

Annual enrolments at schools and in funded pre-school education in Northern Ireland 2023-24

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The purpose of this statistical release is to present final enrolment figures for schools and for children in funded pre-school education in the 2023-24 academic year.

This bulletin was revised on 8th March 2024 to account for a reduction of 2 nursery school pupils (Key points, Section 1.2, Figure 1, Tables 2a, 3 and 7), and 2 year 1 pupils (Key points, Section 2.2, Figure 2, Tables 2a, 2c, 3 and 7). There was also an additional 1 nursery unit pupil added to Controlled Integrated and 1 removed from Catholic Maintained (Key points, Section 1.2, Figure 1, Tables 2a, 2c, 3 and 7), and 19 pupils moved from a mainstream class to Specialist Provision in Mainstream (Section 4 and Figure 4b). This bulletin was further revised on 4th June to remove 35 secondary school pupils (Key points, Section 3.2, Figures 3a and 3b, Tables 2a, 3, and 7)

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Reader Information

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Key Points

- There are 22,556 pupils in **funded pre-school education**, a decrease of nearly 160 on last year.
- There are 169,465 pupils in **primary** schools (years 1-7), and this has fallen by over 1,700 pupils this year.
- In total 156,403 pupils are enrolled in **post-primary** schools, increasing by nearly 2,100 pupils from 2022/23. There are approximately 29,080 pupils in **sixth forms** in schools, 60% of all 16-17 year olds in Northern Ireland.
- Over 68,200 pupils in schools have some form of **special educational need**; this is 19.2% of the entire school population. Nearly 27,000, or 7.6% of pupils, have a statement of special educational needs. The proportion of pupils in SEN stages 1-2 is 11.6%.
- Almost 95,000 pupils in Northern Ireland are entitled to **free school meals** and this represents almost three in ten of all pupils.

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Introduction

Provisional enrolment data from the 2023/24 annual school census was released in December 2023. The purpose of this statistical release is to present the final enrolment figures, and a more detailed analysis of this information.

The data are taken from the school census exercise, which ran in October 2023. Data collected through the school census exercise are used by the Department of Education (DE) to inform a wide range of policy areas, including finance allocations, school estate development and planning, special education, school improvement, area-based planning, extended schools, additional educational needs, early years and integrated and Irish medium education. Other users include the Education Authority, the Education and Training Inspectorate and to inform responses to Assembly questions and requests from academic researchers, journalists, lobby groups and the public.

For the 2023/24 academic year, the school census exercise has been impacted by industrial action, due to ongoing Action Short of Strike (ASOS). Although data has been received from all schools, for 25% of schools (primary, post primary and special schools) pupil level information has not been received in electronic format. The result of this is that the Department has been unable to obtain all the information usually received via electronic census returns, for example religion and ethnicity, and has not been able to fully undertake the normal validation processes. Please see notes section for further information.

Statistics relating to school numbers and enrolments can be found on the Statistics and Research section of the DE website¹. Analysis is provided at Northern Ireland and school level.

This is an annual publication. Provisional data relating to the 2024/25 academic year will be released in December 2024, with a 2024/25 update of this publication being released in February/March 2025.

¹ [Statistics relating to enrolments](#)

1. Funded pre-school education

1.1. Number of institutions

- There are a total of 735 institutions in Northern Ireland providing funded pre-school education (Table 1a). The total number of institutions offering pre-school education has decreased by seven this year.
 - Half of all funded pre-school providers are funded voluntary and private pre-school centres, that is, playgroups and day nurseries. There are 339 funded centres this year.
 - Compared to last year, there are ten fewer funded voluntary and private pre-school centres. The number of primary schools that have reception provision has decreased by two compared to last year², and the number of primary schools with nursery provision has risen by five (four of which are solely Specialist Provisions and not part of PSEP³). In total, 11 primary schools have specialist provision classes for nursery aged pupils, 3 of these schools are also operating PSEP approved nursery classes.

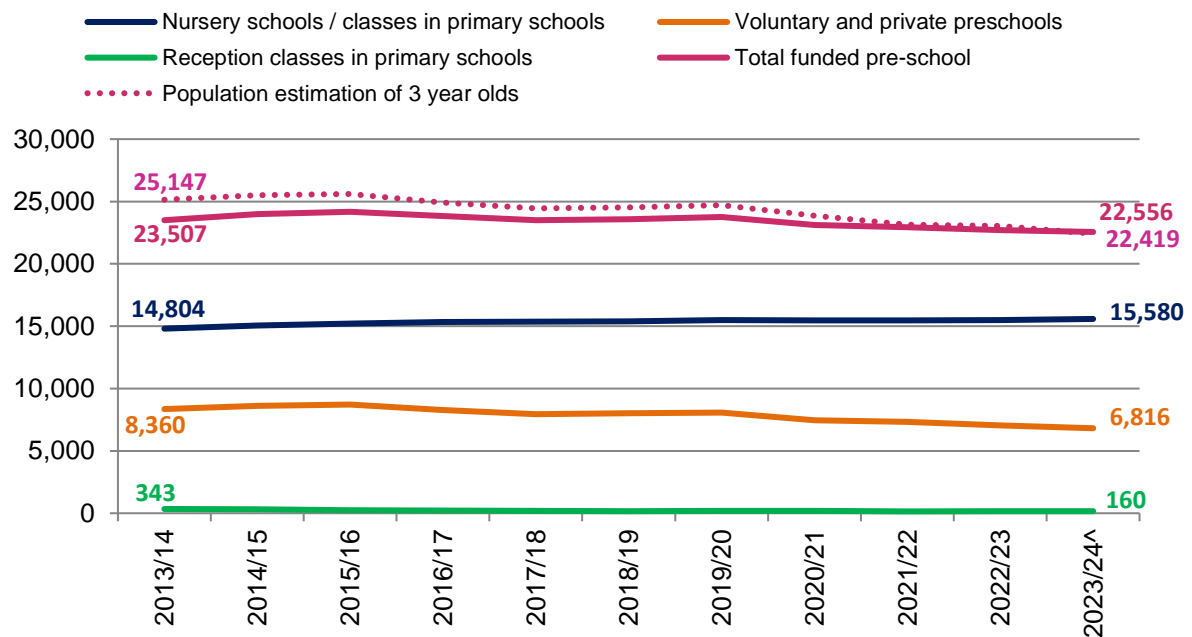
1.2. Enrolments

- There are 22,556 pupils in funded pre-school education (Table 2a). This has fallen by 159 compared to last year.
 - Over 6,800 pupils were enrolled in voluntary and private pre-school centres, nearly 5,800 were enrolled in nursery schools, nearly 9,800 in nursery classes in primary schools and 160 in reception classes (30.2%, 25.6%, 43.4% and 0.7% respectively of all pupils in funded pre-school education). 82 pupils who were solely in Specialist Provision and not part of PSEP³.

² Investing in Early Learning, published in 1997, set out the Department's 'intention to replace reception provision with suitable alternative provision so that all children below compulsory school age in school settings will be in planned pre-school provision which meets specified standards' and proposed that 'no new reception provision in primary schools (i.e. provision in schools where a reception class or group does not exist in the 1998/99 school year) will be funded from September 1999'. This policy was implemented with the introduction of the Pre-School Education Programme in 1998.

