



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

PUBLICATION, DOCUMENT

# Pupils educated other than at school: September 2023 to August 2024

Data relating to pupils known by local authorities to be receiving education outside of school from September 2023 to August 2024.

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# Introduction

This release covers data on pupils receiving Education Other than at School (EOTAS), including at Pupil Referral Units (PRU). It includes data by age, gender, and the type of provision.

This report covers a time both during and after the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The most recent data in this report relates to the situation as of 17 January 2024 when the EOTAS census was taken. Please see the quality section for information on the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on this data collection in the last few years.

The EOTAS Census covers pupils that local authorities place in Pupil Referral Units (PRUs), or other forms of alternative provision referred to as Educated Other Than at School (EOTAS). It is the equivalent of the [Pupil Level Annual School Census \(PLASC\)](#), but for children educated outside school.

This release also has information about children who have been notified to local authorities by parents as being home educated (known as 'elective home educated'). These children are not included in the EOTAS Census, and data is provided in the final section of this publication.

For more detailed definitions about the criteria for EOTAS and categories of EOTAS provision see [definitions and criteria](#).

This publication often uses the number of pupils in every 1,000 (rates) to compare groups. These numbers are calculated by dividing by the number of pupils in the EOTAS group by the number of pupils in the same group in the whole student population.

For example, if in a local authority in 2023/24 there are:

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- 500 EOTAS pupils in the local authority
- 50,000 PLASC and EOTAS pupils combined in the same local authority

Then there are 10 EOTAS pupils in every 1,000 pupils in that local authority.

In Wales, in 2023/24 there are 5.5 of every 1,000 pupils with EOTAS provision.

The local authority in our example is greater than the Wales number, so there are proportionately more EOTAS pupils in that local authority than in Wales.

## EOTAS pupils

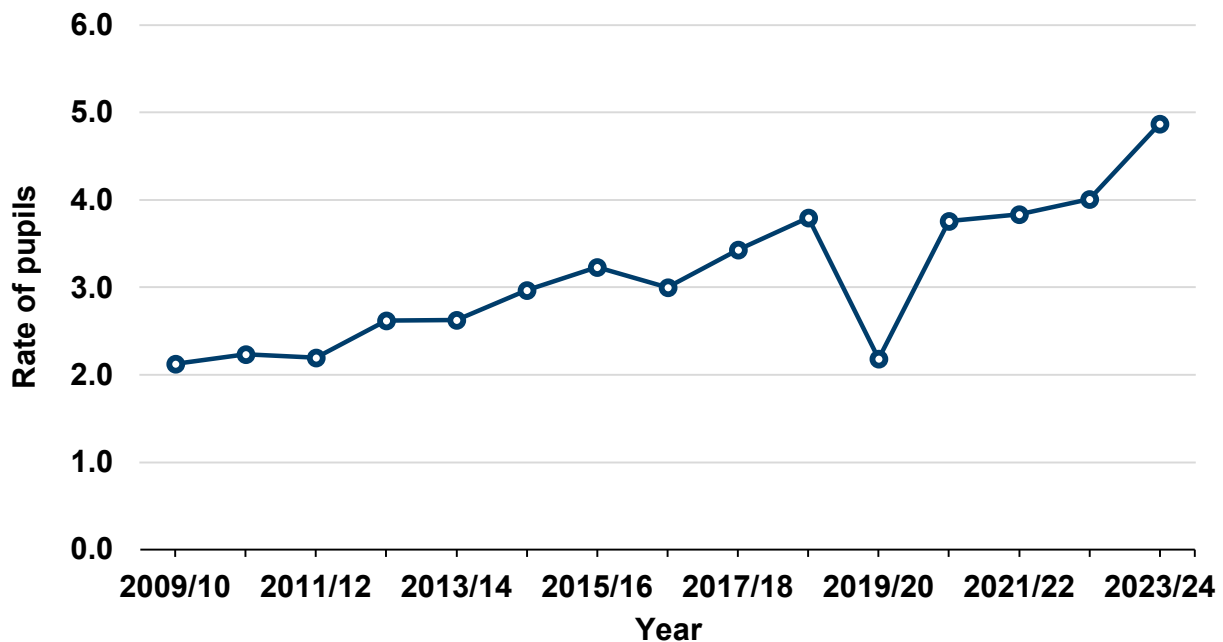
In 2023/24, there are 2,597 pupils receiving some type of EOTAS provision. That's 5.5 of every 1,000 pupils in Wales which is down from a high 5.6 of every 1,000 pupils in 2010/11 and up from 5.1 of every 1,000 pupils in 2022/23.

