



## Examination Results in Schools in Wales, 2017/18

5 December 2018  
SFR 120/2018

### Changes to the production of these statistics

From 2017/18, following recommendations from independent reviews, vocational Science qualifications no longer count towards the core Science element of performance measures. This has had a larger impact on pupils eligible for Free School Meals.

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 this [Article on Key Stage 4 performance measures in Wales](#).

### Key results for 2017/18

#### Year 11 (Key Stage 4)

- 55.1 per cent of pupils achieved 5 GCSEs (or equivalent) at grade A\*-C including English/Welsh and Maths (Level 2 inclusive threshold).
- 29.5 per cent of pupils eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) achieved the Level 2 inclusive threshold compared to 61.7 per cent for those who were not eligible.
- The average Capped 9 Score was 349.5 (Similar to 2016/17; 350.9).
- 64.9 per cent of pupils achieved an A\*-C grade in GCSE English/Welsh First Language.
- 63.6 per cent of pupils achieved an A\*-C grade in either/or both GCSE Mathematics or Numeracy.
- 18.0 per cent of pupils achieved 5 A\*-A GCSE (or equivalent) grades.

#### Pupils aged 17 (Key Stage 5)

- 9,452 (89.1 per cent of) pupils aged 17 entered a volume of qualifications equivalent to 2 A levels.  
Of those:
  - 97.6 per cent achieved 2 A\*-E grades at A level (Level 3 threshold).
  - 57.9 per cent achieved 3 A\*-C grades at A level.
  - 13.4 per cent achieved 3 A\*-A grades at A level.

### About this release

This Statistical Release provides an analysis of external examinations taken by pupils in Year 11 (KS4; aged 15) or pupils in sixth form (KS5; aged 17 at the start of the academic year) in schools in Wales in 2017/18 and previous years. For more data and detailed analysis, see the [supplementary tables](#).

### In this release

#### Year 11 pupils (KS4)

<a href="#">Headline indicators</a>	2
<a href="#">Local authorities</a>	3
<a href="#">Subject performance</a>	4
<a href="#">Free School Meals</a>	6

#### Pupils aged 17 (KS5)

<a href="#">Headline indicators</a>	7
<a href="#">Local authorities</a>	8
<a href="#">Subject performance</a>	9

#### Annex

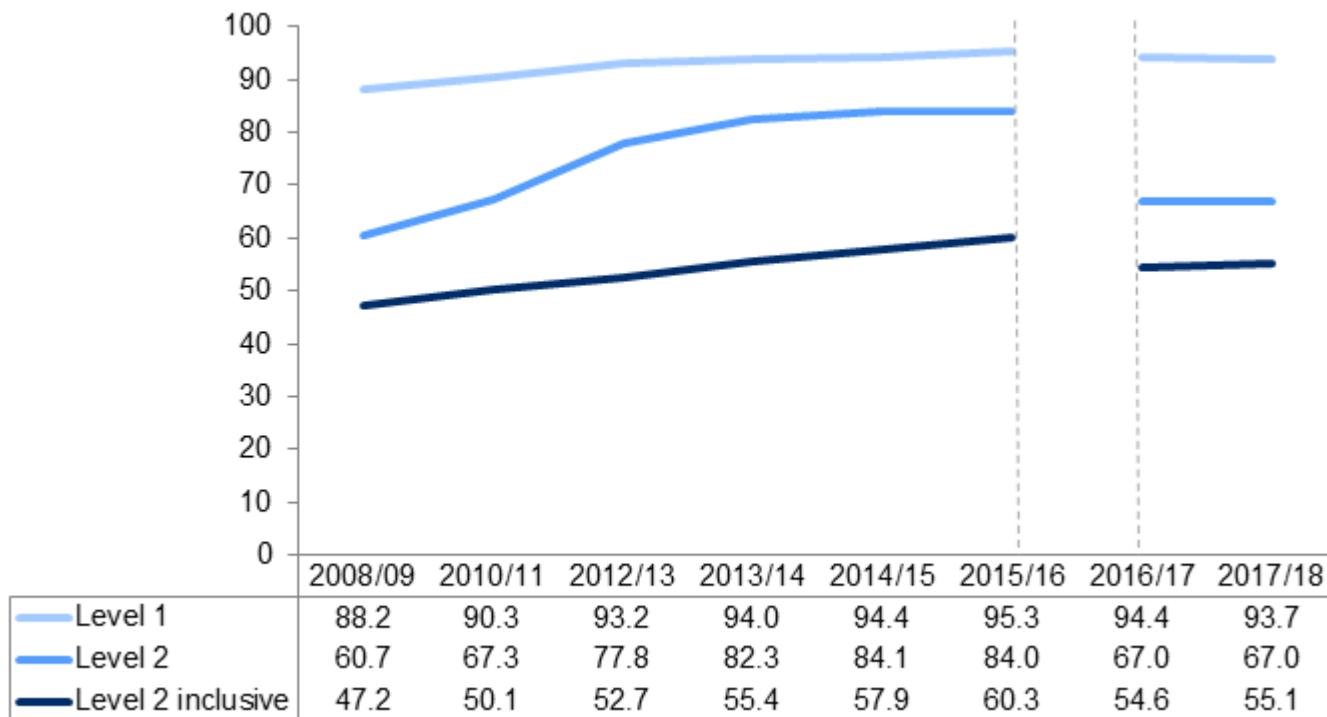
<a href="#">Definitions</a>	10
<a href="#">Notes</a>	11

## Year 11 pupils (Key Stage 4)

### Headline indicators

Making comparisons to performance prior to 2016/17 is difficult due to significant changes in how the indicators are calculated. See the definitions (page 10) for more information.

