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Guidance

Schools block technical specification 2023 to 2024: for use in schools block allocations

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Applies to England

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1. Introduction

This is a full technical specification for the school-level data that has been made available to local authorities in the prepopulated ‘Schools Block Data’ worksheet of the authority proforma tool (APT). This is for use in allocating their 2023 to 2024 schools block funding for schools. We have updated the 2023 to 2024 dataset to use the autumn 2022 census data.

This note accompanies the separate guidance on how to complete the APT.

The data contained in the December 2022 APT is based on the autumn (October) 2022 school census returns, or other existing data collections. The table below outlines what data will be provided and summarises the source data for each indicator.

The indicators and their descriptions were set out in the [Schools operational guide: 2023 to 2024 \(https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pre-16-schools-funding-local-authority-guidance-for-2023-to-2024\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pre-16-schools-funding-local-authority-guidance-for-2023-to-2024). This document now provides more explanation on the construction of the data.

Table 1: data included in the December APT

Data	Breakdown	Data source
School list	Local authority, LAEstab, unique reference number (URN), school name, phase, primary year groups, secondary year groups	Mainstream schools on the autumn 2022 census. The URN and school name are matched from get information about schools (GIAS)
Academy type	Recoupment academy or 0 (0 is a maintained school)	Taken from the Department for Education’s (DfE’s) records – showing the status on the autumn 2022 census date
London fringe	1 or 1.0156360164	District as mapped from the school postcode in the autumn 2022 census. Due to the reorganisation in Buckinghamshire, lower super output areas (LSOAs) are mapped to the school postcode to identify eligible schools

Data	Breakdown	Data source
Year groups	Primary and secondary for middle schools. Primary and secondary for all schools. Key stage 3 and key stage 4 for secondary schools	Autumn 2022 census
NOR	Primary, secondary, reception, years 1 to 6, key stage 3, key stage 4, year 7, year 8, year 9, year 10 and year 11	Autumn 2022 census
Reception difference	Zero or positive value	Difference between on roll in reception, autumn 2021 census and spring 2022 census. If the difference is less than zero then the reception uplift will be zero
Free school meals (FSM)	Separate primary/secondary	Autumn 2022 census
Free school meals ever 6 (FSM6)	Separate primary/secondary	Autumn 2022 census
Income deprivation affecting children index (IDACI)	Split into 7 different bands (G to A, where A is the highest level of deprivation), separate primary/secondary. Funding cannot be allocated to band G	2019 IDACI data. This is matched to the autumn 2022 census using pupil's postcodes matched to LSOA
English as an additional language (EAL)	First to third year in system; separate primary/secondary	Autumn 2022 census for language group, plus the autumn 2019, 2020 and 2021 censuses. Mapping on unique pupil number (UPN) for on roll records

Data	Breakdown	Data source
Primary phase low prior attainment	Year 1 to year 6 who did not achieve a good level of development	Early years foundation stage profile (EYFSP) total score mapped to the autumn 2022 census. Mapping on UPN only. As there were no EYFSP tests in 2020 and 2021; year 2 and year 3 will use the year 4 ratio or, where this is not available, the value from the 2022 to 2023 APT. Where neither of these are available, the local authority average for year 4 will be used
Secondary phase low prior attainment	Year 7, year 8, year 9, year 10 and year 11 who did not achieve the expected level of attainment	Key stage 2 attainment data mapped to the autumn 2022 census. Mapping on UPN only. As there were no key stage tests in 2020 and 2021, year 8 and year 9 will use the year 10 ratio or, where this is not available, the value from the 2022 to 2023 APT. Where neither of these are available the local authority average for year 10 will be used

Data	Breakdown	Data source
Mobility	Primary or secondary. Pupil appears in census data at the same school as in the autumn 2022 census for the first time in a spring or summer census in 2020 or later. For pupils in reception only, those first appearing at their current school in the summer census are classed as mobile As a result of the cancellation of the summer 2020 census, any pupil with an entry date at the current school which is after the spring 2020 census date (16 January 2020) and up to, and including, the summer 2020 census date (21 May 2020) will be classed as mobile	Autumn 2022 census
Sparsity	Primary, secondary	Autumn 2022 census, GIAS, Ordnance Survey, Office for National Statistics

The autumn 2022 census date was 6 October 2022 and, therefore, the data reflects the status of schools at that date. All data for maintained schools will have been approved first by the local authority prior to being used by DfE.

