

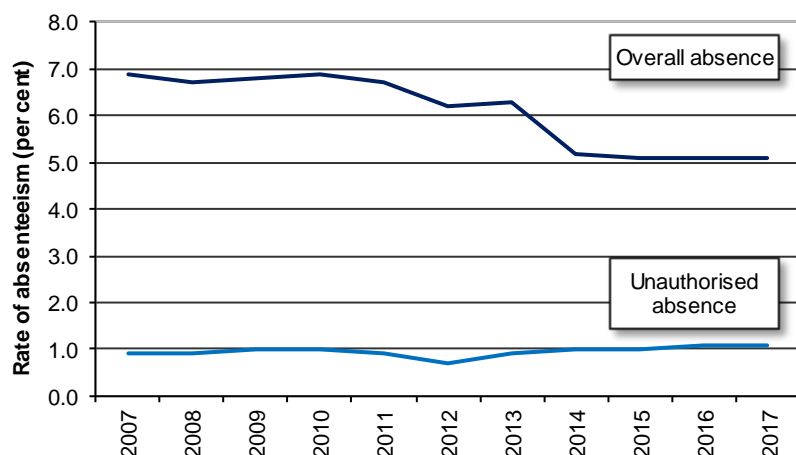


Absenteeism from primary schools, 2016/17

14 Dec 2017
SFR 183/2017

This annual Statistical First Release reports on absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age in maintained primary, middle and special schools and independent schools in Wales. Information relates to the entire academic year, from 2006/07 to 2016/17.

Chart 1: Absenteeism by primary school pupils of compulsory school age, 2006/07 to 2016/17



In general, **overall absence** has been decreasing since 2006/07.

In 2016/17 the rate of overall absenteeism remained at **5.1 per cent**.

Unauthorised absence has increased since 2011/12.

In 2016/17 the rate of unauthorised absenteeism remained at **1.1 per cent**.



Just over 1 in 70 pupils were persistent absentees from primary schools in 2016/17 (or 1.5 per cent).

- In general, persistent absenteeism has been falling since 2008/09. The number of persistent absentees in primary schools in 2016/17 was less than half what it was in 2008/09. A persistent absentee is a pupil who missed at least 20 per cent of half-day sessions that schools were open (a detailed explanation can be found in the [Definitions](#) section).
- Illness was the most common reason for absence in primary schools in 2016/17.

About this release

This release covers overall and unauthorised absenteeism from primary schools, including a breakdown by reason for absence. It also reports on persistent absentees in primary schools.

Data are shown for Wales and at local authority/consortium level.

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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, and amount of absence. [Table 8](#) reports on the number of pupils who are considered persistent absentees (a definition of persistent absenteeism can be found in the [Definitions](#) section). [Tables 9](#) and [10](#) report on the reasons for absence from 2011/12 to 2016/17.

[Chart 1](#) displays the percentage of half-day sessions missed due to overall and unauthorised absenteeism from maintained primary, special and independent schools from 2006/07. [Chart 2](#) 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. [Charts 5](#) and [6](#) 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.

Maps 1 and 2 give a visual representation of Welsh local authorities' rates of overall and unauthorised absence for the 2016/17 academic year.

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



School type	Percentage of half-day sessions missed										
	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
All maintained schools	6.9	6.7	6.8	7.0	6.7	6.2	6.3	5.2	5.1	5.1	5.1
Primary schools	6.9	6.7	6.8	6.9	6.7	6.1	6.3	5.2	5.1	5.1	5.1
Middle schools	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	5.3	4.7	4.9	5.3
Special schools	10.6	9.0	10.3	10.7	12.6	10.8	9.9	9.2	9.0	9.4	8.9
Independent schools	4.5	4.7	5.3	4.9	5.3	4.9	5.0	4.0	4.0	4.1	3.7
Total	6.9	6.7	6.8	6.9	6.7	6.2	6.3	5.2	5.1	5.1	5.1

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh Government

(a) Figures do not include data for 16 independent schools that did not respond to the survey.

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



School type	Percentage of half-day sessions missed										
	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
All maintained schools	0.9	0.9	1.0	1.0	0.9	0.8	0.9	1.0	1.0	1.1	1.1
Primary schools	0.9	0.9	1.0	1.0	0.9	0.8	0.9	1.0	1.0	1.1	1.1
Middle schools	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	0.9	0.9	1.2	1.4
Special schools	1.2	0.9	1.0	1.2	1.3	0.9	0.6	1.1	0.8	0.8	0.8
Independent schools	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.2
Total	0.9	0.9	1.0	1.0	0.9	0.7	0.9	1.0	1.0	1.1	1.1

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh Government

(a) Figures do not include data for 15 independent schools that did not respond to the survey.

Key points

In 2016/17:

5.1% overall absence from primary schools.

1.1% unauthorised absence from primary schools.

▬ Overall absence remained the same in 2016/17.

↓ Overall absenteeism has been falling since 2006/07

- Overall absence remained the same in 2016/17. The rate of overall absence (which includes both authorised and unauthorised absences) from maintained primary, special and independent schools rose in 2012/13, mainly due to illness. In the four years since that previous increase, the rate of overall absence has decreased or remained the same.
- The rate of unauthorised absence also remained the same in 2016/17. In 2011/12 the percentage of half-day sessions missed due to unauthorised absence from all primary schools reached its lowest point in the past 10 years. By 2013/14 this figure had risen to 1.0 per cent, which it remained at in 2014/15, and in 2015/16 it increased to 1.1 per cent, which it remained at in 2016/17.
- Although overall absence rates have risen and fallen a few times over this period, in general they have been decreasing. Unauthorised absence rates have been fluctuating since 2005/06, but 2015/16 and 2016/17 saw the highest rate seen over the past 11 years at 1.1 per cent.

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

	Percentage of half-day sessions missed					
	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Number of schools providing gender information	1,474	1,436	1,421	1,401	1,366	1,351
Percentage of schools providing gender information	99.5	99.7	99.5	99.4	99.6	99.6
Overall absence						
Boys	6.2	6.3	5.3	5.1	5.2	5.2
Girls	6.1	6.3	5.2	5.0	5.0	5.1
Unauthorised absence						
Boys	0.8	0.9	1.0	1.0	1.1	1.1
Girls	0.7	0.8	1.0	1.0	1.1	1.1

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 2016/17:



Boys had higher overall absence than girls.



Unauthorised absence was the same for boys and girls.

- Boys had a higher rate of overall absence than girls in 2016/17. This has been the case over the past 6 years except during 2012/13 when boys and girls had the same rate of overall absence.
- Boys and girls have had the same rate of unauthorised absence from maintained primary, special and independent schools for the last four years.

