

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

Spring School Census 2021 – Readiness Bulletin Number 2

Purpose

The purpose of this note is to provide school census contacts with important information in readiness for the 2021 spring school census. All school census contacts should have already received an early warning readiness email (issued 16 December 2020) and the advice offered here should be read in conjunction with that bulletin.

Data collection timetable and key dates

The census date for the 2021 spring school census is **Thursday 21 January** with the deadline for approved submissions being Wednesday 17 February. The database will be closed to amendments from schools and local authorities on Wednesday 17 March.

We strongly encourage schools and local authorities 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.

Spring census COLLECT familiarisation

The 'beta' release of the 2021 spring school census 'live' COLLECT blade will remain available until 4pm on **Friday 15 January**. The blade will then be removed and cleared out in advance of the start of the live collection on Thursday 21 January.

Unusual circumstances – COVID-19

Schools must provide pupil level data for pupils who are recorded on the school admission register as at census day, irrespective of whether they attend school on that day. Therefore, pupils who are absent from school on census day, whether the absence is COVID-19 related or for other reasons, should be counted in schools' census returns in the usual way.

Current funding allocation through the national funding formula (NFF) and the pupil premium is calculated based on the number of pupils on roll and is not affected by pupil non-attendance on census day. However, other data items are dependent on whether a pupil attends school on census day or during census week. Guidance on these items is as follows:

Free school meals taken and school lunches taken

As schools are only open for vulnerable children and the children of critical workers, the majority of pupils will not be in attendance in schools on census day. Therefore, schools should record free school meals taken and school lunch taken as the normal situation, for example if a pupil would normally have a school meal on a Thursday they should be recorded as such on the census.

Please note however, any vulnerable pupils or children of critical workers who are absent for reasons other than COVID related or who have chosen to have a packed lunch on census day should not be recorded as having taken a school lunch and any of this cohort of pupils who are FSM eligible should not be counted in the free school meals taken figure.

The Department realises that school opening restrictions could affect census returns for UIFSM. We will confirm future funding arrangements for UIFSM separately.

Early years - funded hours, extended hours and hours at setting

Early years provision should remain open and continue to allow all children to attend full time or their usual timetable hours. This includes early years registered nurseries and childminders, maintained nursery schools, as well as nursery classes in schools and other pre-reception provision on school sites. This is the default position for all areas irrespective of national lockdown restrictions. It is the government's intention for there to be parity of approach between the school census and the early years' census.

Funded hours, extended hours and hours at setting for pupils who are in attendance during census week should be recorded as normal.

Funded hours, extended hours and hours at setting should be recorded as the number of hours the pupil would normally be expected to attend during census week in the following circumstances:

- Pupils are absent because they are self isolating
- Parents have chosen not to send their child to nursery

Where the parent has requested a change to the funded hours entitlement taken at the establishment, schools must record the revised funded hours.

Funded hours, extended hours and hours and setting should be recorded as zero in the following circumstances:

- The nursery provision has chosen to close
- Where the child is not attending because the school has chosen to restrict nursery provision to certain groups of children (e.g. vulnerable children and children of key workers)

Class module

Schools should record classes as they would normally have been timetabled at the selected time on census day.

Unit contact time

The unit contact time should be recorded as the number of hours the pupil would normally have spent at the unit in the census week.

School childcare

Schools who provide childcare facilities and due to COVID related reasons have had to temporarily close either some or all of these facilities should record what the school would normally offer.

School census data collection guidance

The school census guide for the 2020 to 2021 academic year is available on the [school census website] (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/school-census>)

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 [here] (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/collect-guides-for-schools-and-local-authorities>)

Pupil premium funding

It was announced in December 2020 that pupil premium allocations for most schools will now be based on data collected as part of the autumn school census. This applies to all schools except for

local authority maintained PRUs and alternative provision academies and free schools who will continue to be allocated funds based on information collected in the spring school census. Details can be found [here] (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium/pupil-premium>)

Funding update and COLLECT funding reports

This is a reminder that the data collected via the 2021 spring school census will be used in the calculation of the pupil premium (for school types detailed above), early years pupil premium and the early years block of the dedicated schools grant and therefore it is vitally important that the census data for your schools are submitted promptly and accurately.

Funding reports showing pupil numbers for both the dedicated schools grant and pupil premium allocations (including the early years pupil premium) are available via the reports section in COLLECT. It is essential that these funding reports are checked and verified in conjunction with LA Finance Officers in advance of the spring school census database closing to amendments from schools and local authorities on 17 March. Amendments to the database will not be possible after this date and, consequently, this will be your only opportunity to contest your funding pupil numbers.

To assist with using and interpreting these funding reports, funding report user guides have been published on the [school census website] (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complete-the-school-census/check-your-data>)

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 has been published for each report. These guides are available on the [school census website] (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complete-the-school-census/check-your-data>):

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

Other COLLECT reports

We would like to remind you of the other reports available to local authorities to assist in ensuring that census returns include the correct data which will be used for funding allocations. These are:

- Pupil number report
- UIFSM report
- FSM summary report

These reports will allow schools to identify anomalies in their data which can impact funding calculations for dedicated schools grant, pupil premium allocations and universal infant free school meals. Therefore, we would strongly encourage all local authorities to ensure that these reports are **checked and verified prior to database closure on 17 March.**

Term-on-term validation

Details of term on term queries which are applied as part of the school census is available on the [school census website] (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complete-the-school-census/check-your-data>)

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 on the [school census website] (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complete-the-school-census/check-your-data>) providing examples of what would be regarded as an acceptable

notepad entry for queries on the spring census. Within this workbook there are separate tables for 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

A data collection forum is available for all data collection contacts to access. The purpose of the forum is to provide a facility to allow customers to exchange ideas and good practice relating to specific data collections and related EDD systems. To gain access to the forum please complete a [service request form] (<https://form.education.gov.uk/service/Data-collections-service-request-form>)

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 [data collections service request form] (<https://form.education.gov.uk/service/Data-collections-service-request-form>)

Please use the [feedback form] (<https://www.education.gov.uk/researchandstatistics/stats/feedbackform>) 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



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