesting that the proportion of secondary students reporting being bullied in the previous year in Gloucestershire, is slightly higher than most areas shown, but not significantly.

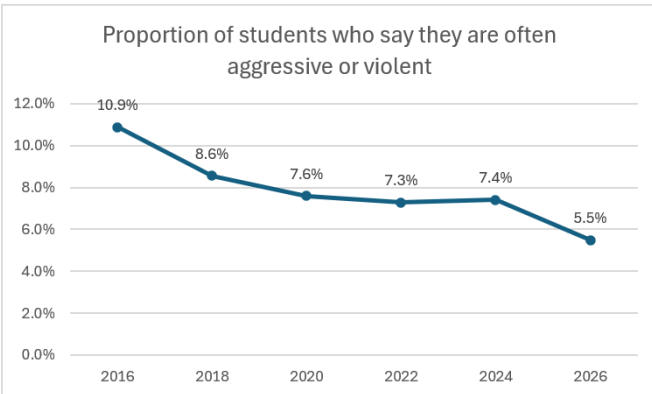


ONS reported in 2023⁵ that 34.9% of children aged 13-15 years experienced in-person bullying in the last year.

Violence

Questions around violence are asked to students in all phases and year groups.

The proportion of students reporting they are *often aggressive or violent* has also been reducing since the question was first asked in 2016 from 10.9% to 5.5%. This reduction is mainly influenced by a reduction in older students reporting they are *often aggressive or violent*, in Year 10 and Year 12 the proportion halved in the period.



Again, being *often aggressive or violent* appears to be linked to deprivation with the highest levels in

mainstream settings in IMD quintile 1 (7.6%) and the lowest levels in students at selective settings (2.4%). Students with LMW were twice as likely to report being *often aggressive or violent* (8.4%) than those with A/HMW (4.1%).

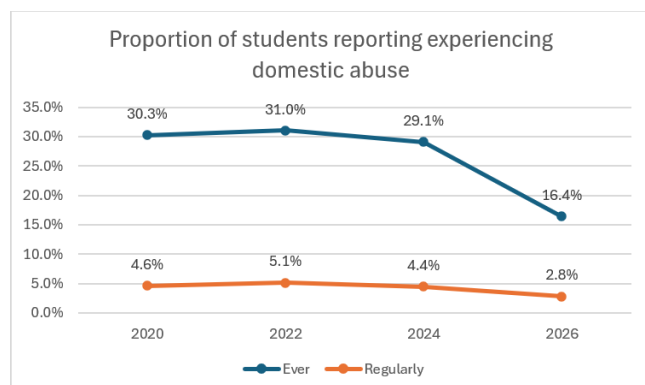
In 2025/26 6.3% of officially recorded exclusions in Gloucestershire were for *Physical assault against adult* and 13.2% were for *Physical assault against pupil*.



Questions around domestic abuse are asked to secondary and post-16 pupils only.

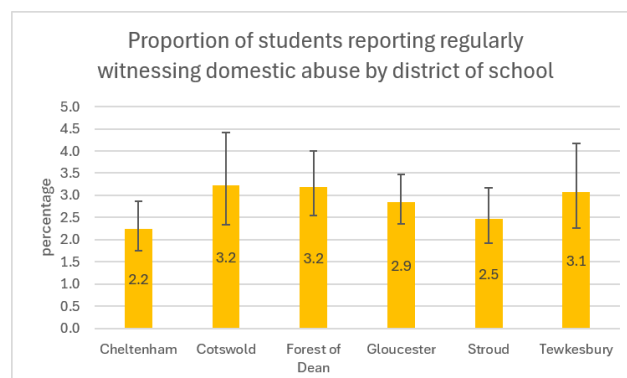
1 in 6 students reported ever witnessing domestic abuse, coercive control or teen relationship abuse (subsequently referred to collectively as ‘domestic abuse’) in 2026. If this is extrapolated to the current student population this equates to around 15,450 students across Gloucestershire.

Around 1 in 30 pupils reported regularly (*Quite often(weekly) /Most days*) witnessing domestic abuse. Both witnessing domestic abuse ever and regularly have reduced significantly in 2026.

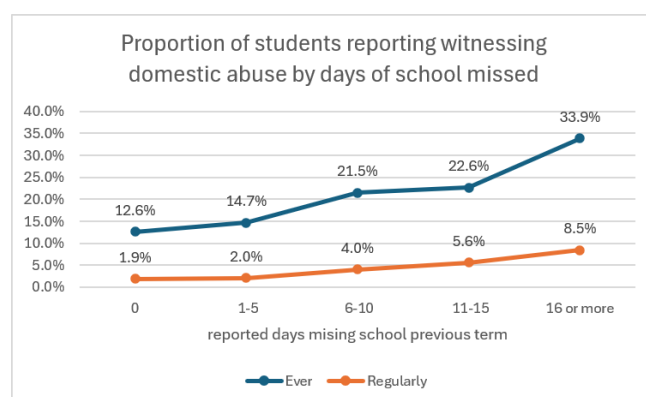


Generally, the proportion of students reporting regularly witnessing domestic abuse decreases as

deprivation levels decrease. Students attending settings in Cotswold, Forest of Dean and Tewkesbury, had the highest reported levels of ever witnessing domestic abuse (17.6%, 17.4% and 17.0% respectively) and witnessing domestic abuse regularly.



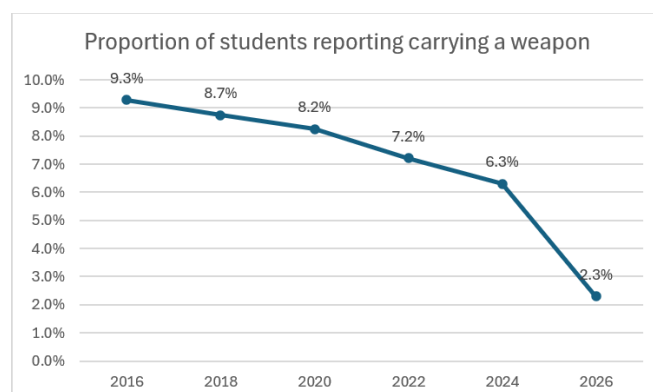
Pupils who witness domestic abuse were more likely to be absent from education than those who had never witnessed abuse and students who had an isolation, suspension or exclusion were twice as likely to have witnessed domestic abuse regularly than those with no exclusion.



Carrying a weapon

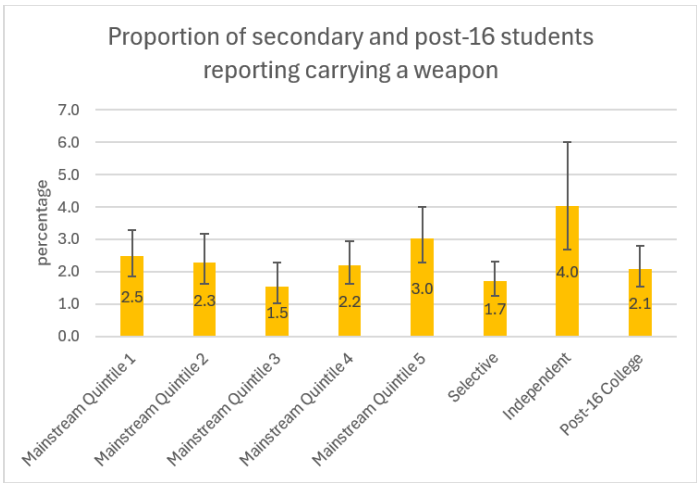
Questions around weapons are asked to secondary and post-16 pupils only.

2.3% of secondary and post-16 students reported carrying a weapon, this was a significant reduction from 2024.



