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# School Enrolments and Numbers Annual Data Collection

## Description of data collection exercise

Information on pupil enrolments is collected annually from schools, as part of what is commonly known as the school census. This data collection exercise is an annual snapshot of pupil and school level data for each pre-school centre, nursery, special, primary, post-primary, hospital, EOTAS centre and independent school in Northern Ireland. As well as data relating to school enrolments and numbers, information in relation to attendance is collected as part of the overall school return. The collection of data is facilitated by C2k, who are responsible for the provision of ICT systems in schools.

School census data is used by policy branches within DE and by other users across the education service, most notably by the Education Authority (EA). The main driver for the school census is to create a statistical base to inform a wide range of policy areas, including: finance allocations; school estate development and planning; special education, school improvement; area based planning; healthy schools, newcomers and Travellers; early years; pupil suppport; and integrated and Irish medium schools. The data are also the basis of a number of Assembly questions and are used in the EA auditing process.

Further users include Education and Training Inspectorate in preparation of background material for schools inspections. To reduce the burden on schools, other data needs are met as part of the exercise, such as using data collected in the exercise as the basis for information for the Common Funding Formula for schools. The date for the school census is usually the Friday of the first full working-week in October.

The content of the census is defined by DE information needs. The relevance of this is checked each year when we ask whether there are any changes DE branches and the Education Authority would like considered for the following year. This is a stimulus for discussions on needs with individual customers. We also meet with LMS officers from the EA who give feedback on EA requirements. A second forum in which we participate is the C2k Liaison Group which captures formal feedback from C2k help teams (and indirectly schools) about the experiences of schools in providing census data.

Data collected relates mainly to pupil characteristics and attributes such as year group, religion, ethnicity, special needs, etc. A full list of the variables available from the exercise is attached at Annex A. Data is collected from schools via both electronic data interchange and via paper return. Information for primary schools, post-primary schools, special schools and EOTAS centres is collected, in the main, at pupil level, with aggregate level information available for pupils at nursery schools, voluntary and private pre-school centres, independent and hospital schools. A list of developments in the data collected, reflecting the changing needs of users, is included at Annex B.

***Legislation and Data Protection Act***

DE ASU collects and processes personal information for statistics and research purposes, in order to meet the legal obligations and public functions of the Department of Education. These obligations and functions include:

* The statutory provisions providing the duties of the Department are contained in the Education Reform (NI) Order 1989. Article 3 places a duty on the Department to promote the education of the people of Northern Ireland and secure the effective execution by the Education Authority and other bodies of the Department’s policy in relation to the provision of the education service;
* The Department has duties under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity:
* between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;
* between men and women generally;
* between persons with disability and persons without; and
* between persons with dependants and persons without.

In addition, without prejudice to the above obligation, in carrying out its functions the Department is required have regard to the desirability of prmoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group; and

* The processing of data by the Department is provided for under statutory provisions listed in the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 2003 Article 37 provides that the EA and schools shall make such reports and returns and give such information to the Department as the Department may reasonably require for the purposes of its functions under any statutory provision.

The GDPR requires that processing of personal data is only undertaken under a fixed list of conditions. Unless stated otherwise, DE ASU’s processing of personal data/special personal data is carried out under the following condition: *“Processing is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest or in the exercise of official authority vested in the controller.”*

In addition, DE ASU may also process special personal data. The condition that DE ASU process this data is that: *“Processing is necessary for archiving in the public interest, scientific or historical research purposes or statistical purposes based on UK law.”*

In order to carry out the statutory functions of the Department ASU may obtain personal information directly from schools. In some circumstances DE ASU will provide you with a [Privacy Information Statement](https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/education/de-asu-privacy-notice.pdf), to explain in more detail how we may use your personal information.

DE ASU treats all the data we hold with respect, keeping it secure and confidential. Your personal data will solely be used for statistics or research purposes. Personal data collected or held by DE ASU for statistics or research purposes will **not** be disclosed for other purposes. Only DE ASU officials or organisations under/in contract with DE ASU and involved in the production of statistics or research will be able to access and use your personal data.

## Resources

The process is currently managed by 1 Deputy Principal Statistician with 1 Assistant Statistician dedicated to the census on a permanent basis. There is further administrative support from 2 clerical staff for the period of the data collection and validation exercise, an additional statistical officer is brought in on a temporary basis at the beginning of the data collection period. This is the minimum required to produce the dataset to its current standard and in the current timeframe.

## Response Burden

The Department collects a range of information from schools each year. To help minimise the burden on schools, information on enrolments and attendance is collected in one exercise, the annual school census.

A sample survey of schools making data returns through the school census process found that the compliance costs for all schools and voluntary and private preschool centres in the most recent exercise was £195,963.55. This exercise will be repeated for the 2018/19 census exercise.

