



Coronavirus (COVID-19) attendance in education and early years settings – summary of returns

Headline facts and figures

- The attendance rate amongst pupils in educational establishments was around 1% during the week commencing 13 April 2020, which would have usually been part of the Easter holidays for most schools. Attendance was initially above 3% in the week commencing 23 March 2020.
- The number of teachers in attendance has also fallen since then, suggesting that establishments are adapting to lower numbers of pupils and the latest advice on social distancing.
- It was estimated on 16 April that 65,000 children were attending early years childcare – about 4% of the number of children who usually attend childcare in term time.

Background

Following the announcement that all educational establishments would close from Friday 20 March for all but those children of critical workers and vulnerable children, the Department created a means by which establishments could report daily on important information that would help understand the impacts of the decision including the number of students, teaching and non-teaching staff in attendance. Establishments were asked to complete these for each day they remained open, and if closed let us know when they planned to reopen, if they knew this.

Additionally, the Department for Education has since created a means by which Local Authorities (LAs) could regularly report on similar information on available early years childcare provision during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

This data release covers a summary of four weeks' of the educational establishment data up to 4pm on Friday 17 April 2020. Data was collected on Good Friday and Easter Monday but due to the low response rate, the narrative makes comparisons to Friday 3 April. It contains a single view of the early years data collection on Thursday 16 April as we do not yet have a consistent time-series. This data will continue to be published on a weekly basis.

Non-response adjustment

For the educational settings survey, the response rate for the first two weeks was between 67% and 76%. It remained above 50% during the following two weeks as more schools entered the Easter break, aside from the two bank holidays where response rate was lower. To take account of non-response during the first week (Monday 23 to Friday 27), analysts assumed that non-responding establishments are as likely to be open as those that did provide a return to estimate the national picture. More details of how this was done is outlined in the [Methodology](#) section. This decision was

taken because at the time there was little information to help refine the methodology, but after a full week of returns analysts were able to review return patterns and revise our understanding of what is happening in those establishments that are not reporting. Figures from Monday 30 March onwards in this document are based on a new methodology that no longer makes this assumption.

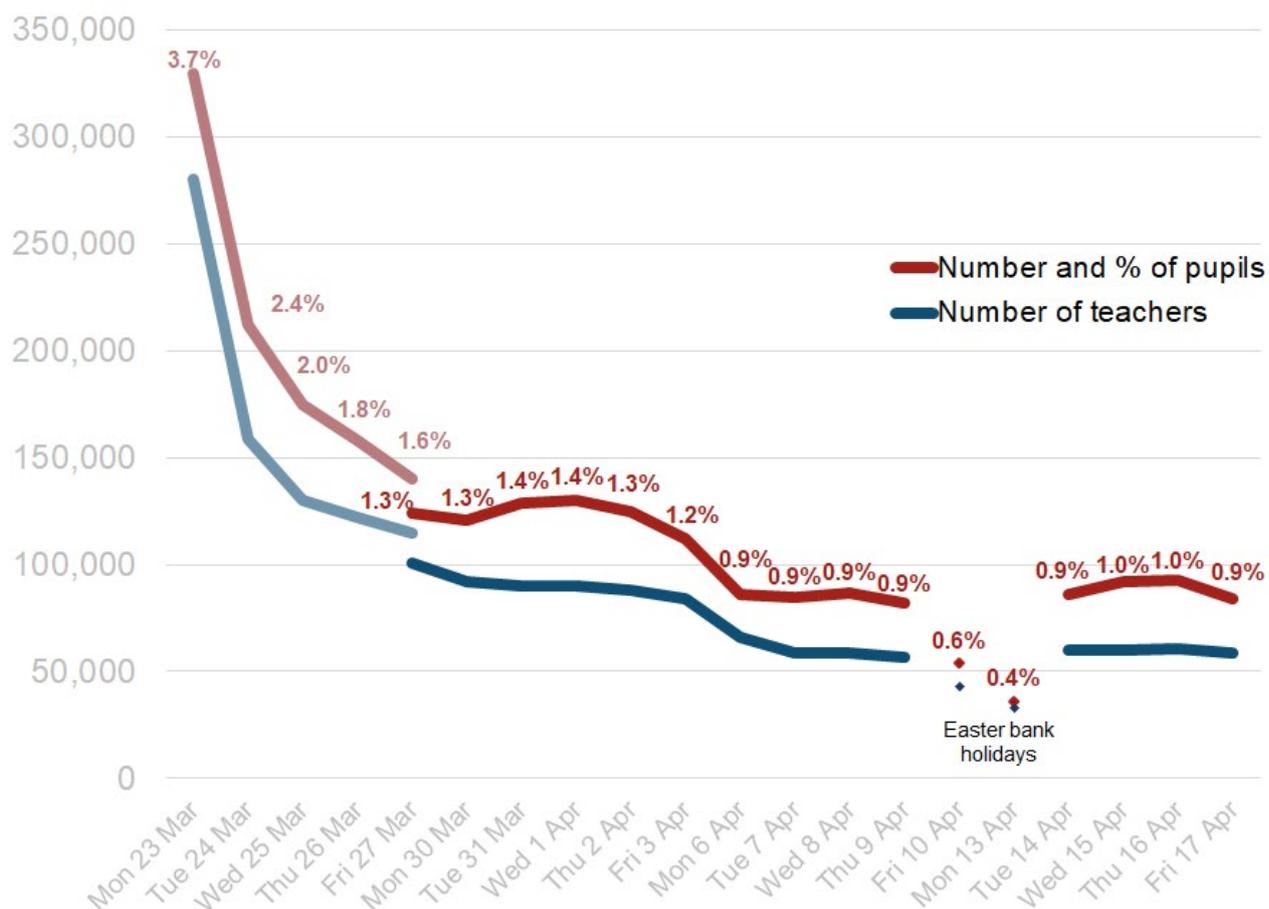
The main difference this revision made was to better understand the proportion of establishments that were open. More granular information, such as attendance rates of pupils and teachers saw only minor changes. Figures for Friday 27 have been rerun to show the effect of this change and the uncertainty in the estimates (see the [Methodology](#) section).