³ PSEP overview: [Pre-School Education Guidance](#)

**Figure 1: Funded pre-school enrolment by school type,
2013/14- 2023/24**



^2023 mid-year estimate figures were unavailable at the time of publication, therefore population projections have been used instead

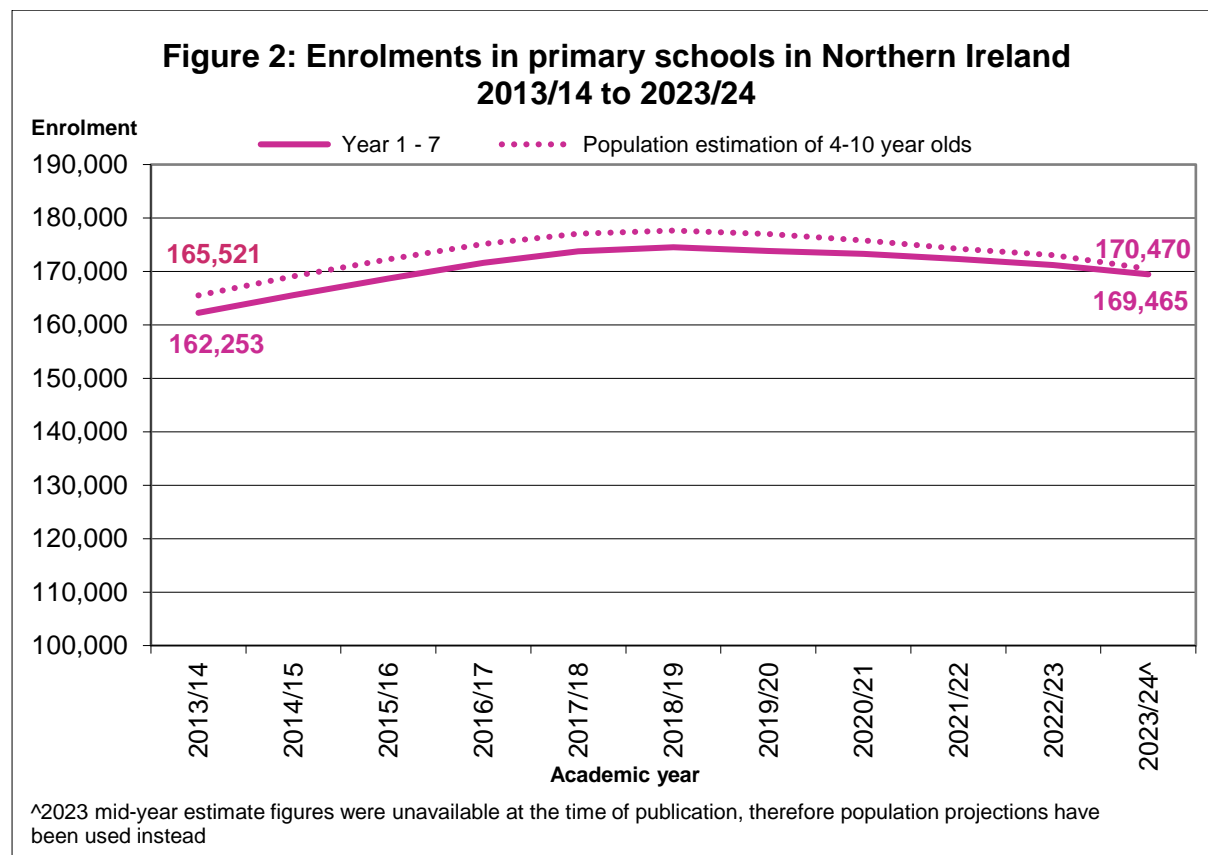
2. Primary school education

2.1. Number of schools

- There are 789 primary schools (including preparatory departments) in Northern Ireland. This has dropped by 24 schools since 2018/19 (Table 1b).

2.2. Enrolments

- Enrolments of pupils in years 1 to 7 has fallen for the fourth year. In October 2023 the total number of year 1-7 pupils was 169,465 (Table 2a). Enrolments have decreased this year by over 1,700 pupils compared to last year (Figure 2). The decrease observed is in line with the fall in the number of 4-10 year olds over the last few years in the population³.
- With the reduction in the number of schools, the mean number of pupils per school has risen from 193 in 2013/14 to 215 in 2023/24.



³ [NISRA mid-year estimates](#) and [ONS NI population projections](#)

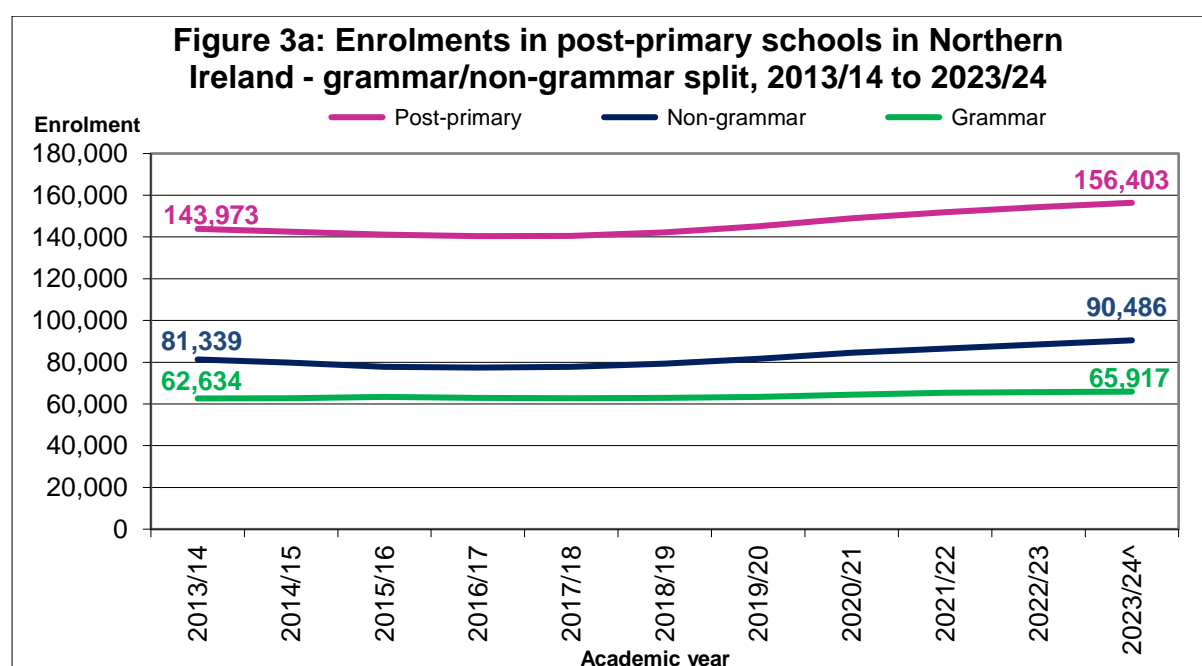
3. Post-primary school education

3.1. Number of schools

- The number of post-primary schools in 2023/24 is 192 (Table 1b), a decrease of 4 from 2018/19. This is accounted for by a drop in the number of non-grammar schools.
- One-third (66) of post-primary schools are grammar schools and the remaining two-thirds (126) are non-grammars.
- A total of 159 schools had pupils in approved sixth form.

