



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

STATISTICS, DOCUMENT

Schools' census results: January 2023

Statistics on schools, teachers and pupils including data for local authorities and Wales for January 2023.

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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, additional learning and special educational needs, class sizes, teachers and support staff.

The data in this report is collected by the Welsh Government from local authority maintained schools in an electronic return called the Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) and from independent schools in an aggregated return.

Data on pupils eligible for free school meals

After the release of the schools' census headline statistics on 25 May 2023 we analysed the data in more detail as part of our normal programme of work which raised some concerns relating to the free school meal eligibility data. To address these concerns, we carried out additional validation of this data on pupils eligible for free school meals with local authorities. Please see the [quality and methodology information section](#) and our [Chief Statistician's update](#) on this.

Main points

- There were 1,463 local authority maintained schools, down 7 compared with February 2022.
- There were 469,872 pupils in local authority maintained schools, down 1,259 compared with February 2022.
- Of the 383,065 pupils aged 5 to 15, 22.2% were known to be eligible for free

school meals. Please see the [quality and methodology information section](#) for information on the quality of this data.

- 28.7% of pupils aged 5 to 15 were known to be eligible for free school meals or transitionally protected, up from 26.9% at February 2022.
- There were 63,089 pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) or special educational needs (SEN) in maintained schools (13.4% of all pupils), down from 74,661 (15.8%) at February 2022.
- There were 10,499 pupils with Individual Development Plans under the new ALN system in maintained schools (16.6% of pupils with ALN or SEN), up from 3,330 (4.5%) at February 2022.
- There were 24,884 full-time equivalent qualified teachers in maintained schools, up 228 compared with February 2022.

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](#).

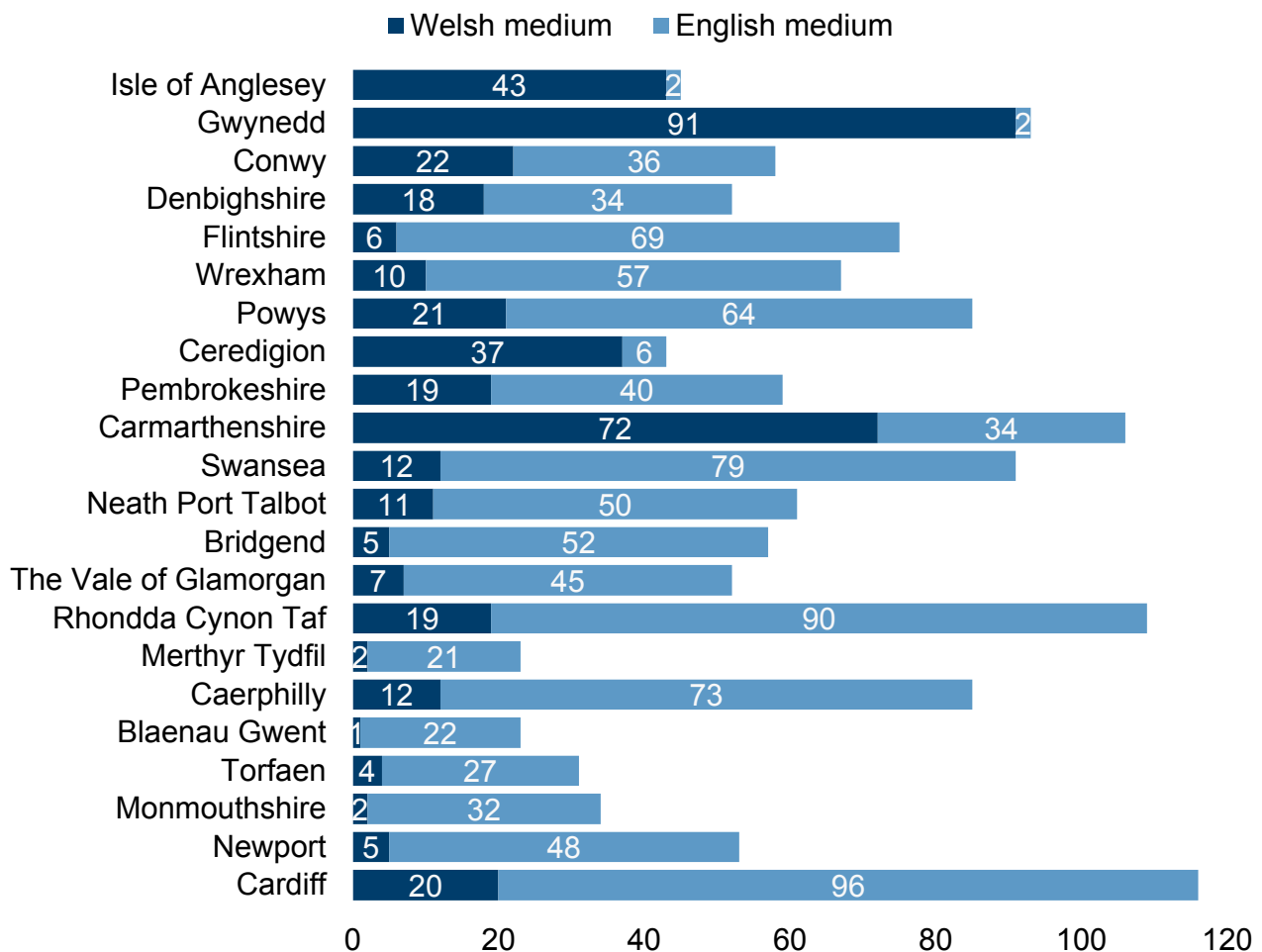
Table 1: Number of schools in Wales by sector, 2022 to 2023

