

Welsh-medium pupil placements analysis

Projection methodology for mainstream provision

Cardiff Council employs a robust projection methodology for planning school places which takes account of NHS GP registration data and school census data submitted by and verified by all Cardiff schools. The most recent datasets available to inform this were supplied by the NHS in August 2025 and by schools through PLASC in January 2025. As projections can only take account of historic and current information the Council also identifies trends within projections (comparing against previous datasets), and analyses school preference data and other contextual information to produce forecasts on a city-wide basis and in each locality.

Data analysis allows projections to be prepared based on localised patterns at primary school catchment area level, by secondary school catchment and on a city-wide basis. Each of these provide differing contextual information to inform the forecasting on the number of places that may be needed to meet the requirements of each area and of Cardiff as a whole.

The geographical units that are most suitable to analyse the recent and future demand for secondary school places in each area are secondary catchment areas. A wider range of geographical information including aggregated primary school catchment areas, city-wide information and outflow to other admissions authorities informs planning for meeting the demand for secondary school places. School catchment areas in Cardiff are not coterminous with ward boundaries and often serve all or part of several ward areas.

The most recent NHS GP registration data available at the time of analysis allows for primary phase intake data to be modelled to 2028/29.

Modelling of secondary school intakes can be undertaken to 2031/32, based on pupils already enrolled in Reception year at the time of the most recent school census (PLASC) in January 2025. Any modelling beyond 2031/32 would be based only on population data would not include any information relating to primary school take-up.

Sufficiency of primary and secondary school places citywide

City-wide intakes to primary education are projected to remain at low levels in the next three intakes as a consequence of a sustained fall in the birth rate and changes to migration patterns, which are evidenced in data published by the Office of National Statistics and the most recent NHS GP registration data sets. However, changes to populations are not consistent in all parts of the city.

In 2024/2025, approximately 19% of Reception age primary school places available were through the Welsh language, in Welsh-medium, dual stream or dual language community schools. This was sufficient to accommodate up to 25% of the intake to primary education in 2024/25.

Approximately 81% of Reception age primary school places available were through the medium of English, in English-medium or dual stream community schools or in English-medium faith-based schools.

As intakes to schools reduce, the level of surplus places in each type of provision would increase. The Council would be able to accommodate a greater percentage of the overall population in any of these types of provision.

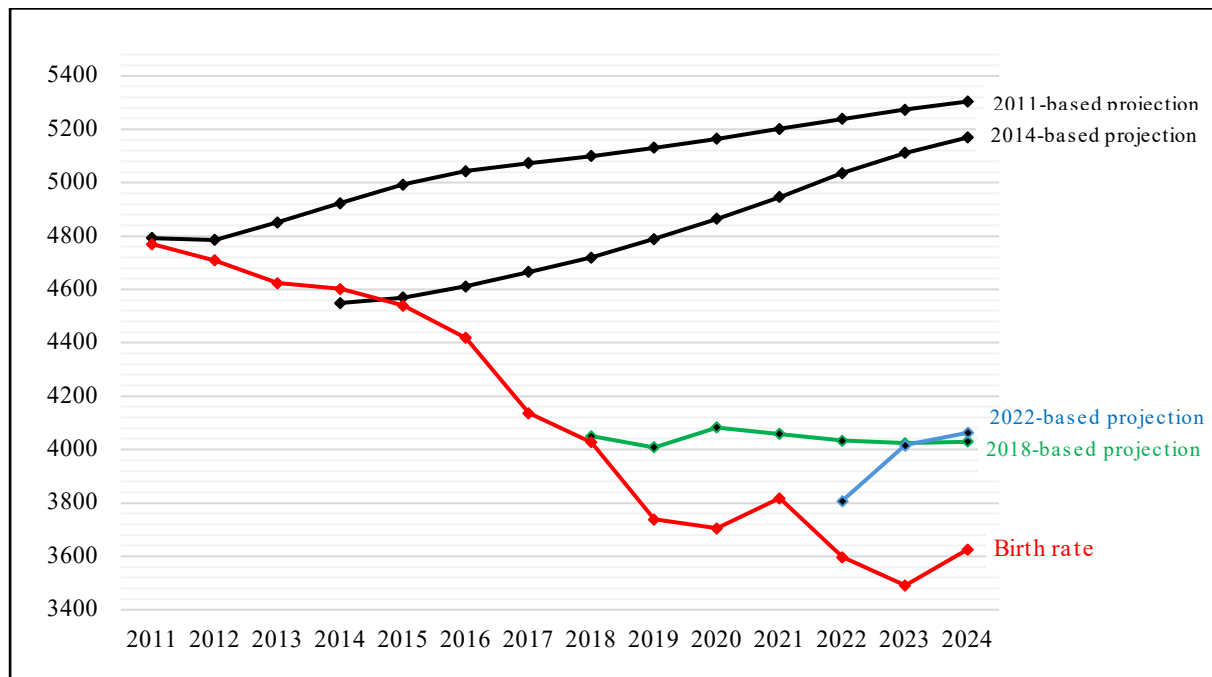
The number of places available through the medium of Welsh is sufficient to support an increase in take up that would meet the lower threshold 25% Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) target set by Welsh Government and Cardiff Council respectively. Increased capacity would be required to meet the upper threshold 29% target; however, at this time, such an increase would create a greater proportion of surplus places and would compromise the sustainability of other local schools.

