



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

PUBLICATION, DOCUMENT

Attendance of pupils in maintained schools: 2 September to 6 December 2024

Management information provided by schools in Wales on attendance of pupils in maintained schools from 2 September to 6 December 2024.

First published: 17 December 2024

Last updated: 17 December 2024

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Introduction

This headline presents information on the attendance and absence of pupils in schools during the current 2024/25 academic year and consistent historical data back to 2018/19. Data is presented as the percentage of half day school sessions for pupils aged 5 to 15.

Publication schedule

This is the final publication before the Christmas school holidays. The publication will resume fortnightly from 14 January 2025.

New tables

In this release we have added new tables for attendance by ethnic background (table 6) and for persistent absence (tables 10 and 11). Pupils are persistently absent if they have missed 10% of sessions or more of the total number of sessions in the academic year.

The year to date figures for 2023/24 and 2024/25 will increase due to more pupils reaching the 10% threshold as the academic year progresses.

Data coverage

Most tables in this release present data for 2018/19 and 2022/23 onwards. This represents the years for which comparable data are available. Please see the

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notes and quality information at the end of this release for information about data availability and comparability the 2019/20 to 2021/22 academic years which were affected by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Data for full academic years and academic year to date

All tables include data for the full academic years 2018/19, 2022/23 and 2023/24. This data is provided so that users can see longer term trends in attendance and absence.

All tables also include data for the 2024/25 academic year to date and the equivalent period in the 2023/24 academic year. This data is provided so that users can assess how attendance and absence has changed within the current academic year as compared to the same period in the previous year.

Currently we would advise users not to compare data for the current 2024/25 academic year to date with data for the full previous academic years. This is because the year to date figures will be volatile at the start of the year but will become more stable as further weeks are added into the data. Historical data has also shown that the first few weeks in September have the highest attendance of any week of the academic year and as such the year to date figures are likely to fall as the year progresses.

We will provide further advice once the year to date figures are stable enough to make more robust comparisons with full year historical data.

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Persistent absence

Pupils are persistently absent if they have missed 10% of sessions or more of the total number of sessions in the academic year. The year to date figures for 2023/24 and 2024/25 will increase due to more pupils reaching the 10% threshold as the academic year progresses.

Main points

Comparison of 2024/25 with same period in the 2023/24 academic year

- The average attendance for this academic year to date is 91.4%, up from 91.0% over the same period in the 2023/24 academic year.
- The average attendance for this academic year to date for pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM) is 86.1%, up from 85.9% over the same period in the 2023/24 academic year. For pupils not eligible for FSM the average attendance is 93.1%, up from 92.7%.
- The average attendance for this academic year to date for males is 91.5%, up from 91.1% over the same period in the 2023/24. For females the average attendance is 91.4%, up from 90.9%.
- Average attendance falls as pupils get older. The average attendance for this academic year to date is lowest amongst pupils in year 11 (87.8%) and highest amongst pupils in years 3 and 4 (93.4%). Attendance amongst year 11 pupils is 1.1 percentage points higher than it was in the same period in the 2023/24 academic year.
- The most common reason for absence in this academic year to date is illness, accounting for 3.8% of sessions. This was also the most common reason in the same period of the 2023/24 academic year.

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- The 10% persistent absence threshold has been reached by 5.8% of pupils for this academic year to date, down from 6.5% over the same period of the 2023/24 academic year.
- 13.6% of pupils eligible for FSM were persistently absent, down from 14.1% over the same period of the 2023/24 academic year.

Comparison between 2023/24 and 2018/19

- The average attendance for the 2023/24 academic year was 90.2%, down from 94.3% in 2018/19. This is a fall in attendance of 4.1 percentage points.
- The average attendance in 2023/24 for pupils eligible for FSM was 84.7%, down from 91.2% (6.5 percentage points) since 2018/19.
- Average attendance for males was slightly higher than for females in both 2022/23 and 2023/24, reversing the typical trend in 2018/19 and earlier years where attendance for females was higher. Attendance for both males and females fell by at least 3.9 percentage points between 2018/19 and 2023/24.
- Average attendance in 2023/24 was lowest amongst pupils in year 11 at 84.7% and highest amongst pupils in year 3 at 92.5%. Attendance amongst year 11 pupils was 8.5 percentage points lower than it was in 2018/19. Attendance in primary school year groups fell by 2.4 to 2.8 percentage points over the same period.
- Illness accounted for 4.4% of all school sessions in 2023/24, up from 3.0% in 2018/19.
- The 10% persistent absence threshold was reached by 31.3% of pupils in 2023/24, up from 14.7% in 2018/19.
- 52.9% of pupils eligible for FSM were persistently absent in 2023/24, up from 30.4% in 2018/19.

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Quality information

Sources of attendance data

There are two sources of attendance data for maintained schools in Wales

- Accredited official statistics on [attendance in primary schools](https://www.gov.wales/absenteeism-primary-schools) (<https://www.gov.wales/absenteeism-primary-schools>) and [attendance in secondary schools](https://www.gov.wales/absenteeism-secondary-schools) (<https://www.gov.wales/absenteeism-secondary-schools>). These are derived from statutory data collections which are captured at the end of each academic year.
- Management information extracted weekly from school management information systems (MIS).

Data quality

The data for 2023/24 onwards is management information automatically extracted from MIS once a week. This data has not undergone the same level of quality assurance as accredited official statistics and the data may be subject to future revisions. The figures for 2024/25 should be treated as provisional. Figures for earlier years are final and are not subject to change.

The data collection has been designed to ensure that there are no additional administrative burdens on schools. As a result, there are three main issues that can affect the quality of this data. We do not actively pursue any of these known issues:

- Technical issues can mean that for some weeks we are not able to extract data for every school.