The pupil-level indicators for numbers on roll, IDACI, FSM eligibility and mobility have been calculated from data collected in the autumn 2022 census. This data has also been linked, using the UPN collected in the autumn census, to data held in DfE's National Pupil Database (NPD) to create the EAL and prior attainment indicators.

This data extract has been prepared prior to the autumn 2022 census being formally matched into the NPD. The IDACI indicators are based on the relationship between pupil postcode, local authority district and IDACI ranks.

Changes made to the dataset for the 2023 to 2024 formula, compared to that used for the 2022 to 2023 formula, are:

- following the cancellation of the 2020 and 2021 primary school assessments, due to coronavirus (COVID-19), the low prior attainment (LPA) ratios for years 2, 3, 8 and 9 for each school have been updated using the corresponding school's ratio for pupils in years 4 and 10 or, where that is not available, the ratio entered on the 2022 to 2023 APT. If neither of these are available, the local authority average for year 4 or year 10 will be used
- EAL1, EAL2 and looked-after children have been removed, as they can no longer be included in a local authority's funding formula

More information about the school census can be found in the [school census guidance \(https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complete-the-school-census\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complete-the-school-census). If you have any queries about this specification, please contact us at:

aptsubmissions.questions@education.gov.uk

2. Using the data to allocate school budgets

For each of the pupil-led factors there are one or more allowable indicators. The pupil-led factors are:

- age-weighted pupil units (AWPU)
- deprivation
- EAL
- prior attainment
- mobility
- looked-after children

The indicator to be used for AWPU is the NOR for primary, key stage 3 and key stage 4. For the other indicators, schools attract funding through pupil units. These pupil units are calculated as the appropriate NOR, weighted by the proportion of pupils that qualify under the indicator.

The pupil units for primary FSM would be given by:

- primary NOR x by the number of primary pupils eligible for FSM / the number of primary pupils with a valid FSM response, or
- from the supplied dataset NOR primary times the primary FSM proportion

All the indicator data is presented in the APT in the form of a decimal proportion that should be applied to the NOR (except NOR). This means that if you record a change to a school's NOR figures in the 'Inputs & Adjustments' sheet of the APT (see the circumstances described in the 'local adjustments to the supplied schools block data' section in which adjustments to NOR figures can be made), then the proportion in the schools block dataset can still be multiplied by them to produce the appropriate pupil units.

The calculations of the proportions always exclude pupils with a 'NULL' value for the required response. This, plus the facility for you to alter the NOR, can result in pupil units for the indicators which are not whole numbers. Values in the schools block are shown to 2 decimal places, but this is presentational only, and numbers are not rounded.

3. Local adjustments to the supplied schools block data

In some cases, it will be necessary to use a local calculation or estimate for an indicator, based on the technical descriptions given in this document, to ensure the data used in the APT to calculate school budgets is representative.

This only applies to individual schools. This section describes when and how this should take place. You should record adjustments on the 'Inputs & Adjustments' sheet of the APT, and must provide a clear explanation for the change in each case.

4. Schools undergoing change

In the case of a planned amalgamation, you should take the data from each of the schools as they appear in the 'Schools Block Data' sheet of the APT and then merge, using weighted sums for each of the factors.

In the example shown in the table below, Old Street Infants and Old Street Juniors are combining to form New Street Primary. The primary FSM proportion for the new school is calculated as the weighted average of the relevant proportion figures for the former schools. A similar calculation should be done for all of the other pupil-led factors.

Table 2: example weighted average calculation

School	NOR primary	Primary FSM proportion
Old Street Infants	300	0.10
Old Street Juniors	100	0.05
New Street Primary	300 + 100 = 400	$((300 \times 0.10) + (100 \times 0.05)) / (300 + 100) =$ 0.0875

In the case of a new school with no relevant predecessors, or a school converting from the private sector, either your average or a local estimate based on similar schools in the local authority should be used for the first year.

