

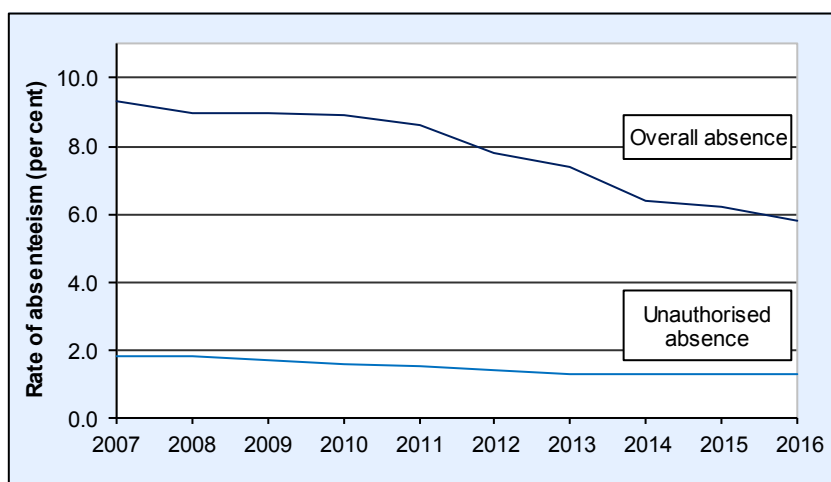


## Absenteeism from Secondary Schools, 2015/16

31 August 2016  
SFR 111/2016

This annual Statistical First Release reports on absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age in maintained secondary, middle and special schools and independent schools in Wales. Information relates to the period from the start of the academic year to the late May bank holiday, from 2006/07 to 2015/16.

**Chart 1: Absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age, 2006/07 to 2015/16**



In general, **overall absence** has been decreasing since 2006/07. In 2015/16 the rate of overall absenteeism was **5.8 per cent**.

**Unauthorised absence** has not changed since 2012/13. In 2015/16 the rate of unauthorised absenteeism was **1.3 per cent**.

- **Just under 1 in 25 pupils were persistent absentees** from mainstream secondary and middle schools in 2015/16 (or 3.9 per cent).

- Persistent absenteeism has been falling since 2008/09. The number of persistent absentees in mainstream secondary and middle schools in 2015/16 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 mainstream secondary and middle schools in 2015/16. The percentage of half-day sessions missed due to illness has been decreasing since 2012/13.



### About this release

This release covers overall and unauthorised absenteeism from secondary schools, including a breakdown by reason for absence. It also reports on persistent absentees in secondary 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, etc. [Table 8](#) informs 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 2015/16.

[Chart 1](#) displays the percentage of half-day sessions missed due to overall and unauthorised absenteeism from maintained secondary, 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.

**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
<b>LA maintained schools</b>	<b>9.4</b>	<b>9.1</b>	<b>9.0</b>	<b>8.9</b>	<b>8.7</b>	<b>7.9</b>	<b>7.4</b>	<b>6.4</b>	<b>6.2</b>	<b>5.9</b>
Mainstream schools	9.4	9.1	9.0	8.9	8.6	7.9	7.4	6.4	6.1	5.8
Special schools	13.9	12.2	12.3	10.8	11.6	11.0	11.3	10.3	10.2	10.4
<b>Independent schools</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>5.8</b>	<b>6.0</b>	<b>6.3</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>5.3</b>	<b>5.3</b>	<b>4.1</b>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>4.9</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>9.3</b>	<b>9.0</b>	<b>9.0</b>	<b>8.9</b>	<b>8.6</b>	<b>7.8</b>	<b>7.4</b>	<b>6.4</b>	<b>6.2</b>	<b>5.8</b>

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh Government

(a) Figures do not include data for 13 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
<b>LA maintained schools</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>1.3</b>
Mainstream schools	1.9	1.8	1.7	1.6	1.5	1.4	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3
Special schools	3.3	2.5	2.3	1.9	2.5	2.6	2.6	2.4	2.6	2.2
<b>Independent schools</b>	<b>0.2</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>0.2</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>0.2</b>	<b>0.3</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>1.3</b>

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh Government

(a) Figures do not include data for 13 independent schools that did not respond to the survey.

**Key points****In 2015/16:****5.8%** overall absence from secondary schools.**1.3%** unauthorised absence from secondary schools.

Overall absence decreased in 2015/16.



Overall absenteeism has been falling since 2006/07.

- In 2015/16, 5.8 per cent of half-day sessions were missed due to overall absence (which includes both authorised and unauthorised absences) from maintained secondary, middle and special schools and independent schools. The rate of unauthorised absence from these schools was 1.3 per cent.
- The trend in overall and unauthorised absence rates over the years can be seen in [Chart 1](#) on the front page. These data relate to the 'Total' rows in [Tables 1](#) and [2](#). The chart shows that the percentage of half-day sessions missed due to overall absence has been falling since 2006/07. Unauthorised absence fell between 2007/08 and 2012/13, but has not changed since then. In 2015/16, overall absenteeism continued to fall, dropping by 0.3 percentage points since the previous year. Although unauthorised absenteeism has not changed since 2012/13, if you compare it with 2007/08, over eight years it has decreased by 0.5 percentage points.
- Due to the small number of pupils on roll at maintained special and independent schools, their absence rates do not have a large effect on the total for Wales. However, their overall absence rates increased in 2015/16, and while the rate of unauthorised absence decreased in maintained special schools, the rate increased very slightly in independent schools. However these rates have fluctuated from year to year.

