



## Statistical Bulletin 3/2018

### School Meals in Northern Ireland, 2017/18

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The purpose of this statistical bulletin is to provide results of the annual data collection relating to the uptake of school meals in grant-aided schools in Northern Ireland in 2017/18.

**Key points:**

- **Over 184,000 school meals**, both free and paid, were taken by pupils on census day, which equates to a **school meals uptake level of 59.5%** by pupils present for lunch on the day.
- The school meals uptake level for 2017/18 is **1.6 percentage points lower than the previous year**.
- **100,254 pupils in grant-aided schools are entitled to free school meals**; this represents 29.9% of pupils.
- The **uptake level for free school meals by entitled pupils is 80.8%**.

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## INTRODUCTION

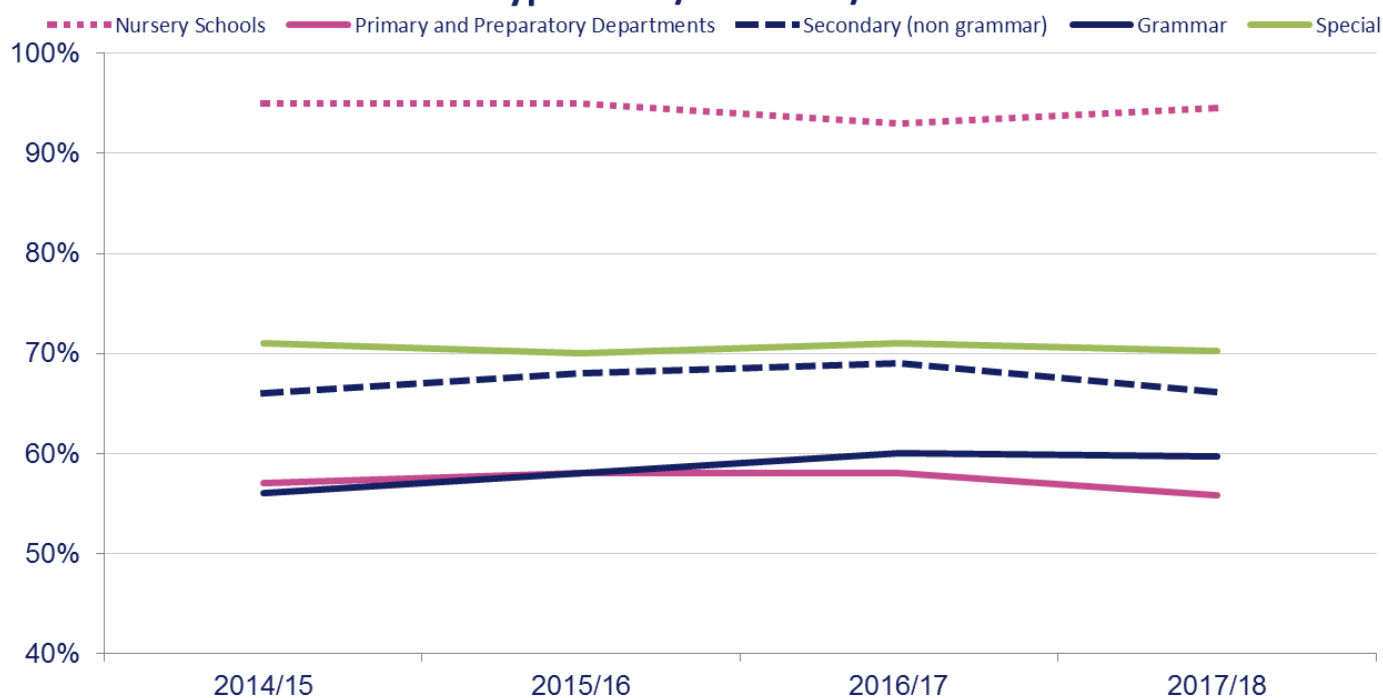
The purpose of this statistical bulletin is to provide results of the latest annual data collection relating to the uptake of school meals in Northern Ireland schools, commonly known as the school meals census. The information was collected with a reference point of 6 October 2017 and relates to all grant-aided schools in Northern Ireland.

Data collected through the school meals census are used by policy teams within the Department of Education and by other users across the education service, most notably by the Education Authority. The data are also used to inform a number of Assembly questions. The Department is responsible for formulating and developing policy and the associated financial arrangements in relation to school meals.

## SECTION 1: UPTAKE OF SCHOOL MEALS (FREE AND PAID)

- 184,478 school meals, both free and paid, were taken by pupils on census day. Pupils not taking a school meal are making alternative arrangements for lunch, which can include bringing their own food into school. Almost 41% of meals fall into this category (Tables 1 and 2).
- The school meals uptake level by pupils present for lunch on census day is 59.5%. The 2017/18 school meals uptake level is 1.6 percentage points lower than the previous year (Table 3).
- There is variation in the level of uptake across school types with nursery schools having the highest uptake at 94.6%. This is followed by special schools with 70.2% and secondary schools with 66.1%. Grammar schools and primary/preparatory schools have lower levels of uptake with 59.7% and 55.8% respectively (Table 3).

**Figure 1: Uptake of school meals (free and paid), by school type: 2014/15 - 2017/18**



<sup>1</sup> Nursery only includes pupils in nursery schools

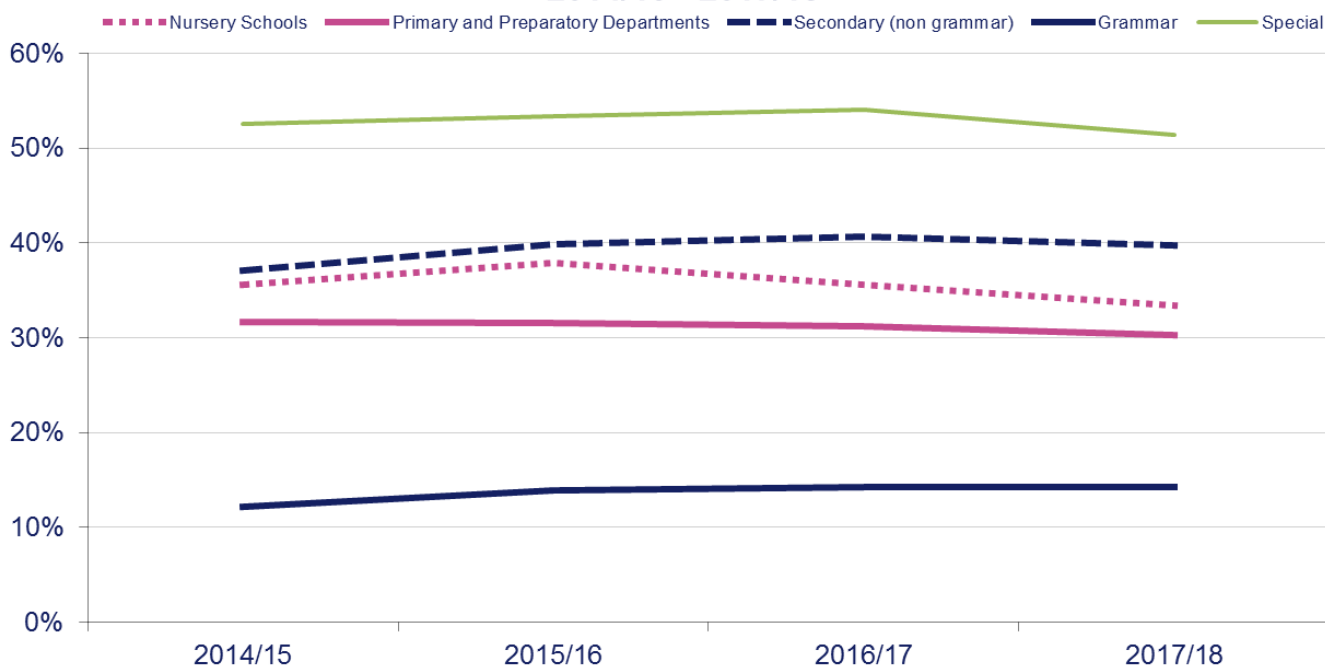
<sup>2</sup> Primary includes pupils in reception and nursery classes

