

SDR 231/2011

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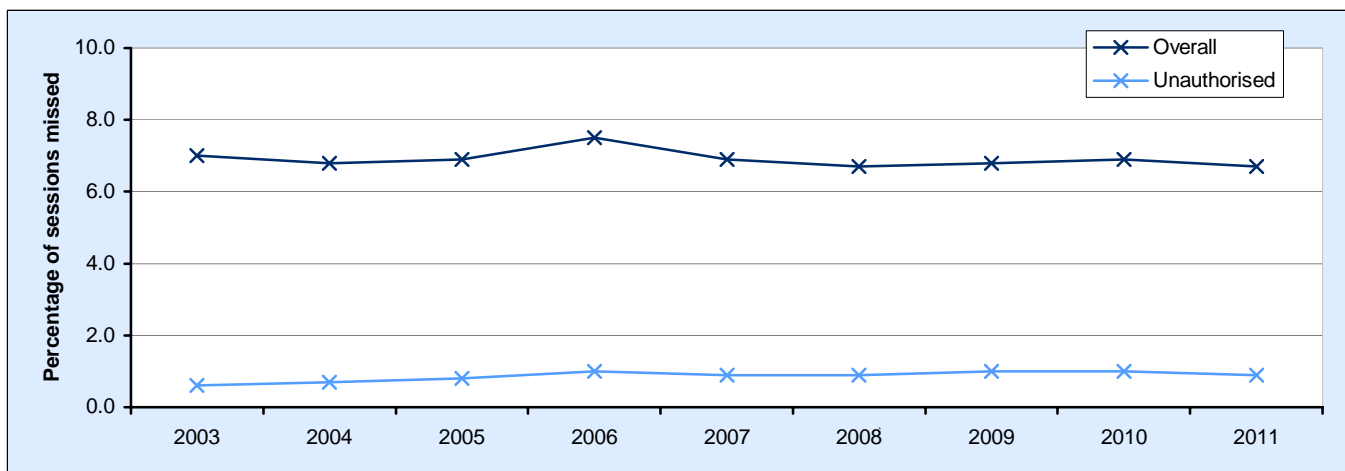
Absenteeism from Primary Schools, 2010/11

This annual Statistical First Release reports on absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age in maintained primary, special and independent schools in Wales. Information relates to the start academic year 2002/03 to 2010/11.

Key results

Following a peak in 2005/06, overall absence has been decreasing each year. Unauthorised absence has been stable at around 1.0 per cent since 2005/06.

Chart 1: Overall absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age



Overall absenteeism

- In 2010/11, 6.7 per cent of half-day sessions were missed in maintained primary, special and independent schools through authorised and unauthorised absence, a decrease of 0.2 percentage points from 2009/10 (Table 1).

Unauthorised absenteeism

- In 2010/11, 0.9 per cent of half-day sessions were missed in maintained primary, special and independent schools through unauthorised absence, a small decrease from 2009/10 (Table 2).

Distribution of absence in maintained primary schools

- Over 5,000 pupils (2.7 per cent) had no absence from school in 2010/11 (Table 6);
- Just under 400 pupils (0.2 per cent) had more than 50 per cent absence from school in 2010/11 (Table 7).

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Introduction

Chart 1 shows authorised and unauthorised absenteeism from primary schools in Wales since the 2002/03 academic year. The tables that follow break down the percentage of half-day sessions missed due to absenteeism by school type, gender, local authority and free school meal entitlement. Three new charts have been included in this statistical release: 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.

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Table 1: Overall absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age, by sector

	Percentage of school sessions missed							
	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Maintained Primary Schools	6.8	6.9	7.5	6.9	6.7	6.8	6.9	6.7
Special Schools	11.3	12.9	11.7	10.6	9.0	10.3	10.7	12.6
Independent Schools	4.5	4.3	5.1	4.5	4.7	5.3	4.9	5.3
Total	6.8	6.9	7.5	6.9	6.7	6.8	6.9	6.7

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh Assembly Government



- In 2010/11, 6.7 per cent of half-day sessions were missed due to authorised and unauthorised absence from maintained primary, special and independent schools, a decrease of 0.2 percentage points from 6.9 per cent in 2009/10 and the lowest that this value has been since 2007/08;
- Since 2003/04 special schools have had the highest rate of overall absence and independent schools have had the lowest rate, but because of the relatively small number of these schools compared to the number of maintained primary schools these schools do not significantly affect the total overall absence rate.

