



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

STATISTICS

# Schools' census results: April 2021

Statistics on schools, teachers and pupils including data for local authorities and Wales for April 2021.

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# Introduction

This statistical release presents data collected from the annual census of maintained schools in Wales. Data for independent schools is also shown. It reports information on schools, pupils, ethnicity, free school meal eligibility, special educational needs, class sizes, teachers and support staff.

## Timing

This report covers a time period within the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The most recent data in this report relates to the situation as at April 2021. The Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) would usually take place in January. However, school closures between December 2020 and March 2021 due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic meant that the census date was delayed to 20 April 2021.

## Note on quality assurance and data coverage

This is the final release of the schools' census 2021 data, following validation as part of the Local Government Finance settlement as in previous years. The counts of pupils have increased slightly since the provisional release of this data in June 2021 as the data for 6 schools that had not submitted data at that point has now been included.

## Main points

- There were 1,473 local authority maintained schools, down 7 compared with January 2020.

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- There were 474,724 pupils in local authority maintained schools, up 5,548 compared with January 2020.
- Of the 379,669 pupils aged 5 to 15, 22.9% were known to be eligible for free school meals, up from 19.9% at January 2020. These figures do not include transitional protection (see below).
- There were 92,688 pupils with special educational needs in maintained schools (19.5% of all pupils), down from 97,551 (20.8%) at January 2020.
- There were 7,617 pupils (7.5%) in infant classes of over 30 pupils at April 2021, little change from 7,620 pupils (7.4%) at January 2020.
- There were 23,941 full-time equivalent qualified teachers in local authority maintained schools, up 347 compared with January 2020.

## 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.

This protection applies to individual pupils and will continue until the end of their current schools 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.

Of the 379,669 pupils aged 5 to 15, 25.2% were known to be eligible for free school meals or transitionally protected at April 2021 up from 21.1% in January 2020.

# Schools and pupils

This section presents information on schools and pupils. Local authority maintained schools meet their expenditure partly from council tax and partly from general grants made by the Welsh Government.

For definitions of types of school (including how they are classified in terms of language of teaching (medium)) see [definitions](#).

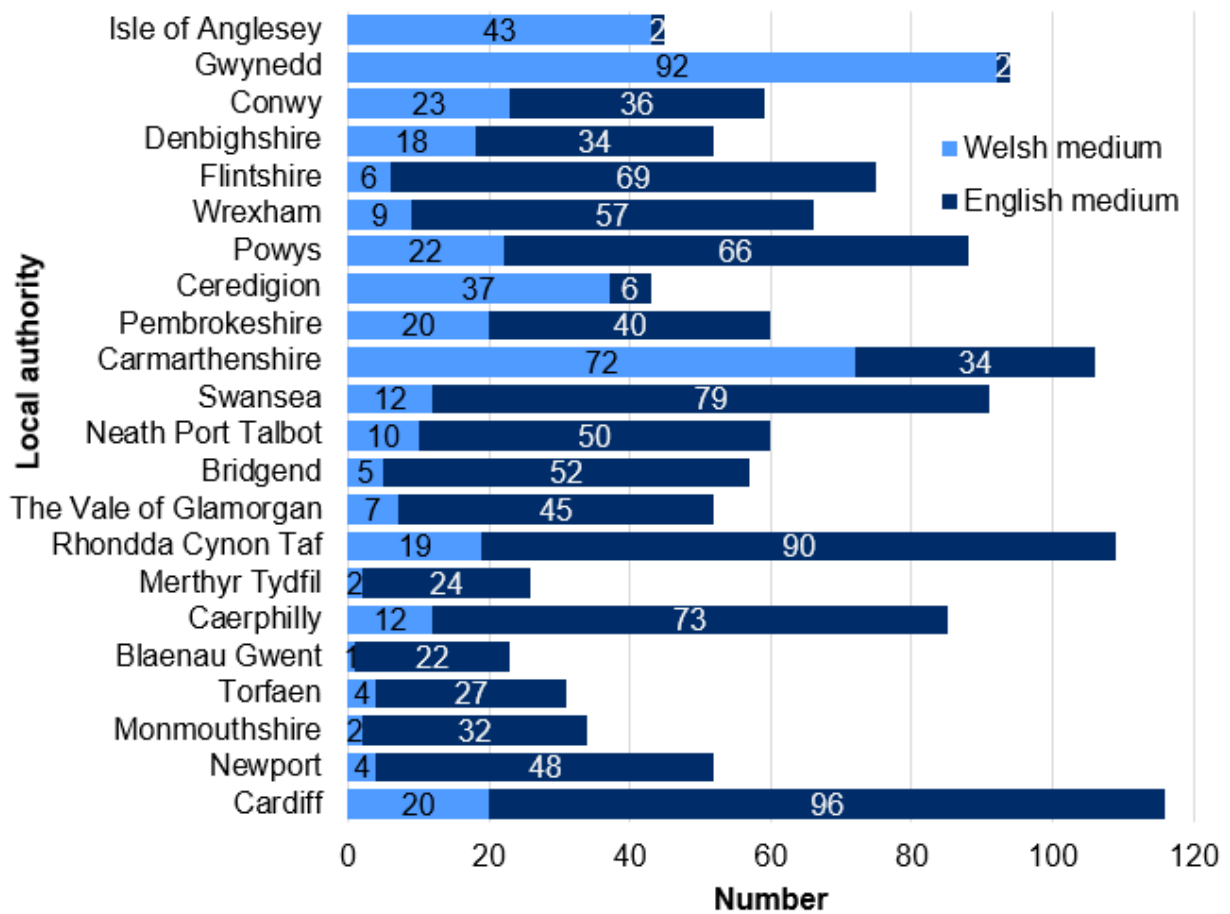
**Table 1: Number of schools by sector, 2020 to 2021**

