

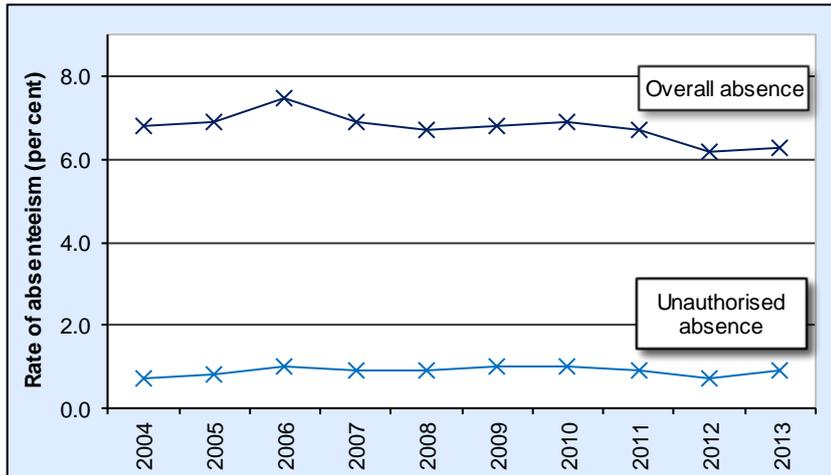
SDR 221/2013

18 December 2013

Absenteeism from primary schools, 2012/13

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 entire academic year, from 2003/04 to 2012/13.

Chart 1: Absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age, 2003/04 to 2012/13



6.3% overall absence from primary schools.

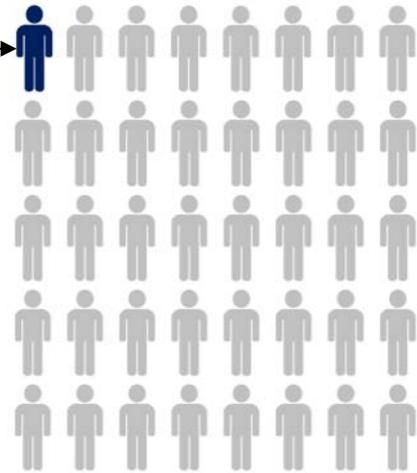
0.9% unauthorised absence from primary schools.

↑ overall and unauthorised absenteeism increased slightly.

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

Persistent absenteeism ([Table 8](#))

Just under **1 in 40** pupils were persistent absentees in primary schools (or 2.4%).



Other key points ([Tables 8](#) and [10](#))

- ↑ Absence due to illness increases.
- This increase had the biggest effect on the rise in absenteeism in 2012/13.
- ↓ Persistent absenteeism continues to decrease.

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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). And Tables 9 and 10 report on the reasons for absence in 2011/12 and 2012/13. 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.

Charts 1 displays the percentage of half-day sessions missed due to overall and unauthorised absenteeism from maintained primary, special and independent schools from 2003/04. Charts 2 and 3 show how the range 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. Chart 4 groups pupils by their rates of absence and shows how these groups have changed over time.

New for 2012/13, Maps 1 and 2 give a visual representation of Welsh local authorities' rates of overall and unauthorised absence for the 2012/13 academic year.

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

	Percentage of school sessions missed									
	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
LA Maintained Primary Schools	6.8	6.9	7.5	6.9	6.7	6.8	6.9	6.7	6.1	6.3
Special Schools	11.3	12.9	11.7	10.6	9.0	10.3	10.7	12.6	10.8	9.9
Independent Schools	4.5	4.3	5.1	4.5	4.7	5.3	4.9	5.3	4.9	5.0
Total	6.8	6.9	7.5	6.9	6.7	6.8	6.9	6.7	6.2	6.3

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh Government

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



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

	Percentage of school sessions missed									
	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
LA Maintained Primary Schools	0.7	0.8	1.0	0.9	0.9	1.0	1.0	0.9	0.8	0.9
Special Schools	0.8	1.1	0.9	1.2	0.9	1.0	1.2	1.3	0.9	0.6
Independent Schools	0.4	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2	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	0.7	0.9

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh Government

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



Key points

6.3% overall absence from primary schools.

0.9% unauthorised absence from secondary schools.



Overall and unauthorised absence increased slightly.



