

# Examination results in schools in Wales, 2017/18: Notes

## Accessing the data electronically

The data behind the chart and tables in this release can be found on [StatsWales](#) (a free-to-use internet service that allows visitors to view, manipulate, create and download tables). Please select “Education and Skills” and then “Schools and Teachers” at the navigation screen. School level data will be published on [My Local School](#) later in the year. School level data is also available on request.

## 1. Context

### 1.1 Related publications

Data for England, Northern Ireland and Scotland can be found in the links below. Note that the data produced by these administrations are based on pupils at the end of Key Stage 4, whereas we publish on the basis of pupils in Year 11. Following the changes to qualifications levels, equivalencies, discounting and rules around re-entry in England in 2014, data for England are no longer on a comparable basis – see also section 5.5. Comparisons cannot be made with Scotland because their examination system and qualifications are different.

For further information or advice on the constraints of international comparisons please email [school.stats@gov.wales](mailto:school.stats@gov.wales).

For reference, examination results for the other UK countries can be found by following the links below:

### England

[GCSE and Equivalent Results in England](#)

[A-Level and other 16-18 Results in England](#)

### Northern Ireland

[Qualifications and Destinations of Northern Ireland School Leavers](#)

### Scotland

[Summary statistics for attainment, leaver destinations and healthy living](#)

We also publish information on teacher assessments in core and non core subjects at foundation phase and key stages 2 and 3, which can be found on the [Statistics and Research page](#).

The figures differ from those published by Awarding Organisations in August. The Awarding Organisations’ figures related to the outcome of the individual subject areas for all candidates in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, regardless of their age. The figures published in this Statistical First Release focus on the overall performance of candidates in Year 11/ aged 15 and those aged 17 taking these examinations in Wales only. These figures can be found on the [JCO website](#).

## 2. Data source

The statistics are collated from a number of awarding organisations over the summer. The following awarding organisations provided data for this release:

ABC Awards, Agored Cymru, AQA, ASDAN, Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM), British Computer Society (BCS), British Safety Council (BSC), CACHE, City and Guilds, CCEA, Cambridge International Examinations (CIE), Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH), C Skills, EMTA Awards Ltd (EAL), ILM, IMI Awards Ltd (IMIAL), LIBF, NCFE, National Open College Network (NOCN), OCR, Pearson (Edexcel/EDI), Prince's Trust, Rock School Ltd (RSL), Sports Leaders UK, VTCT, WJEC.

## 3. Definitions

### 3.1 Coverage

The statistics in this release cover all maintained schools in Wales. Only results for pupils who are in Year 11 and pupils aged 17 received from the awarding organisations listed above are included. Examinations taken at an earlier age are also included. Any examinations achieved before the pupil is in Year 11 will be held back and included in the school year in which the pupil enters Year 11. Note that the information in this release relates to all schools for Wales figures.

Only qualifications awarded up to the 31 August are included. New awards after that date, as well as any re-sits or re-marks after that date, are not included.

Up to 2005/06, the statistics include GCSEs, GCSE short course, GNVQs and NVQs only. From 2006/07, 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. An explanation of the different types of qualifications can be found from the [Gov.UK website](#).

### 3.2 Threshold indicators and points

Indicators showing threshold equivalencies were published (as provisional indicators) for the first time in 2007 and are now the headline indicators of performance in secondary schools.

Thresholds represent a volume, or 'size', of qualifications at a specific level on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). Three thresholds have been established:

- Level 1 – a volume of qualifications at Level 1 equivalent to the volume of 5 GCSEs at grade A\*-G;
- Level 2 – a volume of qualifications at Level 2 equivalent to the volume of 5 GCSEs at grade A\*-C;
- Level 3 – a volume of qualifications at Level 3 equivalent to the volume of 2 A levels at grade A\*-E.

The Capped 9 score is calculated using the best 9 results for each pupil, with subject specific requirements in English/Welsh, Mathematics, Mathematics-Numeracy and Science. [Further information on how the capped points score is calculated](#).

### **3.3 Discounting**

An examination is discounted when a pupil achieves a higher grade or higher level qualification in the same subject group. If a qualification is discounted then it does not count towards the statistics published in this release, or in any other official statistics published by the Welsh Government. We discount similar qualifications within the following subject groups:

**Group 1:** Entry level qualifications, GCSE short course, full GCSE, vocational double award GCSEs

**Group 2:** AS level, vocational double AS level, A levels, vocational double A level, AS Vocational Certificate of Education, Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education, Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education double award

**Group 3:** Free standing maths qualifications

**Group 4:** Key skills

**Group 5:** The Award in Digital Applications (AiDA), the Certificate in Digital Applications (CiDA), the Extended Certificate in Digital Applications (CiDA+) and the Diploma in Digital Applications (DiDA).