**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
Number of schools providing gender information	299	290	285	273	277
Percentage of schools providing gender information	98.0	98.3	96.0	97.5	97.2
Overall absence					
Boys	7.7	7.2	6.2	6.0	5.7
Girls	8.0	7.5	6.6	6.3	5.9
Unauthorised absence					
Boys	1.4	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3
Girls	1.4	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3

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 2015/16:



Girls had higher overall absence than boys.



Unauthorised absence was the same for boys and girls.

- Since 2011/12 girls have had a higher rate of overall absence than boys, and this pattern continues in 2015/16.
- Between 2011/12 and 2015/16 the trends in overall and unauthorised absence for boys and for girls have been very similar. During this time period boys had the same rate of unauthorised absence as girls.

**Table 4: Absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age in all mainstream secondary and middle schools, by proportion entitled to free school meals, 2015/16 (a)**

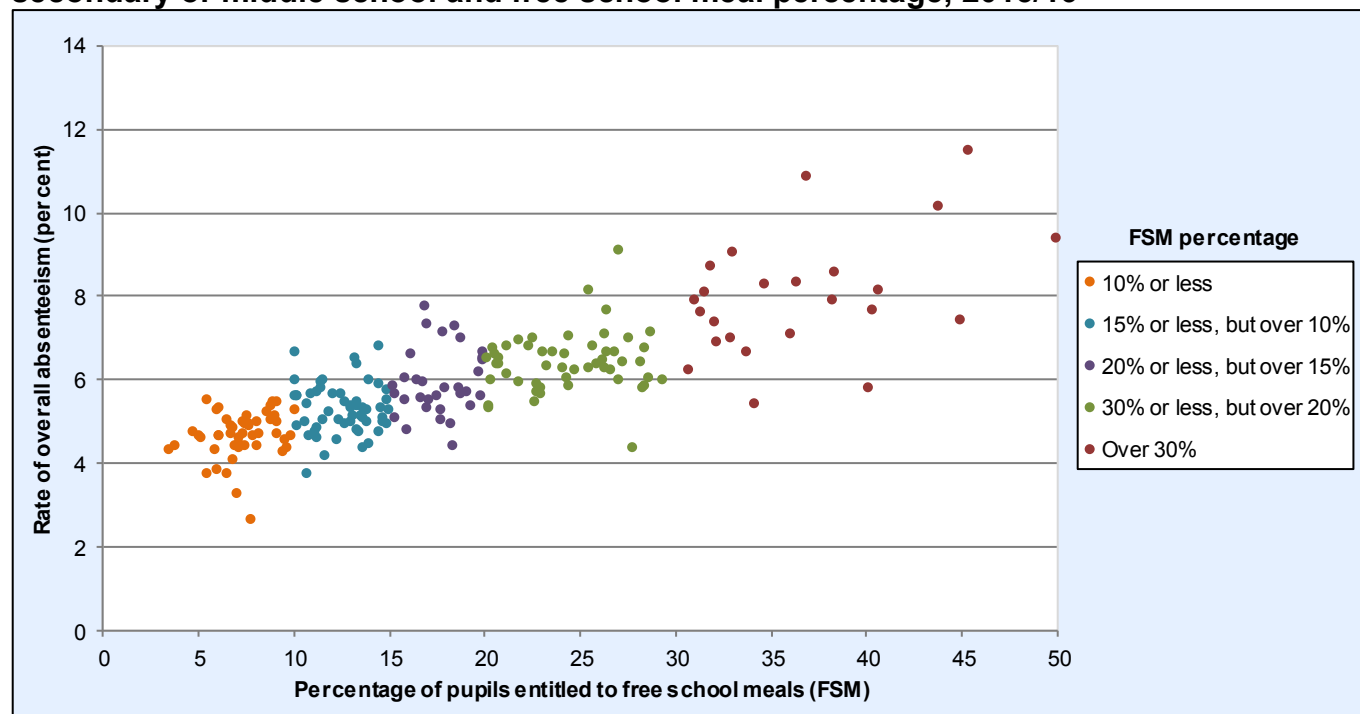
Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals	Percentage of half-day sessions missed		Number of schools
	Overall absence	Unauthorised absence	
10% or less	4.6	0.6	49
15% or less, but over 10%	5.4	0.9	55
20% or less, but over 15%	5.9	1.1	32
30% or less, but over 20%	6.4	1.7	52
Over 30%	7.9	3.1	24
All mainstream secondary and middle schools	5.8	1.3	212

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 1 of the 212 mainstream secondary and middle schools that submitted attendance data to the Welsh Government in 2015/16. 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 secondary or middle school and free school meal percentage, 2015/16**