There are 2,279 EOTAS pupils mainly educated outside school. That's 4.9 of every 1,000 pupils in Wales which is up from 4.0 of every 1,000 pupils in 2022/23 and the highest rate since we started calculating the data in 2009/10.

The number of EOTAS pupils mainly educated outside school appears to be trending upwards, having doubled proportionately since 2009/10, which you can see in Figure 1. Since the start of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, there has been no change in the long-term trend.

The percentage of EOTAS pupils mainly educated outside school is 87.8%, up from 42% in 2009/10.

**Figure 1: Rate per 1,000 pupils mainly educated outside school, 2009/10 to 2023/24**



Description of Figure 1: A line chart showing a long-term upward trend in the rate per 1,000 pupils of those mainly educated outside school, 2009/10 to 2023/24. There is a sharp dip in the rate in 2020 due to the first national lockdown in Spring 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Source: EOTAS Pupil Census and PLASC

Many EOTAS pupils are still on roll at maintained schools. Of the 2,597 EOTAS pupils in 2023/24:

- 902 had 'subsidiary' enrolment status in a maintained school, which means their main education was 'other than at school'
- 318 had 'main' or 'current' enrolment status in a maintained, which means

that their main education was in a maintained school

The focus in this release will be on the 2,279 EOTAS pupils mainly educated outside school. A combination of the:

- 902 pupils with subsidiary enrolment, i.e. they spend some time in school
- 1,377 pupils exclusively educated outside school

Pupils with 'main' or 'current' enrolment status are included in the Schools' Census publication.

## Local authorities

Merthyr Tydfil had the highest rate of EOTAS pupils in 2023/24 with 10.4 of every 1,000 pupils mainly educated outside school.

Pembrokeshire's EOTAS numbers have increased the most since 2009/10, going from a rate of 0.5 of every 1,000 pupils to 8.5 of every 1,000 pupils in 2023/24. The rate is now 15 times greater than in 2009/10. This is due to an increase in the number of pupils being recorded as subsidiary enrolment at a maintained school, as opposed to being recorded as main or current enrolment status.

## Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Additional Learning Needs (ALN)

In 2023/24, there are, proportionately, significantly more pupils with SEN or ALN mainly educated outside school than in the general student population.

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# The rates of EOTAS pupils for each category of SEN or ALN provision

## Statement of SEN

- 56.8 of every 1,000 pupils

## School Action Plus

- 48.7 of every 1,000 pupils

## Local authority maintained Individual Development Plan (IDP)

- 118.1 of every 1,000 pupils

Compared to 4.9 of every 1,000 pupils in the general pupil population. For information on the categories of SEN or ALN pupils, please see the information in [definitions and criteria](#).

In 2023/24 the rate of pupils mainly educated outside school with SEN/ALN increased compared to 2009/10. The rate of pupils mainly education outside school was below 10 of every 1,000 pupils between 2009/10 and 2012/13 but has risen rapidly in the last three years to reach 35.3 of every 1,000 pupils in 2023/24.

Following the phased introduction of ALN reforms from September 2021, in 2023/24, a local authority maintained IDP is the most common provision for pupils mainly educated outside school.

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## Free School Meals (FSM)

Pupils are eligible for free school meals if their parents or guardians are in receipt of certain means-tested benefits or support payments.

There has consistently been a higher rate of pupils eligible for FSM mainly educated outside school than in the general population. The rate peaked this year at 11.2 of every 1,000 pupils eligible for FSM mainly educated outside school. This is up from the previous high in 2017/18, with 8.4 of every 1,000 pupils eligible for FSM mainly educated outside school.

44.9% of pupils mainly educated outside school were eligible for free school meals in 2023/24, compared to 20.3% of pupils in school (PLASC) eligible for free school meals.

## EOTAS provision

Since pupils may attend more than one educational provision in a week, some pupils may be counted against more than one provision. So, the number of enrolments (2,356) is higher than the number of pupils mainly educated outside school (2,279 pupils).

In 2023/24 there were 1,052 enrolments at pupil referral units, which accounted for 44.7% of all EOTAS enrolments. Pupil referral units are still the most common provision for EOTAS pupils. The percentage of pupils in PRUs has been relatively constant since 2009/10.

