

To: All local authorities, service children education providers and school's MI suppliers

Autumn School Census 2021 – Readiness Bulletin Number 1

Purpose

The purpose of this note is to provide school census contacts with important information in readiness for the 2021 autumn school census. This will be the first in a series of bulletins and therefore provides some basic information about the autumn school census including arrangements around COLLECT familiarisation.

Why is the school census important?

The school census is the department's primary source of administrative data about pupils attending schools in England. The data collected is vital in supporting a number of the department's strategic objectives and is widely used for the purpose of improving, and promoting, the education or well-being of children in England. For example, the data collected helps us to make sure we are allocating funds where they are needed and that no groups of children are missing out on the education they deserve.

The autumn school census will be used to fund the schools block of the dedicated schools grant and the pupil premium. Details of the funding arrangements for the 2022-23 financial year will be available shortly.

Data collection timetable and key dates

The census date for the 2021 autumn school census is Thursday 7 October, the local authority ask that **maintained schools** make their return by **Friday 8 October** in order to give us enough time to support you in thoroughly checking your data and resolving errors and queries.

The deadline for approved submissions from local authorities and **academies** is Wednesday 3 November, but as usual the local authority ask that academies submit well ahead of this time in order to allow as much time as possible to check data and resolve errors, queries and duplicates.

The database will be closed to amendments from schools and local authorities on Wednesday 1 December.

Autumn census COLLECT familiarisation

A 'beta' release of the 2021 autumn school census live COLLECT blade will be available to you week commencing 20 September. This will remain available until 4pm on Friday 1 October at which point the blade will be removed and cleared out in advance of the start of the live collection on Thursday 7 October.

The department would strongly recommend that, if possible, all schools take the chance to load a file output from their 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 autumn 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 autumn school census for the first time.

COLLECT familiarisation will take place on the same system as the live collection and, therefore, can be accessed by logging into COLLECT via DfE Sign in at <https://services.signin.education.gov.uk/> in the same manner as you would for the live collection. You must submit your data using

COLLECT, our centralised data collection and management system.

School census guide

A guide for the 2021-22 academic year is now available [here](#).

Early years funding

On 18 March we announced that we are temporarily varying our approach to funding local authorities (LAs) for the early years entitlements this financial year to give LAs and providers more certainty over their funding income, and LAs will be funded on a termly attendance count basis in 2021 to 2022.

For maintained settings, we intend to use the termly data from the 2021 summer term and the 2021 autumn term) school census to determine the early years block funding allocation for three and four year olds in school nurseries, maintained nursery schools and academies.

As we don't normally use the summer or autumn term school census for early years funding allocation purposes, these censuses do not have the additional marker for 'reason for funding' for two year olds, or for children eligible for the early years pupil premium (EYPP), which is normally provided through the spring school census. Therefore, we cannot identify from the summer or autumn school census which children qualify for the national entitlements for the two year old entitlement or the EYPP. LAs have been advised to submit a termly data count in order to provide this information, which will also include a termly data count for children accessing the early years entitlements in non-maintained settings, such as private, voluntary and independent childcare providers.

As the autumn term data will be used to determine the funding allocation for the early years entitlements, it is important to make sure your census information is accurately submitted and any additional data is provided to your early years contact at the local authority. The technical guidance for local authorities setting out the early years funding approach for 2021 to 2022 is available

[here] (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-funding-spring-2021-and-financial-year-2021-to-2022>.)

For Spring 2022 – New voluntary data on placements in alternative provision (AP)

During the 2021 to 2022 academic year, we are asking schools to submit new voluntary data on alternative provision (AP) placements. The new data, which will provide us with valuable information on placements that have been arranged from the start of the academic year, will be collected termly from spring 2022. This will allow us to have a better understanding of how the AP system works to support national reforms which aim to deliver significantly improved outcomes for the often vulnerable and disadvantaged children and young people who attend AP.

There are two new modules on AP placements:

- Alternative provision for single-registered pupils – Only PRU / AP schools (Pupil Referral Units (PRUs), AP academies and AP free schools) can complete this module which will provide information on single-registered pupils in these types of school.
- Alternative provision placements arranged by schools – all schools can submit information on AP placements that they have arranged for their pupils during the 2021 to 2022 academic year.

If your school has not arranged any placements in AP, you will not need to complete this module.

Schools often routinely record information on placements in AP and we have worked closely with school software suppliers and tested our proposals with school leaders and data managers to ensure that the administrative burdens attached to collecting and submitting the data are minimal.

The collection of these modules is voluntary in the 2021 to 2022 academic year, and we will not pursue schools for a response, but we would encourage all participating schools to provide this valuable information. We have included more information on this in the census guidance for the 2021 to 2022 academic year.

Further support

As always, if you have any queries about any of the points covered in this note, COLLECT or school census in general, please use the [service request form](#). 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

Education Data Division Helpdesk