

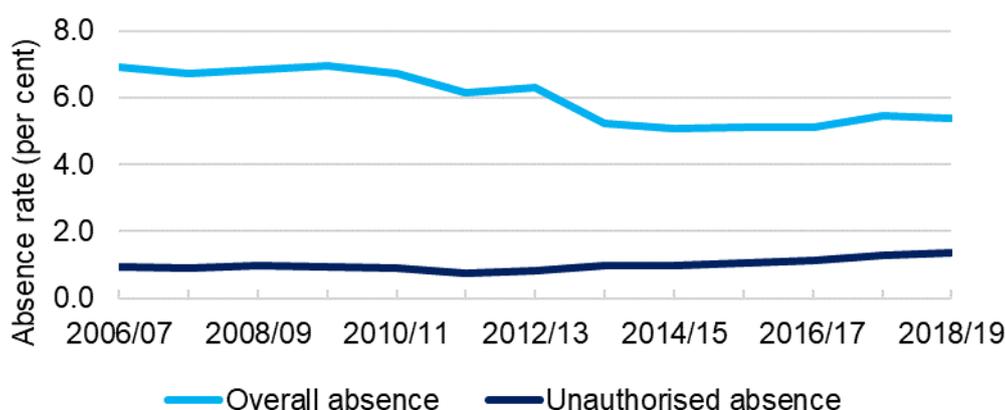


Absenteeism from Primary Schools, 2018/19

13 December 2019
SFR 122/2019

This annual Statistical First Release reports on absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age in maintained primary, middle and special schools and independent schools in Wales.

Chart 1: Absenteeism by primary school pupils of compulsory school age, 2006/07 to 2018/19



In 2018/19, **overall absence** in primary schools decreased from 5.5% to **5.4%**.



Overall absence is higher than it was between 2014 and 2017, but is 0.9 percentage points lower than it was in 2013.



In 2018/19, **unauthorised absence** increased from 1.3% to **1.4%**, the highest it has been since 2007.

Illness was the **most common reason for absence** in mainstream primary and middle school accounting for **51.0%** of all absences in 2018/19.

Absence by gender, 2018/19

- Overall absence is slightly higher for males (5.5%) than females (5.3%).
- Unauthorised absence is higher for males (1.4%) than females (1.3%).



5.5%



5.3%

About this release

This release covers absenteeism from primary schools, including a breakdown by reason for absence. It also reports on persistent absentees in primary schools. Data are shown for Wales and at local authority/consortium level.

Information relates to the entire academic year, from 2006/07 to 2018/19.

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

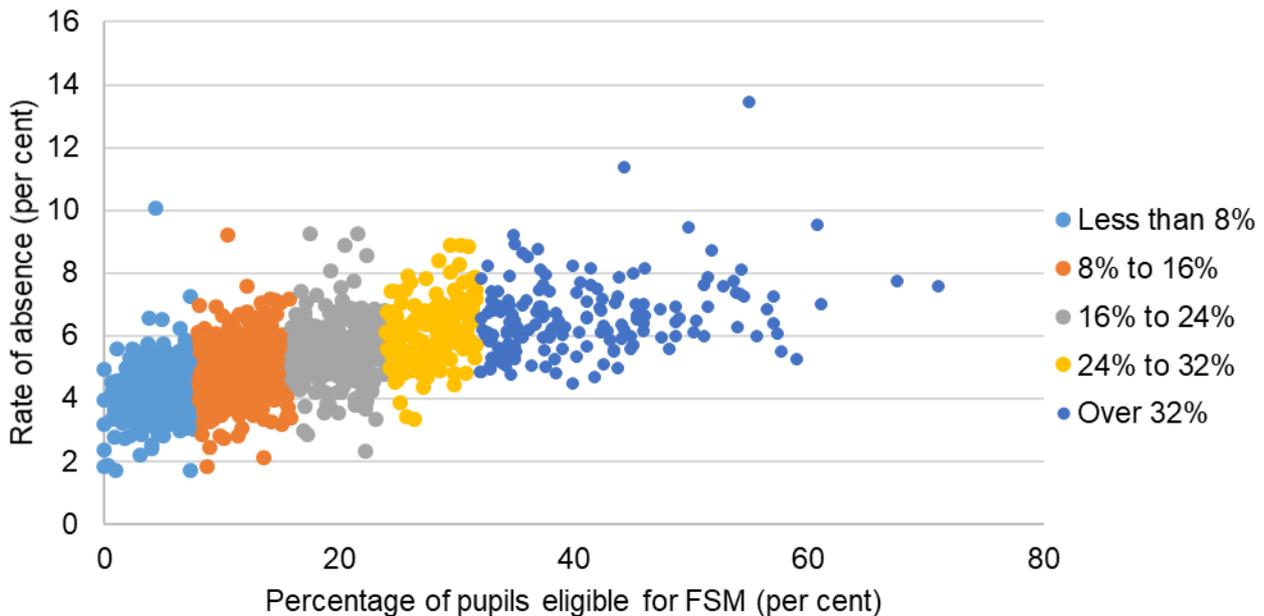
Just over **1 in 55** pupils missed at least 20 per cent of all half day-sessions that a primary school was open for in 2018/19. These pupils are considered to be **persistent absentees** (see definitions).

