



Absenteeism from Secondary Schools, 2017/18

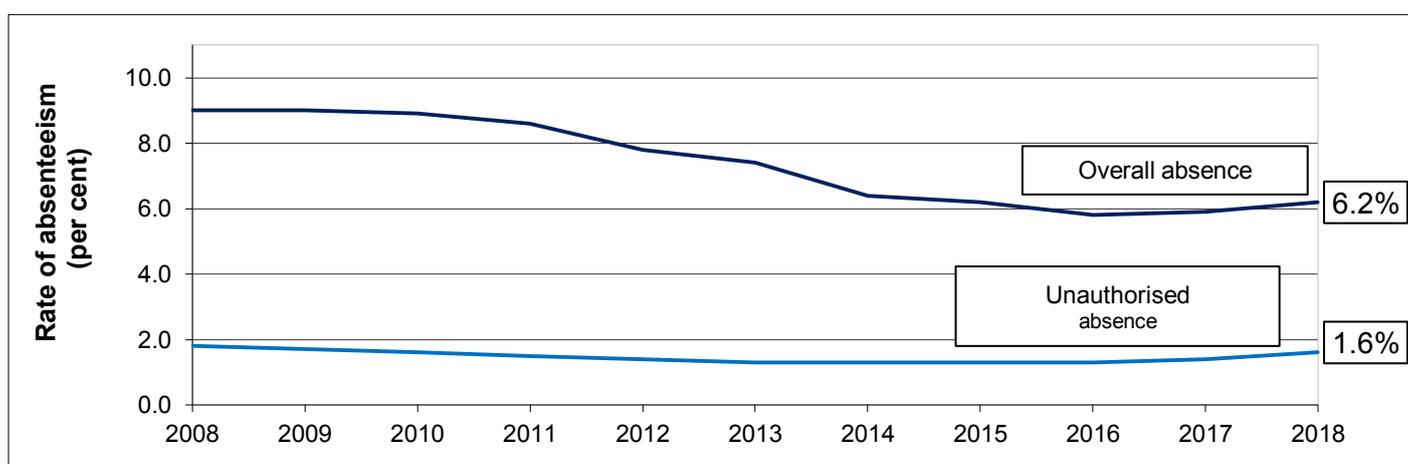
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This annual Statistical First Release reports on absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age in maintained secondary, middle and special schools and independent schools in Wales.

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

We welcome feedback on the new format of this Statistical First Release (see back for details).

Chart 1: Absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age, 2007/08 to 2017/18



In 2017/18, **overall absence** increased from 5.9% to 6.2%.



Until 2015/16, the longer term trend was downwards.



In 2017/18, **unauthorised absence** increased from 1.4% to 1.6%

In 2017/18:

3 out of 4 absences
were authorised.

Persistent absentees

1 in 25 pupils were persistent absentees from mainstream secondary and middle schools in 2017/18 (4.1 per cent).

Percentage of persistent absentees increased from 4.0% in 2016/17 to 4.1% in 2017/18 (but is still less than half of what it was in 2010/11).



Absence by gender, 2017/18:

Percentage of half day sessions missed:



6.3%



6.2%

- Males had higher overall absence than females for the first time since 2011/12.
- **Unauthorised absence** was slightly higher for males than females for the first time since 2011/12. (Percentage of half day sessions missed: **males 1.6%, females 1.5%**).
- Unauthorised absence has been equal for females and males since 2011/12.

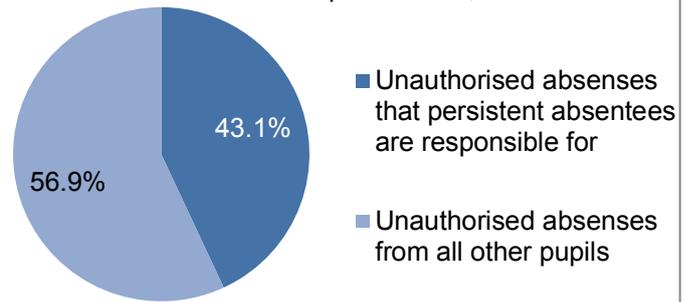
Persistent absentees in more detail

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 4.1% of pupils classed as persistent absentees account for 43.1% of all pupils' unauthorised absences in 2017/18.

Percentage of all unauthorised absence for which persistent and non-persistent absentees are responsible for, 2017/18:



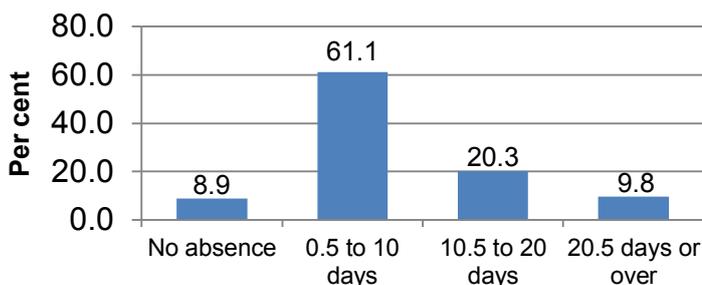
Reasons for absence

- **Illness** was the **most common reason** for absence in mainstream secondary and middle schools accounting for 57.7% of all absences in 2017/18.
- The percentage of sessions missed due to illness increased slightly from 3.4% in 2016/17 to 3.5% in 2017/18.
- The percentage of all absences due to **agreed family holidays** remains the same in 2017/18 (2.4%).
- The percentage of all absences due to family holidays not agreed by the school increased slightly (from 4.2% in 2016/17 to 4.3% in 2017/18). 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).
- After remaining the same for the previous 4 years (at 0.2%), the percentage of sessions missed due to family holidays not agreed has increased slightly to 0.3% in 2017/18.
- A large proportion (20.1%) 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.

Length of absence, 2017/18:

- 70% of pupils are absent for 10 days or less.
- Almost 10% of pupils are absent for more than 20 days.

Percentage of pupils within each overall length of absence category, 2017/18



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, 2017/18:

- Monmouthshire had the lowest overall absence (5.2%) and lowest unauthorised absence (0.6%).
- Merthyr Tydfil had the highest overall absence (7.6%) and highest unauthorised absence (3.0%).

[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 4 September 2017 to 25 December 2017.
- Spring term – from 26 December 2018 to 13 April 2018.
- Summer term – from 14 April 2018 to 25 May 2018.

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 2017/18 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 2017/18, most maintained secondary schools were open to pupils for 306 half-day sessions from the start of the academic year to the late May bank holiday.
- Twenty per cent of that figure equals 62 ($306 * 0.2 = 61.2$) half-day sessions. So a persistent absentee in 2017/18 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.

Further details

The document is available at: <https://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/absenteeism-secondary-schools/?lang=en>

Next update

August 2019 (provisional)

The next update will include a report covering the 2018/19 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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