Table 4: Absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age in all mainstream primary and middle schools, by proportion entitled to free school meals, 2016/17 (a)

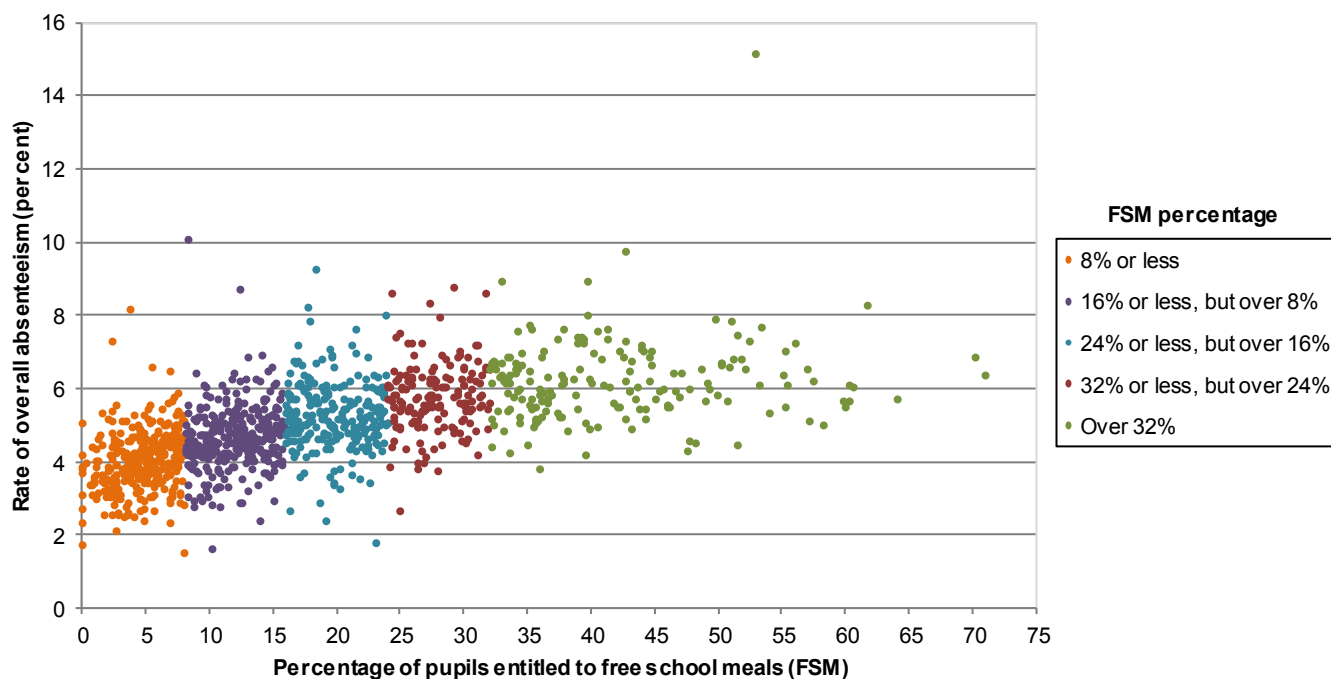
Percentage entitled to free school meals	Percentage of half-day sessions missed		Number of schools
	Overall absence	Unauthorised absence	
8% or less	4.1	0.7	324
16% or less, but over 8%	4.7	0.9	337
24% or less, but over 16%	5.3	1.2	239
32% or less, but over 24%	5.9	1.5	164
over 32%	6.2	1.8	182
All maintained primary schools	5.1	1.1	1,246

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.
- It may be easier to spot this pattern in [Chart 2](#). Each of the dots on this chart represents one of the 1,246 mainstream primary and middle schools that submitted attendance data to the Welsh Government in 2016/17. The schools' rates of overall absenteeism have been plotted against the percentage of their pupils entitled to free school meals.
- The pattern formed by the schools' dots in [Chart 2](#) looks like an upward slope. The chart shows that schools with similar percentages of pupils entitled to free school meals can have very different rates of overall absence. But the upward slope pattern suggests that schools with a higher percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals in general have higher absence rates.

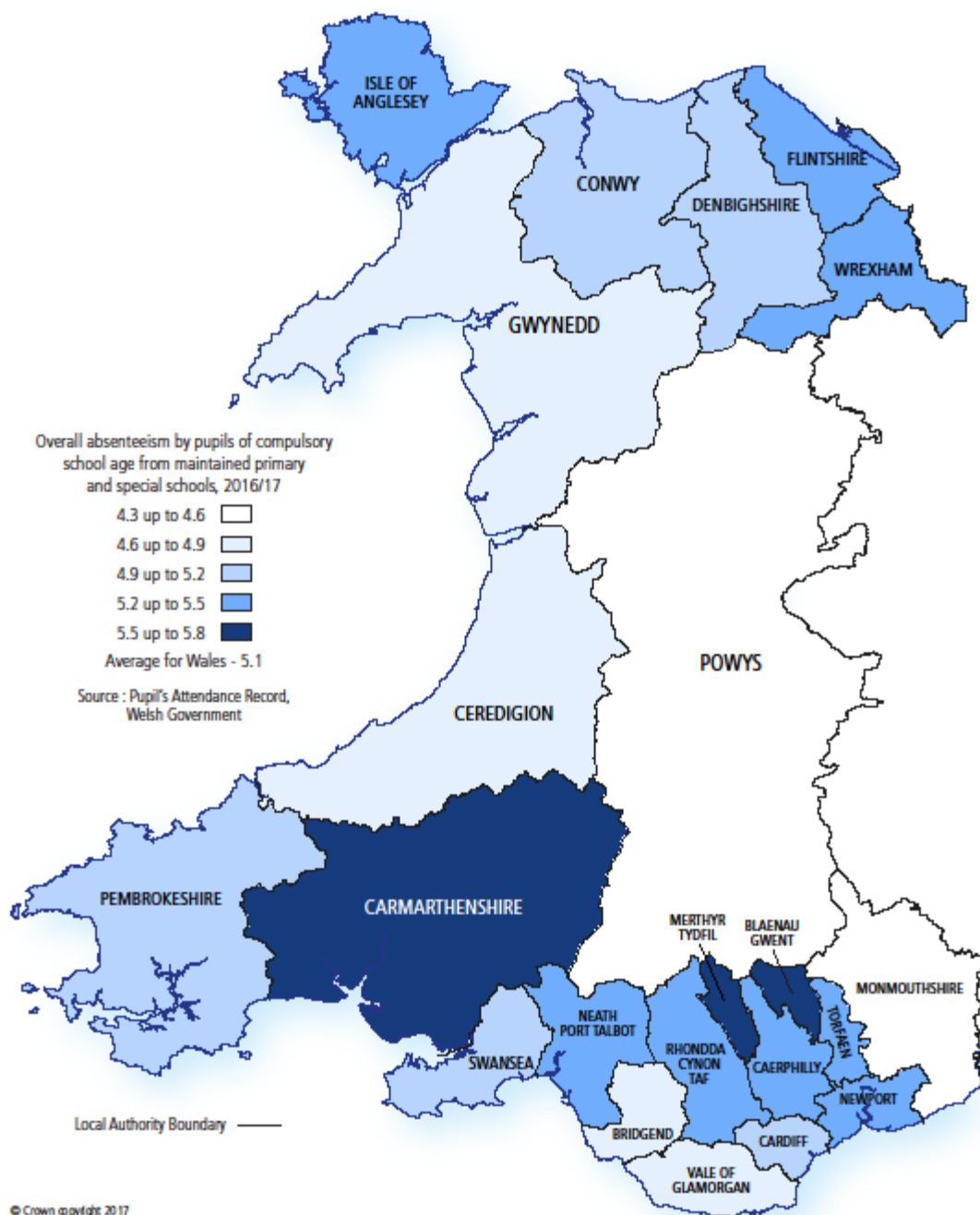
Chart 2: Overall absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age, by mainstream primary school and free school meal percentage, 2016/17



