



SFR 28/2017 – Technical Annex

1. Introduction

Statistics on the numbers of pupils in infant classes are published annually each June in the statistical first release “schools, pupils and their characteristics”. These statistics are produced using data collected from local authorities and schools as a part of the January school census.

What do we count as an infant class?

Our statistics cover classes listed on the school census as either containing reception year or key stage 1 pupils and one teacher. Our statistics cover ordinary teaching sessions and classes with no teachers, or more than one teacher, are not included.

The legislation applies only to classes where the majority of pupils will attain the age of five, six or seven during the course of the school year. Therefore mixed classes are not included, for example mixes of nursery and reception pupils, or key stage 1 and 2 pupils.

In this note, any infant class containing more than 30 pupils is termed a ‘large infant class’.

2. Legislation

The [School Standards and Framework Act 1998](#) limits the size of an infant class to 30 pupils per school teacher. An infant class is one in which the majority of children will reach the age of 5, 6 or 7 during the school year i.e. reception, year 1 and year 2.

[The School Admissions \(Infant Class Sizes\) \(England\) Regulations 2012](#) prescribe certain limited circumstances in which pupils may be admitted as lawful exceptions to the infant class size limit of 30 for one-teacher classes. This means that a class of, for example, 32 pupils is lawful if two or more of those pupils have been admitted under lawful exceptions. If fewer than two have been admitted as lawful exceptions then the class is termed ‘unlawful’.

3. Context

Since 2010, there has been an increasing primary pupil population and there has been an associated increase in the number of infant classes from 53,887 in 2010 to 60,788 in 2017. In some areas, this has led to infant class sizes larger than the statutory size of 30; the number of infant classes larger than 30 rose from 995 in 2010 to 2,909 in 2017, although this is a drop on the high of 3,224 large infant classes in 2015.

Since 2006, the department has published figures on large infant class sizes, net of exempted pupils, as a data series called “Unlawful infant classes”, following a review of the presentation of infant class size statistics. The figures enable users of the statistics to understand how many, and what proportion, of the total number of large infant classes are defined as unlawful or lawful and how many pupils are in those classes.

In March 2015, the UK statistics authority confirmed that future publications of unlawful infant class size statistics should not be designated as National Statistics, pending further improvements and a future-reassessment by the Authority. The rationale behind this de-designation can be found in part 2 of this annex.

The unlawfully large class size statistics are a small part of the broader set of school class size statistics. The class size statistics which are unaffected by this issue and which retain National Statistics status are:

- average infant class sizes;

- number of infant classes of sizes 1-30, 31 or more;
- number of infant pupils in classes of size 1-30, 31 or more;
- number of infant pupils in classes of 31 or more with 'excepted activity'; and
- all class size statistics for key stage 2 and the split by primary/secondary schools

These statistics can be found in the main text of this statistical first release. This technical annex contains the statistics on unlawful infant classes which have been de-designated as National Statistics, and cannot be published under the UKSA National Statistics kite mark.

Table A1: State-funded primary schools: Large infant classes in England, 2007-2017 (1)

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
All Key Stage 1 Classes (2)											
Number of classes	53,350	53,160	53,497	53,887	54,788	55,506	56,597	58,256	59,214	60,039	60,788
Number of pupils	1,364,960	1,367,860	1,399,040	1,434,450	1,474,960	1,507,705	1,547,390	1,594,665	1,622,755	1,645,880	1,667,820
Lawfully Large Classes With 'Excepted' Pupils (3)											
Number of classes	590	530	612	857	1,061	1,301	2,074	2,436	3,085	2,884	2,798
Percentage of all classes	1.1	1.0	1.1	1.6	1.9	2.3	3.7	4.2	5.2	4.8	4.6
Number of pupils	18,510	16,430	19,130	26,795	33,135	40,690	64,815	76,075	96,390	90,105	87,364
Percentage of all pupils	1.4	1.2	1.4	1.9	2.2	2.7	4.2	4.8	5.9	5.5	5.2
Unlawfully large classes (4)											
Number of classes	130	200	276	138	311	207	225	549	139	161	111
Percentage of all classes	0.2	0.4	0.5	0.3	0.6	0.4	0.4	0.9	0.2	0.3	0.2
Number of pupils	4,280	6,380	8,835	4,475	9,935	6,595	7,125	17,270	4,375	5,100	3,504
Percentage of all pupils	0.3	0.5	0.6	0.3	0.7	0.4	0.5	1.1	0.3	0.3	0.2

1. One teacher classes as taught during a single selected period in each school on the day of the census in January. Key stage as recorded by the school. Classes with missing key stage information are not included unless they are reception year group classes.