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

- In 2012/13, 6.3 per cent of half-day sessions were missed due to overall absence (which includes both authorised and unauthorised absences) from maintained primary, special and independent schools. The rate of unauthorised absence from maintained primary, special and independent schools was 0.9 per cent.
- As can be seen from [Tables 1 and 2](#), and [Chart 1](#) on the front page, overall absenteeism and unauthorised absenteeism increased between the 2011/12 and 2012/13 academic years. The data show that following peaks in 2005/06, overall absence peaked in 2009/10 and unauthorised absence peaked in 2008/09 and 2009/10, and had been decreasing in the two years that followed. This small increase therefore shows a change in the trend of the data. However, when looked at over ten years there has still been a decrease in overall absence, from 6.8 per cent of half-day sessions in 2003/04 to 6.3 per cent in 2012/13.
- An analysis into possible reasons for the increases in overall and unauthorised absence can be seen in the commentary for [Tables 9](#) and [10](#).

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	1,544	1,524	1,512	1,474	1,433
Percentage of schools providing gender information	99.5	99.5	99.7	99.5	99.7
Overall absence					
Boys	6.8	7.0	6.8	6.2	6.3
Girls	6.8	6.9	6.7	6.1	6.3
Unauthorised absence					
Boys	1.0	1.0	0.9	0.8	0.9
Girls	1.0	0.9	0.9	0.7	0.8

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



Overall absence was the same for boys and girls.



Boys had higher unauthorised absence than girls.

- Since 2009/10 boys have had a higher rate of overall absence than girls in maintained primary, special and independent schools, but in 2012/13 the rates equalised with boys and girls both missing 6.3 per cent of half-day sessions.
- As in 2011/12, boys had a higher rate of unauthorised absence than girls in 2012/13.

Table 4: Absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age in all maintained primary 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	
8% or less	5.0	0.4	310
16% or less, but over 8%	5.7	0.5	345
24% or less, but over 16%	6.4	0.8	241
32% or less, but over 16%	7.0	1.0	205
over 32%	7.7	1.7	275
All maintained schools	6.3	0.9	1,376

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 primary and special schools, by local authority (a)

Local Authority	Percentage of school sessions missed due to:							
	Overall absence				Unauthorised absence			
	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Isle of Anglesey	6.2	6.5	5.7	5.6	0.5	0.7	0.6	0.6
Gwynedd	5.8	5.9	5.4	5.7	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.4
Conwy	6.1	5.8	5.5	5.9	0.8	0.8	0.7	0.8
Denbighshire	6.0	5.7	5.5	5.7	0.6	0.7	0.6	0.6
Flintshire	6.3	6.1	5.5	5.9	0.6	0.6	0.4	0.5
Wrexham	6.3	5.7	5.4	5.9	0.8	0.8	0.7	0.7
Powys	6.1	6.4	5.4	5.8	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.2
Ceredigion	5.6	5.7	5.1	5.7	0.5	0.6	0.5	0.6
Pembrokeshire	7.3	6.8	6.1	6.5	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.3
Carmarthenshire	7.1	6.9	6.3	6.5	0.6	0.5	0.4	0.4
Swansea	7.7	7.1	6.7	7.0	0.7	0.6	0.5	0.6
Neath Port Talbot	7.8	7.5	7.0	7.0	0.5	0.4	0.3	0.3
Bridgend	7.0	6.8	6.3	6.5	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.8
The Vale of Glamorgan	6.0	6.3	5.5	5.8	1.7	1.7	1.1	1.0
Rhondda, Cynon, Taff	8.0	7.7	6.9	6.6	1.6	1.4	1.0	0.9
Merthyr Tydfil	8.1	7.6	7.1	6.7	0.9	0.6	0.2	0.2
Caerphilly	7.5	7.2	6.9	6.8	1.4	1.3	1.1	1.0
Blaenau Gwent	8.0	7.5	6.9	6.9	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.5
Torfaen	7.5	6.8	6.0	6.4	1.4	0.7	0.9	1.3
Monmouthshire	5.5	5.6	5.3	5.6	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
Newport	7.3	7.0	6.6	7.0	1.7	1.6	1.5	1.8
Cardiff	7.2	7.1	6.4	6.0	1.7	1.7	1.4	2.0
Wales (b)	6.9	6.7	6.2	6.3	1.0	0.9	0.7	0.9

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh Government

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

(b) Includes independent schools.



Key points

Overall absence

7.0% the highest rate of overall absence.

5.6% the lowest rate of overall absence.

