

REPORT OF A BREACH OF THE CODE OF PRACTICE FOR STATISTICS

1. Core Information [\[guidance\]](#)

Title and link to statistical output	Schools' census results: as at January 2019
Name of producer organisation	Welsh Government
Name and contact details of person dealing with report	Martin Parry 03000 250373 martin.parry@llyw.cymru
Link to published statement about the breach (if relevant)	
Date of breach report	19/07/2019

2. Circumstances of breach [\[guidance\]](#)

Relevant principle(s) and practice(s)	Principle T3, Practices T3.3, T3.4, T3.6
Date of occurrence of breach	4 July 2019
<p>Data on the number of Year 2 pupils studying Welsh as a first language from the Pupil-Level Annual School Census (PLASC) data collection from January 2019 was wrongfully released to an internal policy team and an external contractor undertaking research on behalf of the Welsh Government, prior to its publication on Wednesday 31 July.</p> <p>The Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESP) team in the Welsh Language Division in the Welsh Government is responsible for ensuring that all local authorities in Wales produce a plan for how they will deliver Welsh-medium education in their area. There is a statutory duty for local authorities to do so, and they report targets to the Welsh Government with respect to how many pupils they expect to be assessed in Welsh first language at the end of Year 2 every year. The WESP team use data from PLASC as management information for internal purposes only (and a separate data collection on teacher assessments) to monitor progress towards these targets. Each local authority will have access to its own data as the schools report their data to their own local authority in advance of submitting it to the Welsh Government.</p> <p>The data that was wrongfully released included the number and percentage of Year 2 pupils studying Welsh as a first language by local authority for 2019 only. The internal policy team had already received data for previous years for monitoring progress against targets.</p> <p>The Schools Statistics team is responsible for this data collection from schools and local authorities. However, three members from the Population, Census and Welsh Language Statistics team also have access to the data for the purpose of producing analyses to support the Welsh Language Division (including the WESP team). The latest pre-release data (data referring to the 2018/19 academic year) is stored in the same database as the historic data so that the whole time series can be analysed. Members of the Population, Census and Welsh Language Statistics team have access to the database in order to analyse the historic data that is already published.</p> <p>A member of the Population, Census and Welsh Language Statistics team used the 2019 data from the database on Thursday 4 July, not knowing that it was pre-release statistics and due to be published on Wednesday 31 July. This was shared with a member of the WESP team on Thursday 4 July. The member of the WESP team then shared this further with seven other members of the Welsh Language Division on Friday 5 July. This data was</p>	

used by the WESP team internally to monitor progress against each local authority's target for 2019.

On Monday 8 July, a member of the Welsh Language Division shared this data with a social researcher in the Welsh Government, who manages a contract with an external contractor researching into the Welsh Government's childcare offer. The data was shared with the external contractor to provide an overview of Welsh-medium education in each local authority in Wales, to provide context and background to their research. The social researcher did caveat the data noting that it was not to be shared more widely than the research team and not to be published. This was not due to the social researcher knowing that it was pre-release statistics; this was part of a process that the social researcher had in place with the contractor not to publish or share Welsh Government data without prior consent.

It was brought to the attention of the Head of Population, Census and Welsh Language Statistics that 2019 data had been shared with these parties during a weekly catch-up with the member of staff concerned on Friday 12 July. The Head of Population, Census and Welsh Language Statistics checked the pre-release calendar and confirmed that the 2019 data was subject to pre-release access as it was not due to be published until Wednesday 31 July.

The member of staff immediately contacted both the WESP team and the social researcher to explain that a breach had occurred and asked them to confirm that they had deleted the data. The Head of the Welsh Language Division confirmed that day that the data had not been shared any further and that all Welsh Government officials in that division who had received the 2019 data had deleted it as per the request. The social researcher also confirmed that day that she and the external contractor had deleted the data and that the data had not been shared any further.

The Head of Profession was made aware of the breach on Friday 12 July, as well as the Head of Schools Statistics.

3. Impact of the breach [\[guidance\]](#)

A total of 10 parties were sent the 2019 data prior to its publication – eight internal policy colleagues, one internal social researcher and one external contractor. It is thought that the impact is low as this data was only shared with one external contractor who had been instructed (prior to the breach being identified) to not share the data any wider and not include in any publication. The data was only used internally to monitor progress against targets.

There have been no press reports published as a result of this breach, and no complaints have been received.

4. Corrective actions (taken or planned) to prevent re-occurrence [\[guidance\]](#)

While the data was wrongfully shared over three weeks before publication, it would not be possible to bring forward the date of publication. This particular data item is a small part of a much larger collection of data on schools and pupils and the whole data set undergoes extensive validation for both National Statistics and financial purposes. The entire publication comprises of a first release and over 80 interactive tables published on our StatsWales website and is not usually ready for publication until the end of July each year.

Short-term actions

Since being notified of the release of this data prior to publication, the Population, Census and Welsh Language Statistics contacted all individuals that received the data for confirmation that all copies of the data had been destroyed and had not been shared any further.

Long-term actions

We will undertake a full review of the pre-release access arrangements for this data, to include:

- Restrict access to pre-release data solely for statisticians responsible for the production of the release and provide other members with access to a 'view' of published data.