**Table 5: Absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age in all maintained secondary, middle and 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	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
<b>North Wales</b>	<b>7.0</b>	<b>6.3</b>	<b>6.1</b>	<b>5.7</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>0.9</b>
Isle of Anglesey	6.8	6.6	6.4	5.5	0.7	0.9	1.1	0.9
Gwynedd	6.6	5.8	5.4	5.0	0.7	0.6	0.5	0.5
Conwy	7.1	6.1	5.8	5.6	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4
Denbighshire	7.6	7.0	7.0	6.2	1.5	1.4	1.4	1.4
Flintshire	6.7	6.2	5.8	5.7	0.4	0.5	0.3	0.4
Wrexham	7.3	6.4	6.3	5.8	1.8	1.1	1.1	1.2
<b>South West and Mid Wales</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>6.3</b>	<b>6.0</b>	<b>5.8</b>	<b>0.7</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>1.0</b>
Powys	6.8	5.7	5.4	5.1	0.6	0.8	0.7	0.8
Ceredigion	6.4	5.5	5.5	5.4	1.3	1.2	1.2	1.0
Pembrokeshire	7.8	6.6	6.8	6.7	0.7	1.1	1.2	1.3
Carmarthenshire	8.0	6.2	5.9	5.6	0.4	0.5	0.8	0.7
Swansea	7.7	6.7	6.0	5.7	1.1	1.2	1.1	1.3
Neath Port Talbot	7.4	6.5	6.4	6.4	0.4	0.8	0.9	1.0
<b>Central South Wales</b>	<b>7.4</b>	<b>6.4</b>	<b>6.1</b>	<b>5.7</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>1.6</b>
Bridgend	7.7	6.2	5.8	5.6	1.3	1.1	0.9	0.9
The Vale of Glamorgan	6.7	5.8	5.3	5.0	1.0	1.0	1.2	1.1
Rhondda Cynon Taf	8.1	6.9	6.4	6.1	2.0	1.7	1.7	1.8
Merthyr Tydfil	6.7	7.1	6.9	6.6	1.0	1.1	1.2	1.6
Cardiff	7.1	6.2	6.2	5.6	2.5	2.3	2.5	2.0
<b>South East Wales</b>	<b>7.8</b>	<b>6.9</b>	<b>6.7</b>	<b>6.4</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>1.5</b>
Caerphilly	8.0	7.1	7.3	6.6	1.6	1.4	1.7	1.7
Blaenau Gwent	9.0	7.8	6.8	6.0	2.3	2.3	1.5	1.3
Torfaen	7.5	6.5	6.3	6.3	1.0	0.8	0.7	0.7
Monmouthshire	6.6	5.5	5.4	5.3	0.5	0.8	0.8	1.0
Newport	7.9	7.1	6.9	6.8	2.1	2.4	2.2	2.1
<b>Wales (a) (b)</b>	<b>7.4</b>	<b>6.4</b>	<b>6.2</b>	<b>5.8</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>1.3</b>

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh Government

(a) Figures do not include data for 13 independent schools that did not respond to the survey.

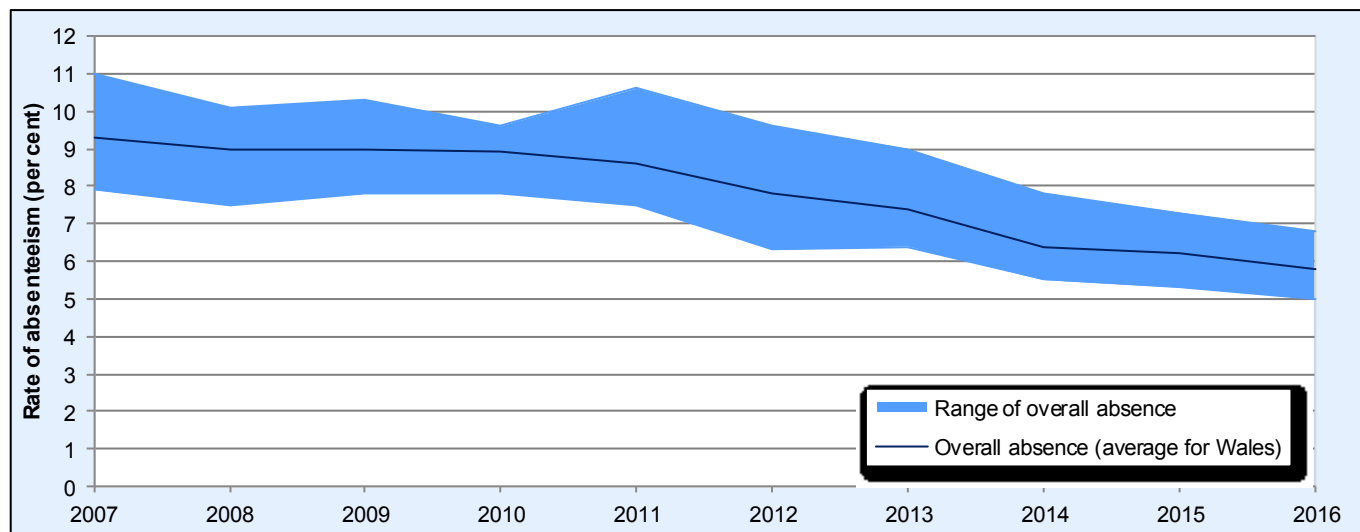
(b) Includes independent schools.



- Newport had the highest rate of overall absenteeism from maintained secondary, middle and special schools (6.8 per cent) during the 2015/16 academic year, while Gwynedd and The Vale of Glamorgan had the lowest rate (5.0 per cent). Local authorities' absenteeism rates for 2015/16 have been plotted in [Charts 5](#) and [6](#), which may make it easier to see how local authorities compare with each other.
- In 2015/16 the highest rate of unauthorised absence (2.1 per cent) was found in Newport, while Flintshire had the lowest rate of unauthorised absence (0.4 per cent).