Map 1: Overall absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age from maintained primary and special schools, 2016/17

WALES

Overall Absenteeism



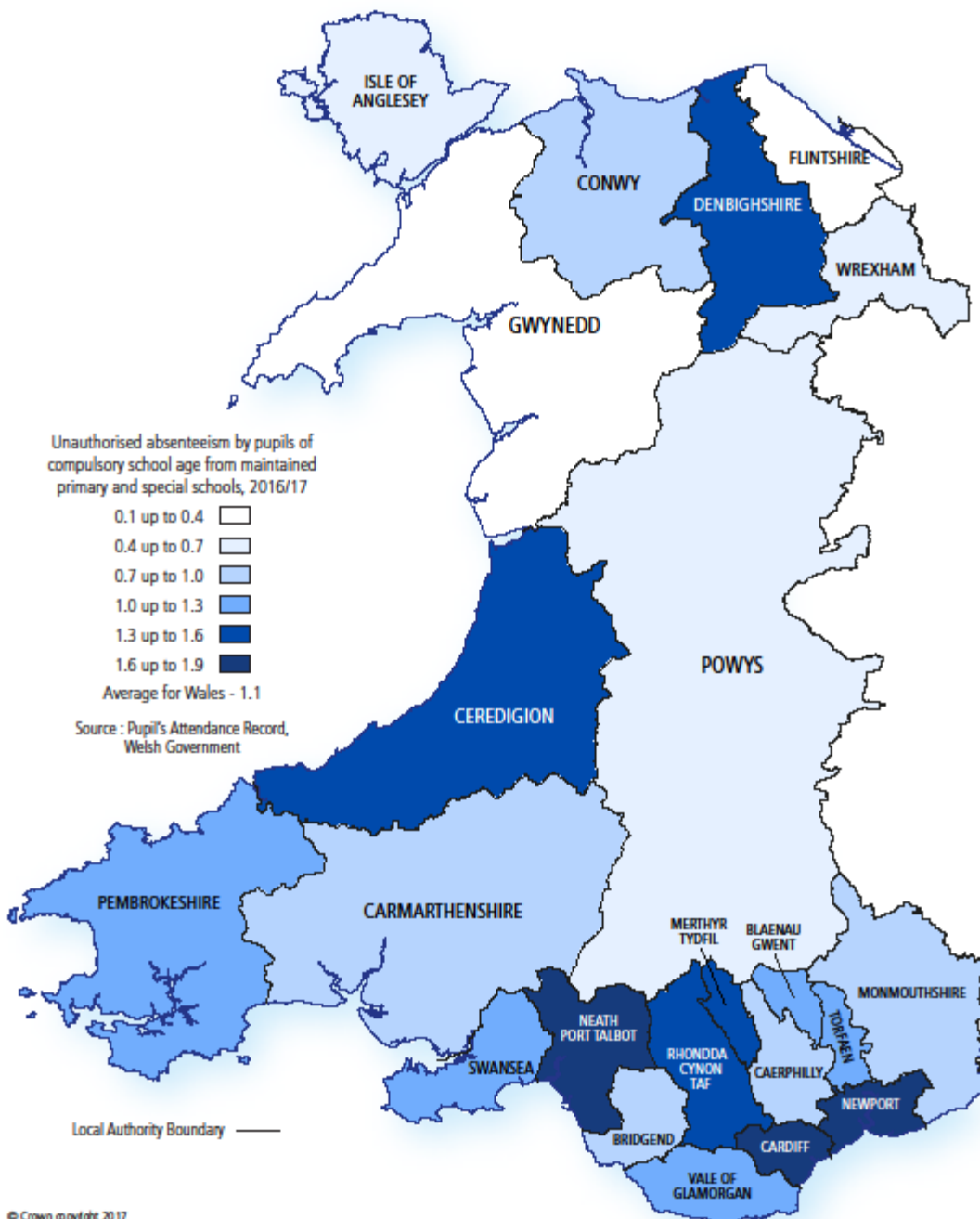
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Map 2: Unauthorised absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age from maintained primary and special schools, 2016/17

WALES

Unauthorised Absenteeism



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Table 5: Absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age in all mainstream primary, special schools, by local authority and consortium