Birth rates

Since the publication of the WESP 2022-31 the birth rate has continued to fall.

Figure 1 below shows how the birth rate data differs to the population projections published by Welsh Government in 2011, 2014, 2018 and the 2022-based projections published in 2025. The number of births in 2024 was 3,626, significantly below the Welsh Government 2022-based projection of 4,063 and the previous 2018-based projection of 4,026. The 2022-based WG projection of 4,063 in 2024 was 12% higher than the actual birth rate figures published in August 2025.

Figure 1: Welsh Government projections for number of 0-year-olds compared with the birth rate



As each of the past five projections published by Welsh Government have not closely aligned with actual birth rate data for Cardiff, this data is not suitable for school place planning in Cardiff. The Council instead analyses published birth rate data and annual updates from the NHS to ensure robustness in its planning.

Intakes to Nursery Education

In 2024/25, 783 learners (19.2%) of pupils in Nursery classes ('Rising 4' and 'Rising 3' cohorts), were taught through the medium of Welsh, an increase of 0.8 percentage points since 2023/24.

In 2023/24, the number of nursery pupils enrolled in the 'Rising 4' cohort in Welsh-medium education was 608 (18.5%). In 2024/25, 600 'Rising 4' learners in Nursery classes (18.9%) were taught through the medium of Welsh (PLASC 2025 data). This is below the WESP target of 755 or 20.5% of 3-year-olds receiving their education through the medium of Welsh, but represents proportionate growth.

Whilst sufficiency of places, and expansion of nursery provision, is a key factor in supporting and driving growth in take up of Welsh-medium and dual language places in the primary and secondary age phases, the projection methodology for primary intakes does not include nursery take-up data. This is because some parents opt to not access a nursery education place, whilst others opt for a delayed start date. Any analysis of this data to inform Reception class planning is therefore less robust than whole population data.

Intakes to primary education

The Cardiff 2050 trajectory document annex to the [WESP 2022-2031](#) noted that the number of Reception age children entering Welsh-medium education had fluctuated between 2010 and 2020 and that the overall trend had been a slow increase.

Following a 'spike' intake of 749 pupils in 2020/21, the successive school census datasets for pupils enrolling in Reception class in Welsh-medium or dual-language education in the four following years have been remarkably consistent at between 655 and 667 pupils. The 2024/25 Reception cohort of 667 pupils will promote to secondary education in 2031/32.

