

SDR 149/2013

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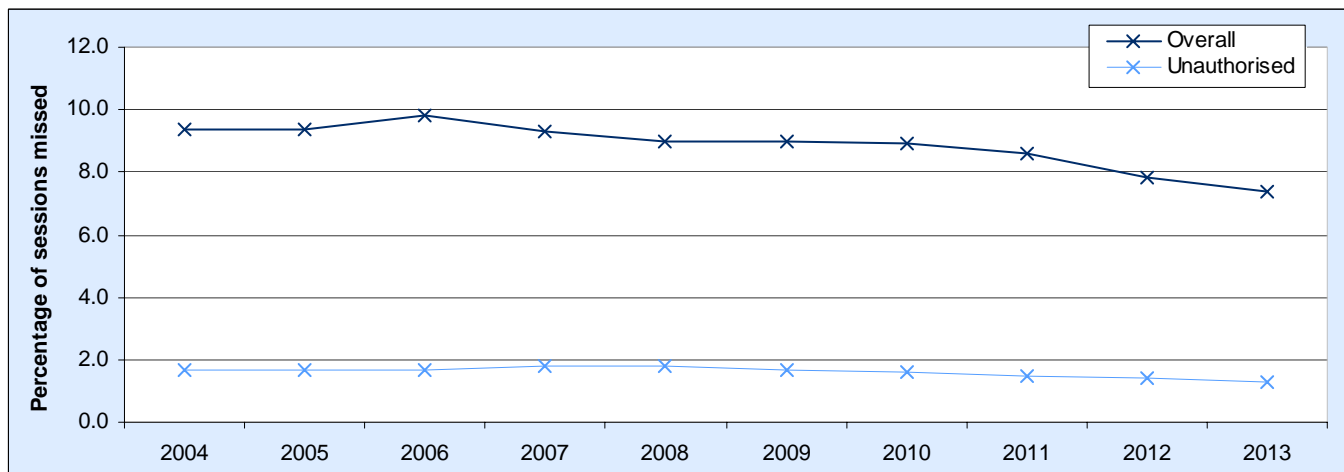
## Absenteeism from Secondary Schools, 2012/13

This annual Statistical First Release reports on absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age in maintained secondary, special and independent schools in Wales. Information relates to the start of the academic year to the late May Bank Holiday for the academic years 2003/04 to 2012/13. Data from maintained schools were collected at attendance code level and were broken down into three terms for the first time in 2011/12.

### Key results

Following a peak in 2005/06, overall absence has been decreasing each year. Unauthorised absence has been decreasing since 2007/08. A session is half a school day.

**Chart 1: Overall absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age**



### Overall and unauthorised absenteeism

- In 2012/13, 7.4 per cent of half-day sessions were missed in maintained secondary, special and independent schools through absence, a decrease of 0.5 percentage points from 2011/12 (Table 1).
- In 2012/13, 1.3 per cent of half-day sessions were missed in maintained secondary, special and independent schools through unauthorised absence, a small decrease from 2011/12 (Table 2).

### Distribution of absence in maintained secondary schools

- The proportion of pupils absent for 20.5 days or more fell from 16.3 per cent in 2011/12 to 14.4 per cent in 2012/13. The percentage of pupils with no absence increased to 5.8 per cent (Chart 4).

### Reason for absence

- Illness accounted for almost 60 per cent of absent sessions from maintained schools (Table 9).

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## Introduction

Chart 1 shows authorised and unauthorised absenteeism from secondary schools in Wales since the 2003/04 academic year. The tables that follow break down the percentage of half-day sessions missed due to absenteeism by school type, gender, local authority, free school meal entitlement, etc. Charts 2 and 3 show the change in the range of local authority-level absenteeism over time and Chart 4 helps users to understand how the proportions of pupils absent for varying lengths of time have changed.

Table 8 is a new addition to this Statistical First Release and informs on the number of pupils who are considered persistent absentees (a definition of persistent absenteeism can be found in the notes section).

Tables 9 and 10 report on the term- and code-level data collected from maintained primary. Table 9 displays the distribution of reasons for absence, i.e. the percentage of overall absence accounted for by each reason for absence. Table 10 shows the percentage of sessions missed from maintained primary schools by reason for absence. Both tables are split by school term.

## Contents

	page
Chart 1 Overall absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age	1
Table 1 Overall absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age, by sector	3
Table 2 Unauthorised absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age, by sector	3
Table 3 Absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age in all schools, by gender	4
Table 4 Absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age in all maintained secondary schools, by proportion entitled to free school meals, 2012/13	4
Table 5 Absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age in all maintained secondary and special schools, by local authority	5
Chart 2 Range of local authorities' rates of overall absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age	6
Chart 3 Range of local authorities' rates of unauthorised absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age	7
Table 6 Distribution of pupils in maintained secondary schools by length of overall absence, 2012/13	8
Table 7 Distribution of pupils in maintained secondary schools by their overall absence rates, 2012/13	8
Chart 4 Distribution of pupils in maintained secondary schools by length of overall absence	9
Table 8 Pupils of compulsory school age who were persistent absentees from maintained secondary schools	10
Table 9 Distribution of reasons for absence by pupils of compulsory school age in maintained secondary schools, by reason for absence and term, 2012/13	10
Table 10 Percentage of sessions missed by pupils of compulsory school age in maintained secondary schools, by reason for absence and term, 2012/13	11

