

Distribution Sub-Group (2024) Paper 09 – Impact of 2024 PLASC pupil numbers on the settlement

This discussion paper has been written by officials of the Welsh Government. Ministers have not had an opportunity to comment on the contents. Exemplifications of changes are provided simply to inform discussion by DSG members. They are not Welsh Government proposals or statements of Government policy for or against changes.

Impact of 2024 PLASC pupil numbers on the Settlement

Summary

1. This paper provides analysis of the latest pupil numbers taken from the February 2024 Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) and exemplifies the impact of the updated data on the 2024-25 Settlement.
2. The analysis **excludes** updated EOTAS. This will be published at a later date and added to the pupil numbers. The analysis also excludes independent school pupil numbers which will be included following the data validation process. These numbers would have a marginal distributional impact.

Views sought

3. DSG members are asked to consider whether or not to update to the latest PLASC data in the 2024-25 Settlement.

Related Papers

4. Distribution Sub-Group (2023) Paper 13 – Impact of 2023 PLASC pupil numbers on the settlement.
5. Distribution Sub-Group (2022) Paper 13 – Impact of 2022 PLASC pupil numbers on the settlement.
6. Distribution Sub-Group (2021) - Paper 12 - Impact of 2021 PLASC pupil numbers on the settlement.
7. Distribution Sub-Group (2020) - Paper 15 - Impact of 2020 PLASC pupil numbers on the settlement.
8. Distribution Sub-Group (2019) - Paper 15 - Impact of 2019 PLASC.
9. Distribution Sub-Group (2018) - Paper 19 - 2018 PLASC data.
10. Distribution Sub-Group (2017) – Paper 08 – Impact of the 2017 PLASC data.

Background

11. 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.
12. The 2021 census was delayed until April 2021 due to the second national lockdown in Spring 2021.

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13. The 2022 census was delayed until February 2022 due to a phased return for pupils following winter 2021. The 2023 census are based on pupil numbers as at January 2023. The 2024 census are based on pupil numbers as at January 2024.
14. The PLASC is the most accurate and robust source of data for pupil numbers and using this as a proxy for need to spend on education services ensures that the Settlement remains reactive to real movements in the number of pupils requiring education.
15. Updates to pupil numbers affect the following IBAs within the Settlement:
 - Nursery and primary school teaching and other services;
 - Secondary school teaching and other services;
 - Secondary school transport services;
 - Adult and continuing education transport;
 - Education administration; and
 - General administration.

Analysis

Changes to pupil numbers

16. [Table 1](#) and [Table 2](#) in [Annex A](#) show PLASC numbers for 2024 and 2023. [Table 3](#) shows the relative change in pupil numbers and the financial impact on the Standard Spending Assessment (SSA) element.
17. For the primary pupils and modelled nursery school pupils indicator, the relative changes range from a 0.06 percentage point decrease in Flintshire to a 0.14 percentage point increase in Newport. For context, in 2024-25 this dataset was used to distribute £1.096m of Standard Spending Assessment (SSA), therefore a 0.01 percentage point change would equate to £109.6k change in SSA.
18. For the Secondary school pupils in year groups 7 to 11, the relative changes range from a decrease of 0.11 percentage points in Caerphilly to an increase of 0.13 percentage points in Cardiff. This dataset was used to distribute around £881m of Standard Spending Assessment (SSA), therefore a 0.01 percentage point change would equate to £88.1k change in SSA.
19. For the population aged 11-15 and secondary pupils in year groups 12-14, the relative changes range from a decrease of 0.08 percentage points in Rhonda Cynon Taff to an increase of 0.08 percentage points in Cardiff. This data set was used to distribute around £48m of Standard Spending Assessment (SSA), therefore a 0.01 percentage point change would equate to £4.8k change in SSA.
20. For the secondary school pupils in year 10 and 11, the relative changes range from a decrease of 0.15 percentage points in Ceredigion to an increase of 0.32 percentage points in Cardiff. This dataset was used to distribute £85m of Standard Spending Assessment (SSA), therefore a 0.01 percentage point change would equate to £8.5k change in SSA.