**Chart 1: Percentage of Year 11 pupils achieving different thresholds**



The percentage of pupils achieving 5 GCSEs at grade A\*-C including Maths & English/Welsh (Level 2 inclusive threshold) increased half a percentage point from the previous year, to 55.1 per cent.

Girls continued to perform better than boys at KS4; the Level 2 inclusive gender gap was 10.5 percentage points, which widened from 8.1 percentage points in 2016/17.



**60.5%** of girls achieved 5 GCSEs at grade A\*-C (including Maths & English/Welsh) compared to **50.1%** of boys



### Capped 9 score

The Capped 9 Score is one of the Well-being of Future Generations (WFG) Headline Indicators. It was introduced in 2016/17 and focuses on Year 11 pupils' best nine results from the qualifications available in Wales, including subject specific requirements. The qualifications used must include English or Welsh First Language, Mathematics, Numeracy and two Science GCSEs. [A breakdown of this Capped 9 score and an explanation of the method used to calculate this measure is available.](#)

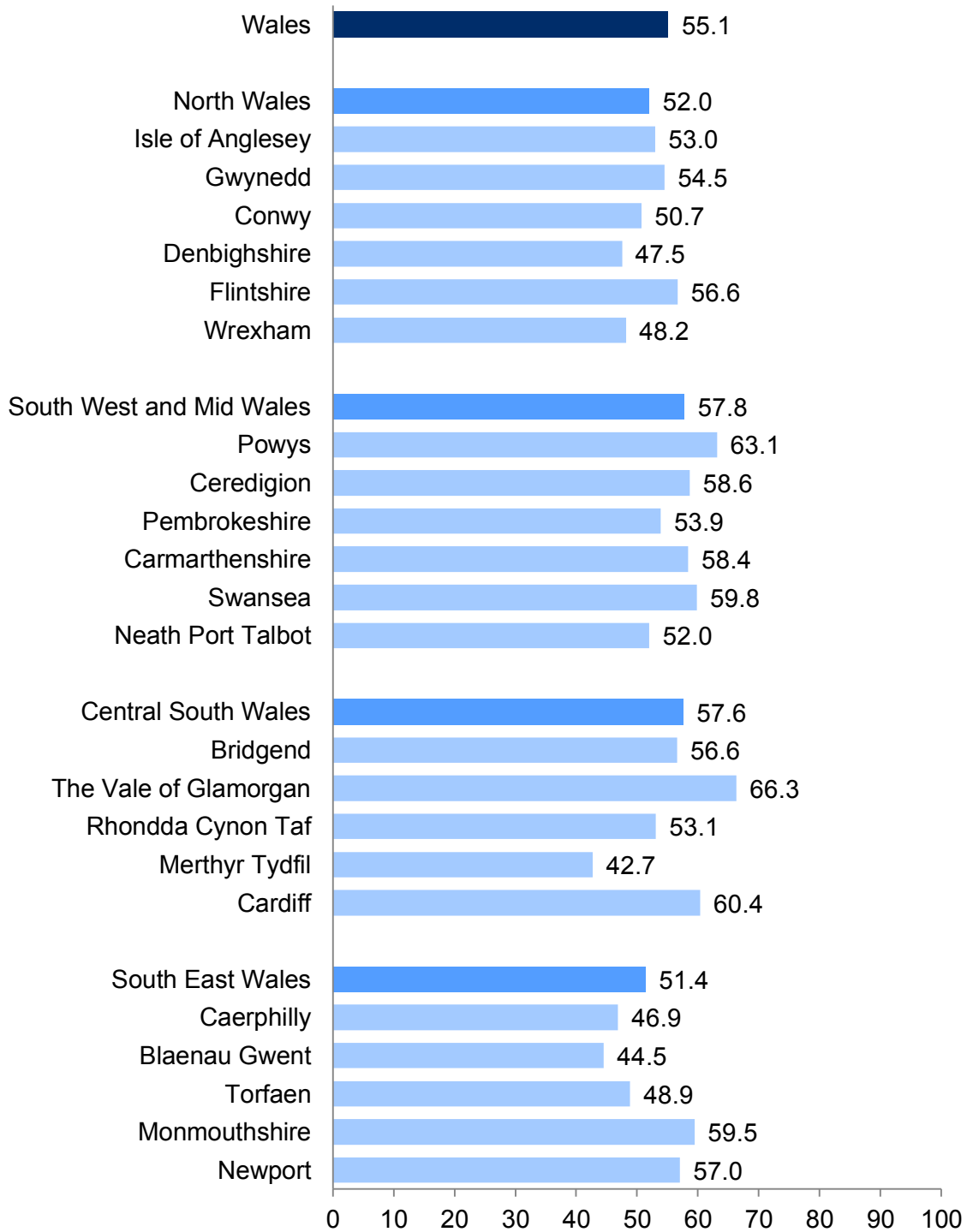
# 349.5

Average Capped 9 Score for 2017/18  
(350.9 in 2016/17)

As a guide, an A grade at GCSE is worth 52 points, a B grade is worth 46 points, a C grade is worth 40 points and so on. The average Capped 9 Score this year is just below the equivalent of 9 C grades (360 points).