The percentage of persistent absentees increased from 1.7% in 2017/18 to 1.8% in 2018/19, but is still less than half of what it was in 2009/10.

Free school meal (FSM) eligibility

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

Chart 2: Overall absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age, by mainstream primary school and free school meal percentage, 2018/19



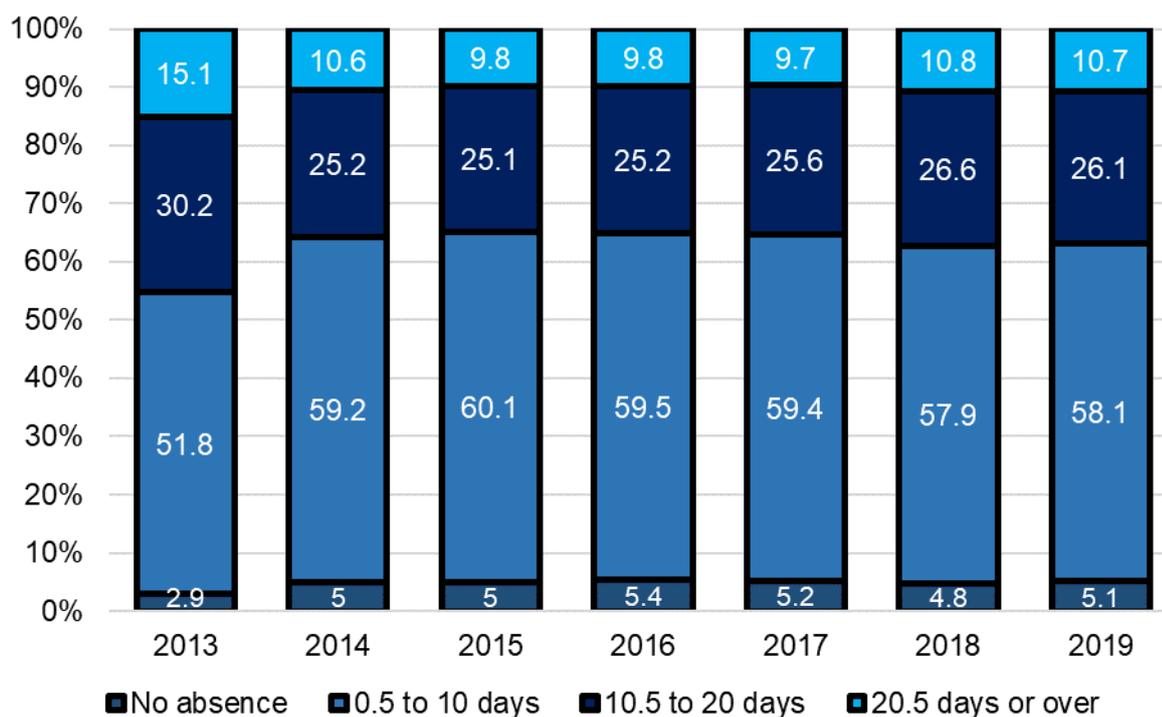
Reasons for absence

- Unauthorised absences made up just over a quarter (25.6%) of all absences in 2018/19, the highest proportion for over 5 years.
- The percentage of all sessions missed due to illness decreased slightly from 2.9% in 2017/18 to 2.7% in 2018/19, the lowest it has been since before 2012/13.
- The percentage of all sessions missed due to agreed family holidays increased from 0.6% in 2017/18 to 0.7% in 2018/19.
- The percentage of all absences due to family holidays not agreed by the school increased from 10.8% in 2017/18 to 11.1% in 2018/19. This has been increasing year on year since 2012/13.

