### ATISN 18549 - take up of Universal Primary Free School Meals in Wales

# Information requested

Thank you for your request which I received on 1 June 2023 You asked:

- What percentage of eligible pupils have taken up universal school meals in the following months:
   September 2022, October 2022, November 2022, December 2022, January 2023, February 2023, March 2023, April 2023, May 2023.
  - i) You asked us to 'provide this information for every local authority in Wales, and within each authority and for it to be broken down by year group (reception, year 1 and year 2) so the percentage of eligible pupils in each year group who have taken up the meals, in each council and in each month requested'.
  - ii) You asked us to 'provide this information as a whole Wales total (the whole Wales total for each month requested)'.

#### Our response

The information you have requested is not held by Welsh Government. We do not collect data on number of pupils taking up the universal primary free school meal offer at this time. We do, however, collect data on the number of meals served and, if helpful, have enclosed that information instead.

Below are tables that present take-up of Universal Free School Meals (UPFSM) across each local authority by year group for the period you request (September 2022 to May 2023), however please note this data comes with several caveats:

- This data relates to the uptake of meals by those newly eligible for a meal
  under the universal offer. It does not include data on uptake or meals served
  to those children traditionally eligible for a meal under benefit-related routes
  (eFSM) local authorities have a duty to provide a school lunch for these
  eligible pupils as set out in the Education Act 1996.
- Local authority UPFSM grant claims report the number of UPFSM meals served to newly eligible pupils (non-eFSM) in each year group for a given week per month. We are therefore able to use this information to report a % uptake figure, by expressing the number of meals served as a proportion of the total number of meals that might be served if every newly eligible pupil took the offer of a meal on each day of the week being reported on.
- To note: While this allows us to express a % uptake figure in terms of meals served, this is different from what you requested (that being the percentage of eligible pupils taking up the offer). By way of example, an uptake figure of 60% (as calculated above) could be the result of 60% of eligible pupils taking up the offer and accessing a meal every day. Equally, it could also be the result of every eligible pupil taking up the offer, but only accessing it on 3 days out of the 5 available in the week being reported on.

- The information provided is based on data collected from local authorities via their grant claims and is for management information purposes only.
- The information provided does not form part of any statutory data collection required by the Welsh Government.
- The data collected is unverified by the Welsh Government.
- Local authorities use several different software systems to record the number
  of meals served to pupils for UPFSM, paid meals and eFSM. There is no
  consistent software system used by all 22 local authorities. As a result, the
  way in which the information is used to calculate the number of UPFSM meals
  served may vary in local authorities and this could impact on the quality of
  data subsequently submitted to the Welsh Government.
- You will note % uptake is not included for Flintshire for April and May 2023 as their grant claims were not available when the information request was received.
- Finally, within the tables presented below, you will note some gaps, particularly across Years 1 and 2. This is because, while some local authorities were able to go faster than others initially, national expectations for rollout to these year groups were that these should be reached no later than April 2023 wherever possible. Prior to this date, therefore, some local authorities would not yet have been delivering to these year groups.

# **All Wales**

All Wales	% Uptake (of UPFSM meals served to newly eligible learners - not including eFSM learners)				
Sep-22	69.3				
Oct-22	67.9				
Nov-22	67.8				
Dec-22	66.5				
Jan-23	69.7				
Feb-23	67.4				
Mar-23	70.6				
Apr-23	69.7				
May-23	70.2				

