

Academic Achievement by Pupil Characteristics, 2019

Key Quality Information

This document provides a summary of information on this output against five dimensions of quality: Relevance, Accuracy, Timeliness and Punctuality, Accessibility and Clarity, and Comparability. It also covers specific data quality issues.

1. Relevance

Who are the key users of this data?

These statistics are used widely both within and outside the Welsh Government. Some of the key users are:

- ministers and the Members Research Service in the National Assembly for Wales;
- the Department for Education in England;
- other government departments;
- local authorities;
- schools;
- Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education and Training in Wales;
- Wales Audit Office;
- the Department for Education and Skills in the Welsh Government;
- other areas of the Welsh Government;
- the research community;
- students, academics and universities;
- individual citizens and private companies.

What are the data used for?

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

- advice to Ministers;
- the all-Wales education core data packs;
- local authority and school comparisons;
- to inform the education policy decision-making process in Wales;
- to assist in research in educational attainment.

2. Accuracy

The datasets used to produce this output have been produced by matching data from the Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) in January to the attainment data obtained for assessments/examinations held in the following summer term. Absenteeism data from the Pupils' Attendance Record has also been matched to the matched dataset.

The matching process described above is only possible for local authority (LA) maintained primary, secondary and special schools. Data for Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) is also included in this output and is provided by matching attainment data to the Educated Other Than at School (EOTAS) pupil level collection data. When publishing analyses based on these school types, pupils who have arrived from a non-English/Welsh based education system are removed from the school and LA summaries, but included in the overall summary for Wales.

Due to the movement of pupils between the PLASC/EOTAS census dates in January and the assessment period and the collection of attendance records, and some issues with data matching, full coverage of data is not available for all pupils. Therefore these figures may not match those published in the [Academic achievement of pupils aged 4 to 14 in core subjects](#) and the [Examination Results](#) statistical releases.

The tables below shows the coverage obtained for each data set:

PLASC and attainment data (a)

		Number of pupils in:		% Coverage
		Matched data set from the NPD	Published cohort (b)	
Foundation Phase	2015	35,581	35,751	99.5
	2016	34,772	34,949	99.5
	2017	35,290	35,474	99.5
	2018	36,078	36,249	99.5
	2019	35,612	35,805	99.5
Key Stage 2	2015	32,159	32,286	99.6
	2016	33,051	33,169	99.6
	2017	33,415	33,541	99.6
	2018	34,172	34,282	99.7
	2019	35,796	35,919	99.7
Key Stage 3	2015	31,547	31,665	99.6
	2016	30,589	30,690	99.7
	2017	31,390	31,527	99.6
	2018	31,812	31,940	99.6
	2019	32,536	32,648	99.7
Key Stage 4	2015	32,580	32,788	99.4
	2016	31,332	31,533	99.4
	2017	30,618	30,814	99.4
	2018	29,441	29,672	99.2
	2019	30,257	30,533	99.1

(a) Key Stage 4 cohort from 2016 is based on pupils who were in Year 11. Up to 2015, the cohort is based on pupils aged 15 at the start of the academic year.

(b) Excludes pupils in Independent schools.

Pupils' Attendance Record and attainment data (a)

		Number of pupils in:		
		Matched data set from the NPD	Published cohort (b)	% Coverage
Foundation Phase	2015	35,380	35,751	99.0
	2016	34,583	34,949	99.0
	2017	35,093	35,474	98.9
	2018	35,825	36,249	98.8
	2019	35,404	35,805	98.9
Key Stage 2	2015	31,918	32,286	98.9
	2016	32,823	33,169	99.0
	2017	33,174	33,541	98.9
	2018	33,883	34,282	98.8
	2019	35,462	35,919	98.7
Key Stage 3	2015	31,204	31,665	98.5
	2016	30,195	30,690	98.4
	2017	30,980	31,527	98.3
	2018	31,413	31,940	98.4
	2019 (c)	31,879	32,648	97.6
Key Stage 4	2015	32,300	32,788	98.5
	2016	30,957	31,533	98.2
	2017	30,237	30,814	98.1
	2018	29,079	29,672	98.0
	2019 (c)	29,568	30,533	96.8

(a) Key Stage 4 cohort from 2016 is based on pupils who were in Year 11. Up to 2015, the cohort is based on pupils aged 15 at the start of the academic year.

