

Contents

KEY DATES.....	2
SCHOOLS INCLUDED	2
PUPILS TO BE INCLUDED.....	2
FUNDING AND THE IMPORTANCE OF SCHOOL CENSUS.....	2
KEY CENSUS DATA ITEM COLLECTION PERIODS	3
NEW, CHANGED & DELETED DATA ITEMS FOR AUTUMN 2026	4
FREE SCHOOL MEAL ELIGIBILITY (NEW DATA ITEMS).....	5
EARLY YEARS DATA FOR AUTUMN 2026	11
SUSPENSION AND PERMANENT EXCLUSION INFORMATION (NEW DATA ITEMS).....	18
KINSHIP CARE INDICATOR (NEW DATA ITEM) [NOT FOR: NURSERY SCHOOLS].....	20
FREE BREAKFAST CLUB ATTENDANCE MODULE (NEW DATA ITEMS)	22
MANAGED MOVES (NEW DATA ITEMS)	24
‘DRY RUN’ & TESTING	25
GENERATING MIS RETURN	25
AUTHORISING MIS RETURN.....	25
SUBMITTING MIS RETURN TO COLLECT	25
COLLECT: FAMILIARISATION	27
COLLECT: RESOLVING ERRORS & QUERIES.....	27
COLLECT: RETURN LEVEL NOTEPAD ENTRIES FOR OK'D QUERIES	28
COLLECT: REPORTS USED FOR FUNDING – DFE VALIDATION QUERY	29
COLLECT: REPORTS USED FOR RESOLVING DUPLICATE RECORDS – DFE VALIDATION ERROR	29
COLLECT: REPORTS NOT RUN VALIDATION QUERY ('Reports').....	30
COLLECT: VIEWING & DOWNLOADING REPORTS.....	30
WHO TO CONTACT?.....	31
AUTUMN 2026 SCHOOL CENSUS – PREPARATION CHECKLIST.....	32

KEY DATES

Normally DfE makes available approximately 4 weeks prior to the collection going 'live'. Ends 25/09/2026 (4pm)	<i>Optional. Department for Education (DfE) strongly recommended, if possible.</i> <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>
Thursday 1 October 2026	Census Day
Tuesday 6 October 2026	Maintained schools & PRU deadline for submission to the Local Authority for validation via COLLECT .
Wednesday 28 October 2026	Maintained schools & PRU deadline for submission to be approved by the Local Authority via COLLECT .
Wednesday 28 October 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 any type of suspension or permanent exclusion in the previous 2 terms.
- any additional pupils who attended the school in the previous term for which termly attendance information is required – not applicable to nursery schools.
- any additional pupils who attended the school in the previous academic year for which learning aims are submitted – autumn census for secondary, all-through and AP schools only.
- any additional pupils who had an alternative provision (AP) placement within the collection period (since the last census day) – not applicable to nursery schools.
- any additional pupils awarded a bursary since the start of the academic year – spring and summer census only, and not applicable to nursery, primary and middle 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.

FUNDING AND THE IMPORTANCE OF SCHOOL CENSUS

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	Start of the autumn term (from 2026-08-01) to 2026-12-31
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 2026-05-22 and up to and including the autumn census day (2026-10-01)
Learner Funding and Monitoring (FAM) entity	Any Learner FAM assigned, where applicable since the beginning of the 2026 to 2027 academic year (from 2026-08-01) to students who are either on roll or off roll on census day (2026-10-01) Learner FAM codes of EMH and MMH planned for the 2026 to 2027 academic year.
Managed Moves	Any pupil no longer on roll where a managed move occurred between 2026-08-01 to 2026-09-30 inclusive
Termly suspensions and permanent exclusions	2026-01-01 to 2026-07-31
Termly suspension and permanent exclusion cancellations	Recorded in systems but not collected until Spring 2027
Termly suspension and permanent exclusion reviews	Recorded in systems but not collected until Spring 2027
Breakfast Club attendance	For schools participating. Recorded in systems but not collected until Spring 2027
Termly attendance	First half of the summer term From Easter Monday 2026-04-06 to the Sunday 2026-05-24 before spring bank holiday
Summer second half term attendance	From spring bank holiday Monday 2026-05-25 to 2026-07-31
Alternative provision (AP) placement module	Any current (open) AP placements and Any previous placements where the pupil has already left an AP placement between: 2026-05-14 to 2026-09-30 inclusive
Post-16 learning aims	For the current academic year covering the period from 2026-08-01 to 2026-10-01 (inclusive) for pupils with a status of 'C' (current – single registration) or 'M' (current main – dual registration) who have been on roll and in actual national curriculum year group 12 or above For the previous academic year covering the period from 2025-08-01 to 2026-07-31 inclusive for pupils who were on roll at any point during this period in actual national curriculum year group 12 or above. Learning aims are only required for those pupils with a pupil status of 'C' (current – single registration) or 'M' (current main – dual registration) at the time of the learning aims

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

NEW, CHANGED & DELETED DATA ITEMS FOR AUTUMN 2026

1) New data items:

Item
• Data Item Reason for Cancellation (N00836) and associated code set CS132, has been created to record the reasons exclusions can be cancelled. • Data item N00837 has been created to record the last date FSM eligibility was checked. • Data item N00838 and associated Code set CS133, has been created to record the FSM Category set that applies to each pupil. • Data item N00839 and associated code set CS134, has been created to record pupils recorded as living in Kinship care. • Data item N00840 and associated code set CS135, has been created to record attendance at government-funded free breakfast clubs. • Data item N00841 has been created to record a managed move start date. • Data item N00842 has been created to record the destination school Name for a managed move. • Data item N00843 and associated code set CS136 has been created to record the reason for a managed move. • Data item N00844 has been created to record the reinstatement date following a cancelled exclusion. • Data Item N00855 has been created to record the number of possible breakfast club sessions for each pupil. • Data Item N00856 has been created to record the number of breakfast club sessions attended for each pupil. • Data Item N00857 and associated code set CS137 has been created to record the exclusion review category. Data items transferred from the APEX collection to School Census: • Review Date - (Date of Independent Review Panel) (N00650) • Exclusion Review Result – (N00651) and the linked code set CS105 (Exclusion Review Reason) has been updated. • Exclusion Reinstatement Date – (N00652) • SEN Expert Indicator – (N00653)

2) Existing data items:

Item
• For Data item N00685, N00686 and N00687 the linked Code Set CS010 (Exclusion Reason) has been updated. • Code set CS105 (Exclusion Review Reason) has been updated. • The UK country code for FSM period is now compulsory.