5. Individual data points that are not representative

For some schools, the indicator data contained in the schools block dataset will not be representative. In this case, it would be reasonable for you to use a local estimate for the indicator. Making such a change does not require our prior approval, but you must provide clear explanations for any such changes on the APT 'Inputs & Adjustments' sheet.

6. Anomalous primary/secondary pupils

Where a primary school has only one or two secondary phase pupils in the 'Schools Block Data' sheet of the APT (or conversely for a secondary school with a small number of primary phase pupils) this may suggest a school census recording error.

You may wish to verify whether these are errors and, if so, amend individual schools' NOR data accordingly, to avoid incorrect formula allocations. Making such a change does not require our approval, but clear explanations for any such changes must be provided on the 'Inputs & Adjustments' sheet of the APT.

7. Sparsity distances

You can make exceptional applications for schools that open after the distances have been calculated. An existing school that qualifies for sparsity funding in the data provided will not lose that funding in-year if a new school opens nearby.

For schools that may qualify for sparsity funding because of another school nearby closing, you should agree an exceptional application with the relevant school's forum and submit that to us for approval.

8. Schools block schools and pupils

All mainstream schools that are recorded on the autumn 2022 census are included in the APT's 'Schools Block Data' sheet. This covers all mainstream schools open on the census date, except the 2 city technology colleges, Emmanuel College and Thomas Telford School. Special schools, alternative provision (AP) schools, pupil referral units (PRUs), early years providers and other institutions without schools block pupils are excluded.

The school filters applied to the census data to identify the schools included in the dataset are:

- the school type code is a value less than 50 or is equal to 55
- the phase is either 'PS' (primary, including academies), 'MP' (middle-deemed primary), 'MS' (middle-deemed secondary), 'SS' (secondary, including academies), or 'AT' (all-through, excluding PRUs)

The pupil filters applied ensure that only pupils aged 4 or above at the start of the 2022 to 2023 academic year and that are in national curriculum year groups

reception to 11, or pupils aged 4 to 15 in year group X are counted. Note that pupils are counted as headcount, not full-time equivalent.

These are:

- On_Roll = 1 – the pupil must be recorded in the autumn 2022 census as on roll at a school passing the school-level filter
- EnrolStatus in ('C', 'M') – the pupil's on roll status at the school is either 'C' or 'M'; the pupil must either be solely registered at the school or, if dual-registered, have their main registration at the school

Then either of:

- NCYearActual in ('R', '1', '2', '3', '4', '5', '6', '7', '8', '9', '10', '11') and AgeAtStartOfAcademicYear ≥ 4 – the pupil must be recorded in the autumn 2022 census as in national curriculum year groups reception to 11 inclusive, and the pupil must be aged 4 or more on 31 August 2022
- NCYearActual = 'X' and AgeAtStartOfAcademicYear ≥ 4 and AgeAtStartOfAcademicYear < 16 – the pupil must be recorded in the autumn 2022 census as in year X (not following the national curriculum) and the pupil must be aged between 4 and 15 on 31 August 2022

The dataset only includes pupils which pass both the school and pupil filters.

9. School information

This section explains how the fields in the dataset which provides information about each school are obtained. It also describes how the London fringe, NOR and reception difference figures are produced.

These fields are taken from the autumn 2022 census, except for the URN and the school name which are matched from GIAS:

- URN
- LAEstab
- school name
- phase
- number of primary year groups for middle schools
- number of secondary year groups for middle schools
- number of primary year groups for all schools
- number of secondary year groups for all schools
- number of key stage 3 year groups for all schools
- number of key stage 4 year groups for all schools

9.1 Academy type

This field contains the value '0' for maintained schools and 'Recoupment Academy' for academies. Using these in the schools block dataset aims to facilitate correct recording.