<sup>3</sup> Data taken from Table 3

## SECTION 2: ENTITLEMENT TO FREE SCHOOL MEALS

- Across all school types, including special schools, 100,254 pupils were entitled to free school meals<sup>1</sup>. This represents 29.9% of the total school enrolment, which is a decrease of 1,873 pupils on the previous year (Table 5).
- There are slight decreases in the proportion of pupils that are free school meal entitled across all school types compared to last year. A lower proportion was found in nursery schools (33.4% compared to 35.6%), primary and preparatory departments (30.3% compared to 31.3%), non-grammar (39.7% compared to 40.6%), and grammar schools (14.2% compared to 14.3%) as well as special schools (51.4% compared to 54.0%).

**Figure 2: Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals, by school type: 2014/15 - 2017/18**



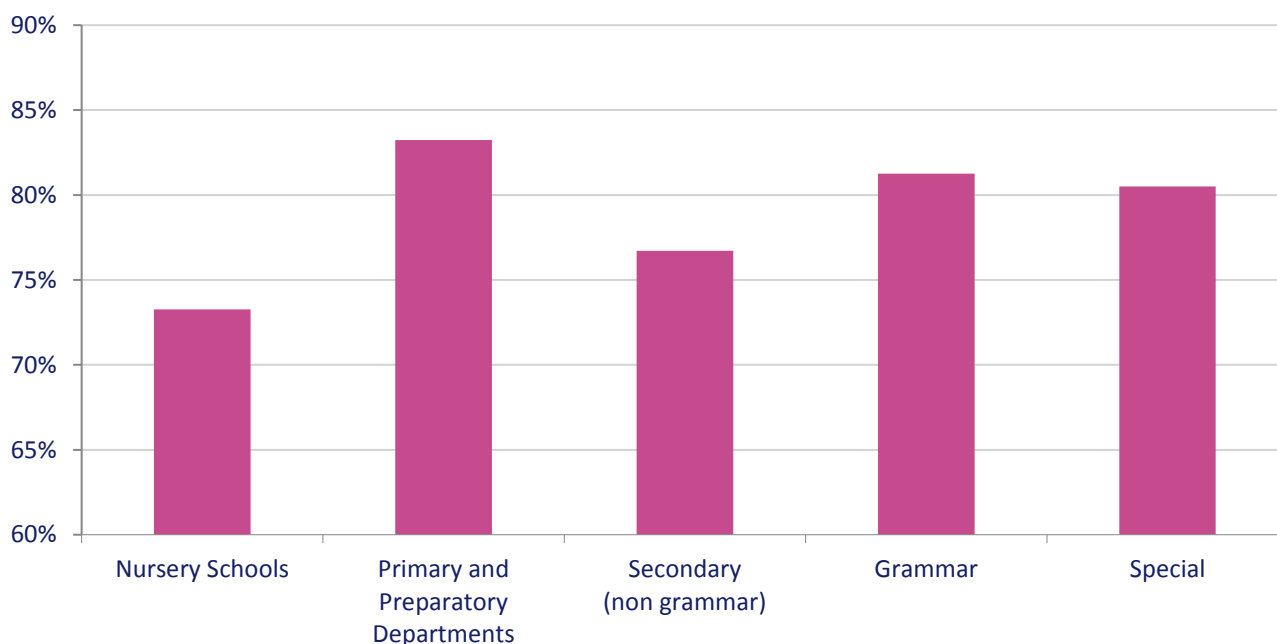
<sup>1</sup> Nursery only includes pupils in nursery schools  
<sup>2</sup> Primary includes pupils in reception and nursery classes  
<sup>3</sup> Data taken from Table 6

<sup>1</sup> Receipt of Income support or Income-based Jobseeker’s Allowance is used as a proxy for free school meal entitlement for pupils in nursery schools and nursery classes in primary schools. Does not include pupils in EOTAS centres.

## SECTION 3: UPTAKE OF FREE SCHOOL MEALS

- There were 80,215 free school meals taken by pupils across all school types, this is a decrease of 2,876 on the previous year (Table 8). This represents 43.5% of all meals provided by schools.
- When considering the number of free school meals provided as a proportion of the number of pupils with actual entitlement to free school meals<sup>2</sup>, uptake of free school meals was 80.8%. (Table 8). The 2017/18 free school meals uptake level is 1.4 percentage points lower than the previous year.
- There is variation in the level of uptake of free school meals by those entitled across school types. The chart below shows that uptake is highest in primary and preparatory departments (83.2%). This is followed by grammar and special schools, with 81.3% and 81.0% uptake respectively. Uptake in secondary schools is 76.7% and is lowest in nursery schools with 73.3% (Table 8).

**Figure 3: Uptake of free school meals, by school type 2017/18**



<sup>1</sup> Nursery only includes pupils in nursery schools

<sup>2</sup> Primary includes pupils in reception and nursery classes

<sup>3</sup> Data taken from Table 8.

<sup>4</sup> See background note 12, 14, 15

<sup>2</sup> For the purposes of calculating uptake the actual entitlement figure for nursery schools and primary schools with nursery pupils is based on full-time pupils only and excludes pupils counted under the proxy measure of free school meal entitlement (receipt of Income Support or Income Support Jobseeker's Allowance). This change was introduced in 2016/17 so figures for previous years are not directly comparable. See background note 15.

## NOTES FOR READERS

### Official Statistics

1. This is an Official Statistics publication. Official statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the Code of Practice for Statistics. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs. They are produced free from any political interference.
2. For general enquiries about the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, contact the National Statistics Public Enquiry Service on 0845 601 3034  
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Letters: Customer Contact Centre, Room 1.101, Office for National Statistics, Government Buildings, Cardiff Road, Newport, NP10 8XG
3. You can also find Official Statistics on the Internet: <http://www.statistics.gov.uk>

### School meal provision

4. The Education Authority is responsible for the day to day operation of the school meals service in all grant-aided schools, with the exception of voluntary grammar schools and grant-maintained integrated schools, where the responsibility lies with the Trustees/Boards of Governors.
5. The service is provided in line with the Approved Arrangements for the Provision of Milk, Meals and Related Facilities made under Articles 58 and 59 of the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986 drawn up by the Department of Education (DE), which will be referred to as 'the Arrangements' in the remainder of this document.  
<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/school-milk-and-meals-background>
6. Two main types of school meal service exist:
  - A traditional meal comprising a main course and dessert; and
  - A cash cafeteria service, where items are priced separately.