Sector	2022	2023
Nursery	8	6

Sector	2022	2023
Primary	1,217	1,213
Middle	23	27
Secondary	182	178
Special	40	39
Local authority maintained schools	1,470	1,463
Independent	79	79
All schools	1,549	1,542

The table shows that there were 1,463 local authority maintained schools at January 2023, down 7 compared with February 2022. There were 79 independent schools, unchanged compared with the previous year.

Figure 1: Number of maintained schools by local authority and medium, 2023 [Note 1]



Description of Figure 1: A stacked bar chart showing the number of Welsh medium and English medium schools in each local authority. Cardiff had the highest number of schools overall at January 2023 and Gwynedd had the highest number of Welsh medium schools.

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

[Note 1] Primary, middle and secondary schools (excluding nursery and special schools)

- There were 439 Welsh medium schools at January 2023, with 108,866 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, 2022 to 2023

Sector	2022	2023
Nursery	611	406
Primary	266,574	262,666
Middle	22,516	26,168
Secondary	175,957	174,948
Special	5,473	5,684
Local authority maintained schools	471,131	469,872
Independent [Note 1]	10,034	9,840
All schools	481,165	479,712

The table shows that there were 469,872 pupils in local authority maintained

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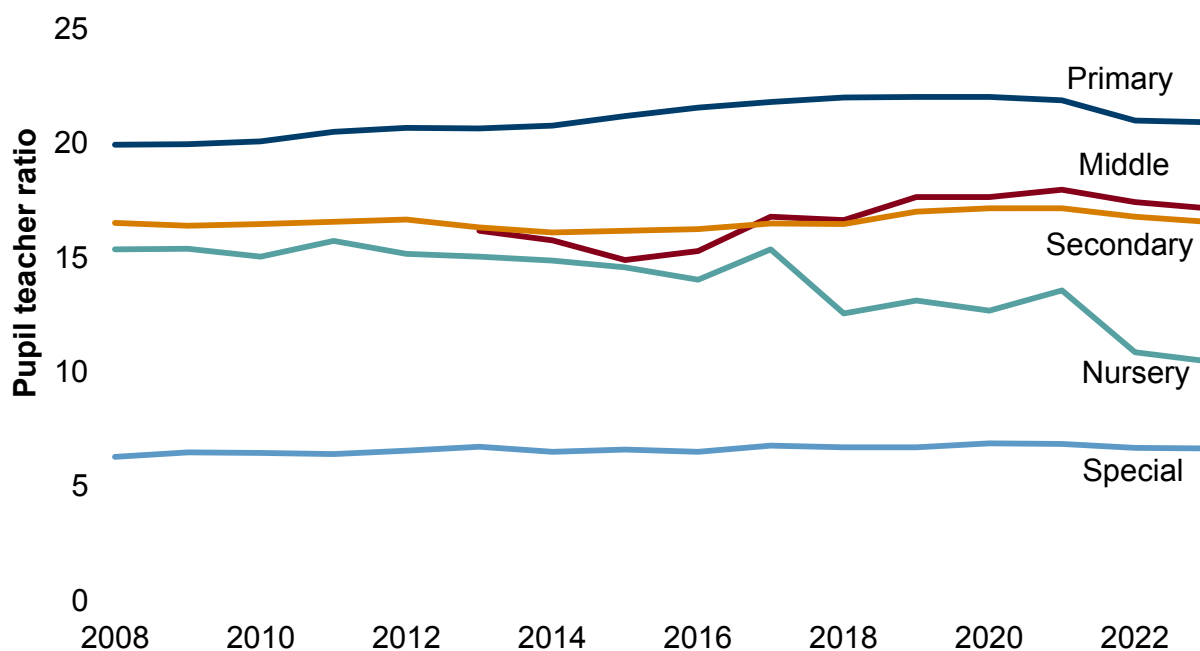
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schools, down 1,259 compared with February 2022. There were 9,840 pupils (2.1% of all pupils) in independent schools at January 2022, down 194 compared with February 2022.

