



Department
for Education

Ad-hoc Notice

**Universal infant free school meals:
Take up by infant pupils based on the
autumn (October) census 2014**

December 2014

Background

On 1 September 2014 all state-funded schools in England became required by law to offer a free school meal to all pupils in reception, year 1 and year 2.

This statistical notice reports the number and percentage of infant pupils who took a free school meal on 2 October 2014, as reported by schools in the autumn school census. Data was received from 100 per cent of schools with infant pupils in the specified year groups (16,510 schools).

An update to this release with more detailed breakdowns, including local authority level data, based on the January 2015 school census, will be provided with the publication 'Schools, Pupils and their Characteristics: January 2015' which will be published in June 2015.

Results

Table 1 - Take up of school lunches by infant pupils on 2 October 2014 census day [1] [2]

| Region | Number of infant pupils who took a lunch on census day | Number of infant pupils who did not take a lunch on census day [3] | Percentage of infant pupils who took a lunch on census day | Percentage of infant pupils who did not take a lunch on census day [3] |
|----------------------|--|--|--|--|
| England | 1,640,530 | 285,490 | 85.2 | 14.8 |
| North East | 79,875 | 9,595 | 89.3 | 10.7 |
| North West | 228,765 | 30,570 | 88.2 | 11.8 |
| Yorkshire and Humber | 167,645 | 27,580 | 85.9 | 14.1 |
| East Midlands | 135,520 | 27,885 | 82.9 | 17.1 |
| West Midlands | 182,575 | 28,170 | 86.6 | 13.4 |
| East of England | 177,535 | 36,900 | 82.8 | 17.2 |
| Inner London | 96,720 | 9,980 | 90.6 | 9.4 |
| Outer London | 172,190 | 30,945 | 84.8 | 15.2 |
| South East | 249,895 | 56,665 | 81.5 | 18.5 |
| South West | 149,810 | 27,200 | 84.6 | 15.4 |

Source: Autumn school census 2014

1. Infant pupils includes those in reception, year 1, year 2 and those not following the national curriculum and who are of infant age.
2. Figures include dually registered pupils (e.g. in a mainstream school and also attends a special school for specialist support) who will be recorded as taking a lunch at the school where the meal is provided. These pupils will always be recorded twice, either: 1) taking and not taking a school lunch on census day; or 2) not taking a school lunch at both schools on census day.
3. Figures include pupils who were absent on census day.

Take up of free school meals

Over 1.6 million infant pupils (85.2 per cent of all infant pupils) took a free school meal on autumn census day in 2014. This is a rise of 1.3 million from the 0.3 million infant pupils who were estimated¹ to have taken a free school meal in the January 2014 school census (which was prior to the introduction of universal infant free school meals).

Take up of free school meals varied by region, with 90.6% in inner London, and 81.5% in the South East.

¹ Data on the number and proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals who took a meal on census day was collected at school level in January 2014, and not split by age of pupil. Therefore, to estimate the number of infant pupils who took a free school meal, the proportion of all primary-age free school meal eligible pupils who took a meal on census day has been applied to the number of infant pupils eligible for free school meals.



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