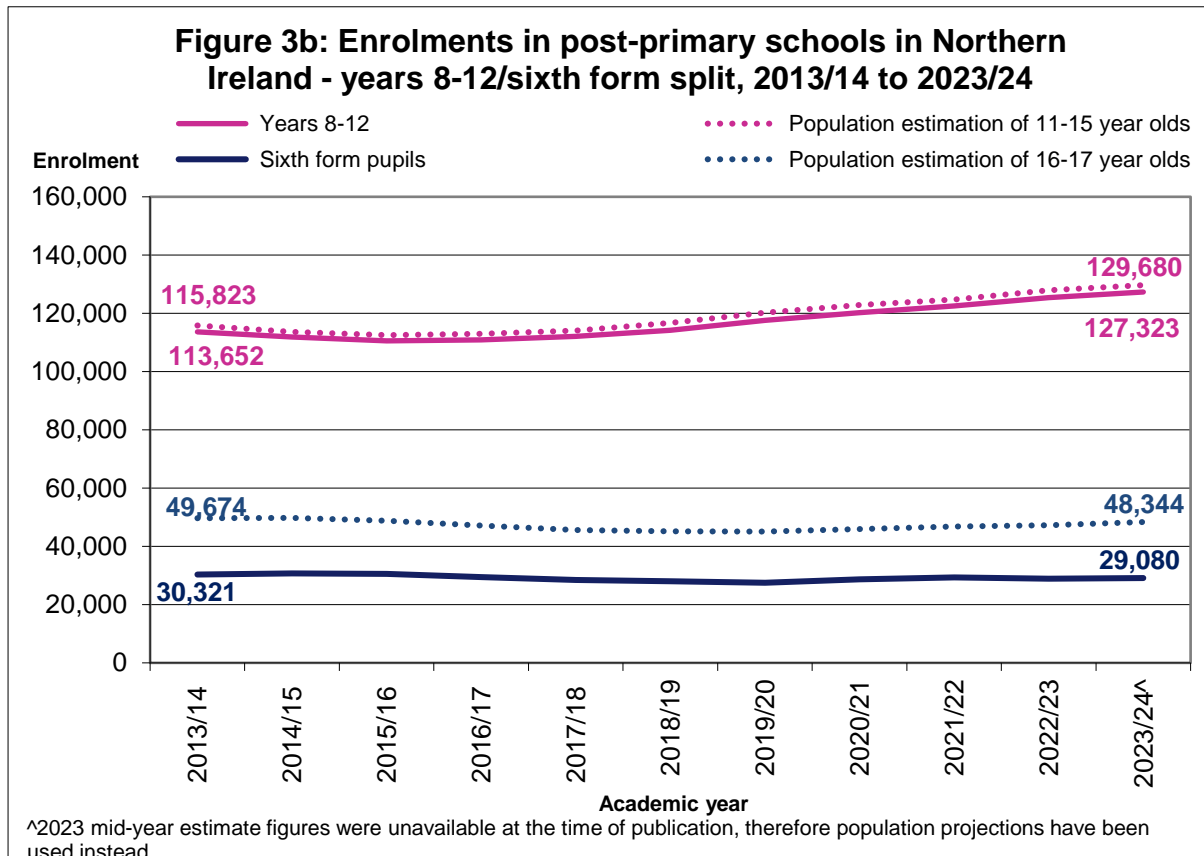
3.2. Enrolments

- The number of pupils in post-primary schools is 156,403 (Table 2a), a rise of nearly 2,100 pupils in 2023/24 compared to the previous year (Figure 3a). Enrolments have increased by over 12,400 pupils since 2013/14 and over 650 more than the previous peak in 2002/03.
- Increases in enrolments in both grammar and non-grammar schools are witnessed this year. However, the rise is mainly in non-grammar, accounting for nearly 1,900 of the increase. The proportion of post-primary school pupils attending grammar schools remains high (42.1% in 2023/24).



3.3. Enrolments by year groups

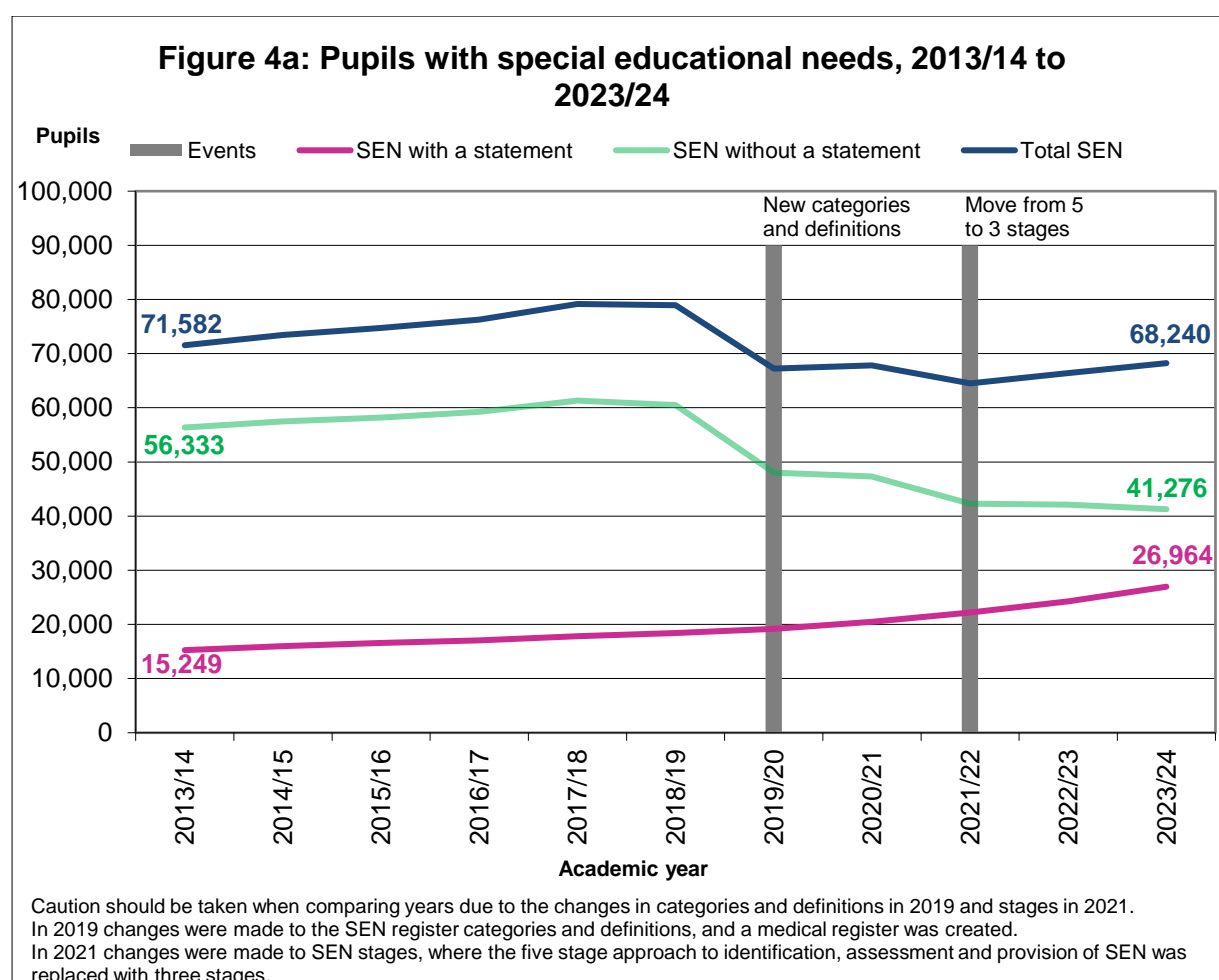
- There are over 1,900 additional pupils in years 8-12 compared to last year. This is reflected in an increase in the number of 11-15 year olds in the population.
- There are nearly 29,100 pupils studying A Level or equivalent qualifications in schools in Northern Ireland in 2023/24. This has increased by over 140 pupils compared to last year.



4. Special education

4.1. Special educational needs

- Over 68,200 pupils in schools have some form of special educational need; this is 19.2% of the entire school population. Nearly 27,000, or 7.6% of pupils, have a statement of special educational needs (Table 7). The proportion of pupils in SEN stages 1-2 is 11.6%.
- In 2023/24, 83.8% of pupils with any needs were educated in a mainstream class in a mainstream school, a decrease from 84.8% in 2022/23.

