Isolation, suspension and exclusion, non-attendance and behaviour issues

Pupil Wellbeing Survey

2024

Introduction

Experiencing a period of exclusion from school, be that a suspension or a permanent exclusion, or an internal isolation can have a significant impact on a pupil.

Pupils may also miss school due to general absence; this may be for accepted reasons such as illness and are therefore marked as 'authorised', however absence can also be due to un-authorised reasons such as holidays and skiving. The effect of a lot of absence whether authorised or un-authorised can also have a significant impact on a child's education and development.

The effects of missing school whether due to general absence; a school isolation, suspension or exclusion on a pupil's life can cover many areas, from health to career to education. Isolation, suspension or exclusion can also cause low self-esteem and social isolation. In all phases of education; general absence; isolation, suspension or exclusion can decrease exam results, and also damage future prospects in general[1]. Isolation, suspension or exclusion could also lead to a lack of respect for authority, which may lead to issues in employment or increased police involvement. These issues are a significant problem for individuals and wider society.

The Department for Education (DfE) reports statistics on the number of pupils receiving a suspension or exclusion, the Pupil Wellbeing Survey asks pupils if they have received an isolation, suspension or exclusion and their experiences of the process. Analysis of the survey results shows that outcomes for pupils, regardless of which behaviour sanction experienced - isolation, suspension or exclusion; are almost always similar and as such for some outcome analysis all pupils who have received an isolation, suspension or exclusion are grouped together. Where relevant these are given as separate results.

The DfE also reports on the proportion of pupils with persistent absenteeism (when more than 10% or more of possible sessions are missed) and severe absenteeism (when more than 50% or more of possible sessions).

The 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. Children and young people participate in years 4, 5 and 6 in Primary schools; years 8 and 10 in Secondary schools; and year 12 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 57.2% of pupils in participating year groups in 2024. The PWS asks a wide variety of questions about children's characteristics, behaviours and lived experience that could have an impact on their overall wellbeing. The 2024 PWS was undertaken between January and April 2024.

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 children and young people attending educational establishments in Gloucestershire are residents in the county. It is therefore important to remember this analysis is based on the pupil population not the resident population.

Gloucestershire is a grammar authority, has a number of notable independent schools and several mainstream schools very close to the county's boundary these all attract young people from out of county. This results in the school 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 from minority ethnic groups however 21.0% of Gloucestershire's school population were pupils from minority ethnic groups in January 2024 and 21.7% of the PWS cohort were pupils from minority ethnic groups in the 2024 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

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[1] https://epi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Early-adult-outcomes-for-suspended-pupils-FINAL.pdf

and education phase might only have certain demographic groups represented due to numbers of pupil take up (for example low numbers completing the survey in Tewkesbury at FE level), where FE provision is situated also impacts the survey as older students travel further to access FE provision.

Analysis of deprivation

Schools can be categorised into statistical neighbour groups which cluster schools with pupils of a similar social profile within the same type of school (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 pupils. The IMD is based on the home postcode of pupils (collected in the school census). This is aggregated to give an overall IMD score for the school, reflecting the deprivation levels experienced by pupils. The schools 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 and alternative schools are compared to all other schools of this type in the same phase without reference to the IMD.
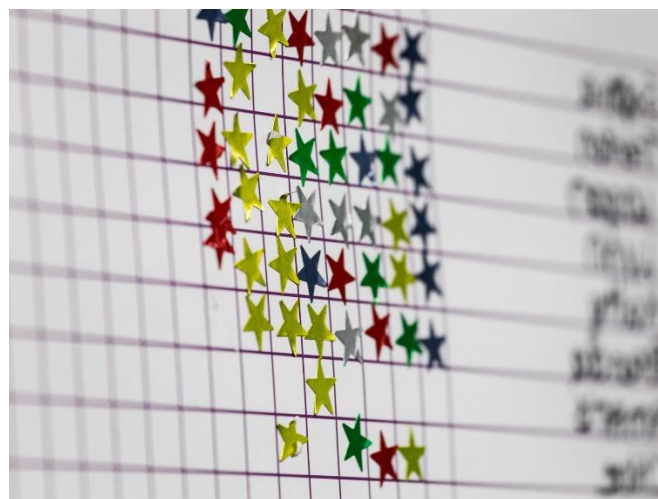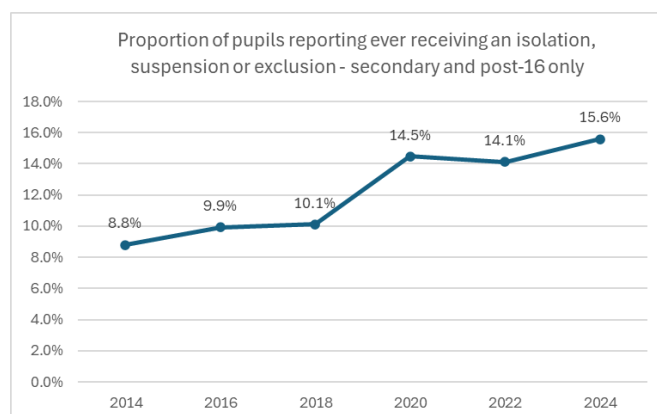