Nationally between 4%⁶ and 6.4%⁷ of young people aged 13-17 report carrying a weapon. There were 7,094 offences recorded by the police in which firearms were reported to have been used in 2024/25 in England and Wales⁸.

The highest reported level of carrying a weapon was in special settings (5.9%) but this was not significantly higher than mainstream settings. Weapon carrying in mainstream settings was in line, but lowest in mainstream quintile 3 settings (1.5%) and selective settings (1.7%). Around 1 in 20 students at independent and vocational & alternative provision settings reported carrying a weapon.



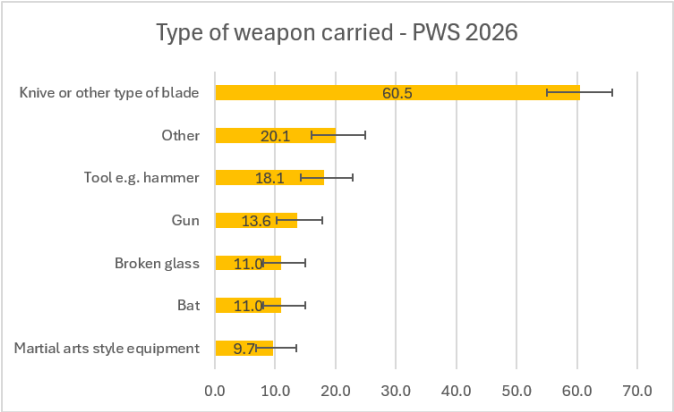
There was no significant difference between students of different districts reporting carrying a weapon, although students attending settings in Tewkesbury district (3.0%) were the most likely to report carrying a weapon and those in Gloucester (2.0%) the least likely.

Males⁹ were more likely to report carrying a weapon than females. Students from diverse ethnic communities were significantly more likely to report carrying a weapon than their *white British* peers. However, this was most influenced by *Other white* students. Students from *Pakistani* (5.6%) heritage were also significantly more likely to report carrying a weapon. Overall, students from *Black*, *Asian*, and *Mixed backgrounds* weren't significantly

⁶ https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/YEF_Children_violence_and_vulnerability_2023_FINAL.pdf
⁷ <https://cls.ucl.ac.uk/one-in-11-boys-have-carried-or-used-a-weapon-at-age-17/>
⁸ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommuni>

more likely to report carrying a weapon than *white British* students.

The most common weapon carried by students was a knife or bladed object (60.5%). Worryingly 1 in 7 of students who reported carrying a weapon said they had carried a gun (13.6%). This was 42 students in 2026 compared to 162 in 2024.



0.8% of exclusions in 2025/26 were for use or threat of a weapon.

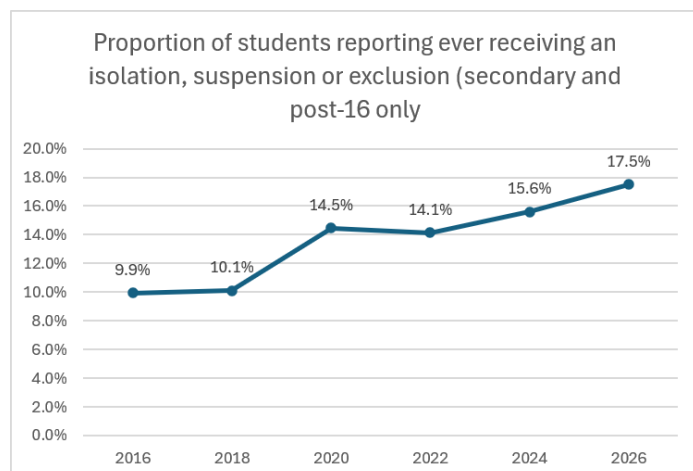
Isolation, suspension and exclusion

Questions around isolation, suspension or exclusion are asked to secondary and post-16 students only.

School Isolation (Internal Exclusion or Removal)
Definition: A student stays on school grounds but is taken out of their regular classroom.
Setting: The child works in a separate, supervised room, often in individual booths or silent study areas.
Goal: To stop ongoing classroom disruption while letting the student keep doing schoolwork.
Suspension (Fixed-Term Exclusion)
Definition: A student is temporarily not allowed to attend school for a set number of days.
Duration: Can last from a small part of a day (like lunchtimes) up to 45 school days in one academic year.
Goal: The student must stay home (or is placed in alternative provision) and is expected to return to the school once the time ends.
Exclusion (Permanent Exclusion)
Definition: A student is permanently removed from the school roll.
Action: The child is not allowed to return to that specific school, and the local authority must find a new educational placement.
Goal: Used only as a last resort for very serious or persistent rule-breaking where the child's presence harms the safety or learning of others.

ty/crimeandjustice/datasets/offencesinvolvingtheuseof weaponsdatatables
⁹ Students are asked to enter the biological sex they were born; they are subsequently asked if their gender aligns with this. Unless stated 'male' and 'female' refers to those reporting it is their biological sex.

In 2026 12.3% of all students and 17.8% of secondary and post-16 students reported ever having at least one isolation, suspension or exclusion, this continues the upwards trend since 2018.

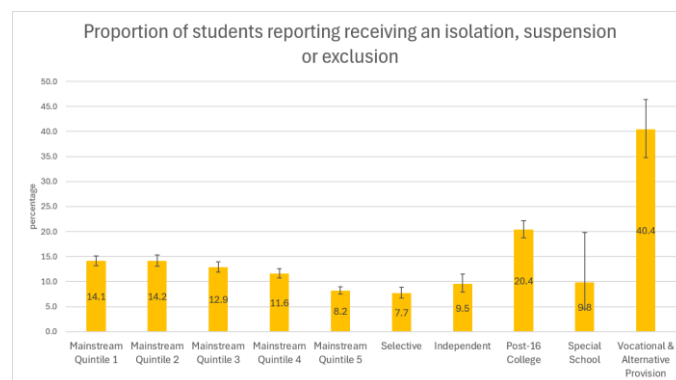


The increase between 2024 and 2026 appears to be attributable to more students reporting an internal isolation.

By separating pupils into the most serious reported sanction, it shows 8.0% of all students had received no higher than a period of isolation in their education setting, 3.5% had received no higher than a suspension and 0.5% had experienced a permanent exclusion. Reported levels of suspension and exclusion are similar to the nationally published data.

Male students (15.1%) were overall significantly more likely to report receiving an isolation, suspension or exclusion than female students (7.9%). They were also almost twice as likely to report receiving an isolation (9.8% vs. 5.4%), a suspension (4.5% vs. 2.2%) and reporting receiving a permanent exclusion (0.7% vs. 0.3%).

Experience of an isolation, suspension or exclusion appears to be linked to deprivation. In mainstream settings isolation, suspension or exclusion appears to reduce as deprivation decreases with students in quintile 5 schools and selective schools having the lowest reported level of isolation, suspension or exclusion.



Students at vocational & alternative settings were the most likely to have experienced an isolation, suspension or exclusion, this matches their remit.

In mainstream settings students in quintile 1 (most deprived) were the most likely to have had an isolation, suspension or exclusion. Whilst this pattern was also observed in suspensions, there was a similar proportion of students reporting experiencing an isolation or an exclusion across the first 4 quintiles of deprivation. This suggests suspension is more likely to be used in settings with higher levels of student deprivation as a behaviour sanction.

