

SDR 9/2013

22 January 2013

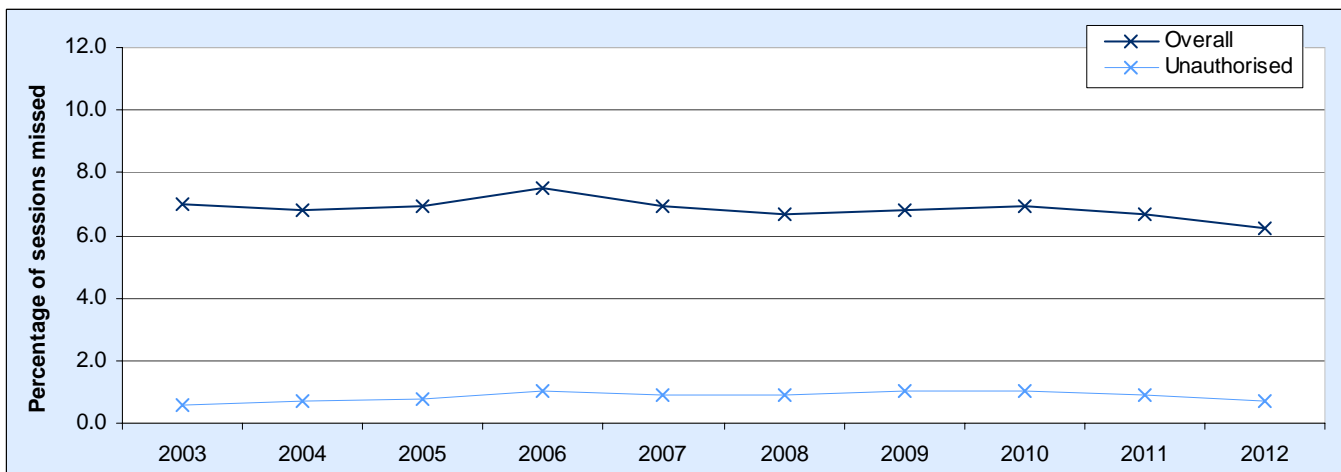
Absenteeism from Primary Schools, 2011/12

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 2002/03 to 2011/12. Data from maintained schools were collected at attendance code level and were broken down into three terms for the first time in 2011/12.

Key results

Overall absenteeism has been stable at between 6.7 and 6.9 per cent of sessions from 2006/07 to 2010/11, but in 2011/12 it saw a drop of 0.5 percentage points. Unauthorised absence has been stable at between 0.6 and 1.0 per cent of sessions since 2002/03. A session is half a school day.

Chart 1: Overall absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age



Overall and unauthorised absenteeism

- In 2011/12, 6.2 per cent of half-day sessions were missed in maintained primary, special and independent schools due to absence, a decrease of 0.5 percentage points from 2010/11 (Table 1);
- In 2011/12, 0.7 per cent of half-day sessions were missed in maintained primary, special and independent schools because of unauthorised absence, a small decrease from 2010/11 (Table 2).

Distribution of absence in maintained primary schools

- The proportion of pupils absent for 20.5 days or more fell from 16.7 per cent in 2010/11 to 14.3 per cent in 2011/12. The percentage of pupils with no absence increased to 3.6 per cent (Chart 4).

Persistent absenteeism

- 2.6 per cent of pupils in maintained primary schools were persistent absentees (Table 8).

Statistician: Stephen Hughes

Tel: 029 2082 3599

E-mail: school.stats@wales.gsi.gov.uk

Next update: Sept 2013 (provisional)

Twitter: www.twitter.com/statisticswales | www.twitter.com/ystadegaucymru

Cyhoeddwyd gan Y Gwasanaethau Gwybodaeth a Dadansoddi

Llywodraeth Cymru, Parc Cathays, Caerdydd, CF10 3NQ

Ffôn – Swyddfa'r Wasg **029 2089 8099**, Ymholiadau Cyhoeddus **029 2082 3332**

www.cymru.gov.uk/ystadegau

Issued by Knowledge and Analytical Services

Welsh Government, Cathays Park, Cardiff, CF10 3NQ

Telephone – Press Office **029 2089 8099**, Public Enquiries **029 2082 5050**

www.wales.gov.uk/statistics



Llywodraeth Cymru
 Welsh Government

Reason for absence

- Illness accounted for more than 50 per cent of absent sessions from maintained schools (Table 9).

