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Autumn term 2025/26

Children missing education

This is the latest release

Published 15 January 2026

Release type [Official statistics in development](#)

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Related information

This publication provides data reported by local authorities on [children missing education \(CME\)](#)  in England.

CME does not include pupils who are receiving suitable elective home education (EHE), a separate [release has been published relating to EHE](#). CME also does not include children who are registered pupils of a school but are persistently or severely absent. Information on these children can be found in [Pupil absence in schools](#).

This release is published as **official statistics in development**, which means that these statistics are undergoing evaluation for quality and user need. The data collection became mandatory in autumn 2024, as a relatively new collection we expect the quality of the data returns to continue to improve over time as the collection becomes established. We also welcome feedback on these statistics via the details in the “contact us” section below.

This publication is updated annually, the next release in winter 2026 will include termly data collected up to autumn 2026.

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Headline facts and figures - 2025/26

Number of CME on census date

34,700

autumn term 2025/26

► What is CME?

- 34,700 children missed education on census date in autumn 2025. In the previous autumn term, there were 39,200 [children missing education \(CME\)](#) .
- An estimated 143,500 children were CME at any point in the 2024/25 academic year. Across the previous academic year, there were an estimated 149,900 CME. These figures include adjustments made for non-response.

As a relatively new data collection, changes over time are likely to be in part due to improvements in data quality and recording practices. For further information on data quality please see the methodology.

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Children missing education on census days

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[Children missing education](#) [?] are at significant risk of underachieving, being victims of harm, exploitation or radicalisation, and becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) later in life. Local authorities have a legal duty to make arrangements to identify, as far as it is possible to do so, the identities of children in their area who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education.

The number of CME decreased compared to previous autumn term

Local authorities reported 34,700 children missing education on census day in autumn 2025. This is a decrease of 4,500 compared to autumn 2024. (The proportion of local authorities providing data reached 100% for the first time in autumn 2024, previous term estimates include adjustments made for non-response.)

The rate of CME was 0.4% of the population of comparable ages (based on ONS [mid-year population estimates \(opens in new tab\)](#) for children aged 5 to 16 years).

As this is a relatively new data collection, which first started in autumn 2022 and became mandatory in autumn 2024, changes over time are likely to be in part due to improvements in data quality and recording practices, for example use of more consistent working definitions, enhanced tracking processes and improved familiarity with the collection. For further information on data quality please see the methodology.



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Children missing education at census date, autumn term 2023/24 to autumn term 2025/26

	2023/24 Autumn term	2023/24 Spring term	2023/24 Summer term	2024/25 Autumn term	2024/25 Spring term	2024/25 Summer term
Number of CME on census date	33,000	36,700	36,600	39,200	34,400	34,100
Rate of CME on census day by population	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%	0.5%	0.4%	0.4%

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[Data symbols](#)

Footnotes

1. Local authority response rates to the data collection vary by census date. To account for non-response, where required national and regional figures have been updated based on local authority pupil populations.
2. CME counts will vary depending on the population within the local authority, which may change over time. Increased identification of CME may also result from improved recording and support practices within local authorities. High or

low counts of CME do not necessarily reflect 'good' or 'bad' practice.

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Source: EHE and CME census

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The length of time children are missing education varies

Of those children that were CME on census day in autumn 2025, 50% had been missing education for 12 weeks or less and 42% of CME had been missing education for more than 12 weeks. The length of time the remaining 8% had been CME was unknown. This is consistent with the previous autumn term.



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Length of time children have been missing education at census date, autumn term 2024/25 to autumn term 2025/26

		2024/25 Autumn term	2024/25 Spring term	2024/25 Summer term	2025/26 Autumn term
Duration	Less than 2 weeks	14%	15%	15%	14%
	2 to 4 weeks	15%	5%	9%	17%
	4 to 8 weeks	11%	14%	12%	10%
	8 to 12 weeks	9%	9%	9%	9%
	12 to 26 weeks	16%	19%	16%	14%
	26 to 52 weeks	11%	13%	14%	12%
	Over 52 weeks	17%	21%	22%	16%
	Unknown	7%	5%	3%	8%

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Source: EHE and CME census

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'School application awaiting outcome' was the most reported reason for CME

The primary reasons known or provided for CME continued to be largely similar to previous autumn terms. The top two most reported reasons for CME were 'school application awaiting outcome' (includes awaiting outcome on admissions appeal), accounting for 13% of children, and 'believed to have moved out of the country', accounting for 10% of children. 'Unsuitable elective home education' continued to increase, becoming the third most reported reason at 9%.

Over 1 in 5 reasons for CME (22%) remain unknown or not recorded.

Five new primary reasons for CME were introduced from autumn 2025 and appear in the table below, a low proportion of local authorities were able to report against the new reasons in this introductory term.