The likelihood of students from the following groups reported receiving an isolation, suspension or exclusion was twice their less vulnerable peers:

- Those bullied regularly (*OR 2.1*)
- Those known to social care (*OR 2.3*)
- Those with a disability (*OR 2.2*)
- Those receiving support for special educational needs (*OR 2.3*)
- Those eligible for FSM (*OR 2.1*)
- Those with low mental wellbeing¹⁰ (*OR 2.0*)
- Those experiencing +4 ACEs (*OR 2.2*)

Compared to students with no isolation, suspension or exclusion history students who had received an isolation, suspension or exclusion were:

More likely to engage in risky behaviours

- more likely to be in trouble with the police (*OR 9.7*)
- more likely to have early sexual debut (under 16 yrs) (*OR 3.0*)
- more likely to self-harm (*OR 2.0*)

¹⁰ Mental wellbeing is measured in the survey using the Warwick and Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS)

- more likely to perpetrate violence (*OR 4.5*)

More likely to engage in health harming behaviours

- more likely to drink alcohol regularly (*OR 4.0*)
- more likely to smoke cigarettes regularly (*OR 6.7*)
- more likely to use drugs (*OR 3.3*)

More likely to disengage from education

- more likely to have frequent school absence (authorised or unauthorised) (*OR 2.2*)
- more likely to report **not** achieving (*OR 3.1*)

More likely to have a complex home life

- more likely to feel unsafe at home (*OR 3.0*)
- more likely to have witnessed domestic abuse (*OR 2.4*)
- more likely to report they often went without food at home (*OR 2.2*)
- more likely to report 4+ ACEs (*OR 2.2*)
- more likely to report excessive screentime (*OR 2.5*)



Just under half (46.2%) of students who had received an isolation, suspension or exclusion said they were not listened to in the process and did not have a say in what happened afterwards. This was decrease on the previous survey year after a period of significant increase between 2020 and 2024.

1 in 3 students who had received an isolation, suspension or exclusion said if there is an incident or issue at school students weren't listened to or involved in making it right compared to 1 in 5 students who had no isolation, suspension or exclusion history. There was no significant difference between those who received an isolation (33.9%), suspension (37.6%) or exclusion (28.4%).

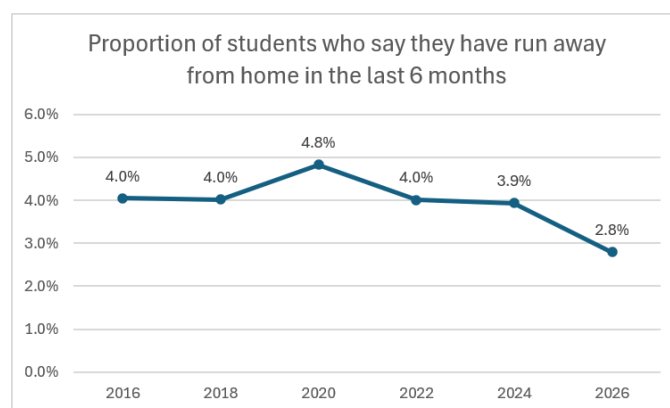
When students had received an isolation, suspension or exclusion, they were significantly less likely to have a trusted adult to go to for help if they were worried than those who had no isolation, suspension or exclusion history (86.0% vs. 93.5%). There was no significant difference between those who received an isolation (86.9%), suspension (84.5%) or exclusion (82.1%).

Students who had an isolation, suspension or exclusion were significantly more likely to report low mental wellbeing (LMW) than those who had no isolation, suspension or exclusion (35.6% vs. 21.5%). There was no difference between those who received a suspension (41.3%) or exclusion (41.3%).

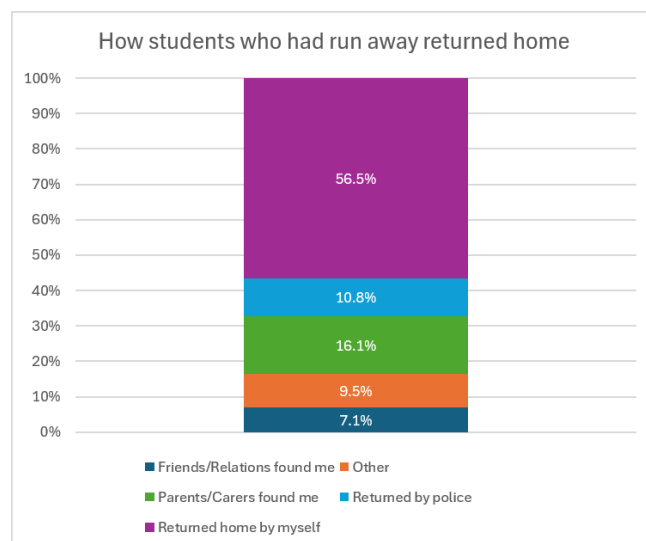
Running away from home

Questions about running away are asked to pupils in all phases and year groups.

In 2026 2.8% of students said they had run away from home in the last 6 months, this was a reduction since 2016.



Of those who had run away the majority (56.5%) returned home by themselves, 10.8% were returned home by the Police.



Students from *Traveller of Irish heritage* (9.7%), *Black Caribbean* (8.0%) and *White Irish* (6.0%) ethnicities were more likely to report running away from home. Students known to social care¹¹ were 5 times more likely to say they had run away from home in the past 6 months than those not known to social care. Neurodivergent students were 4 times more likely to have run away from home in the past 6 months.

Students from settings in the Tewkesbury district were slightly more likely to report running away from home (3.3%), but all districts were in line in 2026.



Joining a gang

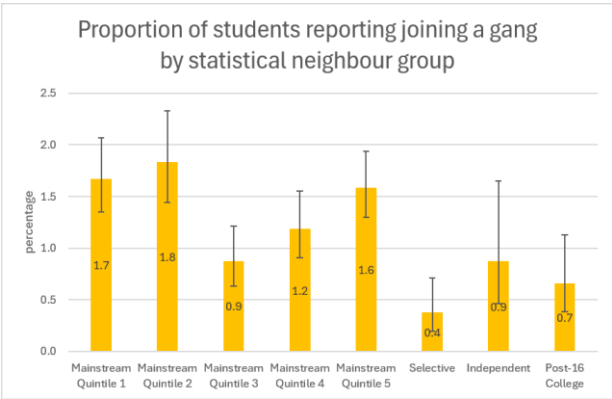
1.3% of students reported joining a gang, males were significantly more likely to report being in a gang (1.6%) than females (0.8%).

Students known to social care and neurodivergent students were over 4 times as likely to report being in a gang than their less vulnerable peers. Young carers and those who were seriously bullied were three times more likely to report being in a gang.

Gang membership was highest in students attending education in Tewkesbury district and lowest in students attending education in Cotswold district, although there was no significant difference between the districts.

There was little difference in the proportion of students reporting gang membership by socio-

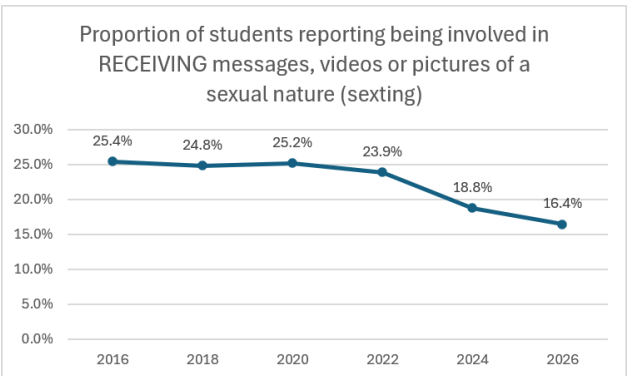
economic school group although students at selective grammar schools were less likely to report gang membership.



Sexting

Questions around sexting are asked to secondary and post-16 pupils only.

Around 1 in 6 students said they had received a message or picture of a sexual nature in 2026; this continues the downwards trend observed since 2022.



Females were more likely to have received a message or picture of a sexual nature than males (20.2% vs. 14.7%).

8.1% students reported they had sent a message or picture of a sexual nature in 2026 this has been reducing since 2018 (13.3%). There was no difference between the sexes in likelihood of having sent a message or picture of a sexual nature. The proportion of pupils reporting sending a sexual image of themselves (6.3%; 7.5% of females and 6.3% of males) has reduced significantly since 2016 (11.1%). Students with low mental wellbeing were twice as likely to report sending a message or picture of a sexual nature than those with average or high mental wellbeing.