[Note 1] 10 independent schools did not submit data in 2022 and 5 independent schools did not submit data in 2023.

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

Figure 2: Pupil teacher ratio (PTR) by sector, 2008 to 2023



Description of Figure 2: Line chart showing pupil to teacher ratios for each sector. The chart shows that over the last 15 years, primary schools have had the highest pupil teacher ratio.

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

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- The **pupil teacher ratio** in January 2023 was highest in primary schools at 20.9 and lowest in special schools at 6.7. The ratio in secondary schools was 16.6.
- The pupil teacher ratio has decreased in all sectors since 2021. This may be partly due to the **Welsh Government funding provided to schools** under the “recruit, recover and raise standards” plan to recruit extra staff to support pupils during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Ethnic background

This is the ethnic group with which the pupil identifies themselves.

Table 3: Number and percentage of pupils aged 5 or over by ethnic background, 2023

Ethnicity	Number	Percentage
White	362,945	89.6
White British	346,996	85.7
Traveller	473	0.1
Gypsy/Roma	831	0.2
Any other White background	14,645	3.6
Mixed	15,565	3.8

Ethnicity	Number	Percentage
White and Black Caribbean	2,812	0.7
White and Black African	2,305	0.6
White and Asian	3,116	0.8
Any other mixed background	7,332	1.8
Asian	11,176	2.8
Indian	3,157	0.8
Pakistani	3,223	0.8
Bangladeshi	3,270	0.8
Any other Asian background	1,526	0.4
Black	5,354	1.3
Black Caribbean	191	0.0
Black African	4,618	1.1
Any other Black background	545	0.1
Chinese	976	0.2

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Ethnicity	Number	Percentage
Any other ethnic group	6,400	1.6
Total with valid category	402,416	99.3
Unknown or not stated	2,659	0.7
All pupils	405,075	100.0

The table shows that 85.7% of pupils aged 5 and over identified as White British at January 2023. 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 (15,565 pupils), a White background other than White British, Traveller or Gypsy/Roma (14,645), Asian (11,176) and Black (5,354); whilst 6,400 pupils identify as another ethnic group.

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.