Table 2: Unauthorised absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age, by sector

	Percentage of school sessions missed							
	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Maintained Primary Schools	0.7	0.8	1.0	0.9	0.9	1.0	1.0	0.9
Special Schools	0.8	1.1	0.9	1.2	0.9	1.0	1.2	1.3
Independent Schools	0.4	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.2
Total	0.7	0.8	1.0	0.9	0.9	1.0	1.0	0.9

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh Assembly Government



- In 2010/11, 0.9 per cent of half-day sessions were missed due to unauthorised absence from maintained primary, special and independent schools, a decrease of 0.1 percentage points from 2009/10;
- Special schools have had the highest rate of unauthorised absence and independent schools the lowest rate since 2003/04, 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				
	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Number of schools providing gender information	1050	1569	1544	1524	1512
Percentage of schools providing gender information	65.9	99.3	99.5	99.5	99.7
Unauthorised absences:					
Boys	0.9	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.9
Girls	0.9	0.9	1.0	0.9	0.9
All absences:					
Boys	7.0	6.7	6.8	7.0	6.8
Girls	7.0	6.7	6.8	6.9	6.7

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh Assembly Government

(a) It is not advisable to compare year on year changes for data on absenteeism by gender. Up to 2006/07 the data was supplied voluntarily and hence different schools responded each year. In 2007/08 it became compulsory for maintained primary schools to provide gender information, however it remains voluntary for special and independent schools.

- In 2010/11 girls had a lower rate of overall absenteeism than boys while both genders had the same rate of unauthorised absenteeism;
- Since 2006/07 the rates of overall and unauthorised absenteeism for boys and girls have been very similar, differing by no more than 0.1 percentage points.

Table 4: Absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age in all maintained primary schools, by proportion entitled to free school meals, 2010/11 (a)

Proportion entitled to free school meals (b)	Percentage of school sessions missed		Number of schools
	All absences	Unauthorised absences	
8% or less	5.2	0.3	358
16% or less, but over 8%	6.2	0.5	351
24% or less, but over 16%	6.9	0.9	284
32% or less, but over 24%	7.5	1.1	192
over 32%	8.4	2.0	256
All maintained schools	6.7	0.9	1,441

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record and PLASC, Welsh Assembly Government

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

(b) Free school meal boundaries have been changed to match those used in primary attendance benchmarking.

- Table 4 suggests that there is a relationship between the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals and the rate of absenteeism. It appears 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 primary