Introduction

Chart 1 shows authorised and unauthorised absenteeism from maintained primary, special and independent schools in Wales since the 2002/03 academic year. 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. Charts 2 and 3 show the change in the range of local authority-level absenteeism over time and Chart 4 helps users to understand how the proportions of pupils absent for varying lengths of time have changed.

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

Tables 9 and 10, also new, report on the term- and code-level data collected from maintained primary schools for the first time in 2011/12. Table 9 displays the distribution of reasons for absence, i.e. the percentage of overall absence accounted for by each reason for absence. Table 10 shows the percentage of sessions missed from maintained primary schools by reason for absence. Both tables are split by school term.

Table 11 contains a comparison between absenteeism in England and Wales.

Contents

	page
Chart 1 Overall absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age	1
Table 1 Overall absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age, by sector	3
Table 2 Unauthorised absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age, by sector	3
Table 3 Absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age, by gender	4
Table 4 Absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age in all maintained primary schools, by proportion entitled to free school meals, 2011/12	4
Table 5 Absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age in all maintained primary and special schools, by local authority	5
Chart 2 Range of local authorities' rates of overall absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age	6
Chart 3 Range of local authorities' rates of unauthorised absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age	7
Table 6 Distribution of pupils in maintained primary schools by length of overall absence, 2011/12	8
Table 7 Distribution of pupils in maintained primary schools by their overall absence rates, 2011/12	8
Chart 4 Distribution of pupils in maintained primary schools by length of overall absence	9
Table 8 Pupils of compulsory school age who were persistent absentees from maintained primary schools	9
Table 9 Distribution of reasons for absence by pupils of compulsory school age in maintained primary schools, by reason for absence and term, 2011/12	10
Table 10 Percentage of sessions missed by pupils of compulsory school age in primary schools, by reason for absence and term, 2011/12	11
Table 11 Absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age from maintained primary schools: comparison with England, 2011/12	11

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

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

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh Government

(a) Figures do not include data for 2 independent schools and 4 special schools that did not respond to the survey.



- In 2011/12, 6.2 per cent of half-day sessions were missed due to authorised and unauthorised absence from maintained primary, special and independent schools, a decrease of 0.5 percentage points from 6.7 per cent in 2010/11;
- Overall absenteeism from maintained primary schools dropped by 0.6 percentage points, to 6.1 per cent in 2011/12;
- Special schools saw the largest change in overall absenteeism, which fell from 12.6 per cent in 2010/11 to 10.8 in 2011/12, a drop of 1.8 percentage points;
- The percentage of overall absenteeism from maintained, special and independent schools in Wales is the lowest that it has been since 2004/05.

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

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

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh Government

(a) Figures do not include data for 2 independent schools and 4 special schools that did not respond to the survey.



- In 2011/12, 0.7 per cent of half-day sessions were missed due to unauthorised absence from maintained primary, special and independent schools, a decrease of 0.2 percentage points from 2010/11;
- The rate of unauthorised absence has been relatively stable at between 0.7 and 1.0 per cent of half-day sessions since 2004/05;
- Out of the three sectors of schools included in this statistical first release special schools have had the highest rate of unauthorised absence since 2009/10 and independent schools have had the lowest rate since 2004/05.

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

	Percentage of schools sessions missed				
	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Number of schools providing gender information	1,569	1,544	1,524	1,512	1,474
Percentage of schools providing gender information	99.3	99.5	99.5	99.7	99.5
Unauthorised absences:					
Boys	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.9	0.8
Girls	0.9	1.0	0.9	0.9	0.7
All absences:					
Boys	6.7	6.8	7.0	6.8	6.2
Girls	6.7	6.8	6.9	6.7	6.1

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh Government

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

- Boys continue to have a higher rate of overall absence than girls in 2011/12;
- In 2010/11 girls and boys had the same rate of unauthorised absence, but in 2011/12 boys had a higher rate than girls.

