

Exploring transitions to post-compulsory education in Wales

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This Data Insight explores transitions from school to Post-Compulsory Education and Training (PCET) in Wales.

Background

Welsh Government have committed to reducing rates of young people who do not move into employment, education or training¹, as well as raising the aspirations and attainment of vulnerable young people^{2,3}. In contributing to these goals, it is important to understand the progression of pupils from compulsory education at around aged 16 to post-compulsory education settings.

Whilst national statistics published each year indicate the number of learners registered in Further Education (FE) settings, these figures do not include learners in sixth form settings⁴ and are not representative of the Year 11 cohort transition. The Careers Wales Destinations Survey⁵, undertaken each year on behalf of Welsh Government, provides a more complete picture of the destinations of Year 11 pupils, yet segmentation analysis can only be carried out on gender and ethnicity categories.

This Data Insight utilises administrative education data sources to explore the transition from school to sixth form and FE colleges by a wider range of learner characteristics.

What we did

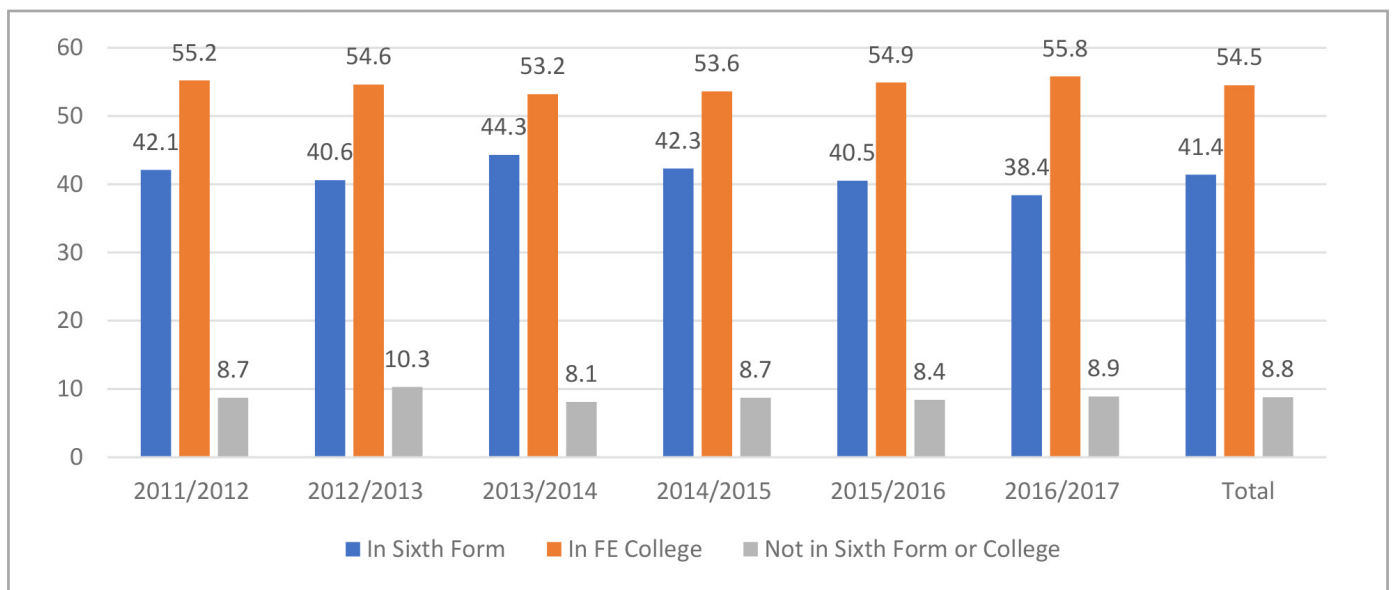
This research linked the Welsh National Data Collection Pupil Level Annual School Census (NDC PLASC), the Post-16 Pupil Level Annual School Census (Post-16 PLASC), and the Lifelong Learner Wales Record (LLWR). Linking these administrative records allowed us to identify those pupils who moved into post compulsory education or training, and look at a variety of characteristics associated with those people who did not transition to further learning in Wales.

For pupils in Year 11 between 2012/13 and 2016/17, we used school records to see if they continued to education in either 6th form or FE colleges in the following academic year, or whether they could not be located in data from post compulsory education settings in Wales. We then considered whether various personal characteristics, like eligibility for free school meals (eFSM) and Special Education Needs (SEN)⁶, were associated with attendance at sixth forms, FE colleges, or not being identified.

What we found

Figure 1 shows the number of pupils who were in sixth forms, FE colleges, or not identified by academic year. Attendance at FE colleges is the most common next step for Year 11 pupils, with around 55% registering at FE colleges. Over 40% of pupils go on to attend a 6th form following Year 11, whilst around 8% of pupils are not found within these records.