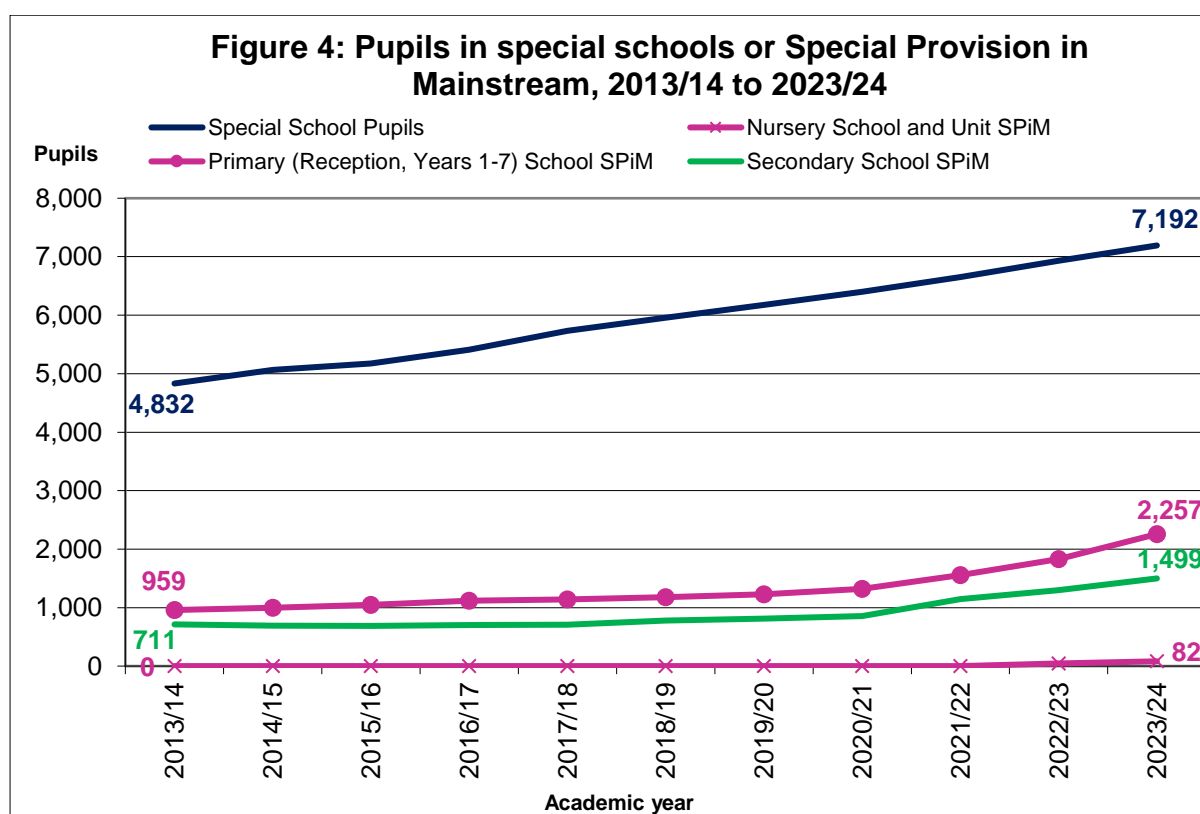


4.2. Specialist Provision in Mainstream (SPiM)

- Specialist Provision in Mainstream (previously known as ‘Learning Support Centres’) refers to classes/units in mainstream primary and post primary schools that have been approved by the Education Authority for the purpose of making educational provisions for pupils with statements of special educational needs (see Notes point 8 for further information).
- Over 3,800 pupils (5.6% of all SEN pupils in schools and preschool settings) were enrolled in specialist provisions in nursery, primary and post-primary schools (Figure 4b). This is an increase of nearly 650 pupils since the previous year.
- SPiMs were operational in 1 nursery school, 134 primary schools, and 53 post-primary schools on census day 2023. This has increased from 102 primary schools and 48 post-primary schools the previous year.

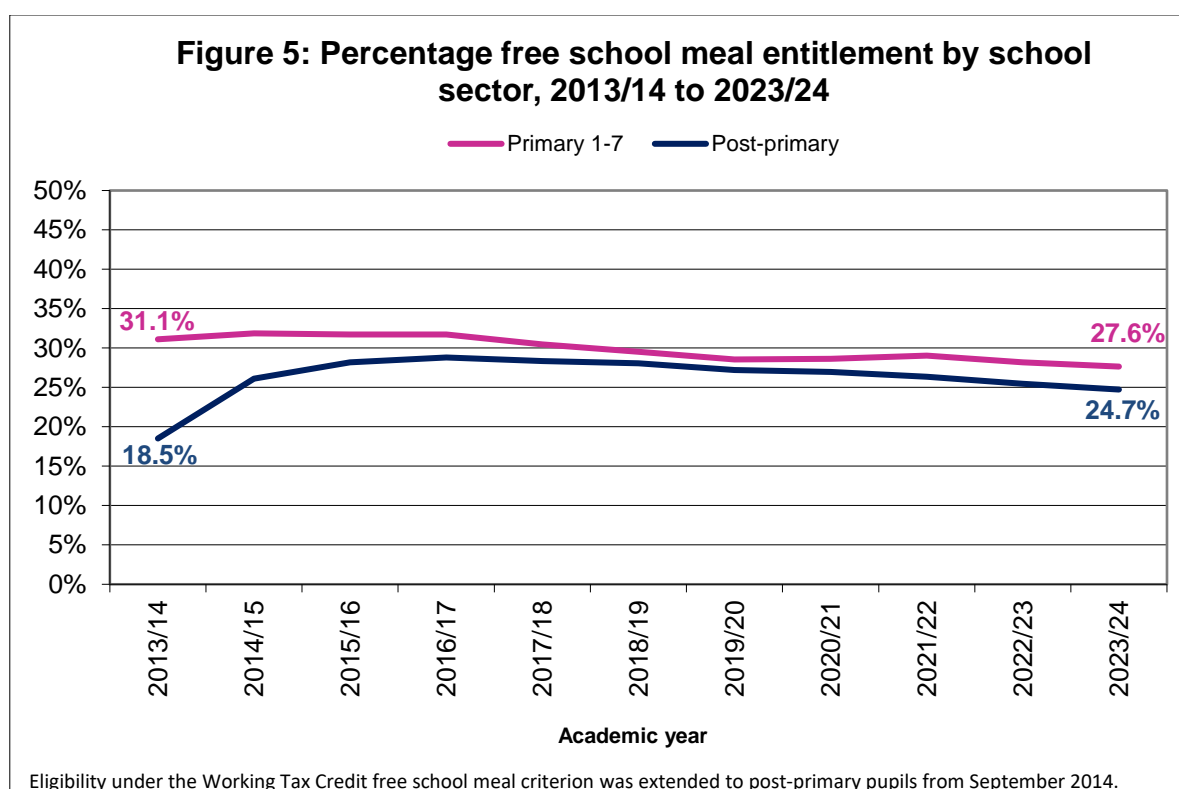
4.3. Special school enrolments

- Nearly 7,200 pupils (10.5% of all SEN pupils in schools and preschool settings) were enrolled in 39 dedicated special schools (Figure 4b; Table 1b; Table 2a). This is an increase of over 260 pupils from 2022/23.



5. Free school meal entitlement

- The overall percentage of children entitled to free school meals has dropped slightly compared to the previous year (27.7%) at 27.2% in 2023/24. This 27.2% equates to nearly 95,000 free school meal entitled pupils in nursery, primary, post-primary, and special schools (Table 3).
- Free school meal entitlement differs significantly by school type. Grammar schools (12.0%) have the lowest proportions of free school meal entitled pupils, whereas non-grammar have (34.0%) and special schools who have the highest proportion at (54.4%).



- DE and the EA agreed to an extension to the date used for the purposes of assessing schools' Free School Meals entitlement numbers. This was to allow more time for parents to apply using the online system. Normally, children must be entitled on census day, for this year the date was extended by two weeks to Friday 20th October with the aim to return to census day for census 2024.

6. Changes in enrolment patterns

This final section details changes in enrolment patterns in schools in recent years.

6.1. Diversity in schools

- There has been an increase in the number and proportion of newcomer pupils in schools in Northern Ireland (Table 6b). A newcomer pupil is one who has enrolled in a school but who does not have the satisfactory language skills to participate fully in the school curriculum. In 2023/24, there were nearly 21,000 newcomer pupils accounting for 5.9% of the school population. This has risen by nearly 4,750 pupils since 2018/19.
- The growth in diversity in the school system may be explained by increased levels of migration among school age children over the last number of years⁷.

6.2. Integrated education

- There are nearly 27,700 pupils enrolled in integrated schools – over 100 in nursery schools, almost 12,200 in primary schools and nearly 15,400 in post-primary schools. The number enrolled has increased by nearly 500 pupils compared to last year, and by nearly 4,100 pupils from 2018/19.

