

SDR 170/2008

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Absenteeism from Secondary Schools, 2007/08

This Statistical First Release reports on absenteeism by 11 to 15 year olds in secondary, special and independent schools in Wales. Pupil level absence data was collected from maintained secondary schools for the first time in 2008. Information relates to the period September to May for the academic years 1998/99 to 2007/08.

Key results

Overall absenteeism

- In 2007/08, 9.0 per cent of half-day sessions were missed in maintained secondary, special and independent schools through authorised and unauthorised absence, a decrease from 9.3 per cent in 2006/07 (Table 1);
- Overall absenteeism is at a lower rate than over the previous decade and in general there has been a slight downward trend over the period despite a levelling off in the mid 00s;
- Absenteeism in maintained secondary schools decreased to 9.1 per cent of sessions in 2007/08 (Table 1);
- The highest level of all absence in 2007/08 was in Isle of Anglesey LEA (10.1 per cent of sessions), with the lowest rate in Flintshire LEA (7.5 per cent) (Table 6).

Unauthorised absenteeism

- In 2007/08, 1.8 per cent of half-day sessions were missed in maintained secondary, special and independent schools through unauthorised absence, the same as in 2006/07 (Table 2);
- The level of unauthorised absence in individual LEAs varied from 0.5 per cent in Neath Port Talbot to 3.3 per cent in Cardiff (Table 7).

Distribution of absence in maintained secondary schools

- Almost 7,500 pupils (4.2 per cent) had no absence from school in 2007/08 (Table 7);
- Just over one fifth of pupils account for over half the total number of absent sessions (Table 7).

Absenteeism and gender

- For those schools that returned data by gender, girls had a higher rate of overall absenteeism while the rate of unauthorised absenteeism was the same for both boys and girls (Table 3).

Absenteeism and deprivation (measured by free school meal entitlement)

- The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals and the rate of absenteeism continue to be correlated (Table 4).

Comparison with England

- The percentage of half-day sessions missed due to both overall absence and unauthorised absence is higher in Wales compared with England (Table 5).

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Next Update: August 2009 (provisional)



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Chart 1: Overall absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age

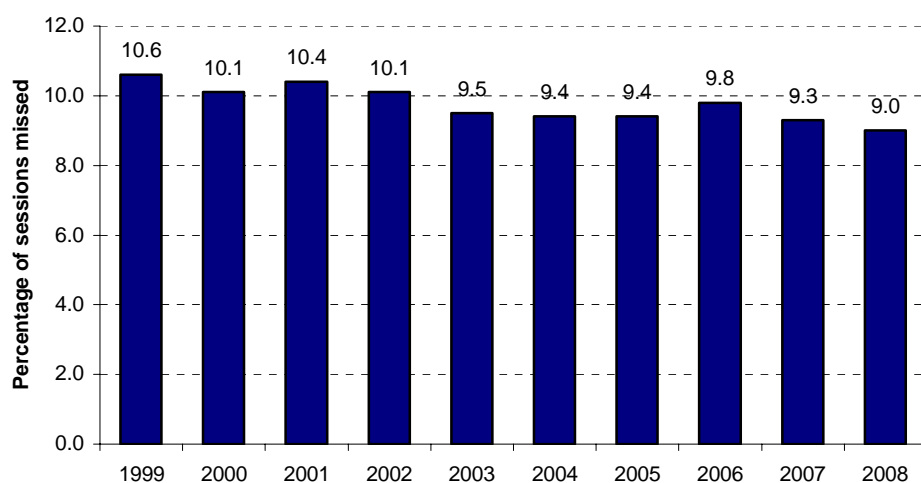


Chart 2: Unauthorised absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age

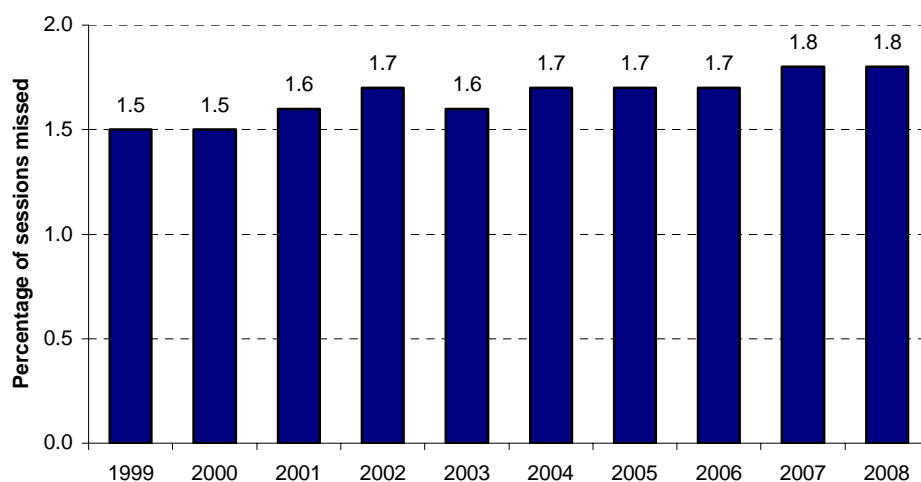


Table 1: Overall absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age, by sector (a)