Unauthorised absence

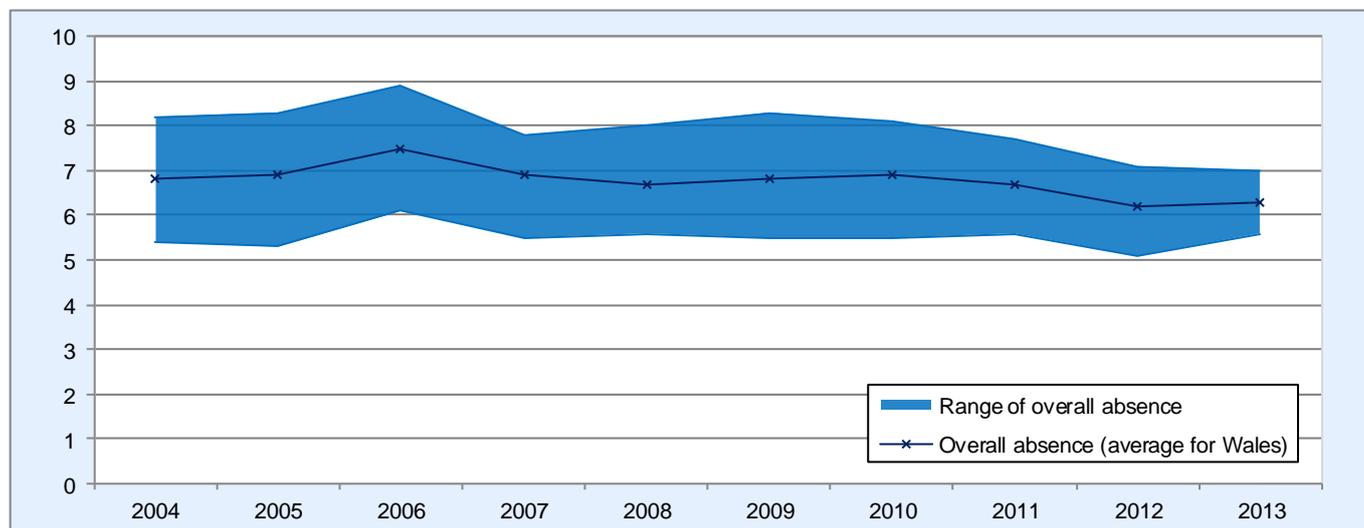
2.0% the highest unauthorised absence rate.

0.2% the lowest unauthorised absence rate.

- In 2012/13 Neath Port Talbot, Swansea and Newport had the highest rate of overall absenteeism from maintained primary and special schools (7.0 per cent), while Isle of Anglesey and Monmouthshire had the lowest rate (5.6 per cent).
- In 2012/13 the highest rate of unauthorised absence (2.0 per cent) was found in Cardiff, while Powys, Merthyr Tydfil and 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 '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



The highest rate of overall absence continues to fall.

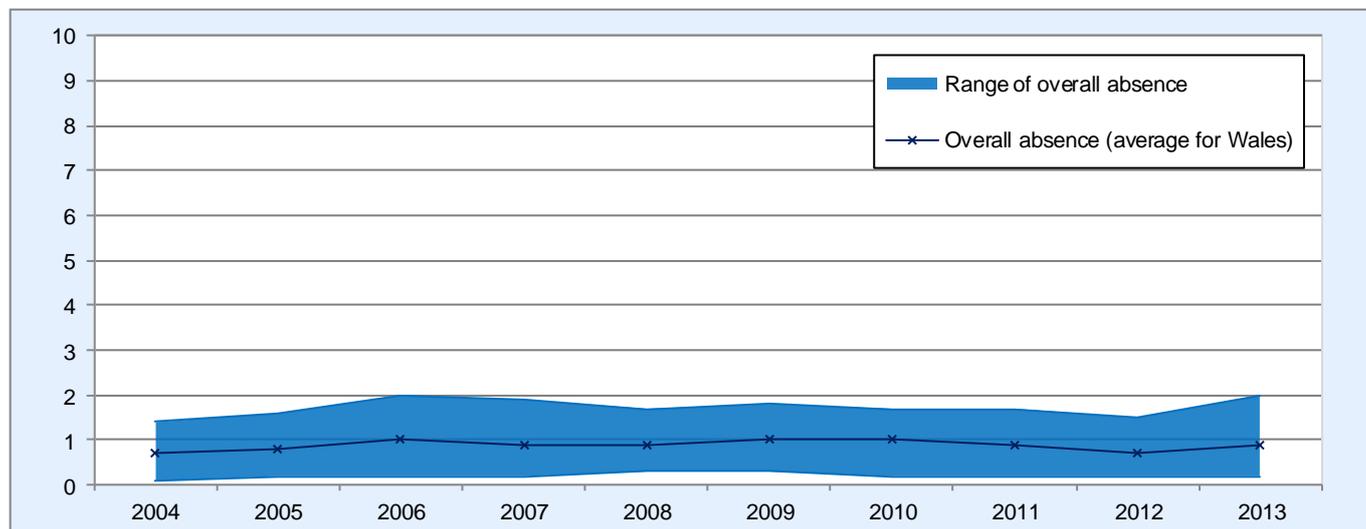


The lowest rate of overall absence increased.