For the local authority early years survey, figures for the number of settings open and closed and the number of children attending for those LAs which did not respond were estimated based on the proportions reported by LAs which did respond. The national estimate comprises reported figures from LAs which did respond combined with these estimates (see the [Methodology](#) section).

Summary of data

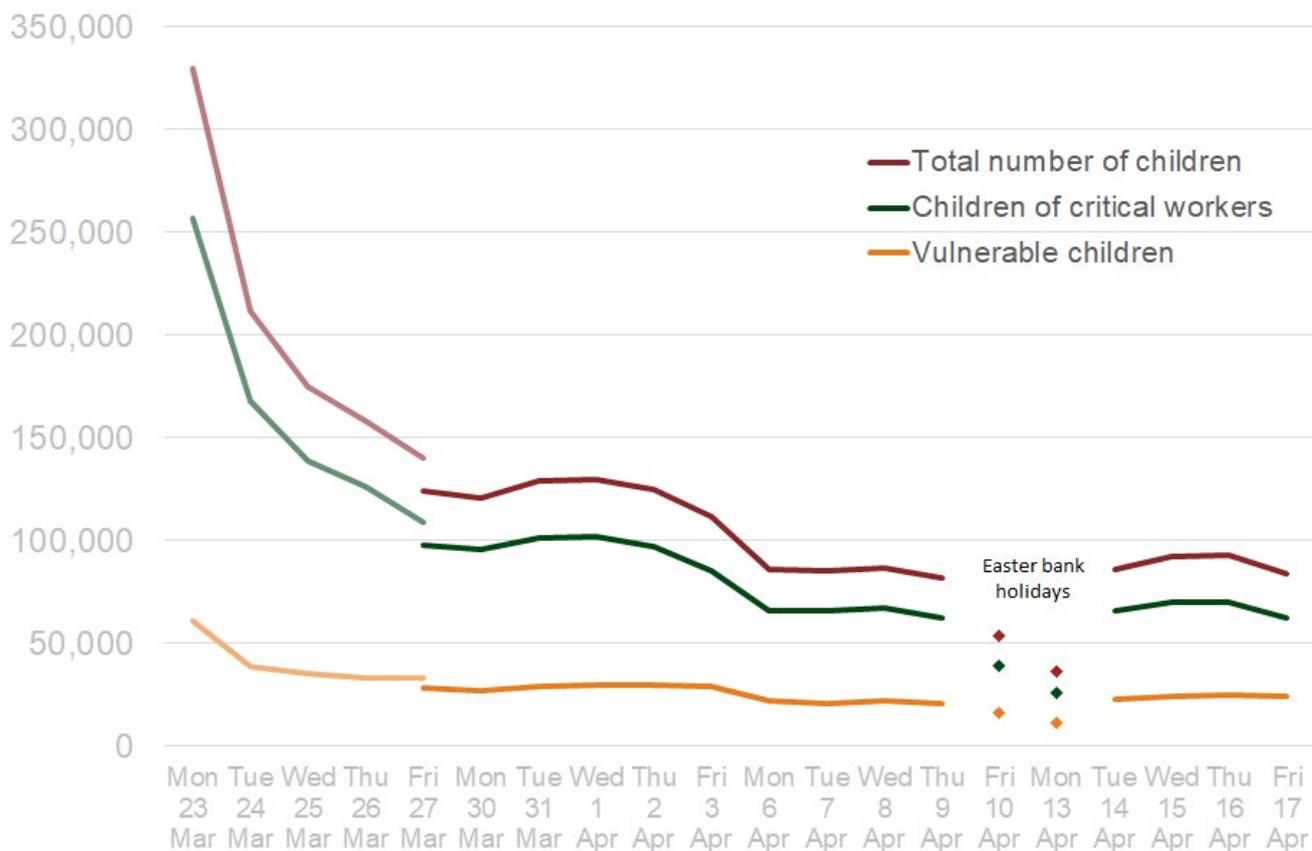
12,800 establishments provided a response to the survey on Friday 17 April. This represents 52% of all establishments. The following key findings are adjusted for non-response (see [Methodology](#)):