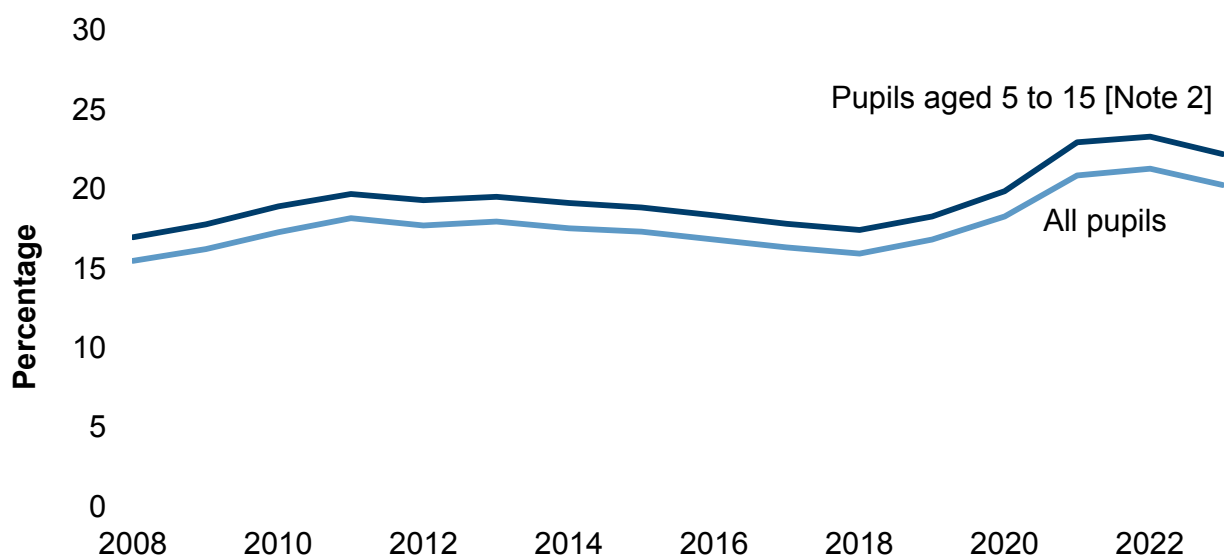
Universal primary free school meals

As part of the Co-operation Agreement between the Welsh Government and

Plaid Cymru, **all primary school children in Wales will get free school meals by 2024**. The rollout began in September 2022 with most local authorities delivering free school meals to Reception aged children from the start of the autumn term (September 2022) and extending the offer to years 1 and 2 no later than the start of the summer term (April 2023).

Whilst this rollout of free school meals to those not previously eligible for them has started, the data presented in this release does not reflect the total number of pupils receiving free school meals in January 2023. Instead, it includes only the number of pupils who are eligible for free school meals 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.

Figure 3: Percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, 2008 to 2023 [Note 1]



Description of Figure 3: A line chart showing that the percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals was higher in 2023 than in the years before

the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

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

[Note 1] Pupils eligible if their parents or guardians are in receipt of certain means-tested benefits or support payments. The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic may have impacted on the quality of this data and may have resulted in over recording of this data in 2020 to 2022. Please see the [quality and methodology information section](#) and our [Chief Statistician's update](#) on this.

[Note 2] Age as at 31 August of the previous year.

- There were 85,057 pupils (22.2%) aged 5 to 15 known to be eligible for free school meals at January 2023.
- There were 95,187 pupils (20.3%) of all ages known to be eligible for free school meals at January 2023.

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), 2021 to 2023

	2021	2022	2023
Pupils aged 5 to 15			
Number eligible for FSM [Note 1]	87,095	88,808	85,057
% eligible for FSM [Note 1]	22.9	23.3	22.2
Number eligible for FSM or TP	95,532	102,391	109,977
% eligible for FSM or TP	25.2	26.9	28.7
Pupils of all ages			
Number eligible for FSM [Note 1]	99,135	100,305	95,187
% eligible for FSM [Note 1]	20.9	21.3	20.3
Number eligible for FSM or TP	108,447	114,992	121,550
% eligible for FSM or TP	22.8	24.4	25.9

The table shows that there were 109,977 pupils (28.7%) aged 5 to 15 known to be eligible for free school meals or transitionally protected at January 2023, up from 102,391 pupils (26.9%) at February 2022.

There were 121,550 pupils (25.9%) of all ages known to be eligible for free school meals or transitionally protected at January 2023, up from 114,992 pupils (24.4%) at February 2022.

[Note 1] The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic may have impacted on the quality of this data and may have resulted in over recording of this data in 2020 to 2022. Please see the [quality and methodology information section](#) and our [Chief Statistician's update](#) on this.

Additional learning needs (ALN) and 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 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.

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.

Individual Development Plans (IDPs) are statutory plans created under the Act. A learner may have either a school maintained IDP or a local authority maintained IDP.

Implementation is underway, with children moving from the special educational needs (SEN) system to the additional learning needs (ALN) system in groups over 4 years until August 2025. On 20 March 2023, in response to feedback from the sector, **the Minister for Education and Welsh Language announced an extension to the implementation period from 3 to 4 years**. This will allow more time to move learners from the SEN system to the ALN system and create more flexibility for those bodies who are responsible for this process.

Implementation of the ALN Code has taken place in partnership with education transformation leads, delivery partners and education establishments, with a programme of learning and development, and creation of new statutory roles in local authorities, schools and the health service.