Figure 1 - Progression to Post-Compulsory Education

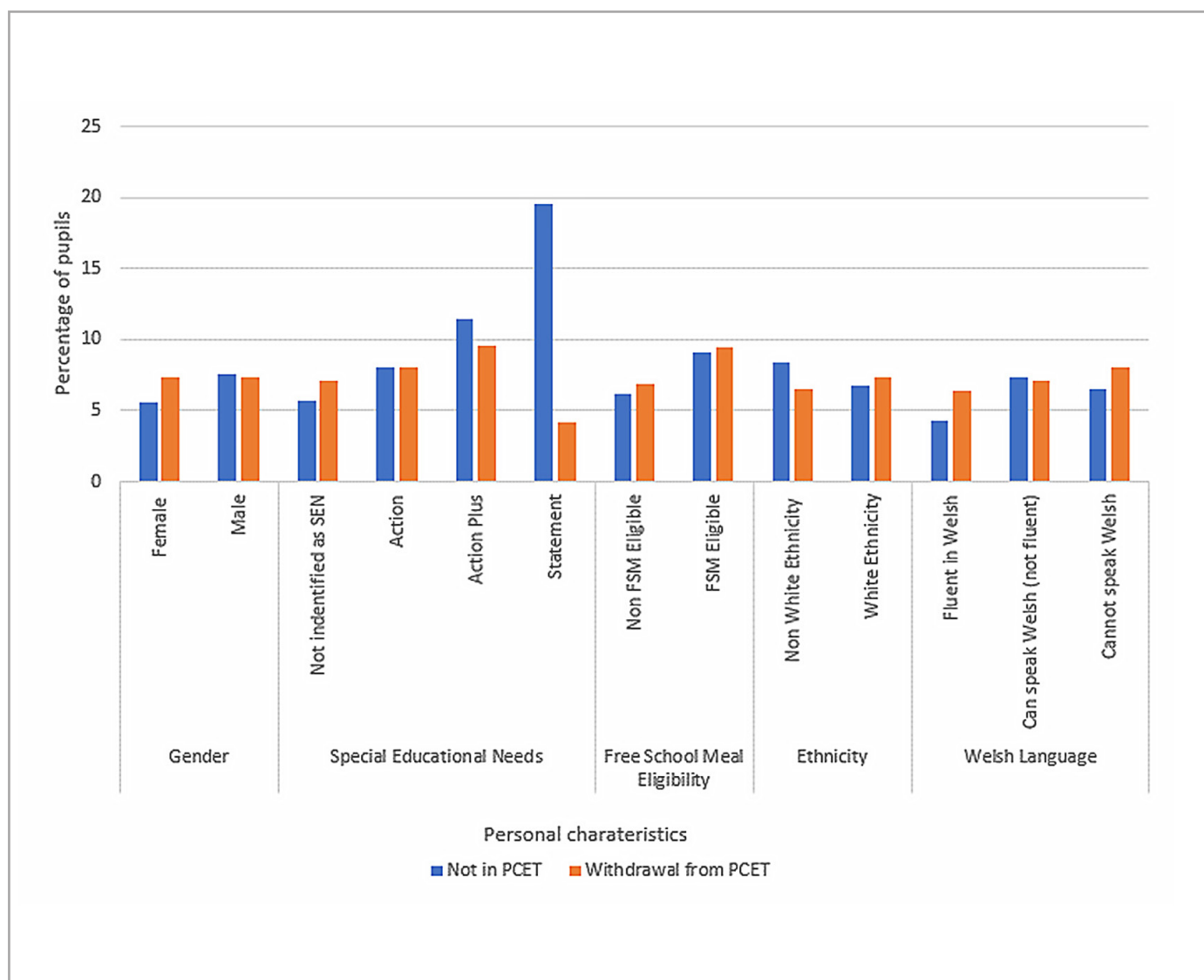


There are a number of reasons that Year 11 pupils cannot be located with the post compulsory education data.

The 2020 Careers Wales Destinations Survey suggested that around 3% of Year 11 pupils went into employment, a further 3% were undertaking work-based training (but were not employees), whilst a smaller minority 'left the area'⁷. Indeed, some of these young people may have moved out of Wales for employment, further education or training purposes. The remainder are likely to be economically inactive.

We further explored characteristics associated with not continuing to post-compulsory education and withdrawal from post-compulsory education. Figure 2 summarises these findings. Results suggest that FSM eligibility and those with SEN status could benefit from targeted support to enter and remain in post-compulsory education, compared to those not eligible for FSM and those not identified as SEN.

Figure 2 – Not in Post-Compulsory Education or Training (PCET)



Why it matters

Current estimates of PCET either do not provide a holistic picture of transitions from Year 11 to Year 12, or do not allow examination by a wide range of characteristics. Understanding characteristics of those who do not continue in PCET can aid the support of such individuals to enter employment, education or training. By providing appropriate support to these individuals it might be possible to further reduce attainment gaps and the number of NEET (not in education, employment or training) young people in Wales.

What next?

To further understand the support provided to school pupils, the PLASC and PCET datasets can be linked to information on careers guidance interventions, allowing for exploration of support strategies for young people to prevent them from becoming NEET.

Acknowledgements

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References

1. <https://gov.wales/youth-engagement-and-progression-framework-implementation-plan>
2. <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-03/rewriting-the-future-raising-ambition-and-attainment-in-welsh-schools.pdf>
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4. <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Education-and-Skills/Post-16-Education-and-Training/Further-Education-and-Work-Based-Learning/Learners/Further-Education>
5. <https://careerswales.gov.wales/careers-professionals/pupil-destinations/pupil-destinations-2020/year-11-pupil-destinations-from>
6. SEN is now referred to as Additional Learning Needs (ALN) following the ALN Act in 2020. We use the term SEN as it reflects the period of data we cover. Those with 'No SEN' have not been identified as requiring additional support.
7. <https://careerswales.gov.wales/careers-professionals/pupil-destinations/pupil-destinations-2020/year-11-pupil-destinations-from#Not%20in%20Employment,%20FTE%20and%20Training>

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