¹¹ Those reporting being a child in care, a care leaver or having a family social worker

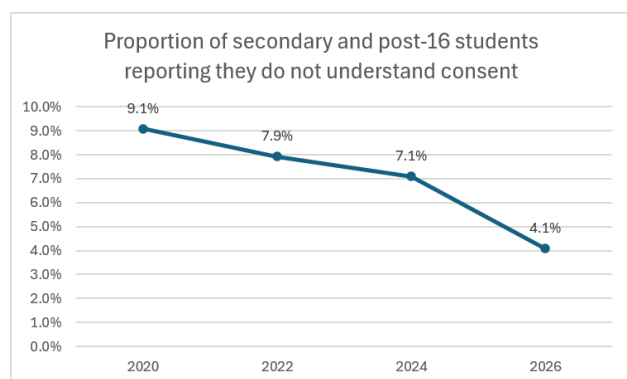
0.5% of officially recorded exclusions¹² in 2025/26 were for *Inappropriate use-social media/tech*, whilst this is not likely to be exclusively 'sexting' a proportion of it probably is.



Consent and unhealthy sexual relationships

Questions around sexual behaviours are asked to secondary and post-16 pupils only.

In 2026 4.1% of students (in Year 8 and above) report not understanding consent in a healthy relationship. This is significantly lower than in 2020 (9.1%).



There was also a significant increase in the proportion of students reporting they understood consent between 2020 and 2026 (90.9% vs. 95.9%).

The proportion reporting understanding consent increases between Year 8 and Year 10 (probably due in part to when this is taught in the PSHE curriculum); however, males are less likely to report understanding consent than females at all ages.

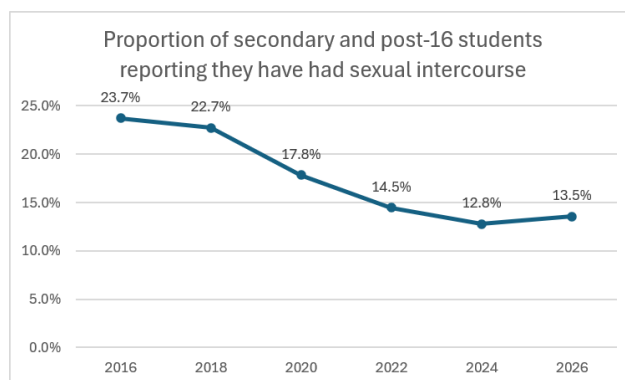
Understanding consent appears to be higher in students from the least deprived backgrounds, at 98.2% in students from selective settings and 97.1% in students in independent settings compared to 93.9% in students from quintile 1 (most deprived) settings. Students in special

settings were the least likely to say they understood consent (82.1%).

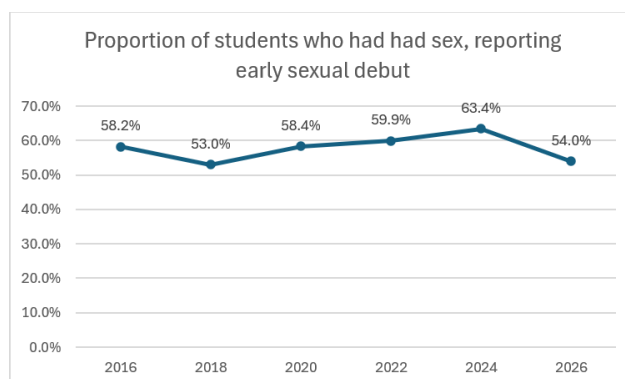
Students from *Bangladeshi* (89.2%), *Black African*, (92.2%) and *white Irish* (91.5%) backgrounds were significantly less likely to say they understood consent than their *white British* peers.

Early sexual debut

The chart below shows the proportion of students reporting having sexual intercourse had been decreasing steadily since 2018. However, there has been a slight increase between 2024 and 2026.



Over half (54.0%) of students who had intercourse had Early Sexual Debut (ESD) - sex under the legal age of consent. This had been increasing slowly since 2016 but has reduced significantly between 2024 and 2026.



There was no difference in likelihood of reporting ESD between the sexes. There was also no significant difference between different ethnic groups and levels of ESD.

Students in Tewkesbury settings were significantly more likely to report ESD than students in settings in Cheltenham, Forest of Dean and Gloucester districts; students in Cheltenham settings were significantly less likely to report ESD than students in all other districts.

¹² In Gloucestershire as recoded on Capita

Nuisance antisocial behaviour

Key takeaways:

Disruption in schools: Over two in five pupils report regular classroom disruption, particularly in more deprived schools.

Excessive alcohol consumption: Alcohol use is common, but frequent drunkenness remains relatively rare and increases with age.

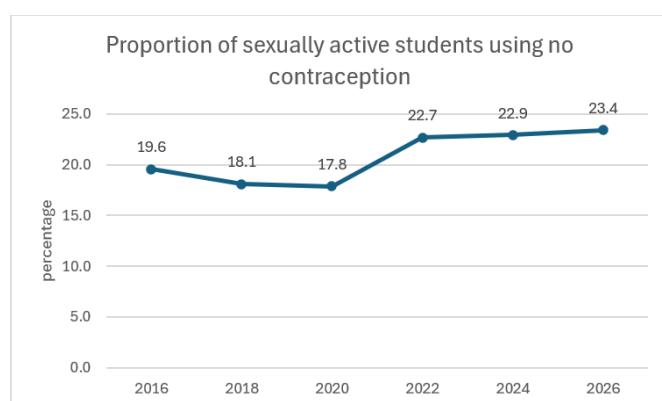
Drugs taking: Drug use remains below national levels and has generally declined, with cannabis the most common drug involved.

Absence from school: Absence has fallen since 2024, but one in five students still missed at least 10% of sessions in the previous term.

Trouble with police: Serious trouble with the police is uncommon and continues to decline but is more common among vulnerable students.



In 2026 23.4% of students who had intercourse reported using no protection the last time they had intercourse and a further 1.8% reported using emergency contraception after the last time they had intercourse. The proportion of students saying they used no contraception increased after the pandemic and has increased between 2024 and 2026.



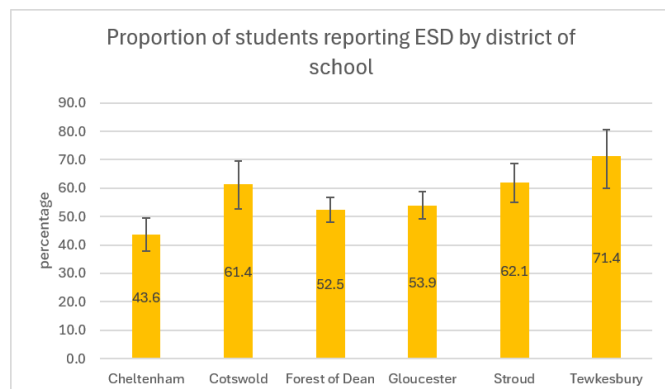
Unsafe sex

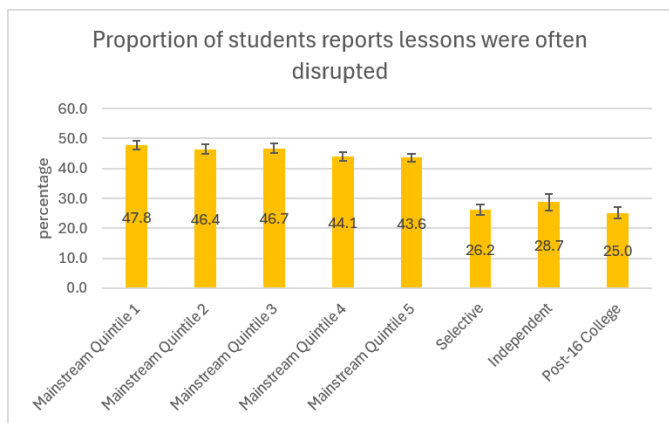
The majority of students who had intercourse protected themselves by using a condom the last time they had sex (51.6%), this was higher in males than females (55.5% vs. 47.6%). A third of students said either they or their partner had used the contraceptive pill the last time they had sex; this was higher in females than males (44.0% vs. 32.4%).