**Group 6:** NVQs

**Group 7:** BTECs and other qualifications

**Group 8:** the Welsh Baccalaureate

### **3.4 Performance of pupils eligible for FSM**

Since 2014/15, this release has included a table (Table 3a) which shows the key indicators for pupils at Key Stage 4 by FSM eligibility. In previous years this data has been published in the January or March as part of the [‘Achievement and entitlement to free school meals’](#) statistical release.

From this year onwards, subject specific indicators for FSM eligible pupils will also be provided in tables 3b and 3c.

This year the tables that accompany this report include an analysis of the relationship between levels of attainment and free school meal entitlement (in tables 10a – 10c and charts 1 - 3). This analysis has previously been published in the separate statistical bulletin on achievement and entitlement to free school meals.

The [Rewriting the Future Report](#), issued in June 2014, uses the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals achieving various measures at the end of Key Stage 4 as one of the key performance indicators. These data can be found in table 3a of this bulletin.

### 3.5 Changes in this release

#### Vocational science

From 2017/18 onwards, vocational Science qualifications no longer count towards the core Science element of these performance measures. This includes the Capped 9 points score and the Level 2 Science measure.

#### Capped 9 score

The Capped 9 measure focuses on Year 11 pupils' results from nine of the qualifications available in Wales, including subject specific requirements. This measure recognises performance and allocates points across the whole spectrum of grades to reflect attainment levels for all learners in Wales. The main changes to the capped points score are:

- Increased from eight to nine GCSEs or equivalent volume of qualifications
- The introduction of subject specific attainment requirements:
  1. English/Welsh
  2. Mathematics – numeracy
  3. Mathematics
  4. 2 x Science.

[A breakdown of this Capped 9 score and an explanation of the method used to calculate this measure.](#)

#### New specifications in English, Welsh and Mathematics/Mathematics-Numeracy

New specifications in English, Welsh and the introduction of the new GCSE Mathematics and GCSE Mathematics-Numeracy will be used in school performance measures this year. Only the new specifications for GCSE English Language, GCSE Welsh First Language, GCSE Mathematics-Numeracy and GCSE Mathematics will count towards the literacy and maths elements of the new Capped 9 score. Legacy qualifications will not count towards the literacy and maths elements, and Literature qualifications will no longer count towards the literacy elements.

In addition, only the new specifications for GCSE English Language, GCSE Welsh Language and GCSE Mathematics/Mathematics-Numeracy will count towards the literacy and maths elements of the Level 2 Inclusive threshold measure. The legacy GCSE Mathematics specification will not count towards the maths element of the level 2 Inclusive measure. Literature qualifications do not count towards the literacy elements from 2017 onwards. The table below shows the effect of changing the Level 2 inclusive indicator to no longer include English/Welsh Literature in the literacy element:

Year	Percentage of pupils who achieved the Level 2 inclusive threshold (excluding English/Welsh Literature in the literacy element) (a)	Percentage of pupils who achieved the Level 2 inclusive threshold (including English/Welsh Literature in the literacy element) (a)	Difference (percentage points)
2016/17	54.6	56.4	-1.8
2017/18	55.1	56.5	-1.4

(a) includes 40% cap on non-GCSEs

Legacy specification GCSEs in English, Welsh and Mathematics will count towards the general (non literacy and numeracy) requirements for performance measures. However **these will only count for learners who do not also have the corresponding new GCSEs.**

### Cap on non-GCSEs to threshold measures

From 2017, a maximum of two vocational qualifications will count towards all threshold measures, depending on size of the qualification (i.e. no more than 40% of the threshold). In the new Capped 9 score for 2017, it will be possible for up to six qualifications to be vocational (two science and four others) depending on size of the qualification. The table below shows the effect of the 40% cap on non-GCSEs to the Level 2 inclusive indicator.

Year	Percentage of pupils who achieved the Level 2 inclusive threshold (with 40% cap on non-GCSEs) (a)	Percentage of pupils who achieved the Level 2 inclusive threshold (without 40% cap on non-GCSEs) (a)	Difference (percentage points)
2016/17	54.6	54.7	-0.1
2017/18	55.1	55.2	-0.1

(a) figures excluding English and Welsh Literature in the literacy element of the Level 2 inclusive threshold

Whilst we can quantify the statistical difference between the two methods this does not account for any changes in pupil or school behaviour around curriculum options which may have resulted from the restrictions around vocational qualifications.

### Essential Skills Wales

Essential Skills Wales and Wider Key Skills no longer hold a contribution value in Key Stage 4 measures.

### Changes in previous years

Note that from 2015/16, we moved to reporting school performance on a Year 11 cohort basis rather than for pupils aged 15 at the start of the year. The Year 11 cohort is based on the number of pupils who were registered as being on roll in Year 11 in the school on the day of the school census.

