



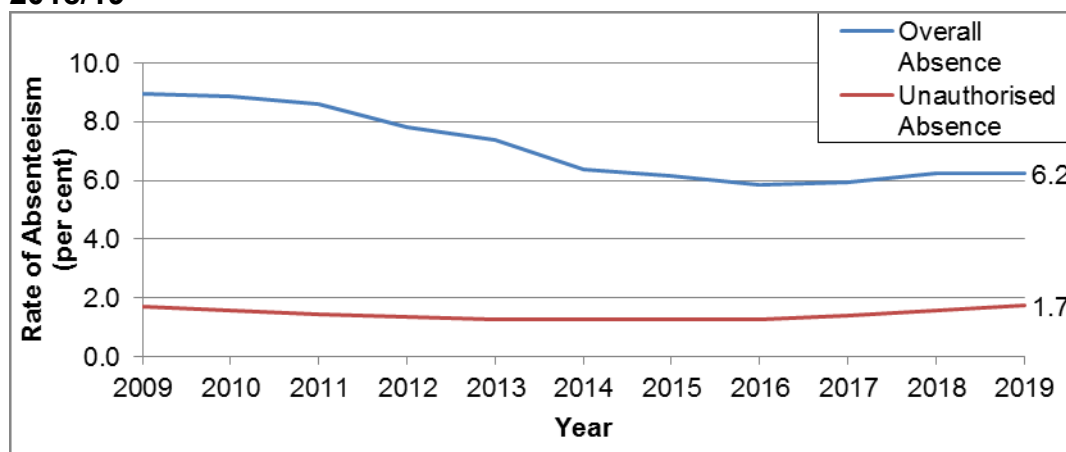
Absenteeism from Secondary Schools, 2018/19

29 August 2019
SFR 69/2019

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.

For more detailed analysis of the contents of this release, please see the related [tables](#) or visit the [StatsWales website](#).

Chart 1: Absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age, 2008/09 to 2018/19



- ➔ In 2018/19, **overall absence** stayed constant at 6.2%.
- ➔ Until 2015/16, the longer term trend has been downwards.
- ⬆ In 2018/19, **unauthorised absence** increased from 1.6% to 1.7% following last years 0.2% increase.

Absence by gender, 2018/19:

Percentage of half day sessions missed:

Males had higher overall absence than females as they did in 2017/18.



Unauthorised absence was slightly higher for males than females as in 2017/18 though both have seen an increase (percentage of half day sessions missed: **males 1.8%, females 1.7%**).

About this release

This release covers 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. Information relates to the entire academic year, from 2007/08 to 2018/19.

The absenteeism information in this Statistical First Release relates to the percentage of half-day sessions missed by pupils for the majority of the academic year.

We welcome [Feedback](#) on the new format of this Statistical First Release.

Accompanying this release:

- [Detailed tables](#)
- [Technical notes and Key quality information](#)
- [StatsWales Tables](#)

Persistent absentees

Just under 1 in 20 pupils were persistent absentees from mainstream secondary and middle schools in 2018/19 (4.6 per cent).

Percentage of persistent absentees increased from 4.1% in 2017/18 to 4.6% in 2018/19, and is now at its highest level since 2013/14.



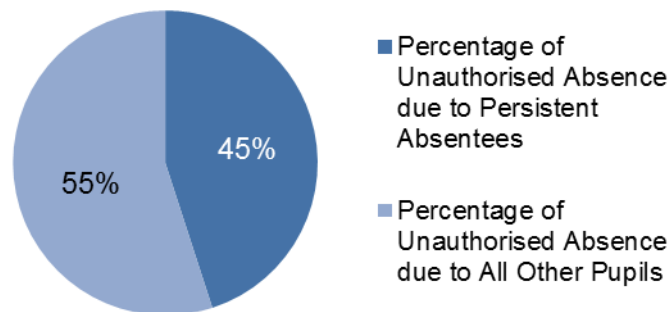
Persistent absentees in more detail

Every year since 2011/12, the percentage of half days missed by persistent absentees due to:

- ↓ Authorised absence has decreased.
- ↑ Unauthorised absence has increased.

The 4.6% of pupils classed as persistent absentees account for 45.0% of all pupils' unauthorised absences in 2018/19.