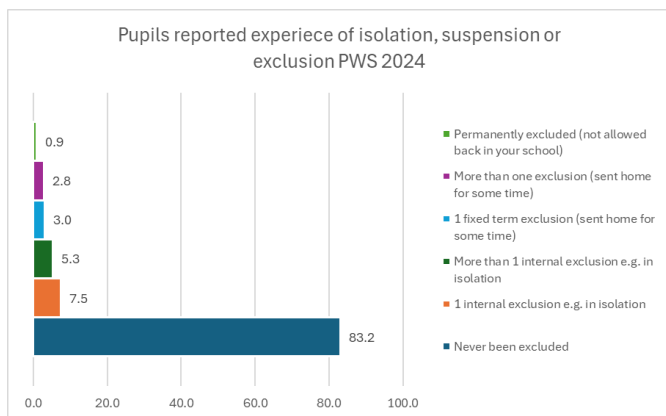## Isolation, Suspension and Exclusions

Questions about isolation, suspension and exclusion were only asked to secondary and post-16 pupils. Nationally and locally there has been an increase in isolation, suspension or exclusion for primary pupils, as such these questions may be extended to younger pupils in subsequent surveys.

Published data for the academic year 2022/23 shows overall in Gloucestershire schools, 8.6% of pupils received a suspension in that year and 0.1% of pupils received an exclusion, internal isolations are not published. In the PWS pupils are asked if they have **ever** had an isolation, suspension or exclusion.

In 2024 15.6% of pupils reported ever having at least one isolation, suspension or exclusion, this increased significantly between 2018 and 2020 (completed pre-covid).

Proportion of pupils reporting ever receiving an isolation, suspension or exclusion - secondary and post-16 only

Over 8 in 10 pupils reported they had never been excluded.

Pupils reported experiece of isolation, suspension or exclusion PWS 2024

- Permanently excluded (not allowed back in your school): 0.9
- More than one exclusion (sent home for some time): 2.8
- 1 fixed term exclusion (sent home for some time): 3.0
- More than 1 internal exclusion e.g. in isolation: 5.3
- 1 internal exclusion e.g. in isolation: 7.5
- Never been excluded: 83.2

The way the question is asked in the survey allows pupils to check multiple boxes to indicate all the behaviour sanctions they have received, some children may have received all three sanctions (isolation, suspension and exclusion) and will therefore check all three boxes. By separating pupils into the most serious reported sanction, it shows 9.5% of all pupils had received no higher than a period of isolation in school, 5.1% had received no higher than a suspension and 0.9% had experienced a permanent exclusion.
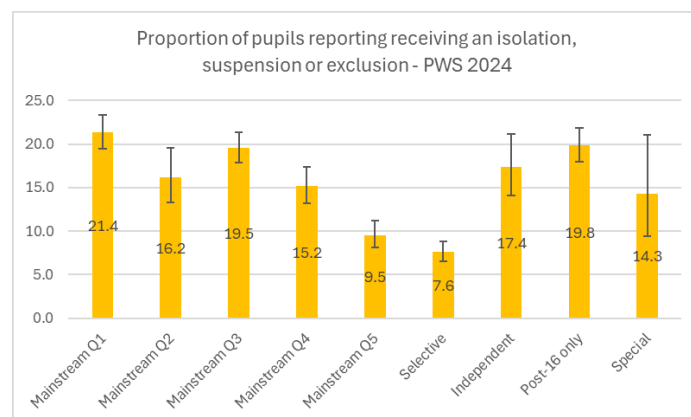
Where pupils are categorised into groups in subsequent analysis grouping reflects the most serious reported sanction, i.e. the isolation group reflects they have only experienced an internal isolation and not reported experiencing a suspension or exclusion.

