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Department for Education

Academic year 2025/26

Phonics screening check attainment

Phonics screening check attainment statistics of pupils in England by pupil characteristics, school characteristics, region and local authority.

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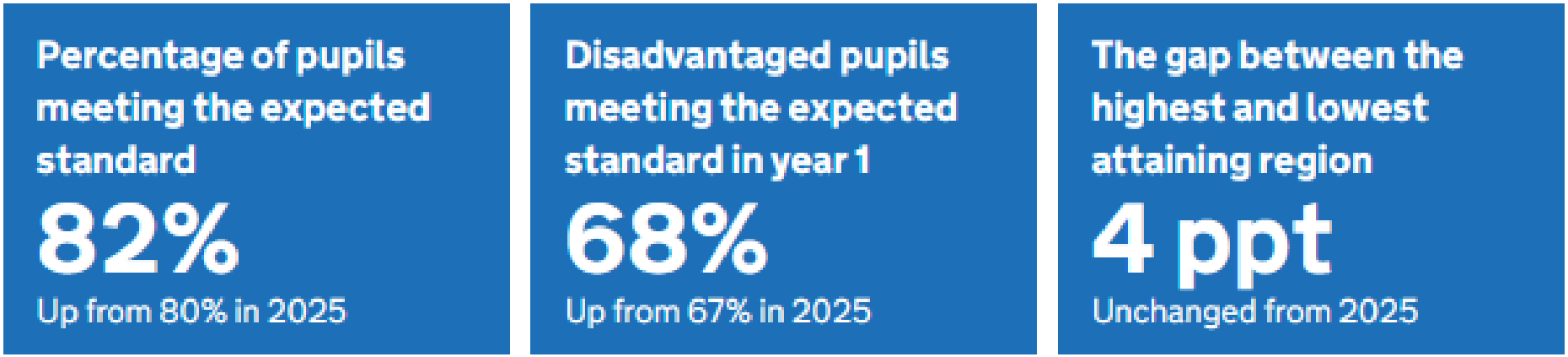
Phonics attainment by school characteristics

Phonics attainment by region and local authority

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Headline facts and figures



These statistics cover the attainment of year 1 and year 2 pupils who took the phonics screening check in summer 2026.

Attainment in the phonics screening check has increased compared to 2025.

82% of pupils met the expected standard in the phonics screening check in year 1, up from 80% in 2025.

89% of pupils met the expected standard by the end of year 2, unchanged from 2025.

Disadvantaged pupils performed less well than other pupils, and the gap has remained similar to 2025 (17 percentage points). 68% of disadvantaged pupils met the expected standard in year 1, up from 67% in 2025.

London is the highest performing region, where 84% of pupils met the expected standard in year 1; the

lowest performing regions were the North East and North West with 80%. The gap between the highest and lowest attaining region is 4 percentage points.

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National attainment in the phonics screening check

About the phonics screening check

The phonics screening check is a statutory assessment for year 1 pupils (typically aged 6) that confirms whether they have met the expected standard in phonic decoding. All state funded schools with a year 1 cohort must administer the check. Pupils who do not meet the standard in year 1 or were not checked, must take part in the check at the end of year 2 (typically aged 7). Teachers administer the check one-on-one with each pupil and record whether their response to each of the 40 words is correct. Each pupil is awarded a mark between 0 and 40.

In 2026, the threshold to determine whether a pupil had met the expected standard is 31. This is the first change to the expected standard since the check was introduced in 2012, when the threshold was 32. Since 2014, this threshold mark has not been communicated to schools until after the screening check has been completed.

The phonics screening checks are developed to the same specification each year. However, because the words must be different, the difficulty of the checks may vary slightly each year, and therefore the mark required to meet the expected standard may also vary slightly each year. The standards maintenance process used by the Standards and Testing Agency (STA) to determine the threshold is outlined on their phonics page (opens in new tab) and in the Test Development Handbook (opens in

new tab).

