Department for Education

Special educational needs in England: January 2017

Technical Document

Contents

Summary

1.	This document provides information on the use of statistics published in the Special educational needs in England statistical first release (SFR). It provides information on how the data is generally used as well as information on the quality and reliability of the data. There are a number of points to consider following the implementation of the SEND reforms under the Children and Families Act 2014.

Users and usage

2.	The information collected on special educational needs via the school census provides the only individual level source of data on children and young people with special educational needs. Ministers, Parliament, central and local government, external organisations and the public use this data to monitor government policies and their effectiveness.

3.	We would like to know more about our users and would encourage and welcome any feedback on how the data is used. Comments on any issues relating to this publication are also welcomed and encouraged. If you would like to be involved in future user engagement consultations then please do get in touch. Please email us at: SEN.STATISTICS@education.gov.uk

Data sources

4.	This SFR contains information about pupils with special educational needs. This information is derived from school census returns, general hospital school census and school level annual school census (SLASC) returns made to the department in January each year.

5.	Guidance on the school census is available on gov.uk. The technical specification for school census explains what data are collected and what validation is in place and includes the business rationale for the collection. Similar information on the general hospital school census can be found here, and similar information on the school level annual school census (SLASC) can be found here.

6.	Schools return their data to the Department for Education via the COLLECT (Collections On-Line for Learning, Education, Children and Teachers) system. COLLECT has built-in validation rules which flag up data which is invalid or where the quality is questionable. This allows schools to identify errors and clean the data before they submit it to DfE. Users are encouraged to clean all errors and double-check data where queries are flagged. Users can add notes to their return if there is a genuine reason for "unusual" data.

7.   Once all users have submitted and cleaned their data, a final dataset is formed. A school level summary dataset is available to download on the publication page. The underlying data zip file contains this school level dataset in .csv format and metadata which contains a list of the variables and their definitions.

Methodology

Free school meals

8.   The figures reported here are based on those pupils known to be eligible for and claiming free school meals. As the data published here is reported by schools, if a pupil comes from a family that would meet the eligibility criteria, but does not report this to the school, then they are not reported here as eligible for free school meals.

9.   From September 2014 all infant pupils in state-funded schools have been entitled to a free school meal.

10.   Free school meals are available to pupils who attend sixth forms attached to a maintained school, as long as the course of study began before the pupil reached age 18. Free school meal eligibility relates to those who meet the eligibility criteria and make a claim.

Ethnic group

11.   Pupils who have been classified according to their ethnic group. Those classified as other than White British are defined as minority ethnic.

First language

12.   The language to which a child was initially exposed during early development and continues to be exposed in the home or in the community. Exposure to a language at home is not an indication of a pupil's proficiency at speaking English.

Quality

13.   The school census return changed to take account of the implementation of the SEND reforms introduced in September 2014. More specific points are outlined below:

Special educational needs provision codes for 2017

14.   The codes used in the SEN provision field within the School census are shown below:

Code	Pupil SEN provision
N	No SEN
S	Statement
E	Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan
K	SEN support

Transfers to EHC plans

15.   The transfer of statements to an EHC plan is due to take place by April 2018 and is phased giving priority to certain groups such as those transferring from primary to secondary school.

16.   Analysis of the data suggests some schools have recorded some or all of their pupils who were previously recorded as 'statement', as 'EHC plan' regardless of whether a formal needs assessment (transfer review) has been completed and a final EHC plan issued. Because of this, we have presented combined figures for pupils with a statement and those with an EHC plan within the publication.

SEN Unit / Resourced Provisions

17.   Within the school level dataset, a flag has been derived to indicate whether the school contains an SEN Unit or a Resourced Provision. This flag was derived using indicators of attendance within an SEN unit or Resourced Provision that are held at the pupil level within the schools census.