Table 4: Absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age in all maintained primary schools, by proportion entitled to free school meals, 2011/12 (a)

Proportion entitled to free school meals	Percentage of school sessions missed		Number of schools
	All absences	Unauthorised absences	
8% or less	4.7	0.3	326
16% or less, but over 8%	5.5	0.4	350
24% or less, but over 16%	6.3	0.7	274
32% or less, but over 16%	6.9	0.9	193
over 32%	7.7	1.6	273
All maintained schools	6.1	0.8	1,416

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:							
	All absences				Unauthorised absences			
	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Isle of Anglesey	6.1	6.2	6.5	5.7	0.6	0.5	0.7	0.6
Gwynedd	5.9	5.8	5.9	5.4	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.4
Conwy	6.0	6.1	5.8	5.5	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.7
Denbighshire	5.7	6.0	5.7	5.5	0.6	0.6	0.7	0.6
Flintshire	6.1	6.3	6.1	5.5	0.5	0.6	0.6	0.4
Wrexham	5.8	6.3	5.7	5.4	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.7
Powys	6.0	6.1	6.4	5.4	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.2
Ceredigion	5.8	5.6	5.7	5.1	0.5	0.5	0.6	0.5
Pembrokeshire	6.8	7.3	6.8	6.1	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.4
Carmarthenshire	6.9	7.1	6.9	6.3	0.6	0.6	0.5	0.4
Swansea	7.6	7.7	7.1	6.7	0.6	0.7	0.6	0.5
Neath Port Talbot	7.5	7.8	7.5	7.0	0.4	0.5	0.4	0.3
Bridgend	6.8	7.0	6.8	6.3	1.0	0.9	0.9	0.9
The Vale of Glamorgan	6.2	6.0	6.3	5.5	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.1
Rhondda, Cynon, Taff	8.1	8.0	7.7	6.9	1.8	1.6	1.4	1.0
Merthyr Tydfil	8.3	8.1	7.6	7.1	1.2	0.9	0.6	0.2
Caerphilly	7.4	7.5	7.2	6.9	1.5	1.4	1.3	1.1
Blaenau Gwent	7.6	8.0	7.5	6.9	0.7	0.5	0.5	0.4
Torfaen	6.9	7.5	6.8	6.0	1.2	1.4	0.7	0.9
Monmouthshire	5.5	5.5	5.6	5.3	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2
Newport	7.4	7.3	7.0	6.6	1.7	1.7	1.6	1.5
Cardiff	7.2	7.2	7.1	6.4	1.6	1.7	1.7	1.4
Wales (b)	6.8	6.9	6.7	6.2	1.0	1.0	0.9	0.7

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh Government

(a) Figures do not include data for 2 independent schools and 4 special schools that did not respond to the survey.

(b) Includes independent schools.