### Free school meal provision

7. With regard to free school meal provision the following terms are used:
  - Eligibility: When a pupil within a family meets one of the criteria contained in paragraph 6 of the Arrangements for the provision of milk, meals and related facilities.
  - Entitlement: When an application for free school meals is made on behalf of a pupil and the application is successful.
  - Uptake: When a pupil who is entitled to free school meals makes use of the free school meal provision by taking a free school meal.
8. Certain categories of pupils are entitled to free school meals. Details of the qualifying criteria are contained in paragraph 6 of the Arrangements. The Education Authority is responsible for administering the award of free school meals. Entitlement to free school meals is widely used as an indicator of deprivation.
9. An additional eligibility criterion was added to the Arrangements with effect from 27 September 2017 to reflect the roll-out of Universal Credit as part of Welfare Reform.

## School Meals Census

10. The main statistics in this statistical bulletin have been derived from the annual school meals data collection, commonly known as the school meals census. The data collection for the 2017/18 school meals census was undertaken by the Department, with data collected directly from each grant-aided school. Prior to 2012/13 the former ELBs were responsible for the collection of data in relation to schools in the controlled and maintained sectors and provided a collated return for their area to the Department.
11. The 2017/18 school meals census figures in this statistical bulletin are based on information as at 6<sup>th</sup> October 2017<sup>3</sup>. Some tables in this statistical bulletin include data on school enrolments and the number of pupils entitled to free school meals. Data on school enrolments and free school meal entitlement (FSME) were collected as part of the annual school enrolments data collection exercise and are also based on information as at 6<sup>th</sup> October 2017.
12. In nursery and primary schools, new pupils often have a phased introduction to school with some pupils not starting school until late October. Also new pupils may have a shorter day initially, without a lunch break. The school meals census date is usually the Friday of the first full week in October. This means that not all pupils will have started school, or be staying for lunch break. While pupils due to start later in the month will be counted in school enrolment, and free school meal entitlement figures, they will not be present to take a meal and will not therefore be counted in school meals census figures. Figures presented for free school meal uptake in nursery and primary schools, but particularly nursery, will therefore be lower than would be the case with a later census date.
13. In schools with a cash cafeteria system, school meal numbers are calculated from lunchtime income. Schools also include income from sales at morning break but income from breakfast clubs is not included (from the 2012/13 data collection onwards)<sup>4</sup>. The cost of a fixed price meal is used to convert income from lunch and break-time sales to equated meal numbers. Equated meal numbers will not exactly match pupils present for meals.
14. There were 7,358 pupils who were recorded as being present on census day but schools indicated they were not availing of a school lunch break. These pupils were mainly in nursery and primary schools. This will include part-time nursery pupils and primary pupils whose school day, by census date, did not yet include a lunch break. From the 2012/13 school meals census data onwards these pupils have been excluded from the count of pupils present for meals for the purposes of calculating uptake of school meals.
15. From 2016/17 onwards the figures presented for uptake of free school meals by pupils entitled in nursery schools and primary schools with nursery units has changed. The denominator used in the calculation of the percentages is now based on full-time pupils only and excludes pupils counted under the proxy measure of free school meal entitlement (receipt of Income Support or Income Based Job Seeker's Allowance). Data was not available to enable the revision of figures for previous years. For this reason caution should be used in drawing any comparison between data from 2016/17 onwards and data from previous years. This change affects Table 7 and Table 8.
16. There were 10 schools indicating that they do not provide a school meals service. Of these schools 7 are nursery schools where none of the pupils have a lunch break included as part of their hours of attendance. A total of 45 pupils at the remaining three schools do receive a lunch break. These 45

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<sup>3</sup> If school meals were not being provided by the school on census day the school could choose to conduct the census on the nearest day on which meals are provided.

<sup>4</sup> During the 2016/17 data validation process it emerged that some schools may have erroneously included breakfast income in 2016/17 data returned to the Department. While some breakfast income may have been included in the data it is not considered to have a big impact on the final estimates of school meal uptake.



- pupils are recorded as ‘making other lunch arrangements’ and are included in the count of pupils present for lunch when calculating percentage uptake of school meals (Tables 3 and 7).
17. From the 2013/14 data collection onwards the previous categories of ‘other lunch arrangements’ and ‘taking own food’ have been merged together to create a ‘pupils making other lunch arrangements’ category, which includes pupils taking their own food. This was due to difficulties, expressed by some schools, in capturing accurate data for the categories previously used.
  18. Free school meal entitlement (FSME) data for special schools was not validated prior to 2014/15.
  19. Figures for primary schools may include nursery and/or reception pupils attending primary schools and preparatory departments.
  20. Information presenting uptake of school meals in Northern Ireland, England and Scotland was discontinued as policy differences between the regions and availability of up-to-date information for other regions make comparisons difficult.
  21. The figures in this statistical bulletin 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/education/Revisions%20policy.pdf>
  22. More detail about the collection of data on school meals can be found on the DE website. This can be accessed at <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/school-meals-data-collection-and-validation>
  23. The Statistics and Research section of the DE website (<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/topics/statistics-and-research-1>) also presents data from the school meals census. Statistics on school enrolments, school performance, pupil attendance, teacher numbers, pupil: teacher ratios, school leaver destinations and qualifications may also be accessed via the website.

## General

24. The following symbols are used in the tables in this statistical bulletin:
  - \* = Relates to fewer than 5 cases
  - # = Number (5 or more) suppressed to prevent disclosure of small numbers elsewhere
  - = Indicates no schools in this category

## Further enquiries

25. For more details about the statistics contained in this statistical bulletin, to request further information and analysis, or to provide any feedback on this publication please contact:

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26. DE Statistical Bulletins can be accessed on the DE website (<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/topics/statistics-and-research-1>) under the Statistics and Research section.
27. Press enquiries should be made to the Department’s Press Office at the same address, telephone (028) 9127 9207.

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Table 1: Number and type of meals taken on school meals census day, by school type and school management type: 2017/18

School Type	Management Type	Meals provided by school			Other meals <sup>1</sup>	Total <sup>1</sup>
		Paid school meals <sup>2</sup>	Free school meals	All school meals <sup>2</sup>	Pupils making other lunch arrangements (including own food)	
Nursery Schools <sup>3</sup>	Controlled	1,137	710	1,847	61	1,908
	Catholic Maintained	568	520	1,088	106	1,194
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,705</b>	<b>1,230</b>	<b>2,935</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>3,102</b>
Primary <sup>4</sup> and Preparatory Departments	Controlled	21,313	18,644	39,957	38,266	78,223
	Voluntary	1,057	22	1,079	522	1,601
	Catholic Maintained	24,020	23,284	47,304	31,089	78,393
	Other Maintained	931	1,322	2,253	1,322	3,575
	Controlled Integrated	908	1,101	2,009	1,983	3,992
	Grant Maintained Integrated	1,745	1,285	3,030	2,962	5,992
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>49,974</b>	<b>45,658</b>	<b>95,632</b>	<b>76,144</b>	<b>171,776</b>	
Secondary (Non Grammar)	Controlled	8,073	7,173	15,246	9,830	25,076
	Catholic Maintained	10,608	12,507	23,115	10,360	33,475
	Other Maintained	113	331	444	232	676
	Controlled Integrated	502	630	1,132	1,133	2,265
	Grant Maintained Integrated	3,635	3,039	6,674	2,094	8,768
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>22,931</b>	<b>23,680</b>	<b>46,611</b>	<b>23,649</b>	<b>70,260</b>	
Grammar	Controlled	5,671	1,339	7,010	6,423	13,433
	Voluntary	22,898	5,934	28,832	17,978	46,810
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>28,569</b>	<b>7,273</b>	<b>35,842</b>	<b>24,401</b>	<b>60,243</b>
<b>Post-Primary Total</b>	<b>51,500</b>	<b>30,953</b>	<b>82,453</b>	<b>48,050</b>	<b>130,503</b>	
Special	Controlled	1,047	2,178	3,225	1,395	4,620
	Catholic Maintained	23	158	181	48	229
	Other Maintained	14	38	52	23	75
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,084</b>	<b>2,374</b>	<b>3,458</b>	<b>1,466</b>	<b>4,924</b>
All Grant-aided Schools	Controlled	37,241	30,044	67,285	55,975	123,260
	Voluntary	23,955	5,956	29,911	18,500	48,411
	Catholic Maintained	35,219	36,469	71,688	41,603	113,291
	Other Maintained	1,058	1,691	2,749	1,577	4,326
	Controlled Integrated	1,410	1,731	3,141	3,116	6,257
	Grant Maintained Integrated	5,380	4,324	9,704	5,056	14,760
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>104,263</b>	<b>80,215</b>	<b>184,478</b>	<b>125,827</b>	<b>310,305</b>	

Source: NI school meals census 2017/18

Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Excludes pupils present on school meals census day whose school day did not include a lunch break, including part-time nursery pupils and some P1 pupils (see background note 14).