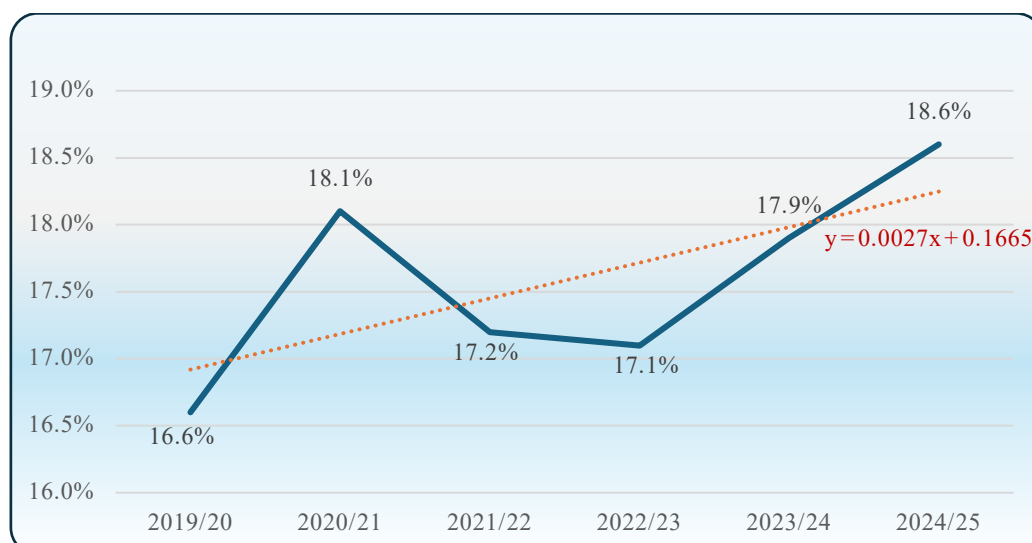
In 2024/25, the percentage of Reception age learners in Welsh-medium education fell to 17.5% as the number of learners in Reception taught through the medium of Welsh fell by 13 pupils to 641 (PLASC 2025 data). Although the number of learners has fallen compared to the previous year's data, the percentage of learners has remained broadly the same as the cohort of learners across all schools in Cardiff is 125 fewer than the previous year, reflecting an earlier decrease in the birth rate.

The percentage of pupils in either Welsh-medium or dual language education was 18.2%. There were 26 pupils on roll in the dual language Reception class at Ysgol Gynradd Groes-wen Primary School, in its second intake. The combined Welsh-medium and dual language percentage still remains below the WESP target for the number and percentage of learners in Reception Class who are taught through the medium of Welsh of 755 pupils, or 20.5%, for 2024/25.

Stable intakes to Reception are set against a backdrop of a decreasing overall pupil population and therefore represent a proportionate growth.

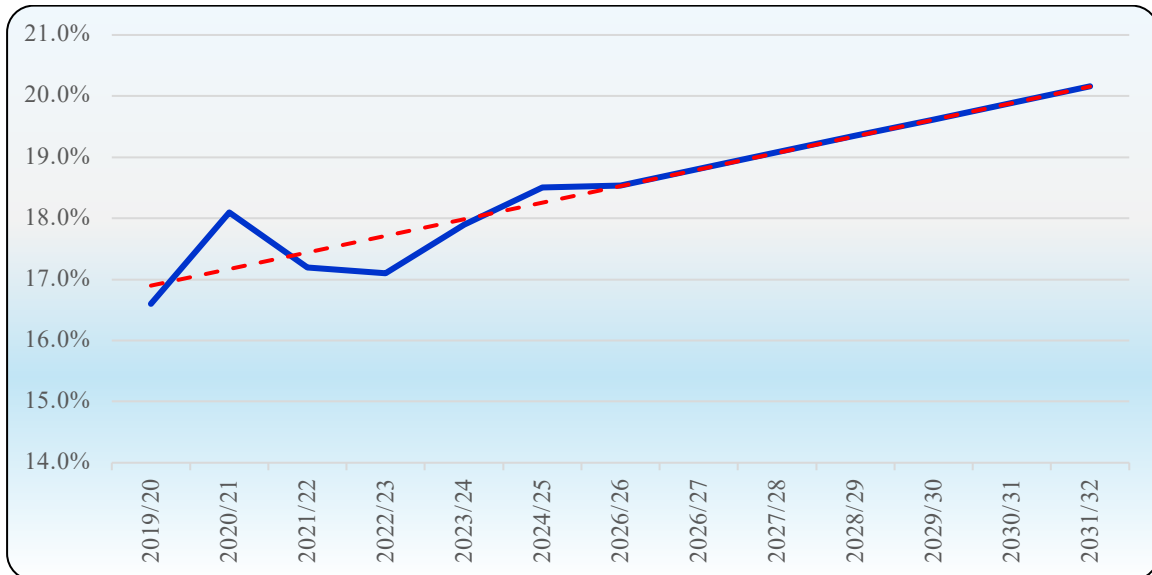
Cardiff's WESP trajectory confirms that the percentage of pupils enrolling in Reception classes in Welsh language education, including Welsh-medium and dual language classes, has increased by 0.25% per year between 2019/20 and 2024/25.