Disruption in schools

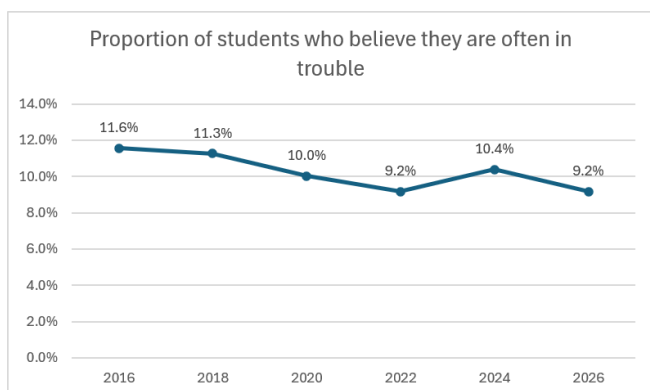
Questions about behaviour in school are asked to students in all phases and year groups.

41.7% of students report other students often disrupt their lessons however this varies significantly by the type of setting and socio-economic background of students. The proportion reporting classroom disruption was highest in mainstream settings where the majority of students live in the most deprived areas (47.8%) and lowest in selective grammar schools (26.2%) and post-16 colleges (25.0%).



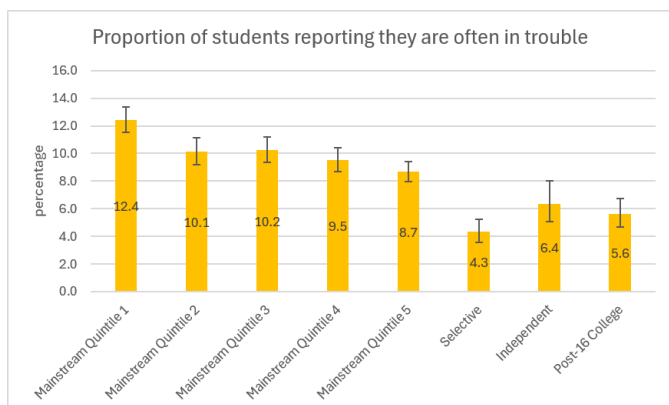


The proportion of students reporting they are *often in trouble* has been reducing slightly since 2016.



Students in Year 8 are the most likely to report often being in trouble. Students with LMW were significantly more likely to report often being in trouble than those with A/HMW. Students from diverse ethnic communities were broadly not significantly more likely to report often being in trouble than white British students; however, students from mixed-ethnicity and Other white backgrounds were significantly more likely to report often being in trouble.

Students in quintile 1 schools were the most likely to report often being in trouble (12.4%) and those in selective schools (4.3%) and post-16 colleges were the least likely (5.6%). Being in trouble appears to be linked to deprivation, with the proportion reducing as deprivation decreases.



Students who report often being in trouble are also more likely to report low mental wellbeing than those not in trouble often (36.1% vs. 20.2%).

Students who reported they *lived with a household member who was depressed, mentally unwell or attempted suicide* were significantly more likely to report often being in trouble than their counterparts (22.5% vs. 15.1%).

Students who reported they *lived with a household member who was depressed, mentally unwell or attempted suicide* were also over four times more likely to report ever experiencing domestic abuse (OR 4.6).

In 2025/26 half of all officially recorded exclusions had a reason given as *Persistent disruptive behaviour*. In 2012/13 this was given as a reason in a third of exclusions, increasing significantly post pandemic.

Excessive alcohol consumption

Questions about alcohol consumption are asked to pupils in all phases and year groups.

In 2026 38.4% (n=11,335) students said they had tried alcohol (aged 8 to 25), but this ranges from 15.1% in Year 4 to 80.8% in Year 13.

1 in 20 students (4.6%) students reported they drank alcohol regularly (Quite often (weekly)/Most days). Again, this increased with age from 1 in 100 in Year 4 to 1 in 4 in Year 13.



Students with LMW (OR 1.9), SEN (OR 1.6) and neurodivergent students (OR 1.6) were more likely to drink alcohol regularly.

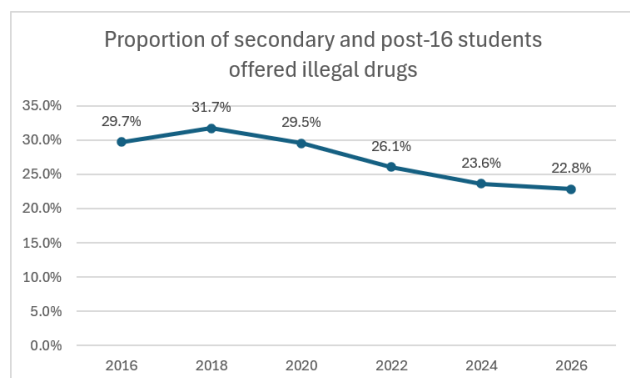
In 2026 around 1 in 6 of all students reported ever being drunk and 1.9% reported frequently being drunk (*Quite often (weekly)/most days*) which is likely to lead to more risk taking and potentially antisocial behaviours. There was an increase in the proportion of students reporting ever being drunk between 2016 and 2020 which has remained since.

In contrast the proportion of students reporting they are drunk regularly has been reducing slowly during the period from 4.2% in 2016 to 1.9% in 2026.

Drugs taking

Questions around drugs are asked to secondary and post-16 pupils only.

Just under a quarter (22.8%) of students (in Year 8 and above) had ever been offered drugs¹³. This has been reducing since 2018 when it peaked at 31.7% and is now below the 2012 figure.

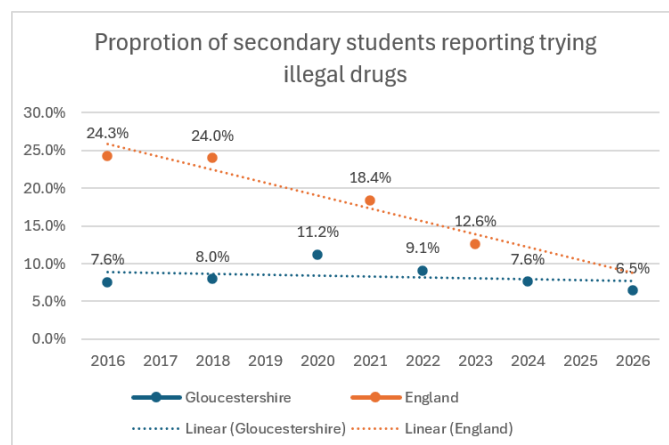


Cannabis was cited as being the drug most often offered to students (20.5% in 2026), but the proportion has been reducing since 2020 when 28.0% of students had been offered it.

In Gloucestershire 12.1% of students reported ever trying drugs in 2026, a similar proportion to the 2024 survey; again, Cannabis was the drug they had most likely to have tried (10.3%).

In secondary students 6.5% of students reported trying illegal drugs, this (and all other recorded years) is below the corresponding England aged 11-15 proportions (most recent published from 2023).

The national proportion of secondary age students has been reducing steadily since 2016, in Gloucestershire there has been a much slower reduction since a peak in 2020.



Absence from school/college

Questions around absence are asked to pupils in all phases and year groups.