## Local authorities

**Chart 2: Percentage of Year 11 pupils achieving Level 2 inclusive by region and Local Authority, 2017/18**

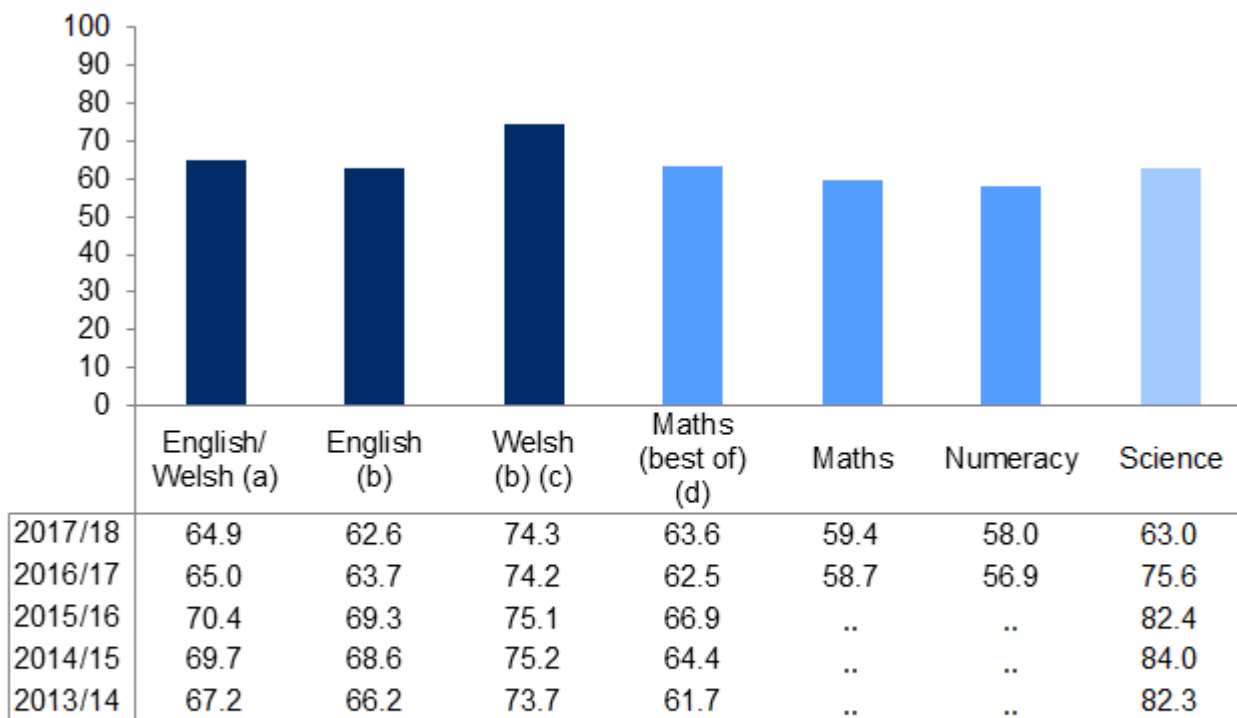


In 2017/18, South West and Mid Wales was the region which had the highest percentage of Year 11 pupils achieving the Level 2 inclusive with 57.8 per cent, whilst South East Wales had the lowest percentage, with 51.4 per cent.

Regarding individual Local Authorities, The Vale of Glamorgan had the highest percentage of Year 11 pupils achieving the Level 2 inclusive in the country with 66.3 per cent. Contrastingly, Merthyr Tydfil had the lowest percentage with 42.7 per cent.

## Subject performance

Chart 3: Percentage of Year 11 pupils achieving A\*-C grades in individual subjects



(a) From 2016/17, the best grade from English Language and Welsh First Language is taken. Previously, English Literature and Welsh Literature were also accepted.

(b) From 2016/17, only Language is included. Previously, Literature was also accepted.

(c) The denominator used is the number of pupils who entered Welsh First Language, rather than the total number of pupils.

(d) From 2016/17, the best grade from Mathematics and Numeracy is taken. Previously, this was only Mathematics.

The drop in the percentage of Year 11 pupils who achieved A\*-C grades in Science can be attributed to vocational science qualifications no longer being included in core science measures from this year.

This is the second year that pupils have been expected to sit two GCSEs in Mathematics – namely, GCSE Mathematics and GCSE Numeracy. The percentage of pupils achieving an A\*-C in either subject improved by over a percentage point from last year, up to 63.6 per cent.

Performance in English/Welsh First Language remains similar to 2016/17, with 64.9 per cent of pupils achieving an A\*-C grade. Note that from 2016/17, only GCSE English/Welsh Language contributed to this measure, whereas before this date, English/Welsh Literature could also be considered.