Figure 2: Historical percentage growth pattern of mainstream Reception Welsh-medium and dual language demand in Cardiff (PLASC)



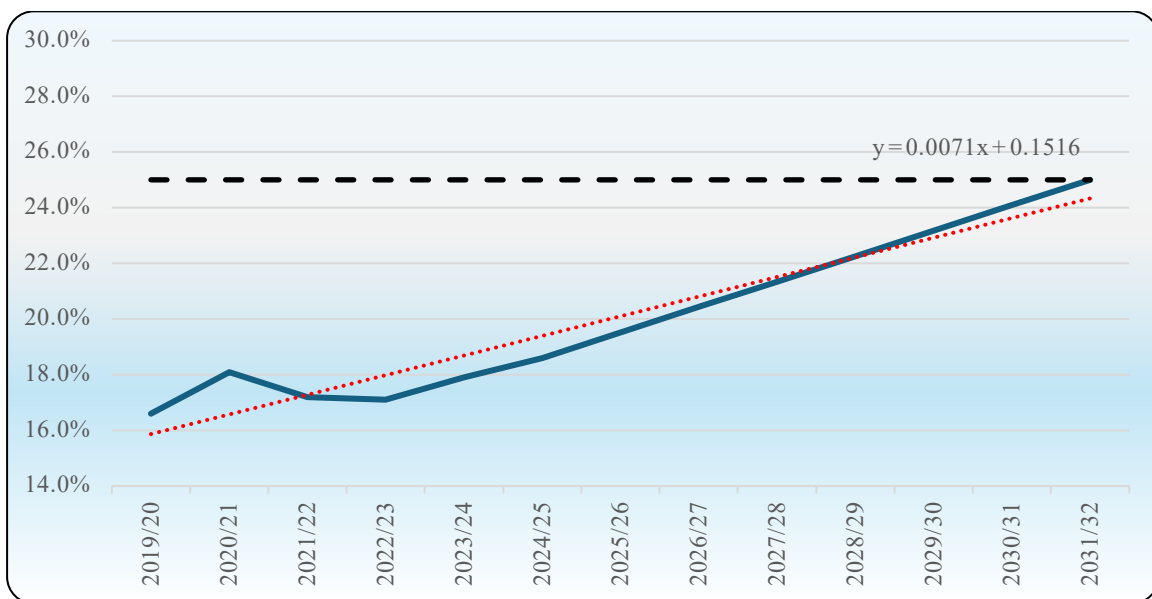
If the percentage of pupils increased at the same rate between 2026 and 2030, 20.2% of pupils entering Reception in September 2031 would be attending Welsh-medium schools.

Figure 3: Projected increase in percentage of mainstream Welsh-medium pupils 2026-2031 based on growth rate of 0.27%



The target set for Cardiff by Welsh Government for pupils enrolling Welsh-medium Reception classes is 25% by 2030. To achieve the threshold indicator of 25% by 2030, approximately 0.7% annual growth is required. This is approximately three times the recent average level of annual growth.

Figure 4: Historical Welsh-medium Reception population growth extrapolated to 2030 (PLASC)



Retention of pupils in the Welsh-medium primary age phase

Cardiff's Welsh Education Forum has established a number of sub-groups and working parties to focus on specific outcomes in Cardiff's adopted Welsh in Education Strategic Plan. The 'Retention' Subgroup, including each of the secondary school headteacher and primary school headteachers representing each secondary school cluster, has met regularly to review data relating to the net retention of learners within the sector.

Focus areas of the group include the retention of pupils within the primary age phase, the transition of pupils from primary education to secondary education, and the retention of pupils within the secondary age phase.

Table 1 shows pupil numbers in Welsh-medium community schools as captured by the Pupil Level Annual School Census. The census captures pupils attending Welsh-medium and dual language classes in Cardiff schools irrespective of where they live.