3) Discontinued items:

Item
• No items have been discontinued.

More information about data item changes is at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complete-the-school-census>.

FREE SCHOOL MEAL ELIGIBILITY (NEW DATA ITEMS)

Needed for on-roll pupils.

From the start of the 2026 to 2027 academic year, all pupils in households receiving Universal Credit (UC) will be eligible to receive a free school meal (FSM).

Schools should record [FSM eligibility](#) periods for pupils when:

- a claim has been made by them or on their behalf
- the relevant school or local authority has confirmed their eligibility

The [Education \(School Lunches\) \(Prescribed Requirements\) \(England\) Order 2003](#) describes an additional requirement for children below compulsory school age who receive education in a local authority maintained setting. These children must be registered pupils and receiving full-time education, or education both before and after lunch.

Children in an academy or free school nursery are also eligible if they meet these conditions.

Schools or local authorities do not need to calculate a family's annual taxable income. HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) make this income calculation, and this figure is used to determine FSM entitlement.

FSM eligibility will be split into 2 categories:

- [targeted FSM](#)
- [expanded FSM](#)

Pupils with FSM periods issued from another UK country (Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland) should be recorded as 'targeted FSM'.

For all FSM periods, the DfE will collect the following information:

- eligibility start date
- eligibility verification date
- eligibility end date – where applicable
- [country of UK](#) – unlike previous years, this data item must be returned
- eligibility [category](#)

Recording FSM eligibility

Keep the original FSM start date if a pupil's qualified for FSM before the autumn 2026 term and is reconfirmed as eligible under the 'targeted' category.

If a pupil moves from the targeted to the expanded category, you must close their targeted FSM period and record a new expanded FSM period, with the earliest start date of 1 August 2026.

If a pupil qualified for FSM before the autumn 2026 term but is no longer eligible for either category, you must record an end date for their targeted FSM period.

For new FSM claims under the expanded criteria, the earliest start date is 1 August 2026.

FSM eligibility verification date

This is the date the pupil's FSM eligibility was last verified.

From the start of the 2026 to 2027 academic year, you must check each pupil's eligibility, at least annually, before the October census, to receive funding.

For the 2026 to 27 academic year, all pupils need to have been rechecked on or after 1 June 2026. For the 'last verified date' to be valid, it must be between the following dates:

2026 autumn school census	The eligibility must be checked at any time between 2026-06-01 and 2026-10-01 (inclusive)
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For new claims the verification date may be the same date as the FSM start date.

Without a valid verification date, pupils will not be counted as eligible, which will result in a loss of funding for schools.

Recording eligibility outcomes

If verification confirms that a pupil is FSM eligible – the school should record the autumn school census day as the FSM eligibility verification date.

If the latest verification indicates that the pupil is no longer eligible for FSM – the FSM period should be returned, with the FSM category of ‘targeted’ and an FSM end date of 2026-07-31.

If the latest verification indicates that eligibility status has moved from targeted to the expanded category – schools should return the closed targeted FSM period and a new expanded FSM period must be recorded, with the earliest start date of 1 August 2026.

Schools should retain any evidence of eligibility for audit purposes. [More information on FSM](#) is available.

Collection periods

Term	Collection period
2026 autumn school census	started on or before 2026-10-01, where the FSM end date is either not present or between 2026-05-22 and 2026-10-01 (inclusive)

Where schools have FSM eligibility flagged for a pupil in their systems, they must ensure their systems include an FSM start date ready for collection in census and transfer in common transfer files.

You can return multiple FSM eligibility start and end dates falling within the periods above where applicable.

Examples for how the FSM module should be completed

Example	Record
Pupil who is not eligible for free meals under either of the targeted or expanded FSM criteria	Nothing is completed for pupils who are not eligible for FSM. The module should be left blank.
Pupil who is eligible under targeted FSM	FSM start date: The school should enter the date when the pupil first became eligible for targeted FSM. (That is when eligibility was first verified after the application for FSM was submitted.) FSM eligibility verification date: The school should enter the date when the eligibility for targeted FSM was last verified on the FSM eligibility checking service. (For the autumn census, any date between 1 June 2026 and 1 October 2026.) An error would appear if the date entered is too old,

Example**Record**

	prompting a recheck for FSM eligibility. If no re-check is made, the pupil will not be considered FSM eligible and will not attract FSM funding. FSM end date: This field should not be completed for this pupil. UK country: Enter the applicable UK country. FSM category: Enter targeted FSM (TFSM) code. If this is left blank, an error message will appear, prompting that this information is compulsory.
Pupil who is eligible for targeted FSM (based on the separate NRPF, immigration or pension credit criteria)	FSM start date: The school should enter the date when the pupil first became eligible for FSM. (That is when eligibility was first verified after the application for FSM was submitted.) FSM eligibility verification date: The school should enter the date when the eligibility for targeted FSM was last verified. (For the autumn census, any date between 1 June 2026 and 1 October 2026.) Pupils eligible for FSM through these circumstances cannot be verified via the manage eligibility for free school meals service, so schools will need to re-verify eligibility in other ways and keep appropriate records of how they have done that for audit purposes. An error would appear if the date entered is too old, prompting a recheck for FSM eligibility. If no re-check is made, the pupil will not be considered FSM eligible and will not attract FSM funding. FSM end date: This field should not be completed for this pupil. UK country: Enter the applicable UK country. FSM category: Enter the 'targeted FSM' code. If this is left blank, an error message will appear, prompting that this information is compulsory.
Pupil who becomes eligible for FSM for the first time in academic year 2026 to 2027, under expanded FSM	FSM start date: The school should enter the date when the pupil first became eligible for expanded FSM. (This will be any date from 1 August 2026.) FSM eligibility verification date: The school should enter the date when the eligibility for expanded FSM was last verified on the manage eligibility for free school meals service. (For the autumn census, any date between 1 June

Example**Record**

2026 and 1 October 2026.)