There were variances in the time taken and differences appear to be affected by a number of factors, including, the size of the school, the level of data requested and the volume of the data requested. Aggregated data are collected from nursery schools and pre-schools while other sectors provide pupil level returns. Primary schools, special schools, post-primary schools and EOTAS centres all provide attendance information as well as enrolment data. Post-primary schools, which tend to be bigger, also include level of study information as part of the school census return. Variances in cost are also be effected by the level of seniority of staff involved in completing the census return in different schools.

## Data validation and confidentiality

A number of validations are built into the reporting process in schools, so that schools can verify and correct data before it is submitted. Once data is collected from schools, it is subjected to a further set of validation checks, including checking against EA information systems for items such as free school meals entitlement. Once the validation process is completed, the datasets are anonymised. Data are transferred from schools via a secure network.

Sensitive data relating to individual pupils, or to small numbers of pupils, are not published or released externally. In this instance, sensitive data are considered as religion, ethnicity, free school meals entitlement, special educational needs details, newcomer details, etc. Other details, such as pupil year group, are not considered sensitive and small numbers may be published in relation to them.

***Publication Details***

There are two main publications issued annually in relation to school enrolments. The first, usually in December, contains some basic enrolment figures. The main press release is usually published at the end of February/start of March and contains a more detailed breakdown of figures. Additionally, a series of tables containing information from the exercise are published on the [Statistics and Research part of the DE website](https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/topics/statistics-and-research/school-enrolments). In accordance with the UK Statistics Authority’s Code of Practice for Official Statistics, the following individuals were granted 24-hour pre-release access to these National Statistics releases:

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| Minister for Education for Northern Ireland |
| Department of Education (DE) Permanent Secretary |
| DE Deputy Secretary |
| DE Deputy Secretary |
| Grade 3 Head of Education and Training Inspectorate, DE |
| Grade 7, CFS Review Team |
| Principal Information Officer, Communications Team, DE |
| Special Adviser to the Minister for Education |
| Grade 6 Head of Education and Training Inspectorate, DE |

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## Annex A

# Data collected at individual pupil level via EDI for post primary schools

Gender

Date of birth

Unique Pupil Identifier/Admission number

Pupil name (for validation only)

Number of ½ day sessions attended

Number of ½ day sessions missed

Reason for absence

Religion

Ethnicity

Highest level of study

Free school meal entitlement

Year group

Registration group (for validation only)

SEN stage

SEN need type

Boarder

Fee payer

Date of arrival at school

Dual registered pupils

Educated off-site but not in a school

In learning support centre

Type of learning support centre

In Irish Medium unit

Home postcode

Country of residence

First language

Newcomer child with English as an additional language

Length of time pupils are recorded as a newcomer

‘Looked after’ child

Living arrangements for Looked after children

Health Trust for Looked after children

Personal Education Plan for ‘Looked after’ children

Children of forces personnel

Level achieved at KS2 in English and mathematics (Y8)

Reasons KS2 not achieved in English and mathematics (Y8)

Type of accommodation (for Travellers)

Pupils with a disability

Type of disability (Physical/mental/both)

Pupil in receipt of EMA

Pupil was previously registered with a Surestart

Pupil previously attended a Surestart developmental programme for 2 and 3 year olds

Level of study (pupils in years 11 – 15 only)

Currently in Nurture unit

Previously in Nurture unit

FSM ever 6 (pupil has been entitled to free school meals in any of the last 6 years)

# Data collected at summary level for post primary schools

Pupils not domiciled in NI

Projected enrolments by year group

In-migration and Out-migration to NI over the past year

Number of special units in the school

Level achieved at KS3 in English and mathematics (senior highs only)

Reasons KS3 not achieved in English and mathematics (senior highs only)

# Data collected at individual pupil level via EDI for special schools

Gender

Date of birth

Unique Pupil Identifier/Admission number

Pupil name (for validation purposes only)

Number of ½ day sessions attended

Number of ½ day sessions missed

Reason for absence

Religion

Ethnicity

First language

Newcomer child

Length of time pupils are recorded as a newcomer

Free school meal entitlement

‘Looked after’ child

Living arrangements for Looked after children

Health Trust for Looked after children

Personal Education Plan for ‘Looked after’ children

SEN stage

SEN need type

Educated off-site but not in a school

Dual registered pupils

Date of arrival at school

Home postcode

Country of residence

Year Group

Registration group

Children of forces personnel

Type of accommodation (for Travellers)

Pupils with a disability

Type of disability (Physical/mental/both)

Pupil was previously registered with a Surestart

Pupil previously attended a Surestart developmental programme for 2 and 3 year olds

Currently in Nurture unit

Previously in Nurture unit

FSM ever 6 (pupil has been entitled to free school meals in any of the last 6 years)

