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The long-term outcomes of school absence

EMER SMYTH, ANNA MOYA AND MERIKE DARMODY

THE LONG-TERM OUTCOMES OF SCHOOL ABSENCE

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ABBREVIATIONS

CAO	Central Applications Office
GUI	Growing Up in Ireland
ILO	International Labour Organization
NFQ	National Framework of Qualifications
SES	Socio-economic status
TESS	Tusla Education Support Service

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

International research has pointed to the longer-term impact of school absence on outcomes in early adulthood. This study uses Growing Up in Ireland data to document the consequences of absence in primary and post-primary education for a range of outcomes in (early) adulthood, including educational qualifications, labour market position, and health and wellbeing. The main research questions addressed in the study are:

1. What is the relationship between school absence and outcomes in early adulthood, including Leaving Certificate attainment, post-school qualifications, employment status and quality, income, life satisfaction, and mental health?

2. Does the impact of school absenteeism on future outcomes vary depending on when the absences occur (i.e. primary or post-primary education)?

3. Does school-level absence have an effect over and above individual absenteeism?

4. Do the relationships between school absenteeism and early adulthood outcomes vary based on factors such as socio-economic status, gender, migrant background, and disability?

Attendance has become all the more important as a policy concern given the increase in school absence since the pandemic.

EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

The findings show a significant relationship between school absence and educational outcomes in Ireland. Even short spells of absence at age 13 are linked to lower Leaving Certificate grades. There is a very large performance gap related to chronic absence, that is, missing 20 or more days a year, a gap of 82 points even controlling for a range of individual and background factors that affect performance. This gap is evident across all social groups, with no evidence that more advantaged families can successfully buffer the negative effects of absenteeism for their children. Over and above the effects of individual patterns of absence, young people who attend a school with a higher prevalence of chronic absence achieve lower Leaving Certificate points. Even those who themselves have good attendance have poorer outcomes if school-level absence is higher. The

grade penalty for attending a high-absence school does not vary by socio-economic background but is found to be greater for migrant-origin students, perhaps because they are more reliant on school-based resources given that their parents may be less familiar with the Irish education system.

Young people with prolonged absence from school are also more negative about the benefits of their schooling to their broader social and personal development. Longer school absence is significantly related to the chances of going on to higher education and of achieving a degree, a pattern that is explained by differences in Leaving Certificate grades.

LABOUR MARKET OUTCOMES

Although educational attainment and employment outcomes are strongly linked in Ireland, the relationship between school absence and labour market outcomes is modest. No differences in labour market status at age 25 are found by absence level but young adults with longer absences are more likely to have spent time unemployed or out of the labour market on home duties. Similarly, there are only modest effects on employment quality, with some tendency for those with prolonged absence to be less likely to be in a professional or managerial job and to have lower employment income. Part of this difference is related to the more disadvantaged profile of those with prolonged absence.

HEALTH, WELLBEING AND SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS

Prolonged absence is found to impact on several important dimensions of wellbeing and social connectedness, though the size of the effects varies across outcomes. Even taking account of early socio-emotional difficulties, chronic absence at ages 9 and 13 is predictive of depressive symptoms and higher stress levels at both 20 and 25 years. Life satisfaction at 20 and 25 years of age is much lower among those who were persistently absent at age 13, a difference that is larger than that by gender or disability. Self-reported physical health at 20 and 25 years is found to decline with increasing absence at age 13, even allowing for the effect of earlier health status, disability and social background.

The findings show fewer close ties with others, social relatedness, among those who were chronically absent. Much lower levels of general trust in others are evident even among those with moderate levels of absence, four to six days. The gap in trust between those with no absence and those with 11 or more days is sizeable, larger than the gap by parental education, suggesting some degree of social alienation among this group of adults. However, this does not translate into differences in political engagement.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY

School absence emerges as an important driver of later inequality, with very significant negative consequences for educational attainment, health, wellbeing and social belonging. The findings highlight the urgency of addressing school absence, especially given the higher levels apparent since the pandemic. The patterns found have implications for policy as well as practice at the school level, pointing to the importance of clear messaging to parents about the value of attendance for their own and other people's children, the need for a range of tiered supports tailored to address specific drivers of absence, school supports to address learning loss and foster social integration among students who have been absent, and broader supports for families and communities to help address the socio-economic factors shaping non-attendance.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

A number of studies internationally have pointed to the longer-term consequences of high levels of school absence into early adulthood and beyond. Klein and Sosu (2024a), in their study of Scotland, find that overall absenteeism in upper secondary schooling reduces the likelihood of continuing to further or higher education, whilst simultaneously increasing the chances of being classified as NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) after school. In the context of the US, Smerillo et al. (2018) indicate that chronic absenteeism in middle grades reduces the high school graduation likelihood by 17 percentage points, while Liu et al. (2021) show that ten absences in ninth-grade Maths lower on-time high school graduation chances by six percentage points. Similarly, Attwood and Croll (2017) investigate truancy in secondary schools in England and reveal that both low and high levels of truancy are linked to less favourable outcomes at age 20, including lower rates of participation in education, a higher likelihood of unemployment, and reduced life satisfaction. Klein et al. (2024), studying the UK, indicate that school absences in both primary and secondary education are linked to unemployment and lower social class in adulthood. Interestingly, the effects of absenteeism may extend beyond educational and labour market outcomes, as Ansari et al. (2020), using data from the US, show that absenteeism is also associated with lower levels of civic engagement. Studies also suggest that the relationships between absenteeism and later outcomes vary amongst groups based on gender (Smerillo et al., 2018:15; Klein et al., 2024:45), ethnicity (Klein et al., 2024:46), parental involvement (Smerillo et al., 2018:15) and socio-economic background (Attwood and Croll, 2017:21).

However, to date no information has been available on the impact of school absence in the Irish context. Growing Up in Ireland data provide a unique opportunity to look at the consequences of absence in primary and post-primary education for a range of outcomes in (early) adulthood, including educational qualifications, labour market position, and health and wellbeing. Ireland might be expected to differ from other countries given the centrality of Leaving Certificate performance as a gateway to post-school education and employment, and the high rates of participation in third-level education. If school absence impacts on educational achievement, we might therefore expect larger differences in adult outcomes between non-attenders and attenders in Ireland. Looking at the consequences of school absence is particularly timely given the significant rise in non-attendance since the pandemic internationally (Dee, 2024; Lichand et al., 2024; Tomaszewski et al., 2023) and in Ireland (Moya et al., 2025). If such absence impacts on longer term outcomes, we might expect a larger group of young adults

to be affected in years to come.

The main research questions addressed in the study are:

1. What is the relationship between school absence and outcomes in early adulthood, including Leaving Certificate attainment, post-school qualifications, employment status and quality, income, life satisfaction, and mental health?

2. Does the impact of school absenteeism on future outcomes vary depending on when the absences occur (i.e. primary vs. post-primary education)?

3. Does school-level absence have an effect over and above individual absenteeism?

4. Do the relationships between school absenteeism and early adulthood outcomes vary based on factors such as socio-economic status, gender, migrant background, and disability?

1.2 RESEARCH ON THE LONG-TERM EFFECTS OF SCHOOL ABSENCE

1.2.1 Education outcomes

Multiple studies have indicated that absenteeism has long-term effects on the likelihood of completing secondary school, pursuing higher education and other measures of educational attainment. These are reviewed in the following section.

Klein and Sosu (2024a) establish a link between absenteeism in secondary schools and a lower likelihood of enrolment in further and higher education institutions. They use data from a longitudinal, nationally representative sample of the Scottish population. Specifically, they study pupils who attended state-funded schools for upper secondary education in the academic years 2008–2009 and 2009–2010 and were tracked in the 2011 census. Controlling for a large set of socio-demographic covariates, the authors find that 'those with higher overall absences are more likely to enter employment or be NEET rather than pursue further and higher education' (2024:8). Specifically, a one percentage point increase in overall absences is associated with a 0.5 percentage point reduction in the likelihood of persisting in education. Interestingly, they also test whether and to what extent academic attainment accounts for the effect of absences on employment versus further and higher education and find that it accounts for almost all of it (83%).

The study is valuable due to its representative sample and extensive control of risk factors. However, a limitation is that absenteeism is measured only in the final

grades of upper secondary education, and some evidence suggests that the timing of absences matters for its effects on young adulthood educational outcomes (Ansari et al., 2025; Klein et al., 2024). Most importantly, outcomes are measured only one to two years after upper secondary education, restricting its ability to assess the long-term effects of absenteeism on educational trajectories.

Some studies have specifically looked at high school graduation outcomes. This is the case for Smerillo et al. (2018), who analyse longitudinal data from Chicago, tracking a cohort of low-income, predominantly African-American students who are at heightened risk of academic underperformance and dropping out. The study focuses on chronic absenteeism, defined as missing an average of 14 or more school days in a school year. The findings reveal a strong negative correlation between chronic absenteeism in middle school and high school completion rates. Specifically, students with persistent absences during the middle grades had an 18-percentage-point lower likelihood of obtaining a four-year high school diploma. Moreover, their probability of graduating with a diploma by age 21 was reduced by 17 percentage points, while their likelihood of completing any form of high school education by that age declined by approximately 11 percentage points. These findings are based on models that control for child and family demographic risk factors, including single parenthood and parental education, although not income. The limitations of the study include measuring only chronic absenteeism, excluding less severe forms of absenteeism, and relying on a non-representative sample, limiting the generalisability of its findings. Moreover, they look at a few years shortly after finishing high school.

Further insights on high school graduation outcomes are provided by Allensworth and Easton's (2007) descriptive figures from a large-scale database of ninth graders, who are approximately 14 to 15 years old, in Chicago. Their findings indicate that even moderate absenteeism is linked with lower rates of high school graduation. Specifically, missing one to two weeks per semester – a common pattern for this age-group – is related to a substantially lower probability of graduating. In the 2000–01 cohort, only 63 per cent of students who missed approximately one week (5–9 days) graduated within four years, compared to 87 per cent of those who missed fewer than five days. While these figures highlight concerning trends, the study's reliance on descriptive statistics impedes its ability to establish causality.

Liu et al. (2021), Ansari et al. (2020) and Klein et al. (2024) look at high school graduation as well as further and higher education transitions. Liu et al. (2021) analyse administrative data from a large urban school district in California, integrating student attendance records with additional databases to obtain demographic information. Their findings indicate that ten absences in ninth grade (corresponding to 14–15 years old approximately) reduce high school graduation, immediate college enrolment, and any college enrolment by approximately one

to two percentage points, with these effects being statistically significant. A key strength of the study is its use of rich administrative data, which includes half-day absences and examines post-secondary outcomes beyond the immediate years after graduation. However, a notable limitation is that it does not account for income as a risk factor, despite its likely connection to both absenteeism and educational outcomes.

Ansari et al. (2020) examine a cohort of children born in 1991 across ten different sites in the US, tracking them through their mid-20s. School attendance is measured using administrative records from kindergarten to eighth grade, roughly covering age 5–6 to 13–14. The study is particularly useful because it accounts for a rich set of covariates, including child characteristics (e.g. gender, childcare quality, academic skills), family background (e.g. maternal education, vocabulary skills, parental quality, employment), and neighbourhood factors (e.g. proportion of households in poverty, receipt of government assistance). Even after accounting for this, their findings indicate that students with higher rates of absenteeism between kindergarten and eighth grade experience poorer educational outcomes. Specifically, frequent absences are associated with a lower high school grade point average, a reduced likelihood of high school graduation, and fewer reported years of post-secondary education.

Klein et al. (2024) also report problematic associations between absenteeism and post-secondary educational outcomes, though their findings present a more nuanced picture that to some extent contradicts the general trends established in the literature. They analyse a longitudinal dataset representative of individuals born in Britain in 1970, with data collected at birth, ages 5, 10, and 16, and subsequently at four-year intervals between ages 26 and 46, providing, relative to other studies, a large long-term scope. They examine various measures of educational attainment, including having no qualifications, lower-level qualifications, middle-level qualifications, higher-level qualifications, a first degree, and a higher degree. Their findings indicate a significant association between school absences and the likelihood of having no formal qualifications. Specifically, individuals who missed five days of school at age 10 – the sample average – have a 0.66 percentage point higher probability of not obtaining any qualifications by age 42. However, it is worth noting that this is the only statistically significant association. This could be due to the study's cohort belonging to an older generation, which may have experienced different dynamics between attendance patterns and educational or labour market conditions. Alternatively, a five-day cut-off may be too low to have a significant impact in the longer term.

Liu et al. (2021) and Ansari et al. (2020) do not control for school (dis)engagement, and since absenteeism may reflect disengagement, the link with lower graduation rates is not necessarily causal. Klein et al. (2024), however, does control for educational motivation, and as mentioned, their findings show more modest

effects of absenteeism on educational outcomes.

The study by Klein et al. (2024) also considers the relationship between average pupil absences (years 1–11) and GCSE attainment,[1] which seems to be stronger than the relationship with gaining qualifications. After adjusting for covariates, all effect sizes are reduced but remain statistically significant at the 0.1 per cent level. In England, each one percentage point increase in cumulative absences is associated with a 2.2 percentage point decrease in the likelihood of obtaining five or more GCSEs. Additionally, increased absenteeism corresponds to lower academic performance, reducing the Attainment 8 score[2] by 6.4 per cent of a standard deviation (SD), the English GCSE score by 5.2 per cent SD, and the Maths GCSE score by 5.5 per cent SD.

Three studies, in the context of England (Attwood and Croll, 2017), Scotland (Klein et al., 2024) and the UK as a whole (Dräger et al., 2023) further confirm the links between high-stakes national exams at the end of post-compulsory schooling and absenteeism.

The first one is that by Attwood and Croll (2017), who conduct a large-scale longitudinal study in England, analysing data collected when participants were aged 14–15 and again at 20–21. The study examines truancy[3] and its relationship with GCSE (lower secondary) performance and further education participation. The findings indicate that truancy is associated with poorer GCSE outcomes, regardless of its severity. Among students who had never engaged in truancy, approximately one in eight failed to achieve at least a grade C in any GCSE subject. In contrast, this proportion was nearly twice as high for those with low levels of truancy and more than four times higher for those with higher levels of truancy. Additionally, truancy at ages 14–15 is linked to a lower rate of continuing education at age 20. While nearly half of non-truant students remained in education at this stage, this figure dropped to just over a quarter for those with lower levels of truancy and to only one in eight for those with higher levels. This study highlights concerning links between absenteeism and GCSE attainment; however, it has important limitations. It focuses exclusively on truancy, overlooking other forms of absenteeism, and relies solely on cross-tabulations and descriptive statistics, limiting its ability to establish causal relationships.

Nonetheless, Dräger et al. (2023) and Klein et al. (2024), who employ a more comprehensive and methodologically robust approach, confirm the patterns identified by Attwood and Croll (2017). Using data from a large-scale longitudinal

1 GCSEs are taken by all students and play a crucial role in shaping future educational and labour market opportunities, as they influence access to further education, training, and employment pathways.

2 The Attainment 8 score is a measure of a student's academic attainment at the last stage of secondary education in the UK based on eight subjects, including English and Maths (which carry greater weight), three subjects from a list that includes Geography, History, Languages, and others, as well as additional approved subjects.

3 Truancy refers to absence from school without a reason (such as illness) and usually without parental awareness.

study of children in the UK, Dräger et al. (2023) apply k-median clustering to classify students based on their absenteeism trajectories throughout their school careers. Their analysis identifies six absenteeism trajectories, ordered by magnitude. The largest group consists of students with very low absences, followed by those with moderately decreasing authorised absences and those with moderately increasing authorised absences. A smaller group maintains a constantly moderate level of authorised absences. The two smallest categories capture students with dramatically increasing absences, one with authorised and the other with unauthorised absences.

The authors control for a wide range of risk factors at the individual, family, and school levels, including socio-economic status, demographics, disruptive events, pupils' cognitive skills, and school characteristics. Even after accounting for these, significant differences in academic achievement remain across absenteeism groups, measured by the likelihood of achieving five or more GCSE passes, as well as English and Maths scores. These disparities are not only evident when comparing students with very low and very high absences but also across most absenteeism categories. Students with dramatically increasing unauthorised absences experience the worst academic outcomes. Compared to those with very low absences, students in this category are 42 percentage points less likely to pass five or more GCSEs and score nearly three grade points lower in English and Maths. Additionally, the study finds that absenteeism has a greater impact on Maths than on English, but this effect is only observed when comparing students with moderate absenteeism to those with low absenteeism. However, for students with dramatically increasing absences, the negative effects are similarly severe for both subjects.

Klein et al. (2024) draw on nationally representative Scottish longitudinal data, examining student absences in the final year of compulsory education (when students tend to be aged 16–17) and their outcomes in national post-compulsory examinations used for university admissions. They find that a one percentage point increase in absenteeism is associated with a 3 per cent of a standard deviation decrease in academic achievement – a meaningful effect, amounting to more than a quarter of the attainment gap between students living in social housing and those who are not.

Overall, the literature provides strong evidence linking absenteeism to future educational outcomes, which is not unexpected given the well-documented associations between absenteeism and short-term academic performance (Aucejo and Romano, 2016; Gottfried, 2010, 2011a; Gottfried and Kirksey, 2017). A number of studies support this long-term connection, particularly in relation to high school graduation (Smerillo et al., 2018; Allensworth and Easton, 2007; Liu et al., 2021; Ansari et al., 2020) and the likelihood of progressing to further and higher education (Klein and Sosu, 2024a; Liu et al., 2021). Among the reviewed literature,

only Klein et al. (2024) do not find a significant link between absenteeism and the likelihood of high school graduation or continuation to further and higher education. However, they do identify a significant association between absenteeism and the probability of having no formal qualifications at all, indicating that absenteeism may still have severe long-term educational consequences. Other studies have also established links between absenteeism and lower attainment in national high stakes post-compulsory examinations in the UK (Attwood and Croll, 2017; Dräger et al., 2023; Klein et al., 2024). Overall, the evidence is largely consistent and points to concerning effects of absenteeism on students' educational trajectories. However, it is also important to acknowledge that the existing literature presents several limitations, including a limited long-term scope in some studies (e.g. Klein and Sosu, 2024a), a reliance on descriptive statistics that constrains the ability to draw causal inferences (Allensworth and Easton, 2007; Attwood and Croll, 2017), and the lack of control for relevant covariates in others (e.g. Liu et al., 2021).

1.2.2 Labour market / economic outcomes

Although to a lesser extent than educational outcomes, research has explored potential connections between absenteeism and economic and labour market outcomes. Several studies provide evidence that absenteeism is indeed associated with negative labour market outcomes, especially employment status. These studies have generally looked at the association rather than potential mechanisms explaining the relationship such as physical and mental health.

Klein and Sosu (2024a) use data from a longitudinal, nationally representative sample of the Scottish population. They track students who attended state-funded schools for upper secondary education (usually corresponding to ages 16–18) in the academic years 2008–2009 and 2009–2010, following their post-school destinations in the 2011 census. As previously discussed, absenteeism is associated with a lower likelihood of pursuing further and higher education and a higher probability of entering employment instead. Additionally, overall absenteeism is linked to an increased likelihood of being NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training), with a one percentage point increase in absences raising the probability of being NEET by 0.3 percentage points. However, it is worth mentioning that they distinguish between different types of absences and find that sickness-related absences significantly increase the risk of being NEET, whereas truancy does not.

Attwood and Croll (2017) conduct a large-scale longitudinal study in England, using data collected when participants were aged 14–15 and again at 20–21. Their findings indicate that low-level truants were twice as likely to be unemployed at age 20 compared to non-truants, while high-level truants were four times as likely to be unemployed. However, their study relies solely on cross-tabulations and descriptive statistics, which limits its ability to establish causal relationships.

Ansari et al. (2020) not only establish a link between absenteeism and unemployment but also identify associations with other negative economic outcomes. The authors study a cohort of children born in 1991 across ten different sites in the United States, examining school attendance from kindergarten through eighth grade and tracking their young adulthood outcomes through their mid-20s. The study controls for a comprehensive set of covariates, including child, family, and neighbourhood characteristics. Their findings indicate that participants who were more frequently absent during early schooling reported greater economic hardship in young adulthood. They were also more likely to receive government assistance and less likely to be employed, with effect sizes ranging from 10–18 per cent of a standard deviation. This study is particularly valuable due to its comprehensive control of risk factors and its examination of several economic and labour market outcomes. However, an important limitation is that the sample is disproportionately composed of middle-class and white families, which may restrict the generalisability of its findings to more diverse populations.

Other research offers a more nuanced perspective on the link between absenteeism and future labour market outcomes, showing that while some outcomes are affected, others are not – often yielding contradictory findings across different studies.

This is the case for the study by Klein et al. (2024). They analyse a longitudinal dataset representative of individuals born in Britain in 1970, with data collected at multiple points throughout their lives, including at birth, ages 5, 10, and 16, and then at four-year intervals between ages 26 and 46. Their findings indicate that the associations between school absences and entering the salariat or working class are statistically non-significant. Additionally, the study finds no evidence that school absences negatively impact the number of months spent unemployed or earnings. However, even after controlling for a range of covariates, school absenteeism remains significantly linked to non-employment. Specifically, individuals who missed five days of school at age 10 (the sample average) are 0.6 percentage points more likely to be non-employed compared to those who had perfect attendance.

Cattan et al. (2023) conducted a study using data from a nationally representative cohort of Swedish children born between 1930 and 1935. They examined school absences during grades 1–4, typically corresponding to ages 7–10. The researchers assessed labour market outcomes at ages 25–30 and 35–40, as well as pension earnings when participants were aged 68–78. The study found no statistically significant association between early absenteeism and employment status. However, absenteeism was found to be negatively associated with earnings, contradicting the findings by Klein et al. (2024). Specifically, each additional day of absence corresponded to a reduction in annual earnings of approximately SEK 80 (about €7.28). Moreover, absenteeism was linked to lower pension earnings.

Each additional day of absence was associated with a decrease in pension earnings of approximately SEK 396, equating to around €36.03. While this study offers valuable long-term insights – being one of the few to examine pension outcomes – it is important to note its limitations. The analysis controlled for a limited set of covariates and did not account for family socio-economic status, which could confound the observed associations. Therefore, these findings should be interpreted with caution.

Hibbett et al. (1990) use data from a longitudinal study that is nationally representative of individuals born in the UK in 1958, tracking their truancy behaviour between ages 11 and 16 and examining their labour market outcomes at age 23. Their findings indicate that being out of the labour force and time spent unemployed as a proportion of economically active time are not statistically associated with truancy. However, truants are more likely to experience unstable job patterns. They tend to have held more jobs, although the differences are not large, and have spent less time in the same job, with a gap of nine months for men and 11 months for women. Truants are also more likely to be in low-prestige occupations. Compared to their non-truant peers, they are ten times less likely to hold professional, managerial, or intermediate non-manual jobs, with a higher concentration in unskilled manual occupations. Regarding income, their findings align with Klein et al. (2024) but contradict Cattan et al. (2023) – possibly due to the shared geographical focus with the former. They find little statistically significant difference in earnings. However, they warn that the seemingly high incomes of truants may be deceptive, as they are disproportionately concentrated in manual jobs, where earnings tend to plateau earlier compared to career trajectories in non-manual professions.

Overall, there is a general trend linking absenteeism to labour market and economic outcomes; however, findings vary across studies and at times conflict, resulting in a body of evidence that is more mixed and inconsistent than that found in the literature on educational outcomes. Unemployment status stands out as a particularly well-examined outcome, with Klein et al. (2024), Klein and Sosu (2024a), Attwood and Croll (2017), and Ansari et al. (2020) identifying a connection between absenteeism and a higher likelihood of unemployment. However, Cattan et al. (2023) and Hibbett et al. (1990) do not find a statistically significant relationship between absenteeism and unemployment. Income has been less frequently studied, with mixed results. Klein et al. (2024) and Hibbett et al. (1990) find no significant association between absenteeism and earnings, whereas Cattan et al. (2023) report a negative relationship in this regard. The literature also displays important limitations. Some rely on non-representative samples (Ansari et al., 2020), focus exclusively on truancy rather than absenteeism more broadly (Attwood and Croll, 2017; Hibbett et al., 1990), do not control for socio-economic status (SES) (Cattan et al., 2023) or rely primarily on descriptive statistics, limiting causal inference (Attwood and Croll, 2017).

1.2.3 Other outcomes

Beyond educational and employment outcomes, a number of studies have linked absenteeism to other kinds of effects. A handful of studies have examined the relationship between absenteeism and later emotional and mental health outcomes. Attwood and Croll (2017) use data collected when participants were aged 14–15 and again at 20–21, and explore young people's self-reported life satisfaction. While only a minority of respondents expressed being 'very' or 'fairly' dissatisfied with their lives, the proportion was twice as high among low-level truants compared to non-truants and more than twice as high among high-level truants. However, it is important to recognise that the analysis is based on descriptive statistics and cross-tabulations, which limit the ability to draw causal conclusions and instead offer insight into broader relational trends.