**Table 1: Overall absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age, by sector (a)**

	Percentage of school sessions missed							
	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
LA Maintained Secondary Schools	9.9	9.4	9.1	9.0	8.9	8.6	7.9	7.4
Special Schools	13.7	13.9	12.2	12.3	10.8	11.6	11.0	11.3
Independent Schools	5.6	5.5	5.8	6.0	6.3	5.5	5.3	5.3
Total	9.8	9.3	9.0	9.0	8.9	8.6	7.8	7.4

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh Government

(a) Figures do not include data for 9 independent schools and 3 special schools that did not respond to the survey.



- In 2012/13, 7.4 per cent of half-day sessions were missed due to authorised and unauthorised absence from maintained secondary, special and independent schools, a decrease of 0.5 percentage points from 7.8 per cent in 2011/12.
- Apart from 2008/09 in which there was no change from the previous year, the percentage of half-day sessions missed due to overall absence from maintained secondary, special and independent schools has been decreasing since 2005/06.
- Special schools continue to have the highest rate of overall absence and independent schools the lowest rate, but because of the relatively small number of these schools compared to the number of maintained secondary schools these schools do not significantly affect the total overall absence rate.

**Table 2: Unauthorised absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age, by sector (a)**

	Percentage of school sessions missed							
	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
LA Maintained Secondary Schools	1.7	1.9	1.8	1.7	1.6	1.5	1.4	1.3
Special Schools	3.1	3.3	2.5	2.3	1.9	2.5	2.6	2.6
Independent Schools	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.2
Total	1.7	1.8	1.8	1.7	1.6	1.5	1.4	1.3

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh Government

(a) Figures do not include data for 9 independent schools and 3 special schools that did not respond to the survey.



- In 2012/13, 1.3 per cent of half-day sessions were missed due to unauthorised absence from maintained secondary, special and independent schools, a decrease of 0.1 percentage points from 2011/12.
- The rate of unauthorised absence has been decreasing since a peak in 2006/07 and 2007/08.
- Special schools have had the highest rate of unauthorised absence and independent schools the lowest rate since 2005/06, but as with overall absence these schools do not significantly affect the total unauthorised absence rate.

**Table 3: Absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age in all schools, by gender (a)**

	Percentage of schools sessions missed				
	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Number of schools providing gender information	306	311	304	299	290
Percentage of schools providing gender information	98	97	98	98	98
Unauthorised absence					
Boys	1.7	1.6	1.4	1.4	1.3
Girls	1.7	1.6	1.5	1.4	1.3
Overall absence					
Boys	8.7	8.7	8.4	7.7	7.2
Girls	9.2	9.1	8.8	8.0	7.5

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh Government

(a) It is not advisable to compare year on year changes for data on absenteeism by gender. Although it became compulsory for maintained schools to provide gender information in 2007/08, it remains voluntary for special and independent schools, so different numbers of schools provide this information each year.

- Historically, girls have had a higher rate of overall absence than boys and this continues to be the case in 2012/13, however the gap has been narrowing since 2008/09.
- Girls and boys had the same rate of unauthorised absence in 2012/13, missing 1.3 per cent of half day sessions for unauthorised reasons.

**Table 4: Absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age in all maintained secondary schools, by proportion entitled to free school meals, 2012/13 (a)**

Proportion entitled to free school meals	Percentage of school sessions missed		Number of schools
	All absences	Unauthorised absences	
10% or less	6.0	0.6	49
15% or less, but over 10%	6.8	0.8	55
20% or less, but over 15%	7.4	1.1	33
30% or less, but over 20%	8.4	1.8	56
over 30%	9.5	3.1	26
All maintained schools	7.4	1.3	219

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record and PLASC, Welsh Government

(a) Free school meal data are based on a three year average.

- Table 4 suggests that there is a relationship between the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals and the rate of absenteeism. It suggests that in general schools with a higher proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals have higher absenteeism rates;
- Free school meals are provided to pupils in low income households, so this suggests that there may be a more general relationship between deprivation and pupil absence.