Attainment in year 1

In 2026, 82% of pupils met the expected standard in year 1, up from 80% in 2025. This is the first time attainment in the phonics screening check has returned to pre-pandemic levels, when 82% of pupils met the expected standard in 2019. Previously, the proportion of pupils who met the standard in year 1 increased year-on-year from 58% in 2012 to 82% in 2018 and 2019, decreased to 75% in 2022, then increased year-on-year to 80% in 2024 and remained stable in 2025.

Chart | Table

▶ Export options

Percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in the phonics screening check in year 1, 2012 to 2026 (England, state funded schools and alternative provision)

	State funded schools and alternative provision
	Percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard
2011/12	58%
2012/13	69%
2013/14	74%
2014/15	77%
2015/16	81%

2016/17	81%
2017/18	82%
2018/19	82%
2019/20	x
2020/21	x
2021/22	75%
2022/23	79%
2023/24	80%
2024/25	80%
2025/26	82%

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Data symbols

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Footnotes

1. Percentages have been rounded to nearest whole number, so may not sum to 100.
2. Data is not available for 2020 and 2021 as assessments were cancelled in these years due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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In 2024, the methodology for identifying the year 2 eligible pupils was changed. This is because key stage 1 data is no longer available as the tests are now non-statutory.

From 2024 onwards, data for the year 2 cohort is produced by matching the year 2 phonics results from the current year with the census and year 1 phonics results from the previous year. Pupils are included in the year 2 figures if:

- they have a valid year 2 phonics result from the current year; or
- they have a valid year 1 phonics result from the previous year and they are in the census in year 2.

Up until 2023, pupils were included in the year 2 figures if:

- they had a valid year 2 phonics result from the current year; or
- they had a valid year 1 phonics result from the previous year and they had a valid key stage 1 result in the current year.

This means that 2024 and onwards figures are not directly comparable to previous years for ‘end of year 2’ measures. This does not impact ‘year 1’ measures. Please see the methodology for more details and a time series from 2019 using the new methodology to enable recent comparisons.

The percentage of pupils who met the expected standard in the phonics screening check by the end of year 2 was 89% in 2026, the same as in 2025 and 2024. This is not directly comparable to years before 2024.

Previously, the proportion of pupils who met the expected standard by the end of year 2 had remained broadly stable between 2016 and 2019, then decreased to 87% in 2022 before increasing to 89% in 2023.

Chart | Table

▶ Export options

Percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in the phonics screening check by the end of year 2, 2013 to 2026 (England, state-funded schools and alternative provision)

	State funded schools and alternative provision
	Percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard
2012/13	85%
2013/14	89%
2014/15	90%
2015/16	91%
2016/17	92%
2017/18	92%
2018/19	91%
2019/20	x
2020/21	x
2021/22	87%
2022/23	89%
2023/24	89%
2024/25	89%
2025/26	89%

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Data symbols

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Footnotes

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Phonics attainment by pupil characteristics

This section looks at attainment in year 1 in the phonics screening check by sex, disadvantage, special educational need (SEN) provision, first language, ethnicity and month of birth. Further information is available in the underlying data, including attainment by free school meal eligibility and SEN primary type of need, and attainment in the phonics screening check by the end of year 2.

Attainment by sex

A higher proportion of girls continue to meet the phonics standard in year 1 than boys but attainment has increased for both. The proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard in year 1 increased from 76% in 2025 to 78% in 2026 for boys, and increased from 84% in 2025 to 86% in 2026 for girls.

The attainment gap is 7 percentage points in 2026, a decrease of 1 percentage point from 2025. The attainment gap has remained broadly stable since the check was introduced in 2012, when the gap was 8 percentage points.