Local Authority	Percentage of half-day sessions missed due to:									
	Overall absence					Unauthorised absence				
	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
North Wales	5.8	5.2	5.2	5.1	5.1	0.6	0.5	0.4	0.5	0.6
Isle of Anglesey	5.6	5.4	5.3	4.9	5.2	0.6	0.5	0.6	0.6	0.6
Gwynedd	5.7	4.9	5.0	4.6	4.7	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.2
Conwy	5.9	5.3	5.2	5.1	5.2	0.8	0.6	0.6	0.7	0.8
Denbighshire	5.7	5.2	5.3	5.0	5.1	0.6	0.5	0.5	1.1	1.3
Flintshire	5.9	5.2	5.3	5.3	5.2	0.5	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.4
Wrexham	5.9	5.2	5.2	5.3	5.3	0.7	0.6	0.5	0.6	0.6
South West and Mid Wales	6.6	5.1	4.9	5.0	5.1	0.4	1.1	1.0	1.1	1.1
Powys	5.8	4.4	4.4	4.3	4.6	0.2	0.8	0.7	0.6	0.6
Ceredigion	5.7	4.4	4.3	4.6	4.7	0.6	0.9	0.9	1.1	1.3
Pembrokeshire	6.5	5.2	5.0	5.1	5.1	0.3	1.2	1.0	1.0	1.0
Carmarthenshire	6.5	5.0	4.8	5.2	5.6	0.4	0.8	0.9	0.9	0.8
Swansea	7.0	5.6	5.1	5.1	5.0	0.6	1.4	1.2	1.3	1.2
Neath Port Talbot	7.0	5.4	5.2	5.5	5.3	0.3	1.2	1.3	1.5	1.7
Central South Wales	6.3	5.3	5.0	5.1	5.1	1.3	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.5
Bridgend	6.5	5.2	4.9	4.7	4.9	0.8	0.8	1.0	1.0	1.0
The Vale of Glamorgan	5.8	4.7	4.7	4.7	4.9	1.0	0.7	0.9	1.1	1.0
Rhondda Cynon Taf	6.6	5.5	5.3	5.4	5.4	0.9	0.9	1.2	1.4	1.5
Merthyr Tydfil	6.7	6.1	5.7	5.8	5.7	0.2	0.6	1.1	1.2	1.5
Cardiff	6.0	5.1	4.9	5.0	5.0	2.0	1.8	1.7	1.8	1.8
South East Wales	6.7	5.4	5.3	5.3	5.2	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.2
Caerphilly	6.8	5.6	5.5	5.4	5.4	1.0	0.8	0.7	0.8	0.9
Blaenau Gwent	6.9	5.6	5.5	5.5	5.5	0.5	1.3	1.2	1.1	1.2
Torfaen	6.4	5.3	5.1	5.2	5.4	1.3	1.1	1.2	1.0	1.2
Monmouthshire	5.6	4.2	4.2	4.3	4.4	0.2	0.6	0.7	0.7	0.7
Newport	7.0	5.8	5.5	5.6	5.3	1.8	1.7	1.8	1.8	1.8
Wales (a) (b)	6.3	5.2	5.1	5.1	5.1	0.9	1.0	1.0	1.1	1.1

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh Government

(a) Includes independent schools.

(b) Figures do not include data for 15 independent schools that did not respond to the survey.

Overall absence, for local authorities, 2016/17:

5.7% the highest rate of overall absence.

4.4% the lowest rate of overall absence.

Unauthorised absence

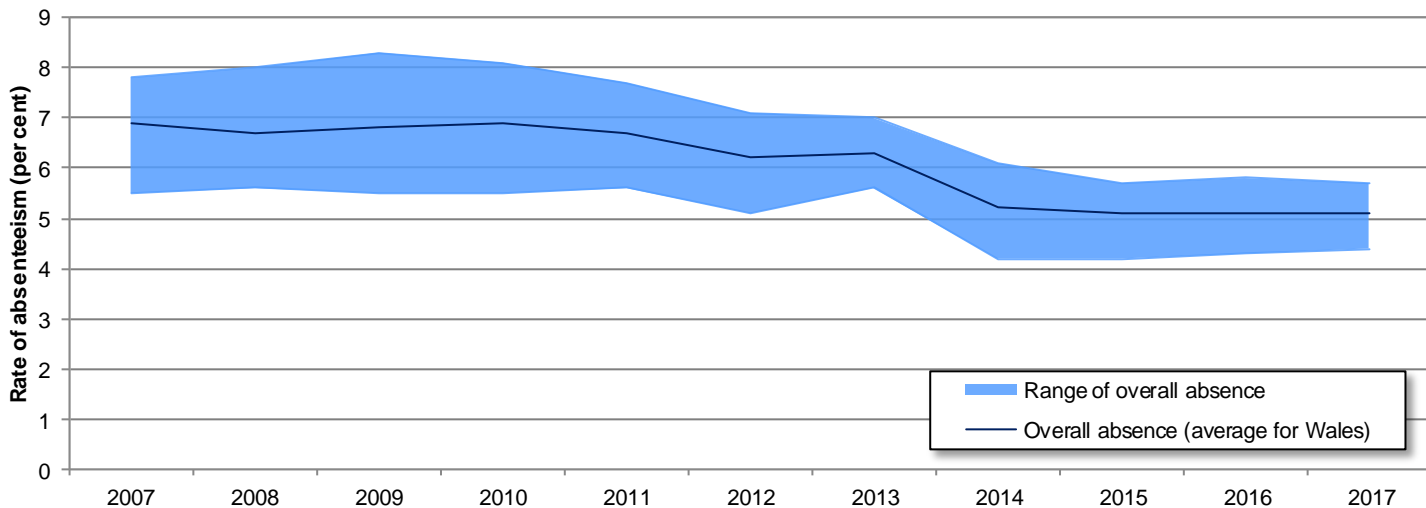
1.8% the highest unauthorised absence rate.

0.2% the lowest unauthorised absence rate.

- Merthyr Tydfil had the highest rate of overall absenteeism from primary schools in 2016/17 (5.7 per cent of half-day sessions missed). Out of all the regional consortia, South East Wales had the highest rate of overall absence in 2016/17.
- Monmouthshire had the lowest rate of overall absenteeism in 2016/17 (4.4 per cent).
- The lowest rate of unauthorised absenteeism from primary schools in 2016/17 was seen in Gwynedd (0.2 per cent). Cardiff and Newport had the highest rate of unauthorised absence (1.8 per cent).
- Local authorities' absenteeism rates for 2016/17 have been plotted in [Charts 5](#) and [6](#), which, as well as [Maps 1](#) and [2](#) shown above, may make it easier to see how local authorities compare with each other

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 2016/17:



The highest rate of overall absence decreased.