However, two studies with more robust methodologies are also suggestive of a relationship between non-attendance and socio-emotional difficulties. In the United States, data from a nationally representative sample link high school quality – including absenteeism – to adult depression (Dudovitz et al., 2016). The study follows adolescents in grades 7–12 during the 1994–95 school year and tracks them into adulthood, when participants were aged 24–34. It finds that a decrease in average daily attendance from 95 per cent or above to 90–94 per cent was associated with a 35 per cent increase in the odds of a depression diagnosis in adulthood. Further reinforcing this link between absenteeism and depression, a study by Hibbett et al. (1990), which follows an English cohort born in 1958 at ages 7, 11 and 16 and then examines outcomes at age 23, finds that high-level truants were more likely to experience depression, controlling for a wide range of covariates.

Presenting even more concerning findings on mental health, a recent study by Diogu et al. (2025) examines the relationship between school exclusion and suicide rates. The authors use data from Wales covering the 2012–2019 school years, focusing on students aged 4–16 who were either chronically absent (defined as missing 20 per cent or more of school days) or excluded from school, and analyse their deaths by suicide in 2021. Although no significant associations were found for chronic absenteeism, the study reports that pupils who were excluded from school were 2.3 times more likely to die by suicide than those who were not, controlling for various risk factors, including area-level deprivation, special educational needs, eligibility for free school meals, and pre-existing mental health conditions.

Some studies have also established links between absenteeism and externalising behaviour. Henry et al. (2012), using a US sample, find that a school disengagement warning index they constructed – which does not focus solely on absenteeism but includes it among other indicators, such as test scores and suspensions – is associated with problem behaviours, including drug abuse and encounters with law enforcement in early adulthood. Similarly, a study by Rocque et al. (2017) links

truancy at ages 12 and 14 in a South London sample with outcomes in middle adulthood, finding that truants were more likely to have convictions, substance abuse issues, and aggressive behaviour. Zhang et al. (2007) further support this evidence, showing that adolescents referred to state authorities for truancy in a US state were more likely to experience incarcerations and probation.

Another interesting study uncovering an association between non-attendance and outcomes beyond educational and labour market spheres is provided by Ansari et al. (2020). The authors examine risky or deviant behaviours, as well as engagement in criminal activities, and do not find a statistically significant association with absenteeism. However, they do identify a link between absenteeism and civic engagement, measured by the likelihood of voting in the last election. Specifically, individuals who were more frequently absent were 4.7 percentage points less likely to have voted in the US 2012 election. The study does not formally test potential explanations for this relationship, but the authors suggest that absenteeism may be linked to a broader sense of disconnection from society. They propose that 'absenteeism from school might indicate or exacerbate a broader withdrawal from conventional institutions' (2020:10), including democratic processes.

Overall, research on the impacts of absenteeism beyond education and the labour market – such as life satisfaction levels, socio-emotional difficulties, criminal involvement, and civic engagement – is not abundant. However, the existing evidence suggests that there is more to uncover in these directions.

1.2.4 Variation in the effects of absence across social groups

Some studies have explored how the relationship between absenteeism and adulthood outcomes may not be uniform across the population but instead vary according to factors such as gender, ethnicity, and socio-economic status. However, research in this area remains limited and yields mixed findings. To begin with, four studies provide evidence that socio-demographic characteristics do influence the impact of absenteeism on early adulthood outcomes.

Smerillo et al. (2018) find that the negative effects of absenteeism on high school attainment are exacerbated for male students, those with low levels of parental involvement, and those whose mothers have completed high school. Drawing from a longitudinal study in Chicago, the authors examine the relationship between chronic absenteeism in the early middle grades (with kids typically aged 11–13) and key high school attainment measures, including four-year graduation by diploma, graduation by diploma by age 21, and any high school completion by age 21. The study considers potential gendered disparities and finds that absenteeism has a stronger negative effect on high school attainment for males than for females across all measured outcomes. For example, the effect size for four-year graduation by diploma is −0.48 for males compared to −0.24 for females, indicating that absenteeism appears to be more detrimental to boys' educational

progression.

Moreover, they find that the negative effects of absenteeism on high school attainment are more pronounced for children with low levels of parental involvement.[4] Specifically, for four-year graduation by diploma, the effect size for children with less-involved parents is substantially larger than that for children with more-involved parents, suggesting that parental engagement may serve as a protective factor against the consequences of absenteeism.

Finally, and perhaps unexpectedly, they observe that absenteeism appears to be more detrimental for children of high school completers than for those whose parents did not complete high school. However, the authors caution that this finding may be influenced by downward bias in estimating the effects of absenteeism for chronically absent children of non-completers. They suggest that part of the impact of chronic absenteeism on educational outcomes in this group may be masked or confounded by other underlying risk factors.

Attwood and Croll (2017) identify nuanced patterns in how socio-economic status (SES) shapes the relationship between truancy and young adulthood outcomes, specifically GCSE attainment and unemployment. SES is measured based on parental occupational categories, grouped into three tiers: professional and managerial, intermediate, and routine occupations or unemployment. Using a longitudinal sample of individuals in England, the study tracks participants' truancy levels at age 13/14 and examines their GCSE outcomes at age 16 and employment status at age 20/21. Their findings suggest that truancy is, by and large, associated with both GCSE attainment and unemployment across the SES spectrum. However, the relationship is complex and varies depending on the specific outcome considered.

When examining GCSE outcomes, the study finds that even among the highest SES group, students with high levels of truancy were ten times more likely to achieve poor GCSE results compared to their non-truant peers. Moreover, these high-SES truants were twice as likely to have poor GCSE outcomes as non-truants from the lowest SES group, indicating that socio-economic advantage alone does not offset the negative academic effects of severe truancy. However, at lower levels of truancy, SES appears to play a more influential role. Occasional truants from high-SES backgrounds performed better than non-truants from both lower-SES groups, and occasional truants from middle-income families outperformed non-truants from routine occupational backgrounds. This suggests that while extreme forms of truancy have consistently negative effects, students from more privileged backgrounds may still maintain better academic outcomes despite occasional

[4] In this study, parental involvement refers to teachers' perceptions of parental participation in school activities, meaning it captures involvement specifically within the educational realm.

absences.

The study also examines unemployment outcomes, revealing a similarly complex relationship between truancy and socio-economic status (SES). As expected, non-truants from high-SES backgrounds are less likely to be unemployed than their truant peers, and the same trend holds for young people from intermediate SES backgrounds. However, the pattern shifts among the lowest-SES group. While high-level truants in this group experience the highest unemployment rates, low-level truants are actually less likely to be unemployed than their non-truant counterparts. A broader trend emerges when comparing across SES groups: young people from higher and intermediate SES backgrounds, including those with more severe truancy histories, tend to have better employment outcomes than any individual from the lowest-SES group, even non-truants.

There seems to be a buffering effect where students from more privileged backgrounds are less impacted by problematic attendance patterns than their peers from disadvantaged families. While this protective advantage does not extend to GCSE outcomes for those with severe truancy, it becomes more apparent in employment prospects. It is worth noting that this conclusion contrasts with the findings of Smerillo et al. (2018), who report that the negative effects of absenteeism on high school attainment are more pronounced among students whose mothers have completed high school. This apparent inconsistency may stem from differences in how socio-economic status is measured across the two studies, as well as from the distinct types of absenteeism being examined: chronic absenteeism in Smerillo et al. (2018) versus truancy in Attwood and Croll (2017). Differences may also be a product of national or temporal variation in labour market conditions, such as the unemployment rate. Moreover, whilst this study insights are valuable, they should also be interpreted with caution given the study's reliance on descriptive statistics and cross-tabulations.

Cattan et al. (2023) and Hibbett et al. (1990) both explore the role of gender in moderating the long-term effects of absenteeism yet arrive at conflicting conclusions. Cattan et al. (2023), using data from a nationally representative Swedish cohort born between 1930 and 1935, examine absences during grades 1–4 (ages 7–10). While they find no overall association between absenteeism and secondary school completion, disaggregated analysis reveals that the effect is statistically significant for men but negligible for women. This suggests that absenteeism negatively affects educational attainment for males, but not for females. However, the authors caution that their analysis includes a limited set of controls, meaning that unobserved confounding variables may influence the results. In contrast, Hibbett et al. (1990) analyse a nationally representative UK cohort born in 1958, focusing on truancy at ages 11 and 16 and outcomes at age 23. Their findings show that for men, truancy is not associated with net family income in young adulthood, whereas for women, truancy is linked to lower net

family income, albeit with a small effect size. These opposing findings may reflect differences in national context, the timing and type of absenteeism examined (early childhood absenteeism vs. adolescent truancy), and the outcomes measured (educational attainment vs. income), all of which likely shape how gender interacts with absenteeism.

Despite the reviewed studies demonstrating how absenteeism's consequences are not always evenly distributed, two other studies show little to no variation.

Ansari et al.'s (2020) research concludes that socio-economic status and urbanicity were not meaningful factors in the relationship between absenteeism and a number of education and economic outcomes. They examine how absenteeism throughout a student's school trajectory, from kindergarten to eighth grade (roughly covering ages 5–14), is associated with various educational and labour market outcomes in their mid-20s, using a large-scale sample in the United States. Their findings reveal links between absenteeism and economic hardship, reliance on government assistance, and a lower likelihood of employment, as well as with educational outcomes such as high school GPA and enrolment. The study also investigates whether these relationships are moderated by urban versus rural settings and socio-economic background, which is measured through various indicators, including equivalised needs and maternal education. Overall, the authors find 'little evidence' that 'the young adulthood outcomes of interest varied as a function of urbanicity and across the socio-economic distribution' (2020:10). However, they acknowledge that their sample over-represents middle-class families and lacks racial and ethnic diversity, which may limit the generalisability of their findings.

Klein et al. (2024b) arguably offer the most comprehensive examination of how the relationship between absenteeism and educational outcomes may vary across different student characteristics. They investigate whether the negative effects of absenteeism on GCSE attainment that shapes post-compulsory education outcomes are moderated by gender, ethnicity, family socio-economic status (SES), and special educational needs (SEND). Beyond this, they also explore whether the impact of authorised versus unauthorised absences differs across these groups. The study analyses a longitudinal dataset representative of individuals born in Britain in 1970, with data collected at birth, ages 5, 10, and 16, and subsequently at four-year intervals between ages 26 and 46.

Regarding gender, the negative effects of absenteeism on English and Maths attainment are slightly more pronounced for boys, though statistical significance is only reached for Maths. In terms of ethnicity, the negative impact of absenteeism on attainment is greater for students from Mixed, Black Caribbean, and Other backgrounds, whereas it is smaller and not statistically significant for pupils of Indian and Black African backgrounds, suggesting that absenteeism does not

appear to be as detrimental to academic performance for these groups. These disparities are more pronounced in English than in Maths. An additional finding is that for pupils from Mixed and Black Caribbean backgrounds, the stronger negative impact of absenteeism on attainment is primarily driven by unauthorised absences. However, the authors caution that only a few pairwise comparisons of absenteeism effects across ethnic groups show statistically significant differences, suggesting that while patterns emerge, they should be interpreted with caution.

Moving on to family socio-economic status, the authors conclude that there are no meaningful differences in how absenteeism impacts English and Maths attainment in this regard. Likewise, they find little variation in the effect of total absences on attainment across different educational backgrounds. However, they do observe that unauthorised absences tend to be more detrimental to academic performance than authorised absences among pupils whose parents have higher educational qualifications. Finally, when comparing students with SEND to those without, the differences in the impact of absenteeism on attainment are small and statistically non-significant. However, when distinguishing between authorised and unauthorised absences, a pattern emerges: for pupils with SEND who have a statement, the impact of authorised absences on attainment is much less pronounced than that of unauthorised absences and is statistically non-significant.

Despite some of the reviewed disparities, the authors themselves acknowledge that there is no strong or consistent evidence that the relationship between absenteeism and GCSE outcomes is significantly moderated by gender, ethnicity, family SES, or special educational needs. As they summarise, 'absenteeism's negative impact on educational attainment is consistent across (…) socio-demographic groups (family SES, gender, SEND, and ethnicity)' (2024:51).

Klein and Sosu (2024a) use a Scottish nationally representative sample of students in the final year of compulsory schooling, tracked to upper secondary stages, and look at the relation between absenteeism during this period and achievement in the national high-stakes exam at the end of compulsory and post-compulsory education – with special attention to how SES may moderate such a relationship. By and large, they find that absences had detrimental effects on students from a range of SES backgrounds – using a wide definition of SES encompassing parental education, class FSM registration and housing tenure. The only exception is that they provide 'evidence for a stronger negative effect of sickness absences on the achievement of pupils from lower compared to higher SES backgrounds' (2024a:69). Such findings are largely consistent with the results of Klein et al. (2024b), pointing at the fact that no groups of students are spared from the negative effects of non-attendance.

Overall, the evidence on whether and how socio-demographic characteristics shape the effects of absenteeism on adulthood outcomes remains mixed and

inconsistent. As reviewed, Attwood and Croll (2017) suggest that socio-economic status (SES) may act as a protective factor in this regard. In contrast, Smerillo et al. (2018) find that the detrimental effects of absenteeism on high school attainment are more pronounced for students whose parents completed high school. Meanwhile, Ansari et al. (2020) and Klein et al. (2024) report that socio-economic background does not significantly moderate the negative effects of absenteeism, further highlighting the lack of consensus in the literature. Evidence regarding the role of gender is also mixed, while research on other factors such as ethnicity and urban–rural location remains limited. Overall, further empirical investigation is needed to better understand how these socio-demographic variables may moderate the long-term impacts of absenteeism.

1.2.5 Type of absences

Some of the reviewed studies suggest that the type of absence – whether authorised (including sickness-related absences) or unauthorised (such as truancy) – matters for long-term academic trajectories.

Dräger et al. (2023), drawing on data from a large-scale longitudinal study of children in the UK, classify students into different absenteeism trajectories throughout their school careers. They find that students with dramatically increasing unauthorised absences experience worse outcomes in GCSE examination than students with similarly increasing authorised absences. This finding leads the authors to conclude that 'trajectories of unauthorised vs. authorised absences have different negative effects on achievement', with the former being more detrimental for academic achievement (2023:10).

Klein et al.'s (2024b) study of absenteeism in England also positions the type of absence as meaningful for GCSE results, though their findings suggest a more nuanced picture than that presented by Dräger et al. (2023). The authors indicate no significant differences in the effect of absence type on the likelihood of obtaining five or more GCSEs (in England and Wales) or GCSE Maths (in Wales). However, when considering Attainment 8/Capped 9 and GCSE English, unauthorised absences are significantly more detrimental to academic attainment than authorised absences.

Klein and Sosu (2024a) also distinguish between truancy and sickness-related absences in their analysis of absenteeism and enrolment in further and higher education with a representative Scottish sample. They find that truancy has a more pronounced negative impact on educational progression. Specifically, a one percentage point increase in sickness-related absences leads to a 0.5 percentage point reduction in the likelihood of continuing studies in further and higher education, whereas the same increase in truancy results in a larger decline of 0.7 percentage points.

Hibbett et al. (1990) provide further evidence that unauthorised absences are more detrimental than authorised ones. The authors draw from a longitudinal, nationally representative sample of individuals born in the UK in 1958, tracking their truancy behaviours at ages 11 and 16 and examining their outcomes at age 23. They test the hypothesis that truancy and other forms of absenteeism have equally negative effects but find that the adverse outcomes they identify – lower occupational prestige and less stable employment careers – are specifically linked to truancy, rather than absenteeism more broadly.

A somewhat contrasting perspective is offered by Klein et al. (2024), who draw on nationally representative Scottish longitudinal data, examining student absences in the final year of compulsory education (when students tend to be aged 15–16 years old) and their performance in national post-compulsory examinations used for university admissions. The study finds that most types of absence – including truancy, sickness, and exceptional domestic circumstances – have a statistically significant negative effect on academic attainment. The only exception is family holidays, which do not show a significant impact on performance in one of the specified models based on the first-difference approach.[5] In terms of magnitude, exceptional domestic circumstances have the largest effect, followed by truancy, family holidays, and sickness absence – which is a pattern broadly consistent with prior literature. However, the authors note that the differences in magnitude between these types of absence are not statistically significant, suggesting that all forms of absence (with the exception of family holidays) are similarly detrimental to academic achievement.

Overall, most evidence points at the fact that the type of absence is not inconsequential for educational outcomes. While previous studies have shown that authorised and sickness-related absenteeism can be more detrimental to short-term educational outcomes than unauthorised absences and truancy (Gershenson et al., 2017; Gottfried, 2009), the reviewed research suggests that these effects may also extend to long-term educational outcomes.

1.2.6 Timing of absences

There is limited evidence on whether the long-term educational effects of absenteeism vary based on when it occurs during a student's schooling, and the findings remain inconclusive.

Ansari et al.'s (2020) research divided educational trajectories into three periods: primary grades (kindergarten through second grade), middle grades (third through sixth grade), and eighth grade, roughly covering ages 5–14. Their findings indicate that the timing of absences does not influence the relationship between

[5] A method that estimates the effect of a given variable by looking at changes over time within the same units, controlling for unobserved characteristics.

absenteeism and labour market outcomes. However, they do observe that absences in eighth grade have a significantly stronger negative impact on educational long-term outcomes compared to absences in earlier years. Specifically, for three of the four educational outcomes studied, absenteeism in eighth grade was associated with effect sizes ranging from 10–35 per cent of a standard deviation, whereas absenteeism in the primary and middle grades had much weaker effects, with effect sizes of only 1–7 per cent of a standard deviation. Ansari and Pianta (2019), using the same sample of a US cohort born in 1991, similarly find that absences in the eighth grade are more detrimental, looking at several outcomes at age 15. Their results further point to the direction that the timing of non-attendance does matter, as 'students who were more frequently absent in eighth grade performed worse academically, were less likely to take more rigorous math and science courses, exhibited more behavior problems, demonstrated less optimal social skills, and were more likely to engage in risky and sexual behaviors' (2019:56).

Klein et al.'s (2024) research in England also finds that the impact of absenteeism on GCSE attainment varies depending on when absences occur. Specifically, absences in years 3–5 (ages 7–10) have a less pronounced effect on GCSE attainment compared to those in years 1 and 2 (ages 5–7). Moreover, from year 5 to year 6 (around age 10 to 11), there is a sharp increase in the negative impact of absences on the likelihood of obtaining five or more GCSEs.

Different conclusions on the matter are reached by Cattan et al. (2023). The authors conducted a study using data from a nationally representative cohort of Swedish children born between 1930 and 1935, focusing on school absences during grades 1–4 (ages 7–10). Their findings suggest that absenteeism during this period is associated with secondary school completion for men, as well as levels of adult earnings and pension income. However, they do not find evidence that the impact of absenteeism on these outcomes varies depending on the specific grade in which the absences occurred.

Overall, research on the influence of absenteeism timing remains scarce, and findings are inconsistent, varying depending on the measurement of absenteeism used and the specific outcome studied.

In sum, there is a growing body of research internationally on the impact of school absence on outcomes into early adulthood, especially on educational achievement and post-school pathways. Much of the research points to an educational penalty to school absence but findings are more mixed on the extent to which such a disadvantage is evident in relation to labour market outcomes. There has been much less attention to the impact of absence on perceptions of education and on broader wellbeing, a lacuna addressed in this study.

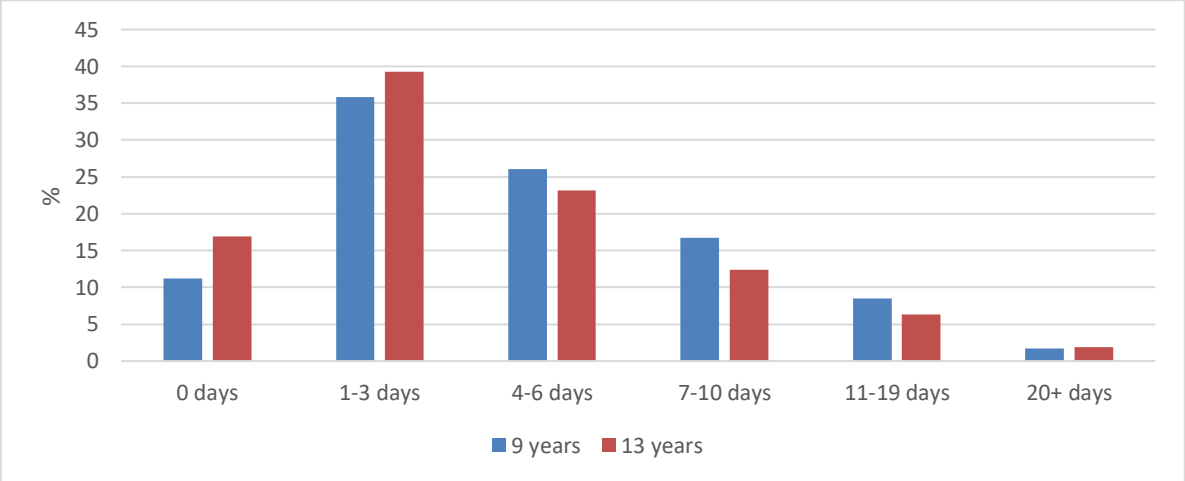
1.3 DATA AND METHODOLOGY

1.3.1 Data

This report uses data from Cohort '98 of the Growing Up in Ireland (GUI) study, the national longitudinal study of children and young people in Ireland. Cohort '98 was first sampled at 9 years of age in 2007/8 and selected on the basis of the primary school attended. Young people were followed up at 13, 17/18, 20 and 25 years of age. The outcomes considered in this report (see section 1.3.2) were measured at 17, 20 and 25 years of age. Response rates for young adults at these three waves were 76 per cent, 62 per cent and 49 per cent respectively. The data have been reweighted to take account of non-response and attrition.

Absence from school is measured at 9 and 13 years of age, and based on reports by the young person's mother. Mothers were asked 'during the last school year, about how many days was [name] absent from school for any reason?'. Response categories ranged from '0 days' to 'more than 20 days'. In keeping with administrative data, absence levels are higher at primary than at post-primary level (Figure 1.1).[6] It should be noted that this information was collected in a face-to-face interview so there may be some under-reporting of absence due to social desirability. Furthermore, it would have been preferable to have measures of school absence at the start of primary education (prior to age 9) and closer to the end of post-primary education. Nonetheless, GUI data provide the first opportunity to look at the longer-term consequences of school absence in the Irish context.

FIGURE 1.1 SCHOOL ABSENCE AT AGES 9 AND 13, REPORTED BY MOTHER



Source: GUI Cohort '98, 9- and 13-year wave.

6 It is difficult to directly compare these patterns to those in administrative data for the same period because of differences in the cut-offs. However, GUI survey data indicate much lower levels of chronic absence than are found in the population. Nonetheless, we expect that the rank order of responses will remain broadly similar.

In addition to looking at the consequences of individual-level absence, the analyses explore whether school-level absence levels have an influence on outcomes over and above the individual level, a topic that has been under-explored in the international literature. At both the 9- and 13-year waves, school principals were asked about the proportion of students in the school that were absent for 20 days or more per school year, that is, the prevalence of chronic absentees. This is examined as a continuous measure, with further analyses distinguishing between high-absence schools, that is, where chronic attenders make up 15 per cent or more of the student population, and other schools.[7]

1.3.2 Outcome variables

The richness of GUI data allows us to capture several dimensions of outcomes in early adulthood, including educational attainment, labour market position, health and wellbeing, and political engagement. The study therefore builds upon existing international and Irish research to provide new evidence on the consequences of school absence for health and wellbeing, a previously under-researched domain.

1.3.2.1 Educational outcomes

A number of measures of educational outcomes have been analysed. These include Leaving Certificate performance (measured in terms of Central Applications Office (CAO) points) and whether the young adult had entered higher education, both captured at the 20-year wave. To allow for educational upgrading between 20 and 25 years of age and to include those who did not complete the Leaving Certificate,[8] a measure of educational attainment was collected at age 25. This was measured in terms of National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) levels; because of small numbers, the variable was recoded to range from level 4 or lower (junior cycle or less, or Leaving Certificate Applied) to level 9 or higher (master's/PhD).

To allow for a broader perspective on the impact of schooling, at age 17, young people were asked about the extent of which their second-level education had benefitted them in relation to a number of dimensions, with responses comprising 'Yes, a lot', 'Yes, some' and 'No help'. The dimensions mentioned were:

- Increasing your self-confidence;
- Helping you develop into a well-balanced person;
- Building good relations with friends of the opposite sex;
- Being able to talk and communicate well with others;

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7 Sixteen per cent of the sample attended a high-absence primary school while 23 per cent attended a high-absence post-primary school.

8 This group comprises those who left school before completion of senior cycle (upper secondary) education and those who took the Leaving Certificate Applied programme, a prevocational course that is not recognised for direct higher education entry.

- Knowing how to go about finding things out for yourself;
- Helping you to make new friends;
- Knowing how to acquire a new skill;
- Getting involved in sports;
- Giving you reading and writing skills;
- Appreciating reading for pleasure;
- Preparing you for the world of work;
- Giving you computer skills;
- Preparing you for adult life;
- Helping you think for yourself;
- Appreciating art or music;
- Helping you to decide what to do after you leave school.