PLASC survey year	Curriculum Year							Grand Total
	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	
2018	708	726	662	668	640	623	573	4600
2019	705	706	717	643	655	623	611	4660
2020	683	706	691	709	639	640	615	4683
2021	749	662	682	671	696	619	628	4707
2022	656	735	650	665	658	684	612	4660
2023	658	653	724	638	648	657	670	4648
2024	657	650	638	718	627	635	643	4568
2025	667	655	650	633	714	616	626	4561

Each of cohorts of pupils in the Welsh-medium primary education has reduced year on year whilst promoting through year groups, with the sole exception of the Reception cohort in 2019 promoting to Year 1 in 2020

The table overleaf shows a breakdown of the size of the cohort that is retained in Welsh-medium community schools as they transition through the primary age phase. Percentage transition across year groups is calculated by averaging the sum of all the transitions between successive year groups for one year of transition.

PLASC survey data capture	Average yearly primary pupil cohort retention, Reception to Year 6
2018 to 2019	98.2%
2019 to 2020	98.8%
2020 to 2021	97.3%
2021 to 2022	98.2%
2022 to 2023	98.6%
2023 to 2024	98.3%
2024 to 2025	99.2%
3-year cohort retention yearly percentage average	98.7%
Total retention through school transition	92.4%

The primary phases show a net loss in pupil numbers as the cohorts' transition through the school, typically between 1% and 3%. The average net retention rate between primary school year groups, over the period 2022/23 to 2024/25 is c98.7%, whilst 92.4% of learners (net) entering Welsh-medium primary education at Reception year are retained in sector in Year 6.

A key finding of the Retention group is that the proportion of learners transferring from Welsh-medium primary schools to English-medium schools is largely within communities with higher mobility i.e. a greater number of families moving into and out a community. This is an established trend largely unchanged for many years.

Although the Council promotes the opportunity for learners to transfer into Welsh-medium primary or secondary education via the Uned Drochi Welsh Immersion class, the proportion of learners leaving the who transfer into Welsh-medium schools is lower than proportion of learners who are new to Cardiff, or to Wales.

Whilst these figures fluctuate, these averages are relatively consistent and support robust projections for learners entering Welsh-medium secondary education.

Transition of pupils from Welsh-medium primary to secondary education

The number of learners enrolled in Year 6 has fluctuated since 2017-18, increasing to 670 pupils in 2022-23 and later reducing. This peak of 670 learners in 2022/23 aligns with the peak birthrate in 2011, and the then-highest intake to Welsh-medium primary education of 744 pupils in 2016/17.

The below table sets out the number of pupils enrolled in Year 6 in Welsh-medium primary schools and classes since 2017/18.

Year 6 Numbers on Roll in Welsh-medium primary schools PLASC data 2018-2025

	2017- 18	2018- 19	2019- 20	2020- 21	2021- 22	2022- 23	2023- 24	2024- 25
Creigiau	20	25	22	23	26	29	24	26
Bro Eirwg	55	56	50	57	54	51	52	46
Coed Y Gof	38	39	43	34	53	39	39	25
Glan Ceubal	7	7	10	19	18	20	20	30
Glan Morfa	23	26	19	27	19	25	28	28
Gwaelod	30	25	26	29	23	26	24	26
Hamadryad						26	17	26
Melin Gruffydd	55	60	57	53	60	61	61	56
Mynydd Bychan	29	28	28	26	28	24	29	28
Nant Caerau	26	25	29	30	29	30	24	26
Pen Y Pil	18	23	30	20	22	26	19	21
Pencae	30	30	29	29	29	31	22	30
Pen Y Groes	12	11	10	5	7	24	15	10
Pwll Coch	69	76	53	58	39	36	46	36
Treganna	49	58	81	89	86	84	84	81
Y Berllan Deg	56	53	56	60	45	59	50	47
Y Wern	56	69	72	69	74	79	89	84
	573	611	615	628	612	670	643	626

Numbers on roll in Year 6 have fluctuated since 2017-18, increasing to 670 pupils in 2022-23 in line with the peak birthrate in 2011. Numbers in the following years then decreased to 626 pupils in 2024-25.

The number of learners enrolling in Welsh-medium secondary at Y7 has also fluctuated since 2017-18. The peak of 641 learners in 2023/24 reflects the cohort of 670 pupils in 2022-23.

