

WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Please pass this to all persons responsible for your Schools' Census return.

MAY SCHOOLS' CENSUS 2026: GUIDANCE FOR WBC MAINTAINED SCHOOLS AND PRU'S

SUMMER SCHOOLS' CENSUS DAY IS THURSDAY 21st MAY 2026

Schools' and PRU'S Census Day is **Thursday 21st May 2026**. Please carry out your schools' census return on or immediately after this day. Please ensure that your data is loaded to COLLECT and s2s by **Tuesday 26th May** at the latest.

If you are using ESS SIMS, in order to run the School Census Summer 2026 Return, you must have the latest SIMS Release installed which should read 7.228 or later.

To check the version of SIMS installed, open SIMS then select **Help | About SIMS**.

MIS providers have produced a range of documents relating to the Schools Census Summer 2026 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.

Summer census COLLECT familiarisation.

A 'beta' release of the 2026 summer school census live COLLECT blade is now available for you to become familiar with. This will remain available until 4pm on Friday 15 May at which point the blade will be removed and cleared out in advance of the start of the live collection on Thursday 21 May.

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 summer 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 summer 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 in the same manner as you would for the live collection.

In previous collections the use of the school census familiarisation blade has been extremely low, therefore if the number of users continue to be low again this collection, the DfE will look to undertake a consultation about the future of this service.

1. DATA ITEMS

1.1. Funded Hours for Pupils Aged Under 5

Funded early years entitlement hours are collected, for eligible pupils aged 2, 3 and 4 years in nursery provision and record the total number of [free entitlement to early education hours](#) spent in education provision (following the learning and development requirements of the early years foundation stage) at the school

All children become eligible for funded early education from the term following a child's third birthday irrespective of background or family circumstances (the universal entitlement). A specified subset of disadvantaged 2-year-olds also become eligible from the term following a child's second birthday. The Early Years Team at WBC will confirm which children meet the eligibility criteria should schools not know. In some circumstances, 9-month-olds to 2-year-olds with working parents are also eligible for Expanded funded entitlement hours. Some 2-year-olds may be eligible for both the 15-hour entitlement for disadvantaged 2-year-olds and the expanded entitlement but can only take up one of these entitlements. In those circumstances, children should be recorded against the disadvantaged entitlement (funded hours). Some 3 and 4-year-olds are also eligible for up to an additional 15 hours per week – the extended entitlement.

- Funded Hours are any hours funded under the free early education entitlements.
- Extended Hours are any hours funded under extended funded entitlement (for working parents)
- Expanded Hours are any hours funded under expanded funded entitlement (for working parents)
- Hours at Setting is the total of Funded Hours plus Extended Hours or Expanded Hours plus any additional hours of education funded from other sources such as parents.

Census	Date of birth ranges
Summer	2 and 3 year olds born between 01/09/2021 and 31/03/2024 (inclusive) - all relevant schools and year groups
	4 year olds born between 01/04/21 and 31/08/2021 (inclusive) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• For nursery schools (that is: phase = 'NS') – all year groups• For all schools excluding nurseries (that is: phase ≠ 'NS') – pupil national curriculum year groups E1, E2, N1 and N2 only

Expanded funded entitlement hours are collected for 2-year-olds with working parents (where the parent has a valid eligibility code), who are in education provision (that is, following the learning and development requirements of the early years foundation stage) at the school and on roll on census day.

Census	Date of birth ranges
Summer	9-month-olds to one-year-olds born between 2024-04-01 and 2025-06-30 (inclusive) with an eligibility code - all relevant schools and year groups
	2-year-olds born between 2023-04-01 and 2024-03-31 (inclusive) - all relevant schools and year groups

1.2 Eligibility code indicator

The eligibility code indicator is an 11-digit integer that is required for pupils who claim extended or expanded childcare hours at your setting. As with the extended and expanded childcare hours field, this applies to pupils who were aged 2, 3 and 4 as of 31 August and in 'E1', 'E2', 'N1' and 'N2' only. The code confirms the eligibility of working parents to receive the 15 extended funded entitlement hours, or the 15 expanded funded entitlement hours. This is particularly important as parents may split this entitlement between two providers.

It is important to run the code through the Early Years Funding Portal before offering extended or expanded hours to a child. This will ensure that the code is valid for the current term. In order to be valid, the code must have a start date of before the 31st of March for the Summer Term. This is regardless of when the start of summer term is.

Children are unable to start extended or expanded hours if they are in their codes grace period. The code, once issued, remains fixed and refers to a single parent / child combination - where a parent has two children, each child will have their own code. However, when the school is presented with the code by the parent, **the school must** confirm the code's validity with their local authority. If you are unsure if a child is eligible contact the Early Years Team for Support.