The average number of hours of education provided to pupils mainly educated outside school was 20.4 hours. Pupils enrolled in independent schools received the highest average number of hours of provision, with an average of 25.1 hours

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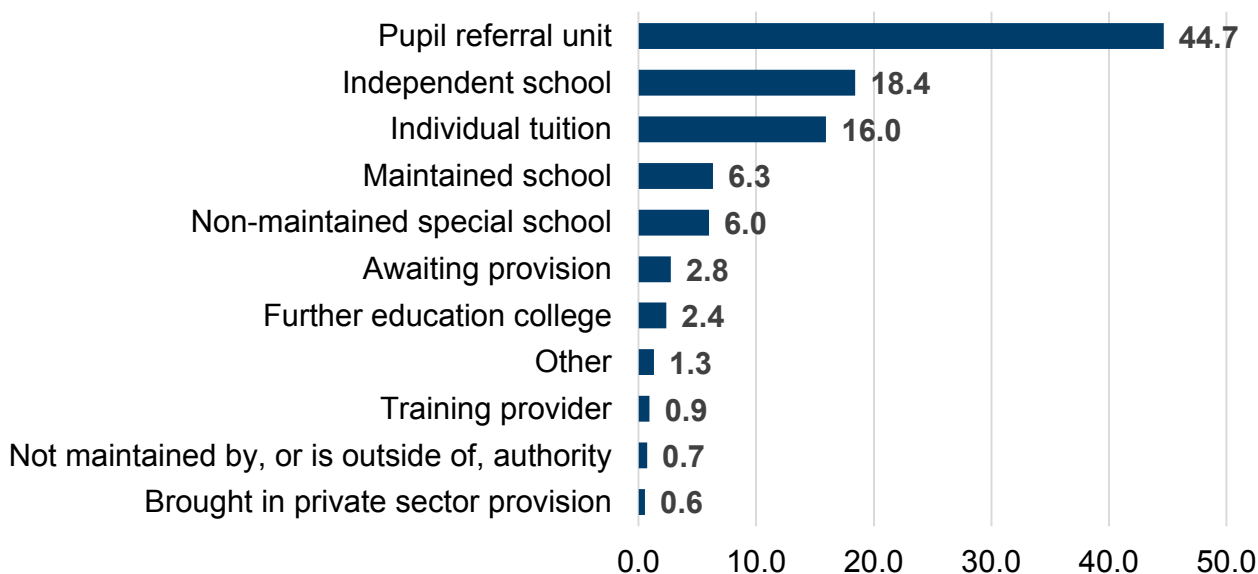
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provided per pupil.

## Figure 2: Percentage of pupil enrolments, by educational provision, 2023/24



Description: Figure 2 is a bar chart showing that the largest number of pupil enrolments (44.7%) are in Pupil Referral Units, followed by independent schools (18.4%) and individual tuition (16.0%).

Source: EOTAS Pupil Census and PLASC

Since 2009/10 the use of both individual tuition and independent schools has increased. Independent Schools are the second most used provision for EOTAS pupils during 2023/24.

# Elective home education

In the 2023/24 academic year 5,330 children were known to be electively home educated in Wales. This number isn't included in the total EOTAS pupil numbers earlier in this release.

The rate of elective home educated pupils in 2023/24 is 13.0 of every 1,000 pupils, up from 1.6 of every 1,000 pupils in 2009/10, and the rate has increased each year since then. The rate increased in all local authorities.

Ceredigion had the highest rate, at 26.1 of every 1,000 pupils. Ceredigion has consistently reported the highest rate of home educated children since 2009/10 for both female and male pupils. In 2023/24 the rate in Ceredigion has reached:

- 26.5 of every 1,000 pupils for females
- 25.6 of every 1,000 pupils for males

The highest proportional growth was in Blaenau Gwent, with an increase to over 28 times the rate of home educated pupils it had in 2009/10.

The most common age for home educated pupils is 15. In 2023/24 there were:

- 38.5 of every 1,000 15-year-old female pupils were electively home educated
- 29.7 of every 1,000 15-year-old male pupils were electively home educated

From 2009/10 to 2023/24, there have been increases in the rates of elective home education across all age groups, with the largest increase in the 16-year-old age group. In 2023/24 the rate of 16-year-old pupils being home educated has increased to 27 times that in 2009/10.

Parents voluntarily notify their local authority that they are home educating their children (unless they have withdrawn their child from school). This means the

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data might not include all electively home educated children.

