

## Statistical Bulletin 9/2017

# Annual enrolments at grant-aided schools in Northern Ireland 2017/18:

## Basic provisional statistics

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The purpose of this statistical release is to present basic provisional enrolment figures for schools and for children in funded pre-school education for 2017/18.

**Key points:**

- There are 173,745 pupils in **primary** schools (years 1-7), and this continues to increase even though there are fewer primary schools year on year.
- In total 140,550 pupils are enrolled in **post-primary** schools; a slight increase of more than 100 pupils from 2016/17.
- There are 23,501 pupils in **funded pre-school** education, that is, pupils attending a nursery school or class, reception or funded voluntary and private pre-school.
- Approximately 100,000 pupils in all schools in Northern Ireland are entitled to **free school meals** and this represents about three in ten of all pupils.



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## Introduction

The data in the following bulletin are taken from the school enrolments census, which was conducted in October 2017. Data collected through the school census exercise are used by the Department of Education (DE) to inform a wide range of policy areas, including finance allocations, school estate development and planning, special education, school improvement, area based planning, extended schools, additional educational needs, early years and integrated and Irish medium education. Other users include the Education Authority, the Education and Training Inspectorate and to inform responses to Assembly questions and requests from academic researchers, journalists, lobby groups and the public.

This first release of the basic statistics contains information which is used in the process to allocate funding to schools. These figures are provisional and subject to change. A further statistical release, containing a more detailed set of tables based on finalised and validated data, will be published in February 2018.

## Section 1: Schools in Northern Ireland

- The numbers of **schools** in Northern Ireland continues to decrease, from 1,187 in 2013 to 1,153 in 2017 (Table 1). Much of this decline is accounted for by the drop of 22 **primary schools** (including preparatory departments) and 9 **non-grammar schools** from 2013.
- The number of funded **pre-school settings** has dropped from 793 last year to 773 this year. This includes 383 voluntary and private pre-schools, 243 primary schools with nursery provision, 95 nursery schools and 52 primary schools with reception classes<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> To avoid double counting, the number of primary schools with nursery or reception classes have not been split out separately in table 1

**Table 1: Number of Schools and Pre-school Education Centres by Management Type**

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
<b>VOLUNTARY and PRIVATE PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION CENTRES<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>396</b>	<b>401</b>	<b>405</b>	<b>399</b>	<b>383</b>
<b>NURSERY SCHOOLS</b>					
Controlled	64	64	64	64	64
Catholic Maintained	32	32	32	31	31
<b>Total nursery schools</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>95</b>
<b>PRIMARY SCHOOLS</b>					
Controlled	370	370	368	366	365
Catholic Maintained	384	381	374	370	367
Other Maintained	29	29	29	28	28
Controlled Integrated	19	19	20	22	22
Grant Maintained Integrated	23	23	23	23	23
<b>Total</b>	<b>825</b>	<b>822</b>	<b>814</b>	<b>809</b>	<b>805</b>
Grammar school preparatory depts.	14	14	13	12	12
<b>Total primary schools and preparatory depts.</b>	<b>839</b>	<b>836</b>	<b>827</b>	<b>821</b>	<b>817</b>
<b>POST PRIMARY SCHOOLS</b>					
<b>Secondary (non grammar) schools</b>					
Controlled	53	51	49	49	49
Catholic Maintained	68	68	64	64	62
Other Maintained	1	1	2	2	2
Controlled Integrated	5	5	5	5	5
Grant Maintained Integrated	15	15	15	15	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>133</b>
<b>Grammar schools</b>					
Controlled	17	18	17	16	16
Voluntary					
Under Catholic management	29	29	29	29	29
Under other management	22	21	21	21	21
<b>Total</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>Total Post Primary schools</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>199</b>
<b>SPECIAL SCHOOLS</b>	<b>Total</b>	40	39	39	39
<b>HOSPITAL SCHOOLS</b>	<b>Total</b>	1	1	1	1
<b>INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS</b>	<b>Total</b>	15	14	14	14
<b>ALL SCHOOLS<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>1,187</b>	<b>1,180</b>	<b>1,166</b>	<b>1,153</b>
<b>ALL SCHOOLS AND PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION CENTRES</b>		<b>1,583</b>	<b>1,581</b>	<b>1,571</b>	<b>1,558</b>
		<b>1,536</b>			