2. Includes middle schools as deemed, academies, free schools and reception classes.

3. Includes only those classes where there are pupils who have been admitted as exceptions making the class size within the legal limit of 30 pupils or fewer.

4. Classes of 31 or more, excluding those large classes engaged in an excepted activity

Source: School Census

Table A2: State funded schools: Key Stage 1: One teacher classes and excepted pupils in England, January 2017 (1)(2)

	State-funded primary schools	All State Funded Schools
Total number of lawfully large classes with excepted pupils	2,798	2,818
Total number of unlawfully large classes (3)(4)(5)	111	112
Number of excepted pupils		
admitted outside normal admissions round with statements of special educational needs specifying a school	255	256
looked after or previously looked after admitted outside normal admission round	393	394
admitted, after initial allocation of places, because of a procedural error made by the admission authority or local authority in the original application process	238	244
admitted after an independent appeals panel upholds an appeal	872	885
who move into the area outside the normal admissions round for whom there is no other available school within reasonable distance (the Local Authority has to confirm that the child qualifies under this category)	1,208	1,213
who are children of UK service personnel admitted outside the normal admissions round	82	83
whose twin or sibling from a multiple birth is admitted otherwise than as an excepted pupil	222	223
with special educational needs who are normally taught in an special educational needs unit attached to the school, or registered at a special school, who attend some infant classes within the mainstream school	222	222

1. One teacher classes as taught during a single selected period in each school on the day of the census in January. Key stage as recorded by the school, classes with missing key stage information are not included unless they are reception year group classes.

2. Includes reception classes.

3. Infant classes with 31 or more pupils without excepted pupils and not engaged in excepted activity.

4. May include some classes with excepted pupils but the class size still exceeds the legal limit of 30 pupils or less.

5. These figures can include excepted pupils that are in a class that remains unlawfully large after excepted pupils are taken into account.

Source: School Census

Table A3: State funded primary schools: Key Stage 1 Classes taught by 1 teacher: January 2017
By local authority area and region in England

LA Code	LA Name	Lawfully large classes with excepted pupils		Unlawfully large classes	
		No. of pupils	No. of classes	No. of pupils	No. of classes
ENGLAND		87,364	2,798	3,504	111
NORTH EAST		3,327	106	191	6
E06000005	841 Darlington	158	5	0	0
E06000047	840 Durham	314	10	0	0
E08000020	390 Gateshead	186	6	0	0
E06000001	805 Hartlepool	94	3	0	0
E06000002	806 Middlesbrough	218	7	0	0
E08000021	391 Newcastle upon Tyne	685	22	0	0
E08000022	392 North Tyneside	403	13	0	0
E06000048	929 Northumberland	225	7	63	2
E06000003	807 Redcar and Cleveland	0	0	0	0
E08000023	393 South Tyneside	312	10	63	2
E06000004	808 Stockton-on-Tees	376	12	31	1
E08000024	394 Sunderland	356	11	34	1
NORTH WEST		15,355	491	299	9
E06000008	889 Blackburn with Darwen	187	6	0	0
E06000009	890 Blackpool	156	5	31	1
E08000001	350 Bolton	908	29	0	0
E08000002	351 Bury	380	12	0	0
E06000049	895 Cheshire East	404	13	0	0
E06000050	896 Cheshire West and Chester	341	11	0	0
E10000006	909 Cumbria	155	5	0	0
E06000006	876 Halton	31	1	0	0
E08000011	340 Knowsley	285	9	0	0
E10000017	888 Lancashire	1,304	42	36	1
E08000012	341 Liverpool	779	25	0	0
E08000003	352 Manchester	935	30	0	0
E08000004	353 Oldham	904	29	201	6
E08000005	354 Rochdale	497	16	0	0
E08000006	355 Salford	414	13	0	0
E08000014	343 Sefton	1,091	35	0	0
E08000013	342 St. Helens	248	8	0	0
E08000007	356 Stockport	1,066	34	0	0
E08000008	357 Tameside	2,872	91	31	1
E08000009	358 Trafford	622	20	0	0
E06000007	877 Warrington	717	23	0	0
E08000010	359 Wigan	623	20	0	0
E08000015	344 Wirral	436	14	0	0

