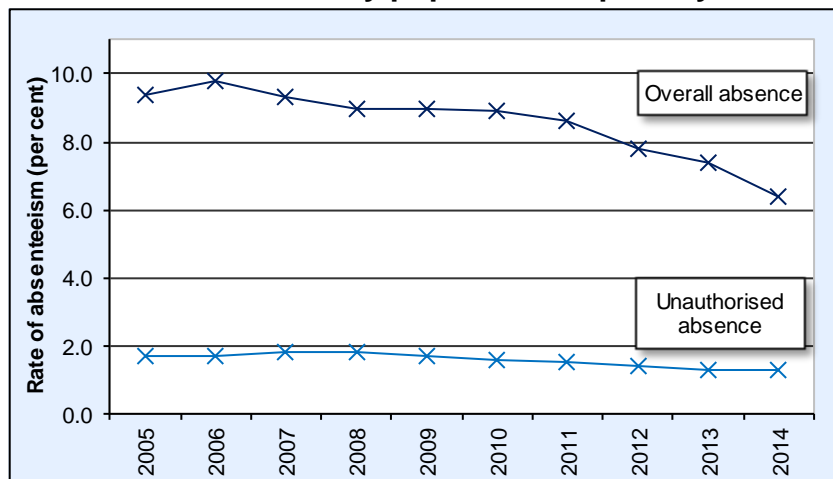


## Absenteeism from secondary schools, 2013/14

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 period from the start of the academic year to the late May bank holiday, from 2004/05 to 2013/14.

**Chart 1: Absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age, 2004/05 to 2013/14**



**In 2013/14:**

**6.4%** overall absence from secondary schools.

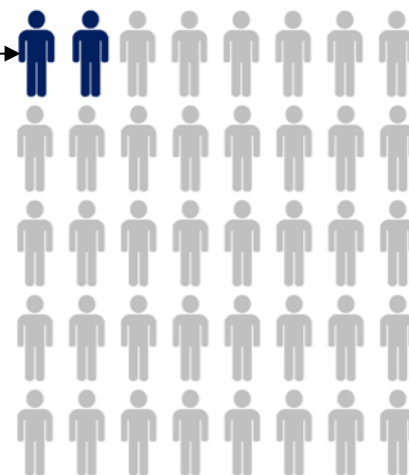
**1.3%** unauthorised absence from secondary schools.

↓ Overall absenteeism decreased in 2013/14.

↓ In general, overall absenteeism has been falling since 2005/06.

**2 in 40** pupils were persistent absentees in secondary schools (or 5.0%).

**Persistent absenteeism** ([Table 8](#))



### Other key points ([Chart 7](#), [Tables 8](#) and [9](#))

- ↑ Percentage of pupils with no absence reaches highest value in seven years.
- ↓ Persistent absenteeism continues to decrease.
- Nearly **60%** of absenteeism was due to illness.

The presentation of this release has been improved in order to aid interpretation of the data. Feedback would be welcome.

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## Introduction

[Tables 1](#) to [7](#) break down the percentage of half-day sessions missed due to absenteeism by school type, gender, local authority, free school meal entitlement, etc. [Table 8](#) 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 reasons for absence from 2011/12 to 2013/14. [Tables 8](#), [9](#) and [10](#) have changed to provide a better analysis of the data. Tables can be produced in the old format if needed.

[Chart 1](#) displays the percentage of half-day sessions missed due to overall and unauthorised absenteeism from maintained secondary, special and independent schools from 2004/05. [Chart 2](#), which is new for 2013/14, plots schools' free school meal entitlement against their overall absenteeism rates to show the correlation between the two types of data. [Charts 3](#) and [4](#) show how the ranges in local authority absence rates have changed over time. They have been amended for this edition of the Statistical First Release to be easier to understand. [Charts 5](#) and [6](#), also new for 2013/14, order local authorities by their overall and unauthorised absenteeism rates, showing how local authorities compare with each other. [Chart 7](#) groups pupils by their rates of absence and shows how these groups have changed over time.

New for 2013/14, [Maps 1](#) and [2](#) give a visual representation of Welsh local authorities' rates of overall and unauthorised absence for the 2013/14 academic year.

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

	Percentage of half-day sessions missed									
	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Maintained secondary schools	9.5	9.9	9.4	9.1	9.0	8.9	8.6	7.9	7.4	6.4
Maintained special schools	11.7	13.7	13.9	12.2	12.3	10.8	11.6	11.0	11.3	10.3
Independent schools	5.2	5.6	5.5	5.8	6.0	6.3	5.5	5.3	5.3	4.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>9.4</b>	<b>9.8</b>	<b>9.3</b>	<b>9.0</b>	<b>9.0</b>	<b>8.9</b>	<b>8.6</b>	<b>7.8</b>	<b>7.4</b>	<b>6.4</b>

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh Government

(a) Figures do not include data for 7 independent schools that did not respond to the survey.

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

	Percentage of half-day sessions missed									
	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Maintained secondary schools	1.8	1.7	1.9	1.8	1.7	1.6	1.5	1.4	1.3	1.3
Maintained special schools	2.4	3.1	3.3	2.5	2.3	1.9	2.5	2.6	2.6	2.4
Independent schools	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>1.3</b>

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh Government

(a) Figures do not include data for 7 independent schools that did not respond to the survey.

**Key points****In 2013/14:****6.4%** overall absence from secondary schools.**1.3%** unauthorised absence from secondary schools.

Overall absence decreased in 2013/14.



In general, overall absenteeism has been falling since 2005/06.

- In 2013/14, 6.4 per cent of half-day sessions were missed due to overall absence (which includes both authorised and unauthorised absences) from maintained secondary, special and independent schools. The rate of unauthorised absence from maintained secondary, special and independent schools was 1.3 per cent.
- The trend in overall and unauthorised absence rates over the years can be seen in [Chart 1](#) on the front page. These data relate to the 'Total' rows in [Tables 1](#) and [2](#). The chart clearly shows that in general, the percentage of half-day sessions missed due to overall absence has been falling since 2005/06. Unauthorised absence has also been falling since 2007/08, but at a slower rate. In 2013/14, overall absenteeism continued to fall, dropping by 1.0 percentage points since the previous year. This is the largest drop that overall absenteeism has seen over the past nine years. Although unauthorised absenteeism did not change between 2012/13 and 2013/14, if you compare it with 2007/08, over six years it has decreased by 0.5 percentage points.
- Due to the small number of pupils on roll at maintained special and independent schools, their absence rates do not have a large effect on the total for Wales. Even still, their overall absence rates decreased in 2013/14, and while the rate of unauthorised absence decreased in maintained special schools, the rate increased very slightly in independent schools.

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

	Percentage of half-day sessions missed				
	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Number of schools providing gender information	311	304	299	290	285
Percentage of schools providing gender information	96.9	98.4	98.0	98.3	96.0
Overall absence					
Boys	8.7	8.4	7.7	7.2	6.2
Girls	9.1	8.8	8.0	7.5	6.6
Unauthorised absence					
Boys	1.6	1.4	1.4	1.3	1.3
Girls	1.6	1.5	1.4	1.3	1.3

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh Government

(a) Caution should be taken when comparing 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.

