

IMPORTANT! *Please pass this to all persons responsible for your Census return.*

OCTOBER SCHOOLS' CENSUS 2025: GUIDANCE

All Schools

Schools' Census Day is **Thursday 2nd October 2025**. We would be grateful if you could load your autumn 2025 school's census data to COLLECT by **noon on Tuesday 7th October 2025 at the latest**.

Please carry out your Schools' Census return on or immediately after this day. For those schools using SIMS, in order to successfully complete the Autumn School Census, you must have the SIMS 7 Summer Upgrade (7.224) or later installed. To check which version of SIMS is installed, open SIMS and then select **Help | About SIMS**. The version should read 7.224 or later.

MIS providers have produced a range of documents relating to the Schools Census which give a comprehensive overview of the schools' census and are all available in the Documentation Centre. These include:

- [Preparing for the Schools Census \(version for each school phase\)](#)
- [Producing the Schools Census \(version for each school phase\)](#)

Over the period of the census please monitor the MIS provider website for notifications of any fixes or file sets that may need to be applied to the Management Information System.

BUDGETS – IMPORTANT

Data collected via the 2025 autumn school census will be used in the calculation of the school's block of the dedicated schools grant (DSG), pupil premium allocations for 26/27, funding allocations for the early years entitlements and also the universal infant free school meals funding, therefore it is vitally important that the census data for your school is submitted promptly and accurately. Post 16 data collected via the autumn school census will be used by the education and skills funding agency (ESFA) to calculate post 16 funding allocations for schools with sixth forms.

The DfE's 2025/26 schools census guidance can be found here. [Complete the school census - Guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/schools-census-2025-26-guidance)

If you have any queries on the census and you are unable to get clarification from this document, please do contact me.

Key Dates for the School Census Autumn 2025 Return

Census Date: **02/10/2025**

Free School Meals started on or before 2025-10-02, where the free school meal end date is either not present or between 2025-05-16 and 2025-10-02 (inclusive)

Attendance 2025 (not applicable to Nursery schools) collected from the summer term 2025 as follows:

- Summer term 2024 to 2025 data is collected from Easter Monday 2025-04-21 to the Sunday 2025-05-25 before the usual late spring bank holiday.
- Summer second half-term data is collected from the usual late spring bank holiday Monday 2025-05-26 to 2025-07-31.

Exclusions collected from 01/01/2025 to 31/07/2025 (not applicable to Nursery schools)

Alternative Provision Placements (not applicable to Nursery schools) collected from 15/05/2025 to 01/10/2025(Inclusive)

1. Autumn census COLLECT familiarisation

A 'beta' release of the 2025 autumn school census live COLLECT blade will be available to you week commencing 8 September. This will remain available until 4pm on Friday 27 September at which point the blade will be removed and cleared out in advance of the start of the live collection on Thursday 2 October. The DfE 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 staff completing the autumn school census for the first time. Please note that some checks require reference data which is not yet in place so may trigger incorrectly – this will be in place in time for 'go live' so genuine errors will remain at that point.

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 in the same manner as you would for the live collection. You must submit your data using COLLECT, the DfE's centralised data collection and management system.

2. Main changes

Full details of the main changes for the 2025 autumn school census are published on the DfE's website here:

[Complete the school census - Guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complete-the-school-census-2025)

Please consult this guide for further details to supplement the brief summary provided below.

2.1 New data items introduced for this academic year

No new data items.

2.2 Changes to existing data items

- Learner Funding and Monitoring (FAM) Type) – the linking code set CS 130 has been created to record English and maths minimum hours.
- Learner Funding and Monitoring (FAM) Type Code) – the linking code set CS117 has been updated to record English and maths minimum hours.
- Expanded hours has been amended to allow up to 30 hours to be claimed, following the policy change from September 2025.

2.3 Deleted data items

- Information about traineeships will be discontinued from autumn 2025.

3. User guides for the 2025-26 academic year

Schools' Census Guide

Guides for the 2025-26 academic year have now been updated and are available on the schools' census website here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complete-the-school-census>

Submitting your data

To assist schools with making a successful school census return, the DfE have published guides on the school census website - <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complete-the-school-census/submit-your-data>

4. Important Information

Free school meal eligibility

Since 1 April 2018, all existing free school meal claimants have remained eligible during the Universal Credit rollout, regardless of changes in household circumstances. This protection will continue until the end of the 2025–26 school year. From the 2026–27 school year, entitlement will extend to all children in households receiving Universal Credit. Transitional protections will end, and eligibility will be based solely on current criteria. Further guidance will be issued before September 2026.