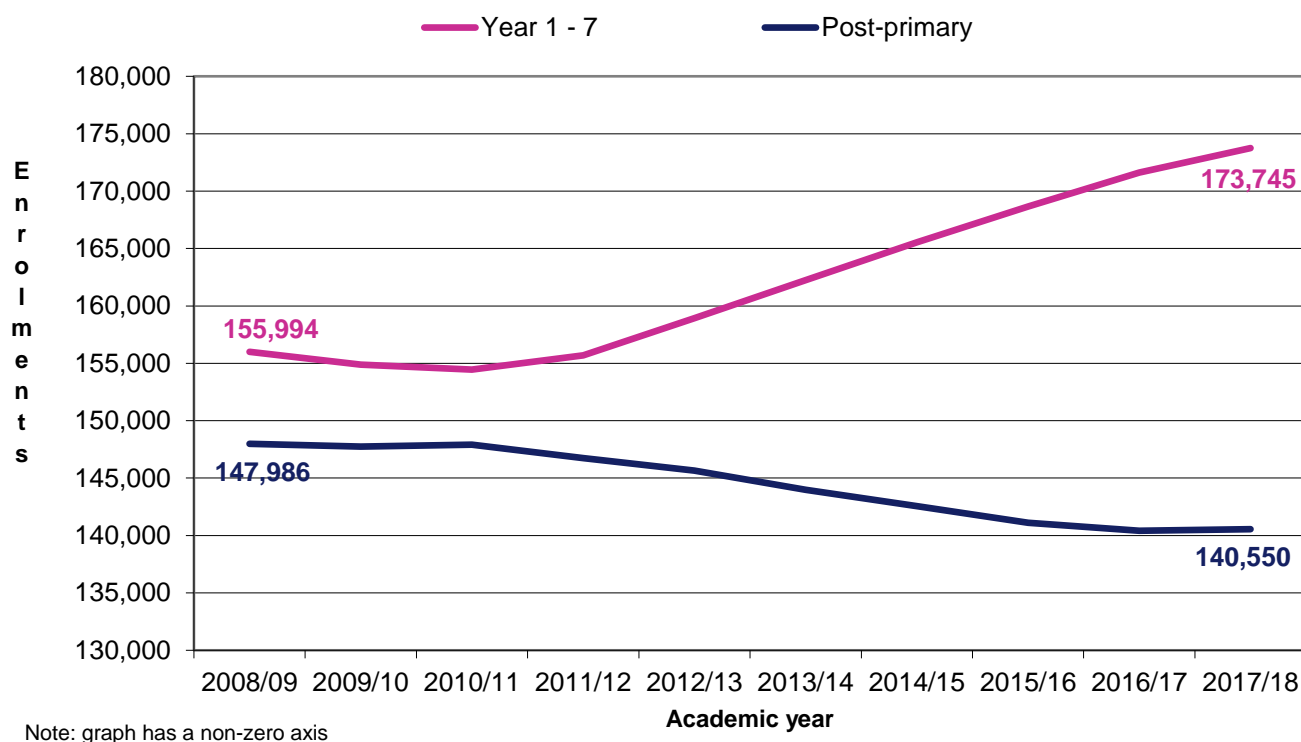
1 Voluntary and private centres funded under the Pre-school Education Expansion Programme, which began in 1998/99.

