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KEY DATES

DfE opens prior to census going 'live' and closes Friday 09 January 2026 (4pm)	<p><i>Optional. Department for Education (DfE) strongly recommended, if possible.</i></p> <p><i>COLLECT familiarisation test period: A 'beta' release is available for testing purposes only, via COLLECT, prior to the census going 'live', and will be removed in advance of the 'live' collection.</i></p>
Thursday 15 January 2026	Census Day
Tuesday 20 January 2026	Maintained schools & PRU deadline for submission to the Local Authority for validation via COLLECT .
Wednesday 11 February 2026	Maintained schools & PRU deadline for submission to be approved by the Local Authority via COLLECT .
Wednesday 11 February 2026	Academies and free schools deadline for validated and approved submission directly by the Department for Education (DfE) via COLLECT .

Note: Following approval and final DfE checks, all state-funded school submissions must receive a final DfE 'authorised' status.

SCHOOLS INCLUDED:

The school census collects individual school characteristics and pupil records, 3 times a year.

In England, all of the following schools are required to provide a return to DfE:

- maintained nursery, primary, middle-deemed primary, middle-deemed secondary, secondary, all-through, special schools (including non-maintained special schools), pupil referral units / alternative provision (PRU / AP), academies (including free schools, university technical colleges (UTCs) and studio schools) and city technology colleges (CTCs).

PUPILS TO BE INCLUDED:

- all pupils on the register on census day
- any additional pupils subject to a suspension or permanent exclusion in previous 2 terms
- any additional pupils who attended the school in the previous term for which termly attendance information is required - not for nursery schools
- any additional pupils who had an alternative provision (AP) placement within the collection period (since the last census day), not applicable for nursery schools
- any additional pupils who were recorded as in receipt of learner funding and monitoring since the start of the academic year – not applicable to nursery schools
- any additional pupils awarded a bursary since the start of the academic year – not applicable to nursery, primary and middle schools

FUNDING AND THE IMPORTANCE OF SCHOOL CENSUS

The spring school census will be used to fund the early year's block of the dedicated schools grant as well as pupil premium (for pupil referral units and alternative provision academies and free schools) and universal infant school meals.

The school census is the DfE's primary source of administrative data about pupils attending schools in England.

KEY CENSUS DATA ITEM COLLECTION PERIODS

Item	Period
Term dates	2026-01-01 to Easter Sunday 2026-04-05
Free school meal eligibility	Periods of eligibility for free school meals with: (a) An FSM eligibility start date and no FSM eligibility end date; or, (b) An FSM eligibility end date since the previous census, that is, on or after 2025-10-03 and up to including the spring census day (2026-01-15)
Learner Funding and Monitoring (FAM) entity	Any Learner FAM assigned, where applicable since the beginning of the 2025 to 2026 academic year (from 2025-08-01) to students who are either on roll or off roll on census day (2026-01-15). Learner FAM new codes of EMH and MMH are not collected in Spring Term.
Termly suspensions and permanent exclusions	Easter Monday 2025-04-21 to 2025-12-31
Termly attendance	Start of the autumn term (from 2025-08-01) to 2025-12-31
Alternative provision (AP) placement module	any current (open) AP placements and any previous placements where the pupil has already left an AP placement between: 2025-10-02 to 2026-01-14 inclusive
Learner support (bursary funding for 16 to 19 year olds)	Any 16 to 19 bursaries awarded since the beginning of the 2025 to 2026 academic year (from 2025-08-01) to students who are either on roll or off roll on census day of 2026-01-15

More school census data items information is at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complete-the-school-census/data-items-2025-to-2026>.

NEW, CHANGED & DELETED DATA ITEMS for SPRING 2026

1) New data items:

Item	Description
None	

2) Existing data items:

Item	Description
None	

3) Deleted data items:

Item	Description
None	

More information about data item changes for the whole of the academic year 2025 to 2026 is at

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complete-the-school-census/changes-for-2025-to-2026>.

EARLY YEARS DATA FOR SPRING 2026

The table below clarifies the early years data requirements for School Census Spring 2026.