Chart | Table

▶ Export options

Percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in the phonics screening check in year 1 by sex, 2012 to 2026 (England, state funded schools)

	Percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard	
	Boys	Girls
2011/12	54%	62%
2012/13	65%	73%

2013/14	70%	78%
2014/15	73%	81%
2015/16	77%	84%
2016/17	78%	85%
2017/18	79%	86%
2018/19	78%	85%
2019/20	x	x
2020/21	x	x
2021/22	72%	79%
2022/23	75%	82%
2023/24	77%	84%
2024/25	76%	84%
2025/26	78%	86%

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Data symbols

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Attainment by disadvantage status

Definition of disadvantage

Disadvantaged pupils are those known to be eligible for free school meals (FSM) prior to the assessment in year 1 (i.e. not including nursery or reception).

Please note that the 2026 data is provisional and does not include pupils in the care of the local authority for 1 day or more in the last year unless they were eligible for free school meals during the last 6 years or they have ceased to be looked after in the last year. These statistics will be updated to include these pupils when the final data is published next year. Based on historic data the impact is expected to be negligible (likely to reduce the percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard by less than 0.1 percentage points). Further information can be found in the methodology.

Attainment in the phonics screening check has increased for both disadvantaged pupils and other pupils. In

2026, attainment of the expected standard in the phonics screening check in year 1 increased from 67% to 68% for disadvantaged pupils, and increased from 84% to 86% for other pupils. This gives a gap of 17 percentage points, the same as 2025 (based on unrounded data).

In 2026, 22% of pupils were disadvantaged. This is the same as 2025 but this is not directly comparable as pupils in the care of the local authority have not been added to this yet.

Chart | Table

▶ Export options

Percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in the phonics screening check in year 1 by disadvantage status, 2012 to 2026 (England, state funded schools)

	Percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard	
	Disadvantaged	**Not known to be disadvantaged**
2011/12	45%	62%
2012/13	57%	73%
2013/14	63%	78%
2014/15	66%	80%
2015/16	70%	83%
2016/17	70%	84%
2017/18	72%	85%

2018/19	71%	84%
2019/20	x	x
2020/21	x	x
2021/22	62%	80%
2022/23	66%	83%
2023/24	68%	84%
2024/25	67%	84%
2025/26	68%	86%

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Data symbols

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Footnotes

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Attainment by Special Educational Need (SEN) status

In 2026, 46% of pupils with SEN met the expected standard in the phonics screening check in year 1, compared with 43% of pupils with SEN in 2025. This is the highest level of attainment for pupils with SEN since the phonics screening check was introduced. Among pupils with SEN, 56% of those on SEN support and 21% of those with with an Education, Health and Care plan met the expected standard in 2026.

In 2026, 19% of pupils in year 1 had a special educational need (SEN), an increase from 18% in 2025. SEN pupils either have an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan or receive SEN support. In 2026, 5% of pupils in year 1 had an EHC plan and 14% were on SEN support. These proportions in 2025 were 5% and 13% respectively.

Chart | Table

▶ Export options

Percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in the phonics screening check in year 1 by SEN status, 2012 to 2026 (England, state-funded schools)

Percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard		
All SEN provision	**Education, health and care plan**	**SEN support / SEN without an EHC plan**

2011/12	24%	no data	no data
2012/13	32%	no data	no data
2013/14	38%	no data	no data
2014/15	37%	25%	41%
2015/16	42%	20%	46%
2016/17	43%	18%	47%
2017/18	44%	19%	48%
2018/19	43%	19%	48%
2019/20	x	x	x
2020/21	x	x	x
2021/22	38%	19%	44%
2022/23	42%	20%	48%
2023/24	44%	20%	52%
2024/25	43%	20%	52%
2025/26	46%	21%	56%

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Data symbols

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Footnotes

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Attainment by first language

Attainment in the phonics screening check has increased compared to 2025 for both pupils whose first language is English and those with a first language other than English. Attainment of the expected standard in the phonics screening check in year 1 increased from 80% to 82% for both groups. This gives a gap of 0 percentage points, which in previous years has been between 1 and 2 percentage points.

The proportion of year 1 pupils with a first language other than English was 23% in 2026, up from 22% in 2025.