**Table 5: Absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age in all maintained secondary and special schools, by local authority (a)**

Local Authority	Percentage of school sessions missed due to:							
	All absences				Unauthorised absences			
	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Isle of Anglesey	9.4	9.1	7.8	6.8	1.1	1.3	0.7	0.7
Gwynedd	8.7	8.1	7.9	6.6	1.1	1.0	0.9	0.7
Conwy	8.1	7.6	7.3	7.1	1.6	1.6	1.5	1.4
Denbighshire	8.8	8.3	7.1	7.6	2.0	1.4	1.5	1.5
Flintshire	7.8	7.6	7.0	6.7	0.6	0.5	0.5	0.4
Wrexham	8.5	7.6	7.2	7.3	1.8	1.6	1.7	1.8
Powys	8.3	8.5	7.1	6.8	0.4	0.5	0.4	0.6
Ceredigion	8.3	7.5	6.3	6.4	1.1	1.2	1.1	1.3
Pembrokeshire	9.3	8.7	7.4	7.8	1.5	0.9	0.5	0.7
Carmarthenshire	8.8	9.0	8.6	8.0	0.7	0.8	0.6	0.4
Swansea	9.4	9.0	8.0	7.7	2.0	1.6	1.4	1.1
Neath Port Talbot	8.3	8.1	7.7	7.4	0.6	0.5	0.5	0.4
Bridgend	9.1	8.8	8.1	7.7	1.8	1.7	1.6	1.3
The Vale of Glamorgan	8.3	8.7	7.3	6.7	1.3	1.5	1.0	1.0
Rhondda, Cynon, Taff	9.5	9.4	9.4	8.1	1.8	1.8	2.1	2.0
Merthyr Tydfil	9.1	8.6	7.6	6.7	1.3	0.9	1.0	1.0
Caerphilly	9.5	9.3	8.3	8.0	1.9	2.1	1.8	1.6
Blaenau Gwent	9.4	10.6	9.6	9.0	2.0	2.1	2.4	2.3
Torfaen	9.5	8.3	7.7	7.5	3.0	1.3	1.2	1.0
Monmouthshire	8.0	7.8	7.0	6.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.5
Newport	8.7	8.2	8.1	7.9	1.9	2.0	2.1	2.1
Cardiff	9.6	9.6	8.3	7.1	2.8	2.9	2.7	2.5
Wales (b)	8.9	8.6	7.8	7.4	1.6	1.5	1.4	1.3

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh Government

(a) Figures do not include data for 9 independent schools and 3 special schools that did not respond to the survey.

(b) Includes independent schools.

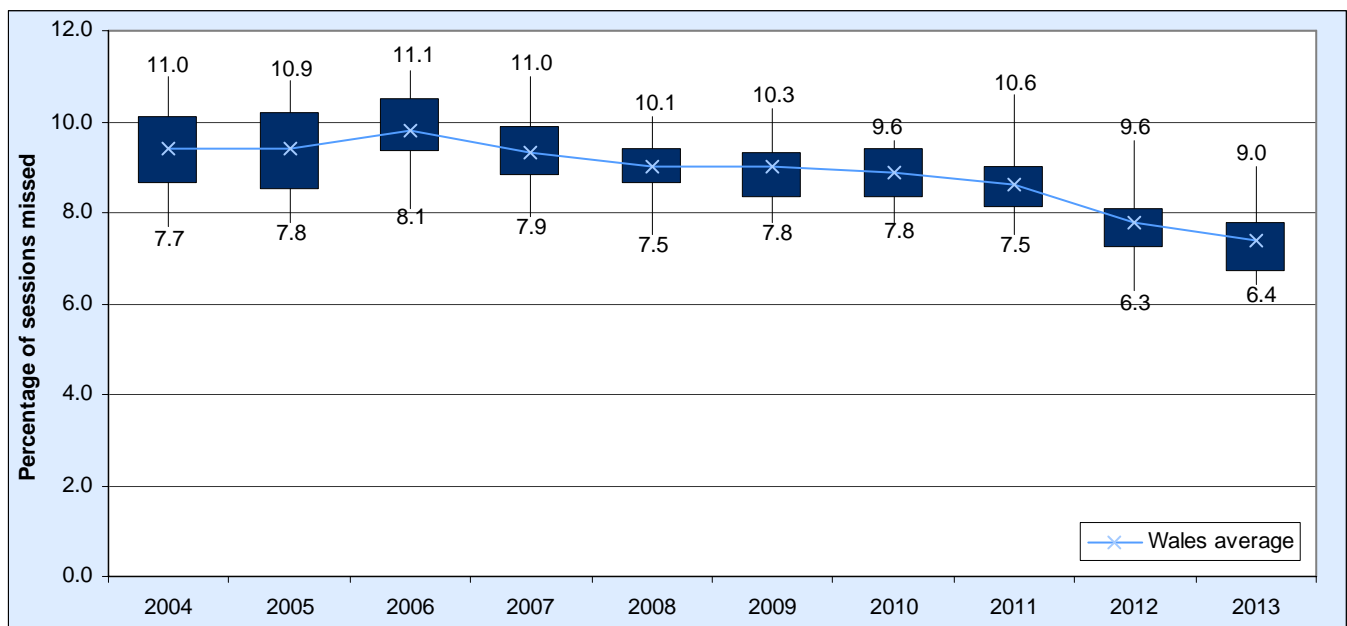


- Blaenau Gwent local authority has had the highest rate of overall absenteeism from maintained secondary and special schools since 2010/11. In 2012/13 this value was 9.0 per cent of half-day sessions.
- Ceredigion has had the lowest rate of overall absenteeism from maintained secondary and special schools since 2010/11. In 2012/13 pupils from this local authority missed 6.4 per cent of half-day sessions.
- In 2012/13 Flintshire, Carmarthenshire and Neath Port Talbot had the lowest rate of unauthorised absence from maintained secondary and special schools (0.4 per cent), while pupils in Cardiff local authority, which has had the highest rate of unauthorised absence since 2010/11, missed 2.5 per cent of half-day sessions.