(b) Excludes pupils in Independent schools.

(c) The matching rate for KS3 and KS4 was lower in 2019 because one secondary school did not submit a valid secondary attendance return.

Indicator definitions

The **Foundation Phase Indicator (FPI)** represents the percentage of pupils achieving the expected outcome or above in “Language, literacy and communication skills” (in English (LCE) or Welsh (LCW)), “Personal and social development, well-being and cultural diversity” (PSD) and “Mathematical development” (MDT) in combination, at the end of the Foundation Phase. The expected outcome of the majority of pupils is outcome 5 at the end of the Foundation Phase.

The **Core Subject Indicator (CSI)** represents the percentage of pupils achieving the expected level or above in English or Welsh (First Language), Mathematics and Science in combination. The expected level of the majority of pupils is level 4 at Key Stage 2 and level 5 at Key Stage 3.

At Key Stage 4, level thresholds represent a volume, or ‘size’, of qualifications at a specific level on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF):

Level 1 – a volume of qualifications at Level 1 equivalent to the volume of 5 GCSEs at grade A*-G;

Level 2 inclusive - a volume of qualifications at Level 2 equivalent to the volume of 5 GCSEs at grade A*-C, including English Language or Welsh First Language and Mathematics or Numeracy.

Performance measures for Year 11

New performance measures have been introduced for 2018/19. These measures are now based on point scores and converts each grade achieved into a point score. The measures are:

Capped 9 points score (interim measure version, see below)

Literacy measure: the best qualification a pupil has achieved in (first Language Welsh or English) Language or Literature GCSE

Numeracy measure: the best qualification from Mathematics or Mathematics - Numeracy GCSEs.

Science measure: takes the best single qualification in a Science GCSE (where a double GCSE is taken the higher grade will be counted).

Skills Challenge Certificate: part of the Welsh Baccalaureate that can be taken at Foundation or National Level

For further information regarding the introduction of these new measures please see the [Interim Key Stage 4 School Performance Arrangements: Measures and Analyses Guidance](#).

Capped 9 points score (interim measure version)

The Capped 9 measure has been changed since last year by reducing the number of subject specific requirements. The measure still includes the best nine GCSEs or equivalent volume of qualifications, but now only three of the nine slots cover specific GCSE subjects, down from five in previous years. These specific subjects are English or Welsh First Language or Literature, Mathematics or Numeracy and a Science.

The Capped 9 points score is one of the Well-being of Future Generations (WFG) Headline Indicators. Due to these changes to the Capped 9 points score (interim measure version) comparisons to previous Capped 9 scores should be avoided. A breakdown of this Capped 9 score (interim measure version) and an explanation of the method used to calculate this measure is available in this [guidance document](#).

Ethnicity data

Please note that some of the ethnic background cohorts are very small. Care should be taken when comparing the performance of groups with relatively few pupils because results for such small groups will show more volatility year on year than for groups with larger numbers of pupils.

The 'Unknown' ethnic background category includes pupils for whom no data were available and those who explicitly stated that they did not want their schools to record a category for them.

Pupils from an ethnic minority background are not evenly dispersed around Wales. They are concentrated in four local authorities, and in particular schools within these LAs. The educational policies in place in such areas may have an impact on the academic achievement of such pupils.

Data for achievement in Foundation Phase 'Language, literacy and communication skills' (Welsh) and Key Stage 2-4 Welsh First Language has been omitted from the attainment by pupils' ethnicity tables due to the very small numbers of pupils of an ethnic background (other than White-British) studying this subject.

Please note that in the PLASC data collection, pupils and their parents are encouraged to choose the most appropriate ethnic background. However, from 2009, the ethnic background for between around 11 and 16 per cent of pupils in the relevant key stages each year was chosen by the school after parents/pupils did not choose a category (and did not explicitly state that they did not want one recorded by the school). The category chosen by the school will have been made available to parents/pupils for amendment but in cases where it was not amended the chosen category may not reflect the ethnic background to which the pupils feel they belong.