An error would appear if the date entered is too old, prompting a recheck for FSM eligibility. If no re-check is made, the pupil will not be considered FSM eligible and will not attract FSM funding.

FSM end date: This field should not be completed for this pupil.

UK country: Enter the applicable UK country.

FSM category: Enter expanded FSM (EFSM) code.

If this is left blank, an error message will appear, prompting that this information is compulsory.

Pupil who was eligible for FSM under the targeted FSM category between the previous and current census – for example, they do not have an open FSM period as at census day

It is rare for schools to be aware of a pupil being eligible for FSM in between census periods, as following the end to the transitional protections, the DfE are only requiring schools to check FSM annually for funding purposes, but it can happen.

a. Where a pupil was eligible under targeted FSM between census periods but is not eligible at the time of the census.

b. Pupil who was eligible for FSM under the expanded FSM category between the previous and current census – for example, they do not have an open FSM period as at census day.

(The school does not need to complete the FSM module for this pupil since expanded FSM is only used for the purpose of meal funding, and the DfE only provide meal funding in respect of pupils eligible at the time of the census.)

FSM start date: The school should enter the date when the pupil first became eligible for targeted FSM. (That is when eligibility was first verified after the application for FSM was submitted.)

FSM eligibility verification date: This field should not be completed for this pupil.

The 'last verified date' should only be completed in 'live' periods of eligibility.

FSM end date: The school should enter the date when they found out the pupil was no longer eligible.

UK country: Enter the applicable UK country.

Example**Record**

Pupil who moved from being eligible under targeted FSM in the previous census to being eligible under expanded FSM at the time of the current census

FSM category: Enter targeted FSM (TFSM) code.

This will ensure that the pupil is counted towards the FSM6 cohort even though they are no longer eligible for FSM.

Schools will need to enter both periods of eligibility, starting with the live period.

For the 'live' period, schools should record the following:

FSM start date: The school should enter the date when the pupil first became eligible for expanded FSM. (That is when the first verification check was carried out, showing that the pupil had moved to expanded FSM. This will be any date from 1 August 2026.)

FSM eligibility verification date: The school should enter the date when the eligibility for expanded FSM was last verified on the manage eligibility for free school meals service. (In this case, that is likely to be the same date as the start date – any date between 1 June 2026 and 1 October 2026.)

An error would appear if the date entered is too old, prompting a recheck for FSM eligibility. If no re-check is made, the pupil will not be considered FSM eligible and will not attract FSM funding.

FSM end date: This field should not be completed for this FSM entry.

UK country: Enter the applicable UK country.

FSM category: Enter expanded FSM (EFSM) code. If this is left blank, an error message will appear, prompting that this information is compulsory.

For the 'closed' period, schools should record the following:

FSM start date: The school should enter the date when the pupil first became eligible for targeted FSM. (That is when eligibility was first verified after the application for FSM was submitted.)

FSM eligibility verification date: This field should not be completed for this pupil.

The 'last verified date' should only be completed in 'live' periods of eligibility.

FSM end date: The school should enter the date when

Example	Record
	they found out the pupil was no longer eligible for FSM under targeted FSM. UK country: Enter the applicable UK country. FSM category: Enter targeted FSM (TFSM) code. The first entry for this pupil will ensure they are accurately captured as currently eligible for expanded FSM. The second entry will ensure that they are captured as part of the FSM6 cohort by DfE.
Pupil who was eligible under targeted FSM at last census but is no longer eligible for FSM (under either threshold)	FSM start date: The school should enter the date when the pupil first became eligible for targeted FSM. (That is when eligibility was first verified after the application for FSM was submitted.) FSM eligibility verification date: This field should not be completed for this pupil. The 'last verified date' should only be completed in 'live' periods of eligibility. FSM end date: The school should enter the date when they found out the pupil was no longer eligible. UK country: Enter the applicable UK country. FSM category: Enter targeted FSM (TFSM) code. Even though this pupil is no longer eligible for FSM, they will still be captured as part of the FSM6 cohort by the DfE.

FSM eligibility checking service

The DfE are rolling out a new FSM eligibility checking service during the 2025 to 2026 summer term to all local authorities who can run checks on behalf of schools and determine which category of FSM a pupil is eligible for. It is replacing the existing checking system made available by the department.

As of the 2026 to 2027 school year, the checking service will be extended to provide a more flexible model for local authorities or schools to make checks, including a model where schools can make checks directly on this system.

Pupil premium funding

The pupil premium directs extra funding to children from disadvantaged backgrounds based on their eligibility for FSM under 'targeted FSM eligibility', as recorded in the school census.

Pupils aged 4 and above in 'reception' to year 11 (or aged 4 to 15 where national curriculum year groups do not apply) are eligible for pupil premium funding. Pupils can only be recorded as eligible for targeted FSM if they meet the targeted FSM eligibility criteria and make a claim.

Pupils who are not eligible for pupil premium include:

- pupils who are solely in receipt of a free school lunch due to universal infant free school meals entitlement
- pupils who are eligible for expanded FSM
- pupils attending nursery schools or classes

More information on [pupil premium](#) is available.