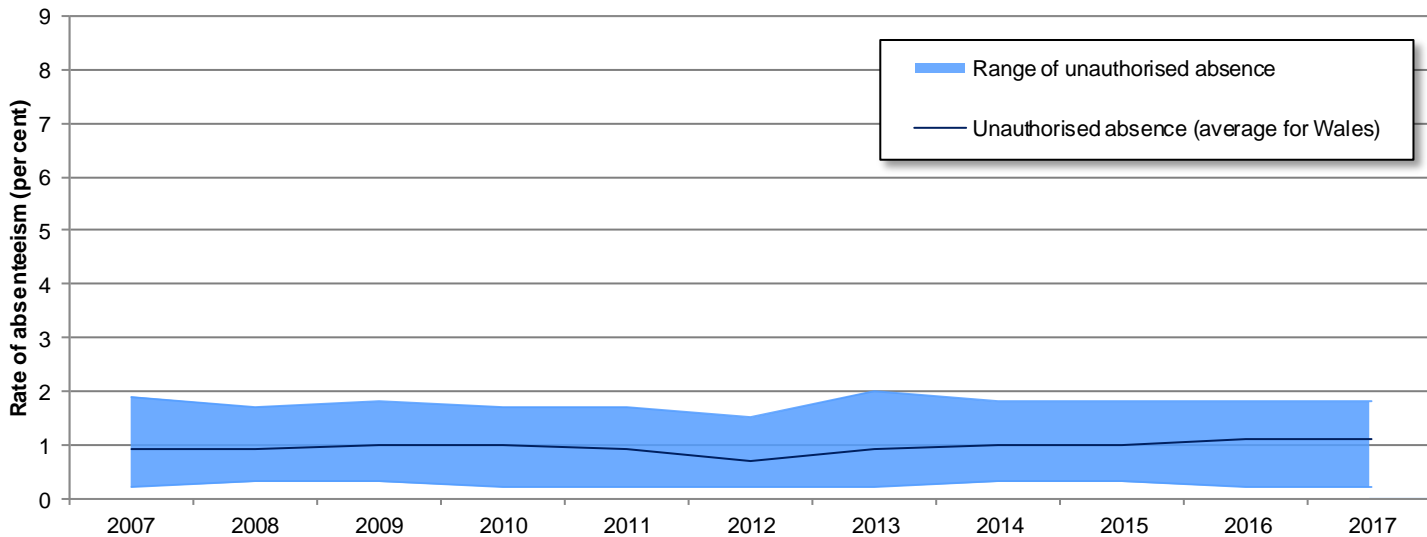


The lowest rate of overall absence increased.

- In general, since 2007 the variation in rates across local authorities across Wales has narrowed.
- The highest rate of overall absence decreased, and the lowest rate for overall absence increased, in 2016/17.
- The highest rate of overall absenteeism at the local authority level has been falling since it last peaked in 2008/09, except for in 2015/16, where it increased slightly. The lowest rate, on the other hand, has fluctuated since then.

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 variation across local authorities in Wales remains broadly the same as in 2007.
- The highest rate of unauthorised absence in local authorities remained the same at 1.8 per cent in 2016/17.
- The lowest rate of unauthorised absence remained at 0.2 per cent in 2016/17. It has varied between 0.2 and 0.3 per cent since 2007/08.

Chart 5: Overall absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age in all maintained primary and special schools, by local authority, 2016/17

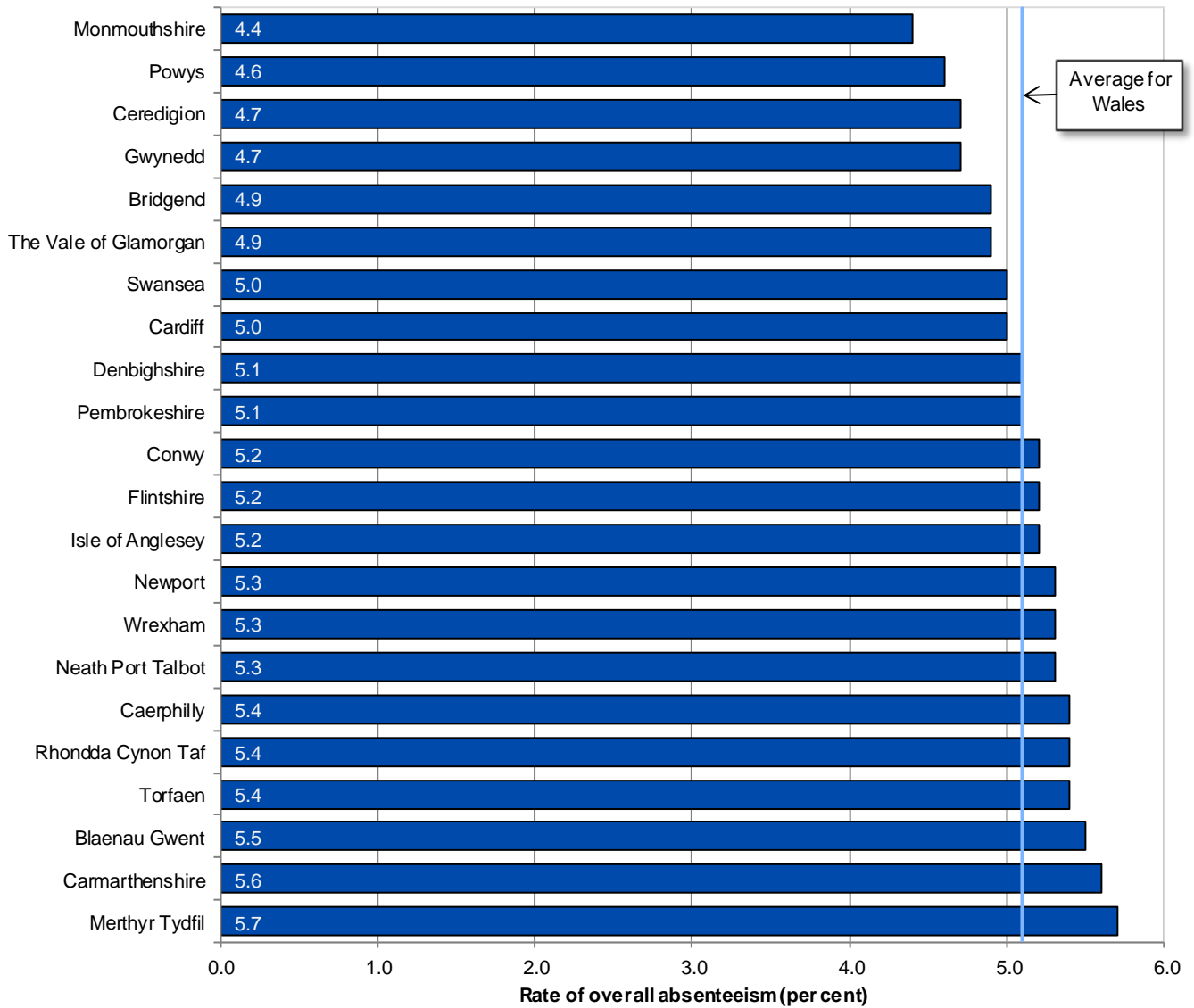


Chart 6: Unauthorised absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age in all maintained primary and special schools, by local authority, 2016/17