Year 7 Numbers on Roll in Welsh-medium primary schools PLASC data 2018-2025

	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Bro Edern	136	151	183	165	162	143	186	173
Glantaf	224	221	243	233	241	237	245	255
Plasmawr	190	179	182	203	202	213	210	193
	550	551	608	601	605	593	641	621

The number of Year 7 pupils on roll in Welsh-medium schools for each cohort is lower than the number on roll in Year 6 in the previous year. This is due in part to parental preference; some pupils state a preference for an English-medium secondary school only, some state a higher preference for a specific English-medium school but also state lower preferences for a Welsh-medium school, some apply to schools in other Local Authority areas consistent with their home address while some transfer into the independent sector. Other pupils move away from Cardiff between the census dates.

Each year, some pupils transfer from English-medium primary education to Welsh-medium secondary education. However, this is most commonly as a lower preference in the initial round of allocations, or as a lower preference in a later allocation round.

Comparison of Year 6 to Year 7 cohorts in Welsh-medium education

	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Total WM Y6 pupils	573	611	615	628	612	670	643
	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Total WM Y7 pupils	551	608	601	605	593	641	621
Difference	-22	-3	-14	-23	-19	-29	-22

Net retention of pupils in Welsh-medium provision

The following table shows a year-on-year comparison of net cohort retention in Welsh-medium community schools as pupils transition between primary and secondary education.

Percentage transition across year groups is calculated by averaging the sum of all the transitions between successive year groups for one year of transition.

PLASC survey data capture	Cohort pupil transition from Year 6 to Year 7
2018 to 2019	96.2%
2019 to 2020	99.5%
2020 to 2021	97.7%
2021 to 2022	96.3%
2022 to 2023	96.9%
2023 to 2024	95.7%
2024 to 2025	96.6%
3-year cohort retention yearly percentage average	95.7%

Transition from primary to secondary phase shows a greater loss of pupil numbers than any other single year group with the average loss over the last 3 years being 3.6%. Approximately 96.4% of Year 6 cohorts promote to Year 7 in Welsh-medium secondary education.

Existing Welsh-medium secondary school provision

The size and location of each of Cardiff's secondary schools, within both the Welsh-medium and English-medium sectors, reflects the availability of sites at the time of proposals being developed and their strategic alignment with Council priorities at the time.

Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Glantaf is an eight-form entry school, for learners age 11-19 located at Bridge Road, Llandaff North. The school initially served all learners in Cardiff who wished to access a Welsh-medium secondary education.

Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Plasmawr is a seven-form entry school, for learners age 11-19 located at Pentrebanne Road, Fairwater. The school was formally established in September 1998 as Cardiff's second Welsh-medium secondary school, on the former Waterhall school site. Following its establishment, Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Plasmawr served a catchment area West of the river Taff, whilst Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Glantaf's catchment area was reduced to the area east of the river Taff.

Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Bro-Edern is a six-form entry school, for learners age 11-19 located at Llanedeyrn Road, Penylan. The school was formally established in September 2012 as Cardiff's second Welsh-medium secondary school, on the former St Teilo's High School site. Following its establishment, catchment area arrangements for each school were reviewed and determined after consultation.

The Council most recently consulted on changes to the catchment areas of Welsh-medium primary and secondary schools in early 2020, to better match the number of places to the future take-up of places, and within that exercise considered the nearest schools to pupils who may be affected by proposed changes.

The changes to the catchment area were developed by a working group of Cardiff's Welsh Education Forum, and sought to

- establish a catchment area for Ysgol Gymraeg Hamadryad,
- provide an appropriate and sustainable balance in the availability and take up of primary school and secondary school places in each catchment area, and
- support growth in the sector.

The changes took effect from September 2021.

Inevitably, as there are three Welsh-medium secondary schools city-wide, some parts of each school's catchment area are more than three miles from the school site. Where learners live more than three miles from their local secondary school, Local Authorities must provide free home to school transport to the nearest school.

Cardiff's school transport policy ensures that free home to school transport is provided to the preferred type of provision, be that English-medium, Welsh-medium or faith-based provision. The Council funds this discretionary arrangement, supporting families to enrol in their preferred type of provision, which exceeds the statutory requirements of the Welsh Government's Learner Travel Wales Measure and supports families to have equitable access to Welsh-medium provision.