## Definitions and criteria

### EOTAS

The main criterion for inclusion in the EOTAS census is pupils that a Welsh local authority has a financial responsibility for and if not included in this census collection would not be picked up via PLASC. However, some pupils may be included in the EOTAS census and on a school PLASC (for maintained primary, secondary, and special schools).

This collection focuses on children receiving education funded by a local authority other than at school as defined in [Section 19\(1\) of the Education Act 1996 \(UK legislation\)](#). i.e. those children of compulsory school age who, by reason of illness, exclusion or otherwise may not for any period receive suitable education.

### Pupil Referral Units (PRUs)

[Section 19 \(1\) of the Education Act 1996 \(UK legislation\)](#) requires local authorities to make arrangements for the provision of suitable education at schools or otherwise for children of compulsory school age who, for whatever reason of illness, exclusion from school or otherwise, may not for any period receive suitable education unless suitable arrangements are made for them. [Section 19 \(2\) \(UK legislation\)](#) states that any school established to provide education for those children and is not a county [community] or special school, shall be known as a “Pupil Referral Unit”.

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## **Independent schools**

Schools which charge fees and may also be financed by individuals, companies, or charitable institutions.

## **Special schools**

Special schools, both day and boarding, provide education for children with SEN who cannot be educated satisfactorily in mainstream schools.

## **Special educational needs**

### **Pupils with statements**

Pupils for whom the authority maintains a statement of special educational needs under Part iv of the Education Act 1996. A statement may be issued by the local authority after assessment of a child's needs.

### **School action**

When a class or subject teacher identify that a pupil has special educational needs they provide interventions that are additional to or different from those provided as part of the school's usual curriculum.

### **School Action Plus**

When the class or subject teacher and the Special Educational Needs Co-

ordinator are provided with advice or support from outside specialists, so that alternative interventions additional or different to those provided for the pupil through 'School Action' can be put in place. The Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator usually takes the lead although day-to-day provision continues to be the responsibility of class or subject teacher.

## **Individual Development Plans (IDPs)**

IDPs are statutory plans created under the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018, which came into force on 1 September 2021. A learner may have either a school maintained IDP or a local authority maintained IDP.

## **Additional learning needs (ALN) and special educational needs (SEN)**

A person has ALN/SEN if they have a learning difficulty or disability (whether the learning difficulty or disability arises from a medical condition or otherwise) which calls for additional learning provision or special educational provision. Learners with ALN will have their needs identified in individual development plans (IDPs) which are statutory plans created under the ALN Act. Learners with SEN may have School Action, School Action Plus or a Statement, which will cease in August 2025 when the implementation of the ALN system is complete.

# Changes to special educational needs data following the implementation of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018

The [Additional Learning Needs Code for Wales 2021 \(the ALN Code\) and regulations](#) came into force on 1 September 2021 to ensure children and young people aged 0 to 25 can access additional support to meet their needs that is properly planned for and protected, with learners at the heart of the process.

Implementation of the ALN system is ongoing, with children moving from the SEN system to the ALN system until August 2025. Learners with ALN will have their needs identified in IDPs maintained by either a school or a local authority.

Analysis of the data, along with feedback from local authorities suggest that the fall in ALN/SEN learners over the last three years is due to a systematic review by schools of their ALN/SEN identification and data, both in readiness for and during implementation of the ALN system. Learners supported through School Action and School Action Plus (those requiring the least amount of special educational provision) may no longer be identified as ALN/SEN in PLASC. This is either because their needs are short term, do not require provision additional to, or different from, that which is provided for other learners, that can be addressed as part of holistic provision.

Additionally, schools were asked to stop using the 'General learning difficulties' category and to reassess an appropriate category of need for such pupils. This category had become a catch-all for those requiring catch up support, with minor needs and/or where multiple needs existed, instead of its original intent, which was to capture learners awaiting assessment. This has also led to some pupils no longer being identified as ALN/SEN in PLASC. The 'General learning difficulties' category was removed from the 2023 and 2024 schools' censuses.

Welsh Government will continue to monitor the numbers throughout

implementation of the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act and work with our partners to ensure the data presents an accurate reflection of the numbers and categories of learners with ALN in Wales.

## Free school meals

Pupils are eligible for free school meals if their parents or guardians are in receipt of certain means-tested benefits or support payments.

## Universal primary free school meals

The Welsh Government has committed to providing **all primary school children in Wales with FSM by 2024**. The rollout began in September 2022. 20 local authorities have now completed the rollout and the remaining 2 local authorities are on track to complete the rollout by September 2024.