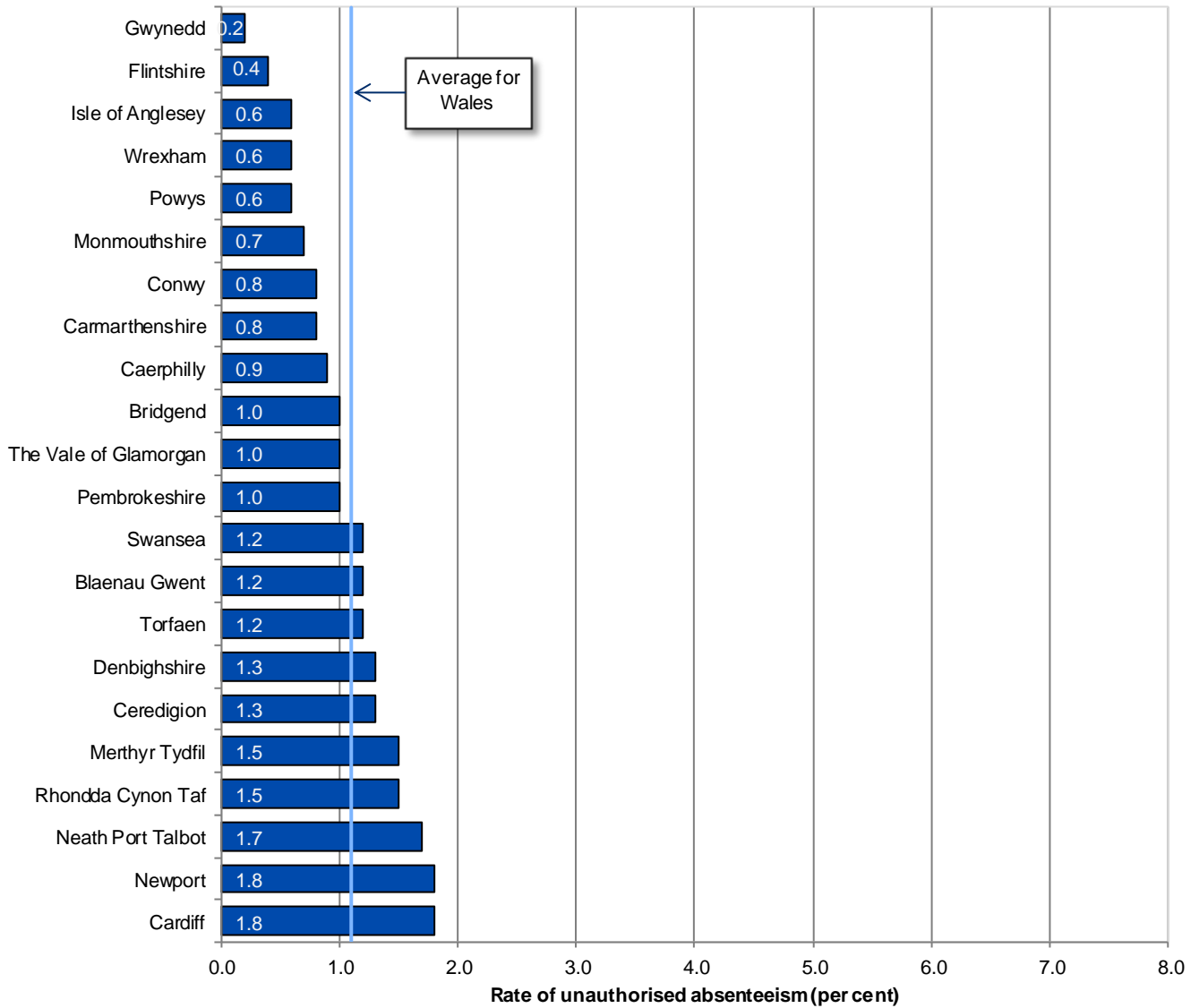


Table 6: Distribution of pupils in maintained primary schools by length of overall absence, 2016/17

Number of days of overall absence	Pupils in schools during 2016/17		Percentage of overall absence
	Number	Percentage	
No absence	11,112	5.2	0.0
0.5 to 5 days	68,732	32.5	9.6
5.5 to 10 days	57,110	27.0	21.6
10.5 to 15 days	35,426	16.7	21.9
15.5 to 20 days	18,844	8.9	16.3
20.5 to 25 days	9,300	4.4	10.3
more than 25 days	11,240	5.3	20.3
Total	211,764	100.0	100.0

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh Government

Table 7: Distribution of pupils in maintained primary schools by their overall absence rates, 2016/17

Overall absence rate	Pupils in schools during 2016/17		Percentage of overall absence
	Number	Percentage	
0%	11,112	5.2	0.0
Over 0%, but 4% at most	97,512	46.0	19.0
Over 4%, but 6% at most	35,856	16.9	16.5
Over 6%, but 10% at most	42,654	20.1	30.4
Over 10%, but 20% at most	21,047	9.9	25.5
Over 20%, but 30% at most	2,516	1.2	5.3
Over 30%, but 50% at most	774	0.4	2.3
Over 50%	293	0.1	1.0
Total	211,764	100.0	100.0

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh Government

Key points

In 2016/17:

211,764 number of pupils in mainstream primary schools.

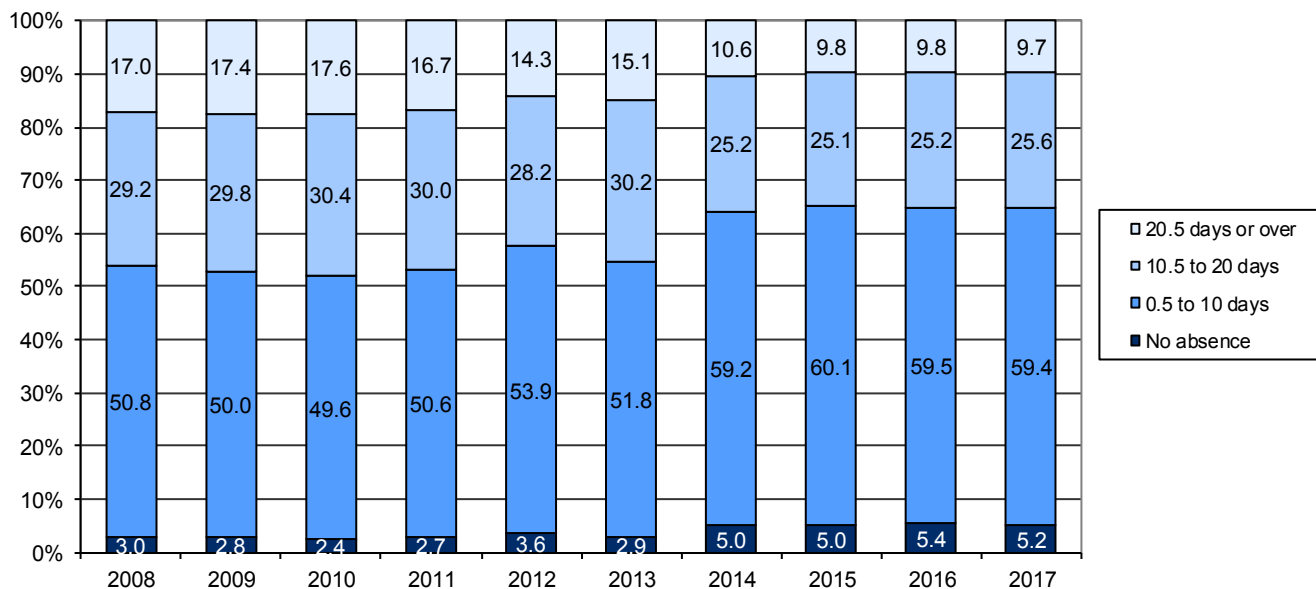
5.3% percentage of pupils absent for more than 25 days (11,240 pupils).