For analysis purposes, responses to the 16 items were summed to give an overall scale of the perceived benefits of education, with a reliability of 0.835. The scale ranged from 15 to 45, with a mean of 33.8 and a standard deviation of 5.4.

1.3.2.2 Labour market outcomes

Most of the GUI sample were still in full-time education or training at age 20 so the measures of labour market outcomes are based on the 25-year wave. Labour market status was measured in terms of status at the time of the survey, using the International Labour Organization (ILO) measure distinguishing between employed, unemployed (and actively seeking work) and economically inactive. In addition, respondents were asked how many months they had spent in different labour market statuses over the past five years. The measures analysed here relate to time spent unemployed, not working because of illness or disability, and not working because of home duties. A number of measures of employment quality were analysed, including whether the job is part time (30 hours per week or less), whether it is permanent as opposed to fixed-term or temporary, occupational status based on assigning the International Socio-Economic Index of occupational status (ISEI) to the occupational group,[9] and monthly income from employment. In addition, the respondents were asked how satisfied they were with their job, with possible responses ranging from 0 (not at all satisfied) to 10 (completely satisfied).

[9] A binary measure distinguishing between professional/managerial occupations and all other groups was also analysed.

1.3.2.3 Health and wellbeing

There has been a lack of research on the relationship between school absence and health and wellbeing (with the exception of a study on life satisfaction by Attwood and Croll, 2017). A self-reported measure of overall health was collected at both 20 and 25 years of age, with responses comprising 'very healthy, no problems', 'healthy, but a few minor problems' and 'sometimes quite ill or almost always unwell'. At both waves, respondents completed the Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression (CES-D) scale. Respondents were asked to indicate how often they experienced each of eight symptoms of depression within the previous seven days. Higher scores mean more depressive symptoms but do not necessarily indicate that they meet the clinical criteria for depression. The Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS) stress subscale was also administered at both waves; this includes seven items, designed to capture difficulty relaxing and feeling upset or agitated over the previous week. At both 20 and 25, respondents were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with life, with responses ranging from 0 (extremely unsatisfied) to 10 (extremely satisfied).

Being absent from school might be expected to lead to involvement in risky behaviour, including anti-social behaviour, as young people potentially spend more time without a routine and/or unsupervised by adults. However, the only identified study finds no significant relationship between school absence and engagement in criminal activities (Ansari et al., 2020), though there is stronger evidence of a link between truancy and involvement in anti-social behaviour (Halls and Edwards, 2025). Two measures were used in this study: a scale of self-reported involvement in anti-social behaviour, ranging from not paying bus fare to involvement in violence, collected at age 17; and the Reactive-Proactive Aggression Questionnaire scale, which contains 23 items.

1.3.2.4 Social connection and political engagement

Prolonged absence from school might be expected to lead to less connection with others and perhaps to alienation from the political system, though to date this topic has been under-researched. Two measures of social connection with others were analysed. At 20 years of age, the young adults completed the Basic Needs Satisfaction Scale; the relatedness subscale is used to capture the quality of relationships with others, including items such as 'People in my life care about me'. At 25 years, respondents were asked to indicate about their level of trust in other people, with responses ranging from 0 (you can't be too careful in dealing with people) to 10 (most people can be trusted). At the same age, a number of aspects of political engagement were captured. Interest in politics ranged from 0 (not at all interested) to 10 (very interested). A summary measure was derived of involvement in nine types of political activities, ranging from signing a petition to working in a political party. Respondents were also asked if they were registered to vote.

1.3.3 Modelling strategy

The outcomes considered in this study include continuous, ordinal and binary measures so the type of models used is discussed further in Chapters 2 to 5. The approach taken is first to examine the 'raw' relationship between absence levels at ages 9 and 13 and the outcome in question. Then the model controls for individual and family background factors that might be expected to influence outcomes among young adults. Individual factors comprise gender and whether the young adult has a disability, that is, has a long-term illness or condition that hampers their day-to-day lives at least to some extent. The analyses adopt a multidimensional approach to measuring socio-economic background, consisting of parental education (the higher educational level of resident parents), household social class (based on the higher occupational level of parents if both are in employment), household income equivalised for household size and composition and divided into quintiles, and family structure (distinguishing between lone- and two-parent families). In addition, the analyses take account of whether the young adult was brought up in an urban or rural area and whether they come from a migrant background, that is, where both parents were born outside Ireland (or one parent if it is a lone-parent family). These background factors were measured at the age 13 wave to capture the family circumstances that have likely shaped adolescent development and at a point prior to the measurement of the outcomes considered.

The analyses therefore indicate the net impact of school absence on the outcome in question, over and above the effects of other individual and family characteristics. It should be noted that this is quite a stringent test of the impact of absence as socio-economic background is a significant predictor of school absenteeism (for a systematic review, see Sosu et al., 2021).

For the educational outcomes, analyses explore whether the patterns found are explained by school disengagement, measured by attitudes to school and teachers at age 9, different indicators of attitudes to school at 13 and 17, and the extent of positive and negative interaction with teachers at 13 and 17. This allows us to explore whether absence has a direct effect, for example, on Leaving Certificate grades or if the pattern found is related to disengagement associated with prolonged absence.

For the health outcome, analyses also control for mother-reported health of the child at age 9 in looking at outcomes at age 20 and for self-reported health at age 20 in looking at outcomes at age 25. This adjusts for the possibility that absence was driven by health status, over and above having a disability. For the wellbeing outcomes, adjustment is made for socio-emotional difficulties at age 9, measured using the mother report on the widely used Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ). Again, this is a stringent test as socio-emotional difficulties at age 9 may, at least partly, reflect the impact of earlier absences, not measured

here.

International research has reached varying conclusions on the extent to which school absence has the same impact on educational outcomes across social groups (see Section 1.2.4). To explore this issue, where significant associations are found, models explore the extent to which any such effects differ by gender, parental education, household social class, income and migrant background. Because of the number of different outcomes analysed in Chapters 3 and 4, potential variation by background characteristics is not examined but further research on the extent to which absence has heterogenous effects on labour market, health and wellbeing outcomes could usefully form the basis for further research.

1.4 OUTLINE OF THE REPORT

Chapter 2 looks at the relationship between school absence and educational outcomes, namely, Leaving Certificate grades, entry to higher education upon leaving school, the perceived benefits of education and educational attainment by age 25. The chapter also explores whether any effect of absence differs between more and less advantaged groups. Chapter 3 examines the association between school absence and labour market outcomes at age 25, capturing labour market status and the quality of employment. Chapter 4 provides new evidence on the relationship between school absence, wellbeing and belongingness, focusing on physical health, mental health and wellbeing, social relatedness and political engagement. Chapter 5 examines the consequences of school-level absence for adult outcomes. Chapter 6 summarises the findings and explores their implications for policy and practice in relation to school attendance.

CHAPTER 2

School absence and educational outcomes

2.1 INTRODUCTION

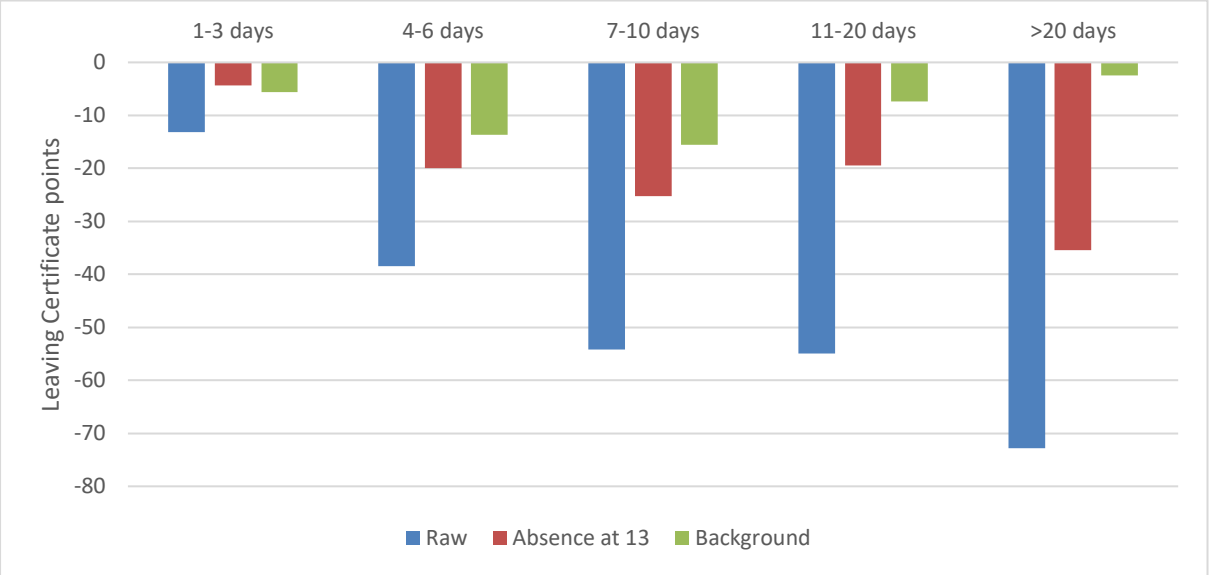
This chapter examines the relationship between school absence at ages 9 and 13 and educational outcomes. The outcomes considered include Leaving Certificate performance, the perceived benefits of schooling for broader development, whether the young person went on to higher education by age 20 and overall level of educational qualifications achieved by age 25. The chapter also looks at whether any effects of absence found vary by gender, social class, parental education or disability.

2.2 LEAVING CERTIFICATE PERFORMANCE

Leaving Certificate performance was measured in terms of overall Central Applications Office (CAO) points achieved, as reported by the young person (see Chapter 1).[10] Figure 2.1 depicts the relationship between school absence at age 9 and Leaving Certificate points, first showing the raw difference, then controlling for absence at age 13 and thirdly, taking account of a variety of individual and background factors that are likely to influence attendance, including disability, gender, parental education, social class, income, family structure, migrant background and location (see Appendix Table A2.1).

[10] This measure therefore excludes early school leavers and those who have taken the Leaving Certificate Applied programme which does not facilitate direct higher education entry.

FIGURE 2.1 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOL ABSENCE AT AGE 9 AND LEAVING CERTIFICATE PERFORMANCE



Source: GUI Cohort '98, 20-year wave.

Notes: Derived from OLS regression model results presented in Appendix Table A2.1. Model 1 looks at the 'raw' effect of absence at age 9 while Model 2 (absence at age 13) depicts the effect of absence at age 9 after taking account of absence at age 3. Model 3 (background) adds controls for disability, gender, parental education, social class, income, family structure, migrant background and location.

2.2.1 Leaving Certificate performance by absence at age 9

Without taking account of any other factors, young people who missed four or more days over the school year at age 9 have significantly lower Leaving Certificate performance at age 17/18 (Figure 2.1). Thus, those who have chronic absence levels, that is, more than 20 days,[11] achieve 73 points lower than those who had no absence. The second column (Model 2) shows that no significant net effect of absence at age 9 is evident when non-attendance at age 13 is taken into account.[12] In other words, early absenteeism influences later achievement only to the extent that it is associated with absenteeism at post-primary level. Model 3 shows that some of this gap is accounted for by differences in social background.

2.2.2 Leaving Certificate performance by absence at age 13

Figure 2.2 looks at the relationship between absence at age 13 and Leaving Certificate performance (see also Table A2.1). Controlling for absence at age 9, there is a large gradient in performance by non-attendance at 13 (Model 2). Even a short absence, 1–3 days, results in a performance penalty and those with chronic

11 It should be noted that the TESS definition of chronic absence relates to 20 days or more but given the GUI response categories, the term chronic absence is used to refer to 'more than 20 days' for convenience.

12 Absence at age 9 is correlated with absence at age 13. However, a variance inflation factor (VIF) test showed none of the categories had a VIF above 2.7, indicating no multicollinearity. Thus, the results can be interpreted as showing that poor attenders at age 9 tend to be poor attenders at age 13 but the effect of early absence on performance is not significant when we take account of absence at 13 years.

absence levels score 124 points lower than their peers with no school absence. Taking account of a range of individual and background factors reduces the performance gap for those with more than four days' absence (Model 3 and column 2 in Figure 2.2). Thus, some of the absence-related underperformance is due to the fact that attendance and performance are influenced by social class, parental education, income and other factors. At the same time, this can be regarded as a stringent test of the effect of absence, given that socio-economic disadvantage and school non-attendance are closely intertwined (see Sosu et al., 2021). Furthermore, the performance difference remains large: the gap between those with no absence and those with 20 or more days is actually larger than the gap between those whose parents have Junior Certificate education or less and those whose parents have degrees (Appendix Table A2.1).

As indicated in Chapter 1, family social background is considered to be multidimensional, with controls for parental education, social class and income, all of which independently influence student achievement (Table A2.1). Additional analyses were conducted to assess whether the impact of attendance on achievement is sensitive to the choice of background indicators. Table A2.2 considers the relationship between absence and Leaving Certificate performance when education, class and income are considered separately. Estimates of the impact of absence at age 13 on grades are largely stable across different specifications of social background, with a gap of 93 to 96 points between those with no absence and those with more than 20 days. However, it is worth noting that this gap is slightly larger than in the model containing all three aspects of social background together. Thus, using only one measure of social background slightly overestimates the effects of absence on Leaving Certificate performance.

Disability, that is, having a long-term illness or condition that hampers a young person's day-to-day life at least to some extent, is used to take account of conditions that are likely to affect absence and achievement. Rates of school absence are significantly higher among children and young people with a disability (Smyth et al., forthcoming). Much of the effect of disability on achievement operates through absence, but grades are somewhat lower among this group taking absence into account (though only significant at the 10 per cent level, see Table A2.1). Information was also collected from mothers on the young person's perceived health status as well as on their socio-emotional wellbeing (measured using the SDQ scale). The direct effect of health status[13] is not significant using either age 9 or age 13 measures while the SDQ total difficulties scale is associated with lower Leaving Certificate grades (Table A2.3). The inclusion of socio-emotional difficulties slightly reduces the size of the school absence coefficients but a very

[13] The variable was recoded into a binary measure because of small numbers in some groups. Health status has not been included in all models because mothers may report at least 'minor problems' if their child has been missing school so the direction of causality is not straightforward.

substantial achievement gap remains.[14] To ensure that the patterns found did not reflect underlying health conditions or disabilities, the analyses were repeated only for the group without disabilities (Table A2.4). The impact of absence and achievement is robust to the exclusion of those with disabilities; if anything, the effect of absence becomes somewhat larger.

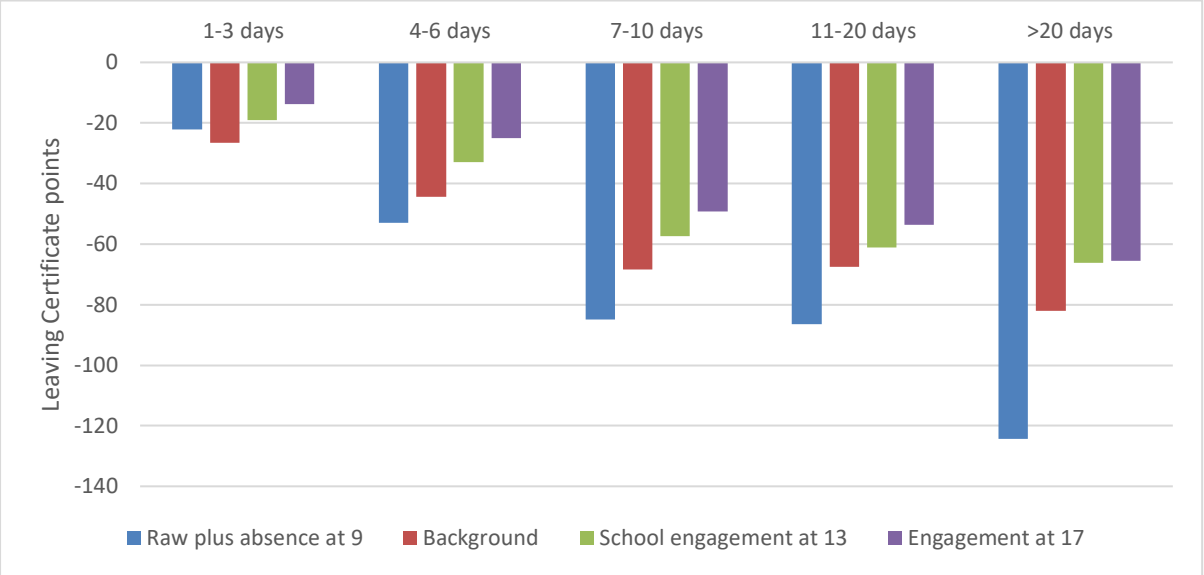
Models 4 and 5 explore the extent to which the longer-term impact of school absence operates through greater disengagement from school and poorer-quality relationships with teachers.[15] Those who are more positive about school at 9 and 13, those who have more positive interactions with teachers (such as praise and positive feedback) and fewer negative interactions with teachers (such as reprimands for their schoolwork or behaviour) at 13 achieve higher Leaving Certificate points (Model 4). The gap in performance by school absence reduces slightly as a result but remains large even when we take account of attitudes to, and engagement with, school at ages 9 and 13.

Model 5 adds in attitudes to school and the nature of interaction with teachers at age 17. Performance is again higher among those who are more positive about school and have better-quality interactions with their teachers. Even taking account of experiences at age 17, early school attitudes (at age 9) and positive interactions with teachers at junior cycle level remain significant predictors of performance. Taking account of these factors, being absent for four or more days over the school year is still significantly related to Leaving Certificate performance, with a gap of 65 points between those with no and those with chronic absence, larger than the effect of household income on exam grades.

14 It should be noted that SDQ scores at age 13 will also have been influenced by prior absence so, in a sense, the analyses 'overcontrols' by including SDQ.

15 In reality, the relationship between absence and disengagement is likely to be bidirectional. Chronic absence is likely to lead to disengagement from school and disengagement is likely to fuel further absence. Future research could usefully disentangle these pathways. Nonetheless, the analyses presented here provide useful insights into the impact of absence net of disengagement factors.

FIGURE 2.2 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOL ABSENCE AT AGE 13 AND LEAVING CERTIFICATE PERFORMANCE



Source: GUI Cohort '98, waves at 9, 13, 17 and 20.
Notes: Derived from Appendix Table A2.1.

2.2.3 Does the effect of absence vary across student groups?

International research has reached mixed conclusions on whether the effects of absence are similar for different groups of students. It could be the case that the additional cultural and economic resources available in more advantaged families might mitigate the impact of absence on student learning. Furthermore, extended absence from school may foster disengagement among more socio-economically disadvantaged students who already had less positive attitudes to school. Analyses in this section look at whether the effects on Leaving Certificate performance are similar by gender, migrant background, parental education, social class and household income by using interaction terms between absence and social group membership. As absence at age 9 does not have an effect over and above that at age 13, the models take account of duration of absence at 13 only.

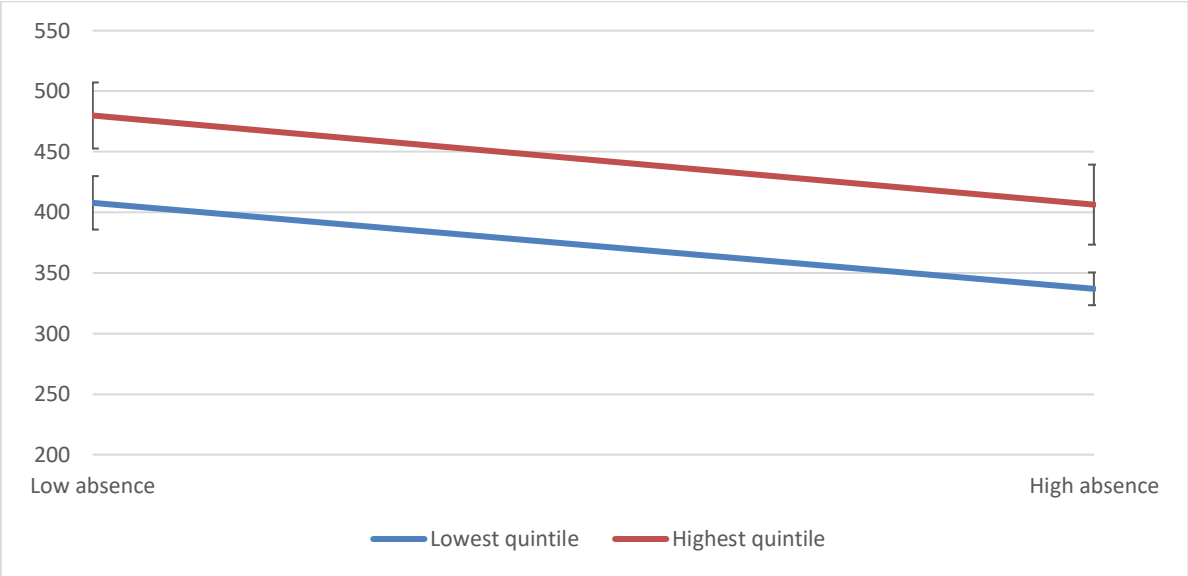
In Appendix Table A2.5, none of the interaction terms between gender and days absent are significant. In other words, we see a similar gradient for performance by non-attendance for boys and girls. In order to allow for non-linearity in the effects of number of days absent, additional models (not shown here) were estimated, grouping high absence (seven or more days) and low absence. This model showed a similar result with no gender difference in the effects of absence.

An analysis of three aspects of family background – parental education, social class and income – shows no significant variation in the effects of absence[16] (Tables A2.6

[16] Some interaction terms are significant but these do not show a consistent pattern.

to A2.8). In other words, there is no evidence that family advantage protects young people from the negative effects of absence on their academic performance. This pattern is illustrated in Figure 2.3, which, for simplicity, shows the difference between high and low levels of absence for the highest and lowest income quintile only. It is clear that the relative effects of absence are the same for young people from high- and low-income families. Some differences might be expected by migrant background, with migrant parents not having the insider knowledge of the Irish curriculum to help their children make up time absent from school. However, there is no evidence of a difference in the effects of school absence by migrant background (Table A2.9).

FIGURE 2.3 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LEVEL OF SCHOOL ABSENCE AT AGE 13, INCOME AND LEAVING CERTIFICATE PERFORMANCE



Source: GUI Cohort '98, waves at 9, 13, 17 and 20.
Notes: Derived from Appendix Table A2.8. High absence refers to missing seven or more days.

2.3 PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF POST-PRIMARY EDUCATION

At the age of 17, young people were asked about the extent to which their education had helped in relation to a number of different aspects of their development, including self-confidence, preparation for the world of work and for adult life (see Chapter 1). These different measures were summed to give an overall scale of the perceived benefits of post-primary education,[17] providing insights into broader aspects of development than Leaving Certificate performance. There is little systematic variation in perceived benefits by absence at age 9, though there is a tendency for those with longer absences to have more

[17] The reliability for this scale is 0.835 (Cronbach's alpha).

negative views (Table 2.1). There is a clear linear relationship between absence at 13 and the perceived value of education, with those with chronic absence having particularly negative views, even taking account of a range of individual and family factors. The effect is sizeable, especially given the lack of marked variation by other factors, with the exception of disability. Missing more than seven days per year at 13 is linked to more negative views than are found among young people with a disability. The relationship between absence at 13 and a more negative view of their education holds for both women and men, migrant- and Irish-origin young people and by parental education (Appendix Tables A2.10 to A2.12).

TABLE 2.1 REGRESSION MODELS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOL ABSENCE AND THE PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF POST-PRIMARY EDUCATION

	Model 1	Model 2
Absence at age 9:		
1–3 days	-0.310	-0.330
4–6 days	-0.258	-0.302
7–10 days	-0.265	-0.197
11–19 days	-1.168*	-1.143*
20+ days	-0.851	-0.727
(Ref. None)		
Absence at age 13:		
1–3 days	-0.804*	-0.799*
4–6 days	-1.594***	-1.555***
7–10 days	-2.437***	-2.293***
11–19 days	-2.273***	-2.079***
20+ days	-3.365**	-3.067**
(Ref. None)		
R^2	0.033	0.045
N	4,657	

Source: GUI Cohort '98, waves at 9, 13, 17 and 20.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. Model 2 controls for gender, disability, parental education, social class, household income, family structure, migrant background and urban/rural location.

Rather than run the model separately for each of the different dimensions, correlations were used to assess whether absence was more strongly associated with some aspects of development than others. Appendix Table A2.13 shows that the relationship is stronger for some dimensions; in particular, those with longer spells of absence are much less likely to report their education helped them in knowing how to acquire a new skill, in increasing their self-confidence and in helping them to develop into a well-balanced person. The relationship is significant for all of the dimensions, but building good relations with friends of the opposite sex and appreciating art or music are less strongly associated with absence.

2.4 POST-SCHOOL EDUCATION PATHWAYS

This section focuses on two measures of post-school pathways: whether the young person had gone on to higher education by age 20, regardless of whether they completed that course, and the highest educational level they had obtained by age 25.