## Chart 2: Range of local authorities' rates of overall absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age

Chart 2 shows how the range of overall absence rates at the local authority level has changed over time and can be used in conjunction with the 'All absences' columns in Table 5. For each academic year a line has been drawn from the lowest local authority's overall absence rate to the highest. For example, in 2012/13 the lowest rate was 6.4 per cent and the highest rate was 9.0 per cent.

For each year the quarter of local authorities with the highest rate of overall absenteeism lie above the blue box, the quarter of local authorities with the lowest rate of overall absenteeism fall below the blue box and the remaining half of local authorities are in the blue box. The Wales average overall absenteeism rate has been plotted to show how the changes in local authority rates relate to the change in Wales as a whole.

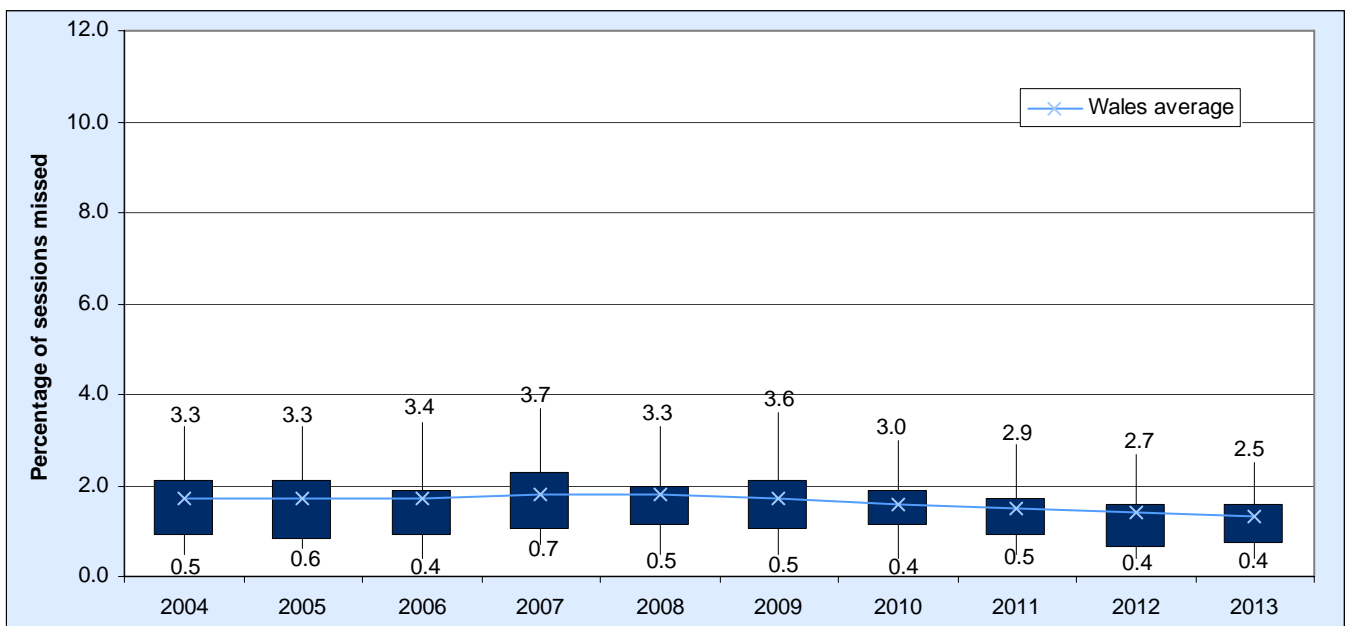


- The highest rate of overall absenteeism in 2012/13, 9.0 per cent, is the lowest that this value has been since 2003/04.
- The lowest rate of overall absenteeism in 2012/13 was 0.1 percentage points higher than this value was in 2011/12.
- The top of the blue box for 2012/13, marking the level below which three quarters of local authorities fall, is at the same level as the Wales average for 2011/12. This means that in 2012/13 three quarters of local authorities had rates of overall absenteeism no higher than Wales' average in 2011/12 (7.8 per cent of half-day sessions).

### Chart 3: Range of local authorities' rates of unauthorised absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age

Chart 3 shows how the range of unauthorised absence rates at the local authority level has changed over time and can be used in conjunction with the 'Unauthorised absences' columns in Table 5. For each academic year a line has been drawn from the lowest local authority's unauthorised absence rate to the highest. For example, in 2012/13 the lowest rate was 0.4 per cent and the highest rate was 2.5 per cent.

For each year the quarter of local authorities with the highest rate of unauthorised absenteeism lie above the blue box, the quarter of local authorities with the lowest rate of unauthorised absenteeism fall below the blue box and the remaining half of local authorities are in the blue box. The Wales average unauthorised absenteeism rate has been plotted to show how the changes in local authority rates relate to the change in Wales as a whole.