and special schools, by Local Authority

Local Authority	Percentage of school sessions missed due to:							
	All absences				Unauthorised absences			
	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Isle of Anglesey	6.0	6.1	6.2	6.5	0.6	0.6	0.5	0.7
Gwynedd	5.7	5.9	5.8	5.9	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.5
Conwy	6.0	6.0	6.1	5.8	0.7	0.8	0.8	0.8
Denbighshire	5.9	5.7	6.0	5.7	0.7	0.6	0.6	0.7
Flintshire	6.0	6.1	6.3	6.1	0.4	0.5	0.6	0.6
Wrexham	5.6	5.8	6.3	5.7	0.7	0.8	0.8	0.8
Powys	6.0	6.0	6.1	6.4	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.3
Ceredigion	5.9	5.8	5.6	5.7	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.6
Pembrokeshire	6.6	6.8	7.3	6.8	0.4	0.3	0.4	0.4
Carmarthenshire	6.8	6.9	7.1	6.9	0.7	0.6	0.6	0.5
Swansea	7.4	7.6	7.7	7.1	0.7	0.6	0.7	0.6
Neath Port Talbot	7.3	7.5	7.8	7.5	0.3	0.4	0.5	0.4
Bridgend	6.7	6.8	7.0	6.8	0.8	1.0	0.9	0.9
The Vale of Glamorgan	6.0	6.2	6.0	6.3	1.6	1.7	1.7	1.7
Rhondda, Cynon, Taf (a)	8.0	8.1	8.0	7.7	1.7	1.8	1.6	1.4
Merthyr Tydfil	7.8	8.3	8.1	7.6	1.0	1.2	0.9	0.6
Caerphilly	7.3	7.4	7.5	7.2	1.4	1.5	1.4	1.3
Blaenau Gwent	7.4	7.6	8.0	7.5	0.6	0.7	0.5	0.5
Torfaen	6.9	6.9	7.5	6.8	1.2	1.2	1.4	0.7
Monmouthshire	5.6	5.5	5.5	5.6	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.2
Newport	7.0	7.4	7.3	7.0	1.4	1.7	1.7	1.6
Cardiff	7.2	7.2	7.2	7.1	1.7	1.6	1.7	1.7
Wales (b)	6.7	6.8	6.9	6.7	0.9	1.0	1.0	0.9

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh Assembly Government

(a) In 2009/10 one maintained primary school in Rhondda, Cynon Taff was unable to provide attendance data because it was destroyed in a fire.

(b) Includes independent and special schools.



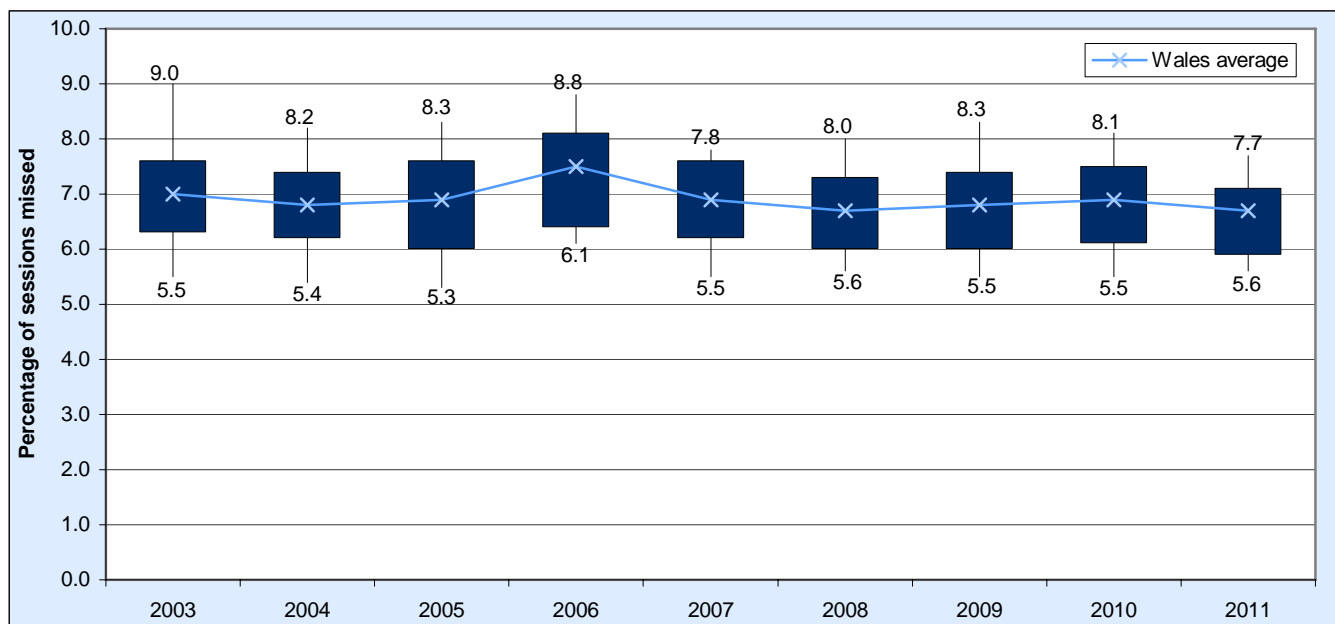
- In 2010/11 Rhondda Cynon Taf local authority had the highest rate of overall absenteeism from maintained primary and special schools (7.7 per cent), while Monmouthshire had the lowest rate (5.6 per cent);
- In 2010/11 the highest rate of unauthorised absence (1.7 per cent) was found in The Vale of Glamorgan and Cardiff, while Monmouthshire had the lowest rate of unauthorised absence (0.2 per cent).