	Percentage of school sessions missed							
	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
LEA Maintained Secondary Schools	10.5	10.1	9.6	9.5	9.5	9.9	9.4	9.1
Special Schools	14.9	13.2	13.1	12.9	11.7	13.7	13.9	12.2
Independent Schools	5.5	5.8	4.6	5.1	5.2	5.6	5.5	5.8
Total	10.4	10.1	9.5	9.4	9.4	9.8	9.3	9.0

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh Assembly Government

(a) Figures do not include data for 2 special and 4 independent schools that did not respond to the survey.

Table 2: Unauthorised absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age, by sector (a)

	Percentage of school sessions missed							
	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
LEA Maintained Secondary Schools	1.6	1.7	1.6	1.7	1.8	1.7	1.9	1.8
Special Schools	3.2	3.0	2.9	2.6	2.4	3.1	3.3	2.5
Independent Schools	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.3
Total	1.6	1.7	1.6	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.8	1.8

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh Assembly Government

(a) Figures do not include data for 2 special and 4 independent schools that did not respond to the survey.

Table 3: Absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age in all schools, by gender (a)

	Percentage of schools sessions missed				
	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Number of schools providing gender information	218	245	244	263	303
Percentage of schools providing gender information	71	79	81	83	97
Unauthorised absences:					
Boys	1.9	1.8	1.9	1.9	1.8
Girls	1.8	1.7	1.8	2.0	1.8
All absences:					
Boys	9.3	9.3	9.8	9.2	8.8
Girls	9.6	9.6	10.2	9.8	9.3

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh Assembly Government

(a) It is not advisable to compare year on year changes for data on absenteeism by gender. Up to 2006/07 the data was supplied voluntarily and hence different schools responded each year. In 2007/08 it became compulsory for maintained secondary schools to provide gender information, however it remains voluntary for special and independent schools.

Table 4: Absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age in all maintained secondary schools, by proportion entitled to free school meals, 2007/08 (a)

Proportion entitled to free school meals	Percentage of school sessions missed		Number of schools
	All absences	Unauthorised absences	
10% or less	7.5	0.8	65
15% or less, but over 10%	8.6	1.6	52
20% or less, but over 15%	9.3	1.8	47
30% or less, but over 20%	10.4	2.5	40
over 30%	12.7	4.4	18
All maintained schools	9.1	1.8	222

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh Assembly Government

(a) Figures do not include data for 2 special and 4 independent schools that did not respond to the survey.

Table 5: Absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age in all maintained secondary schools: Comparison with England

Percentage of school sessions missed due to	2006/07		2007/08	
	Wales	England	Wales	England (a)
All absence	9.4	7.9	9.1	7.3
Unauthorised absence	1.9	1.5	1.8	1.4

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh Assembly Government
Department for Children, Schools and Families

(a) England data for 2007/08 relates to the Autumn and Spring term only. See DCSF Statistical First Releases SFR 05/2008 for England 2006/07 data and SFR 30/2008 for England 2007/08 data:

[SFR05/2008 Pupil Absence in Schools in England, including Pupil Characteristics: 2006/07](#)
[SFR30/2008 Pupil Absence in Schools in England: Autumn Term 2007 and Spring Term 2008](#)

Table 6: Absenteeism by pupils of compulsory school age in all maintained secondary and special schools, by Local Education Authority