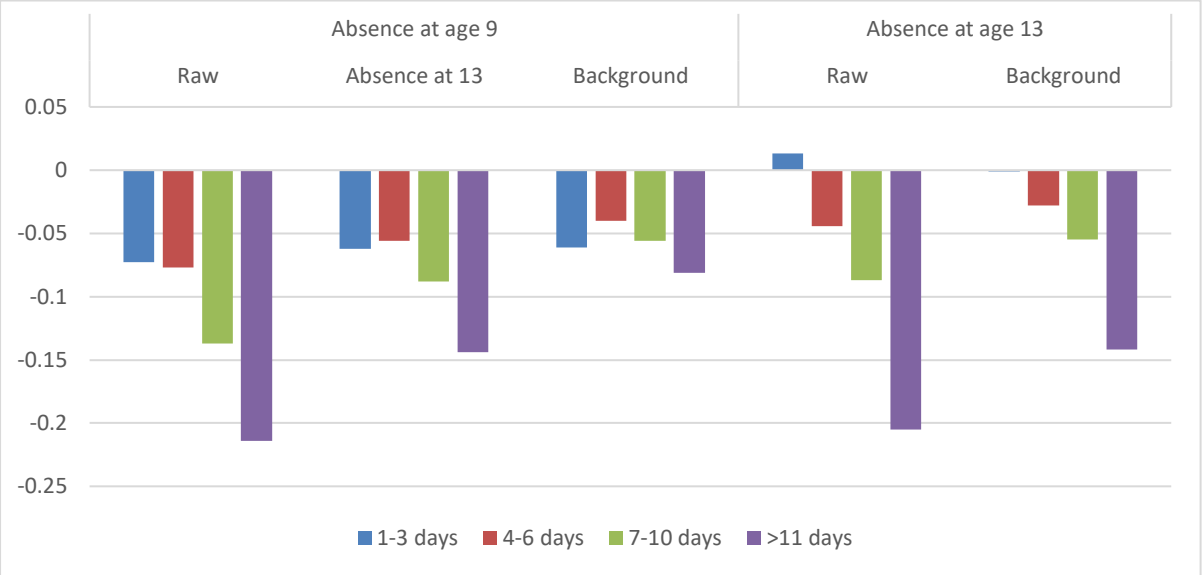
2.4.1 Entry to higher education

The analyses of higher education entry take the same approach as that for Leaving Certificate performance, using a series of nested models to look at whether raw differences by absence levels are robust to the inclusion of measures of individual and family background as well as school (dis)engagement. In addition, the analyses look at the extent to which any effect of absence is due to lower Leaving Certificate performance, given the dominance of this criterion in higher education access.

These analyses are based on logistic regression models as the outcome (higher education entry) is binary. The coefficients in Appendix Table A2.14 are therefore presented as average marginal effects and can be interpreted as the percentage point difference in higher education entry accounted for by a particular characteristic. Model 1 in Table A2.14, and the first set of columns in Figure 2.4, show that, without taking account of other factors, the chances of entering higher education decline with increasing levels of school absence at age 9. Those who miss school for 11 or more days a year are 21 percentage points less likely to enter higher education (by age 20) than those with no missing days.[18] Even taking account of absence levels at age 13 (Model 2), missing seven or more days at age 9 is associated with significantly lower chances of making the transition to higher education. Similarly, missing seven or more days a year at age 13 lowers the chances of entering higher education. Viewed cumulatively, significant absence (>11 days) at ages 9 and 13 results in a 35-percentage-point reduction in higher education entry.

[18] For the purposes of these models, more than 20 days is grouped with 11–19 days because of the small number of chronic attenders who go on to higher education.

FIGURE 2.4 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOL ABSENCE AT AGE 9 AND AGE 13 AND HIGHER EDUCATION ENTRY



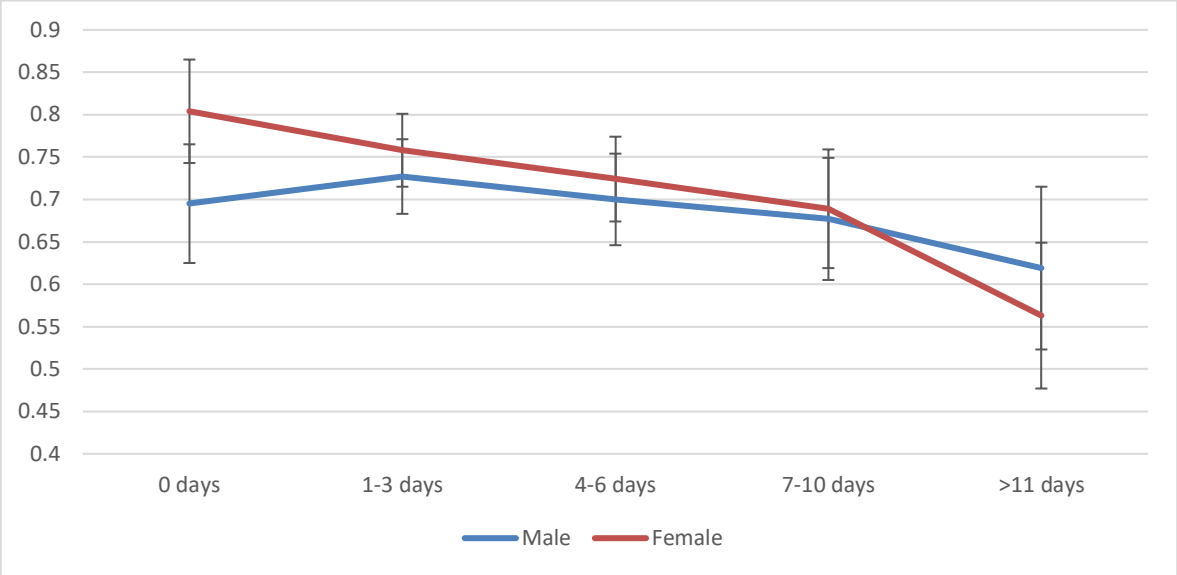
Source: GUI Cohort '98, 20-year wave.
Notes: Derived from Appendix Table A2.14.

The third set of models looks at the extent to which absence is related to higher education entry, even when differences in individual and family background characteristics are taken into account. The size of the gap reduces somewhat[19] when these factors are added to the model, though being absent for 11 or more days at age 9 and 13 remains significant and substantial. These differences are robust to the inclusion of measures of school engagement and interaction with teachers at 9 and 13 (Model 4). Taking account of engagement and interaction at 17, the relationship with attendance at age 9 becomes non-linear but an 11 percentage difference in higher education entry is found between those with no and those with 11 or more days' absence at age 13 (Model 5). Model 6 shows that the effects of school absence on the transition to higher education operate through the penalty in terms of Leaving Certificate grades.

Analyses were carried out to examine whether the relationship between school absence and higher education entry varied across social groups. The significant interaction between longer absence (11 or more days) and gender indicates that the negative gradient in higher education entry is sharper for women than for men (Table A2.15; see also Figure 2.5).

[19] As discussed in relation to Leaving Certificate performance, this is a very stringent test of the effect of absence, given the close relationship between socio-economic background and school disengagement/non-attendance.

FIGURE 2.5 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LEVEL OF SCHOOL ABSENCE AT AGE 13, GENDER AND HIGHER EDUCATION ENTRY



Source: GUI Cohort '98, waves at 9, 13, 17 and 20.
Notes: Derived from Appendix Table A2.15.

Overall, there is no evidence that young people from more advantaged families have greater protection from the negative effects of school absence on higher education entry (Tables A2.16 to A2.18). Some of the interaction terms for parental education are significant (Table A2.16). On closer inspection, this reflects instability in estimates for the Junior Certificate group because of small size. All parental education groups show a similar gradient of decreased higher education entry with increased school absence. The gradient is also similar for those of migrant origin and those with Irish parents (Table A2.19).

2.4.2 Highest educational qualifications

The majority of young adults were still in full-time education or training at the time of the wave 20 survey. Looking at qualifications at age 25 therefore captures whether they, in fact, completed those degrees or other courses and whether they engaged in educational upgrading between the ages of 20 and 25. The information also captures the educational level of those who left school early or completed the Leaving Certificate Applied programme and who are therefore not analysed in Section 2.2. At age 25, the respondents were asked about the highest qualification level they had attained, with responses in terms of levels of the National Framework of Qualifications. Because of small numbers in some categories, the measure has been recoded to run from level 3/4 (Junior Certificate/Leaving Certificate Applied) to level 9/10 (master's degree/PhD).

An ordered logit model is used to estimate the relationship between school non-attendance and the highest educational qualification attained. The coefficients are presented in terms of odds ratios, with coefficients above one indicating increased levels and coefficients below one indicating lower levels. Model 1 in Table A2.20 shows the (raw) relationship between school absence and educational level. Those with very short absences, 1–3 days, at age 9 resemble those with no absence in their educational level. However, those with four or more days achieve lower qualifications, with a marked gap for those with significant absence (11 or more days). Absence rates at age 9 are largely explained by non-attendance at age 13 (Model 2), though those with longer absence (11 or more days) continue to be at a significant disadvantage. Those with 7–10 days and particularly those with 11 or more days' missing school at age 13 are at a marked disadvantage in terms of educational qualifications.

Model 3 takes into account a range of individual and background factors. As indicated earlier in the chapter, this is a stringent test of the effect of school absence, given the close relationship between non-attendance and social background. Longer absence at age 9 becomes non-significant, meaning that the qualification gap for this group is accounted for by their more socio-economically disadvantaged profile. However, those with seven or more days' absence at age 13 continue to differ in their qualification levels. The gap for those away from school for more than 11 days is sizeable, larger than the effect of having a disability or that of social class membership. The effect of being absent for 7–10 days is explained by more negative attitudes to school by age 17, as well as less positive and more negative interaction with teachers (Model 4). However, those who were absent for more than 11 days still have lower qualification levels, even taking account of school engagement and relationships with teachers.

Ordered logit models can be difficult to interpret so the same measure was used to construct a binary variable distinguishing between those with a degree (Levels 8 to 10) and all others. The model coefficients are presented as average marginal effects, showing the percentage point difference between that characteristic and the reference group (for example, between parents with a degree and those with lower secondary education or less) (Table A2.21). Without taking account of other factors, a clear relationship is found between obtaining a degree and absence at age 9, with those with more than 11 days absent being 21 percentage points less likely to have a degree (Model 1). The effects of absence at age 9 operate through later attendance at age 13 (Model 2). Those with four or more days absent at 13 face a disadvantage in reaching degree level, while the gap between the 11+ days and no absence group is 28 percentage points. A substantial gap is still evident when a wide range of individual and background factors are taken into account (Model 3). The gap between 11+ days and others is equivalent to the gap between a parent having a degree and a Junior Certificate and is larger than the difference by disability.

Model 4 shows that some of this qualification gap is related to attitudes to school and the quality of interaction between teachers and students at age 17. However, even at similar levels of school engagement and interaction, those who missed 11 or more days at age 13 are 16 percentage points less likely to have obtained a degree 12 years later. These models do not take account of Leaving Certificate grades as this would exclude those who had Level 3 or 4 qualifications. However, additional analyses (not shown here) show that, among the group who had done the Leaving Certificate Established, there is an 11-percentage-point gap between no and 11 or more days' absence even taking account of grades, suggesting that absence patterns influence the attainment of postgraduate degrees. This is larger than the effect of parental degree net of Leaving Certificate grades.

Analyses were conducted to explore whether the relationship between absence at age 13 and obtaining a degree varied across social groups. This relationship was found to be similar by gender, parental education, social class, household income and migrant background (Tables A2.22 to A2.26). In other words, absence has a negative relationship with getting a degree even for more advantaged groups.

2.5 CONCLUSIONS

International research has shown that longer spells of school absence are linked to poorer educational outcomes (see Chapter 1). This chapter has shown a significant relationship between school absence and educational outcomes in the Irish context. Even short spells of absence at age 13 are linked to significantly lower Leaving Certificate points, with a very large performance gap related to chronic levels of absence. This gap is larger than that by parental education so must be seen as an important driver of educational inequality. The impact of absence is only partly accounted for by school disengagement and the quality of relationships with teachers. Longer periods of absence are related to lower chances of entering higher education and of obtaining a degree by age 25, a pattern that is explained by the gap in Leaving Certificate performance. However, even taking account of grades, longer absence is linked to lower educational qualifications at age 25, suggesting lower rates of participation in postgraduate education among those who missed school. Looking at the contribution of education to broader development, young adults who have had longer school absence are much less positive about the difference their education has made to their social and personal development, their ability to acquire new skills and their preparation for the future.

It might be expected that cultural and economic resources among families would help make up for the academic impact of being absent from school. Like Klein et al. (2024) using Scottish data, the analyses show that the impact of absence holds across socio-demographic groups, with no evidence that young people from more advantaged families are protected from the effects of school absence. The impact of absence on educational outcomes is also generally similar for women and men.

CHAPTER 3

School absence and labour market outcomes

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter looks at the relationship between school absence and labour market outcomes. Given the strong relationship between educational qualifications and employment outcomes in Ireland, it might be expected that school absence would have a negative impact. The outcomes considered include employment status and work history, whether the job is full time or part time, occupational status, employment income and job satisfaction. As in Chapter 2, the analyses first look at the raw relationship between absence and the specific outcome before taking account of a range of individual and background factors. Because sample size is smaller for the 25-year wave, 11–20 days' and more than 20 days' absence are combined.

3.2 LABOUR MARKET STATUS AND WORK HISTORY

At age 25, the respondents were asked about their current labour market status, distinguishing between those in paid employment, those who were unemployed and actively seeking work, and those who were out of the labour force because of home duties,[20] being ill/disabled or in full-time education/training. Contrary to expectations, current labour market status did not vary significantly by history of school absence (Table 3.1). More detailed information was collected by asking the 25-year-olds about the number of months in the past five years they had spent in different labour market statuses. Table 3.2 looks at the relationship between school absence and months unemployed. The numbers with any time out of the labour force because they were ill/disabled or on home duties are smaller than those who experienced any unemployment. The analyses therefore distinguish between those with any time ill/disabled or on home duties and all others. Those with significant absence at age 13 (11 or more days) are found to spend significantly longer in unemployment – an average of two months – than those with no attendance issues. There are no significant differences in being out of the labour market because of illness or disability by school absence. Those who had substantial absence at age 13 are 14 percentage points more likely to have spent some time on home duties (Model 1, Table 3.2). This difference is still substantial – at ten percentage points – even taking account of a wide range of other individual and family factors (Model 2).

[20] This includes parents or others in a care role.

TABLE 3.1 MULTINOMIAL LOGISTIC REGRESSION MODELS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOL ABSENCE AND LABOUR MARKET STATUS (ILO) AT AGE 25 (BASE: EMPLOYED) (RELATIVE RISK RATIOS)

	Model 1		Model 2	
	Unemployed	Out of labour force	Unemployed	Out of labour force
Absence at age 9:				
1–3 days	1.356	0.273	1.451	1.329
4–6 days	1.406	1.513	1.405	1.467
7–10 days	0.727	1.012	0.707	0.951
>11 days	1.099	1.288	0.968	1.041
(Ref. None)				
Absence at age 13:				
1–3 days	0.837	0.555*	0.813	0.631*
4–6 days	0.995	0.754	0.923	0.787
7–10 days	0.622	0.676	0.607	0.641
>11 days	1.275	1.404	1.192	1.221
(Ref. None)				
R2	0.014		0.066	
N	2,438		2,438	

Source: GUI Cohort '98, waves at 9, 13, 17 and 20.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. Model 2 controls for gender, disability, parental education, social class, household income, family structure, migrant background and urban/rural location.

TABLE 3.2 REGRESSION MODELS (POISSON AND LOGISTIC) OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOL ABSENCE AND WORK HISTORY BY AGE 25

	Months unemployed		Ever ill/disabled (AME)		Ever on home duties (AME)	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Absence at age 9:						
1–3 days	0.680	0.709	0.022	0.015	-0.001	-0.001
4–6 days	0.901	0.918	0.044	0.030	0.022	0.017
7–10 days	0.711	0.761	0.033	0.024	0.020	0.017
>11 days	1.053	1.082	0.077±	0.055	0.038	0.020
(Ref. None)						
Absence at age 13:						
1–3 days	0.988	1.053	-0.026	0.001	-0.005	0.005
4–6 days	1.302	1.296	-0.019	0.000	0.008	0.007
7–10 days	1.537±	1.434	-0.034	-0.020	0.022	0.014
>11 days	2.057*	1.819*	0.005	-0.006	0.144*	0.100*
(Ref. None)						
R2	0.005	0.001	0.010	0.078	0.026	0.098
N	2,259					

Source: GUI Cohort '98, waves at 9, 13, 17 and 20.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. Model 2 controls for gender, disability, parental education, social class, household income, family structure, migrant background and urban/rural location.

3.3 EMPLOYMENT QUALITY

The 25-year wave collected detailed information on employment quality, including type of contract, occupational status and job satisfaction. Information provided on hours worked was used to distinguish between those working part time (30 hours or less per week) and those working full time. There was little marked variation by school absence, though those who missed one to ten days at age 9 were somewhat less likely to work part time, taking account of other characteristics (Table 3.3). Contrary to expectations, those who missed school were more likely to have a permanent contract, if employed. There is no ready explanation for this pattern, though it may relate to the lower rate of permanent employment for those in professional/managerial jobs among this cohort in a relatively early stage in their career (49 per cent compared with 58 per cent for all other jobs) (see Table 3.4 on the relationship between absence and being a professional or managerial job).

TABLE 3.3 LOGISTIC REGRESSION MODELS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOL ABSENCE AND TYPE OF JOB CONTRACT AT AGE 25 (AVERAGE MARGINAL EFFECTS)

	Part-time		Permanent	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Absence at age 9:				
1–3 days	-0.087±	-0.099*	0.016	0.012
4–6 days	-0.094±	-0.107*	0.019	0.017
7–10 days	-0.105±	-0.123*	-0.039	-0.040
>11 days	-0.061	-0.071	0.022	0.021
(Ref. None)				
Absence at age 13:				
1–3 days	0.018	0.031	0.097*	0.097*
4–6 days	-0.021	-0.009	0.151**	0.140**
7–10 days	0.004	0.007	0.181**	0.174**
>11 days	0.009	-0.001	0.152*	0.141±
(Ref. None)				
R2	0.010	0.040	0.010	0.022
N	1,777		1,865	

Source: GUI Cohort '98, waves at 9, 13, 17, 20 and 25.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. Model 2 controls for gender, disability, parental education, social class, household income, family structure, migrant background and urban/rural location.

TABLE 3.4 REGRESSION MODELS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOL ABSENCE AND OCCUPATIONAL STATUS AT AGE 25 (AVERAGE MARGINAL EFFECTS)

	ISEI		Professional/managerial job (AMEs)	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Absence at age 9:				
1–3 days	0.253	0.096	0.017	0.018
4–6 days	-1.380	-1.209	-0.066	-0.012
7–10 days	-3.048	-1.903	-0.057	-0.043
>11 days	-2.395	-1.278	-0.011	0.005
(Ref. None)				
Absence at age 13:				
1–3 days	1.209	0.390	-0.026	-0.042
4–6 days	-0.899	-0.767	-0.087±	-0.077±
7–10 days	-0.725	-0.201	-0.086	-0.067
>11 days	-0.278	1.572	-0.128*	-0.090
(Ref. None)				
R2	0.013	0.108	0.010	0.058
N	1,757		1,882	

Source: GUI Cohort '98, waves at 9, 13, 17, 20 and 25.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. Model 2 controls for gender, disability, parental education, social class, household income, family structure, migrant background and urban/rural location.

The occupations of respondents were coded to the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) at the two-digit level, as used in the Irish Census of Population, and could therefore be assigned occupational status scores (Ganzeboom and Treiman, 1996). There was no significant difference in occupational status by school absence (Table 3.4). An alternative classification distinguished between those with professional or managerial jobs and all others. Those with substantial absence at age 13 (11 or more days) were 13 percentage points less likely to be in a professional/managerial job at age 25, though this was partly explained by the socio-economic background of their families (compare Models 1 and 2, Table 3.4).

TABLE 3.5 REGRESSION MODELS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOL ABSENCE AND INCOME AND JOB SATISFACTION AT AGE 25

	Employment income		Job satisfaction (Ordered logit)	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Absence at age 9:				
1–3 days	13.969	7.622	0.906	0.915
4–6 days	-120.398	-109.710	0.995	0.986
7–10 days	-123.034	-101.332	0.958	0.898
>11 days	-137.254	-108.657	0.885	0.863
(Ref. None)				
Absence at age 13:				
1–3 days	-90.939	-103.035	1.134	1.104
4–6 days	-173.454±	-161.671	0.829	0.809
7–10 days	-241.374*	-175.785	1.097	1.083
>11 days	-347.612*	-25.966±	1.273	1.211
(Ref. None)				
R2	0.016	0.056	0.002	0.009
N	2,280		1,917	

Source: GUI Cohort '98, waves at 9, 13, 17, 20 and 25.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. Model 2 controls for gender, disability, parental education, social class, household income, family structure, migrant background and urban/rural location.

Table 3.5 shows that those with more than seven days' absence at age 13 tend to receive lower incomes from employment than those with no absence; the raw differences are €241 per week for those missing 7–10 days and €348 per week for those missing 11 or more days. Model 2 shows that most of this income differential relates to the more disadvantaged backgrounds of this group, though the 11+ days group have lower incomes at the 10 per cent significance level. No difference in job satisfaction is found by absence at ages 9 and 13.

3.4 CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has looked at the relationship between school absence and a number of labour market outcomes. International research has reached differing conclusions on whether school absence impacts on employment chances (see Chapter 1). Given the strong link between educational attainment and employment quality in Ireland, marked variation might have been expected. However, any differences found are modest. It is not clear why stronger effects are not evident. It may relate to the 25-year-olds being in the early stages of employment integration, as the majority were still in full-time education or training at age 20. Alternatively, lower response rates at age 25, and much smaller numbers with chronic absence, may make it more difficult to detect a significant effect.

Longer absences are related to spending longer time being unemployed, an average of two months longer, since the age of 20 and being more likely to have spent some time out of the labour market because of care duties. However, there is no significant relationship with current labour market status. There are few relationships between absence and employment quality, though more prolonged absence is linked to being less likely to be in a professional or managerial job and to lower employment income. Part of this difference is related to the more disadvantaged profile of those with prolonged absence, highlighting the complex interplay of school non-attendance and broader socio-economic disadvantage.

CHAPTER 4

School absence, wellbeing and belonging

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 pointed to the dearth of research on the relationship between school absence and broader measures of wellbeing. Growing Up in Ireland (GUI) data provide an opportunity to look at a range of indicators of wellbeing, including depression and stress, and physical health. The chapter also examines the extent to which absence influences feelings of connectedness with others in the form of political engagement and more general feelings of trust in, and relatedness with, others.

4.2 DEPRESSION AND STRESS

Young adults were asked about depressive symptoms and stress at both 20 and 25 years of age. Table 4.1 shows the relationship between school absence and depressive symptoms. Without taking account of any other factors, the prevalence of depressive symptoms is significantly greater among those who were chronically absent (20 days or more) at age 9 than among those who had no attendance issues (Model 1). This difference is apparent even taking account of absence levels at age 13. Absence at age 13 is associated with depression, with the highest levels among the chronically absent, though the relationship is not linear. Model 2 shows that some of the relationship found is due to the individual and background characteristics, including childhood socio-emotional difficulties, of those with higher absence. However, the findings do suggest a relationship with absence over and above these factors. It should be noted that this is a stringent test of the relationship, firstly, because of the close relationship between family background and attendance, and secondly, because socio-emotional difficulties at age 9 may have been influenced by prior absence.[21]

Because of smaller numbers at the age 25 wave, the 11–20 and more than 20 days categories are grouped in the model. Significant absence (11 or more days) at age 9 is associated with higher levels of depressive symptoms at age 25, even taking account of other characteristics (Model 2) and level of depression at age 20 (Model 3). There is a tendency for those with four or more days' absence at age 13 to have higher depression levels. Some of this pattern is related to background factors and prior depression but some absence groups continue to

[21] Because the Cohort '98 survey first contacted children when they were 9 years of age, information on school absence prior to this point is not available.

have higher depression even taking account of these factors.[22]

TABLE 4.1 OLS REGRESSION MODELS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOL ABSENCE AND DEPRESSION AT AGES 20 AND 25

	Age 20		Age 25		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Absence at age 9:					
1–3 days	-0.081	-0.037	0.089	0.100	-0.032
4–6 days	0.214	0.251	0.542	0.494	0.219
7–10 days	-0.200	-0.378	0.642	0.602	0.577
11–20 days	-0.053	-0.305	2.281**	1.886**	1.725**
>20 days	2.803**	2.013±			
(Ref. None)					
Absence at age 13:					
1–3 days	-0.042	0.031	0.578	0.730±	0.552
4–6 days	0.633±	0.691*	1.283*	1.365**	1.222**
7–10 days	0.963*	0.871*	0.992±	0.974±	0.778
11–20 days	0.491	0.300	1.796**	1.193±	1.086±
>20 days	1.409*	1.208±			
(Ref. None)					
R2	0.018	0.065	0.036	0.103	0.261
N	4,604		2,217		

Source: GUI Cohort '98, waves at 9, 13, 17, 20 and 25.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. Model 2 controls for SDQ at age 9, gender, disability, parental education, social class, household income, family structure, migrant background and urban/rural location. Model 3 controls for depressive symptoms at 20.