# Data collected at summary level for special schools

Pupils not domiciled in NI

Projected enrolments by year group

In-migration and Out-migration to NI over the past year

# Data collected at individual pupil level via EDI for primary schools

Gender

Date of birth

Unique Pupil Identifier/Admission number

Pupil name (for validation purposes only)

Number of ½ day sessions attended

Number of ½ day sessions missed

Reason for absence

Religion

Ethnicity

Free school meal entitlement

Pupils with parent in receipt of JSA/Income Support (nursery pupils only)

Year group

Pattern of attendance for nursery pupils

SEN stage

SEN need type

Boarder

Fee payer

Educated off-site but not in a school

Dual registered pupils

Date of arrival at the school

In learning support centre

Type of learning support centre

In Irish Medium unit

Home postcode

Country of residence

First language

Newcomer child

Length of time pupils are recorded as a newcomer

Looked after child

Living arrangements for Looked after children

Health Trust for Looked after children

Personal Education Plan for ‘Looked after’ children

Registration groups (including composite classes).

Children of forces personnel

Pupils with a disability

Type of disability (Physical/mental/both)

Previous educational experience of year 1

Type of accommodation (for Travellers)

Pupil was previously registered with a Surestart

Pupil previously attended a Surestart developmental programme for 2 and 3 year olds

Currently in Nurture unit

Previously in Nurture unit

FSM ever 6 (pupil has been entitled to free school meals in any of the last 6 years)

# Data collected at summary level for primary schools

Pupils not domiciled in NI

Projected enrolments by year group

In-migration and Out-migration to NI over the past year

Number of special units in a school

# Data collected at summary level for nursery schools

Gender

Pattern of attendance

Age

Summer birthday

Projected numbers by age and pattern of attendance

Looked after children

Living arrangements for Looked after children

Class size and numbers

Pupils with parent in receipt of JSA/Income Support

Religion

Ethnicity

Newcomer children

SEN stage

SEN need type

Children of forces Personnel

Children not domiciled in Northern Ireland.

Type of accommodation (for Travellers)

Children with a disability

# Data collected at pupil level for nursery schools

Home postcode

# Data collected at summary level voluntary and private pre-school centres

Number of hours of pre-school activity provided per day

Total children in centre

Number of funded children

For funded children:

Gender

Pattern of attendance

Age

Summer birthday

Projected numbers by age and pattern of attendance

Living arrangements for Looked after children

Class size and numbers

Pupils with parent in receipt of JSA/Income Support

Religion

Ethnicity

Newcomer children

SEN stage

SEN need type.

Type of accommodation (for Travellers)

Children with a disability

# Data collected at pupil level for voluntary and private pre-school centres

Home postcode

**Annex B**

**School census year on year progress report**

**2006/07**

EDI returns for primary and special schools introduced.

* Pupil level data available for primary schools
* New summary sheets introduced

Irish language forms and documentation introduced for IM schools/pre schools.

* Irish language documentation for all schools in IM sector

Documentation put on website

* Reference documents for schools put on website and schools emailed access links

**2007/08**

Changes to xml conversion procedure

* Facility for bulk conversion of files introduced

UPN for post primary pupils introduced.

**2008/09**

Forces children marker collected at pupil level.

UPN for primary and special schools introduced.

Attendance data collected at pupil level.

**2009/10**

Code for ‘Roma’ introduced in ethnicity variable.

Accommodation type for Traveller children collected.

**2010/11**

Revised language codes introduced.

Registration type – dual or single – variable introduced for primary, post primary and special school pupils.

Children educated of-site but not in a school variable introduced for primary, post-primary and special schools.

**2011/12**

Extended use of Common Transfer File mechanism for transfer of pupil information between primary and post primary schools.

**2012/13**

No changes.

**2013/14**

Accommodation type for ‘looked after’ children collected.

Responsible Health Trust for ‘looked after’ children collected.

Home postcode for children in funded places in voluntary and private preschool centres collected.

Newcomer start date collected for pupils in primary, special and post-primary schools.

**2014/15**

Disability information collected from nursery schools and voluntary and private preschool centres.

Newcomer end date collected for pupils in primary, special and post-primary schools.

**2015/16**

Personal Education Plan information collected for pupils in primary, post primary and special schools.

Pupil registered with a Sure Start project

Pupil previously attended a Sure Start Developmental Programme for 2-3 year olds collected for pupils in primary and special schools.

**2016/17**

Level of study variable for pupils enrolled in years 11 – 15.

Online form used by Voluntary and Private Preschool Centres to return data.

Excel form used by Nursery schools to return data.

**2017/18**

Type of Learning Support Centre

SIMS extended to EOTAS centres to facilitate electronic collection

**2018/19**

Year taught in variable for all schools

Currently in Nurture unit

Previously in Nurture unit

Type of disability (Physical/mental)

Free school meal ever 6