## Welsh language

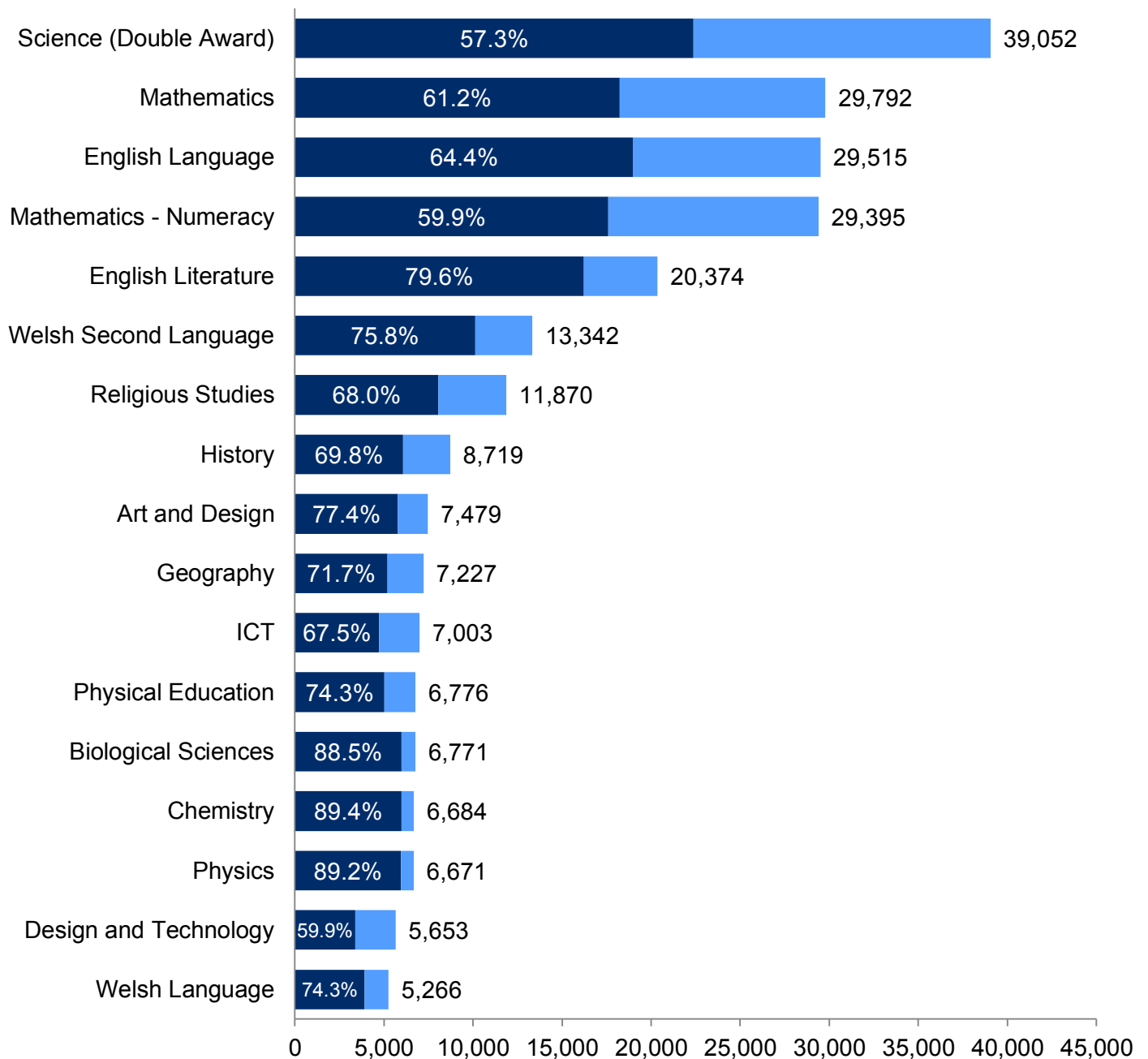
**17.3%**

of pupils (5,266 out of 30,371) entered GCSE Welsh as a first language

74.3 per cent of those pupils who entered Welsh First Language achieved A\*-C grades. The percentage of pupils entering Welsh First Language has been steadily increasing, up from 17.1 per cent in 2016/17.

Full data on individual subjects and their corresponding grade distributions are available in the [supplementary tables](#).

**Chart 4: Top GCSE subject entries and corresponding percentage of A\*-C grades, 2017/18**

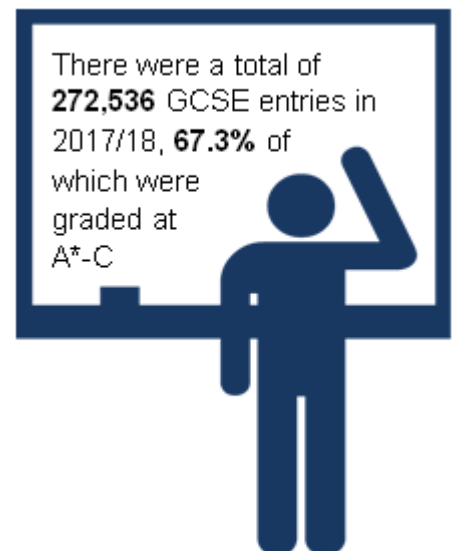


The greatest numbers of GCSE entries are, as expected, for Mathematics, English and Science subjects (Note that double awards are counted as two individual GCSE entries).

The most popular GCSEs after these subjects were Welsh Second Language and Religious Studies, with 13,342 and 11,870 entries respectively.

In 2017/18, between 88 and 90 per cent of GCSEs in Chemistry, Physics and Biological Sciences were graded at A\*-C.

