

# 2023-2024 School Absences

HENRY COUNTY, OHIO



## Introduction

School absenteeism is an issue that affects students' academic performance, social development, and overall well-being. Understanding the patterns and reasons behind student absences can help educators, parents, and community members address these challenges more effectively. This report provides a breakdown of school absences in our county for the 2023-2024 school year. This includes an examination of trends, causes of absences by month, and a comparison to historical absence data. Through this report, we aim to identify trends, uncover underlying issues, and provide recommendations to reduce student absences for the upcoming school year.

## School Absence Program

Since the 2018-2019 school year, Henry County Health Department (HCHD) has been requesting school absence data from the following Henry County Schools:

- Holgate Elementary, Middle, and High School
- Liberty Center Elementary, Middle, and High School
- Napoleon Elementary, Junior, and High School
- Patrick Henry Elementary, Middle, and High School
- St. Augustine Catholic School
- St. John Lutheran School
- St. Paul Lutheran School

Data requested from these schools consists of enrollment numbers, number of students who called in sick, number of students who were sent home sick, and the number of absences caused by illness related to each of the following symptom groups: Respiratory, Gastrointestinal, Ear, Nose, Throat, Rash, Neurological, General, or Unknown (Definitions located on page 2).

## Key Takeaways



**Percentage of absences that were called in**



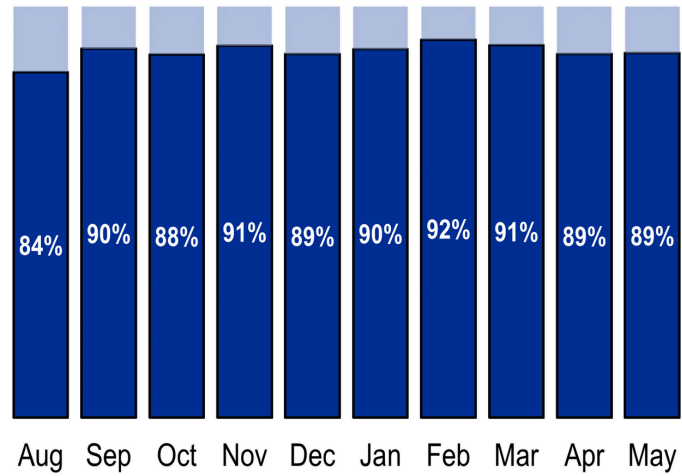
**2 in 3 students had at least one absence in February**



**Most reported reason for absence was Unknown**

# 90% of all school absences were called in

A large majority, 90%, of the reported absences across all Henry County schools were received via a call in. This reflects a strong understanding from parents and guardians when their students are sick, they need to stay home from school.



## February had over 1500 more absences than the next highest month.

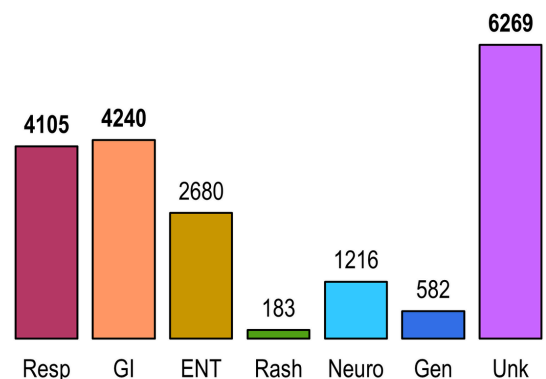
	Respiratory	GI	ENT	Rash	Neuro	Gen	Unknown	Total
Aug	66	94	52	5	16	34	77	344
Sep	340	385	242	14	123	68	510	1,682
Oct	337	391	284	41	124	62	688	1,927
Nov	446	529	393	33	153	70	670	2,294
Dec	307	477	210	20	103	64	442	1,623
Jan	503	527	258	15	136	79	884	2,402
Feb	1159	660	497	10	206	74	1366	3,972
Mar	480	510	327	14	149	37	741	2,258
Apr	286	401	202	15	114	43	477	1,538
May	181	266	215	16	92	51	414	1,235

*Note: Each absence is for a single day per student. For example, a student who is absent two days of school will account for two absences that month.*