- The highest rate of unauthorised absenteeism in 2012/13 was 2.5 per cent, which is the lowest that this value has been since 2003/04.
- The lowest rate of unauthorised absence in 2012/13, 0.4 per cent, did not change between 2011/12 and 2012/13.

**Table 6: Distribution of pupils in maintained secondary schools by length of overall absence, 2012/13**

Number of days of overall absence	Pupils in schools during 2012/13		Percentage of overall absence
	Number	Percentage	
No absence	9,679	5.8	0.0
0.5 to 5 days	53,203	31.9	8.0
5.5 to 10 days	40,523	24.3	16.6
10.5 to 15 days	24,972	15.0	16.9
15.5 to 20 days	14,624	8.8	13.8
20.5 to 25 days	8,497	5.1	10.3
more than 25 days	15,498	9.3	34.4
Total	166,996	100.0	100.0

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh Government

- A little over 9,600 pupils (5.8 per cent) had no absence from school in 2012/13, while just under 15,500 pupils (9.3 per cent) were absent for more than 25 days (5 school weeks).
- Just under one tenth of pupils accounted for over a third of all half-day sessions missed.

**Table 7: Distribution of pupils in maintained secondary schools by their overall absence rates, 2012/13**

Overall absence rate	Pupils in schools during 2012/13		Percentage of overall absence
	Number	Percentage	
0%	9,679	5.8	0.0
Over 0%, but 4% at most	61,901	37.1	10.8
Over 4%, but 6% at most	24,266	14.5	10.0
Over 6%, but 10% at most	31,948	19.1	20.4
Over 10%, but 20% at most	28,476	17.1	31.8
Over 20%, but 30% at most	6,409	3.8	12.3
Over 30%, but 50% at most	3,149	1.9	9.2
Over 50%	1,168	0.7	5.5
Total	166,996	100.0	100.0

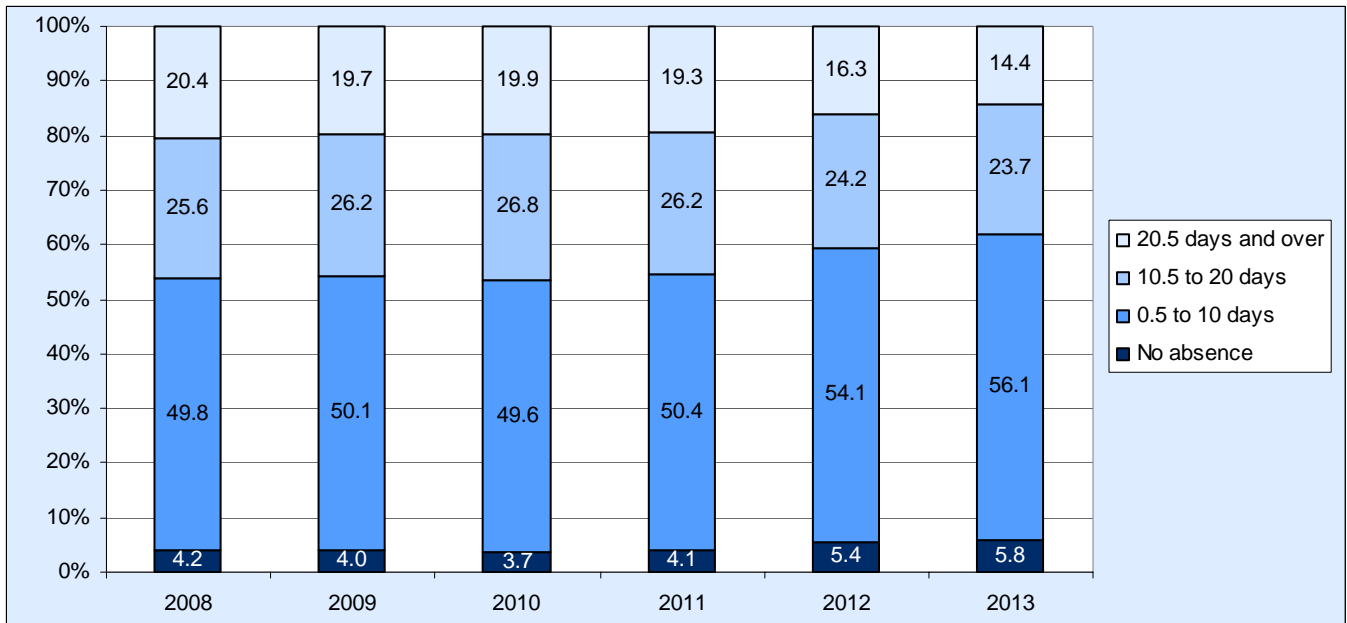
Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh Government

- Just under 1,170 pupils were absent for more than half the time that they were on roll at a maintained secondary school.



#### Chart 4: Distribution of pupils in maintained secondary schools by length of overall absence

Chart 4 groups all pupils attending maintained secondary schools in Wales by the number of days that they were absent and plots the percentage of pupils that fall into four groups from 2007/08 to 2012/13. As the legend shows, the bottom bars relate to the percentage of pupils who had no absence and the bars above it increase in length of absence to the top bars which represent the percentage of pupils who were absent for at least 20.5 days. We can only produce this chart from 2007/08 because the necessary data weren't available before that.