Last year's 2022 schools census represented the first submissions from dedicated ALN Coordinators across Wales, as part of the Implementation of the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018.

Analysis of the data, along with feedback from local authorities suggests that the fall in ALN/SEN pupils over the last two years is due to a systematic review by schools of their ALN/SEN registers in readiness for the rollout of the ALN system. Those pupils with low level needs, who were not identified as having a recognised ALN/SEN, were removed from the register.

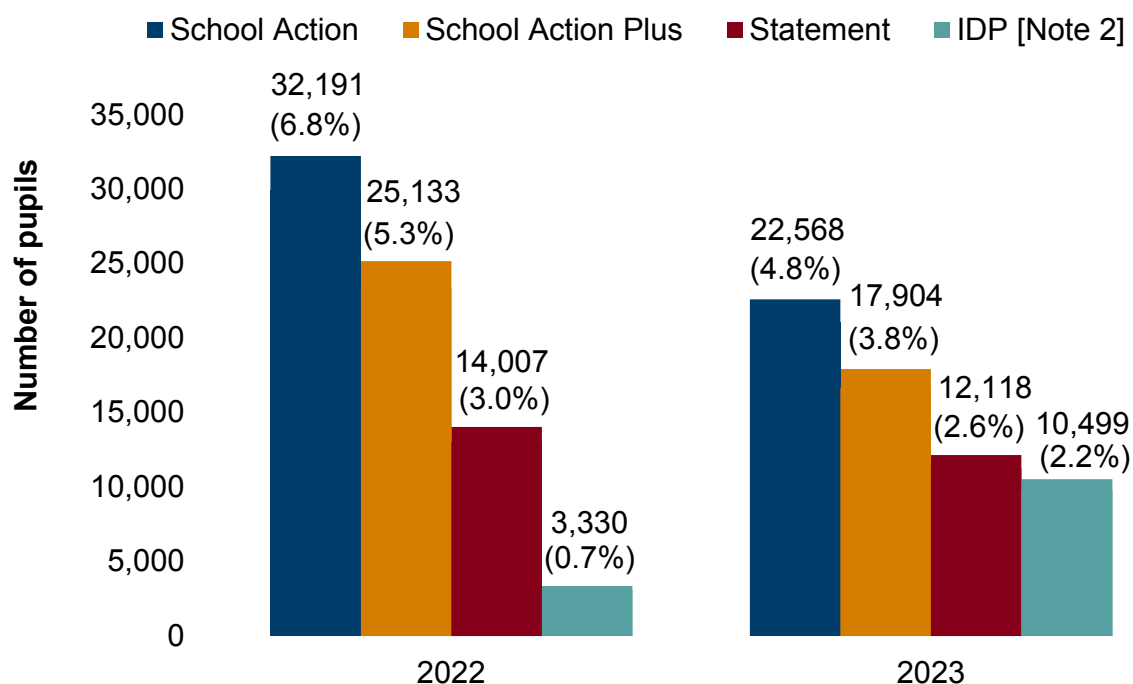
Schools were also asked to stop using the 'General learning difficulties' category and to reassess an appropriate category of need for such pupils. This category had become a catch-all for those requiring catch up support, with minor needs and/or where multiple needs existed, instead of its original intent, which was to

capture learners awaiting assessment. This has led to some pupils being removed from the register if they were identified as not having ALN/SEN. The 'General learning difficulties' category was removed from the 2023 schools census.

Additionally, many pupils on School Action Plans (those requiring the least amount of special educational provision) have been removed from the ALN/SEN register. This was either because their needs were short term but they had remained on the register, or they 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.

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.

Figure 4: Number and percentage of pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) or special educational needs (SEN) in maintained schools by type of provision, 2022 to 2023 [Note 1]



Description of Figure 4: Clustered bar chart showing that the most common type of ALN or SEN provision in 2023 was School Action. IDP provision has increased compared to 2022, while other types of provision have decreased as pupils move to the new ALN system.