Where pupils had received an isolation, suspension or exclusion just under half (47.9%) had only had 1 internal isolation and 5.9% reported having a permanent exclusion.

Male pupils (19.2%) were overall significantly more likely to report receiving an isolation, suspension or exclusion than female pupils (11.2%). They were also almost twice as likely to report receiving an isolation (12.0% vs. 6.8%), or suspension (6.1% vs. 3.7%). There was no significant difference between the sexes however in terms of the proportion reporting receiving a permanent exclusion (1.1% vs. 0.6%) although numbers are small.

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

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

lowest reported level of isolation, suspension or exclusion.

Proportion of pupils reporting receiving an isolation, suspension or exclusion - PWS 2024

- Mainstream Q1: 21.4
- Mainstream Q2: 16.2
- Mainstream Q3: 19.5
- Mainstream Q4: 15.2
- Mainstream Q5: 9.5
- Selective: 7.6
- Independent: 17.4
- Post-16 only: 19.8
- Special: 14.3

Pupils in quintile 1 schools (most deprived) were the most likely to have had an isolation, suspension or exclusion. This pattern was observed regardless of the level of sanction; isolation, suspension or exclusion.

A significantly higher proportion of pupils from the following groups reported receiving an isolation, suspension or exclusion:

- Those bullied regularly
- Those known to social care
- Those with a disability
- Those receiving support for special educational needs
- Young carers
- Those eligible for FSM
- Those with low mental wellbeing[2]

Compared to pupils with no isolation, suspension or exclusion history pupils who had received an isolation, suspension or exclusion are:

More likely to engage in risky behaviours

- 9.5 times more likely to be in trouble with the police
- 1.2 times more likely to have early sexual debut (under 16 yrs)
- 1.7 times more likely to self-harm
- 4.2 times more likely to perpetrate violence

More likely to engage in health harming behaviours

- 2.5 times more likely to drink alcohol regularly
- 4.5 times more likely to smoke cigarettes regularly

https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/sci/med/research/platform/wemwbs/

- 3.4 times more likely to use drugs

More likely to disengage from education

- 1.7 times more likely to have frequent school absence (authorised or unauthorised)
- 1.8 times more likely to report not achieving

50.1% of pupils 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 an increase on the previous survey year and a significant increase since 2020.
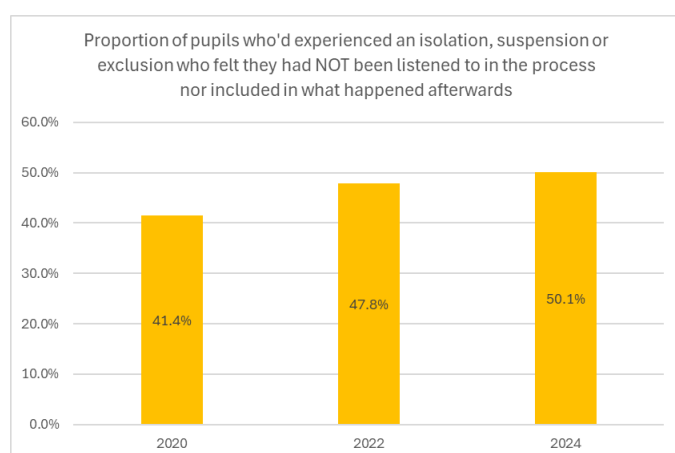
Pupils who had received a permanent exclusion were the least likely to say they felt listened to in the process (12.9%), however, it was not significantly lower than the proportion of pupils who had experienced isolation (21.5%) or suspension (19.7%) saying they felt listened to in the process.

52.6% of pupils who had received an isolation, suspension or exclusion said nothing changed afterwards. 1 in 3 (33.7%) of pupils who received a

permanent exclusion said afterwards things got worse, significantly higher than those who received an isolation (13.0%) or suspension (19.3%).