<sup>2</sup> Paid meal figures presented are equated meals: Where schools have a cash cafeteria system for lunch the meal numbers are calculated based on lunchtime income.

Income from morning break provision is also included in the calculation of meal numbers (see background note 13).

<sup>3</sup> Only includes pupils at nursery schools.

<sup>4</sup> Includes pupils in reception and nursery classes of primary schools.

Table 2: Percentage and type of meals taken on school meals census day, by school type and school management type: 2017/18

School Type	Management Type	Meals provided by school			Other meals <sup>1</sup>	Total <sup>1</sup>
		Paid school meals <sup>2</sup>	Free school meals	All school meals <sup>2</sup>	Pupils making other lunch arrangements (including own food)	
		%	%	%	%	
Nursery Schools <sup>3</sup>	Controlled	59.6	37.2	96.8	3.2	100.0
	Catholic Maintained	47.6	43.6	91.1	8.9	100.0
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>55.0</b>	<b>39.7</b>	<b>94.6</b>	<b>5.4</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Primary <sup>4</sup> and Preparatory Departments	Controlled	27.2	23.8	51.1	48.9	100.0
	Voluntary	66.0	1.4	67.4	32.6	100.0
	Catholic Maintained	30.6	29.7	60.3	39.7	100.0
	Other Maintained	26.0	37.0	63.0	37.0	100.0
	Controlled Integrated	22.7	27.6	50.3	49.7	100.0
	Grant Maintained Integrated	29.1	21.4	50.6	49.4	100.0
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>29.1</b>	<b>26.6</b>	<b>55.7</b>	<b>44.3</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Secondary (Non Grammar)	Controlled	32.2	28.6	60.8	39.2	100.0
	Catholic Maintained	31.7	37.4	69.1	30.9	100.0
	Other Maintained	16.7	49.0	65.7	34.3	100.0
	Controlled Integrated	22.2	27.8	50.0	50.0	100.0
	Grant Maintained Integrated	41.5	34.7	76.1	23.9	100.0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>32.6</b>	<b>33.7</b>	<b>66.3</b>	<b>33.7</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
Grammar	Controlled	42.2	10.0	52.2	47.8	100.0
	Voluntary	48.9	12.7	61.6	38.4	100.0
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>47.4</b>	<b>12.1</b>	<b>59.5</b>	<b>40.5</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Post-Primary Total</b>		<b>39.5</b>	<b>23.7</b>	<b>63.2</b>	<b>36.8</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Special	Controlled	22.7	47.1	69.8	30.2	100.0
	Catholic Maintained	10.0	69.0	79.0	21.0	100.0
	Other Maintained	18.7	50.7	69.3	30.7	100.0
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>22.0</b>	<b>48.2</b>	<b>70.2</b>	<b>29.8</b>	<b>100.0</b>
All Grant-aided Schools	Controlled	30.2	24.4	54.6	45.4	100.0
	Voluntary	49.5	12.3	61.8	38.2	100.0
	Catholic Maintained	31.1	32.2	63.3	36.7	100.0
	Other Maintained	24.5	39.1	63.5	36.5	100.0
	Controlled Integrated	22.5	27.7	50.2	49.8	100.0
	Grant Maintained Integrated	36.4	29.3	65.7	34.3	100.0
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>		<b>33.6</b>	<b>25.9</b>	<b>59.5</b>	<b>40.5</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: NI school meals census 2017/18

Notes:

Figures may not add due to rounding.

<sup>1</sup> Excludes pupils present on school meals census day whose school day did not include a lunch break, including part-time nursery pupils and some P1 pupils (see background note 14).

<sup>2</sup> Paid meal figures presented are equated meals: Where schools have a cash cafeteria system for lunch the meal numbers are calculated based on lunchtime income.

Income from morning break provision is also included in the calculation of meal numbers (see background note 13).

<sup>3</sup> Only includes pupils at nursery schools.

<sup>4</sup> Includes pupils in reception and nursery classes of primary schools

**Table 3: Uptake of school meals (free and paid) - number and percentage of pupils present for lunch on school meals census day, by school type and school management type: 2014/15- 2017/18**

School Type	Management Type	2014/15		2015/16		2016/17		2017/18	
		School meals provided <sup>1</sup>	Uptake <sup>2</sup> %	School meals provided <sup>1</sup>	Uptake <sup>2</sup> %	School meals provided <sup>1</sup>	Uptake <sup>2</sup> %	School meals provided <sup>1</sup>	Uptake <sup>2</sup> %
Nursery Schools <sup>3</sup>	Controlled	1,745	96.2	1,891	96.7	1,812	94.7	1,847	96.8
	Catholic Maintained	1,177	93.3	1,210	91.5	1,086	90.9	1,088	91.1
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,922</b>	<b>95.0</b>	<b>3,101</b>	<b>94.6</b>	<b>2,898</b>	<b>93.2</b>	<b>2,935</b>	<b>94.6</b>
Primary <sup>4</sup> and Preparatory Departments	Controlled	39,909	53.7	40,847	53.5	41,548	53.8	39,957	51.2
	Voluntary	1,068	67.2	1,109	69.7	1,084	68.7	1,079	67.4
	Catholic Maintained	46,186	61.7	47,427	62.3	47,909	61.6	47,304	60.4
	Other Maintained	1,980	65.2	2,099	64.9	2,213	65.5	2,253	63.0
	Controlled Integrated	1,813	50.6	1,891	50.1	1,994	50.5	2,009	50.3
	Grant Maintained Integrated	2,776	49.6	2,998	52.7	3,128	54.0	3,030	50.6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>93,732</b>	<b>57.5</b>	<b>96,371</b>	<b>57.8</b>	<b>97,876</b>	<b>57.7</b>	<b>95,632</b>	<b>55.8</b>	
Secondary (Non Grammar)	Controlled	15,337	61.4	15,418	62.8	15,733	63.2	15,246	60.3
	Catholic Maintained	24,365	68.4	24,259	70.7	24,016	71.6	23,115	69.0
	Other Maintained	358	65.1	381	66.4	383	60.3	444	65.7
	Controlled Integrated	901	40.8	1,106	49.1	1,219	54.7	1,132	50.0
	Grant Maintained Integrated	6,231	72.6	6,426	76.4	6,625	76.6	6,674	76.1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>47,192</b>	<b>65.6</b>	<b>47,590</b>	<b>67.9</b>	<b>47,976</b>	<b>68.6</b>	<b>46,611</b>	<b>66.1</b>	
Grammar	Controlled	7,787	51.8	7,930	55.4	7,292	54.0	7,010	51.8
	Voluntary	25,787	57.3	27,038	58.2	28,405	61.2	28,832	62.0
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>33,574</b>	<b>55.9</b>	<b>34,968</b>	<b>57.5</b>	<b>35,697</b>	<b>59.5</b>	<b>35,842</b>	<b>59.7</b>
Post-Primary	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>80,766</b>	<b>61.2</b>	<b>82,558</b>	<b>63.1</b>	<b>83,673</b>	<b>64.4</b>	<b>82,453</b>	<b>63.2</b>
Special	Controlled	3,044	70.2	3,047	69.6	3,159	70.5	3,225	69.8
	Catholic Maintained	175	86.6	179	81.7	183	84.3	181	79.0
	Other Maintained	40	100.0	37	53.6	56	74.7	52	69.3
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,259</b>	<b>71.2</b>	<b>3,263</b>	<b>69.9</b>	<b>3,398</b>	<b>71.2</b>	<b>3,458</b>	<b>70.2</b>
All Grant-aided Schools	Controlled	67,822	56.3	69,133	56.8	69,544	57.0	67,285	54.5
	Voluntary	26,855	57.7	28,147	58.6	29,489	61.4	29,911	62.2
	Catholic Maintained	71,903	64.2	73,075	65.2	73,194	64.9	71,688	63.3
	Other Maintained	2,378	65.5	2,517	64.9	2,652	64.9	2,749	63.5
	Controlled Integrated	2,714	46.8	2,997	49.7	3,213	52.0	3,141	50.2
	Grant Maintained Integrated	9,007	63.5	9,424	66.9	9,753	67.6	9,704	65.7
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>180,679</b>	<b>59.7</b>	<b>185,293</b>	<b>60.6</b>	<b>187,845</b>	<b>61.1</b>	<b>184,478</b>	<b>59.5</b>	