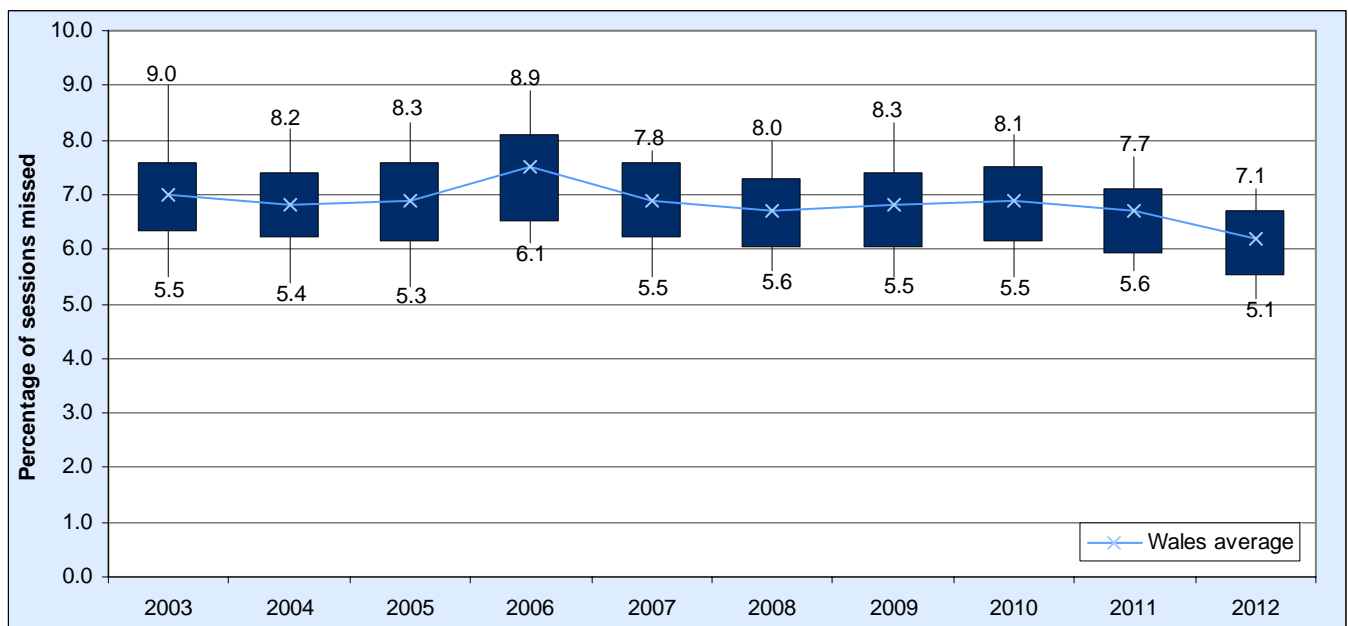


- In 2011/12 Merthyr Tydfil local authority had the highest rate of overall absenteeism from maintained primary and special schools (7.1 per cent), while Ceredigion had the lowest rate (5.1 per cent);
- In 2011/12 the highest rate of unauthorised absence (1.5 per cent) was found in Newport, while Powys, 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 '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 2011/12 the lowest rate was 5.1 per cent and the highest rate was 7.1 per cent.

