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Autumn School Census 2025 – Readiness Bulletin Number 2

Purpose

The purpose of this note is to provide school census contacts with important information in readiness for the 2025 autumn school census. All school census contacts should have already received an early warning readiness email (issued 3 September 2025) and the advice offered here should be read in conjunction with that bulletin.

Data collection timetable and key dates

The census date for the 2025 autumn school census is Thursday 2 October with the deadline for maintained Ealing schools of Friday 3 October.

We strongly encourage schools to submit their census returns to the department as soon as possible so that we can provide additional support where needed. Schools or local authorities should contact us straight away if they anticipate any issues in making a complete census return.

School census 2025 to 2026 guide

A guide for the 2025-26 academic year is now available here. We would ask that you also look at the section which covers changes since the previous census here.

COLLECT user guides

To assist schools and local authorities with using the COLLECT system to make a successful school census return, we have published COLLECT user guides on the school census website. These can be found at here

Funding update and COLLECT funding reports

This is a reminder that the data collected via the 2025 autumn school census will be used in the calculation of the schools block, early years block and high needs block of the dedicated schools grant, pupil premium allocations for mainstream and special schools, early years pupil premium allocations and also the universal infant free school meals funding therefore it is vitally important that the census data for your schools' are submitted promptly and accurately. Post 16 data collected via the autumn school census will be used to calculate 16-19 funding allocations for schools with sixth forms.

Reports showing information which will feed into the calculations for the dedicated schools grant, pupil premium, early years pupil premium, the universal infant free school meal and post 16 will be available via the reports section in COLLECT. It is essential that these reports are checked and verified in conjunction with LA Finance Officers in advance of the autumn school census database closing as amendments to the database

will not be possible after and, consequently, this will be your only opportunity to contest your funding pupil numbers.

To assist with using and interpreting the funding reports, funding report user guides are available [here](#).

16-19 funding reports

The school census autumn 2025: 16 to 19 reports will be available throughout the live collection, via the 'launch reports' button in COLLECT.
The report suite comprises eight reports: four reporting on student data for the current year and four on student data for the previous year, both of which are used in 16 to 19 funding allocations. They contain information on how your funding may be affected next year.

- 16-19 maths and English GCSE status by student (current academic year data)

- 16-19 maths and English GCSE status by student (previous academic year data)

- 16-19funded students summary report (current academic year data)

- 16-19 funded students summary report (previous academic year data)

- 16-19 student detail report (current academic year data)

- 16-19 student detail report (previous academic year data)

- 16-19 T-Level students report (current academic year data)

- 16-19 T-Level students report (previous academic year data)

We have developed the reports to help schools and academies quality assure their post-16 data and make more accurate census returns. 16-19 funding allocations are based on census data from individual schools and academies, so returning accurate data is a key factor in ensuring the allocation is right.
Information on the reports is available on [GOV.UK](#).
It gives information about the reports' contents and sets out some of the common data issues.
The complementary school census post-16 interactive tool is available [here](#). The tool is designed to help schools and academies understand how school census data is used to calculate 16-19 funding, and how common errors impact on the level of funding. We encourage schools and academies to use the tool so that they can avoid errors in recording:

- GCSE maths and English prior attainment

- valid, up-to-date qualification numbers (QNs)

- transfers and withdrawals

- core aim

- planned hours

There are examples of all these errors and their solutions in the tool.

Core aim flag

As part of the 16-19 funding allocations process for providers who return the census, DfE look at how schools and academies record the core aim flag against post-16 learning aims in the autumn school census return. We use the flag when calculating funding allocations to determine programme cost weighting and student retention. In some cases we correct significant errors to avoid negative effects on funding. This is known as the core aim fix. We will use the fix for the last time for 2026 to 2027 allocations; the core aim flag will still be a mandatory part of data returns but we will no longer review and fix erroneous recording after this point.

We have published detailed information about the fix on the Check your data' school census page under the heading '16 to 19 funding reports – autumn 2025'. This will tell you how the core aim flag affects funding calculations, and how you can use the 16 to 19 student detail report to check that the flag is correct. If you have students whose core aim has previously been fixed, and you do not make sure that the flag is correct, then it is possible that these students will earn less funding than they should.

COLLECT duplicate reports

There are 2 different duplicate reports which are available for schools and local authorities to run in COLLECT and a separate guidance document is available here for each report. These reports are:

(i) duplicate report – Same UPN
(ii) duplicate report – Same Person Different UPN

Known issues

Errors 4043 and 4044

It has been identified that the logic for E4043 and E4044 is not quite correct and therefore the validation wasn't working as expected. We have issued a revised version to software suppliers and appreciate that not all software suppliers will have sufficient time to implement this into their software and therefore this is a 'known issue'. Please note for schools where the software is not updated they will either trigger an error, or the error will disappear when they load their file onto COLLECT. Any error E4043 or E4044 triggered on COLLECT will be genuine and must be resolved.

Term-on-term validation

A user guide for the term on term queries which are applied as part of the school census will shortly be available here. This user guide sets out what term-on-term validation checks are carried out, how they are derived and what the thresholds are.

Notepad entries

Where validation queries are raised in COLLECT, an explanation will be required for these queries in the return level notes field within COLLECT. Please note that the department

will require sufficient detail in these explanations to allow the queries to be accepted and returns authorised.

A guide is available [here](#) providing examples of what would be regarded as an acceptable notepad entry for queries on each termly census. Within this workbook there are separate tables for notepad guidelines, school level queries, pupil level queries and term on term queries. Please note that the examples within this document are only provided for illustrative purposes and should not be used as a simple 'copy and paste' into COLLECT – a relevant explanation for an individual school's circumstances should be provided.

Further support

If you wish to contact the Service Desk with regard to your School Census return please complete a Service Request form [here](#) or call us on 0300 303 2330. Lines are open Monday – Friday 9.00am – 3.00pm (excluding bank holidays). Please note this line is only for collection queries for anything else please contact the National Helpline on 0370 000 2288 Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm.

Please use the [feedback form](#) if you have any comments about the data collection content on the web site, the service offered by the data collection helpdesk, the COLLECT system or any other aspect of our data collection service.

Thank you for your support and cooperation

Kind regards

Data Operations Service Desk