The patterns are broadly similar for stress levels. Chronic absence at age 9 is associated with higher feelings of stress at age 20, though this effect becomes less significant (to the p<.10 level) as other factors are taken into account (Table 4.2). Missing 11 or more days at age 9 is linked to higher stress at age 20. Missing four or more days at age 13 is significantly related to higher stress at age 20, a difference that is robust to the inclusion of other factors. Stress is particularly high among those who were chronically absent. At age 25, the pattern shifts slightly, with higher stress evident among the four to ten days group, even taking account of background factors and stress levels at age 20.

[22] It should be noted that some of the coefficients become non-significant because of smaller numbers.

TABLE 4.2 OLS REGRESSION MODELS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOL ABSENCE AND STRESS AT AGES 20 AND 25

	Age 20		Age 25		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Absence at age 9:					
1–3 days	0.276	0.286	0.084	0.165	-0.107
4–6 days	0.698*	0.736*	0.226	0.243	-0.180
7–10 days	0.488	0.368	0.486	0.484	0.224
11–20 days	0.322	0.176	2.003**	1.666**	1.190*
>20 days	2.537*	2.046±			
(Ref. None)					
Absence at age 13:					
1–3 days	0.099	0.143	0.629±	0.686*	0.498
4–6 days	0.519±	0.573*	1.137**	1.232**	0.930**
7–10 days	0.878*	0.828*	0.967*	0.994*	0.756±
11–20 days	0.853±	0.795±	0.798	0.540	0.262
>20 days	1.634*	1.642*			
(Ref. None)					
R2	0.019	0.049	0.029	0.092	0.260
N	4,619		2,193		

Source: GUI Cohort '98, waves at 9, 13, 17, 20 and 25.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. Model 2 controls for SDQ at age 9, gender, disability, parental education, social class, household income, family structure, migrant background and urban/rural location. Model 3 controls for stress at age 20.

Young adults were asked to rate their overall life satisfaction on a scale of 1 to 10. Absence at age 9 is not significantly related to life satisfaction at either 20 or 25 (Table 4.3). However, those who were chronically absent at age 13 have significantly lower life satisfaction at age 20, a pattern that is robust to the inclusion of background factors and prior socio-emotional difficulties. This difference is sizeable and is larger than the variation by gender or disability (not shown here). Missing four or more days at age 13 is linked to lower life satisfaction at age 25, a difference largely robust to the inclusion of information on family background and socio-emotional difficulties. The difference is mainly mediated through lower life satisfaction at age 20, though those who missed 11 or more days have lower satisfaction even taking account of levels five years previously.

TABLE 4.3 OLS REGRESSION MODELS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOL ABSENCE AND LIFE SATISFACTION AT AGES 20 AND 25

	Age 20		Age 25		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Absence at age 9:					
1–3 days	0.016	-0.005	0.180	0.157	0.176
4–6 days	-0.147	-0.150	0.020	0.046	0.058
7–10 days	-0.118	-0.105	-0.018	-0.016	-0.057
11–20 days	-0.018	0.039	-0.132	-0.001	-0.027
>20 days	-0.347	-0.279			
(Ref. None)					
Absence at age 13:					
1–3 days	-0.042	-0.090	-0.256	-0.308±	-0.258±
4–6 days	-0.124	-0.143	-0.389*	-0.390*	-0.296±
7–10 days	-0.358*	-0.311±	-0.612*	-0.564*	-0.413±
11–20 days	-0.027	0.052	-0.698*	-0.501±	-0.476*
>20 days	-0.712**	-0.627*			
(Ref. None)					
R2	0.007	0.024	0.017	0.058	0.153
N	4,642		2,241		

Source: GUI Cohort '98, waves at 9, 13, 17, 20 and 25.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. Model 2 controls for SDQ at age 9, gender, disability, parental education, social class, household income, family structure, migrant background and urban/rural location. Model 3 controls for life satisfaction at age 20.

Table 4.4 presents findings on the relationship between school absence, levels of aggression and involvement in anti-social behaviour. These measures were captured at ages 20 and 17 respectively. No relationship is found between early absence and aggression. However, there is a tendency for higher absence, especially chronic absence, to be linked to higher aggression levels. This pattern is partly, though not fully, related to differences in background factors and early socio-emotional difficulties. No systematic difference is found by absence at either 9 or 13 in levels of anti-social behaviour at age 17.

TABLE 4.4 OLS REGRESSION MODELS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOL ABSENCE AND AGGRESSION AND ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

	Aggression (Age 20)		Anti-social behaviour (Age 25)	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Absence at age 9:				
1–3 days	-0.244	-0.247	-0.115	-0.112
4–6 days	0.399	0.359	-0.173	-0.090
7–10 days	-0.488	-0.566	-0.427±	-0.423±
11–20 days	-0.086	-0.192	-0.426	-0.321
>20 days	0.594	0.419	1.194	1.182
(Ref. None)				
Absence at age 13:				
1–3 days	0.271	0.269	0.281±	0.291±
4–6 days	0.236	0.112	0.150	0.134
7–10 days	1.770***	1.523**	0.563*	0.540*
11–20 days	0.397	0.103	0.301	0.266
>20 days	2.355*	1.888±	0.706	0.640
(Ref. None)				
R2	0.021	0.062	0.012	0.052
N	4,603		4,610	

Source: GUI Cohort '98, waves at 9, 13, 17, 20 and 25.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. Model 2 controls for SDQ at age 9, gender, disability, parental education, social class, household income, family structure, migrant background and urban/rural location.

4.3 PHYSICAL HEALTH

Young adults were asked to rate their health at both ages 20 and 25. Long spells of absence (11 or more days) at age 9 are significantly related to poorer self-reported health at age 20 (Table 4.5). However, this pattern is largely driven by differences in background characteristics and health status at age 9 (as reported by the mother) (compare coefficients in Models 2 and 3). Length of absence at age 13 is significantly related to health status at age 20, even taking account of background characteristics and health status at age 9. Self-reported health is poorest among those who missed 11 or more days of school. This effect is sizeable, being larger than the difference between those from professional and non-employed families (not shown here). There is no relationship between early absence (at age 9) and health status at age 25. However, once again, absence at age 13 is predictive of poorer health status, a pattern that holds when a range of individual and background factors are taken into account (Model 2). Model 3 shows that some of the effect of absence on health status at 25 operates via health status at 20 but longer absences (11 or more days) continue to negatively influence health, even controlling for prior health. This is noteworthy given that almost all of the effect of background factors (with the exception of income) is mediated through earlier health status.

TABLE 4.5 ORDERED LOGISTIC REGRESSION MODELS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOL ABSENCE AND HEALTH AT AGES 20 AND 25

	Age 20			Age 25		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Absence at age 9:						
1–3 days	1.049	1.025	1.026	1.299	1.299	1.404*
4–6 days	0.918	0.929	0.937	0.967	1.027	1.086
7–10 days	0.820	0.882	0.915	0.972	1.017	1.154
11+ days	0.667*	0.748±	0.818	0.738	0.846	1.034
(Ref. None)						
Absence at age 13:						
1–3 days	0.718**	0.703**	0.706**	0.709*	0.666**	0.756±
4–6 days	0.703**	0.715**	0.726*	0.572***	0.575***	0.673*
7–10 days	0.613**	0.660**	0.690*	0.594**	0.633*	0.761
11+ days	0.476***	0.525***	0.550**	0.388***	0.448***	0.560*
(Ref. None)						
R2	0.009	0.021	0.023	0.013	0.032	0.093
N	4,671			2,569		

Source: GUI Cohort '98, waves at 9, 13, 17, 20 and 25.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. Model 2 controls for SDQ at age 9, gender, disability, parental education, social class, household income, family structure, migrant background and urban/rural location. Model 3 controls for health at age 9 for the age 20 outcome and health at age 20 for the age 25 outcome.

4.4 SOCIAL RELATEDNESS AND POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

The richness of the GUI data allows for a detailed exploration of the consequences of school absence for social integration and political engagement. It might be expected that longer spells of school absence might disrupt social ties with others and that therefore young adults might feel they have less of a stake in the political system. The measure of relatedness taps into feeling close to and getting on well with others in their lives. There is little systematic relationship between school absence and relatedness at age 20, though it is noteworthy that those with chronic absence at 13 have significantly lower levels of relatedness, a pattern that is only partly related to differences in background factors (Table 4.6). Those who missed four or more days of school at age 13 have significantly lower levels of trust in other people, even taking account of a range of individual and background factors. The gap between those with no absence and those with 11 or more days is sizeable, larger than the gap between having a parent with a degree and a parent with a Junior Certificate (not shown here).

TABLE 4.6 OLS REGRESSION MODELS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOL ABSENCE AND SOCIAL RELATEDNESS AT AGE 20 AND TRUST IN OTHER PEOPLE AT AGE 25

	Social relatedness		Trust in other people	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Absence at age 9:				
1–3 days	0.602±	0.561±	-0.104	-0.088
4–6 days	0.290	0.294	-0.314	-0.247
7–10 days	0.312	0.330	0.123	0.186
11–20 days	0.170	0.405	-0.465±	-0.279
>20 days	-1.176	-0.955		
(Ref. None)				
Absence at age 13:				
1–3 days	0.052	0.039	-0.079	-0.169
4–6 days	-0.251	-0.199	-0.541**	-0.517**
7–10 days	-0.206	-0.109	-0.643**	-0.611**
11–20 days	-0.031	0.269	-0.951**	-0.833**
>20 days	-1.450*	-0.983±		
(Ref. None)				
R2	0.009	0.044	0.031	0.087
N	4,648		2,569	

Source: GUI Cohort '98, waves at 9, 13, 17, 20 and 25.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. Model 2 controls for SDQ at age 9, gender, disability, parental education, social class, household income, family structure, migrant background and urban/rural location.

Three measures of political engagement were examined: self-reported interest in politics; level of involvement in political activities (ranging from signing a petition to joining a political party); and whether the respondent is registered to vote. Little systematic relationship is found between school absence and any of the measures of political engagement (Table 4.7).

TABLE 4.7 OLS REGRESSION MODELS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOL ABSENCE AND POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT AT AGE 25

	Political interest (Ordered logit)		Political activity (Poisson, IRR)		Voter registration (AME)	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Absence at age 9:						
1–3 days	0.937	0.973	1.252±	1.269	-0.022	-0.038
4–6 days	0.926	1.032	1.101	1.151	-0.054	-0.058±
7–10 days	1.209	1.310	1.535**	1.501**	-0.050	-0.053
11+ days	0.824	0.949	1.193	1.228	-0.072	-0.043
(Ref. None)						
Absence at age 13:						
1–3 days	0.982	0.917	1.131	1.094	0.002	-0.014
4–6 days	0.789	0.773±	1.076	1.080	-0.038	-0.047
7–10 days	1.027	1.026	1.214	1.169	-0.061	-0.069±
11+ days	0.872	1.000	1.182	1.164	-0.026	-0.026
(Ref. None)						
R2	0.002	0.019	-	-	0.014	0.110
N	2,569		2,373		2,569	

Source: GUI Cohort '98, waves at 9, 13, 17, 20 and 25.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. Model 2 controls for SDQ at age 9, gender, disability, parental education, social class, household income, family structure, migrant background and urban/rural location.

4.5 CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has provided new insights into the relationship between school absence and wellbeing in early adulthood. Prolonged absence is found to impact on several important dimensions of wellbeing and social connectedness, though the size of the effects and the relative influence of early and later absence vary across outcomes. Chronic absence at ages 9 and 13 is predictive of depressive symptoms at both 20 and 25 years, even taking account of early socio-emotional difficulties. Stress levels at age 20 are also linked to chronic absence at primary and post-primary levels, though the relationship at age 25 is less linear. Those who were persistently absent at age 13 have much lower life satisfaction at both 20 and 25 years, a difference that is larger than that by gender or disability.

It might be expected that prolonged absence from school would potentially expose young people to more risky behaviour. In common with Ansari et al. (2020)'s findings in the US, no relationship is found between school absence and involvement in anti-social behaviour, though there is some tendency towards higher aggression levels among those who were chronically absent at 13 years.

Physical health status will, of course, contribute to school absence but absence may affect physical health through its impact on wellbeing and mental health. Absence at 13 is significantly related to poorer self-reported health at ages 20 and 25, even taking account of health status at age 9 and whether or not the young

adult has a disability or other long-term condition that hampers their day-to-day lives. Even taking account of self-reported health at age 20, 25-year-olds who had been persistently absent from school have poorer health.

School absence may reduce feelings of connectedness with others by disrupting social ties and even alienating young people from the political system. The findings point to lower feelings of social relatedness among those who were chronically absent. The relationship with general trust in others is even more marked with lower levels of trust evident even among those who were absent for four to six days. The gap between those with no absence and those with 11 or more days is sizeable, larger than the gap by parental education, suggesting some degree of social alienation among this group of adults. However, this does not translate into differences in political engagement.

CHAPTER 5

School-level absence and its consequences

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Research on school absenteeism has generally focused on the consequences of individual absence for later outcomes, with only a few exceptions (see Chapter 1). One US study by May et al. (2024) finds that average absenteeism at the (primary) school level has a stronger negative effect on English and Maths test scores than individual absence. In another US study, Gottfried (2011b) found that the level of unexcused absences (rather than total absences) among classmates was linked to lower reading and Maths test scores at primary level. Research has generally not examined the potential mechanisms underlying any effects of school- or class-level absence rates. However, chronic absence rates might be expected to affect the pace of teaching and learning, resulting in lower curricular coverage and therefore impacting on achievement levels (Gottfried, 2011b). At the same time, frequent repetition of material might contribute to disengagement among students (Gottfried, 2014). High levels of absence may also negatively affect peer relations and a sense of school belonging. Research has pointed to lower job satisfaction among teachers with more absent students (Gottfried et al., 2025), which may in turn affect student achievement levels and/or wellbeing (Wartenberg et al., 2023).

Growing Up in Ireland (GUI) collected information from school principals on the proportion of their students who were chronic absentees. This was measured at both the 9- and 13-year waves, allowing us to explore the effects of primary and post-primary school context on young adult outcomes, over and above the effects of individual absence. As in Chapters 2 to 4, a range of individual and family background factors are taken into account in the models. The models do not take account of other school-level factors.

5.2 EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

Table 5.1 shows the relationship between school-level absence at primary and post-primary level and Leaving Certificate performance, controlling for individual-level absence at 9 and 13 in Model 1, and a range of individual and background factors in Model 2. Level of chronic absence at the school level is treated as a continuous variable, while an alternative specification distinguishes between high-absence schools (where chronic absentees make up 15 per cent or more of the school population) and other schools. The raw model shows that school-level absence at both primary and post-primary level is significantly associated with lower Leaving Certificate grades. Model 2 indicates that the effect of primary-level absence is due to the profile of students attending high-absence schools. The effect for post-primary absence is slightly reduced in size but still significant when student

characteristics are taken into account. Looking at high-absence schools versus others allows for non-linearity in the relationship as well as providing a more intuitive measure of the scale of the difference. Even controlling for a range of other characteristics, young people who attended a high-absence primary school achieved 22 fewer points while those who attended a high-absence post-primary school achieved 38 fewer points. The latter is equivalent to an individual missing four to six days over the school year.

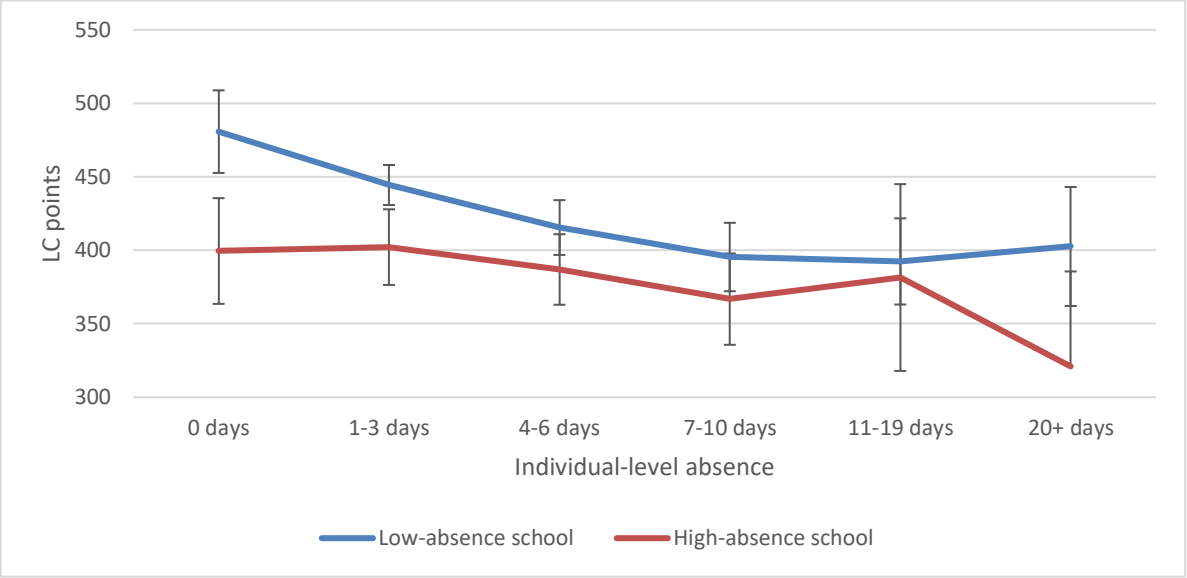
Further analyses explored whether the effect of school-level absence operates in the same way for different groups. Figure 5.1 looks at the interaction between individual and school absence in influencing Leaving Certificate grades; for ease of presentation, the analyses take account of absence at 13 years only. It is evident that the negative effect of school-level absence is strongest for young people who themselves have low levels of absence. At the same time, grades are particularly low for chronic attenders in high-absence schools, though the confidence intervals overlap because of smaller numbers. In sum, absence by their peers negatively affects Leaving Certificate grades even for good attenders.

TABLE 5.1 REGRESSION MODELS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL- AND SCHOOL-LEVEL ABSENCE, LEAVING CERTIFICATE PERFORMANCE AND HIGHER EDUCATION ENTRY

	LC grades (OLS)		Higher education entry (Logistic regression showing AMEs)	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Absence at age 9:				
1–3 days	-2.803	-6.812	-0.059	-0.064±
4–6 days	-19.883	-17.422	-0.071±	-0.059
7–10 days	-24.870	-17.453	-0.111*	-0.084*
11–19 days	-15.187	-4.759	-0.163**	-0.096*
20+ days	-55.635	-13.753		
(Ref. None)				
School-level chronic absence	-1.346**	-0.594	-0.001	0.000
Absence at age 13:				
1–3 days	-18.637	-19.201±	-0.015	-0.024
4–6 days	-45.872**	-39.863**	-0.054	-0.045
7–10 days	-81.782***	-63.711***	-0.129**	-0.104*
11–19 days	-71.845***	-55.275**	-0.172**	-0.132*
20+ days	-112.552***	-70.734***		
(Ref. None)				
School-level chronic absence	-2.612***	-1.932***	-0.007***	-0.005***
R2	0.101	0.226	0.056	0.130
Alternative specification:				
High (15%+) chronic absence at primary level		-22.067*		-0.019
High (15%+) chronic absence at post-primary level		-38.068***		-0.093***
N	2,921		3,120	

Source: GUI Cohort '98, waves at 9, 13, 17 and 20.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. Model 2 controls for gender, disability, parental education, social class, household income, family structure, migrant background and urban/rural location.

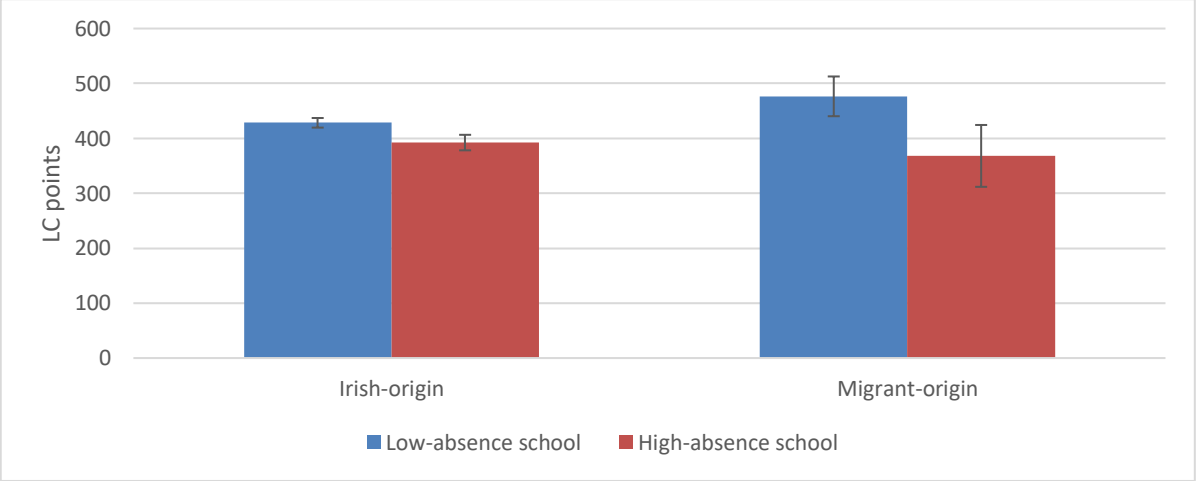
FIGURE 5.1 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOL-LEVEL AND INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL ABSENCE AND LEAVING CERTIFICATE GRADES



Source: GUI Cohort '98, waves at 9, 13, 17, 20 and 25.
Notes: Derived from Appendix Table A5.1.

The effect of school-level absence does not vary by gender, disability or parental education (Appendix Tables A5.1–A5.3). However, there is a significant interaction with migrant background: young people from a migrant background experience a more negative effect from attending a high-absence school than their Irish-origin peers (Figure 5.2 and Table A5.4).

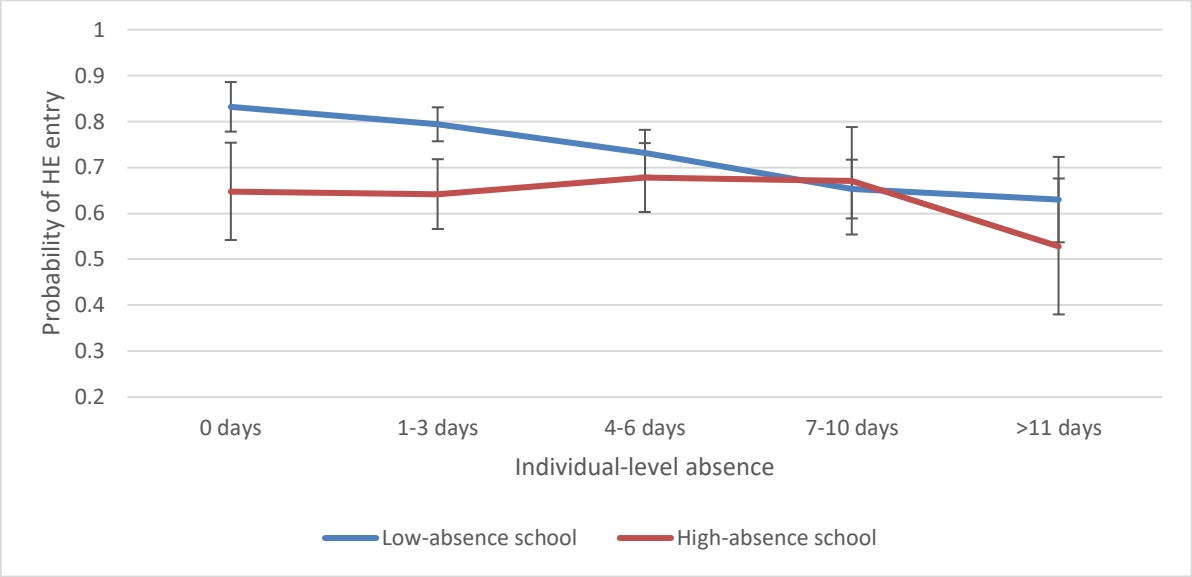
FIGURE 5.2 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOL-LEVEL ABSENCE, MIGRANT BACKGROUND AND LEAVING CERTIFICATE GRADES



Source: GUI Cohort '98, waves at 9, 13, 17, 20 and 25.
Notes: Derived from Appendix Table A5.4.

No significant relationship is found between school-level absence at primary level and the likelihood of entering higher education by age 20 (Table 5.1). However, higher school-level absence at post-primary level is negatively related to higher education entry; those who attended a high-absence school are nine percentage points less likely to go on to tertiary education, all else being equal. As with Leaving Certificate grades, the penalty attached to attending a high-absence school is greater for those with lower levels of individual absence (Figure 5.3). On the other hand, levels of entry are particularly low among those who missed 11 or more days in high-absence schools.