EARLY YEARS DATA FOR AUTUMN 2026

The table below shows a summary of entitlements against ages:

Autumn 2026	Age ranges	Funded hours	Basis for funding	Expanded hours	Eligibility code	Extended hours
9 months to 1-year-olds	Born between 2024-09-01 and 2025-11-30 (inclusive) all relevant schools and year groups	X	X	✓	✓	X
Early learning for 2-year-olds	Born between 2023-09-01 and 2024-08-31 (inclusive) all relevant schools and year groups	✓	✓	X	x	x
2-year-olds	Born between 2023-09-01 and 2024-08-31 (inclusive) all relevant schools and year groups	x	x	✓	✓	X
3-year-olds	Born between 2022-09-01 and 2023-08-31 (inclusive) all relevant schools and year groups	✓	X	X	✓	✓
4-year-olds	4-year-olds born between 2021-09-01 and 2022-08-31 (inclusive) - for pupils in national curriculum year groups 'E1', 'E2', 'N1' and 'N2' only	✓	X	X	✓	✓

Data item	Description
Funded universal free entitlement hours.	Funded universal entitlement hours (used for funding) This information is not required from city technology colleges or non-maintained special schools. 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. 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). The Childcare Act 2006 and Childcare Act 2016 set out that children are only entitled to free early education entitlements until they reach compulsory school age (the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday). A specified subset of 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. Note, in some circumstances, 2-year-olds may be eligible for both the 15-hour entitlement for early learning for 2-year-olds and the expanded entitlement for working parents. In those circumstances, parents must use the early learning 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 early learning entitlement and 10 hours of the working parent entitlement. 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. The DfE will fund local authorities for the early years entitlements using data collected via the January censuses. 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 our 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). <table><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><tr><td>Autumn 2026</td><td>2-year-olds born between 2023-09-01 and 2024-08-31 (inclusive) – all relevant schools and year groups</td><td>15 hours</td></tr><tr><td>Autumn 2026</td><td>3-year-olds born between 2022-09-01 and 2023-08-31 (inclusive) – all relevant schools and year groups</td><td>15 hours</td></tr><tr><td>Autumn 2026</td><td>4-year-olds born between 2021-09-01 and 2022-08-31 (inclusive) for pupils in national curriculum year groups 'E1', 'E2', 'N1' and 'N2' only</td><td>15 hours</td></tr></table> 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. 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. It is important that the funded entitlement hours recorded on the census accurately reflect the hours at the setting to 2 decimal places. It should be noted that this is a decimal of hours and therefore does not record hours and minutes. For example, where a pupil has: • 10 and a half hours, this is recorded as 10.50 • 10 hours and 20 minutes, this is recorded as 10.33 Where funded universal entitlement hours are stretched, see the information on stretched funded universal, extended or expanded entitlement. Where unusual circumstances affect data items as of census day and week, refer to the section on unusual circumstances.	Census	Date of birth ranges, school type and pupil national curriculum year group	Maximum funded entitlement hours	Autumn 2026	2-year-olds born between 2023-09-01 and 2024-08-31 (inclusive) – all relevant schools and year groups	15 hours	Autumn 2026	3-year-olds born between 2022-09-01 and 2023-08-31 (inclusive) – all relevant schools and year groups	15 hours	Autumn 2026	4-year-olds born between 2021-09-01 and 2022-08-31 (inclusive) for pupils in national curriculum year groups 'E1', 'E2', 'N1' and 'N2' only	15 hours
Census	Date of birth ranges, school type and pupil national curriculum year group	Maximum funded entitlement hours											
Autumn 2026	2-year-olds born between 2023-09-01 and 2024-08-31 (inclusive) – all relevant schools and year groups	15 hours											
Autumn 2026	3-year-olds born between 2022-09-01 and 2023-08-31 (inclusive) – all relevant schools and year groups	15 hours											
Autumn 2026	4-year-olds born between 2021-09-01 and 2022-08-31 (inclusive) for pupils in national curriculum year groups 'E1', 'E2', 'N1' and 'N2' only	15 hours											
Extended free entitlement hours.	Funded extended entitlement hours (used for funding) This information is not required from city technology colleges or non-maintained special schools.												