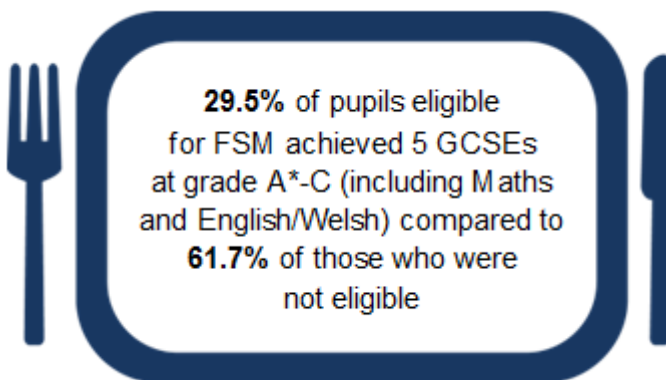
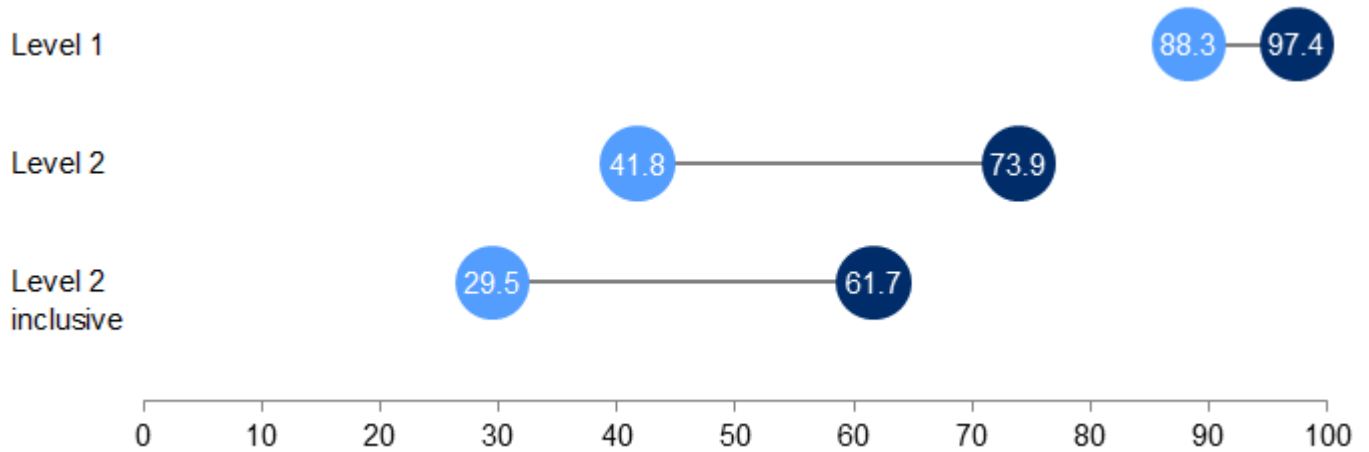
Full data on all individual subjects and their corresponding grade distributions are available in the supplementary tables.



## Free School Meals (FSM)

Pupils are [eligible for free school meals](#) if their families are in receipt of certain benefits/support payments. Chart 5 illustrates the magnitude of the gap between those eligible for FSM and those who are not.

**Chart 5: Percentage of Year 11 pupils achieving different thresholds, by FSM status, 2017/18**  
**Eligible for FSM and Not eligible for FSM**



Pupils who are not eligible for FSM consistently achieve higher results than their FSM-eligible counterparts.

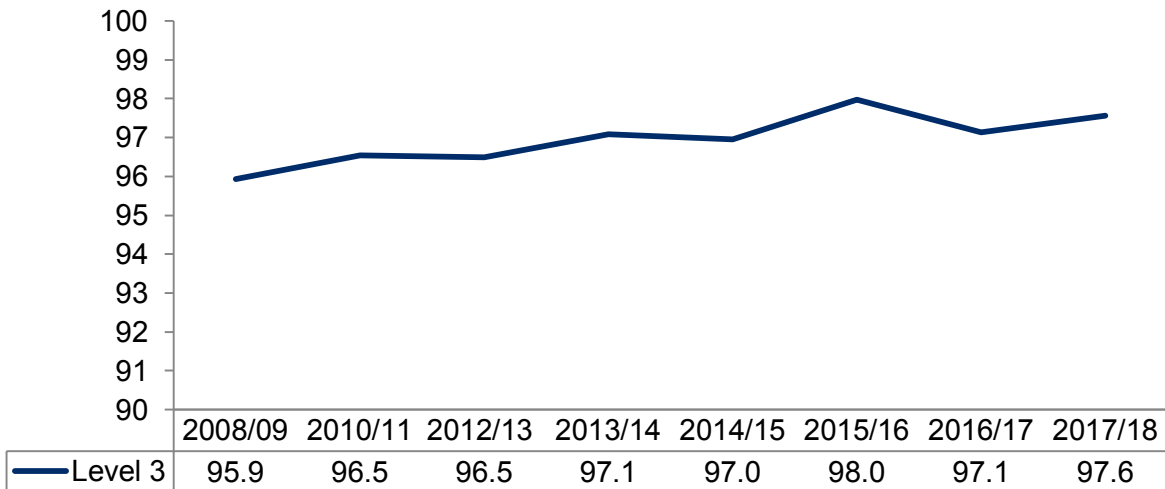
The gap between pupils eligible for FSM and those who are not widens at the higher levels of achievement. For the Level 1 threshold the gap was 9.1 percentage points, whereas for the Level 2 and the Level 2 inclusive thresholds, the gaps were 32.2 percentage points. The Level 2 inclusive gap slightly narrowed (by 0.1 percentage points) from the previous year.