### 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 2015/16:**

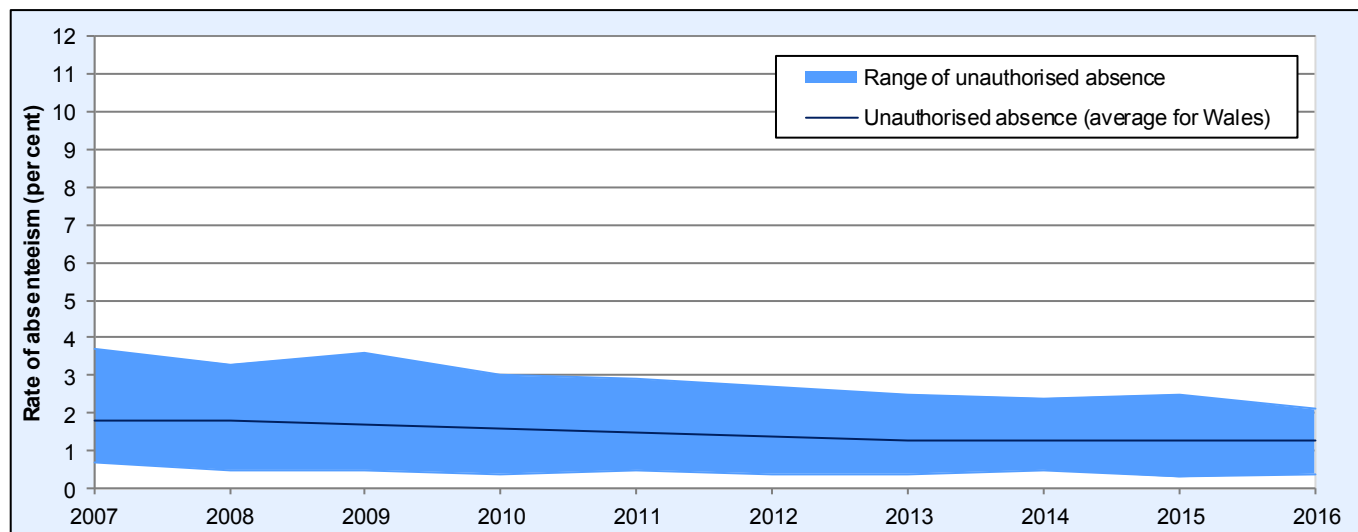
- ↓ The highest rate of overall absence continues to fall.
- ↓ The lowest rate of overall absence also decreased.

- Although the average overall absence rate for Wales has been decreasing since 2006/07 (as discussed in the commentary for [Table 1](#)), the highest rate of overall absence in local authorities has fluctuated twice between then and 2015/16, once in 2008/09 and again in 2010/11. Since 2010/11 the highest rate of overall absence in local authorities has been falling, and in 2015/16 it dropped to its lowest value over the past 10 years – 6.8 per cent.
- In 2012/13 the lowest rate of overall absence in local authorities increased slightly even though the average overall absence rate for Wales decreased. This can be seen by the fact that the bottom of the blue bar in [Chart 3](#) increased between 2011/12 and 2012/13. The lowest rate of overall absence in local authorities has been decreasing since 2012/13, and in 2015/16 fell to its lowest rate since 2006/07 – 5.0 per cent.



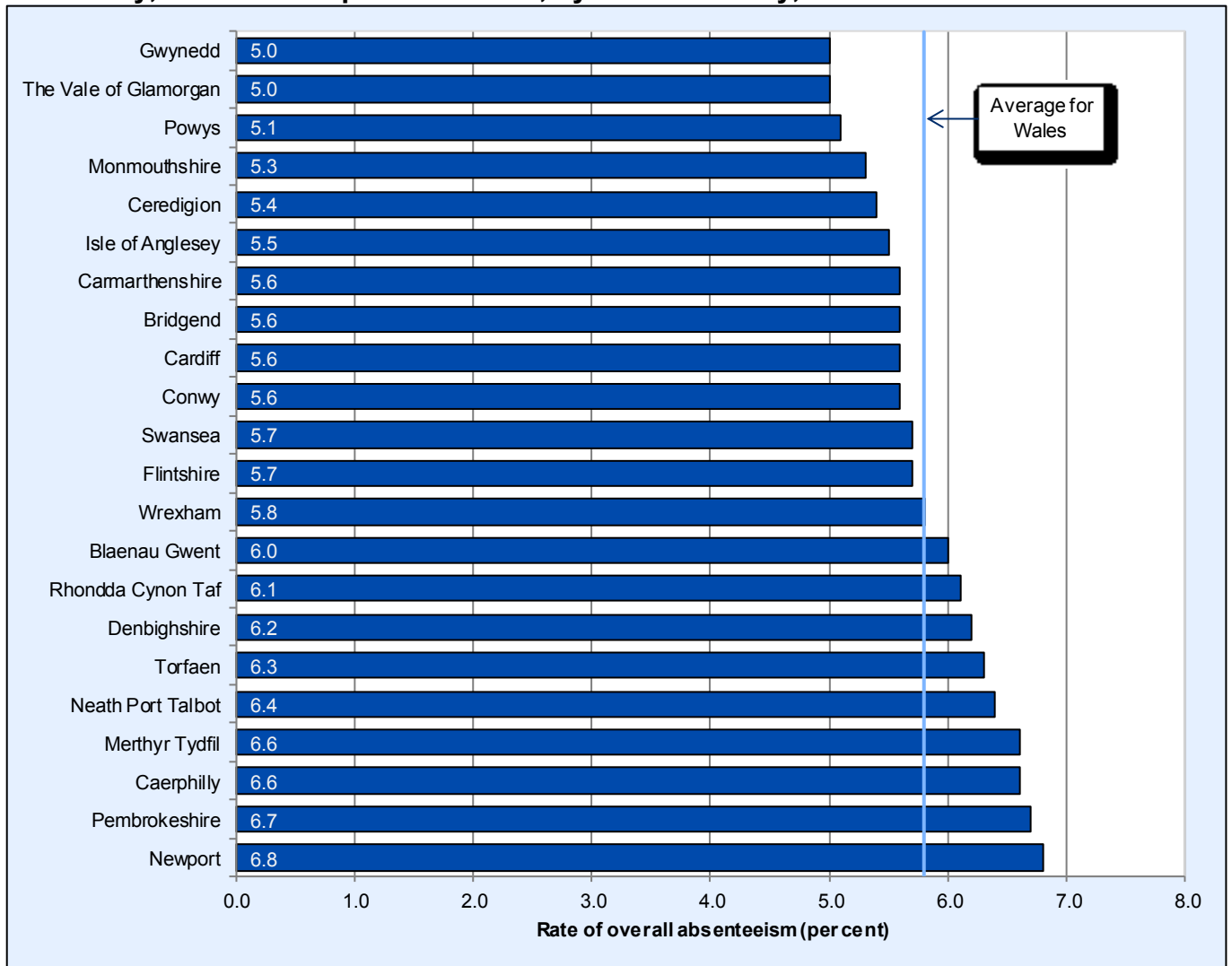
#### Chart 4: Range of local authorities' rates of unauthorised absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age