Data item	Description												
Funded universal entitlement hours	<p>Funded early years entitlement hours are collected for eligible pupils aged 2, 3 and 4 years in nursery provision. The total number of free entitlement to early education hours spent in education provision at the school (following the learning and development requirements of the early years foundation stage) are recorded.</p> <p>All children become eligible for funded early education from the term following their 3rd birthday, irrespective of background or family circumstances (the 3- and 4-year-old universal entitlement).</p> <p>A specified subset of disadvantaged 2-year-olds also becomes eligible from the term following their second birthday. Local authorities will confirm which 2-year-old children meet the eligibility criteria if schools do not know.</p> <p>Note, in some circumstances, 2-year-olds may be eligible for both the 15-hour entitlement for disadvantaged 2-year-olds and the expanded entitlement. In those circumstances, parents must use the disadvantaged entitlement first, then the working parent entitlement up to a maximum of 30 hours in total. For example, a parent eligible for both entitlements and using 25 hours of provision would record 15 hours of disadvantaged entitlement and 10 hours of the working parent entitlement.</p> <p>The table shows the dates of birth and year groups of children for whom funded entitlement hours are required. Where a child falls into the cohorts listed below but is not in receipt of any funding via the funded early education entitlements, a value of zero is recorded for funded entitlement hours.</p> <p>The DfE will fund local authorities for the early years entitlements using data collected via the January censuses.</p> <p>Funded entitlement hours contain only the hours the pupil is in education provision and following the learning and development requirements of the early years foundation stage. Such education will follow the DfE statutory guidance for local authorities on early education and childcare. It excludes any hours where the pupil is not receiving education and any additional hours that are funded by other means (such as the parent).</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Census</th><th>Date of birth ranges, school type and pupil national curriculum year group</th><th>Maximum funded entitlement hours</th></tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Spring 2026</td><td>2-year-olds born between 2023-01-01 and 2023-12-31 (inclusive) – all relevant schools and year groups</td><td>15 hours</td></tr> <tr> <td>Spring 2026</td><td>3-year-olds born between 2021-09-01 and 2022-12-31 (inclusive) – all relevant schools and year groups</td><td>15 hours</td></tr> <tr> <td>Spring 2026</td><td>4-year-olds born between 2021-01-01 and 2021-08-31 (inclusive) for pupils in national curriculum year groups 'E1', 'E2', 'N1' and 'N2' only</td><td>15 hours</td></tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Pupils aged 4 at the start of the academic year in 'reception' and above are funded as full-time equivalent pupils via the schools block of the dedicated schools grant. Therefore, funded entitlement hours are not relevant or required for those pupils, as they are not funded via the early years block.</p> <p>For dual-registered pupils, record the funded entitlement hours spent in education at each school. The main registration records funded hours in education at the main registration, with the subsidiary recording funded hours in education at the subsidiary registration.</p> <p>It is important that the funded entitlement hours recorded on the census accurately reflect the hours at the setting to 2 decimal places. For example, where a pupil has:</p> <p>10 and a half hours, this is recorded as 10.50</p> <p>10 hours and 20 minutes, this is recorded as 10.33.</p>	Census	Date of birth ranges, school type and pupil national curriculum year group	Maximum funded entitlement hours	Spring 2026	2-year-olds born between 2023-01-01 and 2023-12-31 (inclusive) – all relevant schools and year groups	15 hours	Spring 2026	3-year-olds born between 2021-09-01 and 2022-12-31 (inclusive) – all relevant schools and year groups	15 hours	Spring 2026	4-year-olds born between 2021-01-01 and 2021-08-31 (inclusive) for pupils in national curriculum year groups 'E1', 'E2', 'N1' and 'N2' only	15 hours