Redistribution of Aggregated External Finance (AEF)

21. [Table 4](#) in [Annex A](#) exemplifies the impact of the 2024 PLASC on the 2024-25 Total AEF. The changes in AEF range from a £1,929k (or 0.44%) increase in Swansea to a £1,342k (or 0.38%) decrease in Caerphilly.

Conclusion

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22. The exemplification is based on the isolated effect of the PLASC 2024 pupil numbers only on the 2024-25 Settlement. The exemplifications do not account for any other changes in data that will be made for the 2025-26 Settlement, for example: the impact of transfers in and out, for the impact of changes in formulae resulting from IBA reviews or any other structural changes to the overall formula.

Recommendations

23. For the 2024-25 Settlement DSG agreed to use the 2023 pupil numbers data. The group are asked to agree to use the 2024 PLASC data, in the calculation of the 2025-26 settlement.

**Local Government Finance Policy and Sustainability Division
Welsh Government**

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Annex A

Table 1 – PLASC numbers 2024

	Numbers					Proportion				
	Primary pupils and modelled nursery school pupils	Secondary school pupils in year groups 7 to 11	Population aged 11-15 and secondary school pupils in	Secondary school pupils in year groups 10 and 11	Pop 16-18 other than at school	Primary pupils and modelled nursery school pupils	Secondary school pupils in year groups 7 to 11	Population aged 11-15 and secondary school pupils in	Secondary school pupils in year groups 10 and 11	Pop 16-18 other than at school
Isle of Anglesey	5,184	3,507	4,459	1,334	1,684	2.07%	2.00%	2.17%	1.95%	1.99%
Gwynedd	8,632	6,683	7,343	2,593	3,052	3.44%	3.82%	3.57%	3.78%	3.60%
Conwy	8,050	5,720	7,329	2,191	2,505	3.21%	3.27%	3.56%	3.20%	2.96%
Denbighshire	8,098	6,444	6,624	2,550	2,539	3.23%	3.68%	3.22%	3.72%	3.00%
Flintshire	12,226	8,711	10,389	3,482	4,340	4.87%	4.98%	5.05%	5.08%	5.12%
Wrexham	11,179	6,710	8,616	2,659	4,475	4.46%	3.84%	4.19%	3.88%	5.28%
Powys	9,417	6,470	7,977	2,618	3,309	3.75%	3.70%	3.88%	3.82%	3.91%
Ceredigion	4,818	3,633	4,151	1,355	1,533	1.92%	2.08%	2.02%	1.98%	1.81%
Pembrokeshire	9,248	6,426	7,784	2,477	3,464	3.69%	3.67%	3.78%	3.61%	4.09%
Carmarthenshire	14,493	10,512	12,473	4,098	5,039	5.78%	6.01%	6.06%	5.98%	5.95%
Swansea	19,512	13,707	15,333	5,412	6,668	7.78%	7.84%	7.45%	7.89%	7.87%
Neath Port Talbot	11,027	8,120	8,892	3,122	4,688	4.40%	4.64%	4.32%	4.55%	5.53%
Bridgend	11,703	8,276	10,123	3,172	3,507	4.66%	4.73%	4.92%	4.63%	4.14%
The Vale of Glamorgan	11,781	8,379	9,964	3,304	3,020	4.70%	4.79%	4.84%	4.82%	3.57%
Rhondda Cynon Taff	19,648	14,577	16,425	5,644	6,463	7.83%	8.33%	7.98%	8.23%	7.63%
Merthyr Tydfil	5,336	3,200	3,591	1,315	1,924	2.13%	1.83%	1.75%	1.92%	2.27%
Caerphilly	14,811	10,186	11,567	4,016	5,376	5.90%	5.82%	5.62%	5.86%	6.35%
Blaenau Gwent	5,581	3,168	3,821	1,249	2,097	2.22%	1.81%	1.86%	1.82%	2.48%
Torfaen	7,919	5,694	5,784	2,205	3,145	3.16%	3.25%	2.81%	3.22%	3.71%
Monmouthshire	6,543	4,141	6,040	1,655	2,194	2.61%	2.37%	2.94%	2.41%	2.59%
Newport	15,264	9,944	11,901	3,949	4,061	6.08%	5.68%	5.78%	5.76%	4.79%
Cardiff	30,424	20,736	25,165	8,157	9,626	12.13%	11.85%	12.23%	11.90%	11.36%
Wales	250,894	174,944	205,751	68,557	84,709					

