



Department
for Education

Special educational needs in England: January 2019

Technical Document

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Summary

1. This document provides information on the use of statistics published in the Special educational needs in England publication. 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 publication 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.

Compliance with Code of Practice for Statistics

13. The United Kingdom Statistics Authority designated these statistics as National Statistics in October 2017, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Statistics. Designation can be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics:

- meet identified user needs;
- are well explained and readily accessible;
- are produced according to sound methods; and
- are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.

14. Once statistics have been designated as National Statistics it is a statutory requirement that the Code of Practice shall continue to be observed. Since being assigned National Statistics we have continued to make improvements to ensure the release complies with the Act. Further details on data quality follows.

Quality

15. 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

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

Code	Pupil SEN provision
N	No SEN
S	Statement (discontinued 2019)
E	Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan
K	SEN support

Transfers to EHC plans

17. The transfer of statements to an EHC plan was due to take place by April 2018.

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.

SEN Unit / Resourced Provisions

19. Within the school level dataset, a flag has been derived to indicate whether the school contains an SEN Unit or a Resourced Provision. Where a school has indicated at the pupil level that a pupil is taught in a SEN unit or Resourced provision, this has been interpreted as the school having a SEN unit or resourced provision.

20. Similarly, within the national and local authority tables, tables 11 and 19 show the number of schools with a SEN unit or Resourced provision, using the same methodology.

21. Some discrepancies with the data on SEN units on resourced provisions have previously been identified at a local level, hence caution should be taken in interpreting changes year-on-year, and differences between areas. We're including these figures despite concerns over data quality while making efforts to improve the quality in future. In particular, the department are currently working on extending validation of the SEN unit and resourced provision data collected at the pupil level, including cross referencing to the [Get information about schools](#) system and via consultation with local authorities who are required to approve these provisions.

22. 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).

23. 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

24. 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

25. Primary type of need is collected for those pupils on SEN support or with an EHC plan. The coverage since 2015 is different from previous years.

26. Prior to the introduction of the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) provisions in the Children and Families Act 2014 on 1 September 2014, pupils were registered as being on School Action or School Action Plus. School Action was used where a school identified that action needed to be taken to meet a special educational need and could be provided within the school. School Action Plus was used where School Action could not meet the requirements of the pupil and external support was also required.

27. Pupils who were on School Action were not required to have a primary type of need recorded. From 2015 pupils who were on School Action who have transferred to SEN support will be recorded as having a primary type of need. This led to an increase in the number of pupils recorded as having a primary type of need from 2015 to 2016. No pupils have been recorded as School Action since 2015.

28. There were changes to the classification of type of need in 2015 when the previous code of 'Behaviour, emotional and social difficulties (BESD)' was removed. A new code 'Social, emotional and mental health (SEMH)' was introduced, although this was not intended to be a direct replacement.

29. The code 'SEN support but no specialist assessment of type of need' was also introduced in 2015. Due to the changes in coverage and classification, it is not possible to produce a direct comparison with data prior to 2015.

30. 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

31. 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.

32. In January 2014, 675,095 pupils had a primary need recorded, this increased to 1,011,525 pupils in January 2015 and is 1,208,180 as of January 2019.

New type of need code

33. 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 in previous years. This option was made unavailable for pupils with statements or EHC plans in the 2018 data collection and for subsequent years.

34. '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 treated as a direct replacement and so direct comparisons should be avoided.

Disclosure Control

35. 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.

Independent schools

36. In spring 2019, the department expected 2,319 schools to return data through the school level annual school census (SLASC). Data was received from 1,935 schools within the specified window for this data collection. Data received outside of this window has not been used within this publication.

37. Where data was not received on time, steps to impute the data have been taken as follows. This affects 384 schools.

Step 1 – Imputation from previous year

38. Where a school returned data under the same identifier (LAEstab) for 2018, this data has been rolled forward and used for 2019 without any modification. This approach has been used for 348 schools.

Step 2 – Imputation from previous year (new LAEstab)

39. Where a school can be identified under a different LAEstab number in 2018, the data has again been rolled forward from 2018 and used for 2019 without modification, except to apply the 2019 LAEstab number. This approach has been used for 3 schools.

Step 3 – Imputation of new school, using capacity

40. Where a school could not be identified in a previous year (i.e. the school is new), we have used school capacity and current pupil capacity collected on get information about schools. This data shows that where available, the average current capacity of these new schools is filled to 40% of full capacity¹. This rate has been applied to all of these remaining new schools. This approach has been used for 33 schools.

41. The average current capacity for all new schools who have returned data was at a similar level, 39%.

Summary of data used from SLASC

Year collected	Description	Number of schools	Number of pupils imputed
2019	Data returned during collection window	1,935	522,661
2018	Expected in 2019, not returned, 2018 data available under same identifiers	348	57,585
2018	Expected in 2019, not returned, 2018 data available under different identifier	3	234
2018	Expected in 2019, no data available, imputed at 40% of school capacity	33	467

¹ New schools will often initially only fill the first year of each Key Stage.

Characteristics

42. No characteristics, such as gender, age and SEN, have been derived for the pupils in the 33 imputed schools. Where data from 2018 has been used, no modification of these characteristics has been made.

Further information

43. 352 schools are derived from their 2018 record. 1,868 schools returned data in both 2018 and 2019 and have shown an overall population increase of 0.35%. If applying this to the population of those that have been derived from 2018 (57,764 pupils), we estimate a potential growth of 202 pupils. This would represent 0.03% of the independent school total.

44. Given the low change, no uprating for expected growth has been applied to the schools derived from 2018.

Presentation

45. 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

46. 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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Reference: Special Educational Needs in England: 2019, Technical Document



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