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Funded extended entitlement hours	<p>Extended funded entitlement hours are collected for 3- and 4-year-old children with working parents who are in education provision (that is, following the learning and development requirements of the early years foundation stage) at the school and on roll on census day.</p> <p>As with the funded entitlement hours, extended funded entitlement hours become available – where the parent has an eligibility code – from the term following a child's 3rd birthday until they reach compulsory school age (the term following their 5th birthday).</p> <p>Extended funded entitlement hours are available for pupils aged 3 and those pupils aged 4 who are in year groups 'E1', 'E2', 'N1' or 'N2' only.</p> <p>Pupils who are in 'reception' (or above) are not recorded as receiving the extended funded entitlement as they are in full-time education.</p> <p>As with funded entitlement hours, extended funded entitlement hours are recorded to 2 decimal places.</p> <p>The extended funded entitlement hours field must not include any funded universal entitlement hours.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Census</th><th>Date of birth ranges, school type and pupil national curriculum year group</th><th>Maximum funded extended entitlement hours</th></tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Spring 2026</td><td>3-year-olds born between 2021-09-01 and 2022-12-31 (inclusive) with an eligibility code – all relevant schools and year groups</td><td>15 funded universal free entitlement hours + 15 extended free entitlement hours equals 30 hours</td></tr> <tr> <td>Spring 2026</td><td>4-year-olds born between 2021-01-01 and 2021-08-31 (inclusive) with an eligibility code – for pupils in national curriculum year groups 'E1', 'E2', 'N1' and 'N2' only</td><td>15 funded universal free entitlement hours + 15 extended free entitlement hours equals 30 hours</td></tr> </tbody> </table>	Census	Date of birth ranges, school type and pupil national curriculum year group	Maximum funded extended entitlement hours	Spring 2026	3-year-olds born between 2021-09-01 and 2022-12-31 (inclusive) with an eligibility code – all relevant schools and year groups	15 funded universal free entitlement hours + 15 extended free entitlement hours equals 30 hours	Spring 2026	4-year-olds born between 2021-01-01 and 2021-08-31 (inclusive) with an eligibility code – for pupils in national curriculum year groups 'E1', 'E2', 'N1' and 'N2' only	15 funded universal free entitlement hours + 15 extended free entitlement hours equals 30 hours
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Funded expanded entitlement hours	<p>Expanded funded entitlement hours are collected for 9-month-olds to 2-year-olds with working parents (where the parent has an eligibility code), who are in education provision (that is, following the learning and development requirements of the early years foundation stage) at the school and on roll on census day.</p> <p>Note, in some circumstances, 2-year-olds may be eligible for both the 15-hour entitlement for disadvantaged 2-year-olds and the expanded entitlement. In those circumstances, parents must use the disadvantaged entitlement first, then the working parent entitlement (up to a maximum of 30 hours) in total. For example, a parent eligible for both entitlements and using 25 hours of provision would record 15 hours of disadvantaged entitlement and 10 hours of the working parent entitlement.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Census</th><th>Date of birth ranges, school type and pupil national curriculum year group</th><th>Maximum funded expanded entitlement hours</th></tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Spring 2026</td><td>9-month-olds to one-year-olds born between 2024-01-01 and 2025-03-31 (inclusive) with an eligibility code – all relevant schools and year groups</td><td>30 hours</td></tr> <tr> <td>Spring 2026</td><td>2-year-olds born between 2023-01-01 and 2023-12-31 (inclusive) with an eligibility code – all relevant schools and year groups</td><td>30 hours</td></tr> </tbody> </table> <p>As with funded and extended entitlement hours, expanded funded entitlement hours are recorded to 2 decimal places.</p> <p>The expanded funded entitlement hours field must not include any funded universal entitlement hours or any extended entitlement hours.</p>	Census	Date of birth ranges, school type and pupil national curriculum year group	Maximum funded expanded entitlement hours	Spring 2026	9-month-olds to one-year-olds born between 2024-01-01 and 2025-03-31 (inclusive) with an eligibility code – all relevant schools and year groups	30 hours	Spring 2026	2-year-olds born between 2023-01-01 and 2023-12-31 (inclusive) with an eligibility code – all relevant schools and year groups	30 hours
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Stretched funded universal, extended or expanded entitlement	<p>All cases of funded universal or extended entitlement should be recorded as 38 weeks, regardless of whether they are stretched or not. Part-time equivalent (PTE) will be calculated as funded universal or extended entitlement hours during census week divided by 15.</p> <p>This means that you may need to convert funded universal or extended entitlement back to a term-time only basis for the purposes of making a school census return.</p>									