Local Authority	Percentage of school sessions missed due to:							
	All absences				Unauthorised absences			
	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Isle of Anglesey	10.6	10.8	11.0	10.1	1.9	1.6	1.3	1.3
Gwynedd	8.6	9.5	9.0	8.6	0.8	1.2	1.1	1.1
Conwy	8.7	9.5	9.7	8.8	2.3	2.0	2.2	2.0
Denbighshire	10.4	10.6	10.1	8.8	2.1	1.6	2.2	2.0
Flintshire	8.0	8.1	8.2	7.5	0.6	0.4	0.7	0.8
Wrexham	9.6	8.7	8.8	8.2	1.6	1.4	1.9	1.9
Powys	8.4	8.8	9.4	8.6	0.9	0.8	1.0	1.0
Ceredigion	9.5	10.2	9.2	8.4	1.3	1.7	1.2	1.0
Pembrokeshire	9.1	9.6	8.2	9.1	1.8	1.7	1.3	1.5
Carmarthenshire	9.0	10.0	9.1	9.3	0.8	0.8	0.7	1.1
Swansea	9.9	10.3	9.7	9.2	2.2	2.4	2.3	1.9
Neath Port Talbot	8.6	9.3	8.5	7.9	0.7	0.7	0.8	0.5
Bridgend	8.5	9.9	9.0	9.1	1.4	1.9	1.9	2.0
The Vale of Glamorgan	8.3	8.7	7.9	8.4	1.2	1.3	1.0	1.1
Rhondda, Cynon, Taff	10.9	10.6	10.2	10.0	2.7	2.5	2.5	2.2
Merthyr Tydfil	10.8	11.0	10.4	9.4	0.7	0.7	1.5	1.8
Caerphilly	10.3	10.9	9.9	9.7	2.2	2.3	2.4	2.1
Blaenau Gwent	9.5	10.3	9.3	9.2	1.5	1.8	1.8	2.2
Torfaen	8.5	9.3	9.0	9.3	1.8	1.8	2.5	2.6
Monmouthshire	7.8	8.4	8.4	9.4	0.7	0.6	0.9	1.1
Newport	10.0	10.4	9.8	10.0	2.1	1.9	2.3	2.0
Cardiff	10.7	11.1	10.6	9.7	3.3	3.4	3.7	3.3
Wales (b)	9.4	9.8	9.3	9.0	1.7	1.7	1.8	1.8

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh Assembly Government

(a) Figures do not include data for 2 special and 4 independent schools that did not respond to the survey.

(b) Includes independent schools.

Table 7: Distribution of pupils in maintained secondary schools by length of overall absence

Number of days of overall absence	Pupils in schools during 2007/08		Percentage of overall absence
	Number	Percentage	
No absence	7,495	4.2	0.0
0.5 to 5 days	48,808	27.1	5.6
5.5 to 10 days	40,971	22.7	12.7
10.5 to 15 days	28,060	15.6	14.4
15.5 to 20 days	18,062	10.0	12.9
20.5 to 25 days	11,471	6.4	10.5
more than 25 days	25,346	14.1	43.9
Total	180,213	100.0	100.0

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh Assembly Government

Table 8: Distribution of pupils in maintained secondary schools by their overall absence rates

Overall absence rate	Pupils in schools during 2007/08		Percentage of overall absence
	Number	Percentage	
0%	7,495	4.2	0.0
Over 0%, but 4% at most	57,101	31.7	7.6
Over 4%, but 6% at most	24,501	13.6	7.6
Over 6%, but 10% at most	35,436	19.7	17.2
Over 10%, but 20% at most	37,316	20.7	31.8
Over 20%, but 30% at most	10,635	5.9	15.6
Over 30%, but 50% at most	5,587	3.1	12.5
Over 50%	2,142	1.2	7.8
Total	180,213	100.0	100.0

Source: Pupils' Attendance Record, Welsh Assembly Government

Key Quality Information

- Attendance data was received from 313 schools with pupils of secondary school age. Two special and four independent schools did not respond to the survey.
- Pupil level absence data was collected from maintained secondary schools for the first time in 2007/08. However the definitions and calculations involved in the collection have not changed hence comparability over time has not been affected.
- Since 1999/2000 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. 303 schools (97%) supplied gender data in 2007/08, compared to 263 schools (83%) in 2006/07. It is not advisable to compare year on year changes for data on absenteeism by gender as different schools responded each year.
- Free school meal data is collected through the January 2008 Pupil Level Annual Schools Census (PLASC). This data is currently provisional. Final data will be published in November 2008.

Definitions

1. The absenteeism information in this Statistical First Release relates to:

- secondary school pupils of compulsory school age (11 to 15) registered at mainstream, special and independent schools;
- the percentage of half-day sessions missed due to unauthorised absences, and the percentage missed due to all absences, from the beginning of the academic year up to and ending on the date of the late May Bank Holiday.

2. 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, religious observance, or foot and mouth disease restrictions in 2000/01).
- from 2001/02, pupils who were registered in both a mainstream secondary school and a PRU/special school were deemed to be present at the mainstream school whilst attending the PRU/special school, or vice versa. In previous years they were classified as an authorised absence.
- 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.