- After a dip in 2009/10, the percentage of pupils absent for at most 10 days has been increasing. In 2012/13 this value was 61.9 per cent, an increase of 2.4 percentage points from 2011/12.
- In 2012/13 14.4 per cent of pupils were absent for over 20 days, 1.9 percentage points lower than 2011/12.

**Table 8: Pupils of compulsory school age who were persistent absentees from maintained secondary schools (a)**

	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Number of pupils who are persistent absentees	17,984	16,584	15,619	14,971	12,293	10,399
Total number of pupils	180,213	178,004	175,559	172,886	170,081	166,996
Percentage of pupils who are persistent absentees	10.0	9.3	8.9	8.7	7.2	6.2

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh Government

(a) See the notes section for the definition of persistent absentees.

- The percentage of pupils who are persistent absentees has been decreasing since 2007/08.
- In 2012/13 6.2 per cent of pupils in maintained secondary schools were persistent absentees, a decrease of 1.0 percentage points from 2011/12.

**Table 9: Distribution of reasons for absence by pupils of compulsory school age in maintained secondary schools, by reason for absence and term, 2012/13 (a)**

Type of absence	Code	Reason for absence	Autumn	Spring	Summer	Year
Authorised	I	Illness	61.1	61.7	49.7	59.0
	M	Medical or dental appointments	8.3	7.9	8.2	8.2
	R	Religious observance	0.1	-	-	0.1
	S	Study leave	-	-	3.9	0.8
	T	Traveller absence	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.1
	H	Agreed family holiday	6.7	3.0	6.4	5.4
	F	Agreed extended family holiday	0.1	-	-	-
	E	Excluded, but no alternative provision made	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6
	C	Other authorised (not covered by other codes or descriptions)	6.7	8.2	7.6	7.4
			<b>Total authorised absence</b>	<b>84.8</b>	<b>82.5</b>	<b>77.6</b>
Unauthorised	G	Family holiday (not agreed or sessions in excess of agreement)	1.6	0.8	2.0	1.4
	U	Late (arrived after the register closed)	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.4
	O	Other unauthorised (not covered by other codes or descriptions)	10.7	13.1	14.5	12.3
	N	No reason for the absence provided yet	2.6	3.1	5.4	3.4
			<b>Total unauthorised absence</b>	<b>15.2</b>	<b>17.5</b>	<b>22.4</b>
Overall		<b>Total overall absence</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh Government

(a) See the notes section for term dates.

- Illness was the most common reason for absence in 2012/13, accounting for 59.0 per cent of all half-day sessions missed.
- No reason had been given for 3.4 per cent of half-day sessions missed at the point that the data collection took place.

**Table 10: Percentage of sessions missed by pupils of compulsory school age in maintained secondary schools, by reason for absence and term, 2012/13 (a)**

Type of absence	Code	Reason for absence	Autumn	Spring	Summer	Year
Authorised	I	Illness	4.4	4.7	3.6	4.3
	M	Medical or dental appointments	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6
	R	Religious observance	-	-	-	-
	S	Study leave	-	-	0.3	0.1
	T	Traveller absence	-	-	-	-
	H	Agreed family holiday	0.5	0.2	0.5	0.4
	F	Agreed extended family holiday	-	-	-	-
	E	Excluded, but no alternative provision made	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
	C	Other authorised (not covered by other codes or descriptions)	0.5	0.6	0.5	0.5
		<b>Total authorised absence</b>	<b>6.2</b>	<b>6.3</b>	<b>5.6</b>	<b>6.1</b>
Unauthorised	G	Family holiday (not agreed or sessions in excess of agreement)	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
	U	Late (arrived after the register closed)	-	-	-	-
	O	Other unauthorised (not covered by other codes or descriptions)	0.8	1.0	1.0	0.9
	N	No reason for the absence provided yet	0.2	0.2	0.4	0.2
	<b>Total unauthorised absence</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>1.3</b>	
Overall		<b>Total overall absence</b>	<b>7.3</b>	<b>7.7</b>	<b>7.2</b>	<b>7.4</b>

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh Government

(a) See the notes section for term dates.

- In 2012/13 authorised absence was highest in the spring term, but the highest rate of unauthorised absence was during the summer term.
- 4.3 per cent of half-day sessions were missed by pupils in maintained secondary schools because of illness.
- 0.4 per cent of half-day sessions missed by pupils in maintained secondary schools were for family holidays previously agreed by the school; family holidays either not agreed by the school or in excess of the agreement account were the reason for 0.1 per cent of sessions missed.

## Accessing the data electronically

The data behind the charts and some of the tables in this release can be found on StatsWales (a free-to-use internet service that allows visitors to view, manipulate, create and download tables and charts). Please select "Schools and Teachers" at the navigation screen of the following site:

[www.statswales.wales.gov.uk](http://www.statswales.wales.gov.uk)



For further data relating to these tables or attendance data for individual schools please e-mail [school.stats@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:school.stats@wales.gsi.gov.uk).