	<p>Where a child takes the full funded universal or extended entitlement (570 hours for each entitlement), this should be reported as 15 funded universal hours, extended hours or expanded hours irrespective of how many weeks of the year over which the entitlement is spread.</p> <p>However, where a child takes only part of the funded universal or extended entitlement a conversion is required to calculate how many hours they take over the year.</p> <p>For example, a child takes 11 hours a week over 45 weeks in the year, totalling 495 hours. To convert the funded universal or extended entitlement to the number of hours a child would attend each week if they were taking it over 38 weeks, divide 495 by 38 to get 13.03 hours.</p> <p>The full funded universal or extended entitlement is 570 hrs (15 hrs x 38 weeks). Therefore, this child is taking 0.87 PTE (495/570) and will be funded at 0.87 PTE.</p> <p>The DfE will make no further adjustments to the funded universal or extended entitlement.</p>								
Eligibility code	<p>The eligibility code indicator is an 11-digit integer that is required for pupils who claim extended or expanded funded entitlement hours. This applies to all eligible 9-month-olds to 3-year-olds and those pupils aged 4 in year groups 'E1', 'E2', 'N1' and 'N2' only, who are on roll on census day. The code confirms the eligibility of working parents to receive the 15 extended funded entitlement hours, or the 30 expanded funded entitlement hours. This is particularly important as parents may split this entitlement between 2 providers.</p> <p>The code (not including temporary codes), once issued, remains fixed and refers to a single parent and child combination - where a parent has 2 children, each child will have their own code. However, when the school is presented with the code by the parent, the school must confirm the code's validity with their local authority.</p> <p>Foster children are eligible for the extended or expanded funded childcare in certain circumstances. If eligible, the eligibility code indicator will be issued by the local authority to the foster parents. Schools will still check the code in the same way as for any other parent.</p>								
Hours at setting	<p>Hours at setting are collected for the same pupils and schools for whom funded entitlement hours are collected.</p> <p>This data item records, for pupils aged from 9 months to 4 years old, the total number of hours they spent in education provision (that is, following the learning and development requirements of the early years foundation stage) at the school irrespective of who funded the hours. It is the total of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> any hours funded under the free early education entitlements plus, any hours funded under extended funded entitlement (for working parents) plus, any hours funded under expanded funded entitlement (for working parents) plus, any additional hours of education funded from other sources such as parents <p>This information enables the DfE to monitor the hours attended at state-funded settings on the same basis as private, voluntary and independent provision.</p> <p>For dual-registered pupils, record the actual hours attending each school. The main registration records the hours in education at the main registration. The subsidiary registration records the hours in education at the subsidiary registration.</p> <p>Hours at setting records the hours in education to 2 decimal places. Where a pupil has 10 and a half-hours, for example, this is recorded as 10.50, with 10 and three-quarter hours being 10.75.</p>								
2-year-old basis for funding	<p>The DfE collect the basis under which a 2-year-old has been funded whilst taking up a place in the school. This is not required for 2-year-olds taking up the expanded entitlement hours.</p> <p>You can enter more than one code if needed. Since 1 September 2022, the funded early years entitlement for 2-year-olds was extended to children from all groups with no recourse to public funds (NRPF). The basis for funding for these children should be recorded as 'ECO - economic criteria'. Further information on 2-year-old eligibility criteria is available.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Code</th> <th>Description</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>ECO</td> <td>Economic criteria</td> </tr> <tr> <td>HSD</td> <td>High-level SEN or disability</td> </tr> <tr> <td>LAA</td> <td>Looked after or adopted from care</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Code	Description	ECO	Economic criteria	HSD	High-level SEN or disability	LAA	Looked after or adopted from care
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Disability access fund indicator	<p>The disability access fund (DAF) indicator records whether a child aged from 9 months to 4 years old is in receipt of DAF from the local authority. Receipt of this funding entitles the child to a fixed amount of funding per year from the disability access fund, which is paid direct to the establishment.</p> <p>To be eligible for DAF, the child must be in receipt of disability living allowance (DLA) and one of the early years entitlements.</p> <p>Pupils who are aged 4 as at the 31 August in reception and above, who are funded via the schools' block of the dedicated schools grant, are not eligible for DAF funding. Further information on the DAF is available in the early years national funding formula operational guidance.</p> <p>The DAF indicator should only be returned for eligible children within the date of birth range and year groups outlined who are on roll on census day.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Census</th><th>Date of birth ranges, school type and pupil national curriculum year group</th></tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Spring 2026</td><td>9-month-olds to one-year-olds born between 2024-01-01 and 2025-03-31 (inclusive) - all relevant schools and year groups</td></tr> <tr> <td>Spring 2026</td><td>2-year-olds born between 2023-01-01 and 2023-12-31 (inclusive) - all relevant schools and year groups</td></tr> <tr> <td>Spring 2026</td><td>3-year-olds born between 2021-09-01 and 2022-12-31 (inclusive) - all relevant schools and year groups</td></tr> <tr> <td>Spring 2026</td><td>4-year-olds born between 2021-01-01 and 2021-08-31 (inclusive) - for pupils in national curriculum year groups 'E1', 'E2', 'N1' and 'N2' only</td></tr> </tbody> </table> <p>This indicator should default to '0' or 'false' to require a positive input from schools.</p>	Census	Date of birth ranges, school type and pupil national curriculum year group	Spring 2026	9-month-olds to one-year-olds born between 2024-01-01 and 2025-03-31 (inclusive) - all relevant schools and year groups	Spring 2026	2-year-olds born between 2023-01-01 and 2023-12-31 (inclusive) - all relevant schools and year groups	Spring 2026	3-year-olds born between 2021-09-01 and 2022-12-31 (inclusive) - all relevant schools and year groups	Spring 2026	4-year-olds born between 2021-01-01 and 2021-08-31 (inclusive) - for pupils in national curriculum year groups 'E1', 'E2', 'N1' and 'N2' only
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Early years pupil premium	<p>The early years pupil premium (EYPP) is additional funding for early years settings to improve the education they provide for disadvantaged 9-month-olds to 1-year-olds, 2-year-olds, 3-year-olds and 4-year-olds in 'E1', 'E2', 'N1' and 'N2' only.</p> <p>Disadvantaged pupils taking the 15 hours expanded entitlement for working parents will become eligible to receive early years pupil premium from the term following the child turning 9 months old.</p> <p>Disadvantaged pupils taking the 15 hours funded entitlement for disadvantaged 2-year-olds will become eligible to receive early years pupil premium from the term following their 2nd birthday.</p> <p>Disadvantaged pupils taking the universal 15 hours funded entitlement will become eligible to receive early years pupil premium from the term following their 3rd birthday.</p> <p>They will retain this entitlement until they move from nursery ('N1' and 'N2') class into reception ('R'), when they become eligible to receive the 'mainstream' pupil premium.</p> <p>Children in receipt of EYPP in census week should be recorded with early years pupil premium receipt equal to 'true'.</p> <p>EYPP is paid by local authorities direct to settings. Its award is dependent on the application by parents of eligible children to their local authority, which will use the eligibility checking service to verify their application against benefits-related data.</p> <p>Children are eligible to receive EYPP if they are taking any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • universal funded entitlement for 3- and 4-year-olds • disadvantaged entitlement for 2-year-olds • expanded entitlement for 9-month-olds to 2-year-olds <p>They must also either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • meet benefits-related criteria equivalent to those for free school meals (receipt of free school meals does not automatically qualify a child for EYPP) • be in the care of the local authority (in England or Wales) • have left care (in England or Wales) through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adoption • special guardianship 										