Sector	2020	2021
Nursery	9	9
Primary	1,225	1,219
Middle	22	23
Secondary	183	182
Special	41	40
Local authority maintained schools	1,480	1,473
Independent	78	80
All schools	1,558	1,553

Source: Schools Census

- There were 1,473 local authority maintained schools at April 2021, down 7 compared with January 2020.
- There were 80 independent schools, up 2 compared with January 2020.

**Chart 1: Number of maintained schools by local authority and medium, 2021 (a)**



Source: Schools Census

(a) Primary, middle and secondary schools (excluding nursery and special schools)

### Number of maintained schools by local authority and medium (MS Excel)

- There were 440 Welsh medium schools at April 2021, with 110,142 pupils

(23%) being educated in Welsh medium schools.

- Most schools in Isle of Anglesey, Gwynedd, Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire were Welsh medium schools. In the other 18 local authorities most schools were English medium.

**Table 2: Number of pupils in Wales by sector, 2020 to 2021**

Sector	2020	2021
Nursery	683	724
Primary	271,323	272,339
Middle	20,746	22,308
Secondary	171,271	174,133
Special	5,153	5,220
Local authority maintained schools	469,176	474,724
Independent (a)	.	9,855
All schools	.	484,579

Source: Schools Census

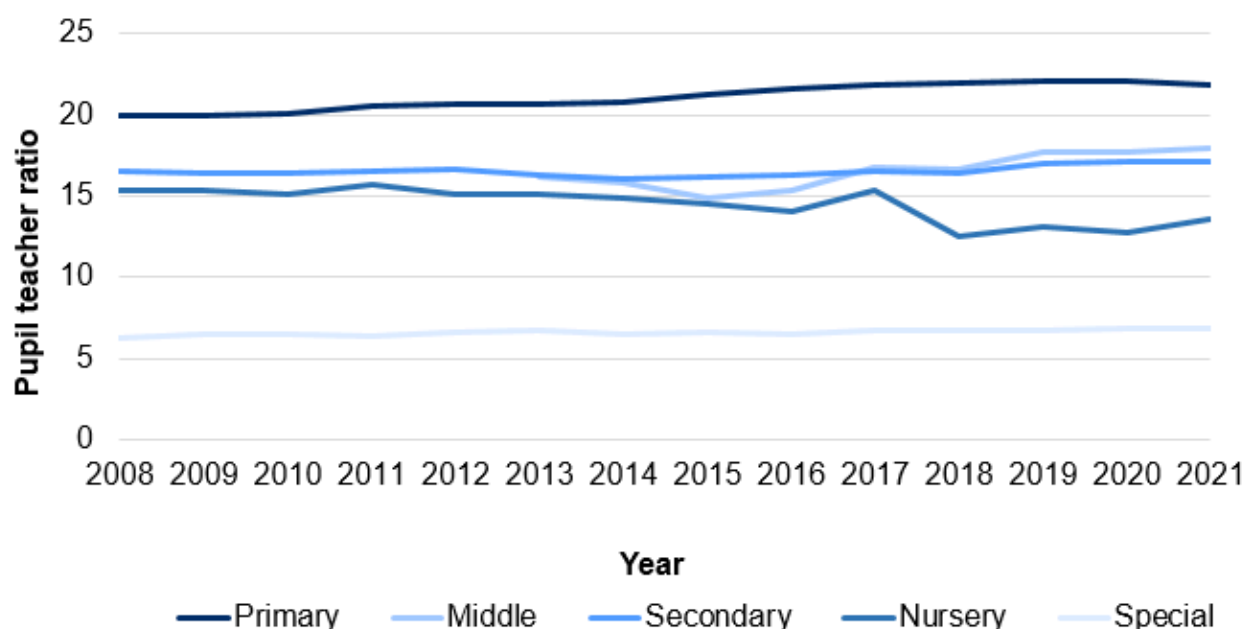
. The data item is not applicable. Data was not published for independent schools in 2020 as the data collection was not completed.