2 All schools total does not count preparatory departments as separate schools as they are so closely linked to grammar schools

## Section 2: Enrolments in schools in Northern Ireland

- There were more than 344,000 pupils in **all** funded schools (including voluntary and private pre-schools) in October 2017 (Table 2). This has increased for the eighth successive year, and has risen by more than 2,000 pupils alone compared to last year.
- Enrolments in **primary schools** (years 1-7) follow the overall trend, with an increase of more than 2,000 pupils on last year to 173,745 (Figure 1). This is the highest number of primary school pupils recorded since 1999. The increase observed is in line with the rise in the number of 4-10 year olds in NISRA’s population estimates over the last five years<sup>2</sup>.

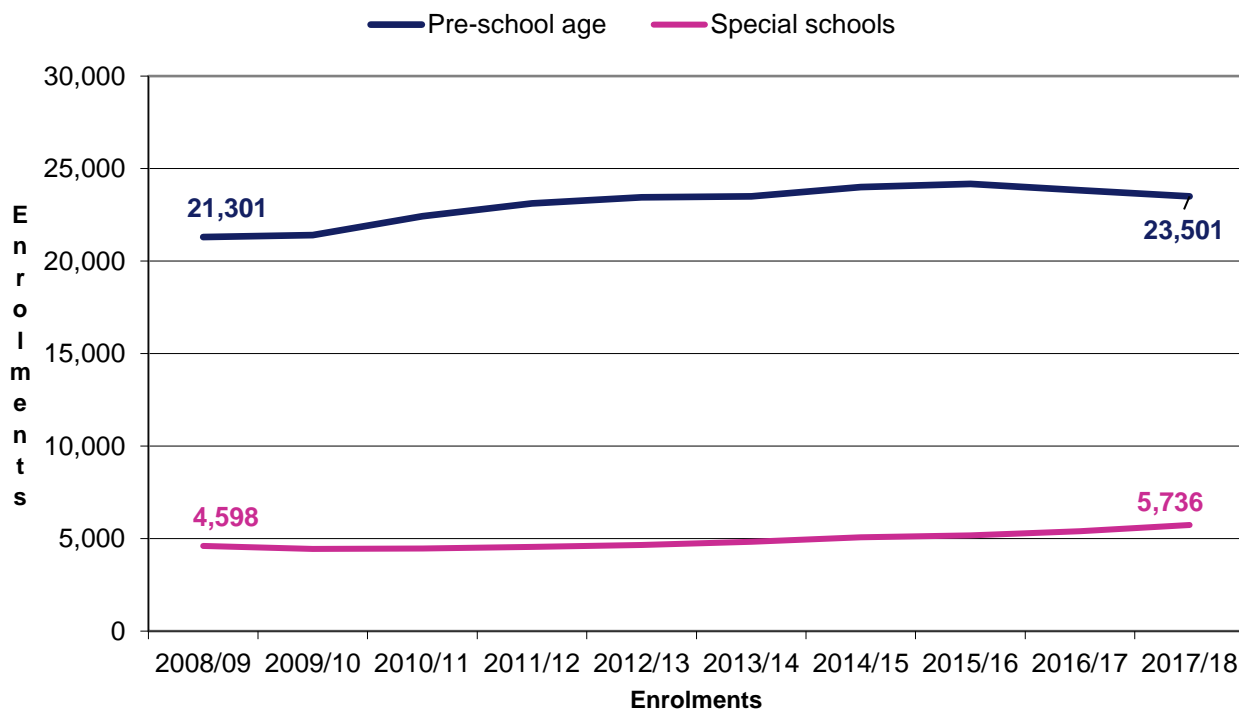
**Figure 1 - Enrolments in primary and post-primary schools in Northern Ireland 2008/09 - 2017/18**



<sup>2</sup> <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/sites/nisra.gov.uk/files/publications/NI-sya-6116.xls>

- Enrolments in **post-primary schools** have slightly increased for the first time in seven years to 140,550 pupils.
  - Compared to last year, enrolments have increased marginally in **non-grammar** and decreased slightly in **grammar** schools (Table 2).
  - The number of pupils enrolled in **sixth form** has dropped for the third successive year. This year enrolments have declined by 1,000 pupils since last year and now stands at 28,478 (Table 2).
- The number of children in funded **pre-school education**, that is, reception classes, nursery schools and units, or voluntary and private pre-school centres, is 23,501, which has decreased by over 300 pupils since last year. Much of this decrease is attributable to the drop in pupils in voluntary and private pre-schools.
- **Special school** enrolments have also gradually increased, rising by more than 900 pupils in the last four years to 5,736 in 2017/18.