6.3. Irish medium education

- Over 7,400 pupils participate in funded Irish medium education, with over 5,800 pupils educated in dedicated Irish medium schools and pre-school settings, and over 1,600 pupils educated in Irish medium units attached to English-medium schools (Table 2b).
- The total number of pupils in funded Irish medium education has steadily risen over time, increasing by nearly 900 pupils since 2018/19 and over 100 pupils since last year. Two-thirds of this increase is coming from greater enrolments in Irish medium schools.

⁷ [NISRA population estimates](#)

6.4. Educated other than at school (EOTAS)

- EOTAS makes educational provision for children with social, emotional, behavioural, medical, or other issues who, without its provision cannot access suitable education.
- In total, 516 pupils were enrolled in EOTAS centres in October 2023. This includes pupils that are 'dual registered' with a mainstream school and may be accessing the EOTAS centre for a temporary period. Just 27 pupils are 'single registered' at EOTAS centres; this means that they no longer have a link to a mainstream school.

7. Notes for readers

National Statistics

1. The United Kingdom Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

Annual enrolments at schools and in funded pre-school education in Northern Ireland statistics were re-assessed by the Statistics Authority in June 2009. Following work to address recommendations that were identified from the assessment ([Assessment and action plan of statistics on enrolment](#)), UKSA confirmed the re-designation of these statistics as National 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.

Once statistics have been designated as National Statistics it is a statutory requirement that the Code of Practice shall continue to be observed.

2. For general enquiries about National Statistics, contact the National Statistics Public Enquiry Service on 0845 601 3034

E-mail: info@ons.gsi.gov.uk

Letters: Customer Contact Centre, Office for National Statistics, Rm D265, Government Buildings, Cardiff Road, Newport, NP10 8XG

3. You can also find National Statistics on the [ONS website](#)

School Census

4. The statistics in this release have been derived from the annual school census; details can be found on the [Department of Education website](#). For voluntary and private pre-school centres, and nursery schools, the census consists of a return via an online app/ paper return comprising a number of tables; for post-primary, primary and special schools, and EOTAS centres, it consists of an electronic return comprising individual pupil records, made over a secure file transfer system. For the 2023/24 academic year, the school census exercise has been impacted by industrial action, due to ongoing Action Short of Strike (ASOS), see Notes section relating to Action Short of Strike for further information. The tables presented in the release reflect key information on enrolments, as determined by Departmental needs and on requests for information from other sources.

The figures for pre-school children in this release relate to children in funded pre-school education. The figures for nursery classes relate to approved nursery classes in primary schools. The figures for reception refer to pupils who were below compulsory school age at 1st July 2023, who were admitted to a reception class or group in primary school following their 4th birthday. Schools may admit reception pupils throughout the year, but only those who have been admitted or will be admitted by 31st October are counted in the school census.

5. Further statistics relating to school numbers and enrolments can be found on the [DE website](#) under the Statistics and Research section.

The DE website presents figures taken from the school census, summarised at Northern Ireland and school level. Statistics on pupil attendance, pupil: teacher ratios, school leaver destinations and qualifications may also be accessed via the website.

6. The data is produced at aggregate level only, therefore individual pupils cannot be identified. More information on confidentiality can be found in the [DE Confidentiality and Access Statement](#)
7. The categories for recording pupils with special educational needs (SEN) were revised in 2019, along with the creation of an electronic Medical Register. A pupil's placement on the SEN register, as required under the SEN Code of Practice, means that the child has a SEN which requires special educational provision to be made. For further information, see the Department's SEN and medical categories guidance <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/sen-and-medical-categories-guidance-schools>

From 2021 the number of Special Education Needs (SEN) stages reduced from five to three. The three individual stages are defined in the draft SEN Code as follows:

- Stage 1: School delivered special educational provision by the teacher, working with the SENCo.
 - Stage 2: School delivered special educational provision plus external special educational provision is being implemented, for example by the EA or HSC Trust.
 - Stage 3/ Statement: School delivered plus special educational provision as set out in a Statement.
8. Specialist Provision in Mainstream (previously known as 'Learning Support Centres') refers to classes/units in mainstream primary and post primary schools that have been approved by the Education Authority for the purpose of making educational provisions for pupils with statements of special educational needs. There are several different types of Specialist Provision for example, Social Communication (Autism), Learning, Behaviour, Hearing, Physical, or Speech.

School types

9. Definitions of school management types are as follows:

Controlled schools are managed and funded by the Education Authority (EA) through Boards of Governors (BoG). Primary and secondary school BoGs consist of representatives of transferors (mainly the Protestant Churches) along with representatives of parents, teachers and EA. Controlled nursery, grammar and special school BoGs consist only of representatives of the latter three categories and the Department (DE).

Controlled Integrated schools are managed and funded by the Education Authority (EA) through Boards of Governors (BoG). The majority of BoGs consist of representatives of transferors, catholic maintained trustees, parents, teachers and EA.

Grant-Maintained Integrated schools are owned and managed by their BoG which consist of foundation governors along with representatives of parents, teachers and DE. They are funded by EA.

A **Voluntary** school means a grant-aided school other than a controlled school or a grant-maintained integrated school:

- **Catholic maintained** schools are voluntary schools owned by trustees and managed by BoGs which consist of members appointed by trustees along with representatives of parents, teachers, EA and DE. Catholic Maintained schools are funded by EA.
- **Other maintained** schools are voluntary schools owned by trustees and managed by BoGs which consist of members appointed by trustees along with representatives of parents, teachers, EA and in some cases, DE. Other Maintained schools are funded by EA.
- **Voluntary grammar** schools are owned by trustees and managed by BoGs. The majority of BoGs consist of members appointed by the trustees along with representatives of parents, teachers, DE and in some cases, EA. Voluntary Grammar schools are funded by EA.

10. Definitions of other school types are as follows:

- A **special school** is a controlled or voluntary school which is specially organised to provide education for pupils with special needs and is recognised by the DE as a special school.
- An **independent school** is a school at which full-time education is provided for pupils aged from 4 to 16 and is not grant aided. These schools set their own curriculum and admissions policies and are funded by fees paid by parents and income from investments. Each independent school must be registered with DE and is inspected regularly by ETI.
- **Education Other Than at School (EOTAS)** includes all forms of education that takes place outside the formal school environment.

Action Short of Strike

For the 2023/24 academic year, the school census exercise has been impacted by industrial action, due to ongoing Action Short of Strike (ASOS). Although data has been received from all schools, for 25% of schools (primary, post primary and special schools) pupil level information has not been received in electronic format (see table below for a breakdown by school type). For those schools refusing to submit electronically, a paper return was received. Some of these were in the form of an aggregate school level summary report and some were based on more detailed individual pupil level data (but did not include identifiers such as names and Unique Pupil Numbers). Due to the poor quality and how labour intensive it would have been to input detailed reports, it was not possible to process these. The result of this is that the Department has either been unable to obtain all the information usually received via electronic census returns, for example religion and ethnicity, and it has not been possible to fully undertake normal validation processes. Some validations have been impossible due to a lack of pupil level information. For example, duplicate pupils cannot be checked between schools, to do this we require pupil names and Unique Pupil Numbers (UPNs). Many other validations have had to take place in a different way than normal. For example, free school meal (FSM) validation usually involves a data matching exercise between pupil data provided by schools and that held by the Education Authority (EA) but for the schools taking part in ASOS this was not possible.