**Key points**

**In 2013/14:**



Girls had higher overall absence than boys.



Unauthorised absence was the same for boys and girls.

- Since 2009/10 girls have had a higher rate of overall absence than boys in maintained secondary, special and independent schools and this pattern continues in 2013/14.
- As in the previous two years, boys and girls had the same rates of unauthorised absence in 2013/14.

**Table 4: Absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age in all maintained secondary schools, by proportion entitled to free school meals, 2013/14 (a)**

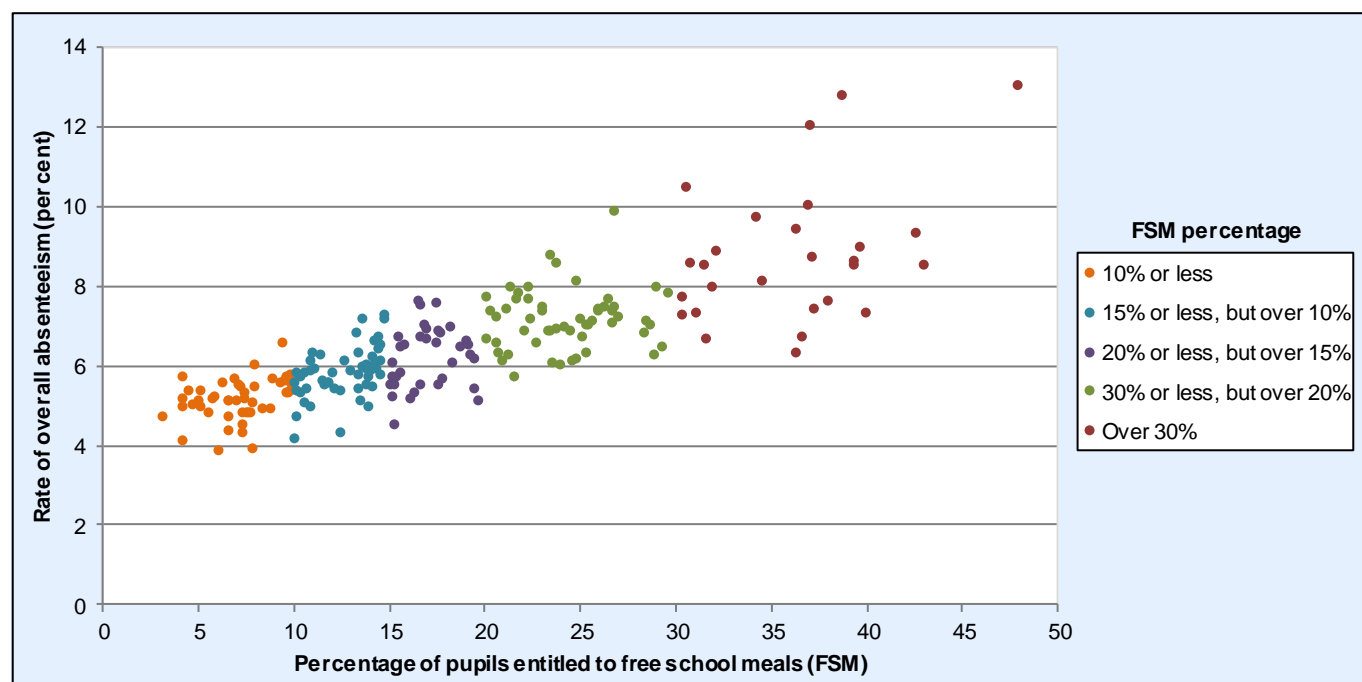
Percentage entitled to free school meals	Percentage of half-day sessions missed		Number of schools
	Overall absence	Unauthorised absence	
10% or less	5.1	0.6	47
15% or less, but over 10%	5.9	0.9	53
20% or less, but over 15%	6.2	1.0	35
30% or less, but over 20%	7.2	1.7	54
Over 30%	8.8	3.1	27
All maintained secondary schools	6.4	1.3	216

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record and PLASC, Welsh Government

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

- The data in [Table 4](#) suggest that there is a relationship between the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals and the rate of absenteeism. 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.
- It is easier to see this trend in [Chart 2](#). The overall absenteeism rate for each of the 216 maintained secondary schools in [Table 4](#) has been plotted against their free school meal percentage. The schools are represented by dots and have been colour-coordinated according to their free school meal group, ranging from group 1, with 10 per cent or less of their pupils entitled to free school meals, to group 5, with over 30 per cent of their pupils entitled to free school meals. Although in general absenteeism rates differ between schools with similar free school meal percentages, when looked at as a whole it can be seen that as free school meal percentage increases, so does the rate of overall absenteeism.

**Chart 2: Overall absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age, by maintained secondary school and free school meal percentage, 2013/14**



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

Local Authority	Percentage of half-day sessions missed due to:							
	Overall absence				Unauthorised absence			
	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
<b>North Wales</b>	<b>7.9</b>	<b>7.3</b>	<b>7.0</b>	<b>6.3</b>	<b>1.2</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>1.0</b>
Isle of Anglesey	9.1	7.8	6.8	6.6	1.3	0.7	0.7	0.9
Gwynedd	8.1	7.9	6.6	5.8	1.0	0.9	0.7	0.6
Conwy	7.6	7.3	7.1	6.1	1.6	1.5	1.4	1.4
Denbighshire	8.3	7.1	7.6	7.0	1.4	1.5	1.5	1.4
Flintshire	7.6	7.0	6.7	6.2	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.5
Wrexham	7.6	7.2	7.3	6.4	1.6	1.7	1.8	1.1
<b>South West and Mid Wales</b>	<b>8.6</b>	<b>7.7</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>6.3</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>0.8</b>	<b>0.7</b>	<b>0.9</b>
Powys	8.5	7.1	6.8	5.7	0.5	0.4	0.6	0.8
Ceredigion	7.5	6.3	6.4	5.5	1.2	1.1	1.3	1.2
Pembrokeshire	8.7	7.4	7.8	6.6	0.9	0.5	0.7	1.1
Carmarthenshire	9.0	8.6	8.0	6.2	0.8	0.6	0.4	0.5
Swansea	9.0	8.0	7.7	6.7	1.6	1.4	1.1	1.2
Neath Port Talbot	8.1	7.7	7.4	6.5	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.8
<b>Central South Wales</b>	<b>9.2</b>	<b>8.4</b>	<b>7.4</b>	<b>6.4</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>1.7</b>
Bridgend	8.8	8.1	7.7	6.2	1.7	1.6	1.3	1.1
The Vale of Glamorgan	8.7	7.3	6.7	5.8	1.5	1.0	1.0	1.0
Rhondda Cynon Taf	9.4	9.4	8.1	6.9	1.8	2.1	2.0	1.7
Merthyr Tydfil	8.6	7.6	6.7	7.1	0.9	1.0	1.0	1.1
Cardiff	9.6	8.3	7.1	6.2	2.9	2.7	2.5	2.3
<b>South East Wales</b>	<b>8.8</b>	<b>8.1</b>	<b>7.8</b>	<b>6.9</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>1.6</b>
Caerphilly	9.3	8.3	8.0	7.1	2.1	1.8	1.6	1.4
Blaenau Gwent	10.6	9.6	9.0	7.8	2.1	2.4	2.3	2.3
Torfaen	8.3	7.7	7.5	6.5	1.3	1.2	1.0	0.8
Monmouthshire	7.8	7.0	6.6	5.5	0.6	0.6	0.5	0.8
Newport	8.2	8.1	7.9	7.1	2.0	2.1	2.1	2.4
<b>Wales (a) (b)</b>	<b>8.6</b>	<b>7.8</b>	<b>7.4</b>	<b>6.4</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>1.3</b>

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh Government

(a) Figures do not include data for 7 independent schools that did not respond to the survey.