	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. 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). 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. Pupils who are in ‘reception’ (or above) are not recorded as receiving the extended funded entitlement as they are in full-time education. As with funded entitlement hours, extended funded entitlement hours are recorded to 2 decimal places. Note that this is a decimal of hours and therefore does not record hours and minutes. For example, where a pupil has: • 10 and a half hours, this is recorded as 10.50 • 10 hours and 40 minutes, this is recorded as 10.67 of extended funded entitlement hours per week (up to a maximum of 15 hours) The extended funded entitlement hours field must not include any funded universal entitlement hours. <table><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><tr><td>Autumn 2026</td><td>3-year-olds born between 2022-09-01 and 2023-08-31 (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>Autumn 2026</td><td>4-year-olds born between 2021-09-01 and 2022-08-31 (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></table> Where funded extended entitlement hours are stretched, see the information on stretched funded universal, extended or expanded entitlement. Where unusual circumstances affect data items as of census day and week, see the section on unusual circumstances.	Census	Date of birth ranges, school type and pupil national curriculum year group	Maximum funded extended entitlement hours	Autumn 2026	3-year-olds born between 2022-09-01 and 2023-08-31 (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	Autumn 2026	4-year-olds born between 2021-09-01 and 2022-08-31 (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
Census	Date of birth ranges, school type and pupil national curriculum year group	Maximum funded extended entitlement hours								
Autumn 2026	3-year-olds born between 2022-09-01 and 2023-08-31 (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								
Autumn 2026	4-year-olds born between 2021-09-01 and 2022-08-31 (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								
Expanded free entitlement hours.	Funded expanded entitlement hours (used for funding) This information is not required from city technology colleges or non-maintained special schools. 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. Note, in some circumstances, 2-year-olds may be eligible for both the 15-hour entitlement for early learning for 2-year-olds and the expanded entitlement for working parents. In those circumstances, parents must use the early learning 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 early learning entitlement and 10 hours of the working parent entitlement. <table><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><tr><td>Autumn 2026</td><td>9-month-olds to one-year-olds born between 2024-09-01 and 2025-11-30 (inclusive) with an eligibility code – all relevant schools and year groups</td><td>30 hours</td></tr><tr><td>Autumn 2026</td><td>2-year-olds born between 2023-09-01 and 2024-08-31 (inclusive) with an eligibility code – all relevant schools and year groups</td><td>30 hours</td></tr></table> As with funded and extended entitlement hours, expanded funded entitlement hours are recorded to 2 decimal places and it should be noted that this is a decimal of hours and therefore does not record hours and minutes. For example, where a pupil has: • 10 and a half hours, this is recorded as 10.50 • 10 hours and 40 minutes, this is recorded as 10.67 of extended funded entitlement hours per week (up to a maximum of 15 hours) The expanded funded entitlement hours field must not include any funded universal entitlement hours or any extended entitlement hours. Where funded expanded entitlement hours are stretched, refer to the information on stretched funded universal, extended or expanded entitlement. Where unusual circumstances affect data items as of census day and week, see the section on unusual circumstances. Stretched funded universal, extended or expanded entitlement All cases of funded universal, extended or expanded 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, extended or expanded entitlement hours during census week divided by 15. This means that you may need to convert funded universal, extended or expanded entitlement back to a term-time only basis for the purposes of making a school census return. Where a child takes the full funded universal, extended or expanded 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. However, where a child takes only part of the funded universal, extended or expanded entitlement, a conversion is required to calculate how many hours they take over the year. For example, a child takes 11 hours a week over 45 weeks in the year, totalling 495 hours. To convert the funded universal, extended or expanded 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. The full funded universal, extended or expanded 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. The DfE will make no further adjustments to the funded universal, extended or expanded entitlement.	Census	Date of birth ranges, school type and pupil national curriculum year group	Maximum funded expanded entitlement hours	Autumn 2026	9-month-olds to one-year-olds born between 2024-09-01 and 2025-11-30 (inclusive) with an eligibility code – all relevant schools and year groups	30 hours	Autumn 2026	2-year-olds born between 2023-09-01 and 2024-08-31 (inclusive) with an eligibility code – all relevant schools and year groups	30 hours
Census	Date of birth ranges, school type and pupil national curriculum year group	Maximum funded expanded entitlement hours								
Autumn 2026	9-month-olds to one-year-olds born between 2024-09-01 and 2025-11-30 (inclusive) with an eligibility code – all relevant schools and year groups	30 hours								
Autumn 2026	2-year-olds born between 2023-09-01 and 2024-08-31 (inclusive) with an eligibility code – all relevant schools and year groups	30 hours								
Eligibility code	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. 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. Where a child transfers school, the local authority must be informed of the transfer. Foster children are eligible for the extended or expanded funded childcare in certain circumstances. Foster parents do not apply through the childcare service due to the additional eligibility checking steps required. 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 taking up extended or expanded hours. It should be noted that, although it will still be an 11-digit code, it will begin with a different number to HMRC issued codes. This is to allow local management of the reconfirmation process. Further information is available in our statutory guidance for local authorities on early education and childcare and our early years entitlements operational guidance.
Hours at setting	This information is not required from city technology colleges or non-maintained special schools. Hours at setting are collected for the same pupils and schools for whom funded entitlement hours are collected. 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: • 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 This information will allow us to monitor the hours attended at state-funded settings on the same basis as private, voluntary and independent provision. 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. Hours at setting records the hours in education to 2 decimal places (that is, 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). Where unusual circumstances affect data items as of census day and week, see the section on unusual circumstances for more information.
2-year-old basis for funding	This information is not required from city technology colleges or non-maintained special schools. 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. 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. <table> <tr> <th>Code</th><th>Description</th></tr> <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> </table> More information on early education and childcare is available.	Code	Description	ECO	Economic criteria	HSD	High-level SEN or disability	LAA	Looked after or adopted from care		
Code	Description										
ECO	Economic criteria										
HSD	High-level SEN or disability										
LAA	Looked after or adopted from care										
Disability access fund indicator	This information is not required from city technology colleges or non-maintained special schools. 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. To be eligible for DAF, the child must be in receipt of disability living allowance (DLA) and one of the early years entitlements. 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. 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. <table> <tr> <th>Census</th><th>Date of birth ranges, school type and pupil national curriculum year group</th></tr> <tr> <td>Autumn 2026</td><td>9-month-olds to one-year-olds born between 2024-09-01 and 2025-11-30 (inclusive) - all relevant schools and year groups</td></tr> <tr> <td>Autumn 2026</td><td>2-year-olds born between 2023-09-01 and 2024-08-31 (inclusive) - all relevant schools and year groups</td></tr> <tr> <td>Autumn 2026</td><td>3-year-olds born between 2022-09-01 and 2023-08-31 (inclusive) - all relevant schools and year groups</td></tr> <tr> <td>Autumn 2026</td><td>4-year-olds born between 2021-09-01 and 2022-08-31 (inclusive) - all relevant schools and year groups - for pupils in national curriculum year groups 'E1', 'E2', 'N1' and 'N2' only</td></tr> </table>	Census	Date of birth ranges, school type and pupil national curriculum year group	Autumn 2026	9-month-olds to one-year-olds born between 2024-09-01 and 2025-11-30 (inclusive) - all relevant schools and year groups	Autumn 2026	2-year-olds born between 2023-09-01 and 2024-08-31 (inclusive) - all relevant schools and year groups	Autumn 2026	3-year-olds born between 2022-09-01 and 2023-08-31 (inclusive) - all relevant schools and year groups	Autumn 2026	4-year-olds born between 2021-09-01 and 2022-08-31 (inclusive) - all relevant schools and year groups - for pupils in national curriculum year groups 'E1', 'E2', 'N1' and 'N2' only
Census	Date of birth ranges, school type and pupil national curriculum year group										
Autumn 2026	9-month-olds to one-year-olds born between 2024-09-01 and 2025-11-30 (inclusive) - all relevant schools and year groups										
Autumn 2026	2-year-olds born between 2023-09-01 and 2024-08-31 (inclusive) - all relevant schools and year groups										
Autumn 2026	3-year-olds born between 2022-09-01 and 2023-08-31 (inclusive) - all relevant schools and year groups										
Autumn 2026	4-year-olds born between 2021-09-01 and 2022-08-31 (inclusive) - all relevant schools and year groups - for pupils in national curriculum year groups 'E1', 'E2', 'N1' and 'N2' only										
Early years pupil premium	The early years pupil premium (EYPP) is additional funding for early years settings to improve the education they provide for eligible 9-month-olds to 1-year-olds, 2-year-olds, 3-year-olds and 4-year-olds in 'E1', 'E2', 'N1' and 'N2' only. Eligible 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. Eligible pupils taking the 15 hours funded entitlement for early learning for 2-year-olds will become eligible to receive early years pupil premium from the term following their 2nd birthday. Eligible pupils taking the universal 15 hours funded entitlement will become eligible to receive early years pupil premium from the term following their 3rd birthday. 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. Children in receipt of EYPP in census week should be recorded with early years pupil premium receipt equal to 'true'. 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.										