Whilst this rollout of FSM to those not previously eligible for them has started, the data presented in this release does not reflect the total number of pupils receiving FSM in January 2024. Instead, it includes only the number of pupils who are eligible for FSM if their parents or guardians are in receipt of certain benefits (as reported in previous years) or those who are transitionally protected. Please see the **free school meal information guide** for full details of eligibility criteria and benefits.

## Transitional protection for free school meals

On 1 April 2019 the Welsh Government introduced a new transitional protection for free school meals policy. This was brought in to ensure that pupils have their free school meals protected during the Universal Credit rollout period.

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This protection applies to individual pupils and will continue until the end of their current school's phase, being the end of primary school or end of secondary school.

Any pupil that was eligible for free school meals on the introduction of the policy on 1 April 2019 should also be transitionally protected. In addition, any pupil that has become eligible at any point during the Universal Credit rollout under the new eligibility criteria should also be transitionally protected.

## Quality and methodology information

### Official statistics status

All official statistics should show the standards of the Code of Practice for Statistics.

These are accredited official statistics. They were independently reviewed by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) in July 2010. They comply with the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in the Code of Practice for Statistics.

It is Welsh Government's responsibility to maintain compliance with the standards expected of accreditation. If we become concerned about whether these statistics are still meeting the appropriate standards, we will discuss any concerns with OSR promptly. Accreditation can be cancelled or suspended at any point when the highest standards are not maintained, and reinstated when standards are restored.

Accredited official statistics are called National Statistics in the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007.

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# Statement of compliance with the Code of Practice for Statistics

Our statistical practice is regulated by the OSR. OSR sets the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in the Code of Practice for Statistics that all producers of official statistics should adhere to.

All our statistics are produced and published in accordance with a number of statements and protocols to enhance trustworthiness, quality and value. These are set out in the Welsh Government's [Statement of Compliance](#).

These [accredited official statistics \(OSR\)](#) demonstrate the standards expected around trustworthiness, quality and public value in the following ways.

## Trustworthiness

The data in this release relates to pupils educated other than at school (EOTAS). The data for is derived from the EOTAS returns supplied by local authorities for pupils with a EOTAS provision during census week, which is usually in January each year. The returns are authorised and validated by local authorities.

The data collection and validation are carried out between January and May. The data is normally published in August.

These statistics are published in an accessible, orderly, pre-announced manner on the Welsh Government website at 9:30am on the day of publication.

This output adheres to the Code of Practice by pre-announcing the date of publication through the [upcoming calendar](#) web pages.

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## Quality

The published figures provided are compiled by professional analysts using the latest available data and applying methods using their professional judgement and analytical skillset. Statistics published by Welsh Government adhere to the Statistical Quality Management Strategy which supplements the Quality pillar of the [Code of Practice for Statistics \(UK Statistical Authority\)](#) and the European Statistical System principles of quality for statistical outputs.

We work closely with local authorities to ensure all data is validated before tables are published. Data is 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.

The data in this release relate to the position on the week beginning Monday 15 January 2024. DEWi was available for uploading files on 16 January 2024. Local authorities were then asked to validate their data within a specified validation period.

The 2019/20 data collection was not completed due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. For this reason, only 14 local authorities were able to submit data, so the data only relates to those authorities.

## Value

These statistics are used in a variety of ways. Some examples of these are:

- resource allocation in the Welsh Local Government Finance Settlement and the Pupil Development Grant
- advice to ministers

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- to inform the education policy decision-making process in Wales including school reorganisation
- to inform Estyn during school inspections
- the education domain of the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation
- to assist in research in educational attainment

This release is pre-announced and then published on the Statistics section of the Welsh Government website. It is accompanied by [detailed tables on StatsWales](#), a free to use service that allows visitors to view, manipulate, create and download data.

The commentary and notes in the release have been developed to try to make the information as accessible as possible to the widest range of users. Furthermore, all our school statistics outputs are published in Welsh and English.

## Comparability

### England

[Statistics: school and pupil numbers \(Department for Education\)](#)

### Scotland

[Statistics and research \(Scottish Government\)](#)

### Northern Ireland

[Education statistics \(Department of Education\)](#)

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## Well-being of Future Generations Act (WFG)

The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 is about improving the social, economic, environmental, and cultural wellbeing of Wales. The Act puts in place seven wellbeing 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 Senedd Cymru. The 46 national indicators were laid in March 2016.

Information on the indicators, along with narratives for each of the wellbeing 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 wellbeing assessments and local wellbeing plans.

## Contact details

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