Number and percentage of pupils with additional learning or special educational needs in maintained schools by type of provision (MS Excel)

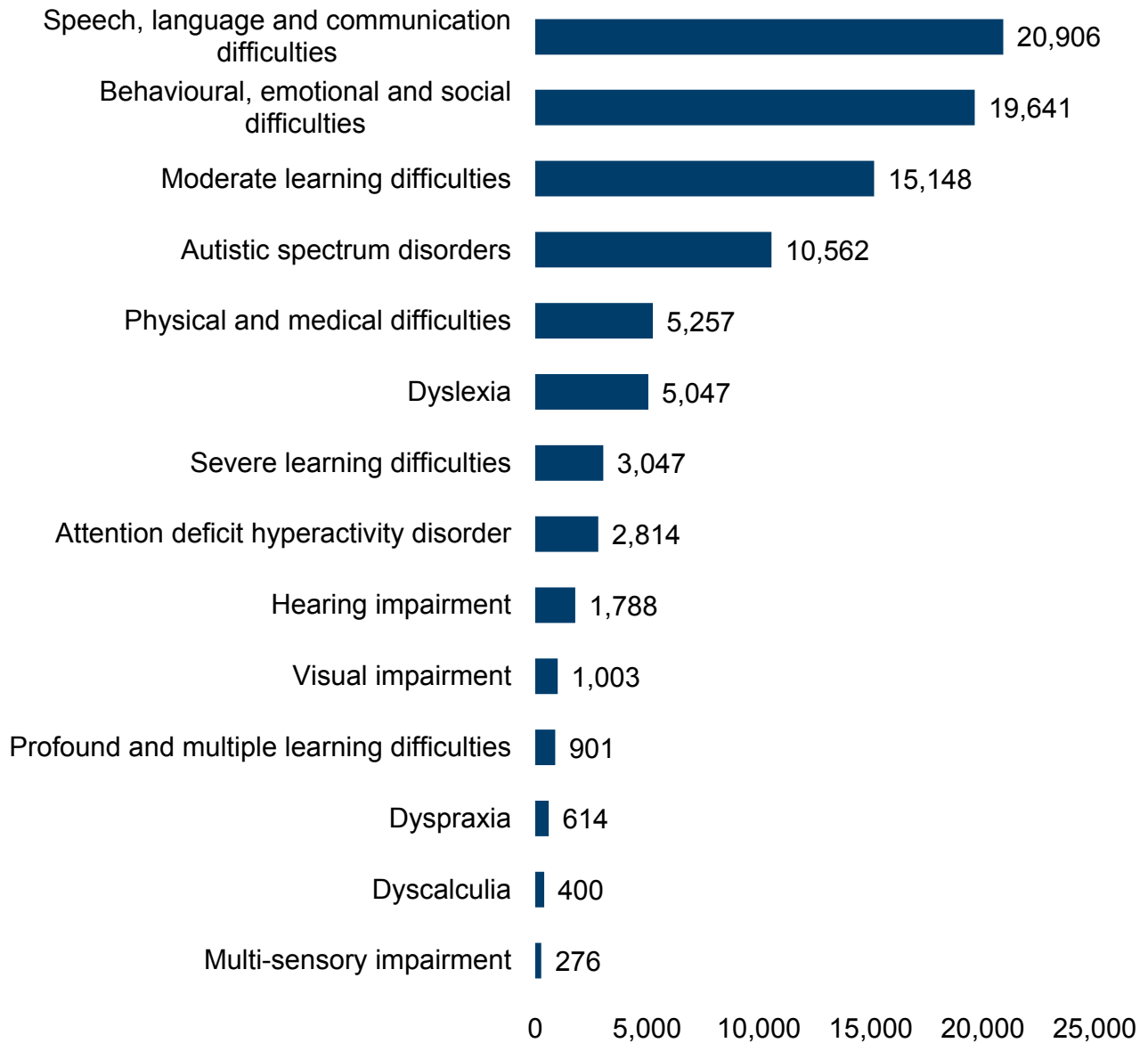
[Note 1] Percentages represent the percentage of all pupils with these types of ALN or SEN provision.

[Note 2] Individual Development Plans (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.

- There were 63,089 pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) or special educational needs (SEN) in maintained schools (13.4% of all pupils), down from 74,661 (15.8%) in February 2022.
- The number of pupils with School Action provision fell by 30% and the number of pupils with School Action Plus provision fell by 29% in 2023.
- There were 10,499 pupils with Individual Development Plans under the new ALN system in maintained schools (16.6% of pupils with ALN or SEN), up from 3,330 (4.5%) in February 2022.