For more detailed information on FSM, including subject performance and a regression model for the expected relationships between eligibility and different performance measures, please see the supplementary tables.

## Pupils aged 17 in schools (Key Stage 5)

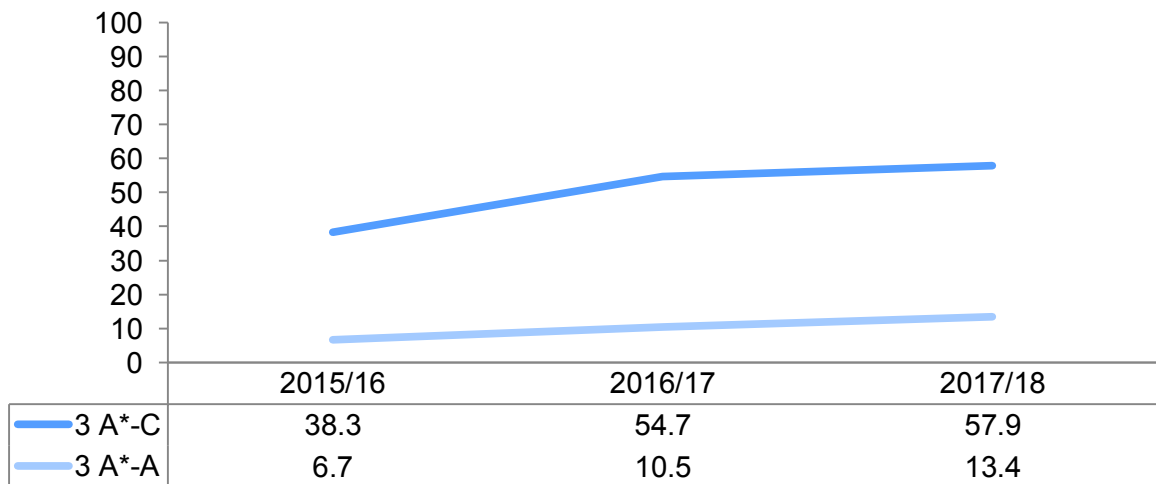
### Headline indicators

Chart 6: Percentage of pupils aged 17 achieving the Level 3 threshold



Of the pupils that took two or more A Levels, the percentage achieving 2 A\*-E grades (Level 3 threshold) in 2017/18 has increased by 0.4 percentage points from last year, rising to 97.6 per cent.

Chart 7: Percentage of pupils aged 17 achieving different A level grade thresholds



The percentage of pupils in school achieving 3 A\*-C grades in A level (or equivalent) has increased by 3.3 percentage points from the previous year. Similarly, the percentage of pupils achieving 3 A\*-A grades has also increased, rising by 2.9 percentage points to 13.4 per cent.

Girls continued to out-perform boys at KS5; however this gender gap reduces dramatically for high achievers (i.e. those achieving 3 A\*-A grades).



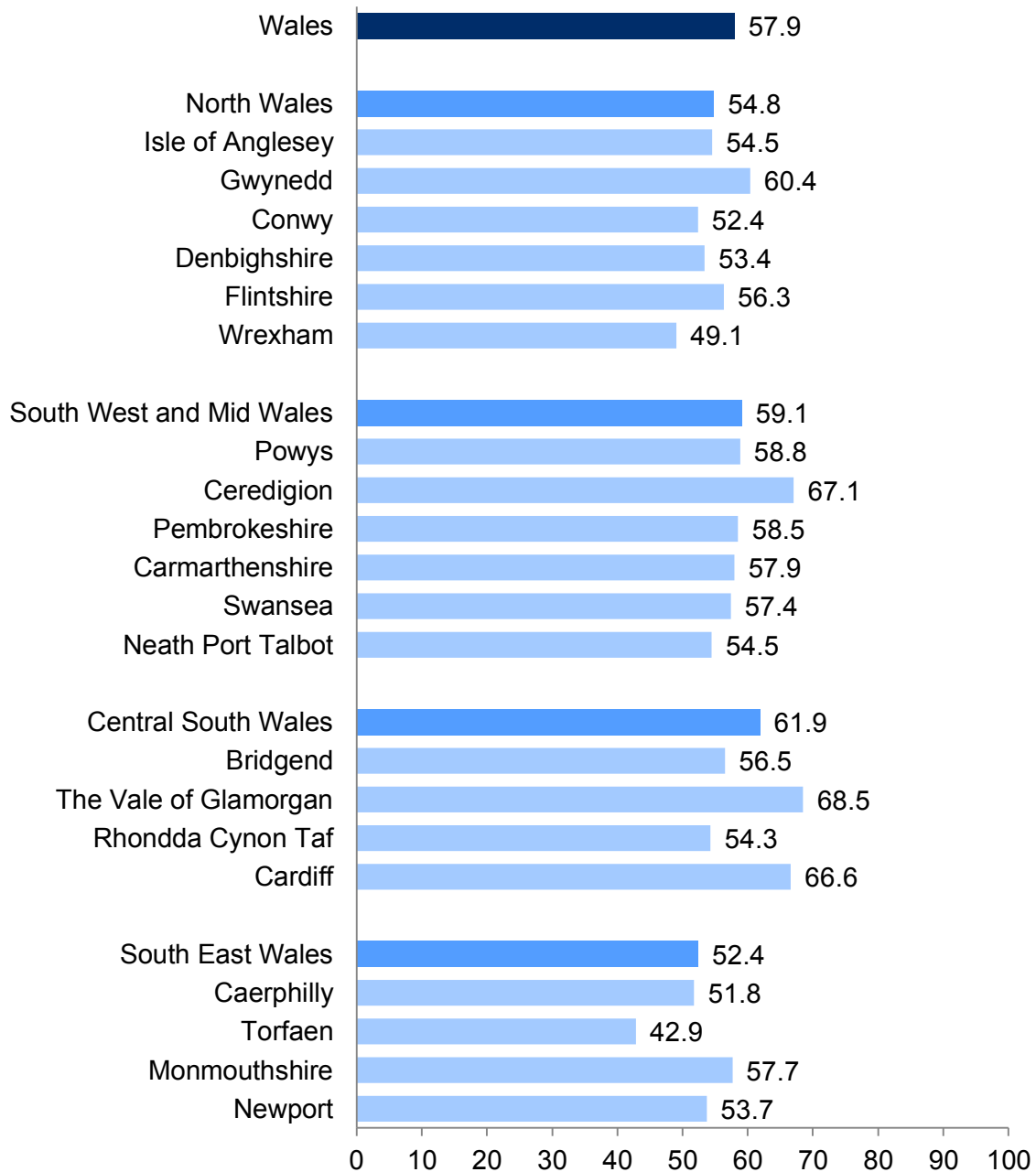
**64.2%** of girls achieved 3 A levels at grade A\*-C compared to **50.1%** of boys