- a child arrangements order (formerly known as a residence order)

The DfE will use this data, collected via the spring census, to determine the early years pupil premium allocation for local authorities to fund their early years providers.

EYPP is not payable on the extended entitlement for 3 and 4-year-old children of working parents.

This table shows the cohorts of children for whom early years pupil premium data is required.

Census	Age	Date of birth ranges	Code	Early years pupil premium basis for funding
Spring 2026	9-month-olds to one-year-olds	Born between 2024-01-01 and 2025-03-31 (inclusive)	RE	In receipt through eligibility for economic reasons: where they are in receipt via eligibility for the benefits related criteria for FSM
Spring 2026	2-year-olds	Born between 2023-01-01 and 2023-12-31 (inclusive)	RO	In receipt through eligibility for other reasons: where they are in receipt due to eligibility for being in care or due to leaving care through adoption, a special guardianship order or a child arrangement order
Spring 2026	3-year-olds	Born between 2021-09-01 and 2022-12-31 (inclusive)	RB	In receipt through eligibility for both reasons: where they are in receipt through eligibility for both economic and other reasons
Spring 2026	4-year-olds – for schools not equal to phase 'NS': pupils in 'E1', 'E2', 'N1' or 'N2' only	Born between 2021-01-01 and 2021-08-31 (inclusive)	RU	In receipt through eligibility for unknown basis: where the school knows the child is in receipt of EYPP (due to receiving funding from the local authority) but does not necessarily know the reason why

More information about these data items is at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complete-the-school-census/data-items-2025-to-2026>.

CLASS INFORMATION FOR SPRING 2026

The DfE need details of all classes running at the selected time on spring census day. The 'selected time' is based on the last digit of a school's departmental establishment number.

Please note that as at 07/01/2026 the Department for Education (DfE) has confirmed that the 'selected time' table previously shown in the school census guidance and the technical specification was incorrect. The DfE have updated their guidance and software suppliers have been informed.

The correct 'selected time' information is:

Last digit of your departmental number	Selected time
0, 1 or 5	the selected time is one hour after the start of morning school
2, 3 or 6	the selected time is one hour before the end of morning school
4, 7, 8 or 9	the selected time is one hour after the start of afternoon school

More information is at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complete-the-school-census/data-items-2025-to-2026>.

'DRY RUN' & TESTING

Schools should take the opportunity to do a 'dry run' of their school census return from the school management information system (MIS). The purpose of a dry run is to provide details about any corrections that need to be made to your data to make it acceptable for inclusion. So that you are aware of any potential issues, it is advisable to do this as early as possible, even if you know that your data has not yet been fully prepared or checked. Contact your management information system (MIS) Support Provider for any procedural guidance to facilitate a dry run.

GENERATING MIS RETURN

All relevant pupil data has been entered and updated in your management information system (MIS) before the school census return is created.

Your MIS will have validation which will help you to identify and correct errors in your data before you generate your return. Follow your MIS support provider instructions to create, validate and authorise the return.

Schools should contact their MIS support provider for specific guidance on generating and validating the return.

AUTHORISING MIS RETURN

Your MIS will automatically generate a summary of the data in the school census return that will:

- allow you to check that the data is accurate and complete before sending it to the Headteacher; and
- allow the Headteacher authorising the return to check it is accurate and complete before submitting it to the local authority or DfE.

There should be a Headteacher sign-off process within each school. The Headteacher is responsible for reviewing and authorising census data before it is submitted.

SUBMITTING MIS RETURN TO COLLECT

Maintained schools including pupil referral units submit data to the Local Authority using COLLECT for further validation and approval before being submitted for DfE authorisation. Academies and Free schools submit data directly to the DfE using COLLECT for DfE approval and authorisation.

To use COLLECT to submit your school census data, you will need to log in via DfE Sign-in <https://services.signin.education.gov.uk>. Contact your school approver, if you want to request a DfE sign-in username or password so you can access COLLECT.