(a) 10 of the 80 independent schools did not submit data in 2021.

- There were 474,724 pupils in local authority maintained schools at April 2021, up 5,548 compared with January 2020.
- This increase is mainly due to the delay in the census date to April. The census usually takes place on the second Tuesday in January. There were 5,273 pupils who entered nursery class between 13 January 2021 and 20 April 2021. These pupils would not be included in a January census.

All the data that follows in this release relates to local authority maintained schools only.

**Chart 2: Pupil teacher ratio (PTR) by sector, 2008 to 2021**



Source: Schools Census

### Pupil teacher ratio (PTR) by sector (MS Excel)

- The **pupil teacher ratio** was highest in primary schools in April 2021 at 21.9 and lowest in special schools at 6.9. The ratio in secondary schools was 17.2.



- The pupil teacher ratio has increased steadily for middle schools over the last 5 years, to 18.0 in 2021. The ratio for secondary schools has also increased slightly. The ratio for nursery schools has fluctuated but for primary and special schools has remained stable.

## Ethnic background

This is the ethnic group with which the pupil identifies her/himself.

**Table 3: Number and percentage of pupils aged 5 or over by ethnic background, 2021**

Ethnicity	Number	Percentage
White	366,116	90.8
White British	351,949	87.3
Traveller	434	0.1
Gypsy/ Roma	714	0.2
Any other White background	13,019	3.2
Mixed	14,006	3.5
White and Black Caribbean	2,676	0.7
White and Black African	2,071	0.5

<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>White and Asian</b>	2,908	0.7
<b>Any other mixed background</b>	6,351	1.6
<b>Asian</b>	10,218	2.5
<b>Indian</b>	2,515	0.6
<b>Pakistani</b>	3,237	0.8
<b>Bangladeshi</b>	3,329	0.8
<b>Any other Asian background</b>	1,137	0.3
<b>Black</b>	4,103	1.0
<b>Black Caribbean</b>	193	0.0
<b>Black African</b>	3,376	0.8
<b>Any other Black background</b>	534	0.1
<b>Chinese</b>	832	0.2
<b>Any other ethnic group</b>	5,807	1.4
<b>Total with valid category</b>	401,082	99.4

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Ethnicity	Number	Percentage
Unknown or not stated	2,252	0.6
All pupils	403,334	100.0