- Although the most recent peak in overall absence for Wales was in 2009/10, the highest rate of overall absence in local authorities has been decreasing since 2008/09 and this trend continued in 2012/13.
- In 2011/12 the lowest rate of overall absence in local authorities reached its lowest value in ten years, but in 2012/13 the lowest rate increased back to 5.6 per cent. This can be seen by the fact that the bottom of the blue bar in [Chart 2](#) increased between 2011/12 and 2012/13.

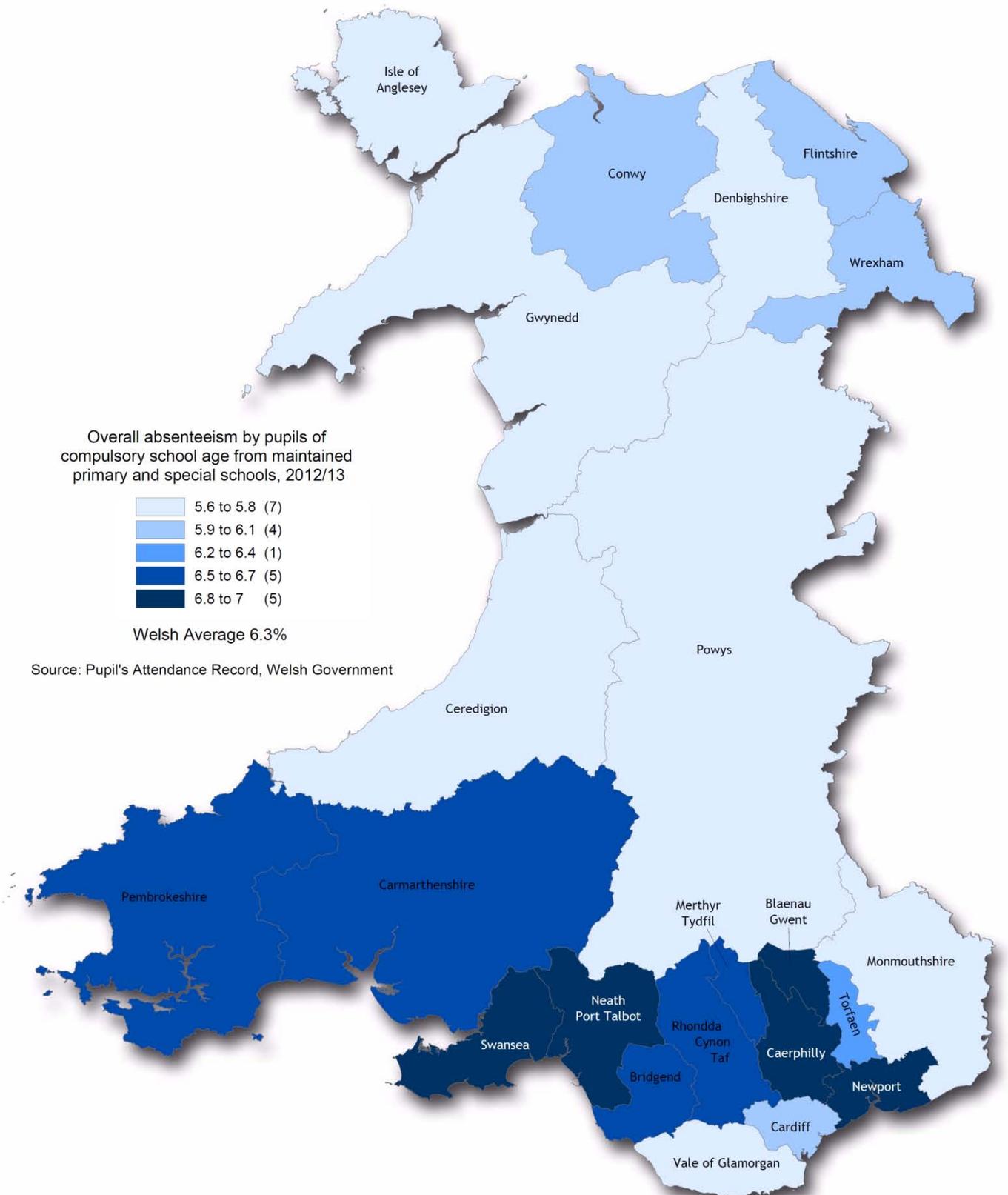
Chart 3: Range of local authorities' rates of unauthorised absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age

[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 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 rose to 2.0 per cent in 2012/13, which is the highest that this value has been since 2005/06.
- The lowest rate of unauthorised absence has been stable at 0.2 per cent since 2009/10 and this continues to be the case in 2012/13.