[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.

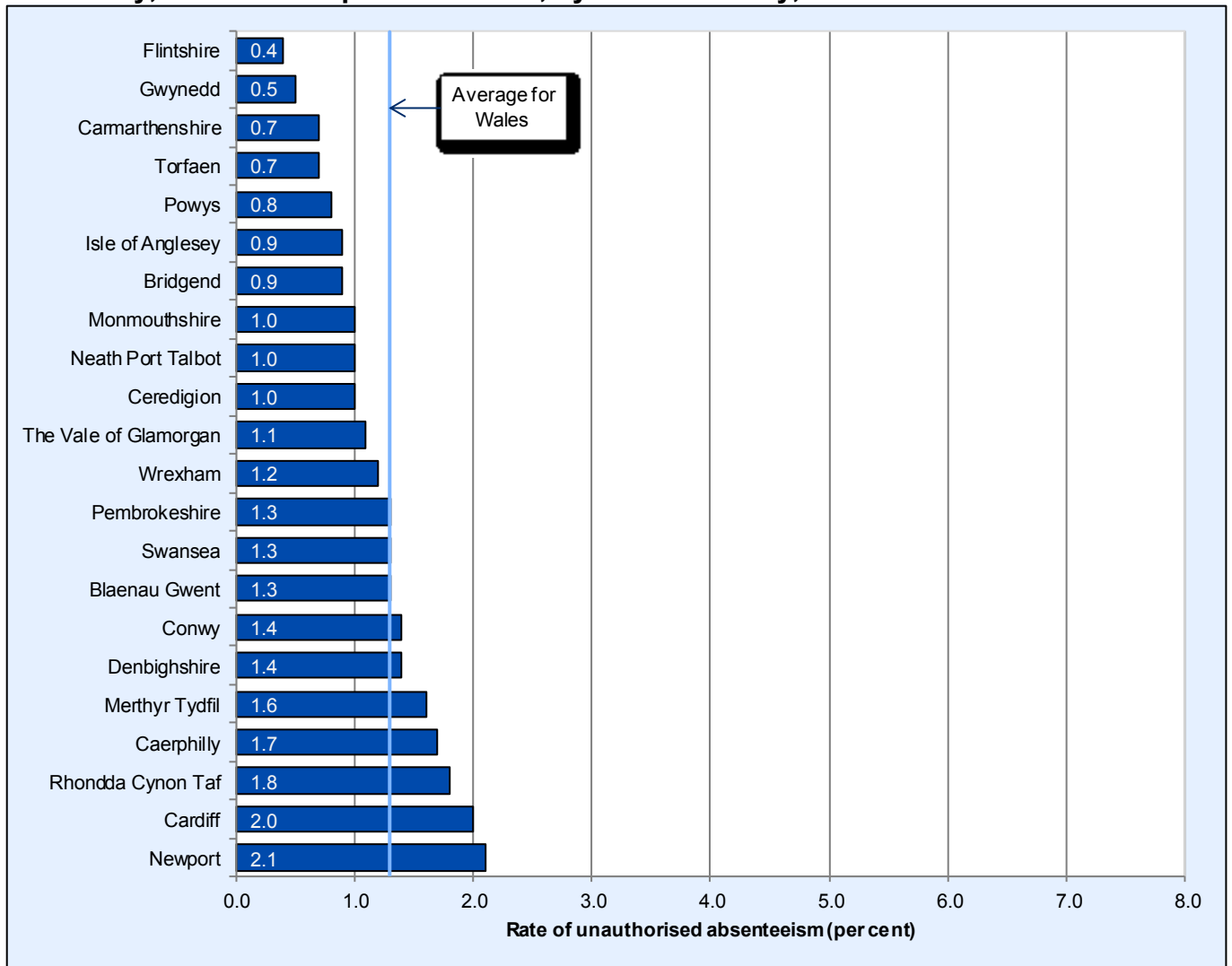


- The highest rate of unauthorised absence in local authorities fell to 2.1 per cent in 2015/16, which is the lowest that this value has been since 2006/07. It peaked twice over this period, in 2008/09 and 2014/15.
- The lowest rate of unauthorised absence rose from 0.3 per cent in 2014/15 to 0.4 per cent in 2015/16. It has varied between 0.3 and 0.5 per cent since 2007/08.