- 61% of establishments were open - around 15,100 establishments. This has been stable during the most recent two weeks, having decreased since the first week of partial closures (when around 19,000 were open).
- The most recent data suggests around 84,000 children attended an educational establishment on Friday 17 April, representing 0.9% of pupils who normally attend. Our analysis suggests that attendance on Monday 23 March was over 3% and that the attendance rate gradually fell - reaching 1.3% on Monday 30 March then 0.9% on Monday 6 April. Attendance during the following two weeks remained stable. This two week period of lower attendance corresponds with the Easter break, although for some parts of the country this would have started on 30 March and so attendance may increase from 20 April. In general, attendance has been higher mid-week.



- 24,000 of the children in attendance on Friday 17 April were classed by schools as vulnerable, down from 29,000 on Friday 3 April. We estimate this represents around 5% of all children and young people classified as ‘Children in Need’ or who have an Education, Health and Care Plan.¹
- 62,000 of the children in attendance on Friday 17 April were classed by schools as children of critical workers, down from 85,000 on Friday 3 April. We estimate that this represents around 2% of all children of critical workers, down from around 3% on 3 April.
- These were cared for by 59,000 teaching staff and 43,000 non-teaching staff. The number of teachers in attendance continues to fall having been around five times this figure at the start of the first week of partial closures, suggesting that establishments are adapting to lower numbers of pupils and the latest advice on social distancing.

¹ This is an estimate based on the 2019 Children in Need census and January 2019 school census and we are working with educational providers and local authorities to improve our understanding of the total number of vulnerable children for whom continued attendance at educational establishments would be beneficial and appropriate. This is in recognition of the fact that attendance may not be appropriate for some children, including because of health considerations and risks, and that many children with EHC plans may be able to have their needs met in the home environment. Full guidance on the definition of vulnerable children and options for continued attendance can be found [here](#)



The response rate to the Local Authority survey on early year settings was 87%, with 131 out of 151 LAs submitting data on Thursday 16 April.

- An estimated 22,000 settings are open. This represents 26% of all settings, with 45% closed and 30% unknown.²
- We estimate 65,000 children are currently attending early years childcare settings – about 4% of the number of children who usually attend childcare in term time.³
- This consists of an estimated 59,000 children of critical workers and 6,000 who are vulnerable children. We estimate this represents approximately 5% of children of critical workers aged 0 to 4 years-old, and 6% of 0 to 4 year-olds classified as ‘Children in Need’ or who have an Education, Health and Care Plan.⁴

² Due to rounding, these do not sum to 100%

³ The number of children in term time was estimated using outputs from the Childcare and early years survey of parents: 2019 and ONS National Population Projections: 2018 based

⁴ 0 to 4 year olds excluding those in Reception classes. See footnote 1 and methodology section regarding vulnerable children.

Methodology

Educational settings survey

Details of the data requested and how it is collected is available at the [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): attendance recording for educational settings](#) webpage. The following educational settings were asked to complete the form:

- academies (including free schools and studio schools)
- local authority maintained schools
- local authority nursery schools
- independent schools
- non-maintained special schools
- pupil referral units
- university technical colleges
- FE colleges and sixth form colleges
- special post-16 institutions or specialist colleges

There are currently no automatic validations on the data submitted by establishments. However, checks are carried out to ensure that no establishment is double counted (if they submit data more than once per day the latest submission is used). Manual checks are applied to the data during data processing. Comparisons are made to other reported data and information obtained by discussions with schools and local authorities to provide reassurance that the data is a fair reflection of the national picture.