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 2010/11 the lowest rate was 5.6 per cent and the highest rate was 7.7 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.

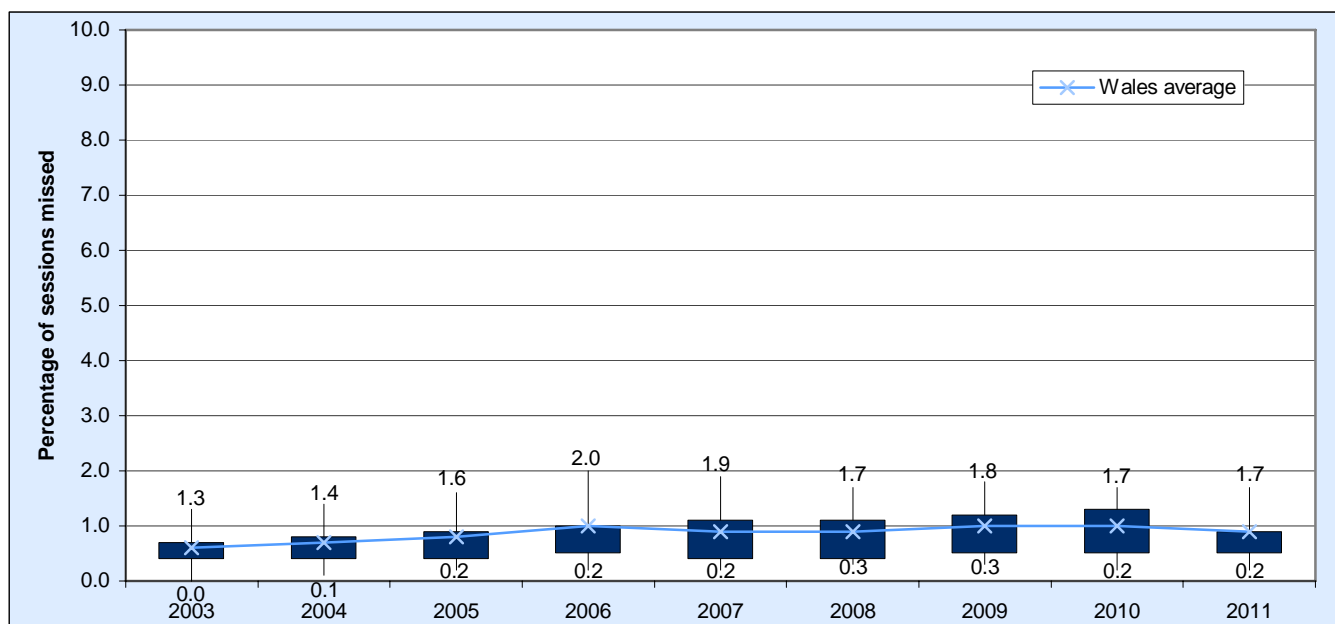


- In 2010/11 all local authorities had overall absenteeism rates of 7.7 per cent or under, the lowest upper limit for local authorities' overall primary absenteeism rates since the data were first collected in 2002/03;
- The lowest rate of overall absenteeism was 5.6 per cent in Monmouthshire and has increased by 0.1 percentage points since 2009/10, but in general the lowest rate has been stable since 2006/07.

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 2010/11 the lowest rate was 0.2 per cent and the highest rate was 1.7 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 2010/11 was 1.7 per cent, showing no change from 2009/10;
- In general the lowest local authority's rate of unauthorised absenteeism has remained stable since 2002/03;
- Although the upper and lower limits of local authorities' unauthorised absenteeism rates have not changed from 2009/10, three quarters of local authorities fall below the Wales average, the first time that this has happened since 2005/06.