**Figure 2 - Enrolments in special schools and funded pre-school education in Northern Ireland 2008/09 - 2017/18**



**Table 2: Number of Pupils in Schools and Children in Funded Pre-school Education by Type of Establishment attended**

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	
<b>VOLUNTARY and PRIVATE PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION CENTRES<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>8,360</b>	<b>8,621</b>	<b>8,716</b>	<b>8,271</b>	<b>7,954</b>	
<b>NURSERY SCHOOLS</b>						
Full-time	3,983	4,000	4,011	3,955	3,944	
Part-time	1,869	1,882	1,893	1,909	1,894	
<b>Total nursery school pupils</b>	<b>5,852</b>	<b>5,882</b>	<b>5,904</b>	<b>5,864</b>	<b>5,838</b>	
<b>PRIMARY SCHOOLS and PREPARATORY DEPARTMENTS</b>						
<b>Nursery class pupils</b>						
Full-time	5,110	5,103	5,195	5,174	5,146	
Part-time	3,842	4,062	4,117	4,292	4,377	
<b>Total nursery class pupils<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>8,952</b>	<b>9,165</b>	<b>9,312</b>	<b>9,466</b>	<b>9,523</b>	
Reception	343	329	241	224	186	
<b>Year 1-7 classes</b>						
Primary schools (year 1 - 7)	160,453	163,735	166,912	169,908	172,035	
Grammar school preparatory depts. (year 1 - 7)	1,800	1,813	1,757	1,704	1,710	
<b>Total year 1 - 7 pupils</b>	<b>162,253</b>	<b>165,548</b>	<b>168,669</b>	<b>171,612</b>	<b>173,745</b>	
<b>Total primary school pupils</b>	<b>171,548</b>	<b>175,042</b>	<b>178,222</b>	<b>181,302</b>	<b>183,454</b>	
<b>POST PRIMARY SCHOOLS</b>						
Non-grammar schools	Years 8-12	68,300	66,516	64,508	64,888	65,881
	Sixth form <sup>4</sup>	13,039	13,324	13,245	12,544	11,851
	<b>Total</b>	<b>81,339</b>	<b>79,840</b>	<b>77,753</b>	<b>77,432</b>	<b>77,732</b>
Grammar schools	Years 8-12	45,352	45,324	46,034	46,040	46,191
	Sixth form <sup>4</sup>	17,282	17,389	17,325	16,941	16,627
	<b>Total</b>	<b>62,634</b>	<b>62,713</b>	<b>63,359</b>	<b>62,981</b>	<b>62,818</b>
<b>Total post primary pupils</b>	<b>143,973</b>	<b>142,553</b>	<b>141,112</b>	<b>140,413</b>	<b>140,550</b>	
<b>SPECIAL SCHOOLS<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Total</b>	4,832	5,064	5,173	5,407	5,736
<b>INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS</b>	<b>Total</b>	688	642	658	514	592
<b>ALL SCHOOLS</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>326,893</b>	<b>329,183</b>	<b>331,069</b>	<b>333,500</b>	<b>336,170</b>
<b>ALL SCHOOLS AND PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION CENTRES</b>		<b>335,253</b>	<b>337,804</b>	<b>339,785</b>	<b>341,771</b>	<b>344,124</b>

1. Voluntary and private centres funded under the Pre-school Education Expansion Programme, which began in 1998/99.

2. In a change from previous bulletins, the number of pupils in the Hospital school have been removed. Their enrolments have been counted against the mainstream school they are registered to

3. Nursery and reception pupils who are enrolled in preparatory departments of grammar schools have not been included as they are not funded by the Department.