The response rate to this survey has been between 52% to 76%, except on the two bank holidays where response rate was closer to 20%. In order to get a full national picture, a grossing methodology was devised. During the first week (Monday 23 to Friday 27), it was assumed that non-responding establishments are as likely to be open or closed as those that provided a return. After a full week of returns, we have been able to analyse return patterns and have developed our methodology which is now as follows:

- Any establishment reporting to be open or closed on the day of collection is recorded as such.
- Establishments also report whether they plan to be open the next day. If they have not provided a return on the day of collection, we consider their most recent return:
 - If these establishments had reported that they planned to close, they are assumed to be closed.
 - If these establishments' most recent return was the previous day and they reported that they planned to open, it is assumed they have remained open.
 - If these establishments most recent return was prior to the previous day and they reported that they planned to open, it is assumed that 50% have remained open.
- For establishments that have never responded, it is assumed 50% have remained open.
- Attendance rates are calculated for each individual establishment type and use 2019/20 census returns to calculate proportions of all pupils on roll. This is likely to over-estimate attendance in cases where establishments are caring for pupils from other establishments. This practice may increase during Easter break. Analysis of returns suggested the likely effect of this was less than 0.1%.

- When calculating attendance rates for non-responding establishments that are assumed open, similar rates are assumed as responding open establishments.

The assumption of 50% having remained open was arrived at by choosing a random sample of 50 establishments and determining that approximately half had closed via school websites and local authority announcements. Adjusting this assumption by +/-10% changes the estimated open establishments by around 1%, whilst it has a negligible effect on the low attendance rate.

The main difference this methodology change made was to better understand the proportion of establishments that were open. We also improved the denominator used for further education colleges, this has driven the majority of the decrease in attendance rate. More granular information, such as attendance rates of pupils and teachers saw only minor changes (see table below).

	Friday 27 March - previous methodology	Friday 27 March - revised methodology
Number of open establishments	23,700	20,000
Proportion of open establishments	96%	81%
Number of pupils attending	140,000	124,000
Proportion of pupils attending	1.6%	1.3%
Teaching staff	115,000	101,000
Support staff	92,000	80,000

Schools are asked to provide a count of the number of critical workers and the number of vulnerable children. Schools are also asked to provide a breakdown of both these figures for pupils with an EHC Plan and those with a social worker. Some schools have been providing a count of critical workers with either EHC Plans or a social worker but not including these in their respective counts for vulnerable children. Therefore, our estimate of the number of vulnerable children may be an undercount. The data suggests the effect of this is c5%.

The proportion of vulnerable children in attendance is based on an estimate of the total number of pupils who are either classed as Children in Need or have an education, health and care plan. This is derived from the Children in Need and School Censuses. This is an estimate and we are working with local authorities and schools to improve our understanding of vulnerable children attending educational establishment in recognition that attendance may not be appropriate for some children, including because of health considerations and risks.

The proportion of children of critical workers in attendance is based on an estimate of the number of pupils who have a critical worker parent derived from the Labour Force Survey.

Early years survey

LAs have completed an online survey from the DfE on provision in EY settings. Checks were carried out to ensure that no LA was double-counted. Comparisons were made to other reported data to provide reassurance that the data is a fair reflection of the national picture.

The response rate by LAs to the survey on Thursday 16 April at 18:00 was 87%. The data returned was therefore “grossed up” as follows based on data the department already holds to estimate the total numbers of open establishments and children attending those establishments.

- The total national numbers of settings, vulnerable children and children of critical workers were estimated from a combination of data including Ofsted data and DfE data, and then broken down to LA level. We then estimate proxy figures for the number of settings open and closed and the number of children attending in LAs not responding. These estimates are based on the proportions of settings open and closed and children attending reported by LAs who did respond. A national estimate is arrived by combining the reported and estimated figures.
- Where the LA reported on fewer providers than in the DfE estimate, the providers for which no information was submitted have been assumed to be in the 'unknown' category.
- The take-up percentages are calculated using estimates of the number of providers in an LA and the estimated number of children in a childcare place in term time.
- This approach assumes no non-response bias from LAs not submitted data.
- The sum of the estimates for open and closed providers is not the total number of providers nationally, as the status of some providers is unknown.
- The estimation methodology will be refined as more data is collected.

Because the LA survey covered school-based early years providers, there is likely to be a very small degree of overlap between the early years data collection and the schools attendance data which includes school-based nurseries. Around a third of children who were in a funded childcare place in January 2019 were taking their place at a school-based provider.

Useful links

- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): attendance recording for educational settings](#)
- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): guidance on vulnerable children and young people](#)
- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): early years and childcare closures](#)
- The [Prime Minister's speech](#) regarding closing educational establishments
- Latest published information on [school and pupil numbers](#)

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