Overall Absenteeism - Wales



Unauthorised Absenteeism - Wales

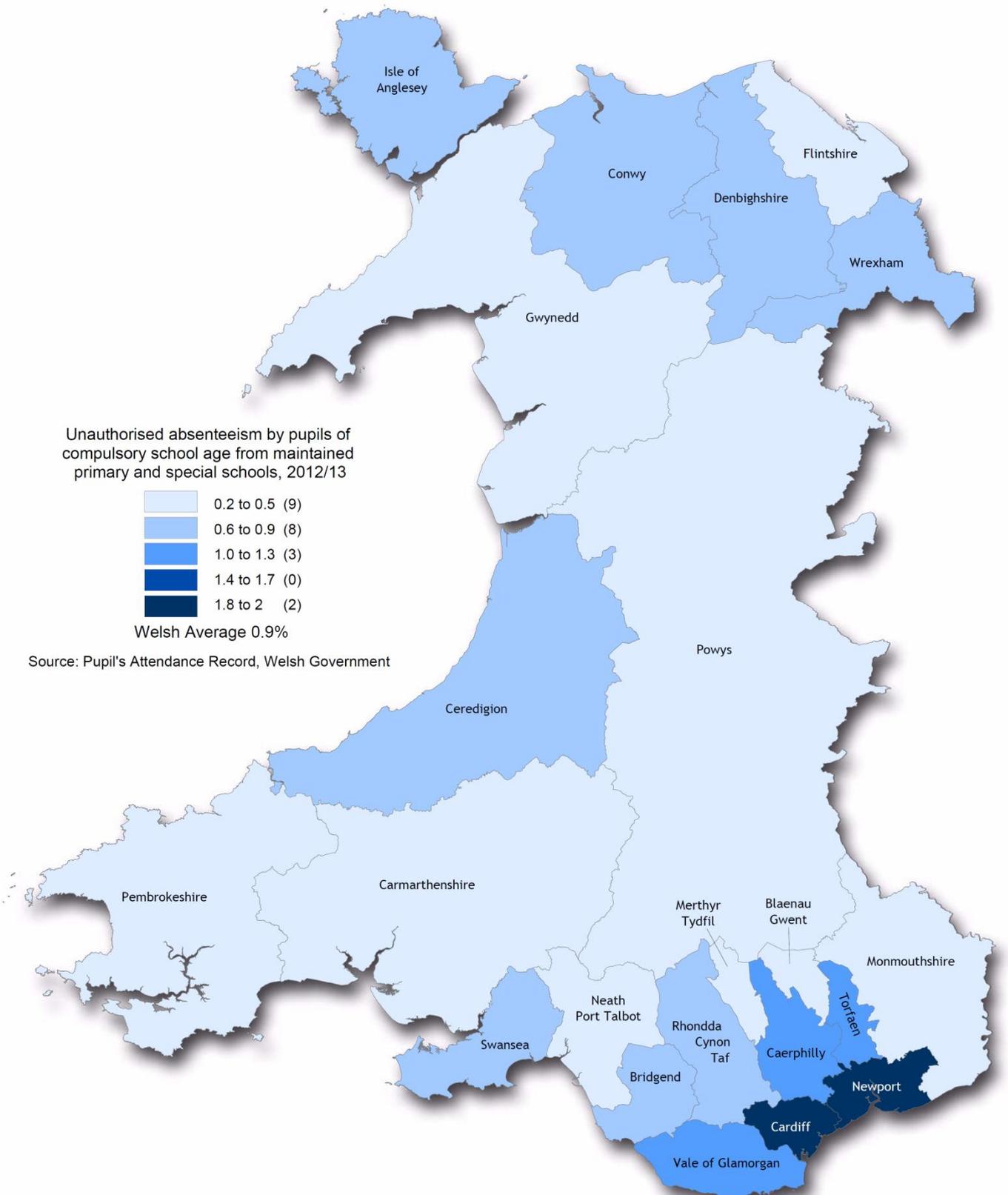


Table 6: Distribution of pupils in maintained primary schools by length of overall absence, 2012/13

Number of days of overall absence	Pupils in schools during 2012/13		Percentage of overall absence
	Number	Percentage	
No absence	5,777	2.9	0.0
0.5 to 5 days	50,588	25.7	6.5
5.5 to 10 days	51,533	26.1	17.2
10.5 to 15 days	36,975	18.8	20.2
15.5 to 20 days	22,493	11.4	17.1
20.5 to 25 days	12,577	6.4	12.3
more than 25 days	17,170	8.7	26.7
Total	197,113	100.0	100.0

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh Government

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

Overall absence rate	Pupils in schools during 2012/13		Percentage of overall absence
	Number	Percentage	
0%	5,777	2.9	0.0
Over 0%, but 4% at most	74,187	37.6	13.2
Over 4%, but 6% at most	35,348	17.9	14.2
Over 6%, but 10% at most	45,592	23.1	28.5
Over 10%, but 20% at most	30,748	15.6	32.8
Over 20%, but 30% at most	4,025	2.0	7.3
Over 30%, but 50% at most	1,125	0.6	2.9
Over 50%	311	0.2	1.0
Total	197,113	100.0	100.0

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh Government

Key points

197,113 number of pupils in maintained primary schools.