DfE Sign-in

DfE Sign-in is how schools and other education organisations access DfE online services.

To access your DfE online services, you'll either need:

- **an existing DfE Sign-in account.** This will be the email address and password you created when you first accessed DfE Sign-in.
- **to create a DfE Sign-in account.** If you haven't used DfE Sign-in before you'll need to [create a DfE Sign-in account](#).

[Start now >](#)

Sign in with username and password

Department for Education Sign-in

Sign-in to access DfE online services.

Email address

Password

 Show

[Forgotten your password?](#)

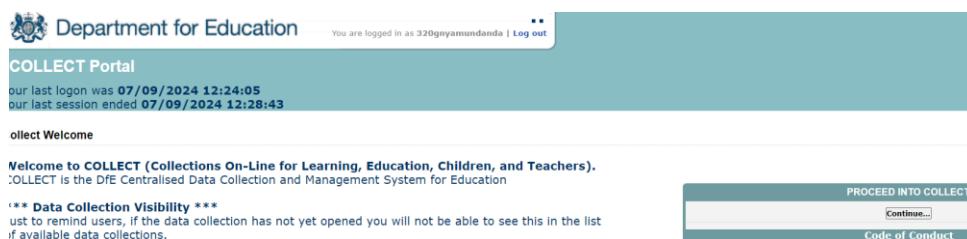
By signing in you accept [DfE Sign-in terms and conditions](#).

[Sign in](#) [Create account](#)

Select 'Collect'

[Collect](#) COLLECT (Collections Online: Learners, Education, Children and Teachers) allows users to see and submit data collections and censuses to the Department for Education.

Click 'Continue'



Department for Education

COLLECT Portal

Welcome to COLLECT (Collections On-Line for Learning, Education, Children, and Teachers). COLLECT is the DfE Centralised Data Collection and Management System for Education

*** Data Collection Visibility ***

use to remind users, if the data collection has not yet opened you will not be able to see this in the list if available data collections.

PROCEED INTO COLLECT

Continue...

Code of Conduct

Select relevant School Census collection, and select 'Select Data Collection'



Select Data Collection

Select 'Upload Return from file', browse local computer and select XML school census return.



What can I do with My Data Return?

Upload Return from file... Press this button to Import a file into your data return

Follow on screen instructions to upload return.

COLLECT: FAMILIARISATION

A ‘beta’ release of the 2026 spring school census will be available via [COLLECT](#) prior to the census going ‘live’ for testing purposes. Once the familiarisation period is over the COLLECT blade will be removed and cleared out in advance of the start of the live collection on Thursday 15 January 2026.

The Department for Education (DfE) and Local Authority strongly recommend that, if possible, all schools take the opportunity to upload a ‘test’ census XML return from the school management information system (MIS) into COLLECT during the familiarisation process. This will allow schools to check that all the required data is being output correctly from their MIS into the census return and whether any validation errors or queries are generated against their data when loaded into COLLECT which need to be resolved before the collection goes live. This will be especially important for any schools completing the school census for the first time. Please note that some COLLECT checks require reference data which is not yet in place so may trigger incorrectly – this will be in place in time for ‘go live’ so genuine errors will remain at that point.

COLLECT familiarisation will take place on the same system as the ‘live’ collection. A DfE schools guide for using COLLECT is at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/collect-guides-for-schools-and-local-authorities>.

COLLECT: RESOLVING ERRORS & QUERIES

Once the return is uploaded, the status screen indicates the status of the return; as well as any DfE COLLECT errors or queries present in the return following system validation.



The status of your data return : Approved
Errors : 2 Queries : 5 OK Errors : 0

What can I do with My Data Return?

- Upload Return from file... Press this button to Import a file into your data return
- Add Return on screen... Press this button to Add a new return using a web form
- Open Return...** Press this button to Open your data return
- Submit Return... Press this button to Submit your completed data return
- Export to file... Press this button to Export your data return to a file
- Launch Reports... Press this button to Report on your data return
- Delete Return... Press this button to Delete your data return

To view the errors or queries, click on “Open Return”, and click the ‘All Errors’ button.



All Errors

Rule No.	Return Level	Error Message	Priority
2190Q	Y	Please check: Percentage of pupils in school with EHC plans seems high (greater than 10%)	Queries
1877Q	Y	Take up of school lunches for pupils in reception, year 1 and year 2 (plus pupils aged 4 to 6 in year X) greater than 95%. Please confirm more than 95% of infant pupils took a school lunch on census day	Queries
4007Q	Y	Please check: no pupils on roll are in receipt of National Tutoring Programme (NTP)	Queries
4015Q	Y	Please check: no School Arranged Alternative Provision (AP) placements have been provided	Queries

Page 1 of 1

- Errors must be resolved by amending the MIS return and resubmitting to COLLECT.
- Checked and ok’d queries can remain if you add an explanatory COLLECT return-level note for each one using the DfE list of acceptable notepad entries which can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complete-the-school-census/check-your-data> (section ‘Adding explanation notes for queries’).