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Table 2 – PLASC numbers 2023

	Numbers					Proportion				
	Primary pupils and modelled nursery school pupils	Secondary school pupils in year groups 7 to 11	Population aged 11-15 and secondary school pupils in	Secondary school pupils in year groups 10 and 11	Pop 16-18 other than at school	Primary pupils and modelled nursery school pupils	Secondary school pupils in year groups 7 to 11	Population aged 11-15 and secondary school pupils in	Secondary school pupils in year groups 10 and 11	Pop 16-18 other than at school
Isle of Anglesey	5,341	3,483	4,526	1,322	1,617	2.09%	2.00%	2.19%	1.93%	1.92%
Gwynedd	8,879	6,662	7,329	2,625	3,066	3.48%	3.83%	3.55%	3.84%	3.64%
Conwy	8,252	5,631	7,358	2,179	2,476	3.24%	3.24%	3.57%	3.19%	2.94%
Denbighshire	8,128	6,396	6,628	2,529	2,535	3.19%	3.68%	3.21%	3.70%	3.01%
Flintshire	12,579	8,751	10,422	3,512	4,307	4.93%	5.03%	5.05%	5.14%	5.12%
Wrexham	11,388	6,645	8,611	2,609	4,480	4.46%	3.82%	4.17%	3.82%	5.32%
Powys	9,554	6,522	8,041	2,640	3,245	3.75%	3.75%	3.90%	3.86%	3.86%
Ceredigion	4,929	3,630	4,176	1,454	1,508	1.93%	2.09%	2.02%	2.13%	1.79%
Pembrokeshire	9,512	6,318	7,791	2,485	3,457	3.73%	3.63%	3.78%	3.63%	4.11%
Carmarthenshire	14,771	10,464	12,452	4,156	5,060	5.79%	6.01%	6.04%	6.08%	6.01%
Swansea	19,633	13,430	15,277	5,397	6,724	7.70%	7.72%	7.41%	7.89%	7.99%
Neath Port Talbot	11,237	8,123	8,907	3,145	4,673	4.41%	4.67%	4.32%	4.60%	5.55%
Bridgend	11,973	8,304	10,243	3,240	3,387	4.69%	4.77%	4.97%	4.74%	4.02%
The Vale of Glamorgan	12,041	8,382	9,977	3,288	3,007	4.72%	4.82%	4.84%	4.81%	3.57%
Rhondda Cynon Taff	19,952	14,555	16,632	5,565	6,256	7.82%	8.36%	8.06%	8.14%	7.43%
Merthyr Tydfil	5,399	3,170	3,591	1,297	1,924	2.12%	1.82%	1.74%	1.90%	2.29%
Caerphilly	15,128	10,315	11,648	4,089	5,295	5.93%	5.93%	5.65%	5.98%	6.29%
Blaenau Gwent	5,551	3,120	3,821	1,216	2,097	2.18%	1.79%	1.85%	1.78%	2.49%
Torfaen	7,992	5,678	5,770	2,198	3,159	3.13%	3.26%	2.80%	3.21%	3.75%
Monmouthshire	6,670	4,169	6,083	1,622	2,151	2.61%	2.40%	2.95%	2.37%	2.56%
Newport	15,153	9,855	11,934	3,897	4,028	5.94%	5.66%	5.79%	5.70%	4.79%
Cardiff	31,017	20,405	25,072	7,921	9,719	12.16%	11.73%	12.15%	11.58%	11.55%
Wales	255,079	174,008	206,289	68,386	84,171					

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Table 3 – Relative change percentage points and SSA element (£'000s) 2024 vs 2023 PLASC numbers