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

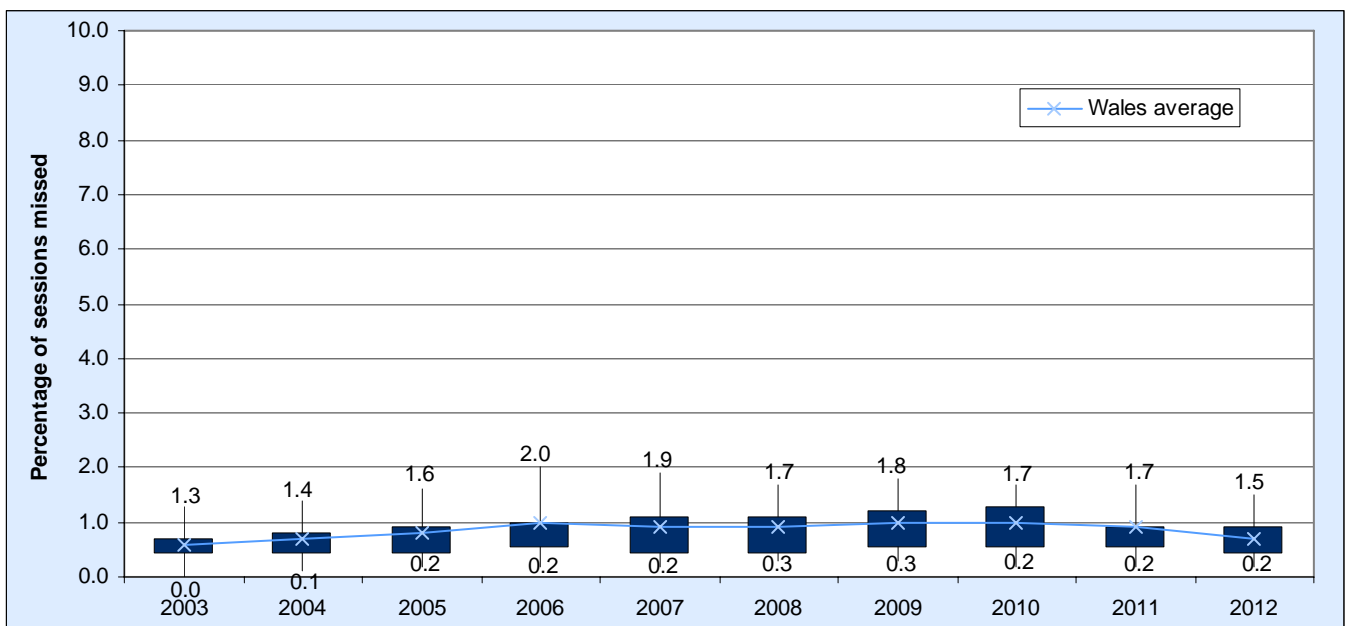


- The highest rate of overall absenteeism in 2011/12, 7.1 per cent in Merthyr Tydfil, is the lowest that this value has been since 2002/03;
- The lowest rate of overall absenteeism in 2011/12, 5.1 per cent, was 0.2 percentage points lower than this value has been since 2002/03;
- The top of the blue box for 2011/12, marking the level below which three quarters of local authorities fall, is at the same level as the average overall absenteeism for Wales in 2010/11. This means that approximately three quarters of local authorities had lower rates of overall absenteeism than the average for Wales last year.

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 2011/12 the lowest rate was 0.2 per cent and the highest rate was 1.5 per cent.

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



- The highest rate of unauthorised absenteeism in 2011/12 was 1.5 per cent, which is the lowest that this value has been since 2004/05;
- The lowest rate of unauthorised absence has been stable at 0.2 per cent since 2009/10.

Table 6: Distribution of pupils in maintained primary schools by length of overall absence, 2011/12

Number of days of overall absence	Pupils in schools during 2011/12		Percentage of overall absence
	Number	Percentage	
No absence	6,977	3.6	0.0
0.5 to 5 days	54,758	28.1	7.2
5.5 to 10 days	50,229	25.8	17.5
10.5 to 15 days	34,723	17.8	19.9
15.5 to 20 days	20,323	10.4	16.2
20.5 to 25 days	11,468	5.9	11.8
more than 25 days	16,419	8.4	27.3
Total	194,897	100.0	100.0

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh Government

- Just under 7,000 pupils (3.6 per cent) had no absence from school in 2011/12, while just over 16,400 pupils (8.4 per cent) were absent for more than 25 days (5 school weeks);
- Just under one quarter of pupils account for just over half of the number of half-day sessions missed in 2011/12.

Table 7: Distribution of pupils in maintained primary schools by their overall absence rates, 2011/12

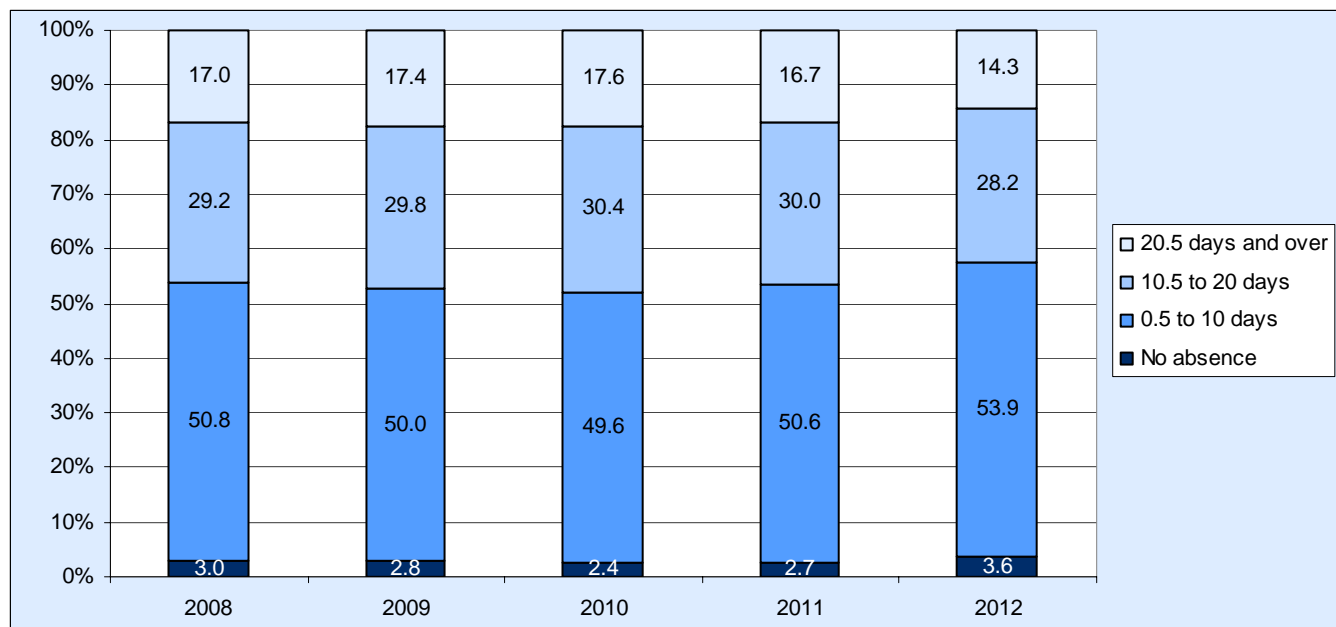
Overall absence rate	Pupils in schools during 2011/12		Percentage of overall absence
	Number	Percentage	
0%	6,977	3.6	0.0
Over 0%, but 4% at most	75,877	38.9	13.3
Over 4%, but 6% at most	35,989	18.5	15.0
Over 6%, but 10% at most	41,859	21.5	27.4
Over 10%, but 20% at most	28,379	14.6	31.7
Over 20%, but 30% at most	4,161	2.1	8.0
Over 30%, but 50% at most	1,275	0.7	3.4
Over 50%	380	0.2	1.2
Total	194,897	100.0	100.0