(b) Includes independent schools.



**Key points**

**In 2013/14, for local authorities:**

**Overall absence**

**7.8%** the highest rate of overall absence.

**5.5%** the lowest rate of overall absence.

**Unauthorised absence**

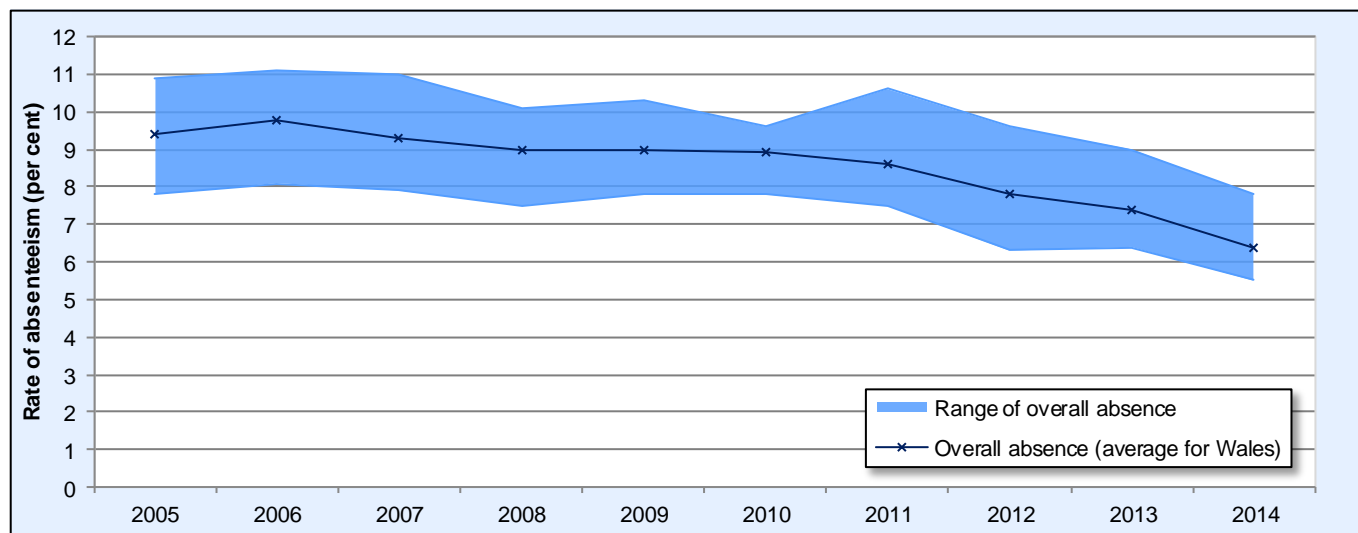
**2.4%** the highest unauthorised absence rate.

**0.5%** the lowest unauthorised absence rate.

- Blaenau Gwent had the highest rate of overall absenteeism from maintained secondary and special schools (7.8 per cent) during the 2013/14 academic year, while Ceredigion and Monmouthshire had the lowest rate (5.5 per cent). Local authorities' absenteeism rates for 2013/14 have been plotted in [Charts 5](#) and [6](#), which makes it easier to see how local authorities compare with each other.
- In 2013/14 the highest rate of unauthorised absence (2.4 per cent) was found in Newport, while Flintshire and Carmarthenshire had the lowest rate of unauthorised absence (0.5 per cent).

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

Chart 3 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 'Overall absence' columns in Table 5. For each year the top of the blue band shows the highest local authority's absence and the bottom of the blue band shows the lowest local authority's absence. The dark blue line within this band is the average overall absence rate for Wales.



#### Key points

##### In 2013/14:



The highest rate of overall absence continues to fall.



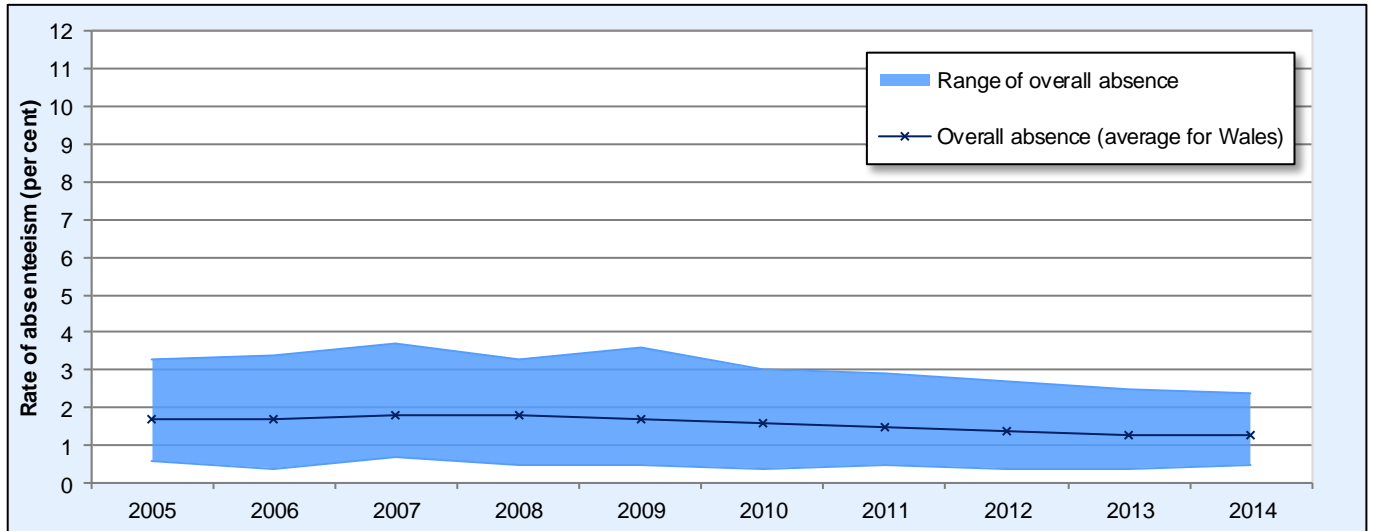
The lowest rate of overall absence also decreased.

- Although the average overall absence rate for Wales has been decreasing since 2005/06 (as discussed in the commentary for Table 1), the highest rate of overall absence in local authorities has fluctuated twice between then and 2013/14, once in 2008/09 and again in 2010/11. Since 2010/11 the highest rate of overall absence in local authorities has been falling and in 2013/14 it dropped to its lowest value over the past 10 years – 7.8 per cent.
- In 2012/13 the lowest rate of overall absence in local authorities increased slightly even though the average overall absence rate for Wales decreased. This can be seen by the fact that the bottom of the blue bar in Chart 3 increased between 2011/12 and 2012/13. The lowest rate of overall absence in local authorities decreased in 2013/14 to its lowest rate since 2004/05 – 5.5 per cent.