Children are eligible to receive EYPP if they are taking any of the following:

- universal funded entitlement for 3- and 4-year-olds
- early learning entitlement for 2-year-olds
- expanded entitlement for 9-month-olds to 2-year-olds

They must also either:

- 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:
 - 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
Autumn 2026	9-month-olds to one-year-olds	Born between 2024-09-01 and 2025-11-30 (inclusive)
Autumn 2026	2-year-olds	Born between 2023-09-01 and 2024-08-31 (inclusive)
Autumn 2026	3-year-olds	Born between 2022-09-01 and 2023-08-31 (inclusive)
Autumn 2026	4-year-olds – for schools not equal to phase 'NS': pupils in 'E1', 'E2', 'N1' or 'N2' only	Born between 2021-09-01 and 2022-08-31 (inclusive)

Pupils aged 4 at the start of the academic year in reception and above are eligible to receive the [school-age pupil premium](#) and therefore are not eligible to receive early years pupil premium funding.

For pupils in receipt of the early years pupil premium, the DfE also need the reason why they are receiving.

Code	Early years pupil premium basis for funding
RE	In receipt through eligibility for economic reasons: where they are in receipt via eligibility for the benefits-related criteria for FSM
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
RB	In receipt through eligibility for both reasons: where they are in receipt through eligibility for both economic and other reasons
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>.

SUSPENSION AND PERMANENT EXCLUSION INFORMATION (NEW DATA ITEMS)

Reason for cancellation (collected from spring 2027) (not for nursery schools)

This information should be available in school systems from autumn 2026 term and will be collected for the first time in the spring school census 2027 for autumn term exclusions.

The DfE need this for both on- and off-roll pupils.

An exclusion can be cancelled before the governing board review meeting. For each cancelled exclusion (either suspension or permanent exclusion) one of the following should be used to indicate the reason:

- new evidence came to light
- managed move (permanent) agreed
- off-site direction to alternative setting (temporary)
- exceptional circumstances

The date the pupil was reinstated should also be included.

If a suspension or a permanent exclusion is cancelled, the original exclusion should be returned with the cancellation details, and a separate suspension record should be provided for the sessions missed.

Termly suspension and permanent exclusion reviews

Exclusions that have been overturned by the governing board are not counted in national statistics. However, from the 2026 to 2027 academic year, information regarding reviews of headteachers decisions to suspend or permanently exclude (which includes the governing board's initial review, and in the case of permanent exclusion the independent review panel (IRP) and if applicable the governing board reconsideration meeting) that occurred in the previous term are to be reported via the school census.

The first collection of this data will take place in the spring 2027 census for any reviews that took place in the autumn term.

Exclusion review category (not for nursery schools)

This will indicate whether the review is a governor's review or an IRP review:

- GB – Governor's review
- IRP – Independent review panel

Exclusion review result (not for nursery schools)

Where a suspension or permanent exclusion is the subject of a governing board and an IRP review the Exclusion Review Result is required.

Governing board outcomes (not for nursery schools)

Schools must record which of the following outcome that applies:

- after initial consideration governing board decided that pupil should not be reinstated and no request for an Independent Review Panel was made (pupil not offered reinstatement)
- the governing board has decided that the pupil should be reinstated, and the relevant person has not declined reinstatement, but the pupil has not yet resumed attendance at the school; (pupil offered reinstatement)
- the governing board has decided the pupil should be reinstated but the relevant person has declined reinstatement (pupil is not offered reinstatement)
- the governing board has decided that the pupil should not be reinstated, the time for an application for a review has not yet expired, and the relevant person has not yet given notice in writing that they do not intend to apply for a review (pupil not offered reinstatement)
- parents made representations where the governing board is required to consider reinstatement (review ongoing)

- pupil offered reinstatement after initial governing board (pupil offered reinstatement)
- pupil not offered reinstatement after initial governing board, a request for an Independent Review Panel was made but not determined (pupil not offered reinstatement)

Exclusion review date (not for nursery schools)

The exclusion review date reflects the date of the exclusion review (the date that the final outcome was decided).

Exclusion review result (not for nursery schools)

Where an IRP review has been lodged, record:

- Independent Review Panel (IRP) Outcomes (not for nursery schools)

Where an IRP review has been lodged, record:

- withdrawn
- independent review panel upheld governing board's initial decision that pupil should not be reinstated (pupil not offered reinstatement)
- pupil offered reinstatement after independent review panel recommended governing board to reconsider reinstatement (pupil offered reinstatement)
- pupil offered reinstatement after independent review panel directed governing board to reconsider reinstatement (pupil offered reinstatement)
- pupil not offered reinstatement after independent review panel recommended governing board to reconsider reinstatement (pupil not offered reinstatement)
- pupil not offered reinstatement after independent review panel directed governing board to reconsider reinstatement (pupil not offered reinstatement)
- ongoing (no decision yet)

If the governing board met to reconsider the headteacher's decision following the IRP, please include this in your response. If this has not yet taken place, select "ongoing"

Exclusion reinstatement date (not for nursery schools)

The exclusion reinstatement date reflects the date the excluded pupil was reinstated at the school following the final review of the decision to exclude.

SEN expert requested (not for nursery schools)

For IRPs – further to the outcome of an exclusion review, schools must record if an SEN expert was requested during the review. This should be recorded as 'Y' if requested and 'N' if not requested.

KINSHIP CARE INDICATOR (NEW DATA ITEM) [NOT FOR: NURSERY SCHOOLS]

The DfE collect the Children in Kinship care indicator for all on-roll pupils as at census day in autumn census only.