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh 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 2011/12. 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. We can only produce this chart for the last five years as the necessary data is not available before that.



- The percentage of pupils with no absence from maintained primary schools increased by 0.9 percentage points from 2010/11 and is the highest that this value has been since the data were first available in 2007/08;
- The percentage of pupils absent for at most 10 days has been relatively stable between 2007/08 and 2010/11, the value being between 49.5 and 51.0 per cent, but in 2011/12 the percentage of pupils absent for between 0.5 and 10 days increased to 53.9 per cent;
- In 2011/12 14.3 per cent of pupils were absent for at least 20.5 days, 2.4 percentage points lower than 2010/11.

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
Number of pupils who are persistent absentees	7,311	6,749	7,186	6,456	5,137
Total number of pupils	199,673	196,895	194,337	193,885	194,897
Percentage of pupils who are persistent absentees	3.7	3.4	3.7	3.3	2.6

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh Government

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

- The percentage of pupils who are persistent absentees from maintained primary schools has been dropping since the peak in 2009/10;
- 2.6 per cent of pupils in 2011/12 were defined as persistent absentees from maintained primary school, a decrease of 0.7 percentage points from 2010/11.

Table 9: Distribution of reasons for absence by pupils of compulsory school age in maintained primary schools, by reason for absence and term, 2011/12 (a)

Type of absence	Code	Reason for absence	Autumn	Spring	Summer	Year
Authorised	I	Illness	51.9	61.9	42.5	51.7
	M	Medical or dental appointments	11.7	10.7	8.4	10.2
	R	Religious observance	-	-	-	-
	S	Study leave	-	-	-	-
	T	Traveller absence	-	-	0.6	0.5
	H	Agreed family holiday	18.1	9.6	29.1	19.3
	F	Agreed extended family holiday	0.7	0.5	0.6	0.6
	E	Excluded, but no alternative provision made	-	-	-	-
	C	Other authorised (not covered by other codes or descriptions)	5.0	4.7	4.8	4.8
			Total authorised absence	88.6	88.3	86.3
Unauthorised	G	Family holiday (not agreed or sessions in excess of agreement)	0.8	0.7	2.4	1.3
	U	Late (arrived after the register closed)	1.1	1.1	1.0	1.1
	O	Other unauthorised (not covered by other codes or descriptions)	7.6	7.7	7.7	7.7
	N	No reason for the absence provided yet	1.9	2.1	2.6	2.2
		Total unauthorised absence	11.4	11.7	13.7	12.3
Overall		Total overall absence	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh Government

(a) See the notes section for term dates.