1 in 6 pupils who had received an isolation, suspension or exclusion said if there is an incident or issue at school pupils weren't listened to or involved in making it right compared to 1 in 4 children who had no isolation, suspension or exclusion history. There was no significant different between those who received an isolation (16.1%), suspension (15.0%) or exclusion (24.8%).

When pupils had received an isolation, suspension or exclusion, they were less likely to have someone to go to for help if they were worried than those who had no isolation, suspension or exclusion history (67.2% vs. 79.3%). There was no significant difference between those who received an isolation (68.4%), suspension (66.2%) or exclusion (59.4%).

Pupils who had received an isolation, suspension or exclusion were less likely to say the food available where they lived allowed them to eat healthily (82.8% vs. 88.5%); more likely to say they spent an above average time on screens[3] (1 in 2 vs. 1 in 3); less likely to say they felt safe at home or the place where they lived (81.2% vs. 90.8%) than those with no isolation, suspension or exclusion history.

Pupils who had an isolation, suspension or exclusion from school were significantly more likely to report Low Mental Wellbeing (LMW) than those who had no isolation, suspension or exclusion (38.4% vs. 29.5%). There was no significant different between those who received an isolation (39.2%), suspension (37.2%) or exclusion (36.6%).

1 in 5 pupils with a history of isolation, suspension or exclusion felt they had been listened to in the process, these pupils were less likely to report LMW (22.0%) than those who did not feel listened to (44.4%).

If pupils felt things got worse after an isolation, suspension or exclusion, they were significantly more likely to report LMW (56.9%) than those who felt things got better (21.6%).

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[3] Median hours usage per day for pupils in the survey fell within 4-6 hours per day, so over 6hrs has been classified as above average usage

Pupils who said they were often in trouble were also significantly more likely to report LMW (38.2%) than those did not (28.0%).
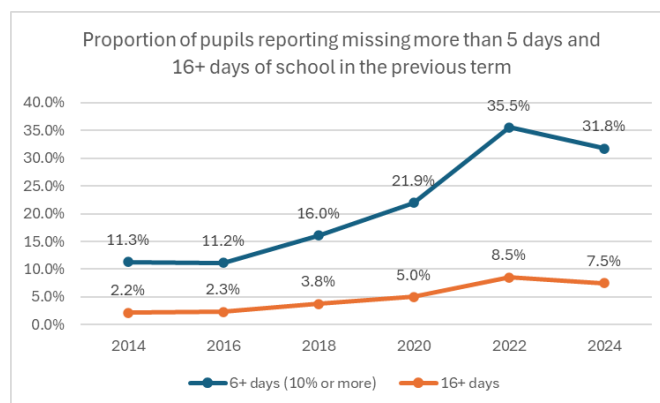
Absence from school/college

Pupils were asked how many school days (each school day includes 2 sessions) they had missed in the previous term (in the 2024 survey this would have been Autumn term 2023). Pupils may miss school due to both authorised and un-authorised reasons.

Persistent absence is a measure used by the Department of Education to track when a pupil's overall unauthorised absence equates to 10% or more of their possible sessions. In the survey it isn't possible to determine if pupil reported absence is authorised or unauthorised and so a comparison to nationally published figures isn't appropriate. The most recent nationally published data shows 20% of Gloucestershire pupils were persistently absent in 2022/23[4].

In the 2024 survey just under 1 in 3 pupils (31.8%) reported being absent from school for 10% or more of sessions in the previous term (authorised and unauthorised), compared to over 1 in 3 pupils (35.5%) in the 2022 survey (Autumn term 2021).

7.5% of pupils reported missing more than 16 days of school in the previous term (missing 25% or more days of schooling) this was a decrease on the 2022 figure (8.5%).

Proportion of pupils reporting missing more than 5 days and 16+ days of school in the previous term

6+ days (10% or more): 11.3%, 11.2%, 16.0%, 21.9%, 35.5%, 31.8%
16+ days: 2.2%, 2.3%, 3.8%, 5.0%, 8.5%, 7.5%

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.