Source: NI school meals census 2014/15 - 2017/18

Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Meal figures presented are equated meals: Where schools have a cash cafeteria system for lunch the meal numbers are calculated based on lunchtime income. Income from morning break provision is also included in the calculation of meal numbers (see background note 13).

<sup>2</sup> Uptake is expressed as the number of school meals provided (free and paid) as a percentage of the number of pupils present for lunch on census day. Pupils present for lunch excludes pupils present on school meals census day whose school day did not include a lunch break, including part-time nursery pupils and some P1 pupils (see background note 14).

<sup>3</sup> Only includes pupils at nursery schools.

<sup>4</sup> Includes pupils in reception and nursery classes of primary schools

**Table 4: Number and percentage of school meals provided (free and paid) by type of meal provision, school type and school management type: 2017/18**

School Type	Management Type	Traditional meals		Cash cafeteria meals <sup>1</sup>	
		Number	%	Number	%
Nursery Schools <sup>2</sup>	Controlled	1,847	100.0	0	0.0
	Catholic Maintained	1,088	100.0	0	0.0
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,935</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.0</b>
Primary <sup>3</sup> and Preparatory Departments	Controlled	39,421	98.7	536	1.3
	Voluntary	982	91.0	97	9.0
	Catholic Maintained	45,866	97.0	1,438	3.0
	Other Maintained	2,253	100.0	0	0.0
	Controlled Integrated	2,009	100.0	0	0.0
	Grant Maintained Integrated	3,030	100.0	0	0.0
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>93,561</b>	<b>97.8</b>	<b>2,071</b>	<b>2.2</b>
Secondary (Non Grammar)	Controlled	452	3.0	14,794	97.0
	Catholic Maintained	2,414	10.4	20,701	89.6
	Other Maintained	392	88.3	52	11.7
	Controlled Integrated	0	0.0	1,132	100.0
	Grant Maintained Integrated	623	9.3	6,051	90.7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,881</b>	<b>8.3</b>	<b>42,730</b>	<b>91.7</b>	
Grammar	Controlled	0	0.0	7,010	100.0
	Voluntary	3,046	10.6	25,786	89.4
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,046</b>	<b>8.5</b>	<b>32,796</b>	<b>91.5</b>
<b>Post-Primary Total</b>		<b>6,927</b>	<b>8.4</b>	<b>75,526</b>	<b>91.6</b>
Special	Controlled	3,020	93.6	205	6.4
	Catholic Maintained	181	100.0	0	0.0
	Other Maintained	52	100.0	0	0.0
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,253</b>	<b>94.1</b>	<b>205</b>	<b>5.9</b>
All Grant-aided Schools	Controlled	44,740	66.5	22,545	33.5
	Voluntary	4,028	13.5	25,883	86.5
	Catholic Maintained	49,549	69.1	22,139	30.9
	Other Maintained	2,697	98.1	52	1.9
	Controlled Integrated	2,009	64.0	1,132	36.0
	Grant Maintained Integrated	3,653	37.6	6,051	62.4
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>		<b>106,676</b>	<b>57.8</b>	<b>77,802</b>	<b>42.2</b>

Source: NI school meals census 2017/18

Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Cash cafeteria meal figures presented are equated meals: Where schools have a cash cafeteria system for lunch the meal numbers are calculated based on lunchtime income. Income from morning break provision is also included in the calculation of meal numbers (see background note 13).

<sup>2</sup> Only includes pupils at nursery schools.

<sup>3</sup> Includes pupils in reception and nursery classes of primary schools

**Table 5: Number and percentage<sup>1</sup> of pupils entitled to free school meals by school type: 2014/15 - 2017/18**

		<b>2014/15</b>	<b>2015/16</b>	<b>2016/17</b>	<b>2017/18</b>
<b>Total enrolment</b>	Nursery Schools <sup>2</sup>	5,882	5,904	5,864	5,837
	Primary <sup>3</sup> and Preparatory Departments	175,042	178,222	181,302	183,453
	Secondary (non grammar)	79,840	77,753	77,432	77,727
	Grammar	62,713	63,359	62,981	62,818
	Special	5,064	5,173	5,407	5,735
	<b>All Grant-aided Schools<sup>5</sup></b>	<b>328,541</b>	<b>330,411</b>	<b>332,986</b>	<b>335,570</b>
<b>Entitlement to free school meals</b>	Nursery Schools <sup>2</sup>	2,096	2,240	2,085	1,952
	Primary <sup>3</sup> and Preparatory Departments	55,526	56,265	56,681	55,536
	Secondary (non grammar)	29,626	30,990	31,461	30,866
	Grammar	7,610	8,811	8,978	8,951
	Special <sup>4</sup>	2,660	2,757	2,922	2,949
	<b>All Grant-aided Schools<sup>5</sup></b>	<b>97,518</b>	<b>101,063</b>	<b>102,127</b>	<b>100,254</b>
<b>Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals<sup>1</sup></b>	Nursery Schools <sup>2</sup>	35.6	37.9	35.6	33.4
	Primary <sup>3</sup> and Preparatory Departments	31.7	31.6	31.3	30.3
	Secondary (non grammar)	37.1	39.9	40.6	39.7
	Grammar	12.1	13.9	14.3	14.2
	Special <sup>4</sup>	52.5	53.3	54.0	51.4
	<b>All Grant-aided Schools<sup>5</sup></b>	<b>29.7</b>	<b>30.6</b>	<b>30.7</b>	<b>29.9</b>

Source: NI school census 2014/15 - 2017/18

Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Percentages express the number of pupils entitled to free school meals in a particular category (e.g. those at primary school) as a proportion of the total pupil enrolment in the same category.