- Illness was the most common reason for absence in 2011/12, accounting for 51.7 per cent of all half-day sessions missed;
- In the summer term 29.1 per cent of half day sessions were missed due to agreed family holiday;
- No reason had been given for 2.2 per cent of half-day sessions missed at the point that the data collection took place.

Table 10: Percentage of sessions missed by pupils of compulsory school age in maintained primary schools, by reason for absence and term, 2011/12 (a)

Type of absence	Code	Reason for absence	Autumn	Spring	Summer	Year
Authorised	I	Illness	3.0	3.7	2.9	3.2
	M	Medical or dental appointments	0.7	0.6	0.6	0.6
	R	Religious observance	-	-	-	-
	S	Study leave	-	-	-	-
	T	Traveller absence	-	-	-	-
	H	Agreed family holiday	1.0	0.6	2.0	1.2
	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	0.3	0.3
	Total authorised absence			5.1	5.3	5.8
Unauthorised	G	Family holiday (not agreed or sessions in excess of agreement)	-	-	0.2	0.1
	U	Late (arrived after the register closed)	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
	O	Other unauthorised (not covered by other codes or descriptions)	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.5
	N	No reason for the absence provided yet	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.1
Total unauthorised absence			0.7	0.7	0.9	0.8
Overall	Total overall absence		5.7	6.0	6.7	6.1

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh Government

(a) See the notes section for term dates.

- 3.8 per cent of half-day sessions were missed due to illness or medical or dental appointments during 2011/12;
- During the whole academic year 1.2 per cent of half-day sessions were missed by pupils in maintained primary schools for family holidays previously agreed by the school, although in the summer term 2.0 per cent of half-day sessions were missed for this reason;
- The rate of overall and unauthorised absenteeism increased as the year progressed, with the rates in the autumn and spring term being lower than the average for the year and the rate in the summer term being higher than the average for the year.

Table 11: Absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age from maintained primary schools: comparison with England, 2011/12 (a)

	Percentage of sessions missed due to	
	All absence	Unauthorised absence
Wales	5.9	0.7
England	4.4	0.7

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

(a) Data relate to the autumn and spring terms only.

- During the autumn and spring terms the rate of overall absenteeism from maintained primary schools was 1.5 percentage points higher in Wales than in England, while the rates of unauthorised absenteeism were the same.

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



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.

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 2011/12 academic year entitled 'Absenteeism from Secondary Schools, 2011/12' was released on 25 September 2012 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.

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 1,481 schools with pupils within these age groups in the 2011/12 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 2011 to 25 December 2011;
- Spring term – from 26 December 2011 to 8 April 2012;
- Summer term – from 9 April 2012 to 31 August 2012.

3.4 Persistent Absentees

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

- The mode is the number which appears most often, so the mode number of half-day sessions that schools were open to pupils is the most frequent number of sessions that they were open to pupils. For the 2011/12 academic year most maintained primary schools were open to pupils for 372 half-day sessions;

- Twenty per cent of that figure equals 74.4 ($372 * 0.2 = 74.4$) 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, 75;
- So a persistent absentee in 2011/12 was someone who was absent for at least 75 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 2011/12.

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

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.

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. As a result of this extra precaution several mistakes were noticed and corrected before publication of the data.

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

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

4.3 Timeliness and Punctuality

DEWi was available for uploading files on 23 July 2012, with maintained primary schools asked to submit attendance data for every pupil aged between 5 and 15 on roll at the school during the 2011/12 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 2011/12 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 the data validation took longer than in previous years. This delay, together with the implementation of a three week checking period to ensure that the data were of satisfactory quality and staff absence during the Christmas period, meant that this statistical first release was published several weeks later than its previous edition.

4.4 Accessibility and Clarity

This Statistical First Release is pre-announced and then published on the Statistics section of the Welsh Government website. It is accompanied by more detailed tables on StatsWales, a free to use service that allows visitors to view, manipulate, 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. 1,474 schools (99.5%) supplied gender data in 2011/12, compared to 1,512 schools (99.7%) of schools in 2010/11. 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.