Length of overall absence for pupils in primary schools

The chart below shows the percentage of overall lengths of absence for all pupils, split by different lengths of overall absence, for the last seven years. Note that overall pupil counts change between years.

Chart 3: Distribution of pupils in maintained primary schools by length of overall absence, 2012/13 - 2018/19

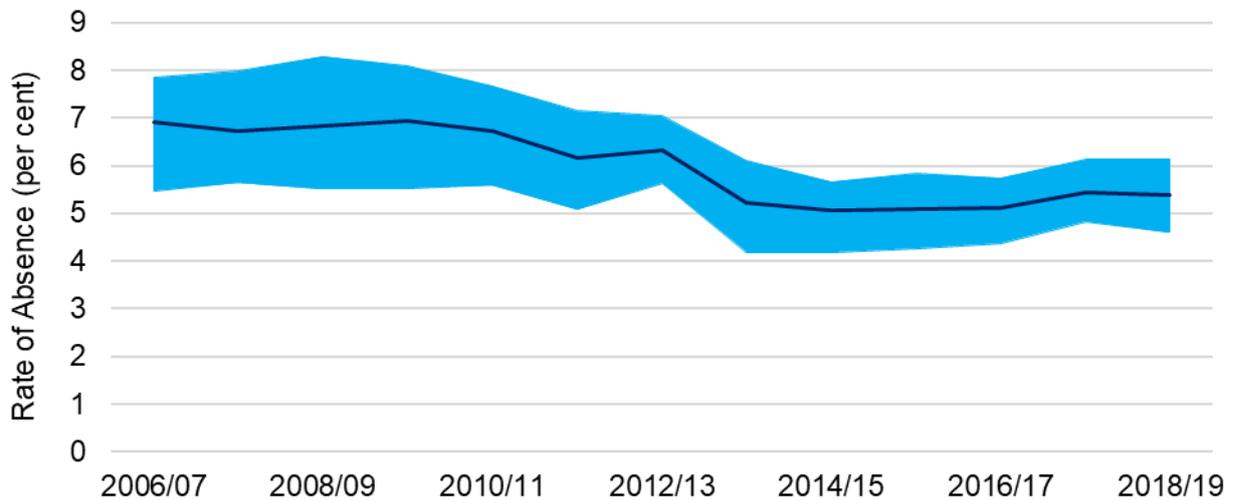


- Around 5% of pupils were not absent at any point in 2018/19. This percentage has stayed around the same level since 2013/14, and while it is lower than the peak in 2015/16 it is significantly higher than the years prior to 2013/14.
- In each of the last five years, over ten thousand pupils had no absence from school during the year.
- Around 58% of pupils are absent for 10 days or less, a similar amount to 2017/18. This represents a slight decrease on 2013/14 to 2016/17, but is higher than the years prior to that point.
- Almost 11% of pupils are absent for more than 20 days, which is around the same level as last year. This is significantly lower than the 15.1% seen in 2012/13, but is higher than the sub-10% levels seen between 2014/15 and 2016/17.