5.2% percentage of pupils with no absence (11,112 pupils).

- 5.2 per cent had no absence from maintained primary school. That means just over 11,000 pupils did not miss any school sessions.
- On the other hand, 5.3 per cent of pupils (a similar amount) were absent for more than 25 days, or 5 school weeks.
- Almost 300 pupils were absent for more than half the time that they were on roll at a mainstream 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 [Definitions](#) 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 mainstream primary and middle schools please see [Table 8](#).

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

[Chart 7](#) groups all pupils attending 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 2016/17. 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.



Key points

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

- In general, as overall absenteeism has decreased so has the number of pupils who are absent for over ten days in a year, with those pupils now more likely to be absent for fewer days (or none at all). During 2016/17, the number of pupils absent for over 10 days increased slightly.
- The percentage of pupils with no absence from maintained primary school decreased between 2015/16 and 2016/17. More than twice as many pupils in 2016/17 had no absence from school than in 2009/10.
- The percentage of pupils missing at least 20.5 days from maintained primary schools in 2016/17 was less than the previous year.
- The percentage of pupils with 10.5 to 20 days increased to 25.6 per cent.
- The percentage of pupils absent for between 0.5 and 10 days has been generally increasing since 2009/10, and reached its highest point of 59.5 per cent in 2015/16. This percentage decreased slightly to 59.4 per cent in 2016/17.
- Both the percentage of pupils with no absence and the percentage of pupils with high absence decreased in 2016/17.
- In [Table 8](#) you will find more information about pupils with high absence known as persistent absentees.

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

	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Number of pupils who are persistent absentees	7,311	6,749	7,186	6,456	5,137	4,778	3,342	2,858	3,107	3,249
Total number of pupils	199,673	196,895	194,337	193,885	194,897	197,113	201,891	205,049	208,532	211,764
Percentage of pupils who are persistent absentees	3.7	3.4	3.7	3.3	2.6	2.4	1.7	1.4	1.5	1.5
Percentage of half days missed by persistent absentees due to:										
Authorised absence	20.4	20.3	20.2	20.1	20.8	20.3	19.4	19.2	18.9	18.3
Unauthorised absence	8.2	8.2	7.7	7.8	7.1	7.4	8.2	8.3	9.0	9.9
Overall absence	28.7	28.5	28.0	27.9	27.9	27.7	27.7	27.5	27.9	28.2
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	7.6	6.6	7.0	7.1
Unauthorised absence	32.3	28.9	29.4	28.7	24.6	20.8	13.8	11.6	12.4	13.3
Overall absence	15.6	14.3	14.9	13.8	11.9	10.6	8.7	7.6	8.2	8.4

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 2016/17 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

In 2016/17:

211,764

Number of pupils in mainstream primary and middle schools.

3,249

Number of persistent absentees (1.5 per cent).



Percentage of persistent absentees remained the same.

- The percentage of persistent absentees has decreased every year since 2009/10, except for the latest two years where it has increased slightly in 2015/16 and then remained the same in 2016/17. It is still less than half of the rate seven years ago, showing a drop of 2.2 percentage points from 3.7 per cent in 2009/10 to 1.5 per cent in 2016/17.
- Overall, persistent absentees missed 28.2 per cent of half-day sessions from mainstream primary schools in 2016/17. As seen in [Table 1](#), the rate of overall absenteeism for all pupils from mainstream schools in 2016/17 was 5.1 per cent.
- The rate of unauthorised absence has been rising among persistent absentees since 2011/12, while authorised absence has been falling.
- The rate of unauthorised absence among persistent absentees reached its lowest value in 2011/12, with persistent absentees missing 7.1 per cent of half-day sessions for reasons not authorised by the school. It has been increasing in subsequent years.
- Since the percentage of all pupils' absence for which persistent absentees were responsible has been falling since 2009/10, except for the previous two years where there were increases, they are having less of an impact on absence rates in primary schools. In 2007/08, persistent absentees were responsible for 15.6 per cent of the overall absence in mainstream primary schools. By 2016/17 they were only responsible for 8.4 per cent of overall absence.

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

This table shows the percentage for each reason for absence as a proportion of the total sessions of absence. It can be used to determine the most commonly given reasons for absence. An increase in a figure (for a particular reason for absenteeism) does not necessarily mean that the percentage of half-day sessions missed due to this reason has increased. It simply means that a greater proportion of absences were attributed to that particular reason for that year.

Type of absence	Code	Reason for absence	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Authorised	I	Illness	51.7	56.9	57.2	60.5	58.6	56.0
	M	Medical or dental appointments	10.2	6.2	6.3	5.9	5.5	5.5
	R	Religious observance	0.2	0.2	0.4	0.3	0.6	0.3
	S	Study leave	0.1	-	-	-	-	-
	T	Traveller absence	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.3
	H	Agreed family holiday	19.3	17.0	11.7	8.4	9.0	11.6
	F	Agreed extended family holiday	0.6	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1
	E	Excluded, but no alternative provision made	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.3
	C	Other authorised (not covered by other codes or descriptions)	4.8	5.0	4.5	4.3	4.2	3.8
		Total authorised absence	87.7	86.4	81.1	80.2	78.8	77.9
Unauthorised	G	Family holiday (not agreed or sessions in excess of agreement)	1.3	3.1	8.0	9.7	10.5	10.9
	U	Late (arrived after the register closed)	1.1	0.9	1.1	1.0	1.0	1.0
	O	Other unauthorised (not covered by other codes or descriptions)	7.7	7.7	9.1	8.6	9.3	9.8
	N	No reason for the absence provided yet	2.2	1.9	0.8	0.5	0.4	0.4
		Total unauthorised absence	12.3	13.6	18.9	19.8	21.2	22.1
Overall		Total overall absence	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh Government

Key points

In 2016/17:

56.0% of absence was due to illness.

11.6% of absence was due to all family holidays agreed by the school.

10.9% of absence was due to holidays *not* agreed by the school.

- Illness was the most common reason given for absence from maintained primary schools in 2016/17. 56.0 per cent of all half-day sessions missed by pupils were because of illness.
- The proportion of absence due to medical or dental appointments or illness decreased between 2015/16 and 2016/17.
- The proportion of absence due to all family holidays agreed by the school increased from 9.0 per cent in 2015/16 to 11.6 per cent in 2016/17. Also, the proportion of absence because of family holidays *not* agreed by the school has increased every year from 1.3 per cent in 2011/12 to 10.9 per cent in 2016/17. Though this proportion has increased, the percentage of absence due to family holidays *not* agreed by the school has remained the same for the previous three years and has been less than one per cent since 2011/12. This can be seen in [Table 10](#).