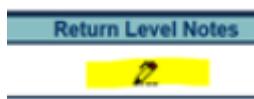
COLLECT: RETURN LEVEL NOTEPAD ENTRIES FOR OK'D QUERIES

Checked and ok'd queries can remain if you add an explanatory COLLECT return-level note for each one using the DfE list of acceptable notepad entries which can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complete-the-school-census/check-your-data> (section 'Adding explanation notes for queries').

To create a return level note select 'Open Return'.



Once you have opened the return click on the pencil icon underneath "Return Level Notes" (all query notes needed to be added at return level, even if the query itself relates to an individual):



If you already have other notes on your return the icon will look like this:

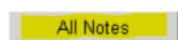


Once you are on the notes page click on the "Add New Note" button



- It is acceptable to return a separate notepad entry for each query; or one notepad entry for numerous queries i.e. start a separate line for each query.
- You can now type in the note you want to add. Begin the note with the query number. When you have completed your note, making sure to use the exact notepad entry advised by the DfE list of acceptable notepad entries. For example "2190Q: *confirmed as correct*".
- If the DfE list of acceptable notepad entries states that a reason must be provided, do not return 'confirmed', 'correct', 'data is correct' etc. This would be an insufficient notepad entry and the DfE will be unable to process the return to 'authorised' stage.
- Where multiples of the same query occur, and the reason is the same for each one, use the "X" and number alongside the query number. For example: "5240Q X2 - *Though the pupil attends school for 25 hours or more, they do not attend the school for 10 sessions a week.*"

To view all the notes you have added, click on "All Notes".



COLLECT: REPORTS USED FOR FUNDING – DFE VALIDATION QUERY

There are a number of reports in COLLECT that you should use to check your data.

All relevant reports for your school phase or type should be run and checked.

The Department for Education (DfE) school census has a validation query to check that your school has run all relevant reports. Schools with this COLLECT validation query should run the reports although this query will not prevent the return from being 'authorised'.

A list of COLLECT reports is outlined below:

Report	Description
Pupil number report	This provides a headcount of your pupils by national curriculum year group, the headcount of your pupils minus subsidiary registrations and the number of pupils that will be used in numerous funding streams and therefore will account for funded and extended hours and unresolved duplicate UPNs.
Free school meals (FSM) report	Allows schools to check the FSM eligibility data submitted in their census return. This report only refers to FSM eligibility reported in the current census and not the FSM ever measure used to allocate the pupil premium.
Universal infant free school meals	Provides a breakdown of the infant pupils that the DfE will use in the universal infant FSM funding calculation.
Pupil premium	Allows schools to check and verify the data in their spring school census, which will feed into the deprivation, service child and post looked-after children report elements of the pupil premium allocation.
Early years pupil premium	Allows schools to check and verify the data in the census, which the DfE use for the early years pupil premium allocations.
Learner funding and monitoring (FAM)	Allows schools to check and verify the data returned in each termly census on pupils in receipt of specific elements of the education recovery package.
Zero funded hours	Highlights the number of early years pupils who have 'zero' funded hours recorded on the school census return. The DfE use funded hours to calculate the early years block of the dedicated schools grant.

More information about these reports is at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complete-the-school-census/check-your-data>.

COLLECT: REPORTS USED FOR RESOLVING DUPLICATE RECORDS – DFE VALIDATION ERROR

Two COLLECT reports identify duplicate records in the census return, as outlined in the table below:

Report	Description
Duplicate report: Same UPN	A duplicate UPN is one where more than one pupil registration shares the same UPN and the registrations sharing the UPN have an invalid combination of enrolment statuses. Unresolved duplicates will impact on funding allocations such as the dedicated schools grant and pupil premium.

Duplicate report: Same Person Different UPN	Includes all cases where there appears to be duplication of a pupil based on the characteristics - for example, surname, forename, middle name, date of birth and gender - but where different UPNs are present.
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More information about these reports is at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complete-the-school-census/check-your-data>.

COLLECT validation error (DupUPNRprt)

The Department for Education (DfE) school census has a COLLECT validation error (DupUPNRprt) that will trigger if the COLLECT return has unresolved duplicates which impact funding allocations.