4. Pupils in sixth form refer to those that are studying level 3 qualifications (i.e. A Level or equivalent)

### Section 3: Pupils entitled to free school meals<sup>3</sup>

- Based on provisional data, approximately 100,000 pupils are entitled to **free school meals** in 2017/18, which represents 29% of children in funded education (excluding voluntary and private pre-schools) (Table 3).
- The proportion of pupils that are free school meal entitled has dropped slightly from last year in **primary** (30% compared to 31% last year) and **post-primary** (28% compared to 29% last year) schools. (Table 3).
- There are some differences in free school meal entitlement by school type. **Special schools** have a much higher than average proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals (51%). **Non-grammar** pupils are also much more likely than **grammar** school pupils to be entitled to free school meals (39% compared to 14%) (Table 3).

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.deni.gov.uk/articles/school-milk-and-meals-background>



**Table 3: Percentage of Children Entitled to Free School Meals<sup>1,4,5</sup> by Type of Establishment attended**

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
<b>VOLUNTARY and PRIVATE</b>					
<b>PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION CENTRES<sup>1,2</sup></b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>NURSERY SCHOOLS<sup>1</sup></b>					
Full-time	45%	47%	50%	48%	44%
Part-time	9%	11%	12%	10%	10%
<b>All nursery schools</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>33%</b>
<b>PRIMARY SCHOOLS</b>					
<b>Nursery class pupils<sup>1,4</sup></b>					
Full-time	43%	44%	44%	42%	41%
Part-time	11%	12%	12%	12%	11%
<b>Total nursery class pupils<sup>6</sup></b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>27%</b>
Reception	17%	19%	14%	17%	11%
<b>Year 1-7 classes</b>					
Primary schools (year 1 - 7)	31%	32%	32%	32%	30%
Grammar school preparatory depts. (year 1 - 7)	1%	1%	1%	2%	2%
<b>Total year 1 - 7 pupils</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>30%</b>
<b>Total primary school pupils</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>30%</b>
<b>POST PRIMARY SCHOOLS</b>					
Secondary (non grammar) schools	27%	37%	40%	41%	39%
Grammar schools	7%	12%	14%	14%	14%
<b>TOTAL POST PRIMARY PUPILS</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>28%</b>
<b>SPECIAL SCHOOLS<sup>7</sup></b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>51%</b>
<b>ALL SCHOOLS<sup>3</sup></b>					
<b>Total</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>30%</b>
<b>TOTAL SCHOOLS AND PRE-EDUCATION CENTRES</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>29%</b>

1. For pupils and children in the nursery sector and in voluntary and private pre-school centres, where free school meal entitlement data is not appropriate, the number of pupils with (a) parent(s) in receipt of Job Seeker's allowance or Income Support is used instead of free school meal entitlement.

2. Voluntary and private centres funded under the Pre-school Education Expansion Programme, which began in 1998/99.

3. Free school meal entitlement data is not validated for independent schools therefore has not been included

4. Eligibility under the Working Tax Credit free school meal criterion was introduced on a phased basis with Nursery, Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 pupils eligible from September 2010 and Key Stage 2 pupils eligible from September 2011. It was extended to post-primary pupils from September 2014.

5. These figures may be subject to revision once the Education Authority's auditing process is completed.

6. Nursery and reception pupils who are enrolled in preparatory departments of grammar schools have not been included as they are not funded by the Department.

7. Free school meal data for special schools was not validated by the Department before 2014/15

## Notes for readers

### *National Statistics*

1. The United Kingdom Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

Designation can be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics:

- meet identified user needs;
- are well explained and readily accessible;
- are produced according to sound methods, and
- are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.

Once statistics have been designated as National Statistics it is a statutory requirement that the Code of Practice shall continue to be observed.