<sup>2</sup> As school meals are not universally available to children in pre-school education, receipt of Income Support or Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance is used as a proxy for free school meal entitlement. Only includes pupils at nursery schools.

<sup>3</sup> Includes pupils in reception and nursery classes of primary schools

<sup>4</sup> Prior to 2014/15 free school meal entitlement data for special schools was not validated.

<sup>5</sup> Does not include pupils attending EOTAS centres.

**Table 6: Number and percentage<sup>1</sup> of pupils entitled to free school meals, by school type and school management type: 2017/18**

<b>School Type</b>	<b>Management Type</b>	<b>Pupils entitled to free school meals</b>	<b>Free school meal entitlement %</b>
<b>Nursery Schools<sup>2</sup></b>	Controlled	1,193	29.0
	Catholic Maintained	759	44.1
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,952</b>	<b>33.4</b>
<b>Primary<sup>3</sup> and Preparatory Department</b>	Controlled	23,715	28.3
	Voluntary	27	1.7
	Catholic Maintained	27,169	32.6
	Other Maintained	1,488	38.8
	Controlled Integrated	1,438	33.3
	Grant Maintained Integrated	1,699	25.9
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>55,536</b>	<b>30.3</b>	
<b>Secondary (Non Grammar)</b>	Controlled	9,809	35.4
	Catholic Maintained	15,966	43.1
	Other Maintained	433	59.0
	Controlled Integrated	1,029	39.8
	Grant Maintained Integrated	3,629	37.8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>30,866</b>	<b>39.7</b>	
<b>Grammar</b>	Controlled	1,758	12.5
	Voluntary	7,193	14.8
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8,951</b>	<b>14.2</b>
<b>Post-Primary</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>39,817</b>	<b>28.3</b>
<b>Special</b>	Controlled	2,716	50.4
	Catholic Maintained	192	71.9
	Other Maintained	41	51.9
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,949</b>	<b>51.4</b>
<b>All Grant-aided Schools</b>	Controlled	39,191	29.0
	Voluntary	7,220	14.3
	Catholic Maintained	44,086	36.0
	Other Maintained	1,962	42.2
	Controlled Integrated	2,467	35.7
	Grant Maintained Integrated	5,328	32.9
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>100,254</b>	<b>29.9</b>	

Source: NI school census 2017/18

Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Percentages express the number of pupils entitled to free school meals in a particular category (e.g. those at primary school) as a proportion of the total pupil enrolment in the same category.

<sup>2</sup> As school meals are not universally available to children in pre-school education, receipt of Income Support or Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance is used as a proxy for free school meal entitlement. Only includes pupils at nursery schools.

<sup>3</sup> Includes pupils in reception and nursery classes of primary schools.



**Table 7: Number and percentage of pupils taking free school meals as a proportion of all school meals provided and as a proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals<sup>1</sup>, by school type and school management type: 2017/18**

School Type	Management Type	Free school meals taken by pupils present	Free meals as a proportion of all school meals provided <sup>2</sup> %	Free school meals taken as a proportion of pupils entitled <sup>1</sup> %
Nursery Schools <sup>3</sup>	Controlled	710	38.4	74.5
	Catholic Maintained	520	47.8	71.6
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,230</b>	<b>41.9</b>	<b>73.3</b>
Primary <sup>4</sup> and Preparatory Department	Controlled	18,644	46.7	79.7
	Voluntary	22	2.0	81.5
	Catholic Maintained	23,284	49.2	86.5
	Other Maintained	1,322	58.7	90.3
	Controlled Integrated	1,101	54.8	77.5
	Grant Maintained Integrated	1,285	42.4	78.2
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>45,658</b>	<b>47.7</b>	<b>83.2</b>
Secondary (non grammar)	Controlled	7,173	47.0	73.1
	Catholic Maintained	12,507	54.1	78.3
	Other Maintained	331	74.5	76.4
	Controlled Integrated	630	55.7	61.2
	Grant Maintained Integrated	3,039	45.5	83.7
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>23,680</b>	<b>50.8</b>	<b>76.7</b>
Grammar	Controlled	1,339	19.1	76.2
	Voluntary	5,934	20.6	82.5
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7,273</b>	<b>20.3</b>	<b>81.3</b>
Post-Primary	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>30,953</b>	<b>37.5</b>	<b>77.7</b>
Special	Controlled	2,178	67.5	80.2
	Catholic Maintained	158	87.3	82.3
	Other Maintained	38	73.1	92.7
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,374</b>	<b>68.7</b>	<b>80.5</b>
All grant-aided schools	Controlled	30,044	44.7	77.8
	Voluntary	5,956	19.9	82.5
	Catholic Maintained	36,469	50.9	83.3
	Other Maintained	1,691	61.5	87.3
	Controlled Integrated	1,731	55.1	70.7
	Grant Maintained Integrated	4,324	44.6	82.0
	<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>80,215</b>	<b>43.5</b>	<b>80.8</b>

Source: NI school meals census 2017/18

Notes:

<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of calculating uptake of free school meals by pupils entitled the denominator used is based on full-time pupils only and excludes pupils counted under the proxy measure of free school meal entitlement (receipt of Income Support or Income Support Jobseeker's Allowance). This only applies to nursery and primary schools. See background note 15.

<sup>2</sup> Percentages express the number of pupils taking free school meals in a particular category (e.g. those at primary school) as a proportion of all school meals provided in the same category.

<sup>3</sup> Only includes pupils at nursery schools.

<sup>4</sup> Includes pupils in reception and nursery classes of primary schools

**Table 8: Uptake of free school meals - number and percentage<sup>1</sup> of pupils entitled to free school meals, by school type: 2014/15 - 2017/18**

		<b>2014/15</b>	<b>2015/16</b>	<b>2016/17</b>	<b>2017/18</b>
<b>Free school meals taken by pupils present</b>	Nursery Schools <sup>2</sup>	1,264	1,473	1,279	1,230
	Primary <sup>2</sup> and Preparatory Departments	46,078	47,001	47,354	45,658
	Secondary (non grammar)	22,838	24,098	24,709	23,680
	Grammar	6,132	7,191	7,356	7,273
	Special	2,248	2,239	2,393	2,374
	<b>All grant-aided schools</b>	<b>78,560</b>	<b>82,002</b>	<b>83,091</b>	<b>80,215</b>
<b>Pupils entitled to free school meals</b>	Nursery Schools <sup>2,3</sup>	2,096	2,240	-	-
	Nursery Schools <sup>2,3</sup> (excluding part-time pupils and proxy FSME)	-	-	1,799	1,679
	Primary <sup>2,3</sup> and Preparatory Departments	55,526	56,265	-	-
	Primary <sup>2,3</sup> and Preparatory Departments (excluding part-time pupils and proxy FSME)	-	-	55,963	54,852
	Secondary (non grammar)	29,626	30,990	31,461	30,866
	Grammar	7,610	8,811	8,978	8,951
	Special <sup>4</sup>	2,660	2,757	2,922	2,949
	<b>All grant-aided schools</b>	<b>97,518</b>	<b>101,063</b>	<b>101,123*</b>	<b>99,297*</b>
<b>Free school meals taken as a proportion of pupils entitled<sup>1</sup></b>	Nursery Schools <sup>2,3</sup>	60.3	65.8	-	-
	Nursery Schools <sup>2,3</sup> (excluding part-time pupils and proxy FSME)	-	-	71.1	73.3
	Primary <sup>2,3</sup> and Preparatory Departments	83.0	83.5	-	-
	Primary <sup>2,3</sup> and Preparatory Departments (excluding part-time pupils and proxy FSME)	-	-	84.6	83.2
	Secondary (non grammar)	77.1	77.8	78.5	76.7
	Grammar	80.6	81.6	81.9	81.3
	Special <sup>4</sup>	84.5	81.2	81.9	80.5
	<b>All grant-aided schools</b>	<b>80.6</b>	<b>81.1</b>	<b>82.2*</b>	<b>80.8*</b>

Entitlement Source: NI school census 2014/15 - 2017/18

Uptake Source: NI school meals census 2014/15 - 2017/18

Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Percentages express the number of free school meals taken in a particular category (e.g. those at primary school) as a proportion of the number of pupils entitled to free school meals in the same category.