Chart | Table

▶ Export options

Percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in the phonics screening check in year 1 by first language, 2012 to 2026 (England, state funded schools)

	Percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard		
	Known or believed to be English	Known or believed to be other than English	First language unclassified
2011/12	58%	58%	33%
2012/13	69%	69%	36%
2013/14	75%	74%	40%
2014/15	77%	76%	40%
2015/16	81%	80%	41%
2016/17	82%	81%	41%
2017/18	83%	82%	40%
2018/19	82%	82%	41%
2019/20	x	x	x
2020/21	x	x	x
2021/22	76%	75%	38%

2022/23	80%	78%	44%
2023/24	81%	80%	45%
2024/25	80%	80%	56%
2025/26	82%	82%	55%

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Data symbols

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Footnotes

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Attainment by ethnicity

Attainment in the phonics screening check varies by pupil ethnicity.

In 2026, attainment in the phonics screening check increased or remained the same compared to 2025 for pupils of all ethnicities.

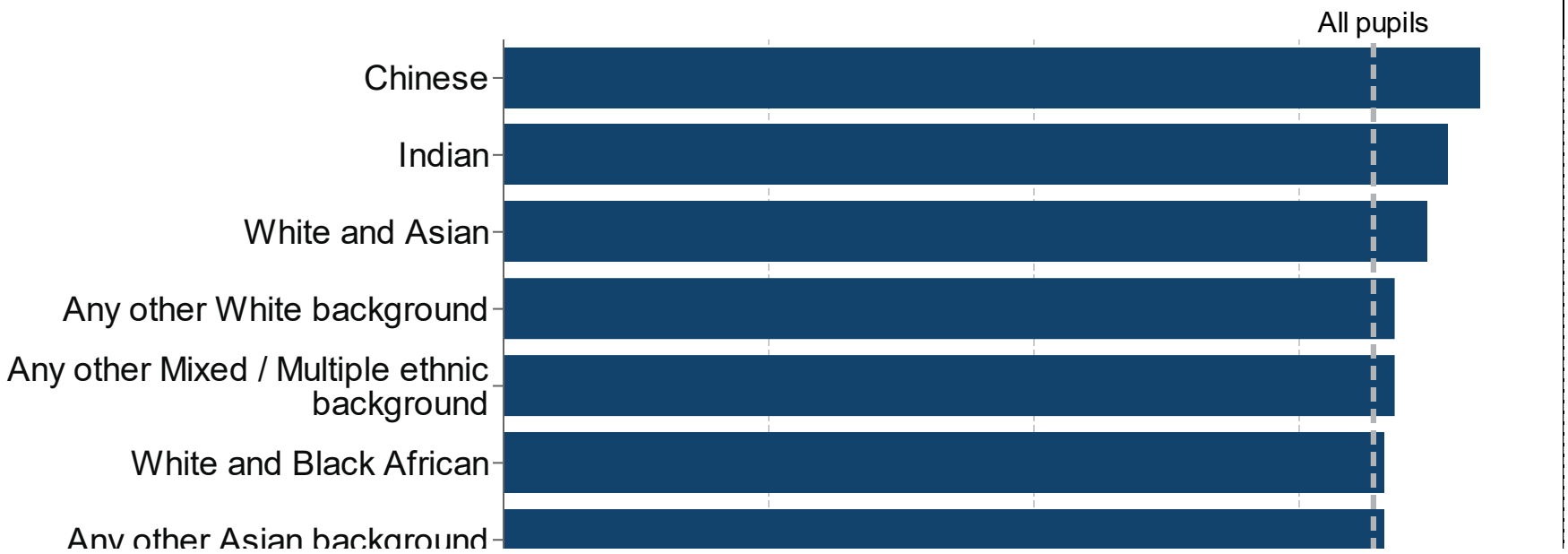
In 2026, Chinese pupils were the highest achieving group (92% met the expected standard), followed by Indian pupils (89%).