2. Guidance Notes for completing your Census:

The DfE Schools' Census Home page can be found on the DfE website and can be accessed via the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complete-the-school-census>

MIS providers have issued guidance documents relating to **Preparing for the School Census Summer 2026 Return and Producing the School Census Summer 2026 Return** and are available in their website. These documents give extensive information about the preparation required for the summer census.

Summary documents: Please note, it is not necessary to return your school's census summary document to the local authority this term.

3. Uploading your Census return

For the May 2026 Schools' Census, we are asking **all** schools to submit their electronic file via the COLLECT section of the **DfE Sign In website** portal by Tuesday 26th May. The URL is [DfE Sign-in](#)

We would be grateful if all schools could **also** submit their return to WBC via s2s. We appreciate that this is an additional burden for schools however this then enables us to keep data held in the ONE system up to date with the data held by schools. COLLECT and s2s are accessed using the DfE Sign-In System.

Once the return has been uploaded to COLLECT and you have addressed any errors produced, then it is necessary to click the **Submit** button on your home screen to hand over the return to us. Any queries that are generated must be investigated and the data amended as necessary. If the query has a valid reason, then you may note this on COLLECT, for example a pupil being taught out of year group for their age – if this is correct schools can place a note against this query in COLLECT. A full list of acceptable notepad entries for each possible query are made available on the DfE Schools' Census website [Check your data - Complete the school census - Guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

4. Information For All Schools

Key Dates

- **Attendance** data collected from 01/01/2026 to 05/04/2026.
- **All suspensions and permanent exclusions** data collected from 01/08/2025 to 05/04/2026
- **Alternative Provision Placements** collected from 15/01/2026 to 20/05/2026
- **Free School Meals** started on or before 2026-05-21, where the free school meals end date is either not present or between 2026-01-16 and 2026-05-21 (inclusive)

4.1 UPN Information for Nursery, Infant, Primary and Special Schools

UPN's should be allocated on a pupil's first entry to a maintained school in England including entry to a nursery school or a nursery class in an infant or primary school. If a pupil with an existing UPN moves from a nursery school or class to an infant or primary school another UPN should **not** be issued.

For a pupil transferring from another school, the previous school should notify the new school of the pupil's UPN. In cases where this does not occur, the new school should make reasonable efforts to ascertain the child's UPN.

If a child's previous school is known the new school should contact it to request the UPN (which can be transferred using the CTF). On receipt, the UPN should be recorded in the normal manner. Where the former school fails to provide a pupil's UPN the receiving school should inform the LA school census contact who may be able to provide

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assistance. Similarly, in cases where the previous school is not known, the LA may be able to investigate and confirm the pupil's valid UPN. For pupils transferring schools please do not issue a new permanent or temporary UPN without checking the above with the LA first.

One exception to this is when a pupil has been adopted. Standard practice for pupils who are adopted after they have been allocated a UPN is that they should be issued with new permanent UPNs and their previous UPN should be deleted and not recorded under 'former UPN'. As part of this process, it is important that there is no link retained between the pre-adoption record (with the original UPN) and the post-adoption record (with the new UPN).

However in situations where the adoption creates no safeguarding risks to the individual pupil – for example, where the child has remained within the same school before, and after, adoption and has undergone no material change in identity as a result of the adoption, it is permissible to retain previous UPN information for the adopted pupil where express permission has been granted by both the pupil's adopted parents and the designated manager of the local authority's adoption service.

A second exception to this is when a child is deemed to be at risk. Schools may receive pupils who, for their own safety have changed their identity. This will be the case for children in the witness protection programme and for those fleeing from abusive family members. As part of their new identities these pupils should be issued with new permanent UPNs, their previous UPN must be deleted and not recorded under 'former UPN'.

UPNs issued by Welsh schools can be fully integrated into the English system and should therefore be retained as the permanent UPN. UPNs issued by Scottish and Northern Irish schools cannot be integrated into the English system; therefore schools must allocate new permanent UPNs to pupils transferring from Scotland or Northern Ireland. Further information regarding UPN's can be found on the DfE website [UPN Guidance](#)

4.2 Pupil Date of entry

Date of entry to current school: **Please Note:** Those pupils who are transferring from Nursery to Reception in the same school do **NOT** need new entry dates.

4.3 Information for Schools

Pupils attending lessons at more than one school:

All schools are required to register pupils attending some lessons at another school as Current Main at their main school and as Subsidiary /Guest at the other school.

5. What WBC requires from schools for the schools' census

Please return the following:

- ❖ **All schools: Census electronic file - To COLLECT website and to s2s via DfE Sign In**

For any queries regarding the 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