**13.8%** of girls achieved 3 A levels at grade A\*-A compared to **13.0%** of boys



## Local authorities

**Chart 8: Percentage of pupils entering a volume equivalent to 2 A levels achieving 3 A\*-C grades in A level (or equivalent) by region and Local Authority, 2017/18**



In 2017/18, Central South Wales was the region with the highest percentage of pupils aged 17 entering a volume equivalent to 2 A levels achieving 3 A\*-C grades, with 61.9 per cent. South East Wales on the other hand had the lowest percentage, with 52.4 per cent.

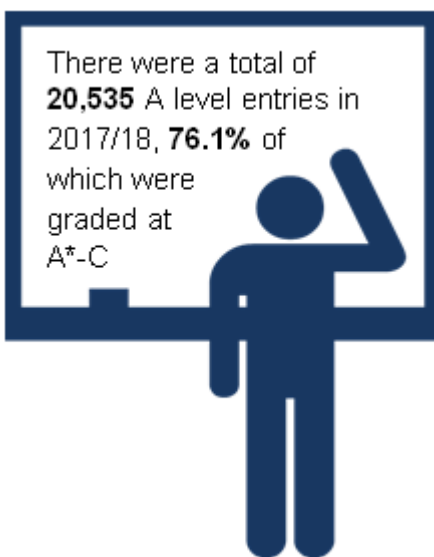
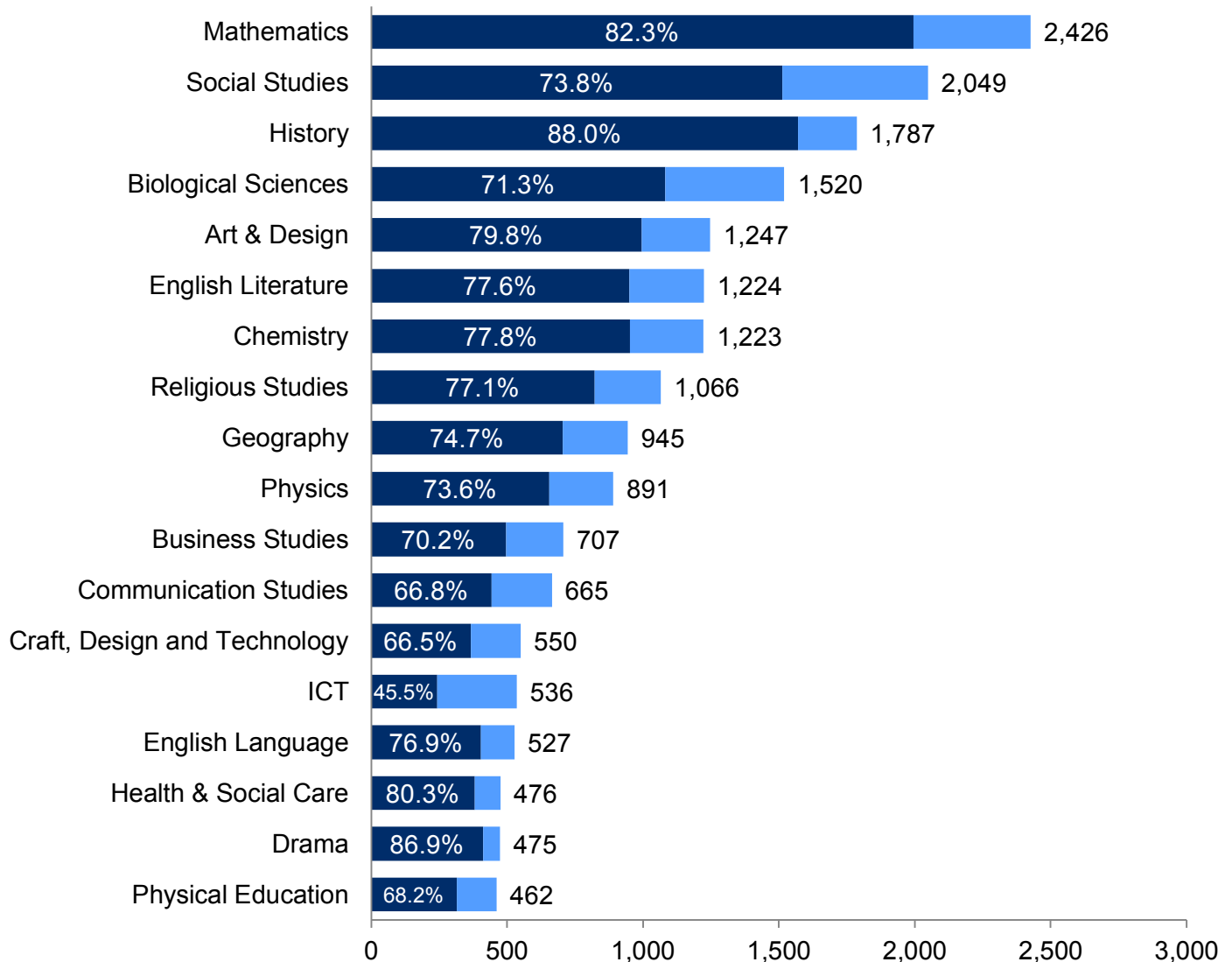
Regarding individual Local Authorities, pupils aged 17 in the Vale of Glamorgan had the highest percentage of 3 A\*-C achievement in Wales, with 68.5 per cent of those who entered at least 2 A levels. Contrastingly, Torfaen had the lowest percentage, with 42.9 per cent. Note there are no sixth forms in schools in Blaenau Gwent or Merthyr Tydfil.