### Symptom Definitions

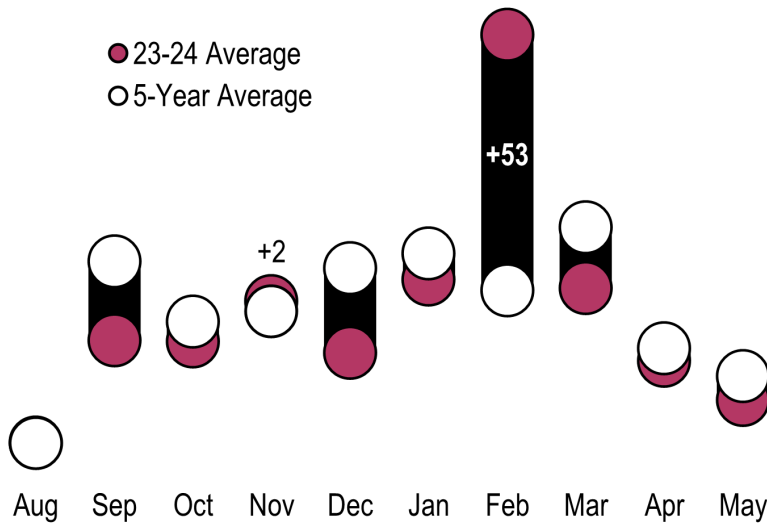
- Respiratory (Resp)**- Cough, Cold, Runny nose, Body aches
- Gastrointestinal (GI)**- Stomach pain, Nausea, Diarrhea, Vomiting
- Ear, Nose, Throat (ENT)**- Earache, Swollen glands, Tonsillitis, Pink eye, Sore throat
- Rash**- Rash, Hives, Skin Infection
- Neurological (Neuro)**- Headache, Dizziness, Lightheadedness, Stiff neck, Passed out
- General (Gen)**- Asthma, Allergies, Fatigue
- Unknown**- No reason given

The month that had the most reported absences across all Henry County schools was February. This month had the most reported absences for 5 out of the 7 symptom categories except for Rash and General. Due to the high number of absences this month, 2 out of 3 students at any Henry County school had at least one absence reported in February. The symptom category with the most reported absences for a single month was the Unknown category with 1,366 absences reported for February.



## How do we compare to previous school years?

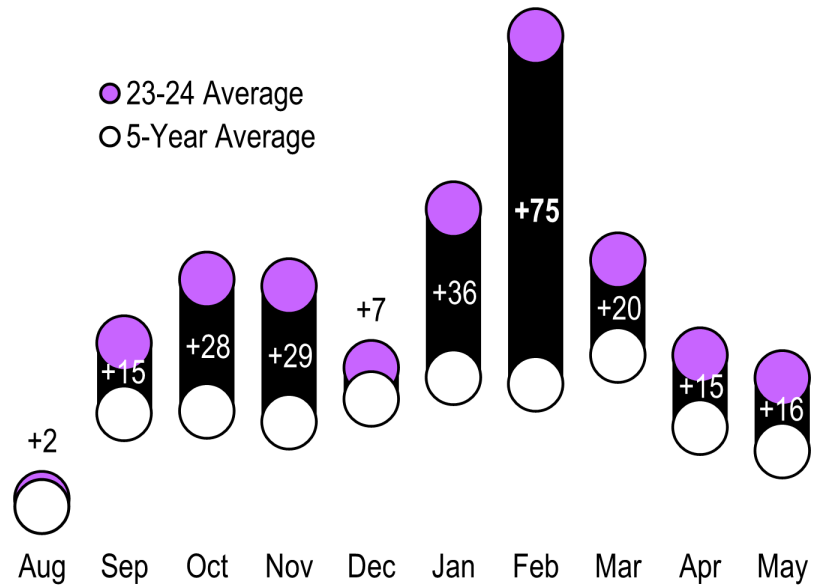
### Respiratory



For the 2023-2024 school year, the average number of absences due to respiratory symptoms followed very similar trends to the county's 5-year averages. The only exception to this was in February where the average number of respiratory absences increased by 53, more than doubling the 5-year county average for that month.

In contrast to respiratory absences, the unknown absence category established a new trend for the 2023-2024 school year. Every month of the school year was higher than the 5-year average with most months having at least a 15 absence increase. The largest spike in absences was in February with a 3.5 times increase from the 5-year average.

### Unknown



## Recommendations

A spike in respiratory absences in the winter months is quite normal for our area. While some of these absences may be unavoidable, many can be prevented, through proper hand hygiene, appropriate cough and sneeze etiquette, staying home when sick, and encouraging everyone to be up to date on their vaccines.

The unknown absence category was the highest reported reason for absence during the 2023-2024 school year. Although it provides an absence reporting option when no illness information is received, it is also being used for unexcused absences that may not be illness related at all. In order to continue improving HCHD's school absence program, this category will be assessed and potentially changed to allow better insight into the health of students in our community.