Primary reason	2023/24 Autumn term	2024/25 Autumn term	2025/26 Autumn term
School application awaiting outcome	8%	10%	13%

Believed to have moved to another country	11%	13%	10%
Unsuitable elective home education	6%	7%	9%
Believed to have moved to another local authority	9%	8%	8%
Moved in from another local authority	7%	7%	8%
Waiting school start	5%	7%	5%
Did not get school preference	3%	4%	3%
Offered school place but not yet accepted	z	z	3%
Moved in from another country	3%	3%	2%
Difficulty accessing suitable school place	2%	3%	3%
Challenging School Attendance Order	1%	1%	1%
Did not apply for a school place at compulsory school age	z	z	low
Mental health	z	z	low
Parental decision not to register at school	z	z	low
Physical health	z	z	low
School dissatisfaction general	1%	low	low
School dissatisfaction SEND	low	low	low

School dissatisfaction bullying	low	low	z
Other	10%	14%	13%
Not recorded	20%	12%	7%
Unknown	14%	10%	15%

Footnotes:

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3. A figure that rounds to 0, but is not 0 is denoted by 'low'.
4. Primary reason 'other' includes instances where local authority systems record two or more of the data collection reasons in a single category, for example mental and physical health.

Source: EHE and CME census

CME by characteristic

The proportion of children missing education varies by characteristics. The figures below relate to autumn 2025 but trends remain similar to previous years.

Sex

45% of CME were reported as female and 53% of CME were reported as male (the rest were unknown). This compares to 49% of the overall school population as female and 51% male as at January 2025.

Year group

The number of CME in primary year groups was less than in secondary with 6-7% of CME in each of the year groups 1 to 6 and 10-13% in each of the year groups 7 to 11.

Ethnicity

36% of CME were of White ethnicity, 4% were of Mixed ethnicity, 7% were of Asian ethnicity, 4% were of Black ethnicity and 4% of other ethnicity. The remaining 45% had refused to provide their ethnicity or were unknown. This compares to the overall school population of 68% White ethnicity, 7% Mixed ethnicity, 14% Asian ethnicity, 6% Black ethnicity and 3% other ethnicity, with 2% unclassified.

Special educational needs (SEN) ?*

8% of CME had an additional requirement of SEN support and 8% of CME had an education, health and care plan (increased from 6% with SEN and 7% with an EHC plan the previous autumn). This compares with 14% and 5%, respectively, for the overall school population.

Children in need*

3% of CME were recorded as a child in need, 1% were recorded as having a child protection plan and 1% were a looked after child. This compares with 3% children in need, 0.4% having a child protection plan and 0.7% looked after children amongst the overall child population.

*SEN provision and Child in need status are as known to the local authority as at the census day and therefore may exclude children who previously held these additional requirements and those for whom these requirements were not known.

The following characteristic was collected for the first time in autumn 2025 and may be under-reported in this first collection.

English as an additional language

18% of CME had a first language other than English. This compares to 21% of the school population.

CME by local authority

The number and rate of children missing education varies across local authorities. Counts will vary depending on the local population, which may change over time; for example significant migration may lead to higher numbers of CME at the start of a school year as parents await their preferred school place. Increased identification of CME may also result from improved recording and support practices within local authorities. High or low counts do not necessarily reflect 'good' or 'bad' practice.

[Chart](#)

[Table](#)



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Rate of CME on census date by local authority, autumn term 2025/26

	2025/26 Autumn term
North East	
County Durham	0.3%
Darlington	0.1%
Gateshead	0.1%
Hartlepool	0.3%
Middlesbrough	0.5%
Newcastle upon Tyne	0.4%
North Tyneside	0.1%
Northumberland	0.1%
Redcar and Cleveland	0.3%

South Tyneside	0.2%
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Stockton-on-Tees	0.1%
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Sunderland	0.1%
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North West

Blackburn with Darwen	0.4%
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Blackpool	1.4%
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Bolton	0.2%
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Bury	1.2%
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Cheshire East	0.2%
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Cheshire West and Chester	low
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Cumberland	0.1%
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Halton	0.4%
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Knowsley	0.3%
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Lancashire	0.6%
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Liverpool	0.2%
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Manchester	0.3%
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Oldham	0.6%
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Rochdale	0.3%
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Salford	0.3%
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Sefton	0.2%
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St. Helens	0.2%
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Stockport	0.6%
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Tameside	0.4%
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	Lameside	0.4%
	Trafford	0.2%
	Warrington	0.1%
	Westmorland and Furness	0.1%
	Wigan	0.2%
	Wirral	0.1%
Yorkshire and The Humber	Barnsley	0.1%
	Bradford	0.6%
	Calderdale	0.7%
	Doncaster	0.9%
	East Riding of Yorkshire	0.3%
	Kingston upon Hull, City of	0.8%
	Kirklees	0.3%
	Leeds	0.6%
	North East Lincolnshire	0.2%
	North Lincolnshire	0.2%
	North Yorkshire	0.3%
	Rotherham	1.0%
	Sheffield	1.2%
	Wakefield	0.1%
York	0.3%	
East Midlands	Derby	0.6%