**Chart 5: Overall absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age in all maintained secondary, middle and special schools, by local authority, 2015/16**



**Chart 6: Unauthorised absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age in all maintained secondary, middle and special schools, by local authority, 2015/16**



**Table 6: Distribution of pupils in mainstream secondary and middle schools by length of overall absence, 2015/16**

Number of days of overall absence	Pupils in schools during 2015/16		Percentage of overall absence
	Number	Percentage	
No absence	14,886	9.4	0.0
0.5 to 5 days	59,240	37.6	11.1
5.5 to 10 days	36,798	23.3	19.5
10.5 to 15 days	20,445	13.0	17.9
15.5 to 20 days	10,666	6.8	13.0
20.5 to 25 days	5,651	3.6	8.9
more than 25 days	10,034	6.4	29.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>157,720</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh Government

**Table 7: Distribution of pupils in mainstream secondary and middle schools by their overall absence rates, 2015/16**

Overall absence rate	Pupils in schools during 2015/16		Percentage of overall absence
	Number	Percentage	
0%	14,886	9.4	0.0
Over 0%, but 4% at most	67,839	43.0	14.7
Over 4%, but 6% at most	22,508	14.3	12.2
Over 6%, but 10% at most	27,048	17.1	22.9
Over 10%, but 20% at most	18,920	12.0	27.9
Over 20%, but 30% at most	3,776	2.4	9.8
Over 30%, but 50% at most	1,916	1.2	7.5
Over 50%	827	0.5	5.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>157,720</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh Government

**Key points**

**In 2015/16:**

**157,720** number of pupils in mainstream secondary and middle schools.

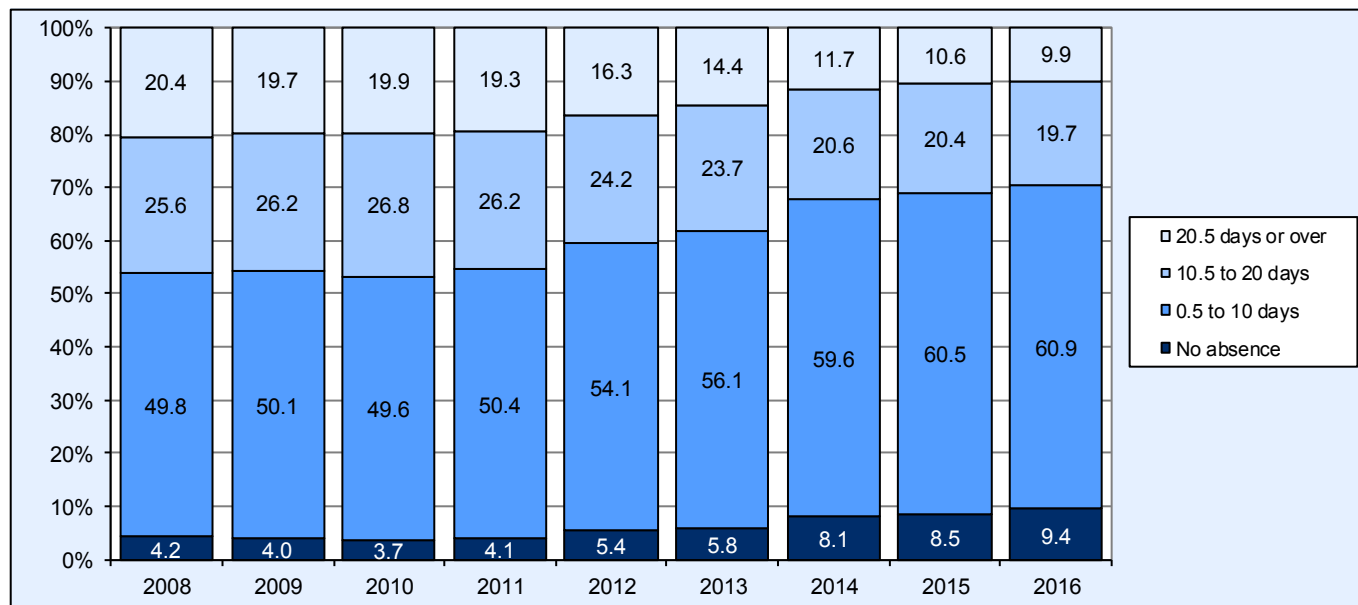
**6.4%** percentage of pupils absent for more than 25 days (10,034 pupils).

**9.4%** percentage of pupils with no absence (14,886 pupils).

- Of the 157,720 pupils who were reported to be on roll at mainstream secondary and middle schools during the 2015/16 academic year, just under 15,000 pupils (9.4 per cent) had no absence from school, and a little over 10,000 pupils (6.4 per cent) were absent for more than 25 days, or 5 school weeks.
- 827 pupils were absent for more than half the time that they were on roll at a mainstream secondary or middle 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 secondary and middle schools please see [Table 8](#).

## Chart 7: Distribution of pupils in mainstream secondary and middle schools by length of overall absence

[Chart 7](#) groups all pupils attending mainstream secondary and middle 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 2015/16. As the legend shows, the bottom bars relate to the percentage of pupils who had no absence and the bars above it increase in length of absence to the top bars which represent the percentage of pupils who were absent for 20.5 days or over. We can only produce this chart for the last nine years as the necessary data were not available before that.



### Key points



The percentage of pupils with no absence increased.