Table 6: Distribution of pupils in maintained primary schools by length of overall absence, 2010/11

Number of days of overall absence	Pupils in schools during 2009/10		Percentage of overall absence
	Number	Percentage	
No absence	5,201	2.7	0.0
0.5 to 5 days	48,241	24.9	6.0
5.5 to 10 days	49,941	25.8	16.1
10.5 to 15 days	36,074	18.6	19.1
15.5 to 20 days	21,998	11.3	16.2
20.5 to 25 days	12,723	6.6	12.0
more than 25 days	19,707	10.2	30.6
Total	193,885	100.0	100.0

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh Assembly Government

- Over 5,000 pupils (2.7 per cent) had no absence from school in 2010/11, while just over 19,700 pupils (10.2 per cent) were absent for more than 25 days (5 school weeks).

Table 7: Distribution of pupils in maintained primary schools by their overall absence rates, 2010/11

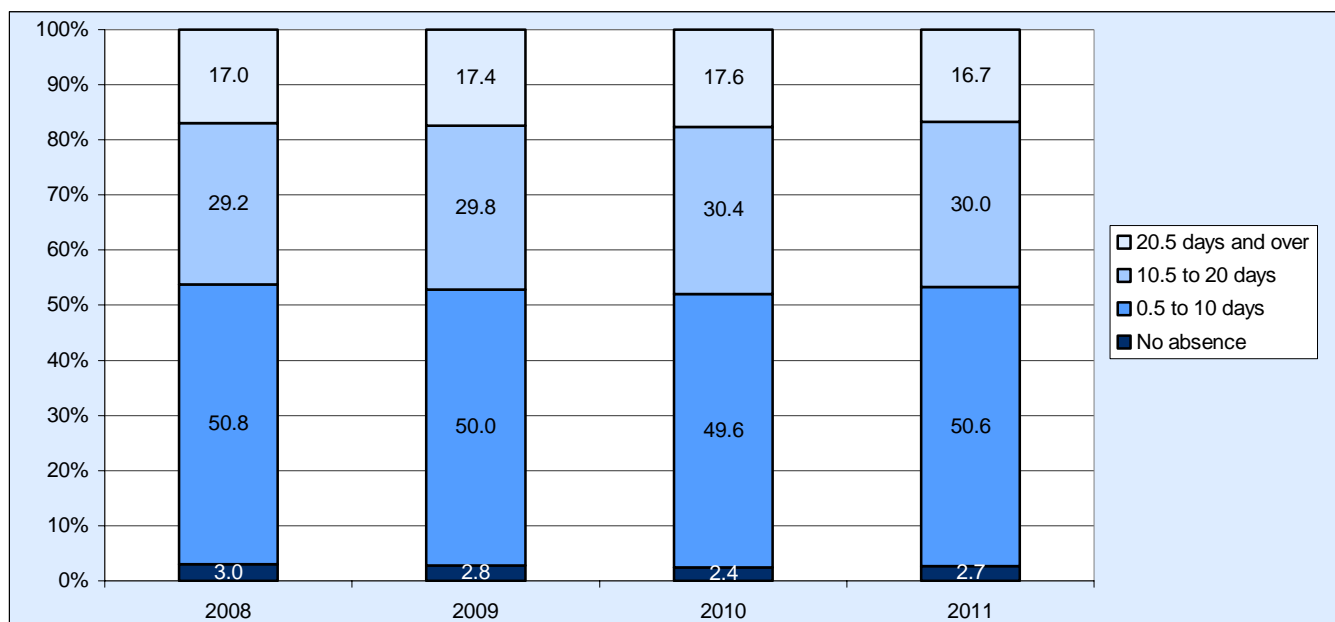
Overall absence rate	Pupils in schools during 2009/10		Percentage of overall absence
	Number	Percentage	
0%	5,201	2.7	0.0
Over 0%, but 4% at most	68,885	35.5	11.6
Over 4%, but 6% at most	36,389	18.8	14.0
Over 6%, but 10% at most	44,138	22.8	26.7
Over 10%, but 20% at most	32,124	16.6	33.3
Over 20%, but 30% at most	5,143	2.7	9.1
Over 30%, but 50% at most	1,618	0.8	4.1
Over 50%	387	0.2	1.2
Total	193,885	100.0	100.0

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh Assembly Government

- Just under 400 pupils were absent for more than half the time that they were on roll at a maintained primary school.