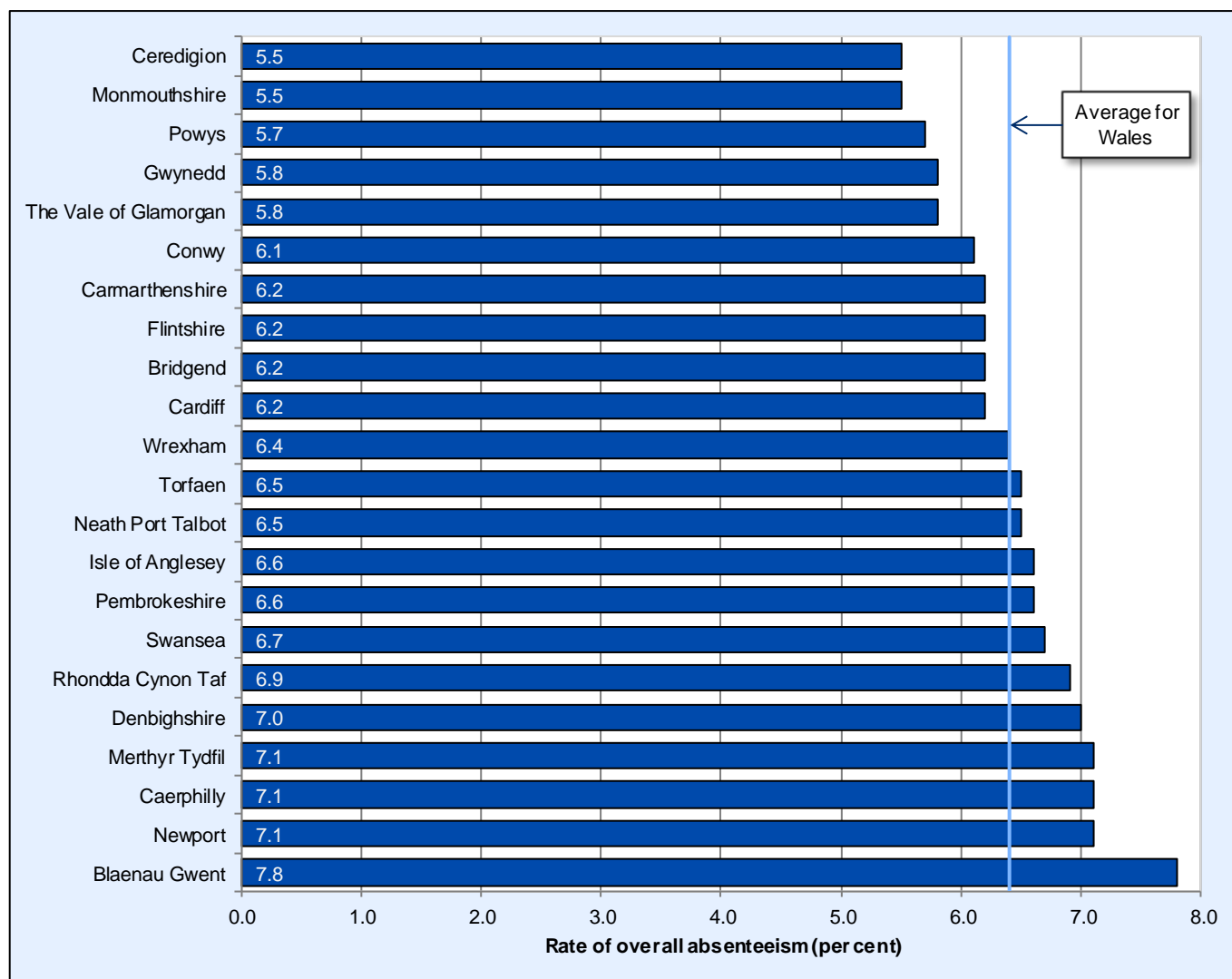
## Chart 4: Range of local authorities' rates of unauthorised absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age

[Chart 4](#) 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 absence' columns in [Table 5](#). For each year the top of the blue band shows the highest local authority's absence and the bottom of the blue band shows the lowest local authority's absence. The dark blue line within this band is the average unauthorised absence rate for Wales.