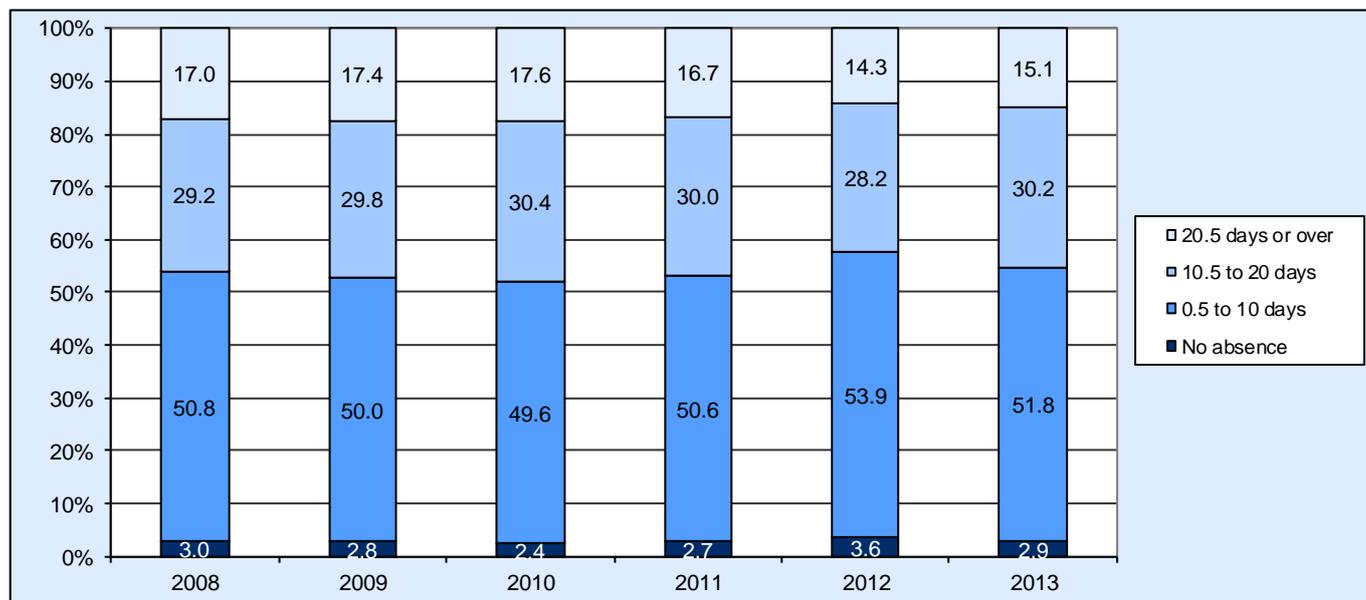
8.7% percentage of pupils absent for more than 25 days (17,170 pupils).

2.9% percentage of pupils with no absence (5,777 pupils).

- Of the 197,113 pupils who were reported to be in attendance at maintained primary schools during the 2012/13 academic year, just under 5,800 pupils (2.9 per cent) had no absence from school in 2012/13 and a little under 17,200 pupils (8.7 per cent) were absent for more than 25 days, or 5 school weeks.
- Just over 300 pupils were absent for more than half the time that they were on roll at a maintained primary 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 primary schools please see [Table 8](#).

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 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 20.5 days or over. We can only produce this chart for the last six years as the necessary data are not available before that.



Key points

- ↓ The percentage of pupils with no absence decreased.
- ↑ The percentage of pupils absent for 20.5 days or over increased.

- The percentage of pupils with no absence from maintained primary schools decreased by 0.6 percentage points, from 3.6 per cent in 2011/12 to 2.9 per cent in 2012/13. Despite this decrease, the percentage of pupils with no absence is still higher than it was in 2010/11.
- The percentage of pupils absent for at most 10 days reached its highest point in five years in 2011/12 but in 2012/13 it decreased by 2.7 percentage points to 51.8 per cent of pupils. Again, this value is still higher than it was in 2010/11.
- In 2012/13 the percentage of pupils absent for 20.5 days or over increased to 15.1 per cent.
- In summary, the percentage of pupils with low absence decreased in 2012/13, while the percentage of pupils with high absence increased.