English as an additional language data

Pupils make progress in acquiring English as an additional language in different ways and at different rates. Broad stages in this development are identified below as descriptions to be applied on a **'best-fit' basis** in a similar manner to the National Curriculum level descriptions. Progression from stage A to stage E can take up to 10 years and individuals are likely to show characteristics of more than one 'stage' at a time. A judgement is usually needed over which stage best describes an individual's language development, taking into account age, ability and length of time learning English.

The valid categories are:

A = new to English. May use first language for learning and other purposes. May remain completely silent in the classroom. May be copying/repeating some words or phrases. May understand some everyday expressions in English but may have minimal or no literacy in English.

Needs a considerable amount of EAL support.

B = Early Acquisition. May follow day to day social communication in English and participate in learning activities with support. Beginning to use spoken English for social purposes. May understand simple instructions and can follow narrative/accounts with visual support. May have developed some skills in reading and writing. May have become familiar with some subject specific vocabulary. **Still needs a significant amount of EAL support to access the curriculum.**

C = Developing competence. May participate in learning activities with increasing independence. Able to express self orally in English, but structural inaccuracies are still apparent. Literacy will require ongoing support, particularly for understanding text and writing. May be able to follow abstract concepts and more complex written English. **Requires ongoing EAL support to access the curriculum fully.**

D = Competent. Oral English will be developing well, enabling successful engagement in activities across the curriculum. Can read and understand a wide variety of texts. Written English may lack complexity and contain occasional evidence of errors in structure. Needs some support to access subtle nuances of meaning, to refine English usage, and to develop abstract vocabulary. **Needs some/occasional EAL support to access complex curriculum material and tasks.**

E = Fluent. Can operate across the curriculum to a level of competence equivalent to that of a pupil who uses English as his/her first language. **Operates without EAL support across the curriculum.**

0 = Not Applicable.

As with ethnicity data, data for achievement in Foundation Phase 'Language, literacy and communication skills' (Welsh) and Key Stage 2-4 Welsh First Language has been omitted from the EAL tables due to the very small numbers of pupils coded A-E in their EAL development studying this subject.

Special Educational Needs (SEN) data

Children have **special educational needs** if they have a learning difficulty which calls for special educational provision to be made for them. Children have a learning difficulty if they:

- a) have a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children of the same age.
- b) have a disability which prevents or hinders them from making use of educational facilities of a kind generally provided for children of the same age in schools within the area of the local education authority.
- c) are under compulsory school age and fall within the definition at a) or b) above or would so do if special educational provision was not made for them.

Special educational provision means:

- a) for children of two or over, educational provision which is additional to, or otherwise different from, the educational provision made generally for children of their age in schools maintained by the local authority (LA), other than special schools, in the area.
- b) for children under two, educational provisions of any kind.

Where children do not respond to differentiation and do not make adequate progress, there is a need for the school to do something additional or different. This school based SEN is described in the code as *School Action* and *School Action Plus*. For further information please see the [Special Educational Needs Code of Practice for Wales](#).

Local authorities have different policies for issuing statements of special educational needs so they will vary and differ across Wales.

Special Educational Needs (SEN) type data

From 2017 maintained schools were allowed to report as many types of special educational need for a pupil as required and the ranking of those needs was removed. The 'Major need' used in earlier publications no longer applies and therefore the figures are not directly comparable with previous years.

Absenteeism data

Pupil-level absence data was collected from maintained primary and secondary schools for the first time in 2007/08. The results therefore should be treated with caution when looking at historical trends.

Attainment data for those with no absence is included with those with less than 4 per cent absence at Key Stage 3 and 4.

3. Timeliness and punctuality

Foundation Phase, Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 attainment data was published in August 2019 and the Key Stage 4 attainment data was published in December 2019. This was linked to January 2019 PLASC data and to absenteeism data which was published in August 2019 for secondary schools and in December 2019 for primary schools, to produce the datasets used for this statistical

output. Additionally, Key Stage 4 data was linked to data for pupils educated other than at school which was published in July 2019, to show Key Stage 4 results for pupils whose main education is at a Pupil Referral Unit.

The data by gender has already been published with the Foundation Phase, Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 attainment data in August 2019 and with the Key Stage 4 attainment data in December 2019.

4. Accessibility and clarity

This statistical output is pre-announced and then published on the Statistics and Research section of the Welsh Government website. The detailed data tables have been published on StatsWales, a free-to-use service that allows users to view, manipulate, create and download tables from Welsh data.