School type	Issued	Returned electronic	Returned paper	%
Primary (inc. nursery units and reception)	787	562	225	28.6
Post Primary	192	170	22	11.5
Special	39	24	15	38.5
EOTAS	16	16	0	0.0
Total	1034	772	262	25.3

See below for ASOS impacts on the data presented in tables and graphs:

Duplicates - Due to a lack of pupil level information for schools taking part in ASOS, it has not been possible to fully conduct duplicate pupil checks. To do this the Unique Pupil Numbers (UPNs), names and DOBs for all pupils are required. It is not possible to check for duplicates between paper return schools and also between paper and electronic schools. This year the Department has identified and rectified 60 pupils from electronic data. For context, last year 132 duplicate pupils were identified. **Figures and tables possibly impacted; Fig 1, Fig 2, Fig 3a, Fig 3b, Fig 4a, Fig 4b, Fig 5, Table 2a, Table 2b, Table 2c, Table 3, Table 6b and Table 7.**

Free School Meals (FSM) – The normal process of validating FSM involves a data matching exercise between FSM pupil data provided by schools and that provided by the EA. The Department then works with the EA to agree a figure from the data held on both

sides. For the schools taking part in ASOS it has been a different process than usual. Due to a lack of pupil level data for these schools, it was not possible to complete the matching exercise with the EA's data. Using the aggregated school level data received via paper, overall numbers were compared with data held by the EA. The EA were asked to investigate any differences with schools, and using EA and schools' pupil level information, a total was agreed. Not all schools engaged in this process but, in all such instances the DE FSM figure was below the EA figure. In the absence of any engagement from the school, the EA figure was accepted as the higher figure and this is likely due to the two week extension (see footnote on table) to the deadline for the school census. This resulted in the inclusion of 27 additional FSM pupils. **Figures and tables possibly impacted; Fig 5 and Table 3.**

Level of study - Due to a lack of pupil level information for schools taking part in ASOS, it has not been possible to validate level of study. These checks are for pupils who are repeating GCSEs but are the correct age for Year 13, and so appear as if they are in sixth form studying a level 3 course of study. Schools may amend the level of study of a pupil to report the correct level of study for census purposes. The correct year group is then computed using this information. It was not possible to validate level of study for schools submitting paper returns. This year the Department has identified and rectified 69 pupils from electronic data. For context, last year 96 pupils were identified and rectified. **Figures and tables possibly impacted; Fig 3b and Table 2c.**

Newcomers – A newcomer pupil is one who has enrolled in a school but who does not have the satisfactory language skills to participate fully in the school curriculum, and the wider environment, and does not have a language in common with the teacher, whether that is English or Irish. This has previously been referred to as English as an Additional Language. It does not refer to indigenous pupils who choose to attend an Irish medium school. The normal process for validating Newcomers includes checking that a Newcomer's language is not recorded as English or Irish. Due to a lack of pupil level information for schools taking part in ASOS, these validation checks could not take place. For those schools, the number of Newcomers is as reported by the school. **Figures and tables possibly impacted; Table 6b.**

Dual registered pupils - When pupils are enrolled in a school and subsequently attend a Specialist Provision in Mainstream (SPiM) class in another school, a special school or EOTAS centre, on a part-time or full-time temporary basis, the core presumption is always that they are registered to, and will subsequently return to the main school. For Census purposes, they are counted as enrolled in their original (main) school, their enrolment in the SPiM/special school/EOTAS centre is referred to as subsidiary. The normal process of validating dual registered pupils is to check that all subsidiary pupils have a corresponding mainstream record. To avoid double counting the subsidiary record is removed from final datasets so if there is no mainstream record a pupil would be lost. This year where a subsidiary record was identified in an electronic return but a matching mainstream record could not be found, the main school was contacted to confirm the pupil had been included on their paper census return. There were also 46 subsidiary

pupils included within paper returns where it was not possible to check for a mainstream record due to a lack of pupil names. **Figures and tables possibly impacted; Fig 1, Fig 2, Fig 3a, Fig 3b, Fig 4a, Fig 4b, Fig 5, Table 2a, Table 2b, Table 2c, Table 3, Table 6b and Table 7.**

Special Educational Needs (SEN) – Validation of SEN pupils includes a process of checking the SEN stage and SEN needs between dual registered pupil's records. Two records are held for these pupils, one in their main school and one in the subsidiary school where they are attending a SPiM/special school/EOTAS centre. Often the subsidiary school will update a pupil's SEN information and not inform the main school, or vice versa. As only the main record is used for census purposes, normally the two records are matched, using Unique Pupil Number, and it is checked that both schools hold the same information. Due to a lack of pupil level information for schools taking part in ASOS, these validation checks could not take place. **Figures and tables possibly impacted; Fig 4a, Fig 4b and Table 7.**

Missing data – For any schools taking part in ASOS, information on the religion or ethnicity of a pupil was not included in the paper summary returns. Some class size information was received but this was not in a usable format. For this reason, it has not been possible to produce some tables. **Figures and tables impacted; Table 4, Table 5, and Table 6a.**

Further enquiries

Request for further information should be addressed to:-

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E-mail: census@education-ni.gov.uk

Special analyses of the school census can be undertaken on request.

Press enquiries should be made to the Department's Press Office:

Press.Office@education-ni.gov.uk

Feedback on this publication can be provided directly via the contact details above or via the [website](#).

8. Tables

Table 1a: The number of pre-school providers with funded places, by centre type and management type, 2018/19 - 2023/24

School and management type	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Nursery Schools						
Controlled	64	64	64	62	60	60
Catholic Maintained	31	31	31	31	31	31
Controlled Integrated	-	-	-	1	2	2
TOTAL	95	95	95	94	93	93
Primary Schools with Funded Nursery Units						
Controlled ¹	119	119	120	121	122	125
Catholic Maintained ²	90	90	90	90	94	94
Other Maintained	16	16	16	16	16	17
Controlled Integrated	4	4	5	5	6	7
Grant Maintained Integrated	16	17	17	17	17	17
TOTAL	245	246	248	249	255	260
Primary Schools with Funded Reception Classes						
Controlled	13	16	14	15	16	18
Catholic Maintained	29	26	29	21	25	22
Other Maintained	-	-	-	-	-	-
Controlled Integrated	3	3	2	3	4	3
Grant Maintained Integrated	-	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL	45	45	45	39	45	43
Voluntary and private pre-school centres with funded places						
Voluntary	331	326	312	308	301	294
Private	55	54	50	48	48	45
TOTAL	386	380	362	356	349	339
All centres - GRAND TOTAL	771	766	750	738	742	735

1. Includes 4 units that are not part of PSEP but rather are solely Specialist Provision in Mainstream in 2023/24

2. Includes 4 units that are not part of PSEP but rather are Specialist Provision in Mainstream in 2022/23 and 2023/24

3. PSEP overview - [Pre-school education places](#)

Table 1b: The number of schools by school type and management type, 2018/19-2023/24

School and management type	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Nursery Schools						
Controlled	64	64	64	62	60	60
Catholic Maintained	31	31	31	31	31	31
Controlled Integrated	-	-	-	1	2	2
TOTAL	95	95	95	94	93	93
Primary Schools						
Controlled	365	361	360	355	354	351
Catholic Maintained ²	363	360	358	355	354	351
Other Maintained - Irish Medium	25	25	25	25	25	25
Other Maintained - Other	3	3	3	2	2	2
Controlled Integrated	22	22	22	24	24	25
Grant Maintained Integrated	23	23	23	23	23	23
TOTAL	801	794	791	784	782	777
Preparatory Departments¹						
Controlled	1	1	1	1	1	1
Voluntary - Schools under Catholic Management	-	-	-	-	-	-
Voluntary - Schools under Other Management	11	11	11	11	11	11
TOTAL	12	12	12	12	12	12
Secondary (Non-Grammar) Schools						
Controlled	48	48	48	48	47	47
Catholic Maintained	60	57	57	56	56	56
Other Maintained - Irish Medium	2	2	2	2	2	2
Other Maintained - Other	-	-	-	-	-	-
Controlled Integrated	5	5	5	5	6	6
Grant Maintained Integrated	15	15	15	15	15	15
TOTAL	130	127	127	126	126	126
Grammar Schools						
Controlled	16	16	16	16	16	16
Voluntary - Schools under Catholic Management	29	29	29	29	29	29
Voluntary - Schools under Other Management	21	21	21	21	21	21
TOTAL	66	66	66	66	66	66
Special Schools	39	39	39	39	39	39
Hospital Schools³	1	1	1	1	1	1
Independent Schools	14	14	15	14	14	14
All schools - GRAND TOTAL	1,146	1,136	1,134	1,124	1,121	1,116

1. These are part of grammar schools.

2. Catholic maintained total in 2019/20 includes a school that did not have any pupils enrolled on census day. In 2023/24, there were 2 Catholic maintained schools that did not have any pupils enrolled on census day and formally closed on 31 October 2023, and 1 school that had pupils but also closed on 31 October 2023.