Free School Meal eligibility should not end dated unless:

- a parent has said they do not wish the child to be recorded as eligible for free school meals and receive a free school meal
- a pupil transfers from another UK country – their non-English free school meals must have an end date
- a parent notifies the school that their support under the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 or the pension credit has ended
- a parent notifies the school that they no longer qualify for free school meals under the criteria for families with no recourse to public funds (NRPF)

Multi-character DfE attendance codes

From 19th August 2024, the DfE will be using a mixture of single and multiple character codes to capture attendance data from English schools. Schools will be aware of the full range of absence and attendance codes, which include values for attendance and for approved education activities, as these codes are used by their MIS when recording pupil attendance. The full list of codes can be found at : [Complete the school census - Find a school census code: applicable from August 2024 - Guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Pupil's home addresses: It is extremely important that all pupils' addresses (including the postcode) are entered correctly and validated within SIMS. Postcodes are used by the DfE for High Needs funding allocations and by the LA for analysis. Kindly ensure that all outdated addresses in the MIS are appropriately end-dated and excluded from the census return.

Part Time Pupils: Please note that the part-time pupil indicator shows whether a pupil is part-time in education (attends fewer than 10 sessions a week) rather than part-time at one or more establishments. A pupil attending three full days in one school and two full days in another school should not be classified by either school as part-time. Compulsory school age pupils on a part-time timetable should be recorded as full-time with the appropriate absence code used for the sessions when they are not required to attend. However, pupils aged under 5 and over the age of 15 can be recorded as part time as they are not of compulsory school age.

For children in receipt of funded early education (those following the learning and development requirements of the early years foundation stage), a child should only be recorded as full-time where they attend education for 10 sessions per week irrespective of the number of funded and / or extended childcare hours.

14-19 Pupils attending course lessons at more than one school: All schools are required to register pupils as Current at their main school and as a Guest at the host school. This is to enable accurate census reports to be generated to inform school budgets. It is important that all schools use exactly the same method of recording to avoid generating census errors. Failure to do this may mean you have to change your data and re-submit your census returns to resolve duplicate pupil errors across the Borough.

Unique learner numbers: Unique learner numbers (ULNs) are mandatory for all pupils aged 14 and above on census day.

Statutory requirements, data sharing and regulations of the schools' census:

The Statutory requirement, data sharing and regulations section of the DfE schools' census guidance contains important information about statutory requirements of the census, including data protection, data sharing and data subject rights. I would recommend that all schools familiarise themselves with the content of this section. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complete-the-school-census/statutory-requirement-data-sharing-and-regulations>

Privacy Notices

DfE provides suggested wording for [privacy notices](#) that schools and local authorities may wish to use. However, where the suggested wording is used, the school / local authority **must review and amend** the wording to reflect local business needs and circumstances. This is especially important, as the school will process data that is not solely for use within census data collections.

It is recommended that the privacy notice is included as part of an induction pack for pupils and staff, is made available on the school website for parents, and features on the staff notice board / intranet. Privacy notices do not need to be issued on an annual basis, where:

- new pupils and staff are made aware of the notices
- the notices have not been amended
- they are readily available in electronic or paper format

However, it remains best practice to remind parents of the school's privacy notices at the start of each term (within any other announcements / correspondence to parents), and it is important that any changes made to the way the school processes personal data are highlighted to data subjects.

5. COLLECT Reports

IMPORTANT - There are a number of reports available in COLLECT for schools to run which will help schools with checking their data. A number of these reports relate to data items that are linked to funding allocations so I would strongly recommend that schools run these reports.

WBC School Census Preparation and Guidance Notes

These notes will be published on the Wokingham School Hub Website at the link below:

[WBC School Census Guidance](#)

Schools' Census Summary documents:

Please note as data submitted this term is used for funding calculations **it is necessary** for all maintained schools to return a copy of the school summary document for the October Census (signed by the Headteacher). Please email a signed scanned copy of the school summary for the Autumn 25 Census to smitha.vinod@wokingham.gov.uk. Please do not include any details sheets as these contains pupil data. This should be received by Friday 10th October 2025.

For any queries regarding this schools census please refer to the contact details below:

Smitha Vinod on 0782 792 9510 smitha.vinod@wokingham.gov.uk

Team email: perf.data@wokingham.gov.uk

2025 School Census Dates

Spring 2026 census date – Thursday 15th January 2026

Summer 2026 census date – Thursday 21st May 2026