LA Code	LA Name	Lawfully large classes with excepted pupils		Unlawfully large classes	
		No. of pupils	No. of classes	No. of pupils	No. of classes
YORKSHIRE AND THE HUMBER		14,019	448	382	12
E08000016	370 Barnsley	472	15	0	0
E08000032	380 Bradford	3,480	111	157	5
E08000033	381 Calderdale	280	9	38	1
E08000017	371 Doncaster	375	12	0	0
E06000011	811 East Riding of Yorkshire	475	15	62	2
E06000010	810 Kingston Upon Hull, City of	686	22	32	1
E08000034	382 Kirklees	1,783	57	0	0
E08000035	383 Leeds	2,375	76	31	1
E06000012	812 North East Lincolnshire	218	7	0	0
E06000013	813 North Lincolnshire	187	6	0	0
E10000023	815 North Yorkshire	914	29	0	0
E08000018	372 Rotherham	466	15	31	1
E08000019	373 Sheffield	683	22	31	1
E08000036	384 Wakefield	967	31	0	0
E06000014	816 York	658	21	0	0
EAST MIDLANDS		7,674	245	197	6
E06000015	831 Derby	372	12	0	0
E10000007	830 Derbyshire	436	14	0	0
E06000016	856 Leicester	1,841	59	0	0
E10000018	855 Leicestershire	2,413	76	63	2
E10000019	925 Lincolnshire	747	24	65	2
E10000021	928 Northamptonshire	559	18	69	2
E06000018	892 Nottingham	186	6	0	0
E10000024	891 Nottinghamshire	1,120	36	0	0
E06000017	857 Rutland	0	0	0	0
WEST MIDLANDS		11,646	374	590	19
E08000025	330 Birmingham	1,616	52	218	7
E08000026	331 Coventry	217	7	0	0
E08000027	332 Dudley	310	10	0	0
E06000019	884 Herefordshire	379	12	0	0
E08000028	333 Sandwell	2,237	72	124	4
E06000051	893 Shropshire	187	6	0	0
E08000029	334 Solihull	998	32	62	2
E10000028	860 Staffordshire	1,120	36	62	2
E06000021	861 Stoke-on-Trent	1,246	40	0	0
E06000020	894 Telford and Wrekin	529	17	0	0
E08000030	335 Walsall	747	24	31	1
E10000031	937 Warwickshire	686	22	62	2

LA Code	LA Name	Lawfully large classes with excepted pupils		Unlawfully large classes		
		No. of pupils	No. of classes	No. of pupils	No. of classes	
E08000031	336	Wolverhampton	874	28	0	0
E10000034	885	Worcestershire	500	16	31	1
		EAST OF ENGLAND	8,575	275	655	21
E06000055	822	Bedford	62	2	0	0
E06000056	823	Central Bedfordshire	125	4	0	0
E10000003	873	Cambridgeshire	469	15	31	1
E10000012	881	Essex	4,088	131	313	10
E10000015	919	Hertfordshire	1,336	43	187	6
E06000032	821	Luton	0	0	0	0
E10000020	926	Norfolk	654	21	31	1
E06000031	874	Peterborough	496	16	93	3
E06000033	882	Southend-on-Sea	442	14	0	0
E10000029	935	Suffolk	653	21	0	0
E06000034	883	Thurrock	250	8	0	0
		LONDON	7,191	231	467	15
		INNER LONDON	809	26	343	11
E09000007	202	Camden	32	1	0	0
E09000001	201	City of London	0	0	0	0
E09000012	204	Hackney	31	1	0	0
E09000013	205	Hammersmith and Fulham	31	1	0	0
E09000014	309	Haringey	31	1	157	5
E09000019	206	Islington	62	2	0	0
E09000020	207	Kensington and Chelsea	31	1	31	1
E09000022	208	Lambeth	156	5	0	0
E09000023	209	Lewisham	155	5	124	4
E09000025	316	Newham	0	0	0	0
E09000028	210	Southwark	125	4	0	0
E09000030	211	Tower Hamlets	93	3	31	1
E09000032	212	Wandsworth	62	2	0	0
E09000033	213	Westminster	0	0	0	0
		OUTER LONDON	6,382	205	124	4
E09000002	301	Barking and Dagenham	282	9	0	0
E09000003	302	Barnet	1,024	33	0	0
E09000004	303	Bexley	217	7	0	0
E09000005	304	Brent	188	6	0	0
E09000006	305	Bromley	437	14	31	1
E09000008	306	Croydon	565	18	31	1
E09000009	307	Ealing	93	3	0	0
E09000010	308	Enfield	311	10	0	0
E09000011	203	Greenwich	590	19	0	0