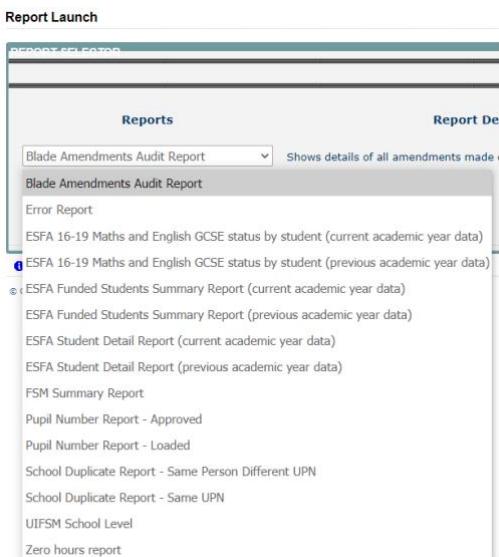
The return will not be authorised by the DfE until all errors are resolved. Please note if the return has been previously authorised and a duplicate UPN is introduced at any point during the 'live' collection the return status will revert to 'approved' i.e. not DfE authorised.

COLLECT: VIEWING & DOWNLOADING REPORTS

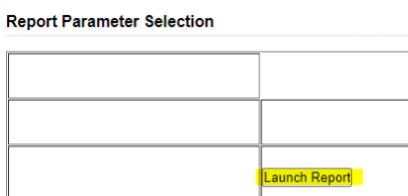
To run these reports

Launch Reports...

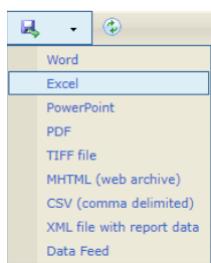
You will then see a page where you can launch a number of different reports, with a brief description of what each report shows. Just select the report you want from the drop-down menu and then click the launch button.



You may then see a second report parameters screen where you will need to click launch report again:



You can view the report in browser and page back and forth using the arrow buttons. Or you can export the report in a variety of different formats:



WHO TO CONTACT?

Contact	Support
Business Intelligence Team E-mail: edu.performance@walthamforest.gov.uk	School Census data collection and return queries. Note: Maintained schools make returns directly to the Local Authority and should contact them regarding any matters to do with the data submitted.
Department for Education (DfE) Service Request: https://form.education.gov.uk/service/Data-collections-service-request-form	School Census data collection and return queries. Note: Academies/free schools make returns directly to the DfE and should contact them regarding any matters to do with the data submitted.
Management information systems (MIS) support provider	For specific training and guidance about producing the CTF/XML return. Here are links to SIMS , Arbor and ScholarPack MIS guidance.

SPRING 2026 SCHOOL CENSUS – PREPARATION CHECKLIST

The checklist below indicates some of the tasks to undertake to prepare for the school census.

Your MIS Support Provider may provide a more specific procedural list of tasks that you should follow.

More information about school census data items is at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complete-the-school-census/data-items-2025-to-2026>.

Description of task	Completed
Check with your System Administrator/Manager that you have the appropriate permissions to run the Census and record associated data	<input type="checkbox"/>
Carry out a dry run to determine what information needs to be updated	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check school-level information:	
Check establishment details	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check the school telephone number and email address	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check the school's support unit	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check school childcare information	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check Special school information SP	<input type="checkbox"/>
Collate admission appeals information P S AT Applicable to Foundation, Voluntary Aided schools and Academies only	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check pupil/students' various registration details:	
Update information using the bulk update routine	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check that leavers and re-admissions have been recorded	<input type="checkbox"/>
Remove any pupil/student records entered in error	<input type="checkbox"/>

Key:

N Nursery schools
SP Special schools

P Primary schools
AT All-Through schools

S Secondary schools
PRU Pupil Referral Units

Description of task	Completed
Check pupil/students' basic details (e.g. name, date of birth, gender, etc)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check pupil/students' registration details (e.g. enrolment status, admission date, year taught in, UPN, part-time information, Alternative Provision Placement, etc)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check and correct their National Curriculum year group	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check pupil/students' home address information	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check pupil/students' eligibility for free school meals	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check pupil/students' ethnic and cultural information	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check additional information	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check welfare information P S SP AT PRU	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check Special Educational Needs information	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check exclusions information P S SP AT PRU	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check class type information P AT	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check attendance data P S SP AT PRU	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check Universal Infant School Meals P SP AT Applicable to schools with pupils in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check Early Years information N P SP AT PRU Applicable to schools with Early Years children	<input type="checkbox"/>
Check top-up funding information	<input type="checkbox"/>

Key:

N Nursery schools **P** Primary schools **S** Secondary schools
SP Special schools **AT** All-Through schools **PRU** Pupil Referral Units

Description of task	Completed
Check pupil/student's post-looked-after arrangements	<input type="checkbox"/>
Update funding and monitoring details as required by the DfE P S SP AT PRU	<input type="checkbox"/>

Key:

N Nursery schools
 P Primary schools
 S Secondary schools
SP Special schools
 AT All-Through schools
 PRU Pupil Referral Units