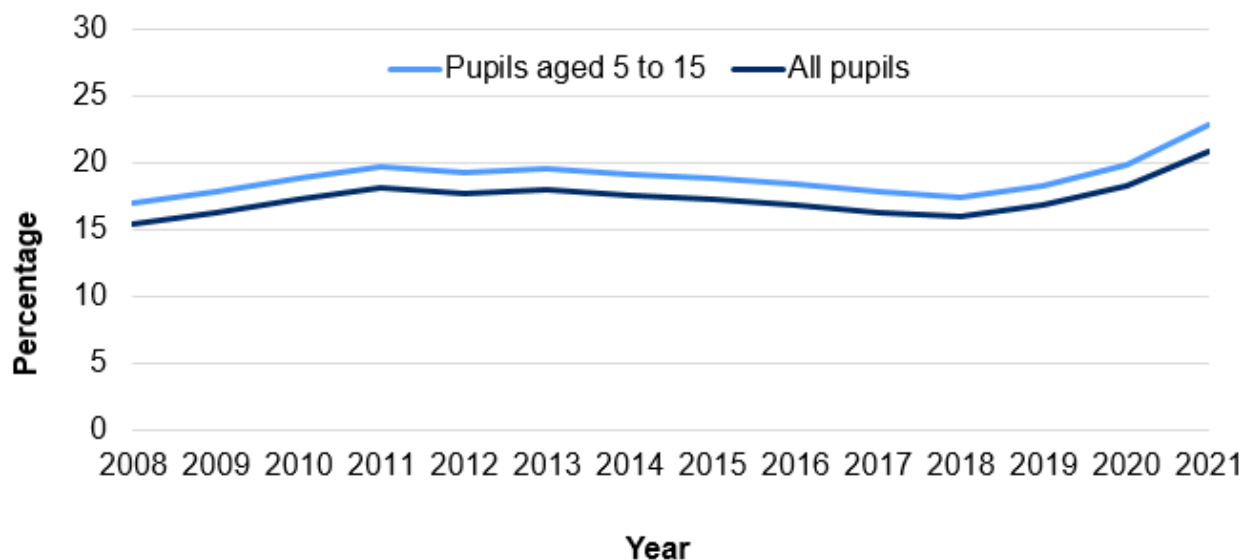
Source: Schools Census

- 87.3% of pupils aged 5 and over identified as White British at April 2021.
- This figure has been falling slightly for each of the past five years with pupils of most other ethnic backgrounds showing increases over the same period.
- Of those pupils from a minority ethnic background the largest groups are those from a mixed ethnic background (14,006 pupils), a White background other than White British (13,019), Black African (3,376), Bangladeshi (3,329), and Pakistani (3,237); whilst over 5,000 pupils identify as another ethnic group.

## Free school meals

Pupils are eligible for **free school meals** if their families are in receipt of certain benefits/support payments.

### Chart 3: Percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, 2008 to 2021 (a)



(a) Age as at 31st August of the previous year.

Source: Schools Census

#### Percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals (MS Excel)

- The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals has increased each year since 2018.
- There were 99,135 pupils (20.9%) of all ages known to be eligible for free school meals at April 2021, up from 85,731 pupils (18.3%) at January 2020.
- There were 87,095 pupils (22.9%) aged 5 to 15 known to be eligible for free school meals at April 2021, up from 75,157 pupils (19.9%) at January 2020.
- Both of these increases are the largest annual increases seen since the data was first collected in 2003.
- These figures do not include transitional protection (see below).

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## 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.

This protection applies to individual pupils and will continue until the end of their current schools 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.

### Table 4: Number and percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals (FSM) or transitionally protected (TP), 2019 to 2021

	2019	2020	2021
<b>Pupils aged 5 to 15</b>			
<b>Number eligible for FSM</b>	68,674	75,157	87,095
<b>% eligible for FSM</b>	18.3	19.9	22.9
<b>Number eligible for FSM or TP</b>	.	79,587	95,532
<b>% eligible for FSM or TP</b>	.	21.1	25.2

	2019	2020	2021
<b>Pupils of all ages</b>			
<b>Number eligible for FSM</b>	78,902	85,731	99,135
<b>% eligible for FSM</b>	16.8	18.3	20.9
<b>Number eligible for FSM or TP</b>	.	90,662	108,447
<b>% eligible for FSM or TP</b>	.	19.3	22.8

Source: Schools Census

. The data item is not applicable

- There were 95,532 pupils (25.2%) aged 5 to 15 known to be eligible for free school meals or transitionally protected at April 2021, up from 79,587 pupils (21.1%) at January 2020.
- There were 108,447 pupils (22.8%) of all ages known to be eligible for free school meals or transitionally protected at April 2021, up from 90,662 pupils (19.3%) at January 2020.