LA Code	LA Name	Lawfully large classes with excepted pupils		Unlawfully large classes	
		No. of pupils	No. of classes	No. of pupils	No. of classes
E09000015	310 Harrow	279	9	31	1
E09000016	311 Havering	250	8	0	0
E09000017	312 Hillingdon	187	6	0	0
E09000018	313 Hounslow	155	5	0	0
E09000021	314 Kingston upon Thames	124	4	0	0
E09000024	315 Merton	62	2	0	0
E09000026	317 Redbridge	744	24	0	0
E09000027	318 Richmond upon Thames	342	11	31	1
E09000029	319 Sutton	248	8	0	0
E09000031	320 Waltham Forest	284	9	0	0
SOUTH EAST		13,160	422	470	15
E06000036	867 Bracknell Forest	62	2	0	0
E06000043	846 Brighton and Hove	248	8	0	0
E10000002	825 Buckinghamshire	1,025	33	0	0
E10000011	845 East Sussex	1,573	50	31	1
E10000014	850 Hampshire	1,833	59	31	1
E06000046	921 Isle of Wight	190	6	0	0
E10000016	886 Kent	2,241	72	250	8
E06000035	887 Medway	529	17	31	1
E06000042	826 Milton Keynes	157	5	0	0
E10000025	931 Oxfordshire	403	13	0	0
E06000044	851 Portsmouth	186	6	0	0
E06000038	870 Reading	93	3	0	0
E06000039	871 Slough	342	11	0	0
E06000045	852 Southampton	217	7	0	0
E10000030	936 Surrey	1,350	43	96	3
E06000037	869 West Berkshire	405	13	0	0
E10000032	938 West Sussex	1,961	63	31	1
E06000040	868 Windsor and Maidenhead	187	6	0	0
E06000041	872 Wokingham	158	5	0	0
SOUTH WEST		6,417	206	253	8
E06000022	800 Bath and North East Somerset	219	7	0	0
E06000028	837 Bournemouth	186	6	0	0
E06000023	801 Bristol, City of	310	10	0	0
E06000052	908 Cornwall	528	17	64	2
E10000008	878 Devon	624	20	0	0
E10000009	835 Dorset	466	15	0	0
E10000013	916 Gloucestershire	1,216	39	95	3
E06000053	420 Isles of Scilly
E06000024	802 North Somerset	280	9	31	1

LA Code	LA Name	Lawfully large classes with excepted pupils		Unlawfully large classes	
		No. of pupils	No. of classes	No. of pupils	No. of classes
E06000026	879 Plymouth	528	17	32	1
E06000029	836 Poole	217	7	0	0
E10000027	933 Somerset	1,033	33	0	0
E06000025	803 South Gloucestershire	62	2	0	0
E06000030	866 Swindon	188	6	31	1
E06000027	880 Torbay	93	3	0	0
E06000054	865 Wiltshire	467	15	0	0

4. Unlawful infant class size data quality

Following publication of the infant class size statistics in June 2014 some users, including local authorities, raised concerns about the number of unlawful infant classes. Further analysis of the number of unlawfully large infant classes showed that nine local authority areas had reported substantial increases since the previous year.

The department contacted these local authorities and all indicated that they believed that at least some of the data submitted from their authority was inaccurate. In some instances lawful exceptions applied but this had not been indicated during the data collection (by providing the number of pupils under each of the statutory exception reasons where appropriate).

Under the [Code of Practice for Official Statistics](#), published statistics must satisfy quality dimensions including accuracy, comparability, coherence and meeting user need. Our concern over the accuracy of the statistics led us to withdraw statistics on unlawful/lawful infant classes in July 2014 pending further investigation with the local authorities and schools that had provided data indicating they had unlawfully large infant classes. We advertised the removal of these statistics on gov.uk and in a revised version of the statistical release to highlight this change to users.

Following the further investigation with local authorities, the department's Head of Profession for Statistics concluded that the statistics on unlawfully (and lawfully) large infant classes were not fit-for-purpose and wrote to the UK Statistics Authority asking that they be de-designated as National Statistics and removed from the main statistical first release. He set out an Action Plan for improving the quality of these statistics which was detailed in the Technical Note to the Schools, Pupils and their Characteristics: January 2014 statistical first release.

The UK Statistics Authority have now completed their reassessment of these figures and have agreed that they can be re-designated as national statistics. Their assessment can be found at <https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/publication/statistics-for-england-on-schools-pupils-and-their-characteristics-and-on-absence-and-exclusions/>.

5. Get in touch

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