Figure 5: Reports of additional learning needs (ALN) or special educational needs (SEN) in maintained schools by type of need, 2023 [Note 1]



Description of Figure 5: Bar chart showing the number of reports of each

additional learning or special educational type of need. Speech, language and communication difficulties was the most common type of ALN or SEN in 2023 followed by behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.

Reports of additional learning or special educational needs in maintained schools by type of need (MS Excel)

[Note 1]: 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 type that can be shown as a pupil's 'Major Need'. The chart above shows the number of times each type of need was reported. For example, if types 'Dyslexia' and 'Dyspraxia' are reported for a pupil that pupil is counted twice, once under each type. The number of ALN or SEN reports will therefore be greater than the number of pupils with ALN or SEN.

- There were 87,404 reports of ALN or SEN type made, an average of 1.4 per pupil with ALN or SEN.
- The most common type of need reported was 'Speech, language and communication difficulties', representing 33.1% of pupils with some form of ALN or SEN.
- The next highest was 'Behavioural, emotional and social difficulties' (31.1%) followed by 'Moderate learning difficulties' (24.0%).

Class sizes

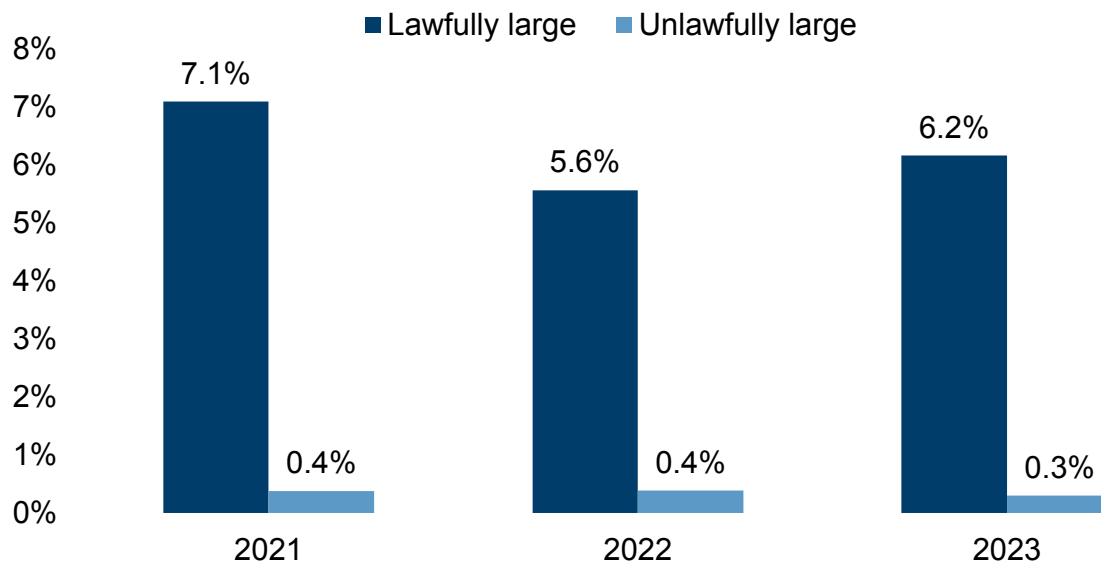
Table 5: Average infant and junior class sizes, 2021 to 2023

Class	2021	2022	2023
Infant	25.3	24.9	24.8
Junior	26.2	25.8	25.7

The table shows that the average infant and junior class sizes both fell slightly in 2023. The fall in class sizes since 2021 may be partly due to the [Welsh Government funding provided to schools](#) under the “recruit, recover and raise standards” plan to recruit extra staff to support pupils during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

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

Figure 6: Percentage of pupils in lawfully and unlawfully large infant classes, 2021 to 2023



Description of Figure 6: Clustered bar chart showing that the percentage of pupils in lawfully large classes increased in 2023 while the percentage in unlawfully large classes decreased slightly.

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

- There were 6,459 pupils (6.5%) in infant classes of over 30 pupils in January 2023, up from 5,992 pupils (6.0%) in February 2022.
- There were 302 pupils (0.3%) in unlawfully large classes of over 30 pupils in January, down from 391 pupils (0.4%) in February 2022.

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 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) is derived using information from the Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) and should continue to be used as the official statistics on the school workforce and for comparisons over time. The latest **SWAC statistical release** was published on 18 July 2023 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.