## Notes

### 1 Context

#### 1.1 Policy/Operational

All children who are receiving an education at school during the normal school day must be placed on the attendance register. An attendance register records every pupil's attendance at every session the school is open to pupils and must be called twice a day: at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. The register must show whether each pupil is present, engaged in an approved educational activity off-site (treated as present if they attend that provision), or absent. In addition, where a pupil of compulsory school age is absent, the register must also show whether the absence was authorised or unauthorised.

Improving attendance has been a key Ministerial priority over the past year. The development of an Attendance Analysis Framework and the introduction of School Banding – where attendance forms part of the measure – have both played an important role in raising the profile of attendance in the context of school improvement.

The Attendance Analysis Framework sets out a standardised and robust approach to data analysis. The Framework was developed in consultation with LA data, Education Welfare and school improvement officers and is intended to identify systematic problems in schools and local authorities, and identify ways that these might be addressed.

Using the Framework as a basis an extensive analysis has been carried out on each local authority's attendance data. The Framework, along with an analysis report which highlighted areas which the Welsh Government felt were weaknesses or strengths were sent to each local authority. Welsh Government officials then met with each authority to discuss the findings.

#### 1.2 Related Publications

A similar release relating to absenteeism from maintained primary, special and independent schools in Wales during the 2011/12 academic year entitled 'Absenteeism from Primary Schools, 2011/12' was released on 22 January 2013 and can be found here:

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/theme/schools/?lang=en>

England publish absenteeism data for primary and secondary schools in the statistical release entitled 'Pupil Absence in Schools in England, Including Pupil Characteristics'. The latest available statistics can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-absence-in-schools-in-england-including-pupil-characteristics>

Scotland publish absenteeism data for primary and secondary schools in supplementary dataset tables. The latest available statistics can be found on their website:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/School-Education/AttendanceAbsenceDatasets>

Northern Ireland publish primary and post-primary (secondary) school absenteeism data and their latest statistics can be found here: [http://www.deni.gov.uk/index/32-statisticsandresearch\\_pg/32-statistics\\_and\\_research\\_statistics\\_on\\_education\\_pg/32\\_statistics\\_and\\_research\\_statistics\\_on\\_education-pupil\\_attendance.htm](http://www.deni.gov.uk/index/32-statisticsandresearch_pg/32-statistics_and_research_statistics_on_education_pg/32_statistics_and_research_statistics_on_education-pupil_attendance.htm)

### 2 Data Source

The Pupils' Attendance Record is made up of pupil-level attendance data collected electronically from maintained schools, care of their local authority (LA), and school-level attendance data from special and

independent schools collected via a voluntary, paper-based survey. Both collections are carried out by the school statistics team in Knowledge and Analytical Services within the Welsh Government.

### 3 Definitions

#### 3.1 Coverage

The absenteeism information in this Statistical First Release relates to the percentage of half-day sessions missed by pupils due to unauthorised and overall absence from the start of the academic year to 24 May 2013. Pupils of compulsory school age (5-15) registered at maintained secondary schools and pupils aged 11-15 registered at special and independent schools are included in the data (ages as on 31st August before the start of the academic year). Attendance data were received from 295 schools with pupils within these age groups in the 2012/13 academic year.

The free school meal data are collected through the January Pupil Level Annual Schools Census (PLASC) and is based on a 3-year average. Where schools have merged, the 3-year average for the new school includes free school meal data for the previous schools for the year or years that they were open prior to merging.

#### 3.2 Types of Absence

All (or 'overall') absences comprise those which are authorised and unauthorised:

- an **authorised absence** is an absence with permission from a teacher or other authorised representative of the school. This includes instances of absence for which a satisfactory explanation has been provided (e.g. illness, family bereavement or religious observance).
- an **unauthorised absence** is an absence without permission from a teacher or other authorised representative of the school. This includes all unexplained or unjustified absences.

Note that pupils undertaking approved and supervised educational activities conducted away from the school (e.g. work experience or educational visits) are deemed to be present at the school.

#### 3.3 Term dates

Attendance and absence data were collected on the days that schools were open to pupils between the following dates:

- Autumn term – from 1 September 2012 to 25 December 2012.
- Spring term – from 26 December 2012 to 7 April 2013.
- Summer term – from 8 April 2013 to 24 May 2013.

#### 3.4 Persistent Absentees

Persistent absentees are pupils who were absent for at least 20 per cent of the mode number of half-day sessions that schools were open to pupils (which does not include INSET days). The following example of how persistent absentees were evaluated for 2011/12 will help to explain what this means:

- The mode is the number which appears most often, so the mode number of half-day sessions that schools were open to pupils is the most frequent number of sessions that they were open to pupils. For the 2012/13 academic year most maintained secondary schools were open to pupils for 304 half-day sessions;
- Twenty per cent of that figure equals 60.8 ( $304 * 0.2 = 60.8$ ) half-day sessions, but since pupil attendance is only recorded in half day sessions that figure has to be rounded up to the nearest whole number, 61;
- So a persistent absentee in secondary schools in 2012/13 was someone who was absent for at least 61 half-day sessions.