Students were asked how many days of education (each school day includes 2 sessions) they had missed in the previous term (in the 2026 survey this would have been Autumn term 2025). Students may miss education due to both authorised and unauthorised reasons.

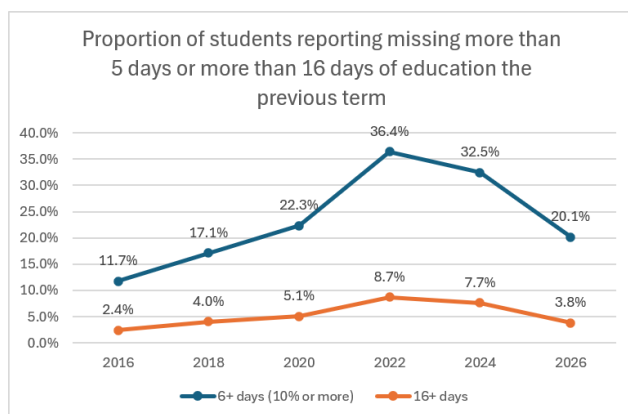
Persistent absence is a measure used by the Department of Education to track when a student's overall unauthorised absence equates to 10% or more of their possible sessions. In the survey it isn't possible to determine if student reported absence is authorised or unauthorised and so a comparison to nationally published figures isn't appropriate. The most recent nationally published data shows 17.2% of Gloucestershire pupils were persistently absent in 2024/25¹⁴. This figure is shared for context, not for comparison

In the 2026 survey just under 1 in 5 students (20.1%) reported being absent from education for 10% or more of sessions (up to 5 days in this instance) in the previous term (authorised and unauthorised), compared to 1 in 3 students (32.5%) in the 2024 survey (Autumn term 2023).

3.8% of students reported missing more than 16 days of education in the previous term (equates to missing 25% or more of education) this was a decrease on the 2024 figure (7.7%).

¹³ students were asked about the following drugs in 2016: cannabis, synthetic cannabinoids, amphetamines, ecstasy and cocaine. In 2026 they were also asked about ketamine and nitrous oxide.

¹⁴ <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/055da0c3-8db5-43ff-11bc-08ded6b7248d>



For the first time there was no difference in the proportion of pupils from minority ethnic group backgrounds reporting being absent from school for 10% or more of sessions compared to their White British peers, however pupils from *Gypsy/Roma* (62.1%), *Traveller of Irish heritage* (48.4%), *Black Caribbean* (41.6%) and *Mixed – white and Black Caribbean* (42.2%) backgrounds were significantly more likely to report being persistently absent. Conversely pupils from *Chinese* (20.0%), *Black African* (17.1%) and *Indian* (26.9%) backgrounds were least likely to report being absent from school for 10% or more of sessions.



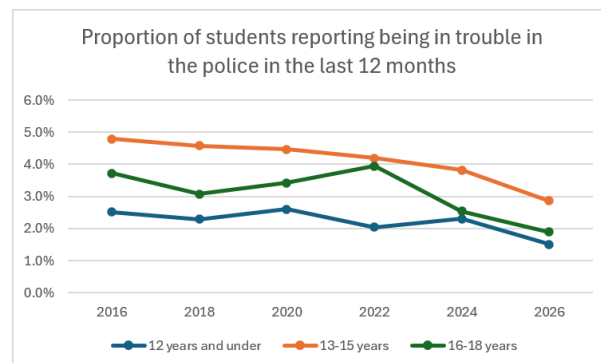
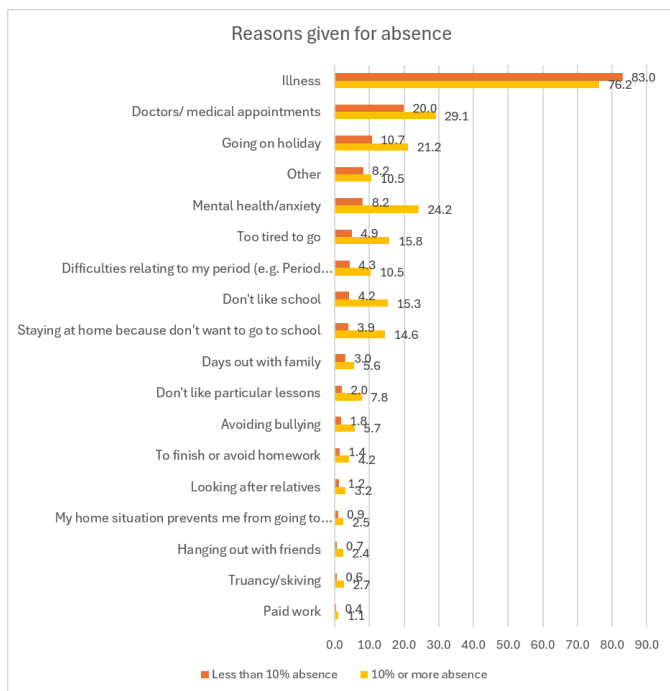
There was no difference in the proportion of students from diverse ethnic communities reporting being absent from education for 10% or more of days compared to their white British peers, however students from a number of ethnic communities were significantly more likely to report being absent for more than 5 days.

Ethnic community	% missing 5+ days
White British	19.9
Any other ethnic background	21.0
Any other mixed background	22.5
White eastern European	24.4
Mixed - White and Black African	25.3
Other White background	25.4
White Irish	25.6
Pakistani	26.7
Bangladeshi	27.9
Mixed - White and Black Caribbean	29.6
Black Caribbean	35.1
Gypsy or Roma	36.2
Traveller of Irish heritage	36.6

Conversely pupils from *Black African* (8.5%) backgrounds were significantly less likely to report being absent from education for 10% or more of sessions and those from *Any other Asian background* (17.6%), *Any other black background* (14.3%) and *Indian background* (17.7%) were also less likely but not significantly.

Reported absence from education for 10% or more of sessions was highest in schools within Forest of Dean, Gloucester and Stroud districts and lowest in Cheltenham schools. This was a similar trend to 2024.

When asked why they had missed education, illness was the most cited reason (81.1% in 2026) for all students. Missing education due to illness would be an authorised absence. This was followed by Doctor's/medical appointment, which was cited by 1 in 5 students (22.5%) who had missed any days of education, again this would be an authorised absence. 1 in 7 students had missed education due to a holiday.



Students from the following groups were more likely to say they had been in serious trouble with the Police:

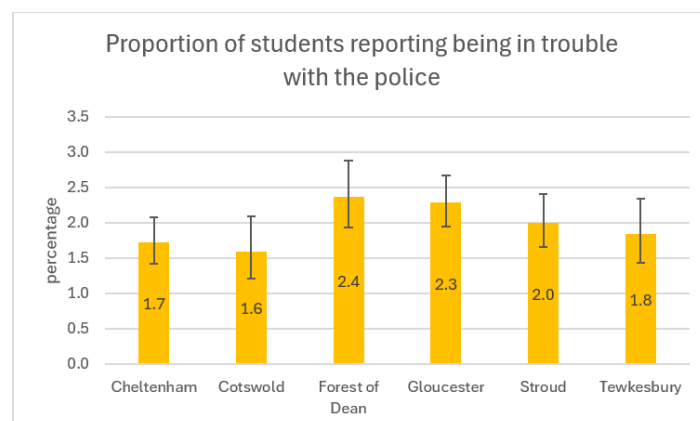
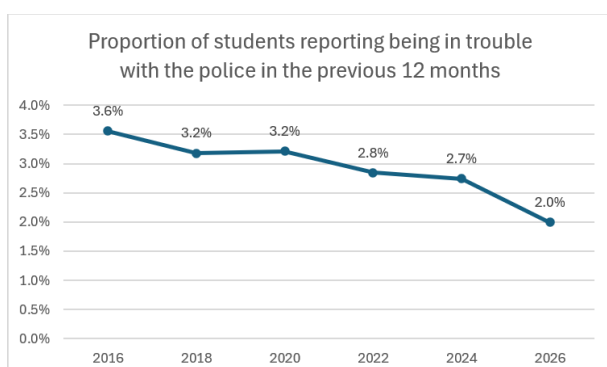
- Those known to social care (*OR 4.6*)
- Those reporting 4+ adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) (*OR 4.1*)
- Neurodivergent students (*OR 3.2*)
- Those who were young carers (*OR 2.9*)
- Those with a disability (*OR 2.8*)
- Those regularly bullied (*OR 2.8*)
- Those eligible for FSM (*OR 2.8*)
- Those with low mental wellbeing (*OR 2.7*)
- Those with SEND (*OR 2.7*)

There was no significant difference in the proportion of students reporting being in serious trouble with the Police by district of school, although, the proportion was highest in Forest of Dean district and lowest in Cotswold district.