The percentage of pupils absent for 20.5 days or over decreased.

- As can be seen by the increase in the dark bar at the bottom of [Chart 7](#), the percentage of pupils who had no absence has been increasing since the 2009/10 academic year. In 2015/16 it reached its highest value (9.4 per cent) since pupil-level absenteeism data were collected for the first time in 2007/08. That is more than twice the value seen in 2009/10.
- The percentage of pupils absent for between 0.5 and 10 days has also been generally increasing since 2009/10 and reached its highest point in 2015/16, which is 60.9 per cent.
- The percentage of pupils with 10.5 to 20 days or 20.5 days or over of absence decreased to the smallest values that they have seen over the past seven years.
- In summary, the percentage of pupils with low absence continued to increase in 2015/16, while the percentage of pupils with high absence decreased.

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

	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Number of pupils who are persistent absentees	16,584	15,619	14,971	12,293	10,399	8,061	7,094	6,119
Total number of pupils	178,004	175,559	172,886	170,081	166,996	161,829	159,041	157,720
Percentage of pupils who are persistent absentees	9.3	8.9	8.7	7.2	6.2	5.0	4.5	3.9
Percentage of half days missed by persistent absentees due to:								
Authorised absence	21.6	21.9	22.0	21.4	20.6	19.5	18.8	18.6
Unauthorised absence	10.9	10.6	10.2	11.2	11.2	12.6	13.8	14.1
Overall absence	32.5	32.6	32.2	32.6	31.8	32.1	32.6	32.7
Percentage of all pupils' absence for which persistent absentees were responsible:								
Authorised absence	27.6	26.6	26.5	23.8	21.1	19.0	17.3	15.9
Unauthorised absence	58.5	58.9	59.8	58.3	54.0	48.8	48.4	43.4
Overall absence	33.6	32.4	32.2	29.9	26.8	25.0	23.7	21.9

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 2015/16 this means that persistent absentees in secondary schools missed at least 64 half-day sessions. See the Definitions section for a more detailed description.

**Key points**

**In 2015/16:**

**157,720** number of pupils in mainstream secondary and middle schools.

**6,119** number of persistent absentees (3.9 per cent).



Percentage of persistent absentees decreased.

- The percentage of persistent absentees has decreased every year since 2008/09. It is now less than half what it was seven years ago, showing a drop of 5.4 percentage points from 9.3 per cent in 2008/09 to 3.9 per cent in 2015/16.
- Overall, persistent absentees missed 32.7 per cent of half-day sessions from mainstream secondary and middle schools in 2015/16. As seen in [Table 1](#), the rate of overall absenteeism for all pupils from mainstream schools in 2015/16 was 5.8 per cent.
- The rate of unauthorised absence has been rising among persistent absentees since 2010/11, while authorised absence has been falling.
- The rate of unauthorised absence among persistent absentees reached its lowest value in 2010/11, with persistent absentees missing 10.2 per cent of half-day sessions for reasons not authorised by the school. It has been increasing in subsequent years.
- Since the percentage of persistent absentees has been falling since 2008/09, they are having less of an impact on absence rates in secondary schools. In 2008/09, persistent absentees were responsible for 33.6 per cent of the overall absence in mainstream secondary schools. By 2015/16 they were only responsible for 21.9 per cent of overall absence.

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

This table looks at the proportion of *absent* sessions by reason for absence. For each year the proportions for all reasons add up to 100, that is, 100 per cent of absence. The table can be used to find out which are the most commonly used reasons for absence, independent of the rise and fall in absence rates. An increase in a figure in this table does not necessarily mean that the percentage of half-day sessions missed for that reason has increased. It simply means that, compared with a previous year, it was more commonly used as a reason for absence.

Type of absence	Code	Reason for absence	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Authorised	I	Illness	53.9	59.0	59.5	61.4	60.7
	M	Medical or dental appointments	9.7	8.2	7.8	7.3	7.1
	R	Religious observance	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.2
	S	Study leave	3.1	0.8	0.5	0.3	0.2
	T	Traveller absence	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.1
	H	Agreed family holiday	5.9	5.4	3.3	2.0	1.8
	F	Agreed extended family holiday	0.1	-	-	-	-
	E	Excluded, but no alternative provision made	1.8	1.6	1.5	1.6	1.6
	C	Other authorised (not covered by other codes or descriptions)	7.8	7.4	6.9	6.3	6.5
		<b>Total authorised absence</b>	<b>82.4</b>	<b>82.6</b>	<b>79.9</b>	<b>79.2</b>	<b>78.2</b>
Unauthorised	G	Family holiday (not agreed or sessions in excess of agreement)	0.8	1.4	2.8	3.0	3.6
	U	Late (arrived after the register closed)	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.7
	O	Other unauthorised (not covered by other codes or descriptions)	11.5	12.3	15.3	16.7	17.2
	N	No reason for the absence provided yet	4.9	3.4	1.5	0.5	0.4
		<b>Total unauthorised absence</b>	<b>17.6</b>	<b>17.4</b>	<b>20.1</b>	<b>20.8</b>	<b>21.8</b>
Overall		<b>Total overall absence</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh Government

**Key points**

**In 2015/16:**

**60.7%** of absence was due to illness.

**1.8%** of absence was due to all family holidays agreed by the school.

**3.6%** of absence was due to holidays *not* agreed by the school.

- The proportion of absence due to medical or dental appointments or illness decreased between 2014/15 and 2015/16. Illness was still the most frequently-used reason for absence in 2015/16.
- The proportion of absence due to all family holidays agreed by the school decreased from 5.9 per cent in 2011/12 to 1.8 per cent in 2015/16. On the other hand, the proportion of absence because of family holidays *not* agreed by the school increased from 0.8 per cent in 2011/12 to 3.6 per cent in 2015/16.
- 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.