## Special educational needs (SEN)

A child has special needs if they have learning difficulties which requires special educational provision to be made for them. A learning difficulty means that the child has significantly greater difficulty in learning than most children of the same age or that the child has an impairment or health condition or is using British

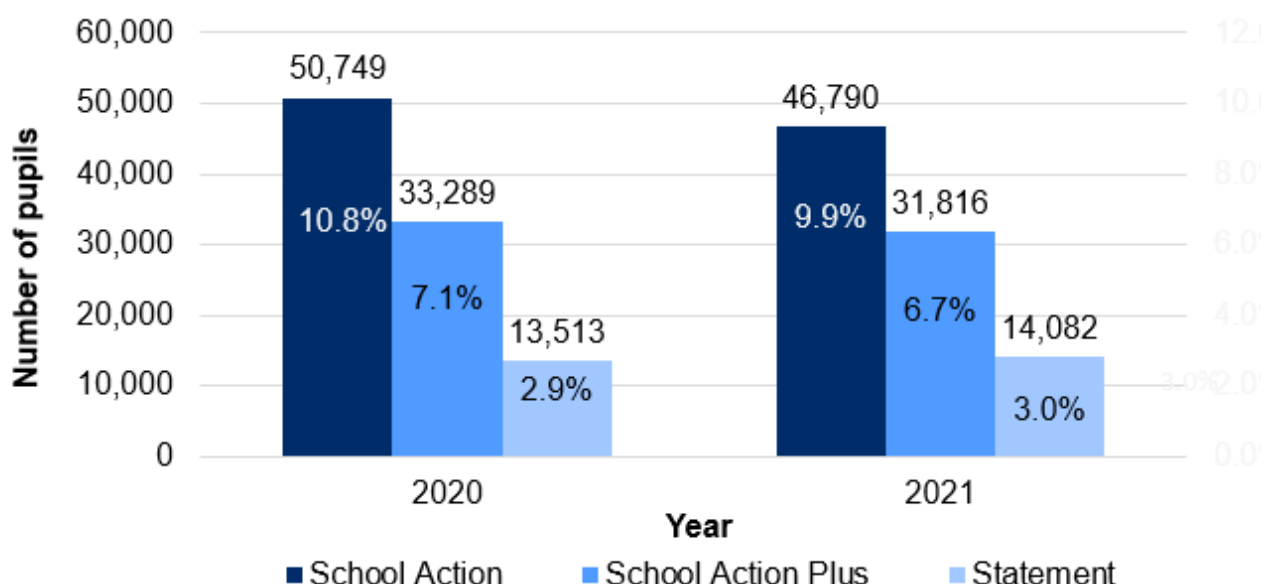
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Sign Language and needs different educational facilities from those that the school generally provides for children. Pupils with **special educational needs** may have **Statements** issued by the LA or may have their needs identified by the school. In the latter case they come under one of two further categories: **School Action** or **School Action Plus**.

**Chart 4: Number and percentage of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) in maintained schools by type of SEN provision, 2020 to 2021 (a)**



(a) Percentages represent the percentage of all pupils with these types of SEN provision.  
Source: Schools Census

### Number and percentage of pupils with special educational needs in maintained schools by type of SEN provision (MS Excel)