Percentage of all unauthorised absence for which persistent and non-persistent absentees are responsible for, 2018/19:



Reasons for absence

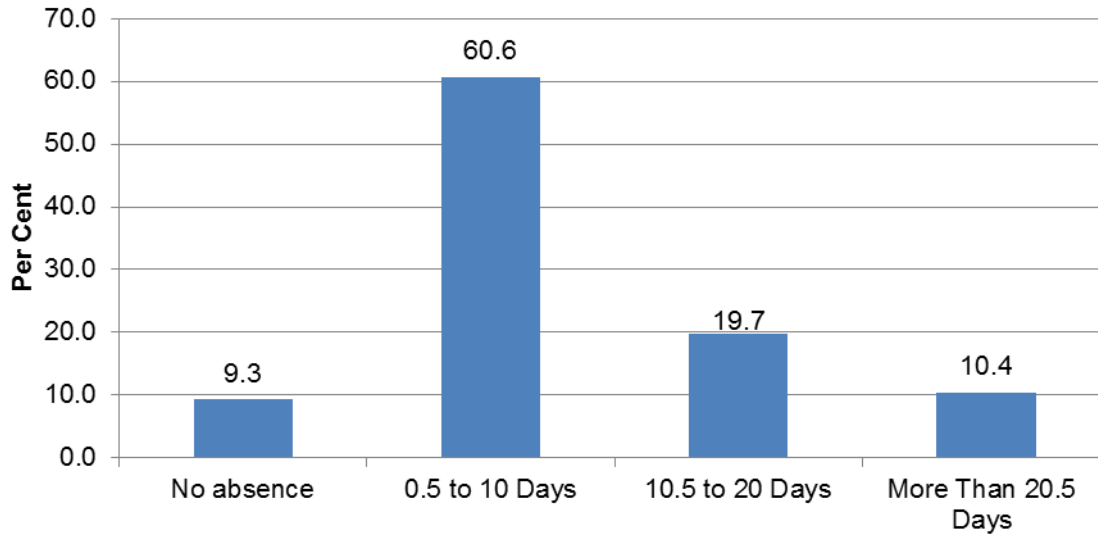
- Illness was the most common reason for absence in mainstream secondary and middle schools accounting for 54.0% of all absences in 2018/19.
- The percentage of sessions missed due to illness decreased slightly from 3.5% in 2017/18 to 3.3% in 2018/19.
- The percentage of all absences due to agreed family holidays remains the same in 2018/19 (2.4%).
- The percentage of all absences due to family holidays not agreed by the school increased slightly (from 4.3% in 2017/18 to 4.7% in 2018/19). This has increased each year since 2012/13. (This does not necessarily mean that the percentage of half-day sessions missed due to this reason has increased. It simply means that a greater proportion of absences were attributed to that particular reason for that year).
- The percentage of sessions missed due to family holidays not agreed by the school in 2018/19 has remained the same as in 2017/18 (0.3%).
- A large proportion (22.4%) of absent sessions was due to unauthorised reasons not covered by other codes or descriptions. Usage of this attendance code, code 'O', has been increasing each year since 2012/13 but saw its biggest increase this year (2.4%).

Length of absence, 2018/19:

60% of pupils are absent for 10 days or less.

Slightly more than 10% of pupils are absent for more than 20 days (10.4%).

Percentage of pupils within each overall length of absence category, 2018/19



Absence by free school meals eligibility



In general, schools with a higher proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals have higher absenteeism rates.

Local authorities, 2018/19:

- Monmouthshire had the lowest overall absence (5.0%) and lowest unauthorised absence (0.7%).
- Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf had the highest overall absence (7.2%) and highest unauthorised absence (2.7%).

[Notes to accompany this release](#) can be found on the Statistics and Research website.

Definitions

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 3 September 2018 to 24 December 2018.
- Spring term – from 25 December 2018 to 21 April 2019.
- Summer term – from 22 April 2019 to 24 May 2019.

This collection ends in May due to pupils in year 11 being on study leave during examinations.

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 2018/19 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 2018/19, most maintained secondary schools were open to pupils for 310 half-day sessions from the start of the academic year to the late May bank holiday.
- Twenty per cent of that figure equals 62 ($310 * 0.2 = 62$) half-day sessions. So a persistent absentee in 2018/19 was someone who was absent for at least 62 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. Table "Persistent Absentees" in related tables shows the values used to evaluate persistent absenteeism from 2008/09 to 2018/19.

Further details

The document is available at: <https://gov.wales/absenteeism-secondary-schools-september-2018-august-2019>

Next update

August 2020 (provisional)

The next update will include a report covering the 2019/20 academic year.

We want your feedback

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

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