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

Type of absence	Code	Reason for absence	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Authorised	I	Illness	4.2	4.3	3.8	3.8	3.5
	M	Medical or dental appointments	0.8	0.6	0.5	0.5	0.4
	R	Religious observance	-	-	-	-	-
	S	Study leave	0.2	0.1	-	-	-
	T	Traveller absence	-	-	-	-	-
	H	Agreed family holiday	0.5	0.4	0.2	0.1	0.1
	F	Agreed extended family holiday	-	-	-	-	-
	E	Excluded, but no alternative provision made	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
	C	Other authorised (not covered by other codes or descriptions)	0.6	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.4
		<b>Total authorised absence</b>	<b>6.5</b>	<b>6.1</b>	<b>5.1</b>	<b>4.9</b>	<b>4.5</b>
Unauthorised	G	Family holiday (not agreed or sessions in excess of agreement)	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.2
	U	Late (arrived after the register closed)	-	-	-	-	-
	O	Other unauthorised (not covered by other codes or descriptions)	0.9	0.9	1.0	1.0	1.0
	N	No reason for the absence provided yet	0.4	0.2	0.1	-	-
		<b>Total unauthorised absence</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>1.3</b>
Overall		<b>Total overall absence</b>	<b>7.9</b>	<b>7.4</b>	<b>6.4</b>	<b>6.1</b>	<b>5.8</b>

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh Government

**Key points**

**In 2015/16:**



Decrease in absence due to illness.



No change in agreed or unauthorised family holidays.

- The percentage of half-day sessions missed due to illness decreased to 3.5 per cent in 2015/16, and is the lowest that it has been since reasons for absence were collected for the first time in 2011/12.
- Along with illness, a small decrease was also seen in the percentage of half-day sessions missed due to medical or dental appointments in 2015/16.
- Between 2011/12 and 2014/15 the percentage of half-day sessions missed due to agreed family holidays decreased, but in 2015/16 there was no change in the percentage of half-day sessions missed due to either agreed or unauthorised family holidays.



## 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@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:school.stats@wales.gsi.gov.uk).

School level data is also available on [My Local School](#) (Updated in early 2016)

## 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.
- The Department for Education and Skills in the Welsh Government.
- 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 secondary 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. The same letter is still sent to independent schools.

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.

## **Timeliness and punctuality**

DEWi was available for uploading files on 31 May 2016, with mainstream secondary schools asked to submit attendance data for every pupil aged between 5 and 15 on roll at the school from the start of September 2015 to the late May bank holiday in 2016. Mainstream middle schools, maintained special schools and independent schools were asked to submit attendance data for pupils aged between 11 and 15 on roll from the start of September 2015 to the late May bank holiday in 2016. 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 secondary 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 1999/2000 secondary 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 secondary schools to provide gender information whilst remaining voluntary for special and independent schools. 277 schools (97.2 per cent) supplied gender data in 2015/16, compared to 273 schools (97.5 per cent) in 2014/15. 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 were asked to provide the total number of sessions that pupils were on roll in the school in 2015/16, one only provided the number of half-day sessions that the school was open. For this reason, although 72 special and independent schools' absence percentages were calculated using the new method, 1 school was 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 from the start of the academic year to the late May bank holiday. Pupils of compulsory school age (5-15) registered at maintained secondary schools and pupils aged 11-15 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 280 schools with pupils within these age groups in the 2015/16 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 11-15 (as on 31st August before the start of the academic year). As with data for other schools, secondary 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 2015 to 25 December 2015.
- Spring term – from 26 December 2015 to 27 March 2016.
- Summer term – from 28 March 2016 to 27 May 2016.

## 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 2015/16 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 2015/16, most maintained secondary schools were open to pupils for 316 half-day sessions from the start of the academic year to the late May bank holiday.
- Twenty per cent of that figure equals 63.2 ( $316 * 0.2 = 63.2$ ) half-day sessions. But since a pupil cannot miss 0.2 of a half-day sessions, this figure is rounded up to the nearest whole number.

- So a persistent absentee in 2015/16 was someone who was absent for at least 64 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 2008/09 to 2015/16.

### Values used to calculate persistent absenteeism

Academic year	Mode of sessions possible	Number of sessions missed to be a persistent absentee
2008/09	304	61
2009/10	308	62
2010/11	308	62
2011/12	306	62
2012/13	304	61
2013/14	310	62
2014/15	310	62
2015/16	316	64

### 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 at: <http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/absenteeism-secondary-schools/>.

A similar release relating to absenteeism from maintained primary, special and independent schools in Wales during the 2014/15 academic year entitled '[Absenteeism from Primary Schools, 2014/15](#)' was released on 1 December 2015.

England publishes absenteeism data for primary and secondary schools in the statistical release entitled '[Pupil absence in schools in England: 2014 to 2015](#)'.

Scotland publishes absenteeism data for primary and secondary schools in supplementary dataset tables. The latest available statistics can be found on the [Scottish government website](#).

Northern Ireland publish primary and post-primary (secondary) school absenteeism data and their latest statistics can be found on the [Northern Ireland government website](#).

## Next update

August 2017 (provisional)

The next update will include a report covering the 2016/17 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@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:school.stats@wales.gsi.gov.uk).

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