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

	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Number of pupils who are persistent absentees	7,311	6,749	7,186	6,456	5,137	4,778
Total number of pupils	199,673	196,895	194,337	193,885	194,897	197,113
Percentage of pupils who are persistent absentees	3.7	3.4	3.7	3.3	2.6	2.4
Percentage of half days missed by persistent absentees due to:						
Authorised absence	20.4	20.3	20.2	20.1	20.8	20.3
Unauthorised absence	8.2	8.2	7.7	7.8	7.1	7.4
Overall absence	28.7	28.5	28.0	27.9	27.9	27.7
Percentage of all pupils' absence for which persistent absentees were responsible:						
Authorised absence	12.9	11.9	12.5	11.5	10.2	9.0
Unauthorised absence	32.3	28.9	29.4	28.7	24.6	20.8
Overall absence	15.6	14.3	14.9	13.8	11.9	10.6

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 2012/13 this means that persistent absentees in primary schools missed at least 76 half-day sessions. See the Notes section for a more detailed description.

Key points

197,113 number of pupils in maintained primary schools.

4,778 number of persistent absentees (2.4 per cent).



Percentage of persistent absentees decreased.

- Following a peak of 3.7 per cent in 2009/10, the percentage of persistent absentees in maintained primary schools has been falling. In 2012/13 this value dropped to 2.4 per cent, the lowest that it has been since it first became possible to evaluate persistent absenteeism in 2007/08.
- During the 2011/12 academic year 25.4 per cent of persistent absentees' absence was unauthorised (calculated by dividing persistent absentees' unauthorised absence, 7.1 per cent, by their overall absence rate, 27.9 per cent). In 2012/13 this value was higher, with 26.7 per cent of persistent absentees' absence not being authorised by the school.
- The percentage of absence for which persistent absentees were responsible is the lowest that it has been since the records began. This is due to the fact that both the percentage of persistent absentees in maintained primary schools and their absence rates have been decreasing over time.
- This may seem to contradict the analysis made for [Chart 4](#), which said that the percentage of pupils with lower absence has been decreasing and the percentage of pupils with higher absence has been increasing, but that is not the case. In 2012/13 pupils in maintained primary schools were considered to be persistent absentees if they were absent for at least 76 half-day session, or 38 days. Persistent absentees are therefore a group that fall within the '20.5 days or over' category. So while the percentage of persistent absentees (who were absent for 38 days or over) has decreased, the percentage of pupils absent for between 20.5 days and 37.5 days has increased.
- The data therefore suggest that persistent absenteeism isn't responsible for the increases in overall and unauthorised absence seen in 2012/13. For an analysis of the possible reasons for these increases please see [Tables 9](#) and [10](#).

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

Type of absence	Code	Reason for absence	2011/12	2012/13
Authorised	I	Illness	51.7	56.9
	M	Medical or dental appointments	10.2	6.2
	R	Religious observance	0.2	0.2
	S	Study leave	0.1	-
	T	Traveller absence	0.5	0.5
	H	Agreed family holiday	19.3	17.0
	F	Agreed extended family holiday	0.6	0.3
	E	Excluded, but no alternative provision made	0.3	0.3
	C	Other authorised (not covered by other codes or descriptions)	4.8	5.0
			Total authorised absence	87.7
Unauthorised	G	Family holiday (not agreed or sessions in excess of agreement)	1.3	3.1
	U	Late (arrived after the register closed)	1.1	0.9
	O	Other unauthorised (not covered by other codes or descriptions)	7.7	7.7
	N	No reason for the absence provided yet	2.2	1.9
		Total unauthorised absence	12.3	13.6
Overall		Total overall absence	100.0	100.0

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh Government

Key points

56.9% of absence was due to illness.

17.3% of absence was due to all family holidays agreed by the school.

3.1% of absence was due to holidays *not* agreed by the school.

- While the proportion of absence accounted for by medical or dental appointments decreased in 2012/13, the proportion accounted for by illness increased by 5.2 percentage points to 56.9 per cent. Illness is still the most common reason for absence in maintained primary schools.
- In 2011/12 19.9 per cent of absence was due to all family holidays authorised by the school, whereas in 2012/13 all family holidays authorised by the school only accounted for 17.3 per cent of absence.
- The proportion of absence due to family holidays not agreed by the school increased from 1.3 per cent in 2011/12 to 3.1 per cent in 2012/13.
- Illness and holidays appear to be the reasons for absence most affecting the rises in overall and unauthorised absence in 2012/13. This can be seen more clearly in [Table 10](#).