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

Chart 4 groups all pupils attending maintained primary 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 2010/11. 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 over 20.5 days. We can only produce this chart for the last four years as the necessary data is not available before that.



- There has been very little change in the proportion of pupils in each group over the past three years, but in 2010/11 there were higher percentages of pupils that had no absence or 0.5 to 10 days of absence than 2009/10, 2.7 and 50.6 per cent respectively;
- In 2010/11 16.7 per cent of pupils were absent for over 20 days, which is lower than previous years.

Table 8: Absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age in all maintained primary schools: comparison with England (a) (b)

	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
Overall absence			
Wales	6.7	6.8	6.9
England (c)	5.3	5.3	5.2
Unauthorised absence			
Wales	0.9	1.0	1.0
England (c)	0.6	0.6	0.7

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh Government
Department for Education

(a) The latest data available for maintained primary schools in England are for 2009/10, so a comparison between England and Wales for 2010/11 is not possible yet.

(b) England data relate to the period September to the late May bank holiday. Wales data relate to the whole academic year.

(c) Figures exclude City Technology Colleges and Academies.

- England's rate of overall absence continues to be lower than that of Wales and the gap between the two rates widened from 2008/09 to 2009/10;
- England have a lower rate of unauthorised absence than Wales, but the gap narrowed from 2008/09 to 2009/10.

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



Tables 4, 6 and 7 are based on data not available on StatsWales. For further data relating to these tables or attendance data for individual schools please email 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.

The Welsh Government expects schools and Local Authorities to take a proactive approach to promoting high levels of attendance and following up pupils with poor attendance at an early stage.

1.2 Related Publications

A similar release relating to absenteeism from maintained secondary, special and independent schools in Wales during the 2010/11 academic year entitled 'Absenteeism from Secondary Schools, 2010/11' was released on 6 September 2011 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: <http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/index.shtml>

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

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 Statistical Directorate within the Welsh Government.

Attendance data for England were taken from the following statistical releases:

- [SFR03/2011 Pupil Absence in Schools in England, Including Pupil Characteristics: 2009/10](#) (Table 1.1)

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 for the whole academic year. Pupils of compulsory school age (5-15) registered at maintained primary schools and pupils aged 5-10 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 1,517 schools with pupils within these age groups in the 2010/11 academic year.

The free school meal data is 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 Missing Data

".." means that the data item is not applicable.

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 included in the Welsh Government's attendance data collection for the first time this year. 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 will no longer adversely affect either schools' or Local Authorities' attendance percentages.

4.3 Timeliness and Punctuality

DEWi was available for uploading files from the end of the academic year, with maintained primary schools asked to submit attendance data for every pupil aged between 5 and 15 on roll during the 2010/11 academic year. Schools and Local Authorities were then asked to validate their data within the validation period, which closed on 23 September 2011. Special and independent schools were asked to submit attendance data for pupils aged between 5 and 10 on roll during the 2010/11 academic year by 23 June 2011 and were then sent a summary of their school's data for validation and verification.

Improvements in the data collection method and procedures, along with the help of colleagues in Local Authorities and schools, have resulted in us being able to bring forward the publication of this Statistical First Release by two months since 2009.

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 were collected from maintained primary 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 2002/03 primary 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 primary schools to provide gender information whilst remaining voluntary for special and independent schools. In 2010/11 1,512 schools (99.7%) supplied gender data, compared to 1,524 schools (99.5%) in 2009/10. 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.