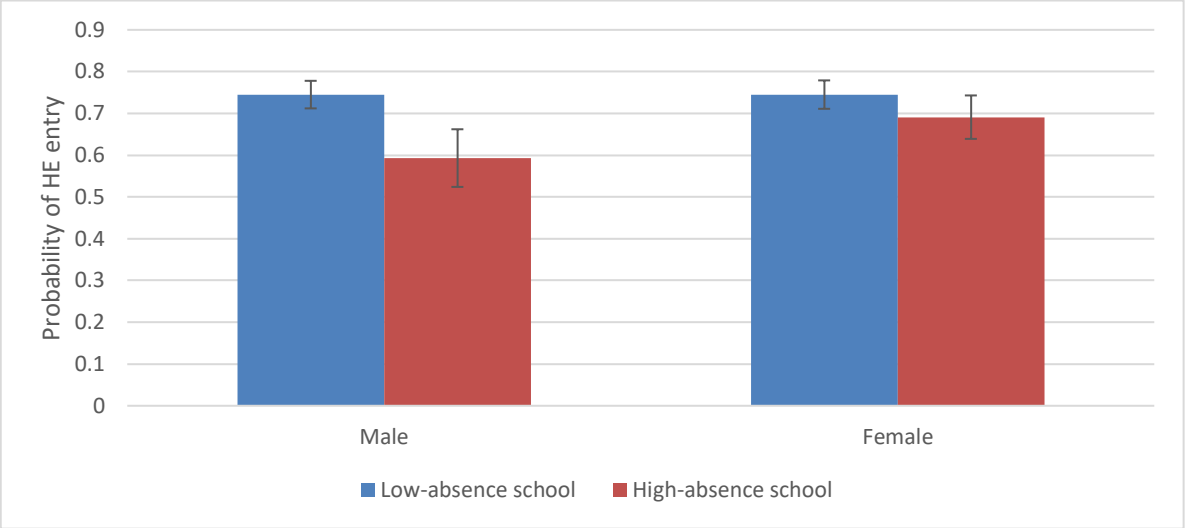
FIGURE 5.3 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOL-LEVEL AND INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL ABSENCE AND HIGHER EDUCATION ENTRY BY AGE 20



Source: GUI Cohort '98, waves at 9, 13, 17, 20 and 25.
Notes: Derived from Appendix Table A5.5.

There is a tendency for the negative effect of attending a high-absence school to be more negative for men than for women (Figure 5.4). However, the effect of school-level absence does not vary by parental education or migrant background (Tables A5.7 and A5.8).

FIGURE 5.4 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOL-LEVEL ABSENCE, GENDER AND HIGHER EDUCATION ENTRY BY AGE 20



Source: GUI Cohort '98, waves at 9, 13, 17, 20 and 25.
Notes: Derived from Appendix Table A5.6.

5.3 WELLBEING AND HEALTH

Table 5.2 shows the relationship between school-level absence and depression scores at ages 20 and 25. At age 20, the continuous measure of school-level absence at both primary and post-primary level is negatively related to depression levels, taking account of other factors, including socio-emotional difficulties at age 9. However, comparing higher- and lower-absence schools shows no significant difference in depression levels. At age 25, there is no relationship between post-primary level absence and depression. However, depression scores are higher for those who had attended a high-absence school at primary level. This gap does not vary by individual-level absence, gender, disability, parental education or migrant background.

TABLE 5.2 REGRESSION MODELS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL- AND SCHOOL-LEVEL ABSENCE AND DEPRESSION AT AGES 20 AND 25

	Age 20		Age 25	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Absence at age 9:				
1–3 days	0.158	0.251	0.268	0.215
4–6 days	0.492	0.570	1.075*	1.139*
7–10 days	-0.171	-0.272	0.844	0.896
11–19 days	-0.393	-0.386	2.402**	2.367**
20+ days	3.668**	2.829*		
(Ref. None)				
School-level chronic absence	-0.021±	-0.028*	0.046*	0.037±
Absence at age 13:				
1–3 days	0.009	0.152	0.901±	1.023*
4–6 days	0.588	0.706	1.501*	1.468**
7–10 days	0.617	0.626	1.558*	1.697**
11–19 days	0.660	0.731	2.433**	2.042*
20+ days	0.933	0.892		
(Ref. None)				
School-level chronic absence	-0.020±	-0.024*	0.004	-0.010
R2	0.041	0.082	0.080	0.131
Alternative specification:				
High (15%+) chronic absence at primary level		-0.538		1.462**
High (15%+) chronic absence at post-primary level		-0.409		-0.510
N	3,081		1,494	

Source: GUI Cohort '98, waves at 9, 13, 17, 20 and 25.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. Model 1 controls for SDQ at age 9. Model 2 controls for gender, disability, parental education, social class, household income, family structure, migrant background and urban/rural location.

The pattern for stress also suggests a non-linear association with school-level absence (Table 5.3). School-level absence is negatively associated with stress at 20, though no significant difference is found between higher- and lower-absence schools. There is little systematic relationship found at age 25, though primary-level absence is associated with greater stress.

TABLE 5.3 REGRESSION MODELS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL- AND SCHOOL-LEVEL ABSENCE AND STRESS AT AGES 20 AND 25

	Age 20		Age 25	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Absence at age 9:				
1–3 days	0.343	0.365	0.333	0.415
4–6 days	0.842*	0.853*	0.721	0.889±
7–10 days	0.623	0.526	0.674	0.782
11–19 days	0.177	0.165	2.302**	2.280**
20+ days	3.255*	2.716*		
(Ref. None)				
School-level chronic absence	-0.017	-0.021	0.040±	0.035±
Absence at age 13:				
1–3 days	0.131	0.232	0.988*	1.064**
4–6 days	0.654±	0.721*	1.327**	1.363**
7–10 days	0.512	0.547	0.951±	1.077*
11–19 days	0.310	0.664	0.916	0.875
20+ days	0.800	0.918		
(Ref. None)				
School-level chronic absence	-0.019±	-0.022*	0.009	0.001
R2	0.032	0.061	0.060	0.108
Alternative specification:				
High (15%+) chronic absence at primary level		-0.471		1.058*
High (15%+) chronic absence at post-primary level		-0.432		-0.215
N	3,075		1,477	

Source: GUI Cohort '98, waves at 9, 13, 17, 20 and 25.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. Model 1 controls for SDQ at age 9. Model 2 controls for gender, disability, parental education, social class, household income, family structure, migrant background and urban/rural location.

Attending a primary school with higher levels of chronic absence is related to lower life satisfaction (Table 5.4). However, this pattern is explained by the profile of students who attended those schools. Overall, no significant relationship is found between level of absence at primary and post-primary level and life satisfaction.

TABLE 5.4 REGRESSION MODELS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL- AND SCHOOL-LEVEL ABSENCE AND LIFE SATISFACTION AT AGES 20 AND 25

	Age 20		Age 25	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Absence at age 9:				
1–3 days	-0.074	-0.089	0.059	0.044
4–6 days	-0.322*	-0.327*	-0.133	-0.146
7–10 days	-0.260	-0.234	-0.189	-0.221
11–19 days	0.025	0.049	-0.091	0.142
20+ days	-0.279	-0.139		
(Ref. None)				
School-level chronic absence	-0.029**	0.006	-0.005	-0.001
Absence at age 13:				
1–3 days	-0.056	-0.122	-0.273	-0.312±
4–6 days	-0.069	-0.113	-0.476*	-0.487*
7–10 days	-0.345±	-0.314	-0.549±	-0.553*
11–19 days	-0.099	-0.091	-0.512	-0.452
20+ days	-0.804*	-0.720*		
(Ref. None)				
School-level chronic absence	0.003	0.004	-0.005	-0.004
R2	0.014	0.028	0.040	0.071
Alternative specification:				
High (15%+) chronic absence at primary level		0.127		-0.280
High (15%+) chronic absence at post-primary level		0.067		-0.016
N	3,090		1,511	

Source: GUI Cohort '98, waves at 9, 13, 17 and 20.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. Model 1 controls for SDQ at age 9. Model 2 controls for gender, disability, parental education, social class, household income, family structure, migrant background and urban/rural location.

There is no significant relationship between rate of chronic absence at school level and levels of aggression among young adults at age 20 (Table 5.5). However, school-level absence is related to anti-social behaviour, albeit in differing directions at primary and post-primary level.[23] Young adults who attended high-absence primary schools have higher levels of anti-social behaviour while those who attended high-absence post-primary schools have lower levels. These differences are sizeable, on a par with the difference between those living in urban and rural areas and larger than any other background factor except gender. There is no ready explanation for these patterns. It may be that attending a higher-absence primary school is disruptive not only of learning but of socio-emotional development, leading to longer-term difficulties. However, the pattern for post-primary absence is more puzzling, though it may relate to the relatively high levels of anti-social behaviour found in more advantaged schools (Smyth and Darmody,

[23] This is not related to multicollinearity as models testing primary and post-primary levels separately show the same pattern.

2021). The effect of school-level absence does not vary by individual-level absence, gender, parental education, disability or migrant background.

TABLE 5.5 REGRESSION MODELS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL- AND SCHOOL-LEVEL ABSENCE AND AGGRESSION AND ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

	Aggression (Age 20)		Anti-social behaviour (Age 17)	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Absence at age 9:				
1–3 days	-0.603	-0.688±	-0.243	-0.295
4–6 days	0.188	0.143	-0.222	-0.181
7–10 days	-0.801±	-0.570*	-0.582±	-0.592*
11–19 days	-0.396	-0.404	-0.582±	-0.451
20+ days	0.067	0.157	1.502	1.525
(Ref. None)				
School-level chronic absence	-0.000	-0.006	0.034**	0.028*
Absence at age 13:				
1–3 days	0.072	0.102	0.153	0.127
4–6 days	-0.086	-0.112	-0.050	-0.064
7–10 days	1.551**	1.493**	0.345	0.332
11–19 days	-0.184	-0.317	0.137	0.028
20+ days	1.372	1.151	0.768	0.610
(Ref. None)				
School-level chronic absence	-0.018	-0.016	-0.027**	-0.021*
R2	0.038	0.073	0.035	0.079
Alternative specification:				
High (15%+) chronic absence at primary level		-0.581		0.580*
High (15%+) chronic absence at post-primary level		-0.059		-0.532**
N	3,078		3,085	

Source: GUI Cohort '98, waves at 9, 13, 17 and 20.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. Model 1 controls for SDQ at age 9. Model 2 controls for gender, disability, parental education, social class, household income, family structure, migrant background and urban/rural location.

Table 5.6 shows no systematic relationship between school-level absence and self-reported health at either 20 or 25 years of age.

TABLE 5.6 ORDERED LOGISTIC REGRESSION MODELS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL- AND SCHOOL-LEVEL ABSENCE AND HEALTH AT AGES 20 AND 25 (ODDS RATIOS)

	Age 20		Age 25	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Absence at age 9:				
1–3 days	1.041	1.029	1.335	1.262
4–6 days	0.881	0.597	0.904	0.921
7–10 days	0.746	0.795	0.920	0.914
11–19 days	0.683±	0.724	0.689	0.770
20+ days	0.282**	0.382*		
(Ref. None)				
School-level chronic absence	0.998	1.001	0.997	1.000
Absence at age 13:				
1–3 days	0.654**	0.646**	0.815	0.798
4–6 days	0.603**	0.602**	0.683*	0.699±
7–10 days	0.560**	0.592**	0.665±	0.700
11–19 days	0.524**	0.549**	0.604±	0.687
20+ days	0.449±	0.536		
(Ref. None)				
School-level chronic absence	1.004	1.009±	0.998	1.004
R2	0.014	0.025	0.010	0.024
Alternative specification:				
High (15%+) chronic absence at primary level		0.946		0.898
High (15%+) chronic absence at post-primary level		1.201		1.104
N	3,119		1,734	

Source: GUI Cohort '98, waves at 9, 13, 17, 20 and 25.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. Model 2 controls for gender, disability, parental education, social class, household income, family structure, migrant background and urban/rural location.

5.4 SOCIAL RELATEDNESS AND POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

Social relatedness, that is, the quality of interaction with significant others, is not significantly related to either individual-level or school-level absence, when considered together (Table 5.7). Trust in others is negatively related to both primary and post-primary school-level absence, though the effect of the post-primary context is found to be related to the profile of students attending high-absence schools (compare the coefficients in Models 1 and 2). The effect of attending a high-absence primary school on levels of trust in others is sizeable, equivalent to the gap in trust between those whose parents have a degree and those whose parents have a Junior Certificate or lower qualification.

TABLE 5.7 OLS REGRESSION MODELS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOL-LEVEL ABSENCE AND SOCIAL RELATEDNESS AT AGE 20 AND TRUST IN OTHER PEOPLE AT AGE 25

	Social relatedness		Trust in other people	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Absence at age 9:				
1–3 days	0.577	0.573	-0.227	-0.193
4–6 days	0.150	0.146	-0.471*	-0.392±
7–10 days	0.319	0.282	-0.038	0.038
11–19 days	0.540	0.508	-0.503±	-0.298
20+ days	-1.123	-1.316		
(Ref. None)				
School-level chronic absence	0.010	0.016	-0.023**	-0.022**
Absence at age 13:				
1–3 days	-0.143	-0.130	-0.281	-0.350*
4–6 days	-0.265	-0.296	-0.667**	-0.658**
7–10 days	0.175	0.203	-0.657**	-0.666**
11–19 days	0.269	0.358	-0.727*	-0.606*
20+ days	-1.256±	-1.062±		
(Ref. None)				
School-level chronic absence	-0.010	-0.015	-0.019**	-0.008
R2	0.029	0.049	0.050	0.096
Alternative specification:				
High (15%+) chronic absence at primary level		0.319		-0.523**
High (15%+) chronic absence at post-primary level		-0.389		-0.259
N	3,107		1,734	

Source: GUI Cohort '98, waves at 9, 13, 17, 20 and 25.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. Model 2 controls for SDQ at age 9, gender, disability, parental education, social class, household income, family structure, migrant background and urban/rural location.

There is no significant relationship between school-level absence and interest or involvement in political activities (Table 5.8). There is a slight tendency for levels of voter registration to be lower for those who attended a high-absence post-primary school but this is only significant at the 10 per cent level.

TABLE 5.8 OLS REGRESSION MODELS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOL-LEVEL ABSENCE AND POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT AT AGE 25

	Political interest (Ordered logit)		Political activity (Poisson, IRR)		Voter registration (AME)	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Absence at age 9:						
1–3 days	1.082	1.069	1.317*	1.393	0.000	-0.022
4–6 days	1.138	1.214	1.197	1.245	-0.041	-0.055
7–10 days	1.478	1.601±	1.505*	1.576**	-0.032	-0.042
11+ days	1.016	1.165	1.093	1.125	-0.093±	-0.059
(Ref. None)						
School-level chronic absence	1.008	1.007	1.000	0.999	-0.000	0.000
Absence at age 13:						
1–3 days	0.785	0.799	1.140	1.162	-0.015	-0.021
4–6 days	0.540***	0.558**	1.091	1.120	-0.050	-0.059
7–10 days	0.721	0.752	1.191	1.211	-0.070	-0.073±
11+ days	0.781	0.853	1.342	1.317	-0.029	-0.041
(Ref. None)						
School-level chronic absence	0.983*	0.999	0.997	0.998	-0.001	-0.002±
R2	0.009	0.028	-	-	0.177	0.128
Alternative specification:						
High (15%+) chronic absence at primary level		0.953		0.881		0.019
High (15%+) chronic absence at post-primary level		0.918		0.995		-0.047±
N	1,734		1,642		1,734	

Source: GUI Cohort '98, waves at 9, 13, 17, 20 and 25.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. Model 2 controls for SDQ at age 9, gender, disability, parental education, social class, household income, family structure, migrant background and urban/rural location.

5.5 CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has presented new analyses of the effects of school-level absence rates on outcomes in early adulthood, over and above the effects of individual absence. Young people attending schools with higher rates of chronic absence tend to achieve lower Leaving Certificate grades and are less likely to go on to higher education than those attending low-absence schools. Even those who themselves have good attendance have poorer outcomes if school-level absence is higher. This pattern does not vary between those from more and less advantaged families. However, the grade penalty for attending a high-absence school is greater for migrant-origin students, perhaps because they are more reliant on school-based resources in the absence of insider knowledge of the educational system on the part of their parents. School-level absence is less influential for dimensions of health and wellbeing.[24] However, those who attended a high-absence primary school tend to have higher levels of anti-social behaviour and less trust in others.

[24] The study did not explore the relationship between school-level absence and labour market outcomes because of the modest effects of individual-level absence.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusions and implications for policy

6.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Ireland, like many other countries, has seen a significant increase in school absence rates since the pandemic (TESS, 2024). It is therefore important to understand the consequences of missing school for young people's outcomes. International research indicates that prolonged absence from school has effects which reach into early adulthood, and potentially beyond (for an overview, see Sosu et al., 2021). This study draws on Cohort '98 of the Growing Up in Ireland (GUI) study to provide the first Irish evidence on how non-attendance influences early adult outcomes, at 20 and 25 years of age. It builds upon international research by not only looking at educational and labour market outcomes but also at health, wellbeing and social connectedness, thus taking a holistic view of the potential impact of school absence. Furthermore, the report examines whether the average level of chronic absence at school level has additional consequences for the outcomes of young adults. This chapter summarises the main findings of the study and discusses the implications for future policy development.

6.2 ABSENCE AND EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

A number of international studies have documented a strong relationship between school absence and poorer educational outcomes, including school non-completion (Smerillo et al., 2018; Allensworth and Easton, 2007; Liu et al., 2021), lower grades and lower rates of post-school participation in education (Ansari et al., 2020; Klein et al., 2024; Liu et al., 2021). The findings presented in this report show a very strong relationship between school absence at age 13 and Leaving Certificate grades four to five years later. Absence at age 9 is also associated with poorer Leaving Certificate performance but its effect is explained through later absence levels. Even short absence spells of one to three days result in significantly lower grades while chronic absentees receive 80 fewer points than those with no non-attendance, even controlling for several individual and background factors. This is quite a stringent test of the net impact of absenteeism as it takes account of a range of social background factors, including parental education, social class and income, that shape both non-attendance and exam grades. This finding contributes to the literature establishing a negative connection between absenteeism and performance in high-stakes national exams that influences educational and labour market pathways (Attwood and Croll, 2017; Dräger et al., 2023; Klein et al., 2022; Klein et al., 2024).

The negative impact of absence applies across all socio-demographic groups, whether defined in terms of parental education, social class, household income, gender or migrant background. Thus, there is no evidence that more advantaged families can buffer the effects of non-attendance by, for example, helping young people cover the curriculum content they have missed and/or paying for private tuition (grinds). This is in line with previous research that showed the negative impact of school absence does not vary significantly by family socio-economic background (Dräger et al., 2023; Klein et al., 2022; Klein et al., 2024). The degree of chronic absence in a school is found to have a significant effect on exam performance, over and above that of individual-level non-attendance. There is a negative penalty attached to attending a high-absence school (that is, where chronic attenders make up 15 per cent or more of the student population), with effects at both primary and post-primary levels. These effects are evident, and strong, even for young people who themselves did not miss any days of school. This report further contributes to the literature on educational inequality by providing evidence that school-level absenteeism adversely affects academic outcomes.

There are a number of potential explanations for the grade penalty associated with school absence. First, being absent from school will result in missing curriculum content and potentially the acquisition of foundational skills. Given the cumulative nature of the curriculum at post-primary level, it is likely to be difficult to recover lost ground in preparing for the Leaving Certificate. Second, school absence may contribute to disengagement from school and to more negative relationships with teachers. The analyses tested this by taking account of attitudes to school at ages 9, 13 and 17 as well as the quality of teacher-student interaction at 13 and 17 years. Only part of the relationship between absence and grades is explained by school disengagement (that is, more negative attitudes to school and poorer relationships with teachers) and there is a clear linear relationship between prolonged absence and lower grades even taking account of these detailed measures. Further, being absent from school may contribute to socio-emotional difficulties (such as problems interacting with peers), which, in turn, may lead to disengagement at school. There is less evidence from previous research as to how school-level absence could shape educational outcomes. However, it is likely that absence of a larger group of students would negatively affect the pace of teaching and learning and would lead to a significant group of students who may lack important foundational skills.

Entry to higher education was the dominant pathway among this cohort of young people (GUI Study Team, 2019). The findings show that being absent for 11 or more days at ages 9 and 13 is associated with significantly lower rates of transition to higher education, even taking account of a number of individual and background factors known to influence post-school pathways. The effects of absence at age 13 hold even taking account of school engagement and teacher-student interaction towards the end of senior cycle. This finding supports the studies of Klein and Sosu

(2024a) on the Scottish population and Liu et al. (2021) examining a school district in Chicago, which identify links between attendance and the likelihood of progressing to further and higher education.

The relationship between absence and higher education entry operates through the Leaving Certificate grade penalty for those with prolonged absenteeism. As is the case for Leaving Certificate performance, there is no evidence that young people from more advantaged families are protected from the consequences of school absence (for similar findings internationally, see Ansari et al., 2020, and Klein et al., 2024).

Over and above the effects of individual absence, attending a school with a high level of absence is associated with a reduced chance of attending higher education, even for those who had good attendance records. Following this cohort to age 25 allows us to identify whether they completed the degree they embarked on or engaged in educational upgrading in their early twenties. The findings show a substantial gap in degree completion between those with no and those with 11 days' absence, equivalent to the gap by parental education.

Education stakeholders in Ireland, teachers, students and their parents, have highlighted the broader developmental aspects of senior cycle education, while pointing to challenges around the adequacy of preparation for the world of work and adult life (Smyth et al., 2019). This study has presented new findings on the extent to which young people feel that their post-primary education has been of benefit to them and whether this differs by levels of school absence. There is a significant negative linear relationship between absence and the perceived benefits of education, with much lower perceptions among those who had chronic attendance issues. The relationship is stronger for certain dimensions, including knowing how to acquire a new skill, increasing their self-confidence and helping them to develop into a well-balanced person. The relationship between absence at 13 and a more negative view of their education holds for both women and men, migrant- and Irish-origin young people and by parental education.

6.3 ABSENCE AND LABOUR MARKET OUTCOMES

Most of the cohort were in full-time education or training at 20 years of age so the analyses focus on labour market outcomes at age 25. Measures include labour market status and history, employment quality and job satisfaction. Given the strong link between educational attainment and employment outcomes in the Irish context, we had expected that absence would affect labour market experiences indirectly via education. In fact, any differences found were relatively modest. Labour market status at age 25 did not vary by levels of school absence. This appears to contrast with several studies that identify a link between absenteeism and a higher likelihood of unemployment, including Klein et al. (2024), Klein and Sosu (2024a), Attwood and Croll (2017), and Ansari et al. (2020). However, none of

these studies focus on Ireland, where current favourable labour market conditions may account for the lack of association. Nevertheless, longer absences are significantly related to spending longer unemployed, an average of two months longer, since the age of 20 and being more likely to have spent some time out of the labour market because of care duties. The lack of strong effects may reflect the dilution of the impact of absence as young adults acquire more employment experience. Alternatively, historically low levels of unemployment may mean that even those with chronic absence were able to obtain employment. There are few significant relationships between absence and employment quality, though more prolonged absence is linked to being less likely to be in a professional or managerial job and to lower employment income. Part of this difference is related to the more disadvantaged profile of those with prolonged absence. The relationship between absenteeism and labour market outcomes in adulthood has received less attention in international research than educational outcomes, with mixed evidence to date, and these findings contribute to exploring this issue in the Irish context while suggesting that income, employment quality, and unemployment duration merit further investigation in the literature.

6.4 ABSENCE, HEALTH AND WELLBEING

International research has generally focused on the impact of school absence on educational and labour market outcomes (for an exception, see Ansari et al., 2020, who examine life satisfaction). This study has yielded new insights into the relationship between non-attendance and a range of measures of physical and mental health and wellbeing. The findings point to more depressive symptoms and higher stress levels among those with prolonged school absence. Some of this difference is related to family background factors, including childhood socio-emotional difficulties and prior depression, but some absence groups continue to have higher depression even taking account of these factors. Stress levels at age 20 are particularly high among those who were chronically absent but the moderate group (4–10 days) have the highest levels at age 25. Over and above individual absence, having attended a primary school with a high level of chronic absence is linked to higher depression and stress at age 25. Stronger variation by absence is found for life satisfaction. Missing four or more days at age 13 is associated with much lower life satisfaction, even taking account of family background and earlier socio-emotional difficulties. The difference is substantial, larger than the gender or disability gap. Given the lack of existing evidence on the link between school absence and wellbeing, it is difficult to identify the processes underlying these relationships. It seems likely that school absence has disrupted key developmental processes, as evidenced by more negative perceptions of the benefits of education, that enhance wellbeing and coping strategies in later life.