East Midlands	Derby	0.3%
	Derbyshire	0.3%
	Leicester	0.6%
	Leicestershire	0.3%
	Lincolnshire	1.8%
	North Northamptonshire	0.4%
	Nottingham	4.2%
	Nottinghamshire	0.3%
	Rutland	0.1%
	West Northamptonshire	0.4%
West Midlands	Birmingham	0.5%
	Coventry	0.8%
	Dudley	0.4%
	Herefordshire, County of	0.1%
	Sandwell	0.2%
	Shropshire	0.2%
	Solihull	0.1%
	Staffordshire	0.1%
	Stoke-on-Trent	1.2%
	Telford and Wrekin	0.4%
	Walsall	0.6%
	Warwickshire	0.9%

	Wolverhampton	0.2%
	Worcestershire	0.2%
East of England	Bedford	0.3%
	Cambridgeshire	0.5%
	Central Bedfordshire	0.6%
	Essex	0.3%
	Hertfordshire	0.3%
	Luton	low
	Norfolk	0.5%
	Peterborough	0.4%
	Southend-on-Sea	0.1%
	Suffolk	0.3%
	Thurrock	1.0%
South East	Bracknell Forest	0.1%
	Brighton and Hove	0.1%
	Buckinghamshire	0.2%
	East Sussex	2.0%
	Hampshire	0.2%
	Isle of Wight	0.1%
	Kent	0.5%
	Medway	0.3%

Milton Keynes	0.1%
Oxfordshire	0.2%
Portsmouth	0.1%
Reading	0.3%
Slough	0.4%
Southampton	3.0%
Surrey	0.1%
West Berkshire	0.1%
West Sussex	0.2%
Windsor and Maidenhead	0.1%
Wokingham	low

South West

Bath and North East Somerset	0.4%
Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole	0.2%
Bristol, City of	0.8%
Cornwall	0.3%
Devon	0.2%
Dorset	0.1%
Gloucestershire	0.2%
Isles of Scilly	0.4%
North Somerset	0.2%

	Plymouth	0.2%
	Somerset	0.3%
	South Gloucestershire	0.2%
	Swindon	0.3%
	Torbay	0.1%
	Wiltshire	0.2%
Inner London	Camden	0.1%
	City of London	0.0%
	Hackney	2.6%
	Hammersmith and Fulham	0.1%
	Haringey	0.4%
	Islington	0.1%
	Kensington and Chelsea	0.1%
	Lambeth	low
	Lewisham	low
	Newham	0.8%
	Southwark	0.3%
	Tower Hamlets	0.3%
	Wandsworth	0.5%
	Westminster	0.2%
Outer London	Barking and Dagenham	0.1%

Barnet	0.1%
Bexley	0.1%
Brent	0.3%
Bromley	0.1%
Croydon	0.1%
Ealing	0.5%
Enfield	0.2%
Greenwich	0.2%
Harrow	0.1%
Havering	0.1%
Hillingdon	0.6%
Hounslow	0.3%
Kingston upon Thames	0.1%
Merton	0.3%
Redbridge	1.0%
Richmond upon Thames	0.1%
Sutton	0.2%
Waltham Forest	0.1%

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[Data symbols](#) 

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[Show 1 more footnote](#)

Source: EHE and CME census

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Children missing education – at any point during the previous academic year

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Data was also collected on the total number of children reported by local authorities as missing education at any point during the previous academic year. Where a child was reported as [CME](#)  more than once, they are only recorded once. These are cumulative counts of all pupils reported by local authorities as CME at some point in the academic year and are not directly comparable to the point in time figures presented as at census day each term.

Local authorities identified an estimated 143,500 CME in 2024/25. This is based on a figure of 143,000 children not registered at school or otherwise receiving suitable

education, at any point during the 2024/25 academic year, as reported by 99% of local authorities. This is a decrease from an estimated 149,900 in the year before.

As this is a relatively new data collection, changes compared to the previous year are likely to be in part due to improvements in data quality and recording practices. For further information on data quality please see the methodology.

► Export options

Children missing education at any point in the academic year, 2021/22 to 2024/25

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
CME at any time in academic year	94,900	117,100	149,900	143,500

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Methodology

Find out how and why we collect, process and publish these statistics.

[Children missing education](#)

Official statistics in development

These statistics are undergoing a development. They have been developed under the guidance of the Head of Profession for Statistics and published to involve users and stakeholders at an early stage in assessing their suitability and quality.

They have been produced as far as possible in line with the Code of Practice for Statistics.

This can be broadly interpreted to mean that these statistics are:

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

Find out more about the standards we follow to produce these statistics through our [Standards for official statistics published by DfE guidance \(opens in new tab\)](#).

Contact us

If you have a specific enquiry about Children missing education statistics and data:

Attendance and exclusions statistics team

Email: schools.statistics@education.gov.uk

Contact name: Pauline Potts

Press office

If you have a media enquiry:

Telephone: 020 7783 8300

Public enquiries

If you have a general enquiry about the Department for Education (DfE) or education:

Telephone: 037 0000 2288

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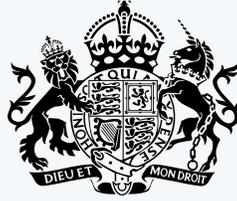
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