



Department
for Education

Special educational needs in England: January 2015

Quality, uses and methodology

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

3. We are very familiar with the uses made of the data by local authorities, within the Department for Education and by the UK government. However, we have less clarity on the uses made of this data by other organisations.

4. 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.gsi.gov.uk

Data sources

5. This SFR contains information about pupils with SEN. This information is derived from school census returns and school level annual school census returns made to the department in January each year. The pupil referral unit census has now been discontinued and these institutions complete the school census.

6. [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 school level annual school census can be found [here](#).

7. Local authorities and 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 and LAs 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.

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

9. The SEN2 survey collects aggregate information from local authorities on children with statements of SEN and EHC plans. It records information on those children for whom the local authority is responsible for, regardless of whether they are educated in the local authority's own maintained schools, in another local authority's school, in the non-maintained or independent sectors or educated outside of school. For this reason figures sourced from the school census and the SEN2 survey are not directly comparable. In 2015 the SEN2 information was published separately on 21 May in SFR 14/2015 Statements of SEN and EHC plans: England 2015.

Methodology

Free school meals

10. 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.

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

12. 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

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

First language

14. 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

15. The 2015 school census return changed to take account of the implementation of the SEND reforms introduced in September 2014. Systems and processes may still be bedding in with this first collection. More specific points are outlined below:

Special educational needs provision

16. Two new codes were added to the SEN provision field within the School Census in autumn 2014, as highlighted below.

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

The changes to these new codes should take place as follows:

Transfers to EHC plans

17. 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.

18. 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.

Transfers to SEN support

19. The transition from school action plus and school action to SEN support should take place during the first term after implementation of SEND reforms so we would expect the majority to be on SEN support at January 2015 – and analysis shows this is the case. However, within the publication we have presented one category of 'SEN support' which includes some pupils who still have the SEN provision codes of school action and school action plus (this is with the exception of the type of need tables where

school action hasn't been included within SEN support because those on school action are not required to provide type of need).

Changes to the type of need

20. There are three main changes to note:

Coverage

21. 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
- an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan
- on School Action Plus
- on SEN Support.

22. In January 2014, 675,095 pupils had a primary need recorded, this has increased to 1,011,525 pupils in January 2015.

New type of need code

23. A new code entitled 'SEN support but no specialist assessment of type of need' was introduced 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.

24. In January 2015, 28,490 pupils had their type of need recorded as 'SEN support but no specialist assessment of type of need', the vast majority of which are on 'SEN support'. Of the 28,490 pupils, 43% were on School Action, 45% had no SEN and 12% were on School Action Plus, in January 2014.

Type of need code change

25. The previous code for type of need 'Behaviour, Emotional and Social Difficulties' (BESD) has been replaced with 'Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH)'. Those with a primary need of BESD in 2014 were not all expected to move to SEMH in 2015.

General Hospital Schools collection issue

26. General hospital schools provide aggregate information on the numbers with SEN in their School Level Annual School Census data return. Following the closure of this data collection, we have identified some minor discrepancies in the numbers with SEN for two schools. Additional validation rules will be added to this data return in future years as a result of this issue.

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 we round numbers	<p>Pupil numbers at national and regional levels have been rounded to the nearest 5. Pupil numbers of 1 or 2 have been suppressed. Where any number is shown as zero (0), the original figure was also zero. Where the numerator or denominator of any percentage calculated on pupil numbers is less than 3, this has been suppressed.</p> <p>This suppression is consistent with the Departmental statistical policy which can be found at: Departmental statistical policy.</p>
And adopt symbols to help identify this	<p>Symbols are used in the tables as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">. not applicablex suppressed figure

Related information

28. The section below provides links to further information.

Previously published SEN figures	<p>The series of publications is available online at: Statistics: special educational needs (SEN).</p>
Local authority comparisons	<p>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)</p>
Wales	<p>Welsh Assembly Government: School census results: Welsh Government: School census results</p>

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

Department for Education, Northern Ireland: Special Educational Needs (SEN) pupils by Education and Library Board (ELB).

[ELB](#)

Special schools data.

[School level data](#)



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