

SCHOOL WORKFORCE CENSUS AUTUMN 2026 PREPARATION GUIDE

For the attention of the School Workforce Census Co-ordinator

PURPOSE

The purpose of this guide is to assist schools in preparing for the School Workforce Census 2026 collection and to provide advice on how to produce the statutory return.

KEY DATES

Thursday 5th November 2026	Census Day
Tuesday 10th November 2026	Deadline for Waltham Forest maintained schools & PRUs to submit a return to the Local Authority via DfE COLLECT .

IMPORTANCE OF THE WORKFORCE CENSUS

School workforce Census is the DfE's main source of data on:

- staff pay bills
- staff turnover
- absences

The school workforce Census data informs departmental policy on pay and the monitoring of the effectiveness and diversity of the school workforce. Accuracy of data is crucial as the data is also used by other government departments, local authorities, external agencies and educational researchers.

IMPORTANT POINTS TO NOTE

- The 2026 School Workforce Census will implement new validation rules regarding Disability and Ethnicity data. Moving forward, 'Information not yet obtained' will not be permitted for staff members employed for over three months, and any such entries will result in queries. To ensure compliance, schools are required to proactively gather this data, marking 'Refused' when a staff member opts not to disclose, in preparation for new requirements and future pay gap reporting legislation
- The value of Sex has replaced Gender captured in previous returns. The legal sex of staff members should be submitted as recorded on a birth certificate or gender recognition certificate and the same as reported to HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC).

CHECKLIST

Individual Management Information Systems publish system specific guidance and links to the most common provider's websites are available below. The following are some generic checks which may help in the submission of your return.

- ☐ The current version of your MIS system has been installed
- ☐ You have access to the [DfE COLLECT](#) portal
- ☐ Contract details have been completed for any new applicable staff
- ☐ National Insurance Numbers have been recorded for workforce members
- ☐ The role of SENCO has been assigned to a staff member. If you share a SENCO, a Return Level Note with the DfE number of the school where SENCO is based will be required in your return
- ☐ The SENCO has a NASENCO qualification recorded
- ☐ School Business Professional (SBP) roles have been recorded

- ☐ The induction year is recorded for any newly qualified teachers (NQT)
- ☐ All teacher reference numbers are recorded or there is a valid reason why it is not available
- ☐ The latest pay review dates are recorded for all directly employed teachers

SUBMITTING AND CHECKING YOUR SCHOOL'S WORKFORCE CENSUS RETURN

Once the return has been completed and the Summary report has been signed by the Head Teacher:

1. Generate a School Workforce Census file from your Management Information System
2. Upload to COLLECT via the [DfE COLLECT](#) portal
3. Once the data has validated click on the **All Errors** button to see a list of errors and queries. In some instances there will be **Details** buttons against the items which allow you to navigate to the relevant areas of the return
4. From the home page click on **Launch Reports** and then **School Error** to generate a report of errors and queries which can be exported to Word, Excel etc
5. The working day after you submit you can also run reports to show **Credibility Checks**. These are issues in your data which have been identified by comparing to the national databases which may need looking at. All of the reports are potentially useful but especially:
 - Return Credibility Check
 - Credibility Check Staff Names
 - Teacher Data Consistency

VALIDATION

Following submission of your return you will be sent a Validation Report containing details of and remaining queries, actions or credibility checks together with details of how to resolve them. You will normally receive this via secure email within two working days of your submission.

FURTHER INFORMATION

DfE GOV.UK	• School Employed Staff Guide • COLLECT Guide for Schools • School Workforce Minimum Notepad Entry Guide
Management Information System Guidance	• SIMS • Arbor • SchoolPod
Other Management Information System	Please contact your ICT support provider about any technical/MIS issues relating to running the census.
General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)	www.gov.uk/government/publications/data-protection-and-privacy-privacy-notice

WHO TO CONTACT

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