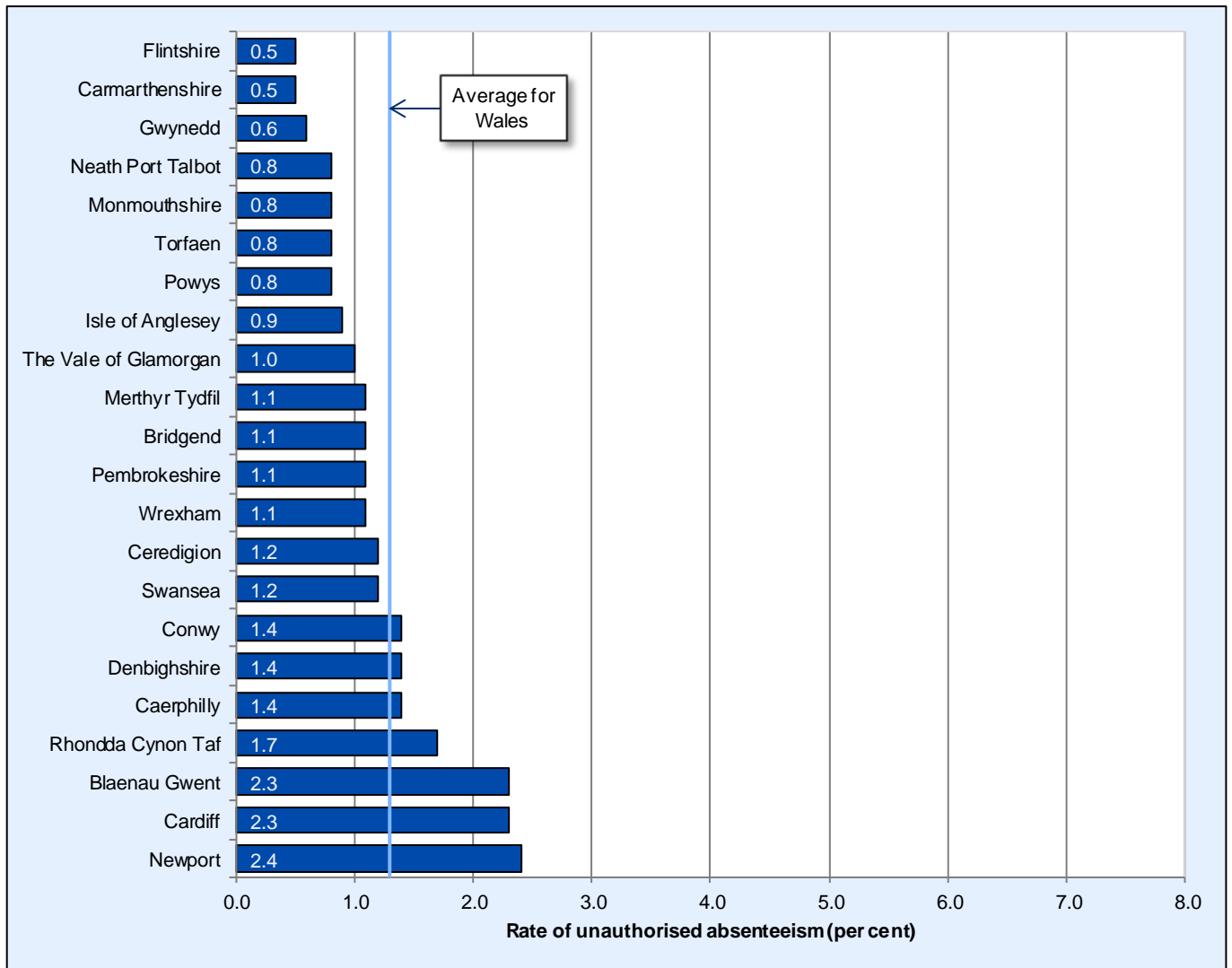


- The highest rate of unauthorised absence in local authorities fell to 2.4 per cent in 2013/14, which is the lowest that this value has been since 2004/05. It peaked twice over this period, in 2006/07 and 2008/09, and has been falling since.
- The lowest rate of unauthorised absence rose from 0.4 per cent in 2012/13 to 0.5 per cent in 2013/14. It has varied between these values since 2007/08.

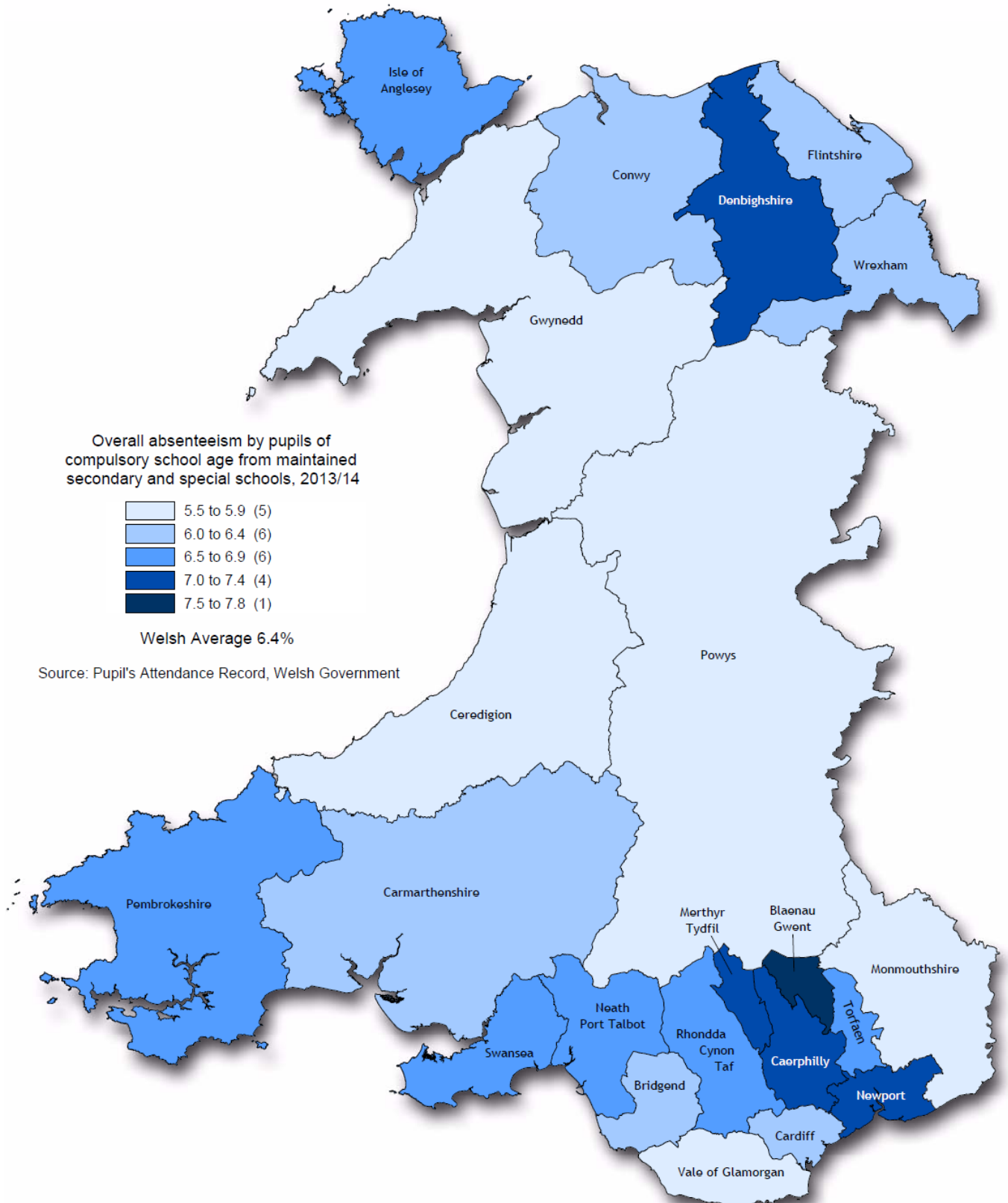
**Chart 5: Overall absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age in all maintained secondary and special schools, by local authority, 2013/14**