Whilst intakes have been relatively consistent, the number of pupils who qualify for free home to school transport fluctuates from year to year as this is based on the home addresses of pupils.

In the Welsh-medium sector, learners in the following communities are supported by free home to school transport to their local Welsh-medium school:

- Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Bro Edern catchment: learners resident in parts of Splott, Llanrumney, Rumney, Trowbridge and St Mellons
- Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Glantaf catchment: learners resident in parts of Butetown, Grangetown, Lisvane, Llanishen and Thornhill
- Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Plasmawr catchment: learners resident in parts of Caerau, Ely, Morganstown, Pentyrch and Creigiau.

Recent and projected take up of Welsh Medium secondary school places

Whilst intakes to Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Bro Edern, Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Glantaf and Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Plasmawr have fluctuated in recent years, the overall number of surplus places has been at a low level, consistent with intakes to English-medium schools.

The Council planned and implemented a temporary measure to increase capacity in the 2023/24 intake year by temporarily increasing the Admission Number at Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Bro Edern from 180 places to 210 places in existing accommodation.

Although intakes in 2024/25 and 2025/26 were at lower level, and a lower intake is projected in 2026/27, a further temporary increase to capacity will be required for the 2027/28 intake year. Intakes to Welsh-medium secondary schools are projected to be at a lower level from 2028/29 until at least 2031/32, taking account of recent net retention rates for pupils already enrolled in primary education.

Applying the recent net retention rates in the primary age phase and at transfer from primary to secondary education, consistent intakes to Reception Year of above 720 pupils would be required to exceed the existing capacity at entry to secondary education of 630 places / 21 Forms of Entry. A Reception intake of 720 pupils in 2027/28 would equate to c23% of learners, significantly above the current 18.5%.

Consistent intakes to Reception Year of above 820 pupils would be required to exceed the existing capacity at entry to secondary education of 720 places (24 Forms of Entry). This equates to four secondary schools of six Forms of Entry. A Reception intake of 820 pupils in 2027/28 would equate to c26% of learners.

The Welsh Education Forum 'Retention' Subgroup has also reviewed projected demand for Welsh-medium secondary school places to support planning for future intakes and the retention of pupils promoting from primary to secondary education in the sector.

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The below table confirms the number of pupils enrolled in Welsh-medium secondary schools in recent years.

Number of pupils enrolled in Year 7, compared to places available (includes temporary measures) (includes pupils resident outside of Cardiff Boundary)									
	Ysgol Bro Edern		Ysgol Glantaf*		Ysgol Plasmawr*		Total		
	Places available	Pupils enrolled	Places available	Pupils enrolled	Places available	Pupils enrolled	Places available	Pupils enrolled	WM %
2012/13	180	71	240	155	180	170	600	396	11.9%
2013/14	180	77	240	176	180	172	600	425	13.0%
2014/15	180	105	240	171	180	187	600	463	13.6%
2015/16	180	116	240	175	180	189	600	480	14.3%
2016/17	180	131	240	194	180	176	600	501	14.1%
2017/18	180	136	240	224	180	190	600	550	15.0%
2018/19	180	151	240	221	180	179	600	551	14.4%
2019/20	180	183	240	243	210	182	630	608	15.2%
2020/21	180	165	240	233	210	204	630	602	14.7%
2021/22	180	162	240	241	210	202	630	605	14.8%
2022/23	180	143	240	237	210	213	630	593	14.1%
2023/24	180	186	240	245*	210	210	630	641	15.1%*
2024/25	180	173	240	255*	210	193*	630	621*	15.3%*
2025/26	180	148	240	240*	210	203*	630	591*	TBC*

NB 2025/26 data is provisional admissions data; finalised datasets not yet available

* includes placements in Specialist Resource Base, above Published Admission Number

The table overleaf provides a city-summary of recent intakes, comparison of projection datasets, and future projected intakes. The projection dataset is updated each year, to take account of changing pupil retention between each age group, meaning that projected intakes will vary.

The close alignment of recent projections to actual placements allows for robust forecasts to be prepared.