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- Schools will have their own procedures and timetables for keeping their electronic attendance registers up to date. The latest attendance data may not have been entered into their systems by the time we extract the data, leading to incomplete data for some schools.
- There is an agreed set of statutory attendance codes for Wales with consistent and common definitions which relate to attendance and reasons for absence (see table 12 of the accompanying spreadsheet). Schools can only use these codes when providing the accredited official statistics. However, for their own purposes schools can also use temporary local attendance codes which are only converted to the statutory codes during those annual data collections. This will result in us receiving some unknown attendance codes in the weekly extract. Such codes are not included in the published weekly data.

The accredited official statistics undergo a rigorous quality assurance process to ensure that the data is comprehensive and accurate.

The data from this weekly source and our accredited official statistics are consistent over the course of a full academic year, as illustrated in the tables below.

Table 1: Comparison of annual attendance data and weekly management information for maintained schools in the 2022/23 academic year

Year group	% of half day sessions present - Annual data	% of half day sessions present - Weekly management information	Difference
1	90.8	90.8	0.1
2	91.6	91.5	0.1

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Year group	% of half day sessions present - Annual data	% of half day sessions present - Weekly management information	Difference
3	91.8	91.7	0.1
4	91.8	91.7	0.1
5	91.7	91.6	0.1
6	91.4	91.3	0.1
7	90.6	90.4	0.2
8	88.4	88.1	0.3
9	87.2	86.9	0.3
10	86.6	86.2	0.4
11	84.4	84.1	0.3

Data availability

No data is available for 2019/20 due to the collections being suspended during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Attendance data for 2020/21 and 2021/22 (<https://www.gov.wales/attendance-pupils-maintained-schools>) has been published separately but is not included in this release because the definitions of absence during this period were not

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consistent with data for the other years presented (see section on data comparability below). The definitions were different so that we could capture information that was useful as part of our response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Comparability

All 4 UK nations are publishing regular data on attendance in school. We do not advise making comparisons between Wales and either Scotland or Northern Ireland due to differences in data collection methods, presentation and definitions of absence.

Both Wales and England publish annual attendance data. The definitions of attendance and data collection methodologies are more similar between Wales and England than between Wales and the other nations. However, there are some differences in attendance codes and the collection of data for the summer term and we would advise users to be cautious when comparing annual data for Wales and England.

Annual data for England can be found at [Statistics: pupil attendance and absence - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-pupil-absence) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-pupil-absence>)

We advise users not to compare results from the weekly collections between any nations due to differences in collection methodologies, definitions and quality assurance processes.

Statement of voluntary application of the Code of Practice for Statistics

These statistics are not classed as official statistics. However, we have applied the principles of the Code of Practice as far as possible during development.

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These statistics have been developed at pace and published the earliest possible opportunity to assist users in understanding the patterns of attendance and absence in real time and the potential impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We have voluntarily applied the **Code of Practice for Statistics (UK Statistics Authority)** (<https://code.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/the-code/>) as follows.

Trustworthiness

We publish and regularly update guidance for schools on **attendance and absence** (<https://www.gov.wales/school-attendance-and-absence>). This will include detailed guidance on valid attendance codes and definitions and recording such information in MIS. This ensures a consistent nationwide approach to recording and returning this information.

The data have been extracted from operational systems and tabulated by statisticians who work under the supervision of the Welsh Government Chief Statistician to ensure that the statistics, data and explanatory material is presented impartially and objectively.

All personal data underlying these statistics are processed in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018. We have put in place a thorough governance process with the contractor to ensure that the data are securely managed and reviewed before release.

These statistics are pre-announced on the **Statistics and Research area of the Welsh Government website** (<https://www.gov.wales/statistics-and-research/upcoming>). Access to the data during processing is restricted to those involved in the production of the statistics, quality assurance and for operational purposes. Pre-release access is restricted to eligible recipients in line with the **Code of Practice (UK Statistics Authority)** (<https://code.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/the-code/trustworthiness/t3-orderly-release/>).

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Quality

The data in this release all originate from school management information systems. These data sources are considered to be of sufficient quality to support this analysis and to ensure that users have access to real time information on attendance and absence trends by protected characteristics.

All stages in the collection, validation and production of these statistics are led by professional statisticians working for the contractor and statisticians from the Government Statistical Group.

All statistics are quality-assured prior to publication.

Value

Our accredited official statistics on attendance and absence in **primary schools** (<https://www.gov.wales/absenteeism-primary-schools>) and **secondary schools** (<https://www.gov.wales/absenteeism-secondary-schools>) show that attendance has not yet recovered to pre-pandemic levels. These statistics have been published at the earliest opportunity to assist users in understanding attendance and absence and the potential ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The statistics will be updated regularly throughout the year to allow users to monitor longer term attendance trends in real time as the academic year progresses.

This release is accompanied by an Open Document Spreadsheet which can be shared and reused widely and which complies with the **Government Analysis Function guidance on Releasing statistics in spreadsheets** (<https://analysisfunction.civilservice.gov.uk/policy-store/releasing-statistics-in-spreadsheets/>).

Data are clearly presented in each table, with the spreadsheet also including a

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cover sheet listing each table. The commentary and notes in the release have been developed to try to make the information as accessible as possible to the widest range of users.

The content of this release is regularly reviewed. It will be supplemented in the future with additional tables on attendance and absence by additional learning needs (ALN), ethnic background and data on persistent absence.

This release is published weekly during September and October when national trends are subject to significant change week to week. Once we are further into the current academic year and the data becomes more stable week to week we will aim to publish either fortnightly or monthly.

We seek to minimise any burden on pupils, teachers, school and local authorities by extracting this data directly from school management information systems.

Contact details

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