The valid entries for this field are:

- Recoupment Academy
- 0

9.2 London fringe

We have determined an appropriate uplift that should be applied to the affected schools' budgets for the 5 local authorities who have some of their schools within the London fringe area (Buckinghamshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Kent and West Sussex). The uplift was calculated using the specific cost of teaching staff within the different pay band areas and the proportion of school expenditure on teaching staff. Using the national distribution of teaching staff by pay band spine point ([School Workforce Census, 2013](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/school-workforce-in-england-november-2013) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/school-workforce-in-england-november-2013>)) and spine point salary data ([School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document 2013](https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/School%20Teachers%E2%80%99%20Pay%20and%20Conditions%20Document%202013.pdf) (<https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/School%20Teachers%E2%80%99%20Pay%20and%20Conditions%20Document%202013.pdf>)) we calculated the average uplift between the London fringe and the rest of England teachers pay band areas to be 2.96%.

Our analysis of the financial year 2012 to 2013 section 251 outturn reporting lines indicated that 53% of school expenditure goes on teaching staff costs. On this basis, the uplift for London fringe schools was 53% of 2.96% which gives a value of 1.56% to be applied to the school formula funding; this excludes factors that should be paid as actual, such as rates, private finance initiative (PFI), split-site and exceptional circumstances.

The districts in the 5 affected local authorities that fall within the London fringe are:

- Buckinghamshire - the former districts Chiltern and South Bucks
- Essex - Basildon, Brentwood, Epping Forest, Harlow
- Hertfordshire - Broxbourne, Dacorum, East Hertfordshire, Hertsmere, St Albans, Three Rivers, Watford, Welwyn Hatfield
- Kent - Dartford, Sevenoaks
- West Sussex - Crawley

All fringe schools will have the value 1.0156360164 for this indicator; all other schools will have the value 1.

9.3 School number on roll

- NOR
- NOR Primary

- NOR Reception
- NOR Y1-6
- NOR Secondary
- NOR KS3
- NOR KS4
- NOR Y7
- NOR Y8
- NOR Y9
- NOR Y10
- NOR Y11

Pupils have been counted by total irrespective of whether they are part-time. Pupils recorded in national curriculum year groups reception to 6 are classed as in the primary phase and those in year groups 7 to 11 are classed as in the secondary phase. Additionally, primary pupils are split into reception pupils and pupils in years 1 to 6 and additionally, secondary pupils are split into key stage groups key stage 3 (years 7 to 9) and key stage 4 (years 10 to 11) and individual years 7 to 11.

The NOR figures are calculated from the autumn 2022 census as the number of pupils at each school passing the pupil filters described in the 'Schools block schools and pupils' section of this document, whose national curriculum year group is in the relevant range.

Pupils recorded in year X in the autumn census aged between 4 and 15 are now included in the data. These pupils are allocated to a year group based on their age at the start of the academic year. The table below shows the year to which these pupils will be assigned.

Table 3 schools block year group for pupils recorded in year group X

Age at start of academic year	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Year group X pupils	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11

For total NOR, the range is years reception to 11 (including pupils in year X allocated to years reception to 11).

9.4 Reception difference

The difference between the number of pupils on roll in reception (only those pupils aged 4 and over at the start of the academic year) in each school between the

autumn 2021 and spring 2022 censuses is provided in the dataset.

This is calculated by subtracting the total number of reception year pupils in autumn 2021 from the total in spring 2022 or given as zero if the result of this calculation is negative. If there are no year R pupils at the school then the result is zero. This is illustrated in the table below.

Table 4: reception difference illustration

URN	Autumn 2021 (1) Number of pupils in reception year	Autumn 2022 (2) Number of pupils in reception year	(2) – (1)	Reception difference
xxxx1	0	0	0	0
xxxx2	62	62	0	0
xxxx3	38	33	-5	0
xxxx4	55	62	7	7

10. Detailed specification for individual factors

The NOR filters apply at pupil level for all the indicators. Pupils are excluded from an indicator where they do not have a valid response in the census or other data source for that indicator.

For example, a pupil with no postcode recorded on the census is discounted when calculating a school's IDACI proportions. The data used for each indicator is taken from the autumn 2022 census unless otherwise indicated.

10.1 Deprivation

The allowable indicators are free school meals (FSM), free school meals ever 6 (FSM6) and IDACI.