Table: Recent take up of Year 7 places and projected city-wide demand modelled on school census data and pre-school GP registration data

Key: Grey shading = annual Year 7 census data supplied by schools in January (PLASC)

Blue shading = projected Year7 intake, applying recent net retention rates from school census data for pupils enrolled in primary education

School Year	2021 census and projection	2022 census and projection	2023 census and projection	2024 census and projection	2025 census and projection	Forecast city-wide intake
2020/21	602	602	602	602	602	
2021/22	616	605	605	605	605	
2022/23	597	596	593	593	593	
2023/24	652	656	649	641	641	
2024/25	620	617	625	619	621	
2025/26	616	613	610	599	591	575-605
2026/27	582	585	587	584	574	560-590
2027/28	648	646	651	655	645	630-660
2028/29		565	576	573	559	550-580
2029/30			572	573	561	550-580
2030/31				573	549	540-580
2031/32					554	545-585

It is evident in the most recent datasets that retention of pupils between Year 6 and Year 7 has reduced. Projections therefore reflect this, and have reduced over time. Should retention increase in coming years, forecast intakes would be closer to the upper range limit than to the lower range limit.

Overall, all data currently available indicates a high intake in 2027/28, after which intakes are projected at lower levels until 2031/32, reflecting smaller cohorts entering the primary age phase and recent low birth rates.

Retention of pupils in the Welsh-medium secondary age phase

Table 1 shows pupil numbers in Welsh-medium community secondary schools as captured by the Pupil Level Annual School Census. The census captures pupils attending Welsh-medium and dual language classes in Cardiff schools irrespective of where they live.

PLASC survey year	Curriculum Year					Grand Total
	7	8	9	10	11	
2018	550	494	467	451	417	2379
2019	551	546	489	462	439	2487
2020	608	550	544	487	458	2647
2021	601	596	544	536	479	2756
2022	605	600	583	538	528	2854
2023	593	603	591	576	535	2898
2024	641	591	599	579	574	2984
2025	621	631	577	586	573	2988

The following table shows a breakdown of the size of the cohort that is retained in Welsh-medium community schools as they transition through school/schools.

Percentage transition across year groups is calculated by averaging the sum of all the transitions between successive year groups for one year of transition.

PLASC survey data capture	Average yearly secondary pupil cohort retention, Year 7 to Year 11
2018 to 2019	98.6%
2019 to 2020	99.5%
2020 to 2021	98.5%
2021 to 2022	98.8%
2022 to 2023	99.1%
2023 to 2024	99.2%
2024 to 2025	98.2%
3-year cohort retention yearly percentage average	98.8%
Total retention through school transition: Reception to Year 11	95.4%

Retention in the secondary phase remains strong, averaging 98.2% annually over the last three years. This corresponds to a total cohort reduction of just under 4.6% between Year 7 and Year 11.

Overall net retention of pupils in Welsh-medium provision

The following table compares transition patterns in Welsh-medium community schools with that in English-medium community schools

Table comparing pupil 3 year average cohort transition percentage in community school settings in Cardiff (PLASC data sets 2022-2025)

Setting	3yr Average yearly primary pupil cohort retention, Rec to Year 6, PLASC 2022-2025	3yr Average Cohort pupil transition from Year 6 to Year 7	3yr Average yearly secondary pupil cohort retention, Year 7 to Year 11, PLASC2022-2025
Welsh-medium Community Schools	92.4%	98.7%	98.8%
English-medium Community Schools	100.7%	86.6%	99.6%

The Council has identified several factors contributing to the overall trend of outflow from schools, including:

- Parental preference: The decision to continue Welsh-medium education at the secondary level is a parental choice. Some parents opt for Welsh-medium primary education and also plan in advance to transfer to English-medium secondary provision. This has been stated within admission preference forms and in past consultations on revising admissions arrangements.
- Pupil mobility: Cardiff has a high degree of pupil mobility, particularly in the south of the city. Some families arriving in Cardiff outside the normal rounds of admission who do not speak Welsh may find the additional challenge of Welsh immersion a barrier to the take up of Welsh-medium provision relative to pupils/parents who are more settled, particularly when the family does not intend to settle in the city.
- Distance/convenience: Cardiff has a significantly larger English-speaking pupil population than Welsh-medium. In order to accommodate these pupils, there are therefore proportionately more English-medium schools distributed across the city. This means, for many pupils, their closest school would be an English-medium school.