Absence at the local authority (LA) level

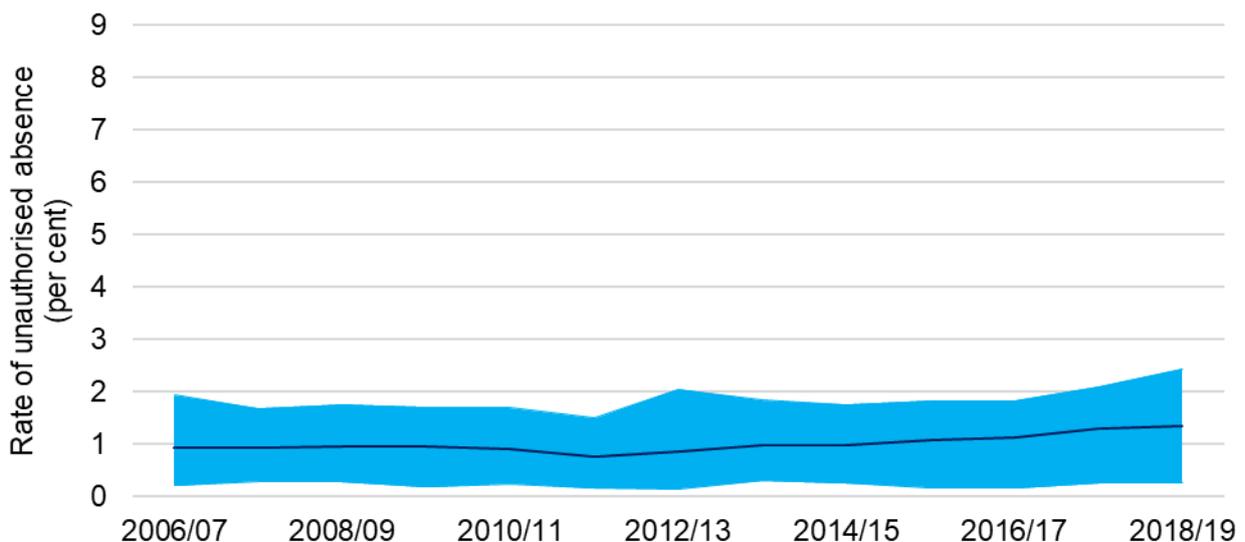
The two charts below show how the range of overall and unauthorised absence rates at the LA level has changed over time. For each year, the top of the blue band shows the highest LA's absence rate and the bottom of the blue band shows the lowest. The dark blue line within this band is the average overall absence rate for Wales.

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



- In general, since 2007 the variation in rates across local authorities across Wales has narrowed.
- In 2018/19, Carmarthenshire, Neath Port Talbot and Merthyr Tydfil had the highest overall absence (6.1%) whereas Monmouthshire had the lowest (4.6%). Please see table 5 and chart 1 of the accompanying spreadsheet tables for more detail.

Chart 5: Range of local authorities' rates of unauthorised absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age



- The variation across local authorities in Wales remains broadly the same as in 2007/08.
- In 2018/19, Neath Port Talbot had the highest unauthorised absence (2.4%) whereas Gwynedd had the (0.3%). Please see table 5 and chart 2 of the accompanying spreadsheet tables for more detail.

Definitions

Types of absence

Absence and Attendance are measured in half-day sessions for each pupil.

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.

Absence rates

Absence rates are calculated by dividing the total number of half-day sessions missed by each pupil by the total number of half-day sessions possible (the number of half-day sessions each pupils' school is open for). These rates are calculated at the Wales level, local authority level and school level. At the Wales level, independent schools are also included.

For example, if a mainstream primary school was open for 380 sessions in 2018/19, and if there were 10 pupils, 9 of which had zero absence and 1 of which attended 300 of the 380 sessions. The absence rate for the school would be:

$$\begin{aligned}\text{Absence rate} &= \left(\frac{\text{Total number of half-day sessions absent}}{\text{Total number of half-day sessions possible}} \right) * 100 \\ &= (9*(380-380) + 1*(380-300))/380*10 \\ &= (80/3800)*100 \\ &= 2.1\%\end{aligned}$$

Term dates

Attendance and absence data were collected on the days that schools were open to pupils between the following dates:

- Autumn: from 3 September to 24 December 2018
- Spring: from 25 December 2018 to 21 April 2019
- Summer: from 22 April 2019 to 22 July 2019

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 primary schools were open to pupils for 378 half-day sessions for the academic year.
- Twenty per cent of that figure equals 76 ($378 * 0.2 = 75.6$) half-day sessions. So a persistent absentee in 2018/19 was someone who was absent for at least 76 half-day sessions.

Because the mode number of sessions that schools were open to pupils changes from year to year the figure used to determine whether a pupil is a persistent absentee or not also changes.

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

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 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 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 the indicators, along with narratives for each of the well-being goals and associated technical information is available in the [Well-being of Wales report](#).

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

This release is available at:

<https://gov.wales/absenteeism-primary-schools-september-2018-august-2019>

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.

We publish the [detailed tables to accompany this release](#).

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

School level data is also available on [My Local School](#) (Updated in early 2019)

Next update

December 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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