Trouble with police

2.0% of students said they had been in serious trouble with the Police. This continues the downwards trend observed over the previous 10 years.



Males were more than twice as likely to report being in serious trouble with the Police than females (2.5% vs. 1.0%). Students aged 13-15 were the most likely to report being in serious trouble with the Police. This has been the case over the last 10 years.

Environmental antisocial behaviour

Key takeaways:

Feeling safe in neighbourhoods: Most students feel safe in their neighbourhood, with perceptions of safety increasing with age and being lower among students from more deprived backgrounds and females.

Experience of criminal behaviour: Around 1 in 20 secondary and post-16 students reported experiencing child sexual or criminal exploitation, highlighting the importance of safeguarding and early intervention for vulnerable young people.

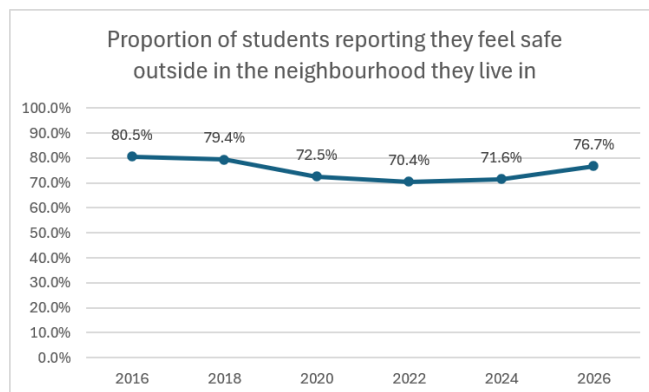
There are not currently specific questions relating to Environmental antisocial behaviour however some of those reporting being in serious trouble with the Police may have been engaged in environmental antisocial behaviour.

Students who have been excluded may also have received the exclusion due to environmental antisocial behaviour. Officially recorded exclusion data shows 122 pupils were excluded in 2025/26 for damage to property, equating to 1.3% of all exclusions in that year. In the same period 0.5% of exclusions were for theft.

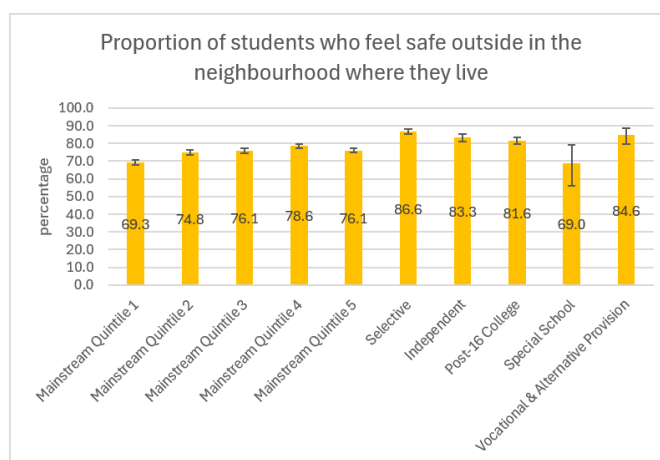
Feeling safe in neighbourhoods

Questions around feeling safe are asked to students in all phases and year groups.

76.7% of students said they felt safe outside in the neighbourhood where they lived. Feeling safe in their neighbourhood increased with age from 71.0% of primary students to 84.4% of post-16 students. The proportion of students reporting feeling safe outside in the neighbourhood where they lived has been increasing since a slight reduction between 2018 and 2022.



There appears to be a correlation between deprivation and feeling safe outside in the neighbourhood where they lived, with those in the least deprived schools most likely to say they feel safe outside in the neighbourhood where they lived.



Female pupils (75.4%) were significantly less likely to say they felt safe outside in the neighbourhood where they lived than males (78.1%).

Overall students from diverse ethnic communities (76.1%) were not significantly more or less likely to report they felt safe outside in the neighbourhood where they lived than their *white British* peers (77.4%). However *Bangladeshi* (66.0%) and *Black African* (73.4%) students were significantly less likely to report feeling safe outside in the neighbourhood where they lived.

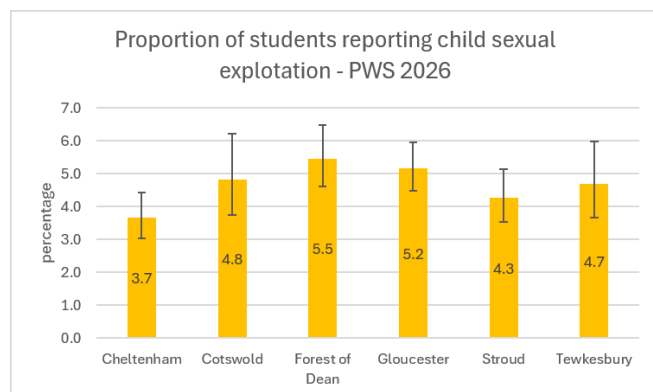
Experience of criminal behaviour

In 2026 questions were added to the survey to investigate child criminal and sexual exploitation. These were only asked to secondary and post-16 students.

4.7% of all secondary and post-16 students reported *an adult had ever taken advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive them into sexual activity, online or in person*. The proportion of students saying they experienced child sexual exploitation increased as

students aged. Females (7.2%) were significantly more likely to report child sexual exploitation than males (2.3%).

There was no significant difference in prevalence of child sexual exploitation by district of school, but this was lowest in Cheltenham (3.7%) and highest in Forest of Dean (5.5%).

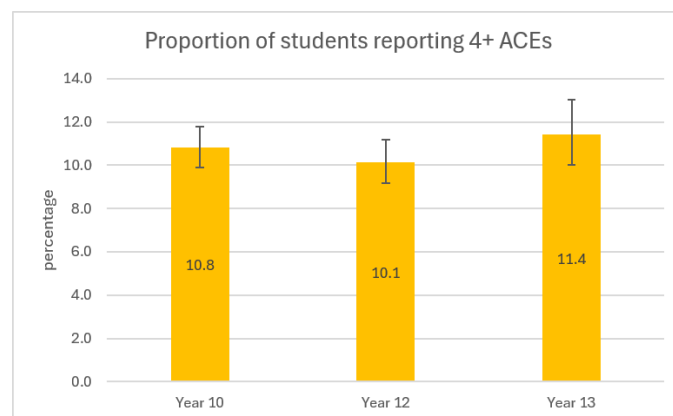


4.3% of students reported they had *been encouraged, coerced or threatened to carry out crime for the benefit of others*. A higher proportion of males reported being a victim of child criminal exploitation than females, although not significantly (4.4% vs. 3.9%). There was very little variation in the proportion of students reporting child criminal exploitation by district of education setting.