2. For general enquiries about National Statistics, contact the National Statistics Public Enquiry Service on 0845 601 3034  
minicom: 01633 812399

E-mail: [info@statistics.gov.uk](mailto:info@statistics.gov.uk)

Fax: 01633 652747

Letters: Customer Contact Centre, Office for National Statistics, Rm 1.101,  
Government Buildings, Cardiff Road, Newport, NP10 8XG

3. You can also find National Statistics on the Internet: <http://www.statistics.gov.uk>

### *School Census*

4. The statistics in this release have been derived from the annual School Census; details about the survey may be found at <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/school-enrolments-data-collection-and-validation>. For voluntary and private pre-school centres, and nursery schools, the census consists of a paper return comprising a number of tables; for post-primary, primary and special schools, it consists of a return comprising individual pupil records, made by Electronic Data Interchange.
5. The 2017/18 figures in this statistical release are based on information as at 6 October 2017. They may be subject to minor revision and these will be notified in accordance with our revisions policy. This can be accessed at <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/de/Statistical%20Revisions.pdf>.

6. A further statistical release, containing **finalised figures** and a more detailed set of tables, will be published in February 2018.
7. The figures for nursery *classes* relate to approved nursery classes in primary schools. The figures for reception refer to pupils who were below compulsory school age at 1st July 2017, who were admitted to a reception class or group in primary school following their 4<sup>th</sup> birthday. Schools may admit reception pupils throughout the year, but only those who have been admitted by 31st October are counted in the school census.
8. Further statistics relating to school numbers and enrolments can be found on the DE website ([www.education-ni.gov.uk](http://www.education-ni.gov.uk)) under the Facts and Figures section.

The DE website presents figures taken from the school census, summarised at regional, former Education and Library Board and school level. Statistics on pupil attendance, pupil: teacher ratios, school leaver destinations and qualifications may also be accessed via the website.

8. Information on enrolments collected via the school census process are used to inform DE policy and procedures (particularly School Funding), as well as to inform Education Authority of detailed information useful to them in their auditing processes.

### **School types**

9. Definitions of school management types are as follows:
  - **Controlled:** Schools are managed and funded by the Education Authority through Boards of Governors (BoG). Primary and post-primary school BoGs consist of representatives of transferors - mainly the Protestant churches - along with representatives of parents, teachers and the EA.
  - **Voluntary:** Self-governing schools, generally of long standing, originally established to provide an academic education at post primary level on a fee paying basis. Now funded by the Department and managed by Boards of Governors. The BoGs are constituted in accordance with each school's scheme of management - usually representatives of foundation governors, parents, teachers and in most cases, DE or EA representatives. The BoGs is the employing authority and is responsible for the employment of all staff in its school.
  - **Maintained** schools are managed by Boards of Governors which consist of members nominated by trustees, along with representatives of parents, teachers and the Education Authority. These schools are funded through the EA for their running costs and directly by the Department in relation to capital building works. For **Catholic Maintained** schools, the Employing Authority is the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS). **Other maintained** schools are any schools that are not Catholic maintained. They are typically, but not exclusively, **Irish medium schools**.
  - **Controlled integrated:** Controlled schools which have acquired integrated status.
  - **Grant Maintained integrated:** Self-governing schools with integrated education status, funded directly by the Department of Education and managed by Boards of Governors. The BoG is the employing authority and responsible for employing staff.

10. Definitions of other school types are as follows

- A **special school** is a controlled or voluntary school which is specially organised to provide education for pupils with special needs and is recognised by the DE as a special school.
- An **independent school** is a school at which full-time education is provided for pupils aged from four to 16 and is not grant aided. These schools set their own curriculum and admissions policies and are funded by fees paid by parents and income from investments. Each independent school must be registered with DE and is inspected regularly by ETI.

**Further enquiries**

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Special analyses of the school census can be undertaken on request.

**Press enquiries should be made to the Department's Press Office at the same address, telephone (028) 9127 9207 / fax (028) 9127 9271.**

Feedback on this publication can be provided directly to Paul Matthews (contact details above) or via the website: <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/contacts/statistics-and-research-team>