It might be expected that prolonged school absence would potentially expose young people to more risky behaviour. Contrary to expectations, there is no significant relationship between individual- or school-level absence and

involvement in anti-social behaviour (measured at age 17). Ansari et al. (2020) also examined these outcomes for a 1991 cohort across sites in the US and, in line with our findings, did not identify a link between absenteeism and risky behaviour. We also find that there is some tendency for chronic absence to be linked to higher aggression levels at age 20, which may again reflect a disruption of developmental processes that enhance self-regulation and coping strategies.

Prolonged school absence is found to be predictive of self-reported health in early adulthood, even taking account of background factors, disability and health status at an earlier age. Self-reported health at both 20 and 25 years is poorest among those who missed 11 days or more of school at age 13. As with mental health, it is difficult to identify the potential mechanisms for this relationship between attendance and physical health. One potential explanation relates to the way in which adverse childhood experiences and associated stress have been found to have consequences for physical health in adulthood, a concept known as biological embodiment (see, for example, Kelly-Irving, 2019).

6.5 SOCIAL BELONGING

Although this topic has been under-researched, it might be expected that school absence could negatively impact social ties by disrupting contact with peers and potentially negatively impact on broader social and political engagement. Those with chronic absence at 13 have significantly lower levels of social relatedness, that is, closeness of ties with others. This pattern is only partly related to differences in background factors. Those who missed four or more days of school at age 13 have significantly lower levels of trust in other people, even taking account of a range of individual and background factors. The gap in trust between those with no absence and those with 11 or more days is sizeable, larger than the gap by parental education. Furthermore, having attended a high-absence primary school is markedly related to lower levels of trust in others. It appears, therefore, that non-attendance weakens social ties and leads to a lack of trust in others. Further research could usefully explore the size and nature of peer networks among those with prolonged school absence and the extent to which they rely on others for support as they move from adolescence to adulthood.

This variation in sense of social belonging does not translate into differences in political engagement. There is no disparity by level of individual- or school-level absence in political engagement, involvement in political activities or the likelihood of being registered to vote. Interestingly, this contradicts Ansari et al.'s (2020) study of a 1990 US cohort, which found a link between absenteeism among pupils aged 5–15 and the likelihood of voting in the last election. However, the two studies concern different contexts and cohorts. Further research would be needed to unpack whether there are connections between school absenteeism and lower levels of civic engagement.

6.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Like any research, this study has a number of limitations. Firstly, the measure of school absence is based on mother-reported information so is potentially subject to social desirability bias. Further, absence is measured at two time-points only – 9 and 13 years. While these capture primary and post-primary patterns, it is likely that absence closer to the time of school completion may be more predictive of later outcomes. Ideally, future waves of GUI would link survey data to administrative records on school absence to capture objective information on patterns at the time of the survey and between survey waves.

Secondly, the analyses do not control for all of the individual, family and school factors that influence both attendance and outcomes such as performance. Related research using GUI Cohort '08 data (Smyth et al., forthcoming) explores the extent to which school absence is linked to a wider range of observed factors, including adverse childhood experiences, family conflict, parental mental health and bullying victimisation, all of which might be expected to also impact on education and wellbeing outcomes. There will, of course, be other salient factors that are not captured even in as rich a data source as GUI. However, there is a tension between taking account of all of the potential factors influencing attendance and the outcome in question and 'overcontrolling' for factors, thus failing to provide a clear and consistent picture of the main patterns at play. Nonetheless, the study goes further than much previous research by having detailed information on different dimensions of family background and by explicitly taking account of school disengagement and prior wellbeing in tracing the impact of school absence.

6.7 IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY

The study findings show very significant negative consequences of prolonged school absence in early adulthood, not only in relation to educational outcomes but also health, wellbeing and social belonging. For educational performance, even short spells of school absence are found to have a negative effect. School absence therefore emerges as an important driver of later inequality, one which reinforces pre-existing social inequalities in young adult outcomes. The findings highlight the urgency of addressing non-attendance given its impact on life-chances. This is all the more important in a context where school absence rates have increased since the pandemic and are much higher than they were at the time Cohort '98 were attending school.

In September 2025, a national media campaign to promote school attendance was launched by Tusla Education Support Service (TESS). The evidence presented in this report could usefully form the basis for clear messaging about the educational penalty for individuals who are absent from school but also for their peers who are negatively affected by chronic absence levels within their school. The performance

gap is evident across all social groups, with no evidence that more advantaged families can buffer the effects of school absence. Messaging could also usefully highlight the implications for being able to benefit from the broader developmental aspects of schooling and for the consequences for later physical and mental health, wellbeing and social belonging.

The findings highlight the importance of providing support to schools to address non-attendance across the spectrum from short spells to chronic levels of absence. The Anseo pilot programme[25] is being extended by TESS from September 2025 to support schools in analysing their attendance data and developing strategies to tackle school absence. This intervention draws on the multi-dimensional multi-tiered system of supports (MD-MTSS) framework (see Kearney and Graczyk, 2020). This framework comprises Tier 1, school-wide practices to promote a culture of attendance for all; Tier 2, early intervention for those with mild to moderate levels of absence; and Tier 3, more intensive interventions for students with chronic absence. A systematic review of existing interventions (Melvin et al., 2025) points to the value of a range of strategies in tackling attendance, including positive behaviour strategies, social and emotional learning, attendance-focused psychosocial interventions within schools, and mentoring programmes. However, the authors caution the need to assess the effectiveness of specific interventions for different types of attendance issues.

In addition to addressing non-attendance, it is important to look at how schools can mitigate the disruption of student development caused by absence through initiatives to help address learning loss and to support broader social development. The School Completion Programme has provided important supports to young people with poor attendance levels (Smyth et al., 2025) but many co-ordinators have reported challenges in meeting the scale and complexity of need at local level. The planned introduction of DEIS Plus,[26] with additional supports for the most disadvantaged schools, may assist in this regard. Furthermore, other than Educational Welfare Officers, no such specific supports are available to students with poor attendance who do not attend DEIS schools.

As with broader school engagement, it is important to consider the role of wider socio-economic factors in shaping non-attendance. These include deprivation among families with children and young people as well as the concentration of disadvantage at local level and its consequences in terms of mental health difficulties, addiction and local conflict or crime. School-based initiatives to tackle non-attendance need therefore to be underpinned by broader supports for

[25] Anseo is an evidence-based programme designed to support school attendance. For further information, see www.tusla.ie/tess/national-school-attendance-campaign.

[26] It is intended that the DEIS Plus programme will provide additional supports for those schools with the highest concentration of disadvantage; www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/question/2025-09-17/477.

vulnerable families at national and local levels.

This report forms part of a broader research programme with TESS. Other studies use GUI data to identify the student- and school-level factors associated with (changes in) non-attendance and employ administrative data to identify types of schools with high levels of absence as a basis for targeted support. It is hoped that this growing evidence base will support schools in their efforts to promote attendance and engagement.

APPENDIX: CHAPTER 2

TABLE A2.1 OLS REGRESSION MODELS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOL ABSENCE AT AGES 9 AND 13 AND LEAVING CERTIFICATE PERFORMANCE

	Model 1 (Raw)	Model 2 (Raw plus attendance at age 9)	Model 3 (Social background)	Model 4 (School engagement at age 9 and 13)	Model 5 (School engagement at age 17)
Constant	439.474	465.023	446.491	268.512	162.838
Absence at age 9:					
1–3 days	-13.179	-4.397	-5.639	-4.756	-3.948
4–6 days	-38.416**	-19.923	-13.658	-13.473	-10.562
7–10 days	-54.187***	-25.199±	-15.529	-21.273±	-20.834±
11–20 days	-51.981**	-19.386	-7.330	-8.487	-1.533
>20 days	-72.816*	-35.401	-2.424	6.554	31.877
(Ref. None)					
Absence at age 13:					
1–3 days		-22.248*	-26.528**	-19.106*	-13.717
4–6 days		-52.899***	-44.296***	-32.909**	-25.062*
7–10 days		-84.923***	-68.373***	-57.456***	-49.300***
11–20 days		-86.502***	-67.574***	-61.161***	-53.721**
>20 days		-124.379***	-81.991***	-66.203**	-65.428**
(Ref. None)					
New LC grading	39.069***	35.443***	19.930**	14.204*	10.321
Female			22.225**	12.008±	7.450
Has disability			-26.789±	-24.291	-18.924
Parental education:					
Leaving Certificate			22.928±	29.653*	33.173*
Post-secondary			38.704**	47.622**	48.771***
Degree or higher			71.389***	77.783***	83.060***
(Ref. Junior Certificate)					
N	4,339	4,339	4,339	4,190	4,190
R2		0.061	0.205	0.250	0.313

Source: GUI Cohort '98, waves at 9, 13, 17 and 20.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10.

TABLE A2.1 OLS REGRESSION MODELS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOL ABSENCE AT AGES 9 AND 13 AND LEAVING CERTIFICATE PERFORMANCE (CONTINUED)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Social class:					
Managerial			-32.000***	-29.546**	-27.361**
Non-manual			-56.539***	-47.040***	-43.189***
Skilled manual			-70.627***	-59.667***	-55.090***
Semi/unskilled			-101.242***	-86.572***	-81.581***
Non-employed			-77.586***	-67.448**	-60.561**
(Ref. Professional)					
Household income:					
2nd			16.434	17.917	15.387
3rd			20.765±	19.217	20.696±
4th			37.411**	32.955**	27.007*
Highest quintile			72.507***	67.050***	59.059***
Income missing			55.834***	55.092***	49.407***
(Ref. Lowest quintile)					
Lone-parent family			-22.799±	-13.999	-9.962
Migrant background			14.886	17.836	16.289
Urban location			-25.524***	-20.866**	-24.738***
(Ref. Rural location)					
Likes school at 9:					
Always				66.531***	57.396***
Sometimes				65.962***	62.289***
(Ref. Never)					
Likes teacher at 9:					
Always				13.450	15.459
Sometimes				44.617**	46.672**
(Ref. Never)					

Source: GUI Cohort '98, waves at 9, 13, 17 and 20.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10.

TABLE A2.1 OLS REGRESSION MODELS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOL ABSENCE AT AGES 9 AND 13 AND LEAVING CERTIFICATE PERFORMANCE (CONTINUED)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Likes school at 13:					
Quite a bit				6.586	-2.848
A little				29.226*	11.309
Don't like/hate				38.981**	17.852
(Ref. Very much)					
Positive interaction with teachers at 13				7.394***	3.627*
Negative interaction with teachers at 13				-9.187***	-3.272
Dislike school:					
Agree					13.398
Disagree					45.799**
Strongly disagree					77.353**
(Ref. Strongly agree)					
Positive interaction with teachers at 17					12.326***
Negative interaction with teachers at 17					-14.444***

Source: GUI Cohort '98, waves at 9, 13, 17 and 20.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10.

TABLE A2.2 LINEAR REGRESSION MODELS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ABSENCE AND LEAVING CERTIFICATE PERFORMANCE, CONTROLLING FOR DIFFERENT DIMENSIONS OF FAMILY SOCIAL BACKGROUND

	Parental education	Social class	Household income
Absence at age 13:			
1–3 days	-24.439*	-25.787*	-24.440*
4–6 days	-46.648***	-46.423***	-46.652***
7–10 days	-73.749***	-71.139***	-69.596***
11–20 days	-72.952***	-72.268***	-70.173***
>20 days	-96.013***	-94.473***	-93.462***
(Ref. None)			
R2	0.16	0.16	0.15

Source: GUI Cohort '98, waves at 9, 13, 17 and 20.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. The models all control for gender, disability, family structure, migrant background and urban/rural location.

TABLE A2.3 LINEAR REGRESSION MODELS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ABSENCE AND LEAVING CERTIFICATE PERFORMANCE, CONTROLLING FOR PERCEIVED HEALTH AND WELLBEING

	Health and wellbeing at age 9	Health and wellbeing at age 13
Absence at age 13:		
1–3 days	-25.907**	-21.818*
4–6 days	-42.655***	-38.657***
7–10 days	-65.891***	-58.265***
11–20 days	-61.393***	-55.937***
>20 days	-73.499***	-68.240***
(Ref. None)		
Health status:		
Almost always unwell/ sometimes quite ill/healthy, a few minor problems	5.998	1.184
(Ref. Healthy, no problems)		
SDQ total difficulties	-7.027***	-7.596***
R2		0.25

Source: GUI Cohort '98, waves at 9, 13, 17 and 20.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. The models all control for gender, disability, parental education, social class, household income, family structure, migrant background and urban/rural location.

TABLE A2.4 LINEAR REGRESSION MODELS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ABSENCE AND LEAVING CERTIFICATE PERFORMANCE, EXCLUDING THOSE WITH A DISABILITY

	Coefficients
Absence at age 13:	
1–3 days	-26.054***
4–6 days	-46.423***
7–10 days	-71.139***
11–20 days	-74.268***
>20 days	-94.473***
(Ref. None)	
R2	0.21

Source: GUI Cohort '98, waves at 9, 13, 17 and 20.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. The models all control for gender, disability, parental education, social class, household income, family structure, migrant background and urban/rural location.

TABLE A2.5 LINEAR REGRESSION MODELS OF THE INTERACTION BETWEEN SCHOOL ABSENCE, GENDER AND LEAVING CERTIFICATE PERFORMANCE

	Coefficients
Absence at age 13:	
1–3 days	-24.395±
4–6 days	-31.850*
7–10 days	-57.796***
11–20 days	-54.309*
>20 days	-90.661**
(Ref. None)	
Female	38.120*
Absence at age 13:	
1–3 days* female	-6.554
4–6 days* female	-31.318
7–10 days* female	-28.122
11–20 days* female	-34.296
>20 days* female	10.782
(Ref. None)	
R2	0.206

Source: GUI Cohort '98, waves at 9, 13, 17 and 20.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. The models all control for gender, disability, parental education, social class, household income, family structure, migrant background and urban/rural location.

TABLE A2.6 LINEAR REGRESSION MODELS OF THE INTERACTION BETWEEN SCHOOL ABSENCE, PARENTAL EDUCATION AND LEAVING CERTIFICATE PERFORMANCE

	Coefficients
Absence at age 13:	
1–3 days	-28.955
4–6 days	-56.987
7–10 days	-108.599*
11–20 days	-81.920
>20 days	-136.145**
(Ref. None)	
Parental education:	
Leaving Certificate	-1.135
Post-secondary	27.783
Degree or higher	73.449*
(Ref. Junior Certificate)	
Absence at age 13:	
1–3 days* Leaving Cert.	17.281
1–3 days* post-sec.	-0.765
1–3 days* degree	-17.074
4–6 days* Leaving Cert.	25.602
4–6 days* post-sec.	9.458
4–6 days* degree	-8.761
7–10 days* Leaving Cert.	45.578
7–10 days* post-sec.	24.529
7–10 days* degree	50.988
11–20 days* Leaving Cert	5.082
11–20 days* post-sec.	18.399
11–20 days* degree	12.830
>20 days* Leaving Cert.	117.778*
>20 days* post-sec.	116.145*
>20 days* degree	-9.364
(Ref. None)	
R2	0.209

Source: GUI Cohort '98, waves at 9, 13, 17 and 20.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. The models all control for gender, disability, parental education, social class, household income, family structure, migrant background and urban/rural location.

TABLE A2.7 LINEAR REGRESSION MODELS OF THE INTERACTION BETWEEN SCHOOL ABSENCE, SOCIAL CLASS AND LEAVING CERTIFICATE PERFORMANCE

	Coefficients
Absence at age 13:	
1–3 days	-65.175***
4–6 days	-75.109**
7–10 days	-78.887*
11–20 days	-86.919*
>20 days	-16.008
(Ref. None)	
Social class:	
Managerial	-53.882*
Non-manual	-105.394***
Skilled manual	-84.183**
Semi/unskilled	-166.241***
Non-employed	-29.769
(Ref. Professional)	
Absence at age 13:	
1–3 days* managerial	36.668
1–3 days* non-manual	73.261*
1–3 days* skilled	24.180
1–3 days* semi/unskilled	93.364*
1–3 days* non-employed	-38.154
4–6 days* managerial	26.383
4–6 days* non-manual	64.826±
4–6 days* skilled	23.655
4–6 days* semi/unskilled	81.142*
4–6 days* non-employed	-73.903
7–10 days* managerial	16.597
7–10 days* non-manual	34.652
7–10 days* skilled	7.898
7–10 days* semi/unskilled	40.685
7–10 days* non-employed	-89.756
11–20 days* managerial	11.780
11–20 days* non-manual	5.007
11–20 days* skilled	-15.752
11–20 days* semi/unskilled	75.735
11–20 days* non-employed	-4.847
>20 days* managerial	-104.996
>20 days* non-manual	-2.583
>20 days* skilled	-71.810
>20 days* semi/unskilled	-0.662
>20 days* non-employed	-136.039
(Ref. None)	
R2	0.214

Source: GUI Cohort '98, waves at 9, 13, 17 and 20.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. The models all control for gender, disability, parental education, social class, household income, family structure, migrant background and urban/rural location.

TABLE A2.8 LINEAR REGRESSION MODELS OF THE INTERACTION BETWEEN SCHOOL ABSENCE, HOUSEHOLD INCOME AND LEAVING CERTIFICATE PERFORMANCE

	Coefficients
Absence at age 13:	
1–3 days	7.024
4–6 days	21.392
7–10 days	-60.260*
11–20 days	-53.704
>20 days	-73.879*
(Ref. None)	
Household income:	
2nd	64.993*
3rd	42.814
4th	78.044**
Highest quintile	103.938***
Income missing	115.023**
(Ref. Lowest quintile)	
Absence at age 13:	
1–3 days* 2nd	-60.646
1–3 days* 3rd	-8.990
1–3 days* 4th	-47.405
1–3 days* highest	-25.871
1–3 days* missing	-83.880±
4–6 days* 2nd	-97.438*
4–6 days* 3rd	84.427*
4–6 days* 4th	-78.847*
4–6 days* highest	-63.785±
4–6 days* missing	-87.163±
7–10 days* 2nd	-7.822
7–10 days* 3rd	0.391
7–10 days* 4th	-4.309
7–10 days* highest	-34.891
7–10 days* missing	-10.759
11–20 days* 2nd	-49.172
11–20 days* 3rd	22.577
11–20 days* 4th	-28.612
11–20 days* highest	-36.304
11–20 days* missing	-6.105
>20 days* 2nd	47.759
>20 days* 3rd	55.003
>20 days* 4th	-38.836
>20 days* highest	-26.530
>20 days* missing	-115.634±
(Ref. None)	
R2	0.215

Source: GUI Cohort '98, waves at 9, 13, 17 and 20.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. The models all control for gender, disability, parental education, social class, household income, family structure, migrant background and urban/rural location.

TABLE A2.9 LINEAR REGRESSION MODELS OF THE INTERACTION BETWEEN SCHOOL ABSENCE, MIGRANT BACKGROUND AND LEAVING CERTIFICATE PERFORMANCE

	Coefficients
Absence at age 13:	
1–3 days	-33.867***
4–6 days	-55.640***
7–10 days	-80.308***
11–20 days	-73.956***
>20 days	-90.698***
(Ref. None)	
Migrant background	-35.789
Absence at age 13:	
1–3 days* migrant	55.089
4–6 days* migrant	98.804*
7–10 days* migrant	89.124
11–20 days* migrant	-0.230
>20 days* migrant	55.286
(Ref. None)	
R2	0.207

Source: GUI Cohort '98, waves at 9, 13, 17 and 20.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. The models all control for gender, disability, parental education, social class, household income, family structure, migrant background and urban/rural location.

TABLE A2.10 LINEAR REGRESSION MODELS OF THE INTERACTION BETWEEN SCHOOL ABSENCE, GENDER AND THE PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF EDUCATION

	Coefficients
Absence at age 13:	
1–3 days	-1.129*
4–6 days	-1.868**
7–10 days	-2.283***
11–20 days	-2.894***
>20 days	-4.072***
(Ref. None)	
Female	-0.034
Absence at age 13:	
1–3 days* female	0.656
4–6 days* female	0.625
7–10 days* female	-0.011
11–20 days* female	1.624
>20 days* female	2.024
(Ref. None)	
R2	0.047

Source: GUI Cohort '98, waves at 9, 13, 17 and 20.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. The models all control for gender, disability, parental education, social class, household income, family structure, migrant background and urban/rural location.

TABLE A2.11 LINEAR REGRESSION MODELS OF THE INTERACTION BETWEEN SCHOOL ABSENCE, PARENTAL EDUCATION AND THE PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF EDUCATION

	Coefficients
Absence at age 13:	
1–3 days	-2.417*
4–6 days	-3.289**
7–10 days	-5.572***
11–20 days	-3.995**
>20 days	-5.319**
(Ref. None)	
Parental education:	
Leaving Certificate	-2.350*
Post-secondary	-2.002*
Degree or higher	-3.049***
(Ref. Junior Certificate)	
Absence at age 13:	
1–3 days* Leaving Cert.	1.557
1–3 days* post-sec.	1.285
1–3 days* degree	2.358*
4–6 days* Leaving Cert.	2.146
4–6 days* post-sec.	1.335
4–6 days* degree	2.049
7–10 days* Leaving Cert.	3.606*
7–10 days* post-sec.	3.449*
7–10 days* degree	3.670*
11–20 days* Leaving Cert.	2.615
11–20 days* post-sec.	1.321
11–20 days* degree	2.307
>20 days* Leaving Cert.	5.179*
>20 days* post-sec.	0.406
>20 days* degree	0.638
(Ref. None)	
R2	0.054

Source: GUI Cohort '98, waves at 9, 13, 17 and 20.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. The models all control for gender, disability, parental education, social class, household income, family structure, migrant background and urban/rural location.

TABLE A2.12 LINEAR REGRESSION MODELS OF THE INTERACTION BETWEEN SCHOOL ABSENCE, MIGRANT BACKGROUND AND THE PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF EDUCATION

	Coefficients
Absence at age 13:	
1–3 days	-0.644*
4–6 days	-1.510***
7–10 days	-2.202***
11–20 days	-1.887**
>20 days	-3.238**
(Ref. None)	
Migrant background	1.310
Absence at age 13:	
1–3 days* migrant	-1.953
4–6 days* migrant	-0.191
7–10 days* migrant	-0.928
11–20 days* migrant	-2.123
>20 days* migrant	2.166
(Ref. None)	
R2	0.048

Source: GUI Cohort '98, waves at 9, 13, 17 and 20.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. The models all control for gender, disability, parental education, social class, household income, family structure, migrant background and urban/rural location.

TABLE A2.13 CORRELATION (PEARSON'S) BETWEEN SCHOOL ABSENCE AND DIFFERENT DIMENSIONS OF THE PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF EDUCATION

	Correlation coefficients
Increasing your self-confidence	-0.140***
Helping you develop into a well-balanced person	-0.127***
Building good relations with friends of the opposite sex	-0.037*
Being able to talk and communicate well with others	-0.104***
Knowing how to go about finding things out for yourself	-0.073***
Helping you to make new friends	-0.111***
Knowing how to acquire a new skill	-0.142***
Getting involved in sports	-0.114***
Giving you reading and writing skills	-0.093***
Appreciating reading for pleasure	-0.064***
Preparing you for the world of work	-0.087***
Giving you computer skills	-0.051***
Preparing you for adult life	-0.109***
Helping you think for yourself	-0.099***
Appreciating art or music	-0.037*
Helping you to decide what to do after you leave school	-0.089***

Source: GUI Cohort '98, waves at 13 and 17.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10.

TABLE A2.14 LOGISTIC REGRESSION MODELS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOL ABSENCE AT AGES 9 AND 13 AND HIGHER EDUCATION ENTRY (AVERAGE MARGINAL EFFECTS)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Absence at age 9:						
1–3 days	-0.073*	-0.062±	-0.061±	-0.068*	-0.064*	-0.034
4–6 days	-0.077*	-0.056	-0.040	-0.049	-0.040	-0.013
7–10 days	-0.137***	-0.088*	-0.056	-0.073*	-0.067*	-0.041
>11 days	-0.214***	-0.144**	-0.081*	-0.080*	-0.053	-0.043
(Ref. None)						
Absence at age 13:						
1–3 days		0.013	-0.001	0.011	0.018	-0.012
4–6 days		-0.044	-0.028	-0.013	0.001	-0.016
7–10 days		-0.084*	-0.055	-0.027	-0.005	-0.001
11–20 days		-0.205***	-0.142**	-0.127**	-0.109**	-0.019
>20 days						
(Ref. None)						
Female			0.030	0.008	0.003	-0.012
Has disability			-0.065	-0.046	-0.028	0.020
Parental education:						
Leaving Certificate			0.118**	0.107**	0..111**	0.046
Post-secondary			0.146***	0.150***	0.149***	0.066*
Degree or higher			0.236***	0.232***	0.239***	0.107**
(Ref. Junior Certificate)						
N	4,673	4,673	4,673	4,507	4,504	4,188
R2	0.013	0.028	0.118	0.146	0.192	0.281

Source: GUI Cohort '98, waves at 9, 13, 17 and 20.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10.