<sup>2</sup> The nursery figures only include pupils at nursery schools. The primary figures include pupils in reception and nursery classes of primary schools.

<sup>3</sup> For the purposes of calculating uptake of free school meals by pupils entitled the free school meal entitlement figure used in 2016/17 and 2017/18 is based on full-time pupils only and excludes pupils counted under the proxy measure of free school meal entitlement (receipt of Income Support or Income Support Jobseeker's Allowance). This only applies to nursery and primary schools. **Figures prior to 2016/17 are not directly comparable.** See background note 15.

<sup>4</sup> Prior to 2014/15 free school meal entitlement data for special schools was not validated.

\* Excluding part-time pupils and proxy FSME

**Table 9: Adults taking school meals, by school type: 2017/18**

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	Adults taking school meal (free or paid)	Adults taking free school meal <sup>1</sup> %
Nursery Schools <sup>2</sup>	302	95.4
Primary <sup>3</sup> and Preparatory Departments	5,847	90.7
Secondary (non grammar)	2,690	85.4
Grammar	1,689	65.7
<b>Post-Primary Total</b>	<b>4,379</b>	<b>77.8</b>
Special	703	94.6
<b>All grant-aided schools</b>	<b>11,231</b>	<b>86.1</b>

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Source: NI school meals census 2017/18

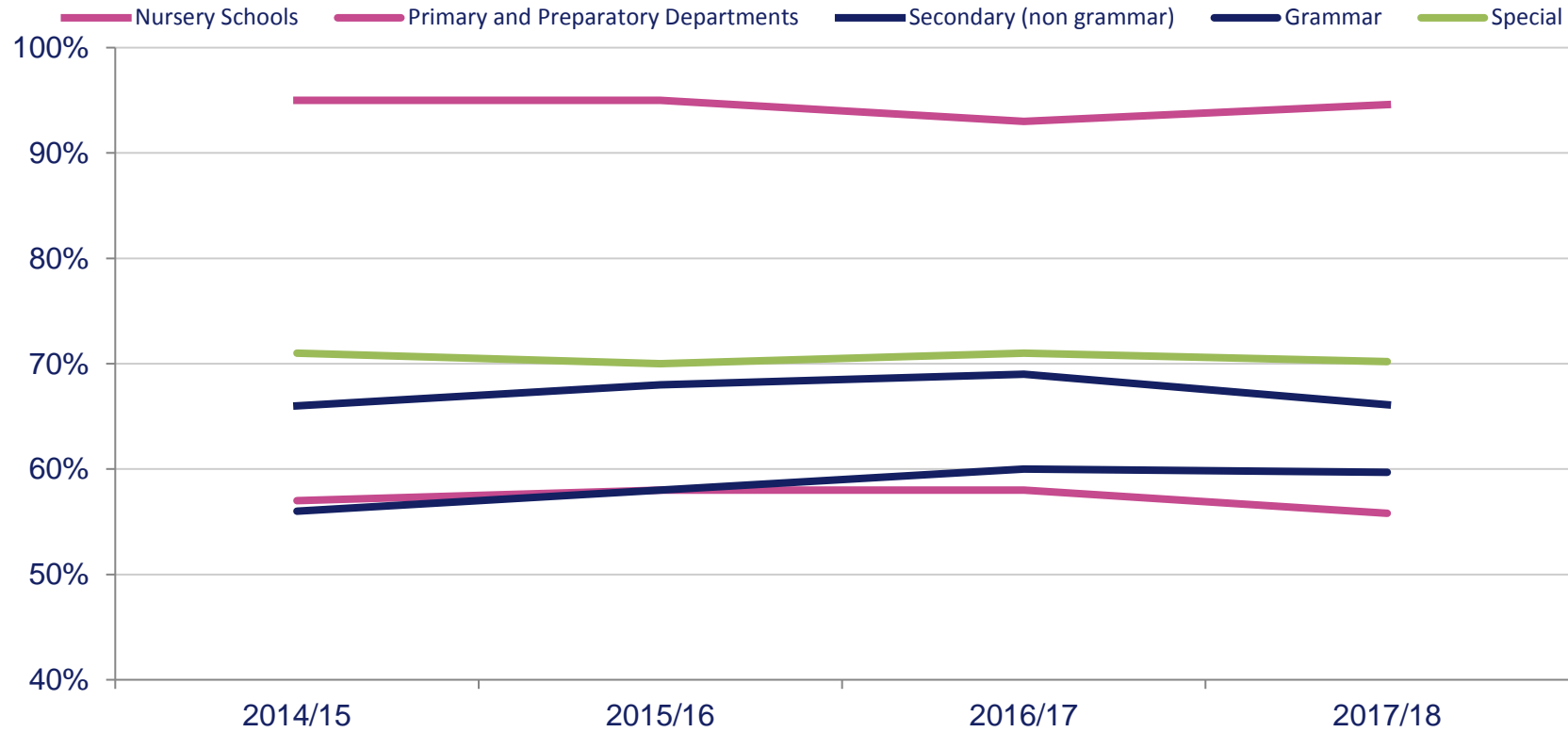
Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Depending on their terms and conditions kitchen staff and mid-day supervisors may be entitled to a free mid-day meal.

<sup>2</sup> Only includes nursery classes in nursery schools.

<sup>3</sup> Includes reception and nursery classes in primary schools.