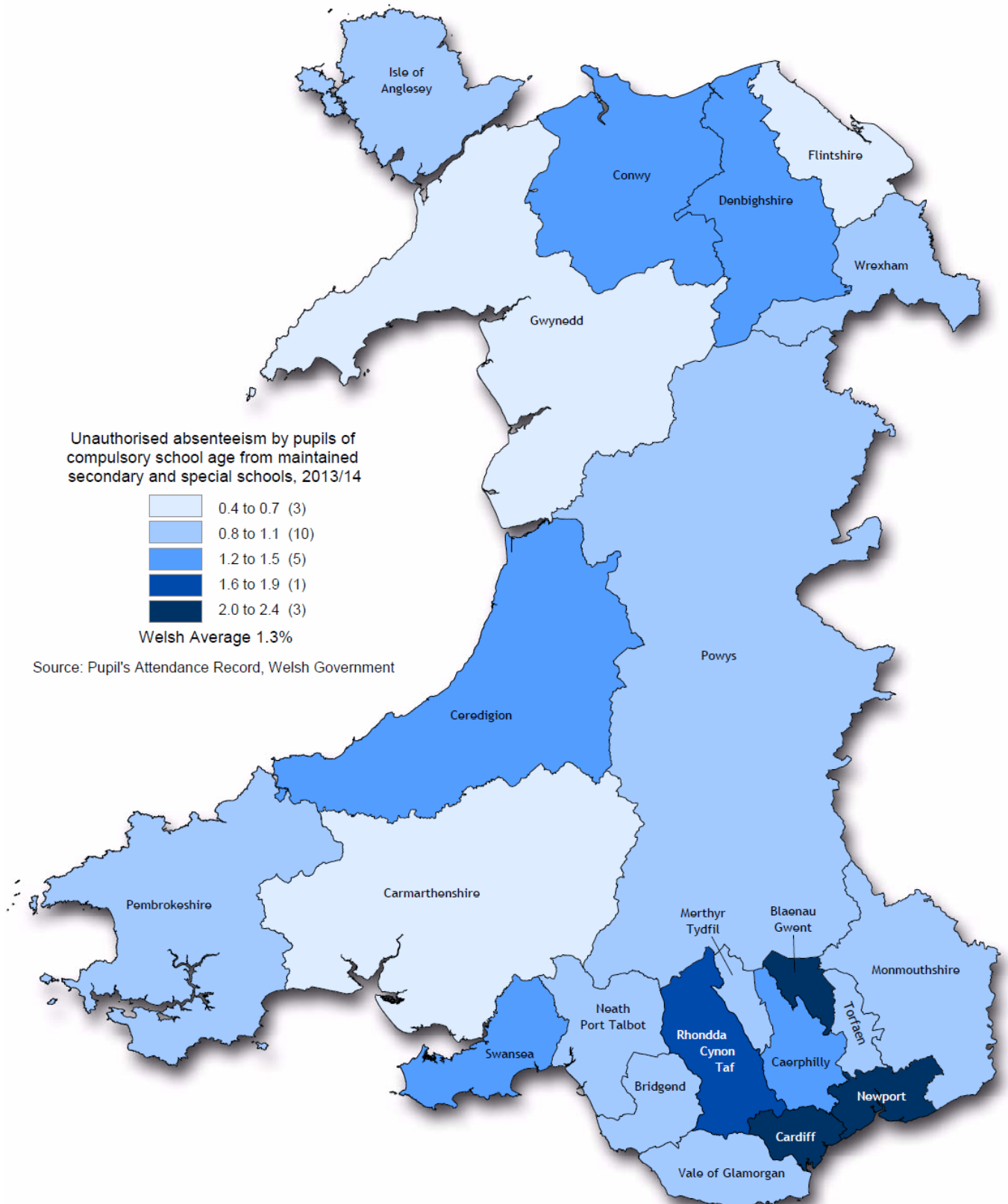
**Chart 6: Unauthorised absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age in all maintained secondary and special schools, by local authority, 2013/14**



# Overall Absenteeism - Wales



# Unauthorised Absenteeism - Wales



**Table 6: Distribution of pupils in maintained secondary schools by length of overall absence, 2013/14**

Number of days of overall absence	Pupils in schools during 2013/14		Percentage of overall absence
	Number	Percentage	
No absence	13,181	8.1	0.0
0.5 to 5 days	58,995	36.5	10.0
5.5 to 10 days	37,405	23.1	18.0
10.5 to 15 days	21,565	13.3	17.1
15.5 to 20 days	11,800	7.3	13.1
20.5 to 25 days	6,611	4.1	9.4
more than 25 days	12,272	7.6	32.4
Total	161,829	100.0	100.0

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh Government

**Table 7: Distribution of pupils in maintained secondary schools by their overall absence rates, 2013/14**

Overall absence rate	Pupils in schools during 2013/14		Percentage of overall absence
	Number	Percentage	
0%	13,181	8.1	0.0
Over 0%, but 4% at most	67,473	41.7	13.2
Over 4%, but 6% at most	22,199	13.7	10.8
Over 6%, but 10% at most	28,245	17.5	21.3
Over 10%, but 20% at most	22,330	13.8	29.4
Over 20%, but 30% at most	4,948	3.1	11.3
Over 30%, but 50% at most	2,472	1.5	8.6
Over 50%	981	0.6	5.3
Total	161,829	100.0	100.0

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh Government

**Key points**

**161,829** number of pupils in maintained secondary schools.

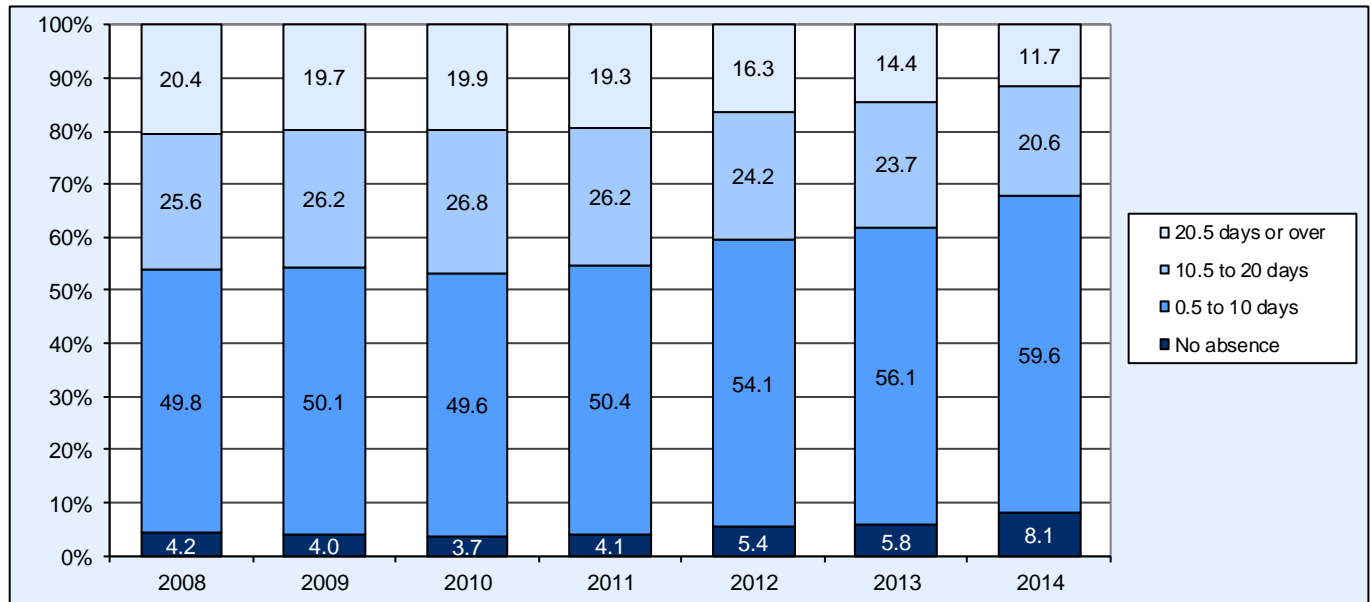
**7.6%** percentage of pupils absent for more than 25 days (12,272 pupils).

**8.1%** percentage of pupils with no absence (13,181 pupils).

- Of the 161,829 pupils who were reported to be on roll at maintained secondary schools during the 2013/14 academic year, just under 13,200 pupils (8.1 per cent) had no absence from school, and a little under 12,300 pupils (7.6 per cent) were absent for more than 25 days, or 5 school weeks.
- Almost 1,000 pupils were absent for more than half the time that they were on roll at a maintained secondary school.
- Please note that the number of pupils with over 20 per cent absenteeism in [Table 7](#) does not relate to persistent absentees (defined in the Notes section) because it includes pupils who may have been on roll for a short period of time. Such pupils may have high absence rates, but the number of sessions that they missed is relatively small so they are not termed persistent absentees. For an analysis of persistent absenteeism in maintained secondary schools please see [Table 8](#).