Before 2015/16, data was based on mainstream schools, special schools, independent schools and PRU's (Pupil Referral Units). We did not include those pupils who were educated other than at school (EOTAS) who did not attend a PRU. This additional EOTAS data has been included in the matching process and is therefore included in our results from 2015/16.

In 2015/16, a limit to the contribution value of non-GCSE qualifications to performance measures has been introduced. This means that any single level 1 or level 2 qualification will have a maximum equivalence value, in performance terms, of 2 GCSEs, applying to all measures.

The statistics in this release previously covered all maintained and independent schools in Wales. From 2015/16, independent schools have been removed from the Wales figures. This is due to fact that data are only collected on qualifications approved by the Welsh Government for use in schools. Independent schools can choose other qualifications which are not approved, such as iGCSEs, and these are not included in our figures. In addition, participation from independent schools in the school data checking exercises held during October to November tends to be low.

From 2017, a maximum of two vocational qualifications will count towards all threshold measures, depending on size of the qualification. Comparisons with previous years should be made with caution.

#### **4. Rounding and symbols**

In tables where figures have been rounded to the nearest final digit, there may be an apparent discrepancy between the sum of the constituent items and the total shown.

The following symbols have been used throughout the publication:

- (p) provisional
- percentages less than 0.5 but higher than zero
- . not applicable
- .. not available
- ~ not yet available
- \* figure is less than 5, or is based on a figure less than 5.

## 5. Key Quality Information

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 2016 data, and describes the quality management tool applied to this area of work.

### 5.1 Relevance

The statistics are used both within and outside the Welsh Government to monitor educational trends and as a baseline for further analysis of the underlying data. Some of the key users are:

- ministers and the Members Research Service in the National Assembly for Wales;
- the Department for Education and Skills in the Welsh Government;
- Estyn;
- other government departments;
- the research community;
- regional education consortia, Local Authorities and schools;
- students, academics and universities;
- individual citizens, private companies and the media.

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

- monitoring education strategies such as *Rewriting the Future* and wider policy strategies such as the *Tackling Poverty action plan*;
- general background and research;
- inclusions in reports and briefings;
- advice to Ministers;
- the all-Wales education core data packs;
- LA and school comparisons and benchmarks;
- 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;
- to assist in research in educational attainment.

## **5.2 Accuracy**

Schools and local authorities have now had an opportunity to assess the provisional results for accuracy, and have supplied amended information where applicable. In keeping with previous years, the change between provisional and final data for all indicators is less than 1 percentage point.

Following the publication of the provisional 2017/18 data, an issue with the calculation of the capped 9 score was identified in the 2017/18 data. This issue affected a number of pupils and has been corrected in the final version of the publication. As a result of this correction, capped 9 scores have fallen slightly from the provisional figures.

## **5.3 Timeliness and punctuality**

The data relate to all qualifications achieved between 1 September and 31 August of the academic year. The figures now include any exam re-grades, resits and missing qualifications where evidence was provided from schools within the allotted time period or was provided automatically by the awarding organisations.

## **5.4 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 more detailed tables on [StatsWales](#) (updated in December), a free to use service that allows visitors to view, manipulate, create and download data.

School-level data is available through the My Local School website. This provisional data will not be added to My Local School but final data for the academic year will be added later in January.



## 5.5 Comparability and coherence

Following the Wolf Review of Vocational Education in England, GCSE reform in England and other changes introduced by the Department for Education in England, **data on Key Stage 4 attainment in England and Wales are no longer on a comparable basis**. The main differences are:

- Data for England limits the size of vocational qualifications to a maximum of 1 GCSE. Since 2015/16, data for Wales limits the size of vocational qualifications to a maximum of 2 GCSEs, following the recommendation in the Review of Qualifications. Prior to this, there was no limit on the size of vocational qualifications, with many choices being equivalent in size to 4 GCSE's.
- Data for England only allow the first entry in any examination to count regardless of grade. The best grade is taken in Wales.
- England has changed the way they discount qualifications so that similar general and vocational qualifications cannot both count in their statistics. This restriction does not apply in Wales.

More information on the changes to [Key Stage 4 performance measures in Wales and their comparability](#) can be found in our statistical article.

Information about GCSE reform in England as well as [The Wolf Review of Vocational Qualifications](#) can be found on the [Gov.UK website](#).

There is also more information about the Wolf Review of Vocational Education in the statistical release [GCSE and Equivalent Results in England 2013/14 \(Revised\)](#). In Wales, the Review of Qualifications started from the academic year 2015/16. This means that the way we calculate our performance measures will change. This will have an impact on comparability over time and will further limit our ability to compare educational attainment in Wales with the rest of the UK. See [Review of Qualifications for more information](#).

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