3. Belfast Hospital school ceased to exist as a school from 19 February 2024 and became part of EOTAS, however it was still in operation on census day 2023.

Table 2a: Pupils by school type and management type, 2023/24^R

School and management type	Controlled ^R	Catholic Maintained ^R	Other Maintained	Controlled Integrated ^R	Grant Maintained Integrated	Voluntary - Under Catholic Management	Voluntary - Under Other Management	Non Grant-Aided	Voluntary pre-school centres	Private pre-school centres	EOTAS Centres	Grand Total ^R
<u>VOLUNTARY AND PRIVATE PRESCHOOLS – FUNDED PLACES</u>												
Playgroups - Part-time	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5,757	249	-	6,006
Day Nurseries - Part-time	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	66	744	-	810
TOTAL	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5,823	993	-	6,816
<u>NURSERY</u>												
Nursery Schools - Full-time ^R	2,335	1,588	-	61	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3,984
Nursery Schools - Part-time ^R	1,592	156	-	52	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,800
Nursery Classes - Full-time ^R	2306	2421	290	78	131	-	-	-	-	-	-	5,226
Nursery Classes - Part-time	2268	1497	200	109	496	-	-	-	-	-	-	4,570
TOTAL^R	8,501	5,662	490	300	627	-	-	-	-	-	-	15,580
<u>PRIMARY</u>												
Reception	46	95	-	19	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	160
Primary Schools (Year 1 - Year 7) ^R	76,536	76,472	3,666	4,797	6565	-	-	-	-	-	-	168,036
Prep. Departments (Year 1- Year 7)	81	-	-	-	-	-	1348	-	-	-	-	1,429
TOTAL^R	76,663	76,567	3,666	4,816	6,565	-	1,348	-	-	-	-	169,625
<u>SECONDARY (Year 8 - Year 14)</u>												
Secondary (Non Grammar) ^R	32190	41,664	1,265	4,439	10928	-	-	-	-	-	-	90,486
Grammar	14806	-	-	-	-	30,045	21,066	-	-	-	-	65,917
TOTAL^R	46,996	41,664	1,265	4,439	10,928	30,045	21,066	-	-	-	-	156,403
<u>SPECIAL</u>	6716	387	89	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7,192
<u>Educated off site but not at school (EOTAS)</u>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	27	27
<u>INDEPENDENT</u>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	772	-	-	-	772
GRAND TOTAL^R	138,876	124,280	5,510	9,555	18,120	30,045	22,414	772	5,823	993	27	356,415

1. Enrolments for special schools and EOTAS centres relate those where pupils are single registered to the school or are dual registered and the special school/EOTAS centre is recorded as the main school. Enrolments including these dual registered pupils are 6,952 for special schools and 535 for EOTAS centres. These additional pupils have been counted in another setting in the table above.

2. Previous bulletins provided enrolments in hospital schools. These pupils have been counted in their "main" school.

3. Figures include full time and part time pupils who are enrolled in nursery settings that are not part of PSEP but are rather in Specialist Provision for preschool aged pupils - [Pre-school education places](#)

4. Figures may be impacted by Action Short of Strike, see Notes section

R. A revision was made to account for reductions in 1 nursery school full time and 1 nursery school part time controlled school pupil, 1 nursery class Catholic Maintained school pupil, 2 year 1 pupils in Controlled Integrated Primary school, 35 from Catholic Maintained Secondary and an increase by 1 nursery class full time pupil in a Controlled Integrated school.

Table 2b: Pupils in Irish-medium education, 2018/19 - 2023/24

School and management type	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Voluntary and private pre-schools - funded places	470	480	452	414	410	411
Nursery Classes						
Schools - Full-time	366	323	318	309	308	315
Schools - Part-time	103	150	149	148	148	174
Units - Full-time	26	30	30	25	26	26
Units - Part-time	-	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL	495	503	497	482	482	515
<u>PRIMARY (Year 1 -Year 7)</u>						
Schools	3,473	3,565	3,637	3,686	3,675	3,636
Units	878	945	967	975	997	996
TOTAL	4,351	4,510	4,604	4,661	4,672	4,632
<u>POST-PRIMARY (Year 8 - Year 14)</u>						
Schools	799	895	1,019	1,113	1,177	1,265
Units	404	428	492	562	569	591
TOTAL	1,203	1,323	1,511	1,675	1,746	1,856
GRAND TOTAL	6,519	6,816	7,064	7,232	7,310	7,414

Note:

1. Figures relate to funded Irish medium provision only
2. Figures may be impacted by Action Short of Strike, see Notes section

Table 2c: Pupils in Integrated education¹, 2018/19 - 2023/24^R

School and management type	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24 ^R
<u>NURSERY SCHOOLS</u>	-	-	-	26	104	113
<u>PRIMARY</u>						
Nursery Classes - Full-time ^R	214	213	266	211	210	209
Nursery Classes - Part-time	437	497	463	518	555	605
Reception	17	29	25	18	29	19
Year 1 - Year 7 ^R	10,449	10,547	10,640	11,167	11,162	11,362
TOTAL^R	11,117	11,286	11,394	11,914	11,956	12,195
<u>SECONDARY (Year 8 - Year 14)</u>						
Year 8 - Year 12	10,666	11,200	11,513	11,751	12,997	13,218
Sixth form ²	1,841	1,775	1,954	2,103	2,126	2,149
TOTAL	12,507	12,975	13,467	13,854	15,123	15,367
GRAND TOTAL^R	23,624	24,261	24,861	25,794	27,183	27,675

1. Figures include children attending Controlled Integrated schools and Grant Maintained Integrated Schools.

2. Sixth form figures are based solely on pupils studying A Level or equivalent qualifications.

3. Figures may be impacted by Action Short of Strike, see Notes section

R. A revision was made to account for an increase in 1 nursery class full-time pupil, and a reduction of 2 year 1 pupils in 2023/24

Table 3: Pupils entitled to Free School Meals¹ by school type and management type, 2023/24^R

School and management type	Number ^R	Enrolment ^R	Percentage
Voluntary and Private Pre-School Centres (funded places only)			
Voluntary	1,170	5,823	20.1
Private	119	993	12.0
TOTAL	1,289	6,816	18.9
Nursery Schools - FULL TIME			
Controlled ^R	1,217	2,335	52.1
Catholic Maintained	869	1,588	54.7
Controlled Integrated	32	61	52.5
TOTAL^R	2,118	3,984	53.2
Nursery Schools - PART TIME			
Controlled ^R	259	1,592	16.3
Catholic Maintained	#	156	#
Controlled Integrated	*	52	*
TOTAL^R	282	1,800	15.7
Nursery Classes - FULL TIME			
Controlled	1,014	2,306	44.0
Catholic Maintained ^R	1,117	2,421	46.1
Other Maintained	148	290	51.0
Controlled Integrated ^R	50	78	64.1
Grant Maintained Integrated	59	131	45.0
TOTAL^R	2,388	5,226	45.7
Nursery Classes - PART TIME			
Controlled	281	2,268	12.4
Catholic Maintained	231	1,497	15.4
Other Maintained	47	200	23.5
Controlled Integrated	18	109	16.5
Grant Maintained Integrated	126	496	25.4
TOTAL	703	4,570	15.4
Reception pupils	25	160	15.6
TOTAL PRE-SCHOOL^R	6,805	22,558	30.2
Primary Schools (Year 1 - Year 7)			
Controlled	20,059	76,536	26.2
Catholic Maintained	22,486	76,472	29.4
Other Maintained - Irish Medium	1,204	3,332	36.1
Other Maintained - Other	22	334	6.6
Controlled Integrated ^R	1,464	4,797	30.5
Grant Maintained Integrated	1,598	6,565	24.3
TOTAL^R	46,833	168,036	27.9
Prep. Departments	14	1,429	1.0
ALL PRIMARY AND PREP. YEAR 1-7 PUPILS^R	46,847	169,465	27.6
Secondary (Non Grammar) Schools			
Controlled	10,245	32,190	31.8
Catholic Maintained ^R	14,926	41,664	35.8
Other Maintained	537	1,265	42.5
Controlled Integrated	1,583	4,439	35.7
Grant Maintained Integrated	3,478	10,928	31.8
TOTAL^R	30,769	90,486	34.0
Grammar Schools			
Controlled	1,507	14,806	10.2
Voluntary - Schools under Catholic Management	4,611	30,045	15.3
Voluntary - Schools under Other Management	1,805	21,066	8.6
TOTAL	7,923	65,917	12.0
ALL POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS^R	38,692	156,403	24.7
ALL PRIMARY AND POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS^R	85,539	325,868	26.2
ALL SPECIAL SCHOOLS	3,911	7,192	54.4
EOTAS Centres	9	27	33.3
ALL NURSERY, PRIMARY, POST-PRIMARY, and SPECIAL^{3,R}	94,966	348,800	27.2
ALL NURSERY, PRIMARY, POST-PRIMARY, SPECIAL SCHOOLS, and EOTAS Centre^{3,R}	94,975	348,827	27.2