	Relative Change Percentage Points (pp)										
	Primary pupils and modelled nursery school pupils (pp)		Secondary school pupils in year groups 7 to 11 (pp)		Population aged 11-15 and secondary school pupils in year groups 12 to 14 (pp)		Secondary school pupils in year groups 10 and 11 (pp)		Pop 16-18 other than at school (pp)		Difference Value (£'000s)
	SSA Element (£'000s)		SSA Element (£'000s)		SSA Element (£'000s)		SSA Element (£'000s)		SSA Element (£'000s)		
	1,095,822		880,581		48,164		84,998		3,951		
Isle of Anglesey	-0.03	-303	0.00	27	-0.03	-13	0.01	11	0.07	3	-276
Gwynedd	-0.04	-443	-0.01	-75	0.02	8	-0.06	-48	-0.04	-2	-559
Conwy	-0.03	-291	0.03	296	0.00	-2	0.01	8	0.02	1	11
Denbighshire	0.04	451	0.01	68	0.01	3	0.02	18	-0.01	-1	541
Flintshire	-0.06	-640	-0.05	-438	0.00	-1	-0.06	-48	0.01	0	-1,128
Wrexham	-0.01	-97	0.02	147	0.01	6	0.06	54	-0.04	-2	109
Powys	0.01	86	-0.05	-438	-0.02	-10	-0.04	-35	0.05	2	-396
Ceredigion	-0.01	-132	-0.01	-83	-0.01	-3	-0.15	-127	0.02	1	-345
Pembrokeshire	-0.04	-471	0.04	373	0.01	3	-0.02	-18	-0.02	-1	-114
Carmarthenshire	-0.01	-156	0.00	-42	0.03	13	-0.10	-85	-0.06	-2	-272
Swansea	0.08	878	0.12	1,031	0.05	22	0.00	2	-0.12	-5	1,929
Neath Port Talbot	-0.01	-112	-0.03	-235	0.00	2	-0.05	-38	-0.02	-1	-384
Bridgend	-0.03	-321	-0.04	-366	-0.05	-22	-0.11	-94	0.12	5	-799
The Vale of Glamorgan	-0.02	-273	-0.03	-242	0.01	3	0.01	10	-0.01	0	-502
Rhondda Cynon Taff	0.01	102	-0.03	-283	-0.08	-38	0.09	81	0.20	8	-131
Merthyr Tydfil	0.01	112	0.01	65	0.00	2	0.02	18	-0.01	-1	197
Caerphilly	-0.03	-300	-0.11	-929	-0.02	-12	-0.12	-103	0.06	2	-1,342
Blaenau Gwent	0.05	529	0.02	157	0.00	2	0.04	37	-0.02	-1	725
Torfaen	0.02	254	-0.01	-73	0.01	7	0.00	2	-0.04	-2	188
Monmouthshire	-0.01	-77	-0.03	-254	-0.01	-6	0.04	36	0.03	1	-300
Newport	0.14	1,571	0.02	181	0.00	0	0.06	52	0.01	0	1,804
Cardiff	-0.03	-367	0.13	1,114	0.08	37	0.32	268	-0.18	-7	1,044
Wales											

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Table 4 - Exemplification to show the impact of updated pupil numbers only on the 2024-25 AEF

Unitary Authority	Settlement		Difference Value	Difference %
	2024-25	PLASC 2024	PLASC 2024	PLASC 2024
Angelsey	127,586	127,310	-276	-0.22%
Gwynedd	233,317	232,758	-559	-0.24%
Conwy	203,526	203,537	11	0.01%
Denbighshire	200,795	201,335	541	0.27%
Flintshire	258,527	257,399	-1,128	-0.44%
Wrexham	232,865	232,974	109	0.05%
Powys	235,865	235,469	-396	-0.17%
Ceredigion	135,286	134,941	-345	-0.25%
Pembrokeshire	218,870	218,756	-114	-0.05%
Carmarthenshire	350,646	350,374	-272	-0.08%
Swansea	435,021	436,950	1,929	0.44%
Neath Port Talbot	285,594	285,210	-384	-0.13%
Bridgend	258,925	258,126	-799	-0.31%
Vale of Glamorgan	209,781	209,279	-502	-0.24%
Rhondda Cynon Taff	485,567	485,436	-131	-0.03%
Merthyr	123,492	123,688	197	0.16%
Caerphilly	348,864	347,522	-1,342	-0.38%
Blaenau Gwent	144,044	144,768	725	0.50%
Torfaen	178,733	178,920	188	0.11%
Monmouthshire	126,019	125,720	-300	-0.24%
Newport	304,045	305,849	1,804	0.59%
Cardiff	623,158	624,202	1,044	0.17%
Total Unitary Authorities	5,720,524	5,720,524		