TABLE A2.14 LOGISTIC REGRESSION MODELS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOL ABSENCE AT AGES 9 AND 13 AND HIGHER EDUCATION ENTRY (AVERAGE MARGINAL EFFECTS) (CONTINUED)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Social class:						
Managerial			-0.053±	-0.043	-0.035	-0.026
Non-manual			-0.090**	-0.067*	-0.051	-0.049±
Skilled manual			-0.119**	-0..111**	-0.097**	-0.055±
Semi/unskilled			-0.189***	--0.159***	-0.146***	-0.082*
Non-employed			-0.211***	-0.199***	-0.174**	-0.094*
(Ref. Professional)						
Household income:						
2nd			0.018	0.011	0.006	0.010
3rd			0.035	0.035	0.031	0.009
4th			0.058±	0.048	0.033	0.002
Highest quintile			0.083*	0.066±	0.045	-0.019
Income missing			0.127**	0.122**	0.106**	0.073*
(Ref. Lowest quintile)						
Lone-parent family			-0.053±	-0.032	-0.024	-0.004
Migrant background			0.031	0.015	0.002	0.000
Urban location			-0.034±	-0.033±	-0.042*	-0.009
(Ref. Rural location)						
Likes school at 9:						
Always				0.091±	0.072	0.050
Sometimes				0.096*	0.090*	0.040
(Ref. Never)						
Likes teacher at 9:						
Always				-0.007	-0.018	-0.026
Sometimes				0.030	0.017	-0.012
(Ref. Never)						

Source: GUI Cohort '98, waves at 9, 13, 17 and 20.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10.

TABLE A2.14 LOGISTIC REGRESSION MODELS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOL ABSENCE AT AGES 9 AND 13 AND HIGHER EDUCATION ENTRY (AVERAGE MARGINAL EFFECTS) (CONTINUED)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Likes school at 13:						
Quite a bit				0.066±	0.033	0.013
A little				0.094*	0.045	0.011
Don't like/hate				0.080*	0.023	0.013
(Ref. Very much)						
Positive interaction with teachers at 13				0.000	-0.006	-0.008*
Negative interaction with teachers at 13				-0.041***	-0.030***	-0.017**
Dislike school:						
Agree					0.095*	0.043
Disagree					0.207***	0.094**
Strongly disagree					0.253***	0.113**
(Ref. Strongly agree)						
Positive interaction with teachers at 17					0.020***	0.006
Negative interaction with teachers at 17					-0.023***	-0.001
Leaving Certificate points						0.001***
New LC grading						0.016

Source: GUI Cohort '98, waves at 9, 13, 17 and 20.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10.

TABLE A2.15 LOGISTIC REGRESSION MODELS OF THE INTERACTION BETWEEN SCHOOL ABSENCE, GENDER AND HIGHER EDUCATION ENTRY

	Coefficients
Absence at age 13:	
1–3 days	0.177
4–6 days	0.025
7–10 days	-0.093
>11 days	-0.387
(Ref. None)	
Female	0.661*
Absence at age 13:	
1–3 days* female	-0.477
4–6 days* female	-0.526
7–10 days* female	-0.601
>11 days* female	-0.927*
(Ref. None)	
R2	0.118

Source: GUI Cohort '98, waves at 9, 13, 17 and 20.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. The models all control for gender, disability, parental education, social class, household income, family structure, migrant background and urban/rural location.

TABLE A2.16 LOGISTIC REGRESSION MODELS OF THE INTERACTION BETWEEN SCHOOL ABSENCE, PARENTAL EDUCATION AND HIGHER EDUCATION ENTRY

	Coefficients
Absence at age 13:	
1–3 days	1.034*
4–6 days	0.557
7–10 days	0.924±
>11 days	-0.041
(Ref. None)	
Parental education:	
Leaving Certificate	1.858***
Post-secondary	1.358**
Degree or higher	1.946***
(Ref. Junior Certificate)	
Absence at age 13:	
1–3 days* Leaving Cert.	-1.698**
1–3 days* post-sec.	-0.723
1–3 days* degree	-1.081*
4–6 days* Leaving Cert.	-1.350*
4–6 days* post-sec.	-0.431
4–6 days* degree	-0.485
7–10 days* Leaving Cert.	-1.982**
7–10 days* post-sec.	-1.331*
7–10 days* degree	-0.589
>11 days* Leaving Cert.	-0.798
>11 days* post-sec.	-0.897
>11 days* degree	-0.987
(Ref. None)	
R2	0.127

Source: GUI Cohort '98, waves at 9, 13, 17 and 20.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. The models all control for gender, disability, parental education, social class, household income, family structure, migrant background and urban/rural location.

TABLE A2.17 LOGISTIC REGRESSION MODELS OF THE INTERACTION BETWEEN SCHOOL ABSENCE, SOCIAL CLASS AND HIGHER EDUCATION ENTRY

	Coefficients
Absence at age 13:	
1–3 days	-0.094
4–6 days	-0.716
7–10 days	-0.601
>11 days	-1.486*
(Ref. None)	
Social class:	
Managerial	-0.863*
Non-manual	-1.077*
Skilled manual	-0.753
Semi/unskilled	-1.161*
Non-employed	-1.055±
(Ref. Professional)	
Absence at age 13:	
1–3 days* managerial	0.162
1–3 days* non-manual	0.737
1–3 days* skilled	-0.401
1–3 days* semi/unskilled	-0.131
1–3 days* non-employed	-0.162
4–6 days* managerial	1.059±
4–6 days* non-manual	0.698
4–6 days* skilled	0.592
4–6 days* semi/unskilled	0.282
4–6 days* non-employed	-0.523
7–10 days* managerial	0.541
7–10 days* non-manual	0.520
7–10 days* skilled	-0.206
7–10 days* semi/unskilled	0.100
7–10 days* non-employed	-0.076
>11 days* managerial	1.084
>11 days* non-manual	0.215
>11 days* skilled	0.601
>11 days* semi/unskilled	0.414
>11 days* non-employed	0.606
(Ref. None)	
R2	0.126

Source: GUI Cohort '98, waves at 9, 13, 17 and 20.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. The models all control for gender, disability, parental education, social class, household income, family structure, migrant background and urban/rural location.

TABLE A2.18 LOGISTIC REGRESSION MODELS OF THE INTERACTION BETWEEN SCHOOL ABSENCE, HOUSEHOLD INCOME AND HIGHER EDUCATION ENTRY

	Coefficients
Absence at age 13:	
1–3 days	0.076
4–6 days	0.046
7–10 days	-0.242
>11 days	-0.046
(Ref. None)	
Household income:	
2nd	0.819±
3rd	0.618
4th	0.309
Highest quintile	0.367
Income missing	0.514
(Ref. Lowest quintile)	
Absence at age 13:	
1–3 days* 2nd	-0.926±
1–3 days* 3rd	-0.130
1–3 days* 4th	0.286
1–3 days* highest	0.407
1–3 days* missing	0.280
4–6 days* 2nd	-0.492
4–6 days* 3rd	-0.728
4–6 days* 4th	-0.136
4–6 days* highest	-0.025
4–6 days* missing	0.358
7–10 days* 2nd	-0.069
7–10 days* 3rd	-0.539
7–10 days* 4th	0.018
7–10 days* highest	-0.211
7–10 days* missing	0.765
>11 days* 2nd	-2.119**
>11 days* 3rd	-0.826
>11 days* 4th	-0.607
>11 days* highest	0.011
>11 days* missing	-0.199
(Ref. None)	
R2	0.129

Source: GUI Cohort '98, waves at 9, 13, 17 and 20.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. The models all control for gender, disability, parental education, social class, household income, family structure, migrant background and urban/rural location.

TABLE A2.19 LOGISTIC REGRESSION MODELS OF THE INTERACTION BETWEEN SCHOOL ABSENCE, MIGRANT BACKGROUND AND HIGHER EDUCATION ENTRY

	Coefficients
Absence at age 13:	
1–3 days	-0.052
4–6 days	-0.237
7–10 days	-0.374±
>11 days	-0.772***
(Ref. None)	
Migrant background	0.150
Absence at age 13:	
1–3 days* migrant	0.204
4–6 days* migrant	0.423
7–10 days* migrant	-0.019
>11 days* migrant	-0.610
(Ref. None)	
R2	0.116

Source: GUI Cohort '98, waves at 9, 13, 17 and 20.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. The models all control for gender, disability, parental education, social class, household income, family structure, migrant background and urban/rural location.

TABLE A2.20 ORDERED LOGISTIC REGRESSION MODELS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOL ABSENCE AT AGES 9 AND 13 AND HIGHEST EDUCATIONAL LEVEL (ODDS RATIOS)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Absence at age 9:				
1–3 days	0.949	0.984	0.968	0.947
4–6 days	0.594**	0.727	0.780	0.779
7–10 days	0.589*	0.835	0.889	0.859
>11 days	0.445***	0.634*	0.796	0.828
(Ref. None)				
Absence at age 13:				
1–3 days		1.381±	1.278	1.339±
4–6 days		0.709±	0.732±	0.801
7–10 days		0.649*	0.674*	0.748
>11 days		0.338***	0.384**	0.412**
(Ref. None)				
Female			1.350**	1.193
Has disability			0.473*	0.559±
Parental education:				
Leaving Certificate			1.648*	1.678*
Post-secondary			1.998**	1.938**
Degree or higher			2.693***	2.659***
(Ref. Junior Certificate)				
N	2,569	2,569	2,569	2,569
R2	0.009	0.025	0.074	0.099

Source: GUI Cohort '98, waves at 9, 13, 17, 20 and 25.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10.

TABLE A2.20 ORDERED LOGISTIC REGRESSION MODELS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOL ABSENCE AT AGES 9 AND 13 AND HIGHEST EDUCATIONAL LEVEL (ODDS RATIOS) (CONTINUED)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Social class:				
Managerial			0.801	0.837
Non-manual			0.595**	0.645*
Skilled manual			0.464**	0.493**
Semi/unskilled			0.406**	0.411**
Non-employed			0.423**	0.441*
(Ref. Professional)				
Household income:				
2nd			1.330	1.262
3rd			1.169	1.127
4th			1.454*	1.371±
Highest quintile			1.863**	1.647*
Income missing			1.712*	1.642*
(Ref. Lowest quintile)				
Lone-parent family			0.697	0.828
Migrant background			0.820	0.828
Urban location			0.696**	0.696**
(Ref. Rural location)				
Dislike school:				
Agree				1.463
Disagree				1.797**
Strongly disagree				2.318***
(Ref. Strongly agree)				
Positive interaction with teachers at 17				1.186***
Negative interaction with teachers at 17				0.829***

Source: GUI Cohort '98, waves at 9, 13, 17, 20 and 25. *Note:* *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10.

TABLE A2.21 LOGISTIC REGRESSION MODELS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOL ABSENCE AT AGES 9 AND 13 AND ATTAINING A DEGREE OR HIGHER DEGREE BY AGE 25 (AVERAGE MARGINAL EFFECTS)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Absence at age 9:				
1–3 days	-0.033	-0.021	-0.029	-0.036
4–6 days	-0.168**	-0.111*	-0.097*	-0.097*
7–10 days	-0.145**	-0.052	-0.046	-0.058
>11 days	-0.209***	-0.107±	-0.059	-0.041
(Ref. None)				
Absence at age 13:				
1–3 days		0.051	0.014	0.040
4–6 days		-0.133**	-0.127**	-0.083*
7–10 days		0.150***	-0.133**	-0.094*
>11 days		-0.277***	-0.223***	-0.164**
(Ref. None)				
Female			0.064**	0.042±
Has disability			-0.128*	-0.104±
Parental education:				
Leaving Certificate			0.121*	0.143**
Post-secondary			0.151**	0.160**
Degree or higher			0.229***	0.238***
(Ref. Junior Certificate)				
N	2,569	2,569	2,569	2,569
R2	0.017	0.049	0.146	0.208

Source: GUI Cohort '98, waves at 9, 13, 17, 20 and 25.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10.

TABLE A2.21 LOGISTIC REGRESSION MODELS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOL ABSENCE AT AGES 9 AND 13 AND ATTAINING A DEGREE OR HIGHER DEGREE BY AGE 25 (AVERAGE MARGINAL EFFECTS) (CONTINUED)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Social class:				
Managerial			-0.068±	-0.052
Non-manual			-0.151**	-0.121**
Skilled manual			-0.161**	-0.139**
Semi/unskilled			-0.179**	-0.174**
Non-employed			-0.255**	-0.235**
(Ref. Professional)				
Household income:				
2nd			0.054	0.033
3rd			0.034	0.013
4th			0.123**	0.091*
Highest quintile			0.203***	0.155***
Income missing			0.133*	0.093±
(Ref. Lowest quintile)				
Lone-parent family			-0.043	-0.013
Migrant background			-0.031	-0.029
Urban location			-0.087***	-0.087
(Ref. Rural location)				
Dislike school:				
Agree				0.082
Disagree				0.149**
Strongly disagree				0.220***
(Ref. Strongly agree)				
Positive interaction with teachers at 17				0.040***
Negative interaction with teachers at 17				-0.045***

Source: GUI Cohort '98, waves at 9, 13, 17, 20 and 25. *Note:* *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10.

TABLE A2.22 LOGISTIC REGRESSION MODELS OF THE INTERACTION BETWEEN SCHOOL ABSENCE, GENDER AND OBTAINING A DEGREE BY AGE 25

	Coefficients
Absence at age 13:	
1–3 days	0.197
4–6 days	-0.648*
7–10 days	-0.359
>11 days	-1.200**
(Ref. None)	
Female	0.587±
Absence at age 13:	
1–3 days* female	-0.377
4–6 days* female	-0.156
7–10 days* female	-0.735±
>11 days* female	0.063
(Ref. None)	
R2	0.145

Source: GUI Cohort '98, waves at 9, 13, 17, 20 and 25.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. The models all control for gender, disability, parental education, social class, household income, family structure, migrant background and urban/rural location.

TABLE A2.23 LOGISTIC REGRESSION MODELS OF THE INTERACTION BETWEEN SCHOOL ABSENCE, PARENTAL EDUCATION AND OBTAINING A DEGREE BY AGE 25

	Coefficients
Absence at age 13:	
1–3 days	0.543
4–6 days	-0.508
7–10 days	-1.216
>11 days	-0.408
(Ref. None)	
Parental education:	
Leaving Certificate	1.101*
Post-secondary	1.021±
Degree or higher	1.163*
(Ref. Junior Certificate)	
Absence at age 13:	
1–3 days* Leaving Cert.	-0.786
1–3 days* post-sec.	-0.428
1–3 days* degree	-0.462
4–6 days* Leaving Cert.	-0.386
4–6 days* post-sec.	-0.397
4–6 days* degree	0.190
7–10 days* Leaving Cert.	0.068
7–10 days* post-sec.	0.685
7–10 days* degree	1.141
>11 days* Leaving Cert	-1.104
>11 days* post-sec.	-0.963
>11 days* degree	-0.434
(Ref. None)	
R2	0.149

Source: GUI Cohort '98, waves at 9, 13, 17, 20 and 25.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. The models all control for gender, disability, parental education, social class, household income, family structure, migrant background and urban/rural location.

TABLE A2.24 LOGISTIC REGRESSION MODELS OF THE INTERACTION BETWEEN SCHOOL ABSENCE, SOCIAL CLASS AND OBTAINING A DEGREE BY AGE 25

	Coefficients
Absence at age 13:	
1–3 days	0.186
4–6 days	-0.758
7–10 days	-0..465
>11 days	-2.000**
(Ref. None)	
Social class:	
Managerial	-0.648
Non-manual	-0.786
Skilled manual	-0.713
Semi/unskilled	-0.607
Non-employed	-1.022
(Ref. Professional)	
Absence at age 13:	
1–3 days* managerial	0.009
1–3 days* non-manual	0.031
1–3 days* skilled	-0.316
1–3 days* semi/unskilled	-0.600
1–3 days* non-employed	-0.682
4–6 days* managerial	0.314
4–6 days* non-manual	-0.214
4–6 days* skilled	0.159
4–6 days* semi/unskilled	-0.749
4–6 days* non-employed	0.397
7–10 days* managerial	0.653
7–10 days* non-manual	-0.389
7–10 days* skilled	-0.843
7–10 days* semi/unskilled	-1.183
7–10 days* non-employed	-1.855
>11 days* managerial	0.912
>11 days* non-manual	1.006
>11 days* skilled	0.362
>11 days* semi/unskilled	1.335
>11 days* non-employed	0.651
(Ref. None)	
R2	0.157

Source: GUI Cohort '98, waves at 9, 13, 17, 20 and 25.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. The models all control for gender, disability, parental education, social class, household income, family structure, migrant background and urban/rural location.

TABLE A2.25 LOGISTIC REGRESSION MODELS OF THE INTERACTION BETWEEN SCHOOL ABSENCE, HOUSEHOLD INCOME AND OBTAINING A DEGREE BY AGE 25

	Coefficients
Absence at age 13:	
1–3 days	0.256
4–6 days	0.118
7–10 days	-0.641
>11 days	-0.527
(Ref. None)	
Household income:	
2nd	1.122*
3rd	0.818±
4th	0.888±
Highest quintile	1.120*
Income missing	0.587
(Ref. Lowest quintile)	
Absence at age 13:	
1–3 days* 2nd	-1.003
1–3 days* 3rd	-0.386
1–3 days* 4th	0.103
1–3 days* highest	-0.034
1–3 days* missing	0.172
4–6 days* 2nd	-1.248±
4–6 days* 3rd	-1.368*
4–6 days* 4th	-0.971
4–6 days* highest	-0.462
4–6 days* missing	-0.676
7–10 days* 2nd	-0.705
7–10 days* 3rd	-0.560
7–10 days* 4th	0.005
7–10 days* highest	0.699
7–10 days* missing	1.740±
>11 days* 2nd	-1.193
>11 days* 3rd	-0.901
>11 days* 4th	-0.745
>11 days* highest	-0.773
>11 days* missing	0.509
(Ref. None)	
R2	0.154

Source: GUI Cohort '98, waves at 9, 13, 17, 20 and 25.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. The models all control for gender, disability, parental education, social class, household income, family structure, migrant background and urban/rural location.

TABLE A2.26 LOGISTIC REGRESSION MODELS OF THE INTERACTION BETWEEN SCHOOL ABSENCE, MIGRANT BACKGROUND AND OBTAINING A DEGREE BY AGE 25

	Coefficients
Absence at age 13:	
1–3 days	-0.016
4–6 days	-0.773***
7–10 days	-0.712**
>11 days (Ref. None)	-1.122***
Migrant background	-0.379
Absence at age 13:	
1–3 days* migrant	0.441
4–6 days* migrant	0.818
7–10 days* migrant	-0.872
>11 days* migrant (Ref. None)	-0.729
R2	0.145

Source: GUI Cohort '98, waves at 9, 13, 17, 20 and 25.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. The models all control for gender, disability, parental education, social class, household income, family structure, migrant background and urban/rural location.

APPENDIX: CHAPTER 5

TABLE A5.1 LINEAR REGRESSION MODELS OF THE INTERACTION BETWEEN SCHOOL-LEVEL ABSENCE, INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL ABSENCE AND LEAVING CERTIFICATE PERFORMANCE

	Coefficients
Absence at age 13:	
1–3 days	-36.317**
4–6 days	-65.252***
7–10 days	-85.319***
11–20 days	-88.317***
>20 days	-78.147**
(Ref. None)	
High absence post-primary school	-81.243***
Absence at age 13:	
1–3 days* high absence school	38.970
4–6 days* high absence school	52.686*
7–10 days* high absence school	52.577±
11–20 days* high absence school	70.275±
>20 days* high absence school	-0.394
(Ref. None)	
R2	0.230

Source: GUI Cohort '98, waves at 9, 13, 17 and 20.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. The models all control for gender, disability, parental education, social class, household income, family structure, migrant background and urban/rural location.

TABLE A5.2 LINEAR REGRESSION MODELS OF THE INTERACTION BETWEEN SCHOOL-LEVEL ABSENCE, GENDER AND LEAVING CERTIFICATE PERFORMANCE

	Coefficients
Absence at age 13:	
1–3 days	-26.171*
4–6 days	-51.602***
7–10 days	-70.148***
11–20 days	-69.625***
>20 days	-78.179***
(Ref. None)	
Female	17.975*
High-absence post-primary school	-47.771***
Female* high absence school	11.624
R2	0.228

Source: GUI Cohort '98, waves at 9, 13, 17 and 20.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. The models all control for gender, disability, parental education, social class, household income, family structure, migrant background and urban/rural location.

TABLE A5.3 LINEAR REGRESSION MODELS OF THE INTERACTION BETWEEN SCHOOL-LEVEL ABSENCE, PARENTAL EDUCATION AND LEAVING CERTIFICATE PERFORMANCE

	Coefficients
Absence at age 13:	
1–3 days	-26.307*
4–6 days	-51.424***
7–10 days	-71.190***
11–20 days	-70.391***
>20 days	-80.939***
(Ref. None)	
Parental education:	
Leaving Certificate	38.242*
Post-secondary	48.687*
Degree or higher	78.043***
(Ref. Junior Certificate)	
High-absence post-primary school	-25.723
LC* high absence school	-19.650
Post-secondary* high absence school	-19.283
Degree* high absence school	-16.799
R2	0.228

Source: GUI Cohort '98, waves at 9, 13, 17 and 20.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. The models all control for gender, disability, parental education, social class, household income, family structure, migrant background and urban/rural location.

TABLE A5.4 LINEAR REGRESSION MODELS OF THE INTERACTION BETWEEN SCHOOL-LEVEL ABSENCE, MIGRANT BACKGROUND AND LEAVING CERTIFICATE PERFORMANCE

	Coefficients
Absence at age 13:	
1–3 days	-26.838**
4–6 days	-52.658***
7–10 days	-72.461***
11–20 days	-70.810***
>20 days	-82.918***
(Ref. None)	
Migrant background	48.204*
High-absence post-primary school	-35.991***
Migrant* high absence school	-72.450*
R2	0.230

Source: GUI Cohort '98, waves at 9, 13, 17 and 20.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. The models all control for gender, disability, parental education, social class, household income, family structure, migrant background and urban/rural location.

TABLE A5.5 LOGIT REGRESSION MODELS OF THE INTERACTION BETWEEN SCHOOL-LEVEL ABSENCE, INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL ABSENCE AND HIGHER EDUCATION ENTRY

	Coefficients
Absence at age 13:	
1–3 days	-0.276
4–6 days	-0.656*
7–10 days	-1.071***
11+ days	-1.186***
(Ref. None)	
High absence post-primary school	-1.100***
Absence at age 13:	
1–3 days* high absence school	0.248
4–6 days* high absence school	0.811±
7–10 days* high absence school	1.191*
11+ days* high absence school	0.625
(Ref. None)	
R2	0.128

Source: GUI Cohort '98, waves at 9, 13, 17 and 20.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. The models all control for gender, disability, parental education, social class, household income, family structure, migrant background and urban/rural location.

TABLE A5.6 LOGIT REGRESSION MODELS OF THE INTERACTION BETWEEN SCHOOL-LEVEL ABSENCE, GENDER AND HIGHER EDUCATION ENTRY

	Coefficients
Absence at age 13:	
1–3 days	-0.166
4–6 days	-0.360±
7–10 days	-0.609**
11+ days	-0.937***
(Ref. None)	
Female	-0.003
High-absence post-primary school	-0.806***
Female* high absence school	0.500±
R2	0.125

Source: GUI Cohort '98, waves at 9, 13, 17 and 20.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. The models all control for gender, disability, parental education, social class, household income, family structure, migrant background and urban/rural location.

TABLE A5.7 LOGIT REGRESSION MODELS OF THE INTERACTION BETWEEN SCHOOL-LEVEL ABSENCE, PARENTAL EDUCATION AND HIGHER EDUCATION ENTRY

	Coefficients
Absence at age 13:	
1–3 days	-0.170
4–6 days	-0.364±
7–10 days	-0.645**
11+ days	-0.954***
(Ref. None)	
Parental education:	
Leaving Certificate	0.618*
Post-secondary	0.753**
Degree or higher	1.471***
(Ref. Junior Certificate)	
High-absence post-primary school	-0.326
LC* high absence school	-0.206
Post-secondary* high absence school	-0.151
Degree* high absence school	-0.614
R2	0.124

Source: GUI Cohort '98, waves at 9, 13, 17 and 20.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. The models all control for gender, disability, parental education, social class, household income, family structure, migrant background and urban/rural location.

TABLE A5.8 LOGIT REGRESSION MODELS OF THE INTERACTION BETWEEN SCHOOL-LEVEL ABSENCE, MIGRANT BACKGROUND AND HIGHER EDUCATION ENTRY

	Coefficients
Absence at age 13:	
1–3 days	-0.179
4–6 days	-0.369±
7–10 days	-0.665**
11+ days	-0.960***
(Ref. None)	
Migrant background	0.294
High-absence post-primary school	-0.497***
Migrant* high absence school	-0.612
R2	0.124

Source: GUI Cohort '98, waves at 9, 13, 17 and 20.
Note: *** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05; ± p<.10. The models all control for gender, disability, parental education, social class, household income, family structure, migrant background and urban/rural location.

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