Schools will be able to record the information of the position on autumn census day using the following code set:

Code	Kinship care indicator
ND	Not declared (default)
KF	Kinship identified (formal arrangement)
KI	Kinship identified (informal arrangement)
KU	Kinship identified (unknown under what arrangement)

This field defaults to 'ND', so you only need to change it for identified children.

Section 22I of the Children's Wellbeing and School's Bill (note: this bill has not yet received Royal Assent) says a child lives in kinship care if:

a) the child lives with a relative, friend or other person connected with the child for all or part of the time, and

b) the child lives with that person for all of the time, or for more time than the child lives with a parent, and they provide all of the care and support provided for the child, or more of that care and support than is provided for the child by a parent, or

c) the child lives with two or more people mentioned in part 'a' all or most of the time (whether or not the child lives with those people at the same time), and those people, taken together, provide all or most of the care and support provided for the child.

Kinship carers do not include a:

- parent of the child
- local authority foster parent who had no connection with the child prior to the child being placed with them
- person caring for the child in a professional capacity

There are different types of kinship arrangements.

These include:

Formal arrangements

These are where the carer has been granted a legal order for the care of the child, such as a Special Guardianship (SGO) or Child Arrangement Order (CAO), or where they have become kinship foster carers.

Informal arrangements

Page 7 of the [kinship care statutory guidance](#) defines informal arrangements as when a close family member or friend looks after a child for a temporary or permanent amount of time. This arrangement is agreed privately with the parents and parental responsibility for the child remains with the parents.

Informal kinship care arrangements (not approved foster care) including:

- a private family arrangement in which a close family member who does not hold parental responsibility raises the child and:
 - the local authority has had no major role in making arrangements for the child
 - where a Family Court has not made an order in respect to the care of the child

- where a child under the age of 16 is being provided with accommodation for less than 28 days by an individual in their own home who is not a close relative
- where a 16 or 17 year old is being provided with accommodation by an individual who is not a close relative in their own home

FREE BREAKFAST CLUB ATTENDANCE MODULE (NEW DATA ITEMS)

From the autumn 2026 term onwards, schools participating in the government's free breakfast club programme and receiving funding in exchange for meeting the minimum requirements of the programme (as set out at [Free breakfast clubs: guidance for schools and trusts](#)) must record attendance at free breakfast clubs for the following pupils in their systems daily:

- pupils with enrolment status C (current), M (dual main) or F (FE colleges) or O (other AP providers)
- pupils aged 4 to 10 years old as at 31 August (DOB between 2021-09-01 and 2016-08-31 inclusive) in Year Groups R to 6 or
- pupils aged 4 to 10 not following the national curriculum (NCYearActual equals 'X' AND pupil born between 2021-09-01 and 2016-08-31 inclusive)

From the spring 2027 school census onwards, the DfE will collect this attendance data for pupils who were on roll during the specified collection period. This includes pupils who may have left the school before census day.

Collection periods

The period covered by the termly breakfast club module is from the start of the autumn term (from 1 August) up to, and including, the Sunday before the usual late spring bank holiday.

Collection	Dates
Spring 2027	Autumn term 2026 to 2027 data is collected from 2026-08-01 to 2026-12-31

Please note: Attendance at breakfast clubs operating outside of the government's free breakfast club programme (e.g., parent paid breakfast clubs or clubs funded through other organisations) should NOT be recorded.

Through the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill, all state-funded schools with primary-aged pupils will be required to offer a free breakfast club. The programme is currently being rolled out to schools in scope of the duty. Schools not participating in the programme – either because they are not yet eligible or have only secondary pupils on roll – should NOT record breakfast club attendance data.

Schools must keep the breakfast club attendance register electronically and use the national breakfast club attendance codes.

Breakfast club sessions possible

This records the number of sessions possible for the attendance period (term or half-term). There is 1 session for each school day.

All pupils attending a school participating in the government's free breakfast club programme aged 4 to 10 (as at 31 August) in Reception to Year 6 at the previous 31 August or pupils aged 4 to 10 not following the national curriculum (NCYearActual equals 'X' who was on the school roll for at least one session during the specified attendance period (term or half-term) should have an entry greater than zero for the number of possible breakfast club sessions (N00855)

Breakfast club attendance reason data is required from the previous term (see collection schedule [Annex C](#)): return one or more attendance codes entries (N00840) against each pupil along with the number of breakfast clubs sessions

Breakfast club attendance codes returned for the census are contained in code set CS135 of the [CBDS](#). These are:

Breakfast club attendance codes

FBC0	The pupil has NOT attended free breakfast club.
FBC1	The pupil has attended the free breakfast club before the start of the compulsory school day.
FBC2	Unable to attend the free breakfast club due to staff shortages – Fully Closed

Breakfast club attendance codes returned for the census are contained in code set CS135 of the [CBDS](#). These are:

Breakfast club attendance codes

FBC3	Unable to attend the free breakfast club due to unsuitable space or premises – Fully Closed
FBC4	Unable to attend the free breakfast club due to other reasons – Fully Closed
FBC5	Unable to attend the free breakfast club due to staff shortages – Partial Closure
FBC6	Unable to attend the free breakfast club due to unsuitable space or premises – Partial Closure
FBC7	Unable to attend the free breakfast club due to other reasons – Partial Closure

Note:

- the default position is FBC0
- where any of the codes FBC 2-4 apply then the MI system should be set up to automatically apply to all pupils in Reception to Year 6
- where any of the codes FBC 5-7 apply then the MI system should be set up to automatically apply to all pupils in Reception to Year 6 who do not have code FBC0 or FBC1

MANAGED MOVES (NEW DATA ITEMS)

This new section introduces data collection on managed moves, which are permanent transfers arranged to reduce a pupil's risk of exclusion and, or following, a review of off-site direction.

For each managed move arranged during the collection period, schools must provide:

- start date of the managed move
- the destination school URN
- reason for the managed move:
 - to reduce the risk of exclusion for a pupil who has not yet been excluded
 - following a period of exclusion and decision to transfer
 - following review of an off-site direction placement

This data will improve transparency around pupil movement and provide insight into how managed moves are used.