For the highest achievers (i.e. those achieving 3 A\*-A grades), The Vale of Glamorgan again had the greatest percentage with 19.5 per cent of pupils, whilst Isle of Anglesey had the least, with 7.7 per cent.



## Subject performance

Chart 9: Top A level subject entries and corresponding percentage of A\*-C grades, 2017/18



The most popular A level in Wales was Mathematics, with 2,426 entries in 2017/18. Mathematics also saw one of the highest rates of A\*-C grade achievement of any A level subject, with 82.3 per cent of pupils falling between this grade boundary.

German and Spanish were the highest A\*-C graded subjects in 2017/18 with 90.9 per cent and 88.5 per cent of entries being awarded one of these grades respectively. History was the best performing popular subject in 2017/18 with 88.0 per cent of entries being awarded an A\*-C grade. On the other hand, ICT had the lowest proportion of A\*-C grades, with 45.5 per cent.

Full data on all individual subjects and their corresponding grade distributions are available in the [supplementary tables](#).

## Definitions

Below is a list of the performance measures used throughout this release and their respective definitions.

### Year 11 pupils (Key Stage 4)

#### Level 1

5 GCSEs (or equivalent) at grade A\*-G.

#### Level 2

5 GCSEs (or equivalent) at grade A\*-C.

#### Level 2 inclusive

5 GCSEs (or equivalent) at grade A\*-C including English Language or Welsh First Language and Mathematics or Numeracy.

#### The Capped 9 Score

Point score which focuses on Year 11 pupils' best nine results from the qualifications available in Wales, including subject specific requirements. This includes English or Welsh First Language, Mathematics, Numeracy and two Science GCSEs. [A breakdown of this Capped 9 score and an explanation of the method used to calculate this measure is available.](#)

### Pupils aged 17 (Key Stage 5)

#### Level 3

2 A levels (or equivalent) at grade A\*-E as a percentage of those entering 2 or more A levels.

#### 3 A\*-C

3 A\*-C grades at A level (or equivalent) having entered at least 2 A levels (or equivalent).

#### 3 A\*-A

3 A\*-A grades at A level (or equivalent) having entered at least 2 A levels (or equivalent).

## Changes and comparisons

From 2017/18, vocational Science qualifications no longer count towards the core Science element of performance measures.

From 2016/17, there is a 40% cap on the contribution vocational qualifications can make towards key performance measures. This, in addition to the removal of literature qualifications from the English and Welsh First Language indicators, mean that the comparisons between 2016/17 or later should not be made to figures from 2015/16 or earlier.

From 2015/16, the Key Stage 4 cohort is based on pupils in Year 11. Up to 2014/15, the cohort was based on pupils aged 15 at the start of the academic year. There is also a maximum of two GCSE equivalence value applied to any individual non-GCSE qualification.

## Notes

### 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 and this release includes 1 of the national indicators namely the average capped points score per pupil, including the gap between those who are eligible or are not eligible for free school meals.

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](#).

As a national indicator under the Act they must be referred to in the analyses of local well-being produced by public services boards when they are analysing the state of economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being in their areas.

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 and supplementary tables are available at:

<http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/examination-results/?lang=en>

Further technical information can be found in the notes document also on the [examination results webpage](#).

## **Next update**

October 2019 (Provisional)

## **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](mailto:school.stats@gov.wales).

## **Open Government Licence**

All content is available under the [Open Government Licence v3.0](#), except where otherwise stated.