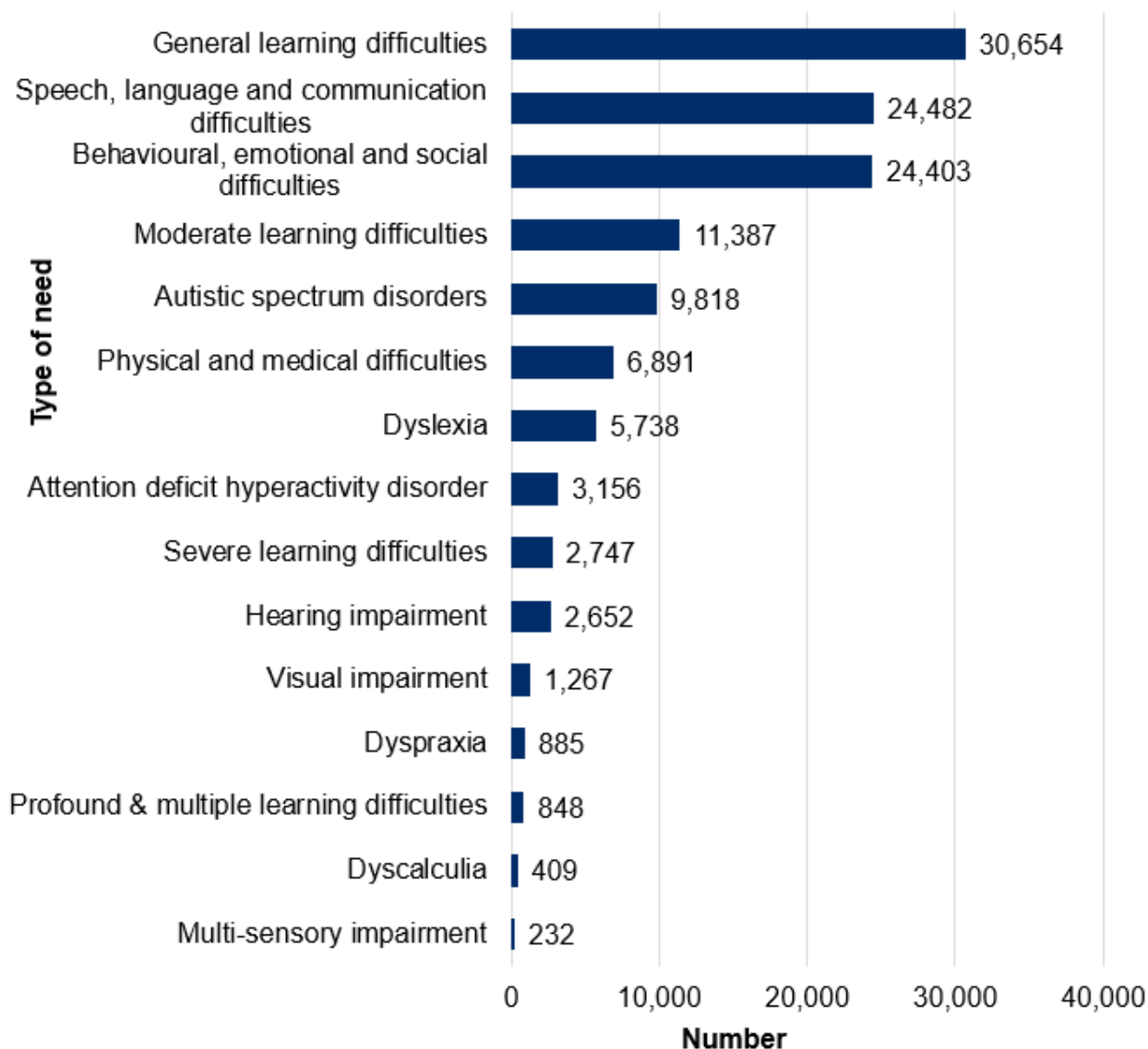
- There were 92,688 pupils (19.5%) in maintained schools with special educational needs at April 2021, down from 97,551 pupils (20.8%) at

January 2020.

- Around half of these had School Action provision and around a third of these had School Action Plus provision.
- 15.2% of the pupils with special educational needs had Statements of SEN.



## Chart 5: Reports of Special Educational Needs (SEN) in maintained schools by type of need, 2021 (a)



(a) From January 2017 maintained schools were allowed to report as many special educational needs for a pupil as required. These reports are not ranked and therefore have no SEN type that can be shown as a pupil's 'Major Need'. The chart above shows the number of times each SEN type was reported. For example, if SEN types 'Dyslexia' and 'Dyspraxia' are reported for a pupil that pupil is counted twice, once under each type. The number of SEN reports will therefore be greater than the number of pupils with SEN.

## Reports of special educational needs in maintained schools by type of need (MS Excel)

- There were 125,569 reports of SEN type made, an average of 1.4 per pupil with SEN.
- The most common type of need reported was 'General Learning Difficulties', representing 33.1 per cent of pupils with some form of SEN.
- The next highest were 'Speech, Language & Communication Difficulties' (26.4%) and 'Behavioural, Emotional & Social Difficulties' (26.3%).