Reported absence from school for 10% or more of sessions was highest in schools within Forest of Dean and Stroud districts and lowest in Cheltenham schools. Young people between the ages of 13 and 15 are most likely to report being absent from school for 10% or more of sessions. In a change to the covid period where there was no significant difference in being absent from school for 10% or more of sessions in different statistical neighbour groups, in 2024 reported absence from school for 10% or more of sessions reduced as deprivation did and was significantly lower in

[4] https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/pupil-absence-in-schools-in-england/2023-24-autumn-and-spring-term

quintile 5, selective and independent schools than schools in quintiles 1 to 4.

When asked why they had missed school, illness was the most cited reason (83.4% in 2024) for all pupils (missing school due to illness would be an authorised absence). Pupils who reported being absent from school for 10% or more of sessions were 4.2 times more likely than those who had missed less than 5 days in the previous term to say they missed school due to *Truancy* and 3.7 times more likely to say they missed school due to *not having enough period products*.

In 2024 pupils with low mental wellbeing (LMW) (40.3%) were significantly more likely to say they had been absent from school for 10% or more of sessions than those with average mental wellbeing (AMW) (29.3%) and high mental wellbeing (HMW) (24.6%).

As stated earlier, the most common reason given for being absent from school for 10% or more of sessions was illness, this was the same whether a pupil had LMW or A/HMW, however those with LMW were significantly more likely to say illness was the reason for absenteeism than those with A/HMW.

Pupils who reported being absent from school for 10% or more of sessions *and* had LMW were significantly more likely to report being absent due to; *didn't want to go to school, my home situation prevents me from going to school, avoid bullying, don't like school, don't like lessons, to avoid homework, truancy, too tired to go and don't have enough period products* than those with A/HMW who reported being absent from school for 10% or more of sessions.

Where persistently absent - reasons given that were significantly different between LMW and HMW	
Reason	Times more likely given by LMW
Staying at home because don't want to go to school	6.1
My home situation prevents me from going to school	2.6
Avoiding bullying	5.2
Don't like school	5.0
Don't like particular lessons	5.2
To finish or avoid homework	4.7
Truancy/skiving	4.1
Too tired to go	5.0
Didn't have enough pads/tampons for period	9.1

Behaviour regulation issues

The DfE report *The Impact of Pupil Behaviour and Wellbeing on Educational Outcomes*[5] found;

- Children with higher levels of emotional, behavioural, social, and school wellbeing, on average, have higher levels of academic achievement and are more engaged in school, both concurrently and in later years.
- Children with better emotional wellbeing make more progress in primary school and are more engaged in secondary school.
- Children with better attention skills experience greater progress across the four key stages of schooling in England. Those who are engaged in less troublesome behaviour also make more progress and are more engaged in secondary school.
- Children who are bullied are less engaged in primary school, whereas those with positive friendships are more engaged in secondary school.
- As children move through the school system, emotional and behavioural wellbeing become more important in explaining school engagement, while demographic and other characteristics become less important.
- Relationships between emotional, behavioural, social, and school wellbeing and later educational outcomes are generally similar for children and adolescents, regardless of their gender and parents' educational level.

Behaviour is becoming more commonly recognised as a form of communication, and signs of poor behaviour may be an indication that a child has

[5]https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a747ef340f0b604dd7ae609/DFE-RR253.pdf

unmet or undiagnosed needs or is struggling to communicate what is going on for them.
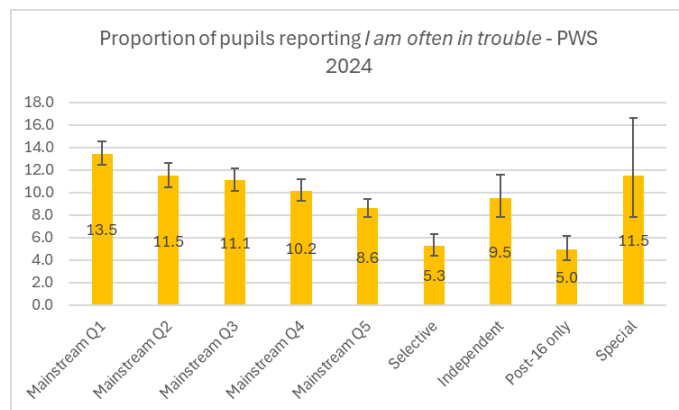

The proportion of pupils reporting they would like more support in *Anger management* in 2024 (12.6%) has decreased since 2022 (13.5%) following a continuous increase since 2012. The previous increase was almost entirely due to an increase in primary age pupils reporting they would like more support in *Anger management*.