**Figure 1: Uptake of school meals (free and paid), by school type:  
2014/15 - 2017/18**

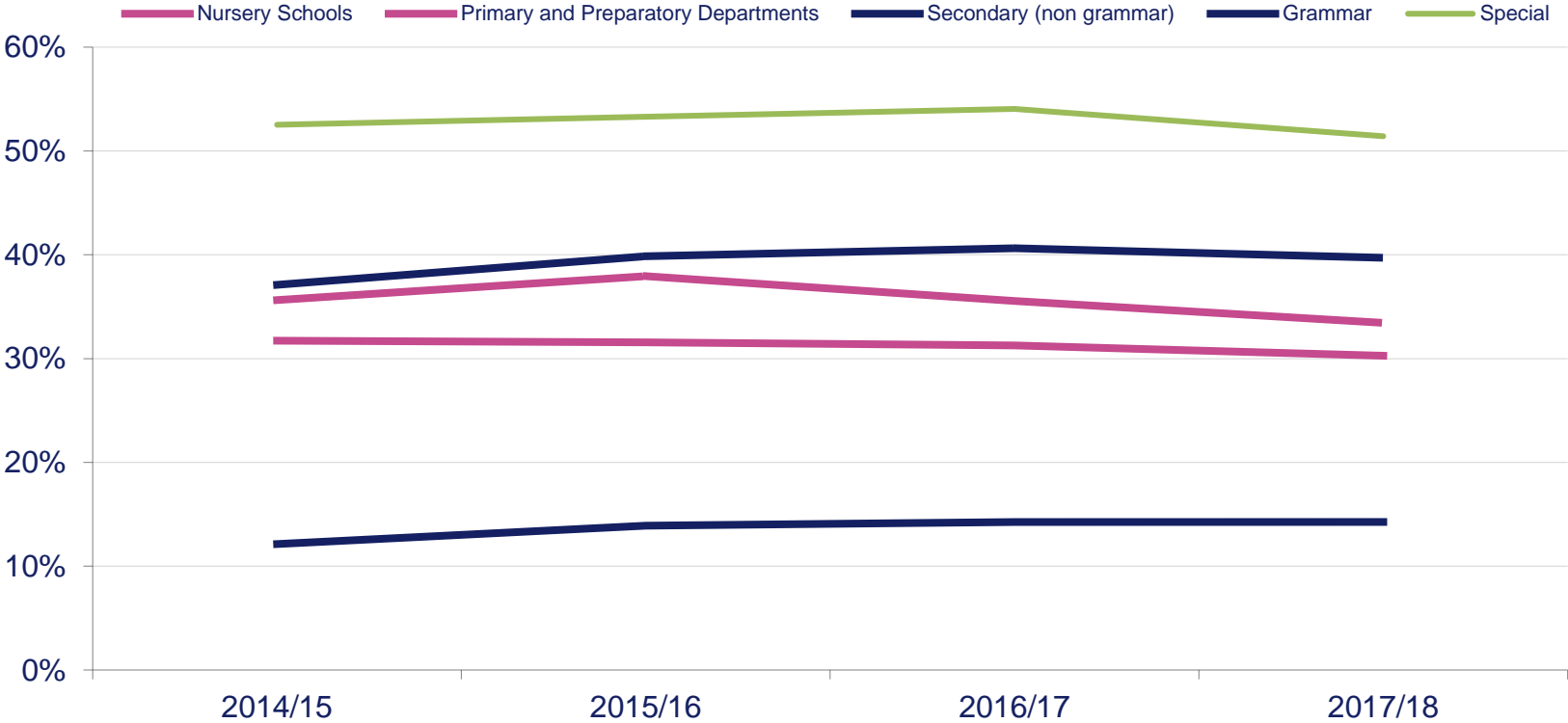


<sup>1</sup> Nursery only includes pupils in nursery schools

<sup>2</sup> Primary includes pupils in reception and nursery classes

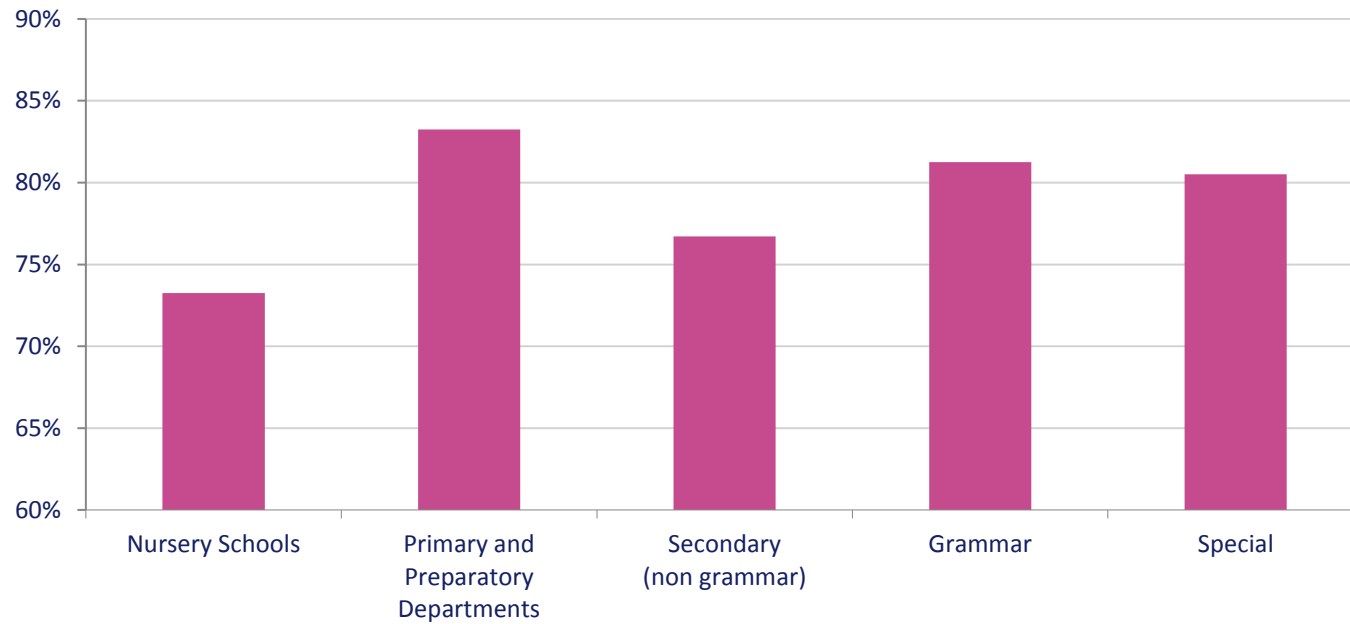
<sup>3</sup> Data taken from Table 3

**Figure 2: Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals, by school type:  
2014/15 - 2017/18**



<sup>1</sup> Nursery only includes pupils in nursery schools  
<sup>2</sup> Primary includes pupils in reception and nursery classes  
<sup>3</sup> Data taken from Table 6

**Figure 3: Uptake of free school meals, by school type  
2017/18**



<sup>1</sup> Nursery only includes pupils in nursery schools

<sup>2</sup> Primary includes pupils in reception and nursery classes

<sup>3</sup> Data taken from Table 8.

<sup>4</sup> See background note 12, 14, 15

## School Management Types

**Controlled** schools are owned and managed by the Education Authority through Boards of Governors. Primary and secondary school Boards of Governors consist of representatives of transferors (mainly the Protestant Churches) along with representatives of parents, teachers and the Education Authority. Controlled nursery, grammar and special school boards of governors consist only of representatives of the latter 3 categories. Within the controlled school sector there are a number of integrated schools and a small but growing number of Irish-medium schools.

**Catholic maintained** schools are voluntary schools owned by trustees (appointed by the Roman Catholic Church) and managed by CCMS through boards of governors. Board of Governors consist of members nominated by the trustees along with representatives of parents, teachers and the Education Authority. Within the Catholic maintained sector there are a small number of Irish-medium schools.

**Other maintained** schools are voluntary schools owned by trustees and managed by Boards of Governors which consist of members nominated by trustees along with representatives of parents, teachers and the Education Authority. This sector includes a number of Irish Medium schools.

**Voluntary grammar** schools are owned by trustees and managed by Boards of Governors which consist of members nominated by trustees along with representatives of parents, teachers, the Department and, in most cases, the Education Authority. (Voluntary grammar schools vary in the rates of capital grant to which they are entitled depending on the management structure they have adopted, with the vast majority entitled to capital grants of 100%.)

**Grant-maintained integrated** schools are owned and managed by their Boards of Governors, which consist of foundation governors along with representatives of parents, teachers and the Department.

All of the above are types of grant-aided school. **Independent Schools** do not receive any funding from the Education Authority or the Department of Education.

Futher background notes can be found within the School Meals Statistical Bulletin at:

<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/school-meals-201718-statistical-bulletin-12-april-2018>