Reception % Uptake									
Local Authority	Month								
	Sep-	Oct-	Nov-	Dec-	Jan-	Feb-	Mar-	Apr-	May-
	22	22	22	22	23	23	23	23	23
Isle of Anglesey	75	70	70	67	74	59	73	74	75
Gwynedd	78	73	74	93	81	78	81	80	78
Conwy	79	69	77	72	79	79	74	74	70
Denbighshire	69	73	72	67	83	69	72	71	71
Flintshire	70	74	70	70	70	66	70		
Wrexham	61	63	63	61	65	68	68	70	69
Powys	73	76	77	72	78	75	76	78	79
Ceredigion	85	82	81	78	83	84	82	89	87
Pembrokeshire	68	68	67	64	72	70	72	72	73
Carmarthenshire	61	62	59	61	63	64	66	66	65
Swansea	78	65	66	63	68	63	75	64	65
Neath Port Talbot	70	66	68	64	70	69	69	72	71
Bridgend	60	58	60	61	61	57	60	62	61
The Vale of									
Glamorgan	86	85	88	81	86	79	88	77	77
Rhondda Cynon Taf	67	67	67	63	68	67	70	70	70
Merthyr Tydfil	58	57	58	55	57	53	59	57	60
Caerphilly	54	56	56	56	57	71	60	59	57
Blaenau Gwent	60	64	59	63	64	69	72	77	74
Torfaen		85	77	75	82	77	90	78	78
Monmouthshire	79	85	86	80	82	78	85	72	72
Newport	69	72	72	62	77	64	73	79	79
Cardiff	69	69	68	65	70	65	67	68	69

Year 1 % Uptake									
Local Authority	Month								
	Sep-	Oct-	Nov-	Dec-	Jan-	Feb-	Mar-	Apr-	May-
	22	22	22	22	23	23	23	23	23
Isle of Anglesey	64	65	70	63	71	55	67	70	69
Gwynedd	66	63	68	83	72	68	72	70	69
Conwy	62	59	64	65	66	74	66	65	65
Denbighshire					61	63	62	63	64
Flintshire									
Wrexham								74	76
Powys								67	69
Ceredigion	71	70	70	68	72	73	72	75	75
Pembrokeshire	71	69	66	68	72	73	73	73	87
Carmarthenshire					64	67	69	67	67
Swansea							73	62	64
Neath Port Talbot			60	58	64	63	63	67	67
Bridgend								61	59
The Vale of									
Glamorgan	89	86	87	81	87	80	85	73	72
Rhondda Cynon Taf					54	57	58	59	58
Merthyr Tydfil								53	57
Caerphilly	46	51	50	52	52	66	55	56	56
Blaenau Gwent	51	51	54	50	49	51	50	73	64
Torfaen		69	72	71	76	69	85	74	72
Monmouthshire	91	92	91	83	87	78	87	70	72
Newport	59	58	58	59	61	58	59	81	82
Cardiff								53	57

Year 2 % Uptake									
Local Authority	Month								
	Sep-	Oct-	Nov-	Dec-	Jan-	Feb-	Mar-	Apr-	May-
	22	22	22	22	23	23	23	23	23
Isle of Anglesey					69	56	71	69	70
Gwynedd					75	72	76	75	74
Conwy	61	61	65	68	67	58	68	69	66
Denbighshire								68	71
Flintshire									
Wrexham								69	72
Powys								77	81
Ceredigion	77	74	68	73	78	77	79	80	78
Pembrokeshire	66	62	61	62	66	64	65	65	64
Carmarthenshire								64	63
Swansea									
Neath Port Talbot			65	64	71	70	69	72	73
Bridgend								59	60
The Vale of									
Glamorgan	98	94	97	90	94	88	94	81	81
Rhondda Cynon Taf								61	62
Merthyr Tydfil								57	59
Caerphilly			54	56	56	70	61	60	59
Blaenau Gwent	68	82	73	74	68	81	81	89	90
Torfaen		66	67	64	70	69	87	72	71
Monmouthshire	77	83	80	75	78	72	79	61	62
Newport	60	61	64	63	68	64	65	83	84
Cardiff									

### **Next steps**

If you are dissatisfied with the Welsh Government's handling of your request, you can ask for an internal review within 40 working days of the date of this response. Requests for an internal review should be addressed to the Welsh Government's Freedom of Information Officer at:

Information Rights Unit, Welsh Government, Cathays Park, Cardiff, CF10 3NQ

or Email: Freedom.ofinformation@gov.wales

Please remember to quote the ATISN reference number above.

You also have the right to complain to the Information Commissioner. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House,

Water Lane, Wilmslow,

Cheshire,

SK9 5AF.

However, please note that the Commissioner will not normally investigate a complaint until it has been through our own internal review process.

Yours sincerely