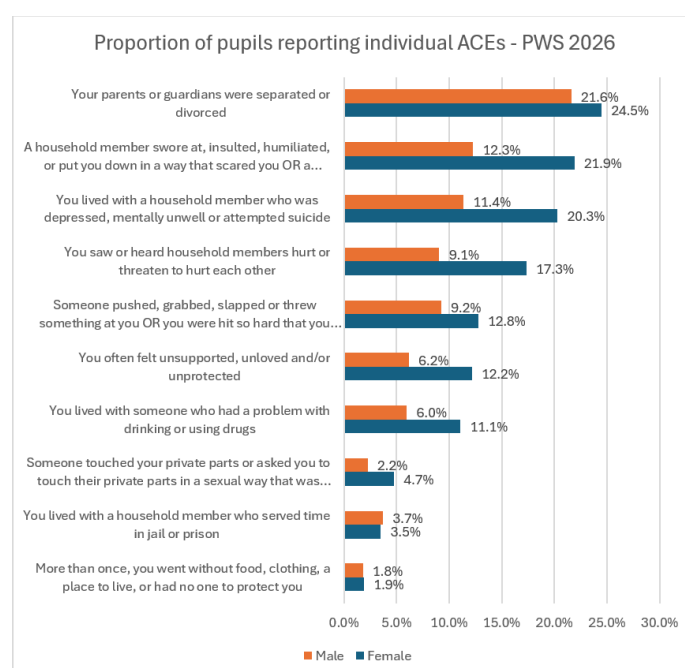
Students from mixed - white and Black Caribbean (7.4%) and white Eastern European (7.1%) backgrounds were significantly more likely to report child criminal exploitation than their white British peers (3.9%).

In a change to the question format from previous surveys Year 10 and post-16 students were asked specific questions about Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) from 2024. Several ACEs reflect experience of living in a household where potential criminal behaviour is normalised or where a parent/carer has served a custodial sentence.

In 2026 around 1 in 10 (10.7%) of students across all year groups reported they had experienced 4 or more ACEs; this was in line with the 2024 survey and reflects the change in methodology and is more in line with national adult estimates¹⁵ (8.4% - 12.6%).



The most frequently reported ACE across all students was *Your parents or guardians were separated or divorced* reported by 22.7% of all students. This was the same for both sexes and all year groups.



Most ACEs were experienced by a significantly higher proportion of females than males (except *living with a household member who had been in prison* and *More than once, you went without food, clothing, a place to live, or had no one to protect you*).

Where students reported experiencing more than 4 ACEs the most commonly reported ACE was *A household member swore at, insulted, humiliated, or put you down in a way that scared you OR a household member acted in a way that made you afraid that you might be physically hurt*, 86.2%.

The most commonly reported ACE by statistical neighbour group was *Your parents or guardians*

¹⁵ <https://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/10/6/e036374>

were separated or divorced for all groups (around 1 in 5) except students at Independent or Selective grammar schools, where the most commonly reported ACE was *A household member swore at, insulted, humiliated, or put you down in a way that scared you OR a household member acted in a way that made you afraid that you might be physically hurt*. 1 in 3 students at Vocational and Alternative settings said their parents or guardians were separated or divorced, the highest of all groups.

The second and third most commonly experienced ACEs also show an interesting picture; in all statistical neighbour groups *You lived with a household member who was depressed, mentally unwell or attempted suicide* was either the second or third most common ACE reported and ranged from 1 in 10 in independent setting students to 1 in 5 in quintile 2 students. This suggests parental mental wellbeing has a significant impact on young people across all socio-economic groups.



Students from Vocational & Alternative settings had significantly higher odds of experiencing *You lived with a household member who served time in jail or prison* (OR 2.7), *Someone touched your private parts or asked you to touch their private parts in a sexual way that was unwanted, against your will, or made you feel uncomfortable* (OR 2.1), *More than once, you went without food, clothing, a place to live, or had no one to protect you* (OR 2.8) and *You often felt unsupported, unloved and/or unprotected* (OR 2.1) than all other groups. Overall, the odds of experiencing any individual ACE was slightly higher in more deprived settings and slightly lower in less deprived settings.

Around three quarters of students who had experienced 4+ ACEs had experienced being humiliated or afraid they would be physically hurt; seen domestic abuse; and have a person in their house with mental illness.

Proportion of students reporting individual ACEs by number of ACEs reported in total (0-3 ACEs and 4+ ACEs)		
	4+ ACEs	0-3 ACEs
A household member swore at, insulted, humiliated, or put you down in a way that scared you OR a household member acted in a way that made you afraid that you might be physically hurt	86.2%	8.4%
You saw or heard household members hurt or threaten to hurt each other	79.6%	4.7%
You lived with a household member who was depressed, mentally unwell or attempted suicide	73.0%	8.3%
Your parents or guardians were separated or divorced	72.8%	16.7%
Someone pushed, grabbed, slapped or threw something at you OR you were hit so hard that you were injured or had marks	61.1%	4.8%
You often felt unsupported, unloved and/or unprotected	52.6%	3.5%
You lived with someone who had a problem with drinking or using drugs	52.0%	3.1%
You lived with a household member who served time in jail or prison	23.9%	1.1%
Someone touched your private parts or asked you to touch their private parts in a sexual way that was unwanted, against your will, or made you feel uncomfortable	20.6%	1.3%
More than once, you went without food, clothing, a place to live, or had no one to protect you	14.6%	0.4%

This suggests these are most often seen together, and that where domestic abuse is in a household that abuse extends to all family members, highlighting the importance of providing support to young people experiencing domestic abuse either directly or indirectly.

Conclusion

Overall, the 2026 Pupil Wellbeing Survey suggests that many indicators linked to antisocial behaviour and risk-taking have improved over time. Reported regular bullying, violence, carrying a weapon, running away from home, being in serious trouble with the Police, drug exposure and some forms of unhealthy sexual behaviour have all reduced compared with earlier survey years. Feeling safe in neighbourhoods has also improved, and most students continue to report positive protective factors such as having a trusted adult. This indicates that, at a whole-population level, there has been some progress in reducing exposure to behaviours and experiences that can contribute to harm.



However, the overall picture is not one of uniform improvement. Across many measures, poorer outcomes continue to cluster among students experiencing wider vulnerability and disadvantage. Students in settings with higher levels of deprivation, those known to social care, those eligible for FSM, students with SEND or a disability, neurodivergent students, young carers, students with low mental wellbeing and those experiencing multiple ACEs were consistently more likely to report experiences associated with antisocial behaviour, exclusion, absence, unsafe home environments or contact with the Police. This suggests that behaviours often understood as antisocial may, for some children and young people, be outward indicators of wider unmet need, trauma, disrupted relationships or instability at home and school.

Inequalities are also evident by sex, age, ethnicity, type of educational setting and district, although these patterns are not always consistent across indicators. Male students were more likely to report some behaviours such as carrying a weapon, being in serious trouble with the Police and receiving an

isolation, suspension or exclusion, while female students were more likely to report some forms of harm, including feeling less safe in their neighbourhood and receiving sexual messages. Some ethnic groups reported higher levels of absence, lower understanding of consent or lower feelings of neighbourhood safety, while students in vocational, alternative and special settings often reported higher levels of complex need. These differences highlight the importance of interpreting the data through an inequalities lens, rather than relying only on the county average.

The findings therefore point to a mixed but important picture. There is evidence of improvement in several population-level trends, but persistent and overlapping inequalities remain. The students most likely to experience antisocial behaviour, sanction, risk-taking or harm are often the same students who report poorer mental wellbeing, more complex home lives and lower levels of safety or support. Prevention and early intervention should therefore continue to focus not only on individual behaviours, but also on the wider circumstances that shape them. A targeted, trauma-informed and inequalities-focused response is likely to be most effective in reducing harm and improving outcomes for children and young people across Gloucestershire.