## Chart 7: Distribution of pupils in maintained secondary schools by length of overall absence

[Chart 7](#) 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 2013/14. 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 20.5 days or over. We can only produce this chart for the last seven years as the necessary data were not available before that.



### Key points



The percentage of pupils with no absence increased.



The percentage of pupils absent for 20.5 days or over decreased.

- As can be seen by the increase in the dark bar at the bottom of [Chart 7](#), the percentage of pupils who had no absence has been increasing since the 2009/10 academic year. In 2013/14 it reached its highest value since pupil-level absenteeism data were collected for the first time in 2007/08, 8.1 per cent. That is more than twice the value seen in 2009/10.
- The percentage of pupils absent for between 0.5 and 10 days has also been increasing since 2009/10 and reached its highest point in 2013/14, which is 59.6 per cent.
- The fact that the percentage of pupils with either low or no absence increased has had the opposite effect on the percentage of pupils with higher absence. The percentage of pupils with 10.5 to 20 days or 20.5 days or over of absence decreased to the smallest values that they have seen over the past seven years.
- In summary, the percentage of pupils with low absence continued to increase in 2013/14, while the percentage of pupils with high absence decreased.

**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	2013/14
Number of pupils who are persistent absentees	17,984	16,584	15,619	14,971	12,293	10,399	8,061
Total number of pupils	180,213	178,004	175,559	172,886	170,081	166,996	161,829
Percentage of pupils who are persistent absentees	10.0	9.3	8.9	8.7	7.2	6.2	5.0
Percentage of half days missed by persistent absentees due to:							
Authorised absence	21.7	21.6	21.9	22.0	21.4	20.6	19.5
Unauthorised absence	10.7	10.9	10.6	10.2	11.2	11.2	12.6
Overall absence	32.5	32.5	32.6	32.2	32.6	31.8	32.1
Percentage of all pupils' absence for which persistent absentees were responsible:							
Authorised absence	29.7	27.6	26.6	26.5	23.8	21.1	19.0
Unauthorised absence	59.9	58.5	58.9	59.8	58.3	54.0	48.8
Overall absence	35.6	33.6	32.4	32.2	29.9	26.8	25.0

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh Government

(a) Persistent absentees are pupils who were absent for at least 20 per cent of half-day sessions. For 2013/14 this means that persistent absentees in secondary schools missed at least 62 half-day sessions. See the Notes section for a more detailed description.

#### Key points

**161,829** number of pupils in maintained secondary schools.

**8,061** number of persistent absentees (5.0 per cent).



Percentage of persistent absentees decreased.

- The percentage of persistent absentees has decreased every year since 2007/08. It is now half what it was six years ago, showing a drop of 5.0 percentage points from 10.0 per cent in 2007/08 to 5.0 per cent in 2013/14.
- Since persistent absentees are pupils who have missed a large amount of school sessions, their absenteeism rates will be higher than for the whole pupil population. In 2013/14 persistent absentees missed 32.1 per cent of half-day sessions due to overall absence, with 12.6 per cent of half-day sessions missed due to unauthorised absence. Compare these values with those on the 'Maintained secondary schools' rows in [Tables 1](#) and [2](#) and you will see how much higher absenteeism rates are in this relatively small group of pupils.
- The rate of unauthorised absence among persistent absentees reached its lowest value in 2010/11, with persistent absentees missing 10.2 per cent of half-day sessions for reasons not authorised by the school. It has been increasing in subsequent years.
- The percentage of overall absence for which persistent absentees are responsible has been decreasing over time, from 35.6 per cent in 2007/08 to 25.0 per cent in 2013/14. The reason for this is that the percentage of pupils who are persistent absentees has been falling. Since overall absence rates for persistent absentees have remained relatively stable (at between 31.8 and 32.6 per cent), the fact that the percentage of persistent absentees is falling means that they are having a reduced effect on the overall absence rates for the entire pupil population.
- That being said, the 8,061 persistent absentees in 2013/14 are still responsible for almost half of the sessions missed due to unauthorised absence by the entire pupil population of 161,829.



**Table 9: Distribution of reasons for absence by pupils of compulsory school age in maintained secondary schools, by reason for absence**

This table looks at the proportion of *absent* sessions by reason for absence. For each year the proportions for all reasons add up to 100, that is, 100 per cent of absence. The table can be used to find out which are the most commonly used reasons for absence, independent of the rise and fall in absence rates. An increase in a figure in this table does not necessarily mean that the percentage of half-day sessions missed for that reason has increased. It simply means that, compared with a previous year, it was more commonly used as a reason for absence.

Type of absence	Code	Reason for absence	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Authorised	I	Illness	53.9	59.0	59.5
	M	Medical or dental appointments	9.7	8.2	7.8
	R	Religious observance	0.1	0.1	0.2
	S	Study leave	3.1	0.8	0.5
	T	Traveller absence	0.1	0.1	0.2
	H	Agreed family holiday	5.9	5.4	3.3
	F	Agreed extended family holiday	0.1	-	-
	E	Excluded, but no alternative provision made	1.8	1.6	1.5
	C	Other authorised (not covered by other codes or descriptions)	7.8	7.4	6.9
<b>Total authorised absence</b>			<b>82.4</b>	<b>82.6</b>	<b>79.9</b>
Unauthorised	G	Family holiday (not agreed or sessions in excess of agreement)	0.8	1.4	2.8
	U	Late (arrived after the register closed)	0.4	0.4	0.5
	O	Other unauthorised (not covered by other codes or descriptions)	11.5	12.3	15.3
	N	No reason for the absence provided yet	4.9	3.4	1.4
<b>Total unauthorised absence</b>			<b>17.6</b>	<b>17.4</b>	<b>20.1</b>
Overall	<b>Total overall absence</b>		<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh Government

**Key points**

**59.5%** of absence was due to illness.

**3.3%** of absence was due to all family holidays agreed by the school.

**2.8%** of absence was due to holidays *not* agreed by the school.

- The proportion of absence due to medical or dental appointments has been decreasing between 2011/12 and 2013/14, while the proportion of absence due to illness has been increasing. In 2013/14, 59.5 per cent of half-day sessions missed by pupils of compulsory school age in maintained secondary schools were because of illness, while 7.8 per cent were due to medical or dental appointments.
- The proportion of absence due to all family holidays agreed by the school decreased from 5.4 per cent in 2012/13 to 3.3 per cent in 2013/14. On the other hand, the proportion of absence because of family holidays *not* agreed by the school increased from 1.4 per cent in 2012/13 to 2.8 per cent in 2013/14.
- A large proportion of absent sessions was due to unauthorised reasons not covered by other codes or descriptions, meaning that they could not be put in any of the other three categories. Usage of this attendance code, code 'O', has been increasing.




**Table 10: Percentage of sessions missed by pupils of compulsory school age in maintained secondary schools, by reason for absence**

This table looks at the percentage of *all half-day sessions* for which each reason for absence was used. This table can be used to find out the reasons for increases or decreases in authorised, unauthorised and overall absence rates over the years.