## Class sizes

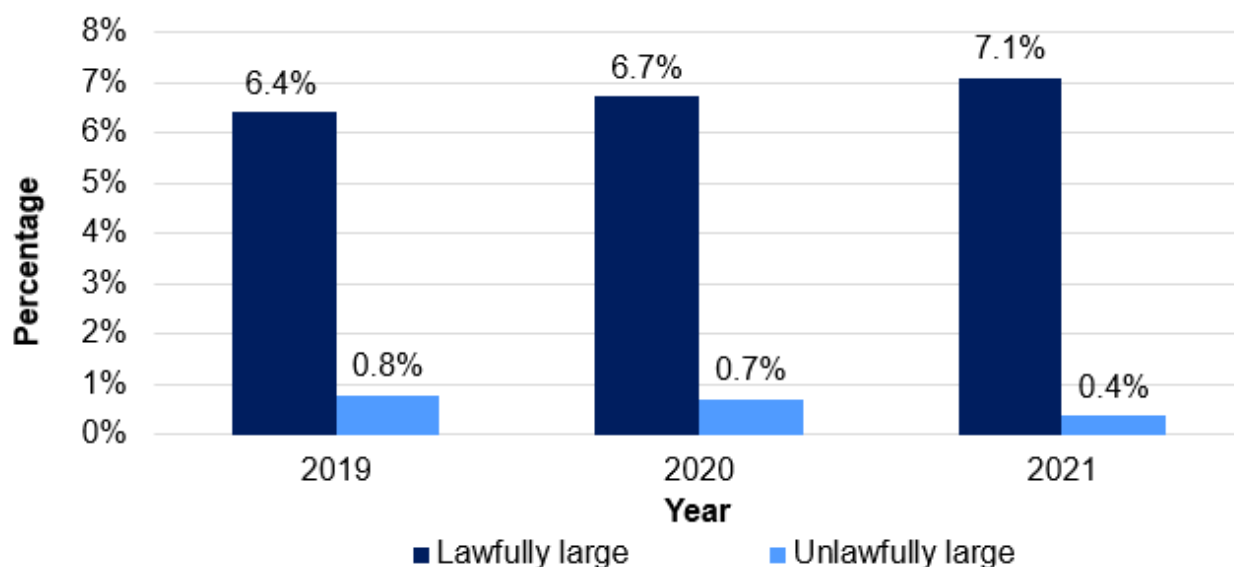
**Table 5: Average infant and junior class sizes, 2019 to 2021**

Class	2019	2020	2021
Infant	25.4	25.4	25.3
Junior	26.3	26.3	26.2

- There was a slight fall in the average infant and junior class sizes in 2021.

**Infant classes** of more than 30 pupils are unlawfully large unless specific circumstances called 'exceptions' are satisfied.

## Chart 6: Percentage of pupils in lawfully and unlawfully large infant classes, 2019 to 2021



Source: Schools Census

### Percentage of pupils in lawfully and unlawfully large infant classes (MS Excel)

- There were 7,617 pupils (7.5%) in infant classes of over 30 pupils at April 2021, little change from 7,620 pupils (7.4%) at January 2020.
- There were 385 pupils (0.4%) in unlawfully large classes of over 30 pupils at April 2021, down from 728 pupils (0.7%) at January 2020.

## Teachers and support staff

The School Workforce Annual Census (SWAC) was introduced in 2019 to provide more comprehensive information on the school workforce in Wales and help inform Welsh Government policy on issues relating to the school workforce

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in Wales. The data will be used in workforce planning and used to monitor equality and diversity of the school workforce. Data published in this statistical release (Schools' census results) derived using information from the Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) should continue to be used as the official statistics on the school workforce, and used for comparisons over time. The latest **SWAC statistical release** was published on 26 August 2021 as experimental statistics. Once the quality of the data collected through SWAC has been assured and any differences explained, the SWAC release will provide the official statistics on the school workforce in Wales.

**Table 6: Number of full-time equivalent (FTE) qualified teachers and support staff in maintained schools, 2019 to 2021**

	2019	2020	2021
<b>Qualified teachers</b>	23,593	23,594	23,941
<b>Support staff</b>	23,251	23,796	23,779

- There were 23,941 **full-time equivalent** qualified teachers in local authority maintained schools at April 2021, up 347 compared with January 2020.
- There were also 23,779 full-time equivalent support staff in local authority maintained schools at April 2021, little change from January 2020.

# Definitions

## Local authority maintained schools

Schools maintained by the local authorities. The authorities meet their expenditure partly from council tax and partly from general grants made by the Welsh Government.

## Welsh medium schools

Primary schools include Welsh medium, dual stream and transitional schools. Middle and secondary schools include Welsh medium and bilingual schools. For further information please see these [guidance notes](#).

## English medium schools

Includes English medium and English with significant Welsh.