The proportion of pupils reporting they are *often in trouble* had been reducing slightly between 2016 and 2022, however has risen in 2024 to 10.0%.
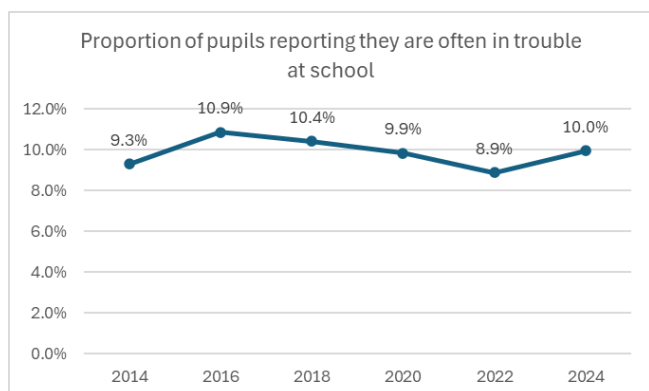

Pupils in Y4 and Y8 are the most likely to report often being in trouble. Pupils with LMW were significantly more likely to report often being in trouble than those with A/HMW. Pupils from minority ethnic groups were significantly more likely to report often being in trouble than White British pupils.

Pupils in quintile 1 schools were the most likely to report often being in trouble (13.5%) and those in selective schools (5.3%) and post-16 colleges were the least likely (5.0%). Being in trouble appears to be linked to deprivation, with the proportion reducing as deprivation decreases.


The proportion of pupils reporting they are *often aggressive or violent* has also been reducing since the question was first asked in 2016 from 10.1% to 7.1% in 2024.
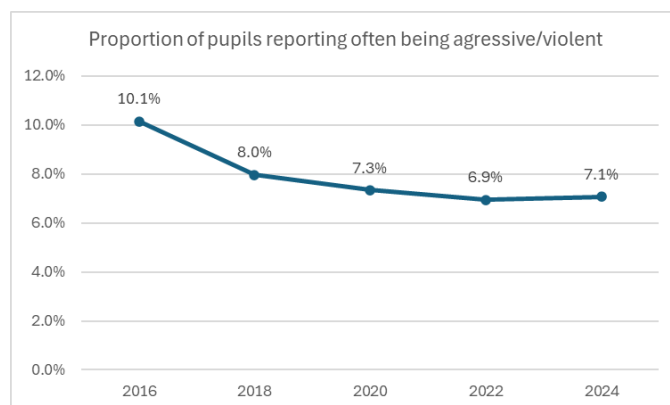
This reduction is mainly influenced by a reduction in older pupils reporting they are *often aggressive or violent,* in Y10 and Y12 the proportion halved in the period.

Again, being *often aggressive or violent* appears to be linked to deprivation with the highest levels in mainstream schools in IMD quintile 1 and the lowest levels in pupils at selective schools.
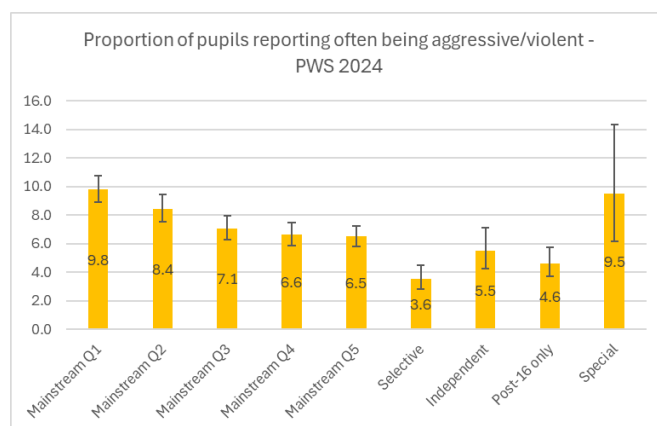
Pupils with LMW were almost twice as likely to report being *often aggressive or violent* than those with A/HMW.