'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

You are logged in as 320gnyamundanda | [Log out](#)

COLLECT Portal

our last logon was 07/09/2024 12:24:05
our last session ended 07/09/2024 12:28:43

ollect Welcome

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 ***
ust 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

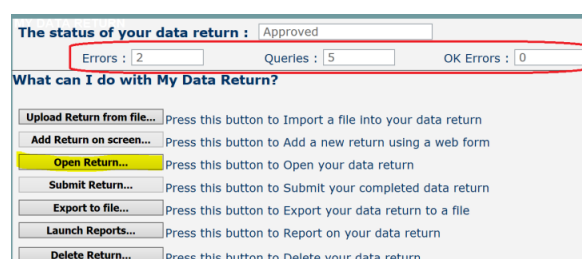
A 'beta' release of the 2026 autumn school census will be available via [COLLECT](#) prior to the census going 'live' for testing purposes in the autumn term. Once the familiarisation period is over the COLLECT blade will be removed and cleared out in advance of the start of the live collection.

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.

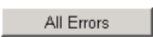
COLLECT familiarisation will take place on the same system as the 'live' collection. A DfE schools guide for using COLLECT is at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/collect-guides-for-schools-and-local-authorities>.

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.



To view the errors or queries, click on "Open Return", and click the 'All Errors' button.



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').

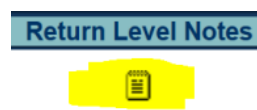
To create a return level note select 'Open Return'.



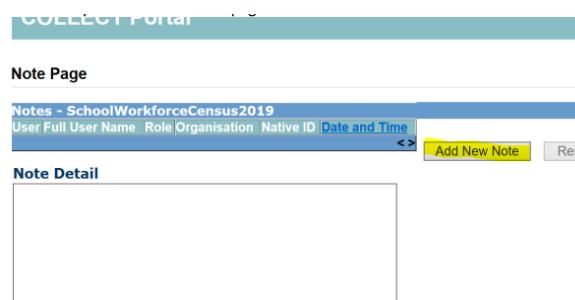
Once you have opened the return click on the pencil icon underneath "Return Level Notes" (all query notes needed to be added at return level, even if the query itself relates to an individual):



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

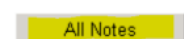


Once you are on the notes page click on the "Add New Note" button



- 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.
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.

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.

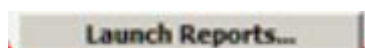
The return will not be authorised by the DfE until all errors are resolved. Please note if the return has been previously authorised and a duplicate UPN is introduced at any point during the 'live' collection the return status will revert to 'approved' i.e. not DfE authorised.

COLLECT: REPORTS NOT RUN VALIDATION QUERY ('Reports')

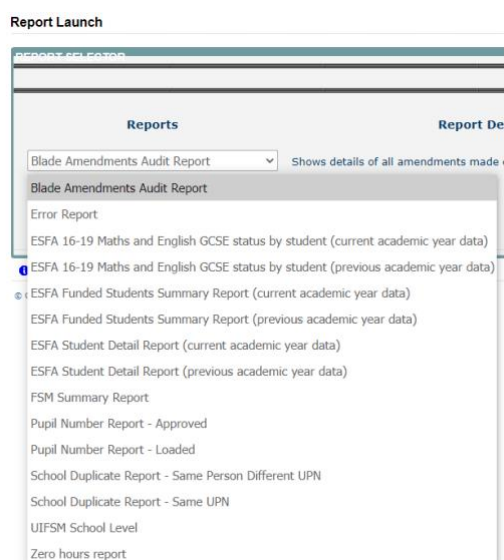
This query will trigger if the relevant reports for your school phase or type have not been run, the query will trigger until all relevant reports have been run, however this will not prevent the return from being 'authorised'.

COLLECT: VIEWING & DOWNLOADING REPORTS

To run these 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.

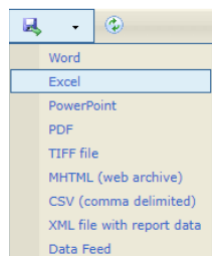


You may then see a second report parameters screen where you will need to click launch report again:

Report Parameter Selection

	Launch Report

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 Arbor and ScholarPack MIS guidance.

AUTUMN 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. Also include new data items preparation.

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	☐
Upgrade to the latest SIMS release as soon as possible to enable dry runs to be carried out	☐
Check with your System Administrator/Manager that the latest fileset version has been imported	☐
Carry out a dry run to determine what information needs to be updated	☐
Check school-level information:	
Check establishment details	☐
Check the school telephone number and email address	☐
Check the school's support unit	☐
Check pupil/students' various registration details:	
Check that leavers and re-admissions have been recorded	☐
Remove any pupil/student records entered in error	☐
Check pupil/students' basic details	☐

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 their enrolment status, admission date and boarder status	☐
Check and correct their UPNs	☐
Check and correct their Unique Learner Numbers S SP AT PRU <i>Applicable to schools with students over the age of 14</i>	☐
Check school-arranged Alternative Provision Placement details P S SP AT PRU	☐
Check and correct their part-time information	☐
Check pupil/students' home address information	☐
Check pupil/students' eligibility for free school meals	☐
Check pupil/students' ethnic and cultural information	☐
Check additional information	☐
Check the Youth Support Services Agreement (YSSA) status S	☐
Check Special Needs information	☐
Check exclusions information P S SP AT PRU	☐
Check attendance data P S SP AT PRU	☐
Check Universal Infant School Meals P SP AT <i>Applicable to schools with pupils in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2</i>	☐

Description of task	Completed
Check hours for Early Years children information N P SP AT PRU <i>Applicable to schools with Early Years children</i>	☐
Update pupil/students with top-up funding	☐
Update pupil/students' post-looked-after arrangements	☐
Update funding and monitoring details P S SP AT PRU	☐
Check post-16 information recorded S SP AT PRU <i>Applicable to Secondary schools with a Sixth form</i>	☐

Key:

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