- 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.
- Tables 9 and 10 show the data in two different ways. Table 9 shows how much of the absence from primary schools was due to each reason. Table 10 shows the percentage of half-day sessions missed because of each reason. So, for example, illness accounts for 56.0 per cent of absence, but only 2.8 per cent of half-day sessions were missed for this reason.

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

Type of absence	Code	Reason for absence	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Authorised	I	Illness	3.2	3.6	3.0	3.1	3.0	2.8
	M	Medical or dental appointments	0.6	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3
	R	Religious observance	-	-	-	-	-	-
	S	Study leave	-	-	-	-	-	-
	T	Traveller absence	-	-	-	-	-	-
	H	Agreed family holiday	1.2	1.1	0.6	0.4	0.5	0.6
	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	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
	Total authorised absence			5.4	5.5	4.2	4.0	4.0	3.9
Unauthorised	G	Family holiday (not agreed or sessions in excess of agreement)	0.1	0.2	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.5
	U	Late (arrived after the register closed)	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
	O	Other unauthorised (not covered by other codes or descriptions)	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.5	0.5
	N	No reason for the absence provided yet	0.1	0.1	-	-	-	-
	Total unauthorised absence			0.8	0.9	1.0	1.0	1.1	1.1
Overall	Total overall absence		6.1	6.3	5.2	5.0	5.1	5.0

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh Government

Key points

In 2016/17:



Decrease in absence due to illness.



Increase in agreed or unauthorised family holidays.

- The percentage of half-day sessions missed due to illness decreased to 2.8 per cent in 2016/17
- The percentage of half-day sessions missed due to medical or dental appointments remains the same in 2016/17 as the previous three years.
- Between 2011/12 and 2014/15 the percentage of half-day sessions missed due to agreed family holidays decreased, but in 2015/16 and 2016/17 there was an increase in the percentage of half-day sessions missed due to agreed family holidays. However, there was no change in the percentage of half-day sessions missed due to unauthorised family holidays.

Context

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. Evidence suggests that absence impacts on an individual learner's attainment. The Welsh Government is committed to ensuring young people are given every opportunity to fulfil their potential including by ensuring regular attendance at school. The Attendance Analysis Framework continues to play an important role in the context of school improvement, providing a standardised and robust approach to data analysis.

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 Knowledge and Analytical Services within the Welsh Government.

Key quality information

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.
- Education Directorate.
- Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education and Training in Wales.
- other areas of the Welsh Government.
- My Local School.
- The Department for Education in England.
- other government departments.
- local authorities and schools.
- Wales Audit Office.
- 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.
- contributing to the national school categorisation 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.

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. 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.

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 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.

Timeliness and punctuality

DEWi was available for uploading files on 18 July 2017, with mainstream primary schools asked to submit attendance data for every pupil aged between 5 and 15 on roll at the during the 2016/17 academic year. Maintained Special schools and independent schools were asked to submit attendance data for pupils aged between 5 and 10 on roll during the 2016/17 academic year, and were then sent a summary of their school's data for validation and verification. Schools and local authorities were then asked to validate their data within a validation period.

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.

Comparability and coherence

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. 1,351 schools (99.6 per cent) supplied gender data in 2016/17, compared to 1,366 schools (99.6 per cent) in 2015/16. 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 have been asked to provide the total number of sessions that pupils were on roll in the school since 2013/14, some still provided the number of half-day sessions that the school was open. In 2013/14, 2014/15, and 2015/16 only one school, five schools and two schools respectively provided the number of half-day sessions that the school was open. In 2016/17, two schools only provided the number of half-day sessions that the school was open. For this reason, although the majority of special and independent schools' absence percentages were calculated using the new method, some schools' percentages 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.

Definitions

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 1,357 schools with pupils within these age groups in the 2016/17 academic year.

A new type of school 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 'mainstream 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 period from the start of the academic year to the late May bank holiday.

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.

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.

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 2016 to 25 December 2016.
- Spring term – from 26 December 2016 to 7 April 2017.
- Summer term – from 8 April 2017 to 25 July 2017.

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 2016/17 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 2016/17, most maintained primary schools were open to pupils for 380 half-day sessions from the start of the academic year to the late May bank holiday.
- Twenty per cent of that figure equals 76 ($380 * 0.2 = 76$) half-day sessions.
- So a persistent absentee in 2016/17 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.

National Statistics status

The [United Kingdom Statistics Authority](#) has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the [Code of Practice for Official Statistics](#).

National Statistics status means that official statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value.

All official statistics should comply with all aspects of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. They are awarded National Statistics status following an assessment by the UK Statistics Authority's regulatory arm. The Authority considers whether the statistics meet the highest standards of Code compliance, including the value they add to public decisions and debate.

It is Welsh Government's responsibility to maintain compliance with the standards expected of National Statistics. If we become concerned about whether these statistics are still meeting the appropriate standards, we will discuss any concerns with the Authority promptly. National Statistics status can be removed at any point when the highest standards are not maintained, and reinstated when standards are restored.

Well-being of Future Generations Act (WFG)

The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The Act puts in place seven well-being goals for Wales. These are for a more equal, prosperous, resilient, healthier and globally responsible Wales, with cohesive communities and a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language. Under section (10)(1) of the Act, the Welsh Ministers must (a) publish indicators ("national indicators") that must be applied for the purpose of measuring progress towards the achievement of the Well-being goals, and (b) lay a copy of the national indicators before the National Assembly. The 46 national indicators were laid in March 2016.

Information on indicators and associated technical information - [How do you measure a nation's progress? - National Indicators](#)

[Further information on the Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015.](#)

The statistics included in this release could also provide supporting narrative to the national indicators and be used by public services boards in relation to their local well-being assessments and local well-being plans.

Further details

The document is available:

<http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/absenteeism-primary-schools/?lang=en> .

A similar release relating to absenteeism from maintained secondary, special and independent schools in Wales during the 2016/17 academic year entitled '[Absenteeism from Secondary Schools, 2016/17](#)' was published on 31 August 2017.

England publishes absenteeism data for primary and secondary schools in the statistical release entitled '[Pupil absence in schools in England: 2015 to 2016](#)'.

Scotland publishes [absenteeism data for primary and secondary schools](#) in supplementary dataset tables.

Northern Ireland publishes [primary and post-primary \(secondary\) school absenteeism data](#).

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.

Further data relating to these tables or attendance data for individual schools is available on request; please e-mail school.stats@gov.wales.

School level data is also available on [My Local School](#) (Updated in early 2017)

Next update

December 2018 (provisional)

The next update will include a report covering the 2017/18 academic year.

We want your feedback

We welcome any feedback on any aspect of these statistics which can be provided by email to school.stats@gov.wales.

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