1. Figures for pupils in nursery schools/units and pre-schools include parents who are entitled to receive Income Support, or Income-Based Jobseeker's Allowance, or Employment Support Allowance where an award of income-based job-seekers allowance has been converted; and Universal Credit are some of the benefits which determine eligibility for free school meals.

2. DE and the EA agreed to an extension to the date used for the purposes of assessing schools' Free School Meals entitlement numbers. Normally children must be entitled on census day this was extended to 20th October.

3. Excludes Voluntary and Private Preschools

4. Figures include full and part time pupils who are enrolled in nursery settings that are not part of PSEP but are rather in Specialist Provision for preschool aged pupils - [Pre-school education places | nidirect](#)

5. Figures may be impacted by Action Short of Strike, see Notes section

R. A revision was made to account for reductions in enrolment in 1 nursery school full time and 1 nursery school part time controlled school pupil, 1 nursery class Catholic Maintained school pupil, 2 year 1 pupils in Controlled Integrated Primary school, 35 pupils in Catholic Maintained Secondary School and an increase by 1 nursery class full time pupil in a Controlled Integrated school.

Due to a lack of pupil level information for schools that took part in Action Short of Strike (ASOS), it has not been possible to produce the following tables. Please see notes section for further information.

Table 4: Average class size^{1,2,3,4} by school type and management type, 2023/24

Table 5: Religion of pupils by school type and management type, 2023/24

Table 6a: Ethnicity of pupils by school type, 2023/24.

Table 6b: Newcomer pupils by school type, 2018/19 – 2023/24

School and management type	2018/19 number	2018/19 %	2019/20 number	2019/20 %	2020/21 number	2020/21 %	2021/22 number	2021/22 %	2022/23 number	2022/23 %	2023/24 number	2023/24 %
Voluntary and Private Pre-School Centres (funded children only)	332	4.1%	331	4.1%	264	3.6%	247	3.4%	269	3.9%	239	3.5%
Nursery Schools	439	7.5%	407	7.0%	446	7.7%	443	7.6%	468	8.1%	476	8.2%
Nursery Classes & Reception	736	7.6%	796	8.1%	808	8.2%	789	8.0%	801	8.0%	871	8.7%
Primary Schools & Prep. Departments (Year 1 - Year 7)	11,435	6.6%	11,964	6.9%	12,080	7.0%	12,507	7.3%	13,291	7.8%	14,236	8.4%
Secondary (Non Grammar) Schools	2,751	3.5%	3,242	4.0%	3,395	3.9%	3,765	4.3%	3,916	4.3%	4,331	4.8%
Grammar Schools (Year 8 - Year 14)	368	0.6%	453	0.7%	478	0.7%	408	0.6%	520	0.8%	634	1.0%
Special Schools	177	3.0%	#	#	193	2.9%	197	3.0%	#	#	200	2.8%
EOTAS Centres	-	-	*	*	-	-	-	-	*	*	-	-
ALL FUNDED PRE-SCHOOL, NURSERY, PRIMARY, POST-PRIMARY, SPECIAL SCHOOLS and EOTAS CENTRES	16,238	4.7%	17,391	5.0%	17,664	5.0%	18,356	5.2%	19,471	5.5%	20,987	5.9%

* Fewer than 5 cases.

Number suppressed.

¹A newcomer pupil is one who has enrolled in a school but who does not have the satisfactory language skills to participate fully in the school curriculum, and the wider environment, and does not have a language in common with the teacher, whether that is English or Irish. This has previously been referred to as English as an Additional Language. It does not refer to indigenous pupils who choose to attend an Irish medium school.

² Enrolments for special schools and EOTAS centres relate those where pupils are single registered to the school, or are dual registered and the special school/EOTAS centre is recorded as the main school.

³ Figures include full time and part time pupils who are enrolled in nursery settings that are not part of PSEP but are rather in Specialist Provision for preschool aged pupils - [Pre-school education places](#)

⁴ Figures may be impacted by Action Short of Strike, see Notes section

Table 7: Percentage of children with Special Education Needs¹ at schools and funded pre-school education centres in 2023/24^R

School and management type	Statemented	STAGE 1 - 2	Total SEN	TOTAL ENROLMENT ^R	% Statemented children	% SEN children (non- statemented)	% SEN children (stage 1 - 3)
VOLUNTARY and PRIVATE PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION CENTRES	112	524	636	6,816	1.6%	7.7%	9.3%
NURSERY SCHOOLS^R	215	789	1,004	5,784	3.7%	13.6%	17.4%
PRIMARY SCHOOLS and PREPARATORY DEPARTMENTS			-				
Nursery class pupils	#	#	649	9,796	3.0%	3.6%	6.6%
Reception pupils	#	*	11	160	5.0%	1.9%	6.9%
Primary schools (year 1 - 7) ^R	9,832	23,098	32,930	168,036	5.9%	13.7%	19.6%
Grammar school Preparatory Depts. (year 1 - 7)	58	143	201	1,429	4.1%	10.0%	14.1%
Total year 1 - 7 pupils^R	9,890	23,241	33,131	169,465	5.8%	13.7%	19.6%
Total primary pupils^R	10,193	23,598	33,791	179,421	5.7%	13.2%	18.8%
POST PRIMARY SCHOOLS							
Secondary (non-grammar) schools ^R	7,915	13,086	21,001	90,486	8.7%	14.5%	23.2%
Grammar Schools	1,512	3,085	4,597	65,917	2.3%	4.7%	7.0%
Total post primary pupils^R	9,427	16,171	25,598	156,403	6.0%	10.3%	16.4%
SPECIAL SCHOOLS	7,004	188	7,192	7,192	97.4%	2.6%	100.0%
EOTAS Centres	13	6	19	27	48.1%	22.2%	70.4%
ALL SCHOOLS^R	26,839	40,746	67,585	348,800	7.7%	11.7%	19.4%
ALL SCHOOLS AND PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION CENTRES^R	26,951	41,270	68,221	355,616	7.6%	11.6%	19.2%
ALL SCHOOLS, PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION CENTRES AND EOTAS CENTRES^R	26,964	41,276	68,240	355,643	7.6%	11.6%	19.2%

* Fewer than 5 cases.

Number suppressed.

1. From 2021, children with Special Education Needs are assessed under the 3 stages of the SEN Code of Practice.

2. Enrolments for special schools and EOTAS centres relate those where pupils are single registered to the school or are dual registered and the special school/EOTAS centre is recorded as the main school.

3. Figures include full time and part time pupils who are enrolled in nursery settings that are not part of PSEP but are rather in Specialist Provision for preschool aged pupils - [Pre-school education places](#)

4. Figures may be impacted by Action Short of Strike, see Notes section

R. A revision was made to account for reductions in total enrolment by 2 for nursery school, 2 for primary schools (year 1-7) and 35 in secondary schools.