Type of absence	Code	Reason for absence	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Authorised	I	Illness	4.2	4.3	3.8
	M	Medical or dental appointments	0.8	0.6	0.5
	R	Religious observance	-	-	-
	S	Study leave	0.2	0.1	-
	T	Traveller absence	-	-	-
	H	Agreed family holiday	0.5	0.4	0.2
	F	Agreed extended family holiday	-	-	-
	E	Excluded, but no alternative provision made	0.1	0.1	0.1
	C	Other authorised (not covered by other codes or descriptions)	0.6	0.5	0.4
	<b>Total authorised absence</b>			<b>6.5</b>	<b>6.1</b>
Unauthorised	G	Family holiday (not agreed or sessions in excess of agreement)	0.1	0.1	0.2
	U	Late (arrived after the register closed)	-	-	-
	O	Other unauthorised (not covered by other codes or descriptions)	0.9	0.9	1.0
	N	No reason for the absence provided yet	0.4	0.2	0.1
<b>Total unauthorised absence</b>			<b>1.4</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>1.3</b>
Overall	<b>Total overall absence</b>		<b>7.9</b>	<b>7.4</b>	<b>6.4</b>

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh Government

#### Key points

-  Decrease in absence due to illness.
-  Decrease in absence due to agreed family holidays.
-  Slight increase in unauthorised family holidays.

- The percentage of half-day sessions missed due to illness decreased to 3.8 per cent in 2013/14, and is the lowest that it has been since reasons for absence were collected for the first time in 2011/12.
- This does not contradict the fact that the proportion of absent sessions due to illness increased in 2013/14, as seen in [Table 9](#). The increase in the proportion of absent sessions due to illness meant that 59.5 per cent of all absences were due to illness in 2013/14, as opposed to 59.0 per cent in 2012/13. But since the percentage of half-day sessions missed due to overall absenteeism dropped in 2013/14, so did the percentage of half-day sessions missed due to illness.
- Along with illness, decreases were seen in 2013/14 in the percentage of half-day sessions missed due to medical or dental appointments, study leave, agreed family holiday, other authorised reasons and no reason for the absence provided yet. Although some reasons for absence saw increases, they were smaller than the decreases seen in the reasons for absence listed above, which is why there is a decrease in overall absence.
- While family holidays not authorised by the school rose by 0.1 percentage point in 2013/14, the percentage of half-day sessions missed due to agreed family holidays decreased by 0.2 percentage points. This suggests that fewer holidays were taken during term time in 2013/14 than in 2012/13.

### Accessing the data electronically

The data behind some of the charts and 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 *Education and skills > Schools and teachers > Absenteeism* on the following site:

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



Further data relating to these tables or attendance data for individual schools is available on request; please e-mail [school.stats@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:school.stats@wales.gsi.gov.uk).

School level data is also available on My Local School (Updated in early 2015)

[mylocalschool.wales.gov.uk](http://mylocalschool.wales.gov.uk)

The presentation of this release has been improved in order to aid interpretation of the data. Feedback would be welcome. Please e-mail any comments to [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 continues to be a key Ministerial priority. The development of the Attendance Analysis Framework has 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.

#### 1.2 Related Publications

A similar release relating to absenteeism from maintained primary, special and independent schools in Wales during the 2012/13 academic year entitled 'Absenteeism from Primary Schools, 2012/13' was released on 18 December 2013 and can be found here: <http://wales.gov.uk/statistics-and-research/absenteeism-secondary-schools/?lang=en>.

England publishes 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-2012-to-2013>.

Scotland publishes 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/facts-and-figures-new/education-statistics/32\\_statistics\\_and\\_research\\_-\\_statistics\\_on\\_education-pupil\\_attendance.htm](http://www.deni.gov.uk/index/facts-and-figures-new/education-statistics/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). School-level attendance data from independent schools are collected via a voluntary, paper-based survey. The same form is sent to maintained special schools via their local authorities and it is mandatory for special schools to respond. All collections are carried out by the Statistical Directorate 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 the late May bank holiday. 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 297 schools with pupils within these age groups in the 2013/14 academic year.

A new type of schools was created during the 2012/13 academic year, middle schools. These schools provide education for pupils of both primary and secondary school age. Data from middle schools are categorised as 'maintained schools' in this Statistical First Release, but only include data for pupils aged 11-15 (as on 31st August before the start of the academic year). As with data for other schools, secondary attendance data for middle schools cover the entire 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.

John Beddoes School in Powys closed on 10 April 2014 and pupils were moved to Newtown High School. Data for pupils' attendance while on roll at John Beddoes School was not available, but Newtown High School reported on their attendance after the transfer.

### 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 2013 to 25 December 2013.
- Spring term – from 26 December 2013 to 20 April 2014.
- Summer term – from 21 April 2014 to 23 May 2014.

### 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 2013/14 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 2013/14, most maintained secondary schools were open to pupils for 310 half-day sessions from the start of the academic year to the late May bank holiday.
- Twenty per cent of that figure equals 62 ( $310 \times 0.2 = 62$ ) half-day sessions.
- So a persistent absentee in 2013/14 was someone who was absent for at least 62 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 2013/14.

#### 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
2013/14	310	62

## 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.

### 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 and Skills in the Welsh Government.
- Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education and Training in Wales.
- The Department for Education in England.
- other government departments.
- local authorities and schools.
- Wales Audit Office.
- other areas of the Welsh Government.
- the research community.
- students, academics and universities.
- My Local School.
- 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.
- contributing 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.

With the aim of further improving the accuracy of the data a new stage in the validation process was implemented for the first time when collecting the 2011/12 data. A table was sent to each local authority containing a summary of the data for all of their maintained secondary schools which they were asked to check. A similar table was sent to local authorities for the first time in the 2013/14 data collection for local authorities to check their special schools' data. In the past a letter was sent to special schools directly to ask them to check a summary of their data. The same letter is still sent to independent schools.

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 27 May 2014, with maintained secondary schools asked to submit attendance data for every pupil aged between 5 and 15 on roll at the school from the start of September 2013 to the late May bank holiday in 2014. Special and independent schools were asked to submit attendance data for pupils aged between 11 and 15 on roll from the start of the 2013/14 academic year to the late May bank holiday. Schools and local authorities were then asked to validate their data within a validation period.

There were no major delays in the collection, validation and analysis of these data, meaning that this edition of the Statistical First Release was able to be published at the same time as the previous edition.

#### **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 and download data.

#### **4.5 Comparability**

Pupil-level absence data were 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. 285 schools (96.0 per cent) supplied gender data in 2013/14, compared to 290 schools (98.3 per cent) in 2012/13. 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.

In previous years absence rates for special and independent schools were calculated by dividing the number of half-day sessions absent by the number of half-day sessions that the school was open multiplied by the number of pupils on roll in the January Pupil-Level Annual School Census (PLASC) and multiplying this number by 100. In 2013/14 it was decided to use a more accurate calculation of absence percentages, dividing the number of half-day sessions absent by the total number of sessions that pupils were on roll in the school and multiplying by 100. Although schools were asked to provide the total number of sessions that pupils were on roll in the school, some only provided the number of half-day sessions that the school was open. For this reason, although 77 special and independent schools' absence percentages were calculated using the new method, 4 schools were calculated using the old method. In future data collections the Welsh Government will endeavour to make sure that all special and independent schools' absence percentages are calculated using the new, more accurate method. Because of the change in methodology, care should be taken when comparing special and independent schools' data between years.