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

Type of absence	Code	Reason for absence	2011/12	2012/13
Authorised	I	Illness	3.2	3.6
	M	Medical or dental appointments	0.6	0.4
	R	Religious observance	-	-
	S	Study leave	-	-
	T	Traveller absence	-	-
	H	Agreed family holiday	1.2	1.1
	F	Agreed extended family holiday	-	-
	E	Excluded, but no alternative provision made	-	-
	C	Other authorised (not covered by other codes or descriptions)	0.3	0.3
	Total authorised absence			5.4
Unauthorised	G	Family holiday (not agreed or sessions in excess of agreement)	0.1	0.2
	U	Late (arrived after the register closed)	0.1	0.1
	O	Other unauthorised (not covered by other codes or descriptions)	0.5	0.5
	N	No reason for the absence provided yet	0.1	0.1
Total unauthorised absence			0.8	0.9
Overall	Total overall absence		6.1	6.3

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh Government

Key points



Increase in absence due to illness.



Slight decrease in absence due to agreed family holidays.



Slight increase in unauthorised family holidays.

- In 2012/13 the percentage of half-day sessions missed from maintained primary schools due to illness increased by 0.4 percentage points to 3.6 per cent.
- The percentage of half-day sessions missed due to medical or dental appointments or agreed family holidays decreased by 0.2 and 0.1 percentage points respectively, which adds up to a combined decrease of 0.3 percentage points.
- Because the increase in absence due to illness was larger than the decrease in absence for other authorised reasons, the total authorised absence increased. So the increase in authorised absence in 2012/13 was because of the increase in half-day sessions missed due to illness. The outbreak of Measles in the spring term, reported in the media, could have been a possible reason for this. Other outbreaks of sickness would also have had an affect on the increase.
- As can be seen in [Table 10](#), although the percentage of half-day sessions missed due to agreed family holidays decreased by 0.1 percentage points, the percentage missed due to family holidays not agreed by the school increased by 0.1 percentage points. Since the percentage of sessions missed for other unauthorised reasons remained the same, the increase in unauthorised absence was because of the increase in unauthorised family holidays.
- For both 2011/12 and 2012/13 the percentage of sessions missed due to holidays (both agreed and not agreed) was 1.3 per cent, so it does not seem that the amount of holidays taken has changed. What has changed is the proportion of holidays that were either agreed by the school or not. In 2012/13 some schools stopped authorising holidays during school time. It is therefore possible that the increase in unauthorised absence is related to this decision.

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



Further data relating to these tables or attendance data for individual schools is available on request; please email school.stats@wales.gsi.gov.uk.

School level data is also available on My Local School (Updated in early 2014)

<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 email any comments to 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 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.

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 secondary, special and independent schools in Wales during the 2012/13 academic year entitled 'Absenteeism from Secondary Schools, 2012/13' was released on 10 September 2013 and can be found here: <http://wales.gov.uk/statistics-and-research/absenteeism-secondary-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/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), 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.

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 of the 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 1,438 schools with pupils within these age groups in the 2012/13 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 5-10 (as on 31st August before the start of the academic year). As with data for other schools, primary 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.

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 31 August 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 2012/13 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 primary schools were open to pupils for 378 half-day sessions.
- Twenty per cent of that figure equals 75.6 ($378 * 0.2 = 75.6$) 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, 76.
- So a persistent absentee in 2012/13 was someone who was absent for at least 76 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	374	75
2008/09	376	76
2009/10	368	74
2010/11	372	75
2011/12	372	75
2012/13	378	76

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 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;
- 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;
- 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.

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 primary schools which they were asked to check.

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 23 July 2013, with maintained primary schools asked to submit attendance data for every pupil aged between 5 and 15 on roll at the school during the 2012/13 academic year. Schools and local authorities were then asked to validate their data within a validation period. Special and independent schools were asked to submit attendance data for pupils aged between 5 and 10 on roll during the 2012/13 academic year and were then sent a summary of their school's data for validation and verification.

Because of the change to attendance code and term-level data during the 2011/12 academic year the data validation took longer than in previous years. This was not an issue for the 2012/13 data collection, but the change in software required by middle schools meant that it took longer than expected to receive the data. Despite this delay, this edition of the Statistical First Release was able to be published five weeks earlier than in 2011/12.

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 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. 1,433 schools (99.7%) supplied gender data in 2012/13, compared to 1,474 schools (99.5%) 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.

One special school in Denbighshire, one special school in Torfaen and five special schools in Cardiff did not respond to the data collection. This means that none of the special schools in Torfaen or Cardiff from which the Welsh Government expected data responded. Caution should be used when comparing local authority data because not all special schools provide data every year.