Indicator 3.3 - Percentage of unauthorised half days missed from secondary/primary schools.

Rationale
Education plays a number of roles in influencing inequalities in health, if health is viewed in its widest sense. Firstly, it has an important role in influencing inequalities in socioeconomic position. Educational qualifications are a determinant of an individual's labour market position, which in turn influences income, housing and other material resources. These are related to health and health inequalities. As a consequence, education is a traditional route out of poverty for those living in disadvantage.¹

The roles of education set out above imply a range of outcomes which are not readily measurable. However, inequality is observed when looking at educational achievement. Children from disadvantaged backgrounds, as measured by being in receipt of free school meals, have lower educational achievement than other children.¹

This indicator relates to the Department for Education PSA 2005-08 target 8, which was to improve levels of school attendance so that by 2008, school absence (sum of authorised and unauthorised) was reduced by 8% compared to 2003. The data were collected and reported as part of the Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPI) up until the 2007/08 data collection. Now, data on school absence among secondary school children is collected as part of the National Indicator Set (NIS); indicator NI87.

Definition
This indicator refers to the percentage of half days missed due to unauthorised absence, which is calculated as the number of sessions missed due to unauthorised absence as a percentage of the total number of sessions. A pupil session is the total number of half days available for all pupils, with each pupil's sessions contributing to the total.

Numerator definition
Number of sessions missed due to unauthorised absence. Unauthorised absence is defined as absence without permission from a teacher or other authorised representative of the school. This includes all unexplained or unjustified absences. The table shows figures for day pupils of compulsory school age (i.e. ages 5-16 in responding schools).

Source of numerator
Data for this indicator is taken from the Department for Education website.

Denominator definition
The total number of sessions; where a pupil session is the total number of half days available for all pupils, with each pupil's sessions contributing to the total. The table shows figures for day pupils of compulsory school age (i.e. ages 5-16 in responding schools).

Source of denominator
Data for this indicator is taken from the Department for Education website.
**Geographic coverage**
Data is available at Region and national level.

**Other dimensions of inequality**
This information is collected by gender, and eligibility for free school meals and also ethnicity, age and disability but is not currently routinely reported.

**Timeliness**
As of 2002, provisional data is released by Department for Education in an Early Statistics Statistical First Release (as National Statistics), in October every year for the previous school year data. It may later be revised after consultation with schools.

**Accuracy and completeness**
The national figure includes all schools except fully boarding schools, i.e. all maintained, special, and independent primary and secondary schools, and City Technology Colleges. Local Education Authority figures refer to maintained schools only. Data are published to two decimal places. The rounding convention used is: any fractions of 0.005 and above will be rounded up; anything less than 0.005 will be rounded down.

**Disclosure**
There are no disclosure issues associated with this indicator.

**Further information**
In law, parents of children of compulsory school age (5-16) are required to ensure that they receive a suitable education by regular attendance at school or otherwise. Failure to comply with this statutory duty can lead to prosecution. Local Education Authorities (LEAs) are responsible in law for making sure that pupils attend school. Schools are required to take attendance registers twice a day: once at the beginning of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. In their register schools are required to distinguish whether pupils are present, engaged in an approved educational activity, or are absent. Where a day pupil of compulsory school age is absent, schools have to indicate in their register whether the absence is authorised by the school or unauthorised. In-depth analyses of the school attendance data are published as a National Statistics product in a Department for Education Statistical Bulletin in December of each year, which is available from Department for Education website. Further information on school attendance can be found on the Department for Education school attendance website.

**References**

Health and Social Care Information Centre
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