From 2021, teacher sickness absence information has been collected through the SWAC. The SWAC collection provides greater coverage of school teacher absences in that it collects data from schools who have opted out of payroll or HR service level agreements with their local authority. For this reason, teacher sickness absence data is no longer collected separately from local authorities and is published as part of the **SWAC statistical release** only going forward.

Please see the **School Workforce Annual Census: quality report** for more details on the SWAC collection and a comparison of data items collected in SWAC and PLASC (relating to qualified teachers, teacher sickness absence and teacher recruitment and retention).

Table 6: Number of full-time equivalent (FTE) qualified teachers and support staff in maintained schools, 2021 to 2023

	2021	2022	2023
Qualified teachers	23,941	24,657	24,884
Support staff	23,779	24,517	25,812

The table shows that there were 24,884 **full-time equivalent** qualified teachers in local authority maintained schools as at January 2023, up 228 compared with February 2022.

There were also 25,812 full-time equivalent support staff in local authority maintained schools as at January 2023, up 1,295 compared with February 2022.

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 ALN or 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).

Additional learning and 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.

Individual Development Plans

Individual Development Plans (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.

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 2023 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.

After the release of the schools' census headline statistics on 25 May 2023 we analysed the data in more detail as part of our normal programme of work which raised some concerns relating to the free school meal eligibility data. To address these concerns, we carried out additional validation of this data on pupils eligible for free school meals with local authorities. Please see our [Chief Statistician's update](#) on this.

The result of this additional validation showed that some pupils who were only receiving free school meals due to transitional protection or through the universal primary free school meal policy had been incorrectly recorded as being eligible for free school meals via the means-tested criteria (pupils are eligible for free school meals if their parents or guardians are in receipt of certain means-tested benefits or support payments, see [Free school meals: information for parents and carers](#)).

Table 7: Number and percentage of pupils aged 5 to 15 known to be eligible for free school meals (FSM) or transitionally protected (TP), January 2023

Measure	Original	Revised
Number eligible for FSM	91,491	85,057
% eligible for FSM	23.9	22.2
Number TP only	18,851	24,920
% TP only	4.9	6.5
Number eligible for FSM or TP	110,342	109,977
% eligible for FSM or TP	28.8	28.7

The table shows that as a result of the corrections received from local authorities, the percentage of pupils aged 5 to 15 who were known to be eligible for free school meals at January 2023 through the means-tested criteria was revised down from 23.9% to 22.2%. This data is now considered final.

The number of pupils eligible for free school meals through the means-tested criteria may have also been over recorded in 2020 to 2022, but it is not possible to revise this data. This over recording may be in part due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, which presented a significant challenge to schools and local authorities and led directly to the suspension or cancellation of a number of data collections. Also, even where collections went ahead the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic may have had further implications on the quality of the

data which might not have been immediately apparent. As shown below, the school censuses in 2020 to 2022 were all affected by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic:

- The January 2020 census did not undergo the usual final validation process as part of the Welsh Local Government Finance Settlement due to the first national lockdown from March 2020.
- The 2021 census was delayed until April 2021 due to the second national lockdown in Spring 2021.
- The 2022 census was delayed until February 2022 due to a phased return for pupils following winter 2021.

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. Due to the level of coronavirus (COVID-19) cases in January 2022, the 2022 census date was delayed to 15 February 2022. School closures between December 2020 and March 2021 due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic meant that the 2021 census date was delayed to 20 April 2021.

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.

Timeliness and punctuality

The census data in this release relate to the position on Tuesday 17 January 2023. DEWi was available for uploading files on 17 January 2023. Schools and local authorities were then asked to validate their data within the validation period, which closed on 5 May 2023. Following concerns relating to free school meal eligibility data, an additional validation period was carried out in June and July 2023.

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 will also be 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 \(GOV.UK\)](#)

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Go to <https://www.gov.wales/schools-census-results-january-2023-html> for the latest version.

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Scotland

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

Northern Ireland

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

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. Under section 10(8) of the Well-being of Future Generations Act, where the Welsh Ministers revise the national indicators, they must as soon as reasonably practicable (a) publish the indicators as revised and (b) lay a copy of them before the Senedd. These national indicators were laid before the Senedd in 2021. The indicators laid on 14 December 2021 replace the set laid on 16 March 2016.

Information on the indicators, along with narratives for each of the wellbeing goals and associated technical information is available in the [Wellbeing 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.

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