## Independent schools

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

## Nursery schools

age under 5.

## **Primary schools**

ages 3/4 to 10.

## **Middle schools**

ages 3/4 to 16/18.

## **Secondary schools**

ages 11 to 16/18.

## **Special schools**

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

## **Full-time equivalent (FTE)**

FTE pupil numbers count part-time pupils as 0.5.

FTE of part-time teachers expresses the teachers' service in hours as a proportion of a school week: 32.5 hours for maintained schools and 26 hours for independent schools.

## **Pupil teacher ratio (PTR)**

Calculated by dividing the FTE number of pupils by the FTE number of qualified teachers (head teachers, acting head teachers, assistant head teachers, deputy heads and other qualified teachers).

## **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 LA 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.

## Infant class sizes

The Schools Standards and Framework Act 1998 and associated regulations placed a statutory duty on local authorities and governing bodies to limit the size of Reception classes to 30 from 1999; Reception and Year 1 classes from 2000 and Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 from 2001. Mixed year or mixed Key Stage classes are subject to the limit, where the majority of the class is made up of pupils in the appropriate year groups; this includes mixed nursery/reception classes.

## Quality and methodology information

### 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. The designation of these statistics as National Statistics was confirmed in July 2010 following a **full assessment against the Code of Practice**.

Since the latest review by the Office for Statistics Regulation, we have continued



to comply with the Code of Practice for Statistics, and have made the following improvements:

- added to and refined information about dimensions of quality and described links to policy
- produced the latest release in a new format to include charts which provide further insight into some of the key information
- made more data available on StatsWales

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.

This section 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 issues relating to quality of 2021 data, and describes the quality management tool applied to this area of work.

## Relevance

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

- ministers and the Senedd Research in the Senedd
- members of the Senedd Cymru/Welsh Parliament
- education policy in the Welsh Government
- other areas of the Welsh Government
- Estyn

- the research community
- students, academics and universities
- individual citizens and private companies

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
- 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
- published on [My Local School](#)
- to assist in research in educational attainment

## Accuracy

The census data in this release relates to all maintained and independent schools in Wales. The teacher sickness absence data included in the accompanying spreadsheet relates to all maintained schools only.

## Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) / School Census (STATS1 Return)

Schools' data are derived from the Pupil Level Annual School Census returns and STATS1 returns supplied by schools open on Census day in January each year. The returns are authorised by headteachers and validated by Local Authorities. The teacher sickness absence data is collected directly from the local authorities in January each year. School closures between December 2020 and March 2021 due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic meant that the

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2021 collections were delayed to April.

PLASC is an electronic collection of pupil and school level data provided by all maintained schools in January each year. Schools record data on pupils and the school throughout the year in their Management Information System (MIS) software. This data is collated into an electronic PLASC 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 to inform policy making and funding.

Independent schools in Wales complete an aggregate STATS1 return.

## **Teacher sickness absence annual returns**

Schools provide sickness absence data to local authorities, which collate the data for the Welsh Government collection. Local authorities carry out their own validation, and are given the chance to review data submitted for the previous year. In built validations in the data collection form compare the new and previous year's data, which highlights any significant changes and provides further opportunity for data validation.

Many local authorities report system developments that have allowed this data to be captured more accurately and timely than in previous years. This has increased the quality of the data provided and sometimes results in revisions being made to previous years' data.

## **Timeliness and punctuality**

The census data in this release relate to the position on Tuesday 20 April 2021. DEWi was available for uploading files on 20 April 2021. Schools and local

authorities were then asked to validate their data within the validation period, which closed on 9 July 2021. The teacher sickness absence data relates to the preceding calendar year.

## Accessibility and clarity

This Statistical First Release is pre-announced and then published on the Statistics section of the Welsh Government website. It is accompanied by an Open Document Spreadsheet and more detailed tables on [StatsWales](#), a free to use service that allows visitors to view, manipulate, create and download data. The data is also published on [My Local School](#), a website designed to open up access to school data for parents and all others with an interest in their local school.

## Comparability

Here is the latest available data for:

### England

[Statistics: school and pupil numbers \(GOV.UK\)](#)

[Statistics: education and training UK \(GOV.UK\)](#)

### Scotland

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

### Northern Ireland

[Education statistics \(Department of Education, Northern Ireland\)](#)

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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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