StatsWales links:

[Foundation Phase](#)

[Key Stage 2](#)

[Key Stage 3](#)

[Key Stage 4](#)

5. Comparability and coherence

Data should not be compared between England and Wales for Foundation Phase, Key Stage 2, Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. Foundation Phase outcomes can not be compared with Key Stage 1 in England. From 2016 in England, Key Stage 2 assessment results are no longer reported as levels: each pupil receives their test results as a scaled score and teacher assessment judgements are based on the standards in the interim framework. England no longer publishes a release for Key Stage 3. Comparisons can not be made with Scotland due to differences in qualification structure. For further information or advice on the constraints of international comparisons please e-mail school.stats@gov.wales.

Up to 2007/08, the Key Stage 4 statistics include GCSEs, GCSE short course, GNVQs and NVQs only. From 2008/09, the statistics include all qualifications approved for pre-16 or 16-18 use in Wales. The introduction of the wider definition has meant the inclusion of a larger range of qualifications and thus an increase in the headline indicators of performance.

From 2017/18, following recommendations from independent reviews, vocational Science qualifications no longer count towards the core Science element of performance measures.

From 2016/17, changes have been made to the Key Stage 4 performance measures, which impact on comparability with previous years. Further details can be found in the [Examination Results](#) statistical release.

Changes to the Foundation Phase Areas of Learning

In October 2014 the Foundation Phase Areas of Learning (AoL) for Language, Literacy and Communication Skills and Mathematical Development were revised to align them with the National Literacy and Numeracy Framework (LNF) as well as make them more demanding. In line with this the Foundation Phase outcomes were recalibrated to align with the increased expectations of the revised Areas of Learning.

[The revised AoL were introduced on a statutory basis from September 2015](#). This means that the cohort of children that started Reception in September 2015 were the first children to be formally assessed against the revised outcomes at the end of the Foundation Phase in the summer of 2018.

Comparisons of Foundation Phase outcomes with data prior to 2018 should, therefore, be avoided as they are not measured on a comparable basis.

Comparison of teacher assessment data with 2018

The percentage of pupils achieving at least the expected level was lower than in 2018 in all core subjects/areas of learning at the end of Foundation Phase and for both Key Stages.

Following a [written statement by the Minister for Education in July 2018 and a consultation which ended in January 2018](#), teacher assessment data is no longer published at a school, local authority and consortia level. This is a significant move away from gathering information about young people's performance on a school by school basis for accountability purposes.

This year's results could be a reflection of these changes, whereby the prime purpose of teacher assessments has started to shift back to individual learners and away from holding schools to account.

Comparing data for low cohort sizes

Cohort sizes have been replaced by a * where there are fewer than 5 but more than zero pupils in a category. Percentages have been replaced by a * where there are fewer than 50 but more than zero pupils in a cohort.

This is to make users aware of the very small numbers in certain categories and to show that care should be taken when making comparisons between attainment data for such categories.

Related published statistics

Further information on the numbers of pupils by ethnic background and special educational needs can be found in the [Schools Census Results](#) statistical release.

Attainment data can be found in [Academic achievement of pupils aged 4 to 14 in core subjects](#), [National Curriculum Teacher Assessments of the Non-core Subjects](#) and [Examination Results](#).

Further information on absence in schools can be found in [Absenteeism from Primary Schools](#) and [Absenteeism from Secondary Schools](#).

Further information on pupils Educated Other Than At School (EOTAS) can be found in [Pupils Educated Other Than At School](#).

An analysis of attainment data by a pupil's free school meal eligibility has been included in the separate [Achievement and Entitlement to Free School Meals](#), released on 7 November 2019 and in [Examination Results](#). Free school meal entitlement has often been taken as a measure of the socio-economic conditions of a school's population. It should be noted however that whilst there is a link between pupil characteristics and performance, many other factors affect school assessment and examination results. Some schools in disadvantaged areas perform well whilst others in more advantaged areas perform poorly.

For school-level data and further information please visit [My Local School](#). The site contains a wealth of data from contextual information, such as data on pupil numbers and characteristics, to school performance, attendance and data on staffing and finance.

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

The document is available at:

<https://gov.wales/academic-achievement-pupil-characteristics>

Next update

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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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