10.2 Free school meals

- Primary FSM Proportion
- Secondary FSM Proportion

The proportion of pupils eligible for FSM 'according to the autumn 2022 census' has been aggregated to school level, with separate indicators for primary and secondary phase pupils.

10.3 Free school meals Ever 6

- Primary Ever 6 Proportion
- Secondary Ever 6 Proportion

This counts the proportion of pupils on roll on the autumn 2022 census that were recorded as eligible for FSM in any of the censuses (autumn, spring and summer, including the alternative provision (AP) and pupil referral unit (PRU) census) over the previous 6 years. This uses the same data that will be used for allocating the pupil premium.

More information on this indicator and the pupil premium can be found in the [pupil premium information for schools and alternative provision guidance](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings>).

10.4 IDACI

- IDACI Primary Proportion Band G
- IDACI Primary Proportion Band F
- IDACI Primary Proportion Band E
- IDACI Primary Proportion Band D
- IDACI Primary Proportion Band C
- IDACI Primary Proportion Band B
- IDACI Primary Proportion Band A
- IDACI Secondary Proportion Band G
- IDACI Secondary Proportion Band F
- IDACI Secondary Proportion Band E
- IDACI Secondary Proportion Band D
- IDACI Secondary Proportion Band C
- IDACI Secondary Proportion Band B
- IDACI Secondary Proportion Band A

The IDACI is a subset of the indices of multiple deprivation (IMD). It is an area-based measure defined at the level of lower super output area (LSOA) and is based on the data published in September 2019. It is a score between 0 and 1,

which can be interpreted as the proportion of children aged under 16 in the LSOA which are in income deprived households.

Each LSOA is then assigned a rank, with 1 being the most deprived. Further information on the updated IDACI figures can be found in the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) [statistical release \(https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2019\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2019).
(https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/465791/English_Indices_of_Deprivation_2015_-_Statistical_Release.pdf)

Only pupils living in areas with an IDACI rank in the 37.5% most deprived can be assigned deprivation funding through this factor, meaning there are 6 bands which can be given different unit values each for primary, and 6 for secondary phase pupils.

Table 5: IDACI bands

IDACI rank	IDACI band
Pupils in the most deprived 2.5% of LSOAs	A
Pupils in the next 5% most deprived LSOAs (2.5% to 7.5%)	B
Pupils in the next 5% most deprived LSOAs (7.5% to 12.5%)	C
Pupils in the next 5% most deprived LSOAs (12.5% to 17.5%)	D
Pupils in the next 10% most deprived LSOAs (17.5% to 27.5%)	E
Pupils in the next 10% most deprived LSOAs (27.5% to 37.5%)	F
Pupils in the remaining 62.5% LSOAs	G

For each of the bands, the proportion of pupils on the autumn 2022 census with valid IDACI details has been aggregated to school level, with separate indicators for primary and secondary phase pupils.

10.5 English as an additional language (EAL)

- EAL 3 Primary Proportion
- EAL 3 Secondary Proportion

The EAL indicator is based on the language code given in the census. Both the short code set and the long code set are grouped so that pupils with an English code (including believed to be English) are '1_ENG', pupils whose language is unknown or undeclared are '3_UNK' and all other pupils are '2_OTH'.

Pupils attract EAL funding if they are grouped as '2_OTH' from the language code on the autumn 2022 census and can be shown to have been in the school system for less than 3 years. This is achieved by deriving a pupil level 'years in system' count based on the pupil's presence in the autumn 2019, autumn 2020 and autumn 2021 censuses.

Using the years in system indicator and the current national curriculum year, an estimated national curriculum start year can be derived. This is important, as the indicator is offset for pupils who were in year reception, N1 or N2 for any of the years covered. This is done because language did not previously have to be declared in the census for pupils aged less than 5, causing the data for pupils when in reception year to be partial and unrepresentative. Also, for this reason, pupils in reception year are excluded from the calculation of the ratios. Pupils grouped as '3_UNK' are also excluded.

A school's 'EAL 3 Primary Proportion' is calculated as the number of pupils in year groups 1 to 6 meeting the EAL 3 criteria, divided by the total number of pupils in years 1 to 6 with a valid language code.

Corresponding calculations are done to obtain the secondary proportions.