Because the mode number of sessions that schools were open to pupils changes from year to year the figure used to determine whether a pupil is a persistent absentee or not also changes. The following table shows the values used to evaluate persistent absenteeism from 2007/08 to 2012/13.

### Values used to calculate persistent absenteeism

Academic year	Mode of sessions possible	Number of sessions missed to be a persistent absentee
2007/08	304	61
2008/09	304	61
2009/10	308	62
2010/11	308	62
2011/12	306	62
2012/13	304	61

## 4 Key Quality Information

This section provides a summary of information on this output against five dimensions of quality: Relevance, Accuracy, Timeliness and Punctuality, Accessibility and Clarity, and Comparability. Between September and November 2010 we conducted a public consultation on our Education Statistics outputs in which we asked for feedback on the quality of the outputs. A summary of the responses has been published and is available here: <http://wales.gov.uk/consultations/statistics/education/?lang=en>

### 4.1 Relevance

The statistics are used both within and outside the Welsh Government to monitor educational trends and as a baseline for further analysis of the underlying data. Some of the key users are:

- Ministers and the Members Research Service in the National Assembly for Wales;
- The Department for Education in England;
- other government departments;
- Local Authorities and schools;
- ESTYN, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education and Training in Wales;
- Wales Audit Office;
- The Department for Education and Skills in the Welsh Government;
- other areas of the Welsh Government;
- the research community;
- students, academics and universities;
- individual citizens and private companies and the media.

These statistics are used in a variety of ways. Some examples of these are:

- advice to Ministers;
- the all-Wales education core data packs (the replacement for the National Pupil Database);
- LA and school comparisons and benchmarks;
- to inform the education policy decision-making process in Wales;
- development of a national banding system for Wales;
- to inform ESTYN during school inspections;
- contributes to the National Performance Indicators;
- international benchmarking;
- the education domain of the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation;
- to assist in research in educational attainment.

## **4.2 Accuracy**

The Welsh Government works closely with schools and local authorities in order to ensure all data are validated before tables are published. Data are collated into an electronic return and submitted to the Welsh Government through DEWi, a secure online data transfer system developed by the Welsh Government. Various stages of automated validation and sense-checking are built into the process to ensure a high quality of data.

During the 2009/10 academic year extreme weather conditions forced a large number of schools to close to protect the welfare of their students. Some schools were able to remain open for pupils who could safely attend. Those who were unable to attend on these days were recorded as having authorised absence, thereby inflating the schools' overall absence percentages. Since not all schools had partial closures due to the inclement weather, and those that did close for a varying number of days and had a varying percentage of pupils absent, the scale of the effect of these partial closures on local authorities' absence rates could not be measured.

A new statistical category 'Not required to attend' was introduced to the Welsh Government's attendance data collection in 2010/11. Half-day sessions are recorded in this category in situations when individual pupils' attendance is not possible but the school remains open, such as when pupils are not able to safely attend school, and will not be counted towards the total number of sessions that they could attend in a year. This means that extreme weather conditions no longer adversely affect either schools' or local authorities' attendance percentages.

## **4.3 Timeliness and Punctuality**

DEWi was available for uploading files on 28 May 2013, with maintained secondary schools asked to submit attendance data for every pupil aged between 5 and 15 on roll at the school between the start of the academic year and 24 May 2013. Schools and local authorities were then asked to validate their data within a validation period that ended on 15 July 2013. Special and independent schools were asked to submit attendance data for pupils aged between 11 and 15 on roll between the start of the academic year and 24 May 2013 by 26 June 2013 and were then sent a summary of their school's data for validation and verification.

Because of the necessary extension to the validation period the release of this statistical first release was moved back by three weeks to ensure that the data were of satisfactory quality by the time of publication.

## **4.4 Accessibility and Clarity**

This Statistical First Release is pre-announced and then published on the Statistics section of the Welsh Government website. It is accompanied by more detailed tables on StatsWales, a free to use service that allows visitors to view, manipulate, create and download data.

## **4.5 Comparability**

Pupil-level absence data was collected from maintained secondary schools for the first time in 2007/08. However, the definitions and calculations involved in the collection have not changed, so comparability over time has not been affected.

Since 1999/2000 secondary schools have been asked to provide, on a voluntary basis, their attendance information broken down by gender. In 2007/08 it became compulsory for maintained secondary schools to provide gender information whilst remaining voluntary for special and independent schools. 290 schools (98.3 per cent) supplied gender data in 2012/13, compared to 299 schools (98.0 per cent) of schools in 2011/12. It is not advisable to compare year on year changes prior to 2007/08 in absenteeism by gender as different schools responded each year.

Due to the effect that partial closures of schools due to extreme weather conditions during the 2009/10 academic year had on schools' attendance rates caution should be used when comparing year-on-year changes.

During the 2012/13 academic year outbreaks of illnesses such as Measles may have had an adverse affect on local authorities' attendance. Caution should be taken when comparing local authority-level data for this year.