18.   Resourced Provisions are where places are reserved at a mainstream school for pupils with a specific type of SEN, taught mainly within mainstream classes, but requiring a base and some specialist facilities around the school. Resourced provisions:

- receive additional funding from the local authority specifically for the purpose of the provision;
- cater for a specific type or types of SEN (e.g. specific learning difficulties);
- are usually for pupils with statements or those with EHC plans (but could include pupils with SEN but without a statement or plan).

19.   SEN units are special provisions within a mainstream school where the children are taught mainly within separate classes. Units:

- receive additional funding from the local authority specifically for the purpose of the provision;
- cater for a specific type or types of SEN (e.g. autistic spectrum disorders);
- are usually for pupils with statements or those with EHC plans (but could include pupils with SEN but without a statement or plan).

Primary type of need

20.   The following primary types of need are currently used:

Specific Learning Difficulty
Moderate Learning Difficulty
Severe Learning Difficulty
Profound & Multiple Learning Difficulty
Social, Emotional and Mental Health
Speech, Language and Communication Need
Hearing Impairment
Visual Impairment
Multi-Sensory Impairment
Physical Disability
Autistic Spectrum Disorder
Other

21.   For a more complete description of the broad areas of the needs listed, please see the Section 6 of the SEND Code of Practice, 'Identifying SEN in Schools'.

Coverage

22.   In 2014, the type of special educational need was only collected for those with a statement or on school action plus. In 2015, the type of special educational need was collected for all those:

- With a statement.
- With an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan
- on School Action Plus
- on SEN Support.

From 2016, the type of special educational need was collected for all those:

- with a statement.
- With an EHC plan.
- On SEN support.

23.   In January 2014, 675,095 pupils had a primary need recorded, this increased to 1,011,525 pupils in January 2015 and is 1,144,224 as of January 2017.

New type of need code

24.   A new code entitled 'SEN support but no specialist assessment of type of need' was introduced in 2014 and aimed at those who transferred from School Action to SEN Support but are yet to be formally assessed for their type of special educational need. Analysis of the data shows that some schools have also used this category for pupils with statements or EHC plans.

25.   'Social Emotional and Mental Health' was added as a new type of need in 2015. At the same time, the type of need 'Behaviour, Emotional and Social Difficulties' was removed; however, it is not expected it should not be treat as a direct replacement and so direct comparisons should be avoided.

Disclosure Control

26.   The Code of Practice for Official Statistics requires us to take reasonable steps to ensure that our published or disseminated statistics protect confidentiality. The data published in this release does not reveal the identity of individuals. Where there is a single pupil with a particular characteristic, prior knowledge of that circumstance would be required to determine which pupil it is. Suppression has only been used in tables where we considered there to be a risk that knowing one piece of information about a pupil could reveal further information about that pupil. By doing this, we can limit suppression or rounding, which means that the practical utility of the statistics is not constrained.

Presentation

27.   When reviewing the tables, please note the following:

We preserve confidentiality	The Code of Practice for Official Statistics requires we take reasonable steps to ensure that our published or disseminated statistics protect confidentiality.
So in some cases we round numbers	National figures in table 1 have been rounded to the nearest 5.
	In the underlying data file, pupil numbers of 1 or 2 have been suppressed. Where any number is shown as zero (0), the original figure was also zero.
	This suppression is consistent with the Departmental statistical policy which can be found at:
	Departmental statistical policy.
And adopt symbols to help identify this	Symbols are used in the tables as follows:
	. not applicable
	.. not available
	x suppressed figure

Related information

28.   The section below provides links to further information.

Previously published SEN figures	The series of publications is available online at: Statistics: special educational needs (SEN).
Local authority comparisons	A range of SEN data is available at local authority level in a comparison format produced by the Department in the Local Authority Interactive Tool (LAIT)
Wales	Welsh Assembly Government: School census results: Welsh Government: School census results
Scotland	Scottish Government: In Scotland there is different legislation and instead of having SEN they have pupils with Additional Support Needs (ASN). Information on this is included in the below publication. Summary Statistics for Schools in Scotland. School Education Statistics
Northern Ireland	Norther Ireland Government: Department for education statistics: Department for Education statistics

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