10.6 Prior attainment

The early years foundation stage profile (EYFSP) results and key stage 2 attainment data are allowable indicators for primary and secondary prior attainment respectively.

Primary prior attainment

Funding for primary schools can be targeted at pupils who did not achieve a good level of development on the new EYFSP.

- Low Attainment under new EYFSP Proportion

Pupils in the autumn 2022 census in years 1, and 4 to 6, are matched onto the new EYFSP data using their UPN. As no tests were carried out for pupils in years 2 and 3 in 2020 and 2021, the year 4 proportion is used, if available. If the school has no year 4 pupils, the proportion entered on the 2022 to 2023 APT is used. If this is not available then the local authority average for year 4 is used.

A school's proportion in the dataset is the number of pupils in years 1 to 6 recorded as not achieving a good level of development divided by the number of pupils in

years 1 to 6 recorded in the attainment data. Pupils who could not be matched onto the attainment data, or for whom the attainment data does not provide a result, are excluded from this calculation.

Secondary prior attainment

- Low Attainment Secondary Proportion Year 7
- Low Attainment Secondary Proportion Year 8
- Low Attainment Secondary Proportion Year 9
- Low Attainment Secondary Proportion Year 10
- Low Attainment Secondary Proportion Year 11

For secondary schools, funding can be targeted at pupils who are below the expected standard of achievement in either English reading, English teacher-assessed writing, or mathematics at key stage 2. Specifically, this means pupils scoring 'B' or 'NS' or 'CA' with a scaled score below 100 (after any adjustment) in mathematics or English reading; and pupils scoring 'BLW', 'HNM', 'PKF', 'PKE', 'PKG' or 'WTS' in English teacher assessed writing.

For years 7, 10 and 11, only pupils who have undertaken the assessment have been considered in calculating each school's proportion. Pupils marked as absent or with a result other than those listed are excluded from this calculation. Pupils in years 7, 10 and 11 in the autumn 2022 census, who could not be matched onto the key stage 2 attainment data, are also excluded.

For pupils in years 8 and 9, as there were no tests in 2020 and 2021, the year 10 proportion is used, if available. If the school has no year 10 pupils, the proportion entered on the 2022 to 2023 APT is used. If this is not available then the local authority average for year 10 is used.

10.7 Mobility

- Mobility Primary Proportion
- Mobility Secondary Proportion

A separate primary and secondary school level proportion is provided, based on the number of pupils whose first census entry at their current school (or any of its predecessors) is within the previous 3 academic years, and whose first entry was not in an autumn census. If the pupil started in reception and their first entry is in autumn or spring, they will not be counted. Pupils who started the school in nursery classes are not mobile.

Any pupil appearing at a new school in the first census after its opening date will not be counted as mobile.

As a result of the cancellation of the summer 2020 census, a pupil will be classed as mobile where:

- they have an entry date at the autumn census school which is after the spring 2020 census date up to, and including the summer 2020 census date (between 17 January 2020 and 21 May 2020, and
- their school's URN in autumn 2022 is different from the URN in spring 2020, and
- their school URN opened on, or before, the date of the spring census

Any pupils which are duplicated (appearing against multiple schools) will be given null values, so will be excluded from the calculation of the mobility ratio.

Table 6 illustration of pupil mobility calculation

Pupil	NC year actual	First census pupil registered at school (from previous 9 returns)	Academic year of first census	In previous 3 academic years?	Start year	School (or predecessor) opening date	NC year
1	R	Autumn 2022	2022 to 2023	Yes	R	September 2004	
2	3	Spring 2020	2019 to 2020	Yes	R	August 2015	
3	5	Spring 2021	2020 to 2021	Yes	3	January 2017	
4	5	Summer 2020	2019 to 2020	Yes	2	January 2013	
5	7	Autumn 2022	2022 to 2023	Yes	7	September 2015	
6	8	Autumn 2020	2020 to 2021	Yes	6	August 2013	

Pupil	NC year actual	First census pupil registered at school (from previous 9 returns)	Academic year of first census	In previous 3 academic years?	Start year	School (or predecessor) opening date	NC
7	8	Summer 2020	2019 to 2020	Yes	5	September 2004	
8	9	Spring 2021	2021 to 2022	Yes	8	December 2020	

Funding may be targeted only at those schools experiencing pupil mobility above a 6% threshold, and funding is not provided for the first 6% of mobile pupils. Each school's mobility proportions given in the 'Schools Block Data' sheet of the APT are their actual mobility proportions as calculated; the deduction of the first 6% is done automatically by the APT's calculations.

10.8 Sparsity

- Primary sparsity av. distance to 2nd school
- Secondary sparsity av. distance to 2nd school

The sparsity distance is the shortest distance by road from the school site to the pupil's postcode. To identify the points on the road network, we firstly identify schools' and pupils' locations on a map. To do this we cross-reference geographic data from the school census and GIAS (the department's database of schools), with Ordnance Survey address data.

Schools can typically be located using Unique Property Reference Numbers (UPRNs). UPRNs are a unique numeric identifier for every addressable location, which are allocated and overseen by local authorities. Use of UPRNs represents a change to the current process, enabling us to measure distances from a point on the road closest to a school's specific site as opposed to their postcode centroids, which can be closer to or further away from the actual school site for different schools.

Sometimes schools record UPRNs inaccurately in GIAS, so we revert to use of postcodes or coordinates to locate schools. The GIAS [frequently asked questions](#)

<https://get-information-schools.service.gov.uk/faq>) webpage includes information on how schools can check their UPRNs and correct them if necessary.

For pupils, we locate the closest school building to their home postcode centroid. Locating the building is a necessary additional step allowing us to determine the correct road to route from. We do not include pupils' postcodes that contain only Welsh or Scottish addresses in the calculation of sparsity distances by the road, because their closest or second closest school(s) might be in Wales or Scotland, for which we are unable to calculate a road distance.

Once we have found schools' and pupils' locations, we use the Ordnance Survey road network data to identify the closest access point to their locations on a road. We then calculate the shortest road distance from the nearest point on a road to the school, to the nearest point on a road to the pupil's address, excluding footpaths and, where possible, avoiding roads such as farm tracks, guided busways and roads that have been altered for use principally by pedestrians as these are either unsuitable for normal school to home journeys, or we cannot be certain they will always be accessible. We acknowledge one-way roads as ones that can be accessed and travelled along from either direction. This avoids treating some schools differently, factoring in one-way streets on journeys from schools and pupils' homes but not vice versa (because that is the direction of travel the sparsity distance has been based on).

Once we have calculated road distances, we calculate schools' sparsity distances in the same way as for the 'crow flies' distance method: for each school, we identify pupils for whom it is their closest compatible school (by the road) and calculate the average distance to their second nearest compatible schools (by the road). We compare these distances to the sparsity distance thresholds to determine whether the school is remote.

A school may attract sparsity funding if it is:

- primary and has fewer than 21.4 pupils on average in each year group, and has a sparsity distance that is greater than or equal to 2 miles
- secondary and has fewer than 120 pupils on average in each year group, and has a sparsity distance that is greater than or equal to 3 miles
- a middle school and has fewer than 69.2 pupils on average in each year group, and has a sparsity distance that is greater than or equal to 2 miles
- an all-through school and has fewer than 62.5 pupils on average in each year group, and has a sparsity distance that is greater than or equal to 2 miles

In addition, the factor includes a new distance threshold taper this year. This means that where schools' sparsity distances are marginally below the main distance thresholds for sparsity funding, they will still attract some allocation through the NFF. The distance threshold taper has been set 20% below the main distance thresholds.

The default distance threshold is 3 miles for secondary schools and 2 miles for all other schools. If a local authority uses the distance taper, a primary school will meet the distance criteria if it has a sparsity distance greater than 1.6 miles (2

miles x 80%). Any primary school with a sparsity distance between 1.6 and 2 miles would receive a tapered amount providing it also meets the year group size criteria.

You may, if you wish, reduce the pupil numbers and increase the distance criteria (they may narrow the criteria), but the criteria quoted above may not be widened. You can make exceptional applications on behalf of existing schools that do not attract sparsity funding using the above criteria.

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