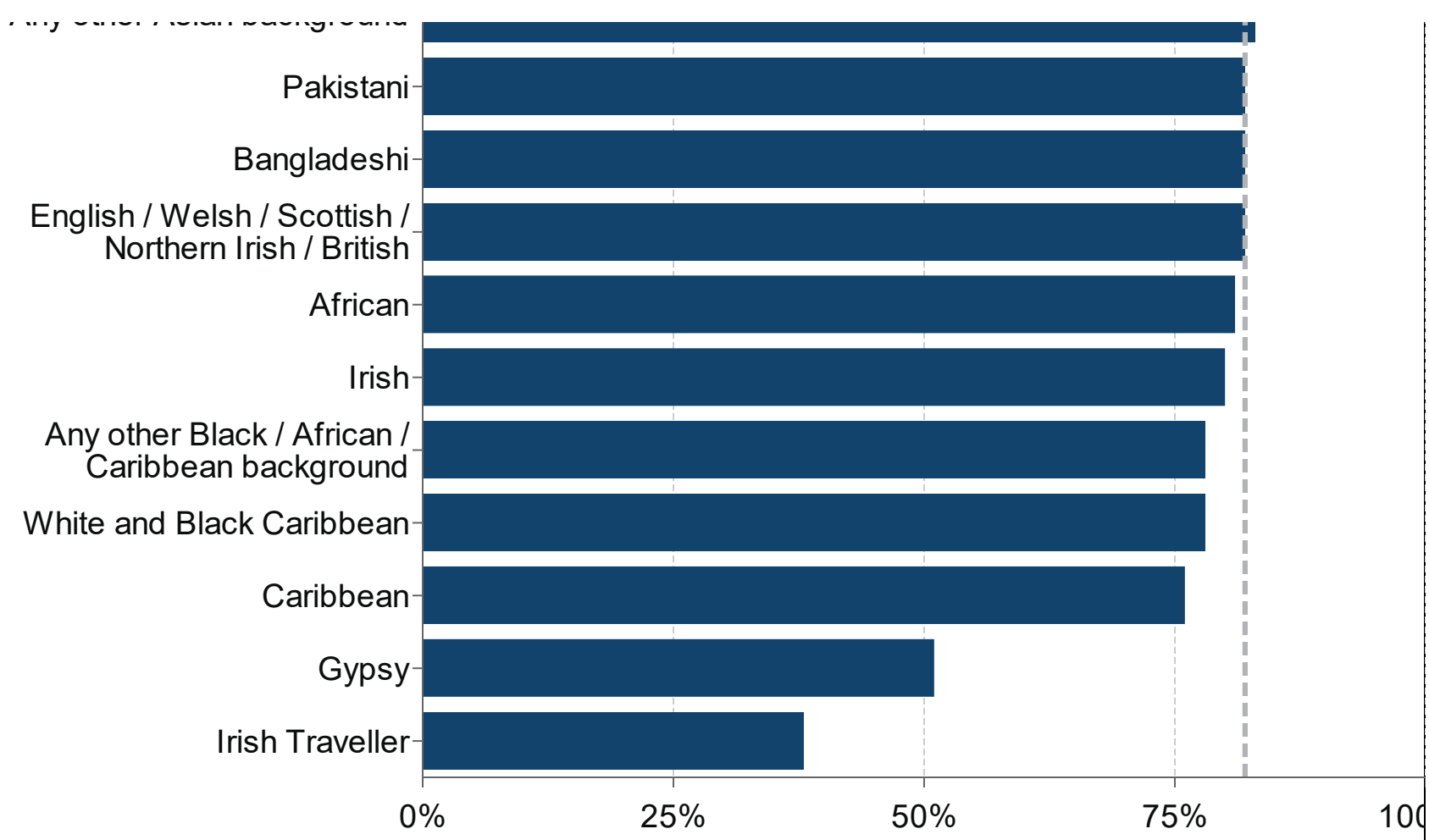
Irish traveller pupils were the lowest performing group (38% met the expected standard), followed by Gypsy pupils (51%).

Chart | Table

▶ Export options

Percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in the phonics screening check in year 1 by ethnicity, 2026 (England, state-funded schools)





Footnotes

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Attainment by month of birth

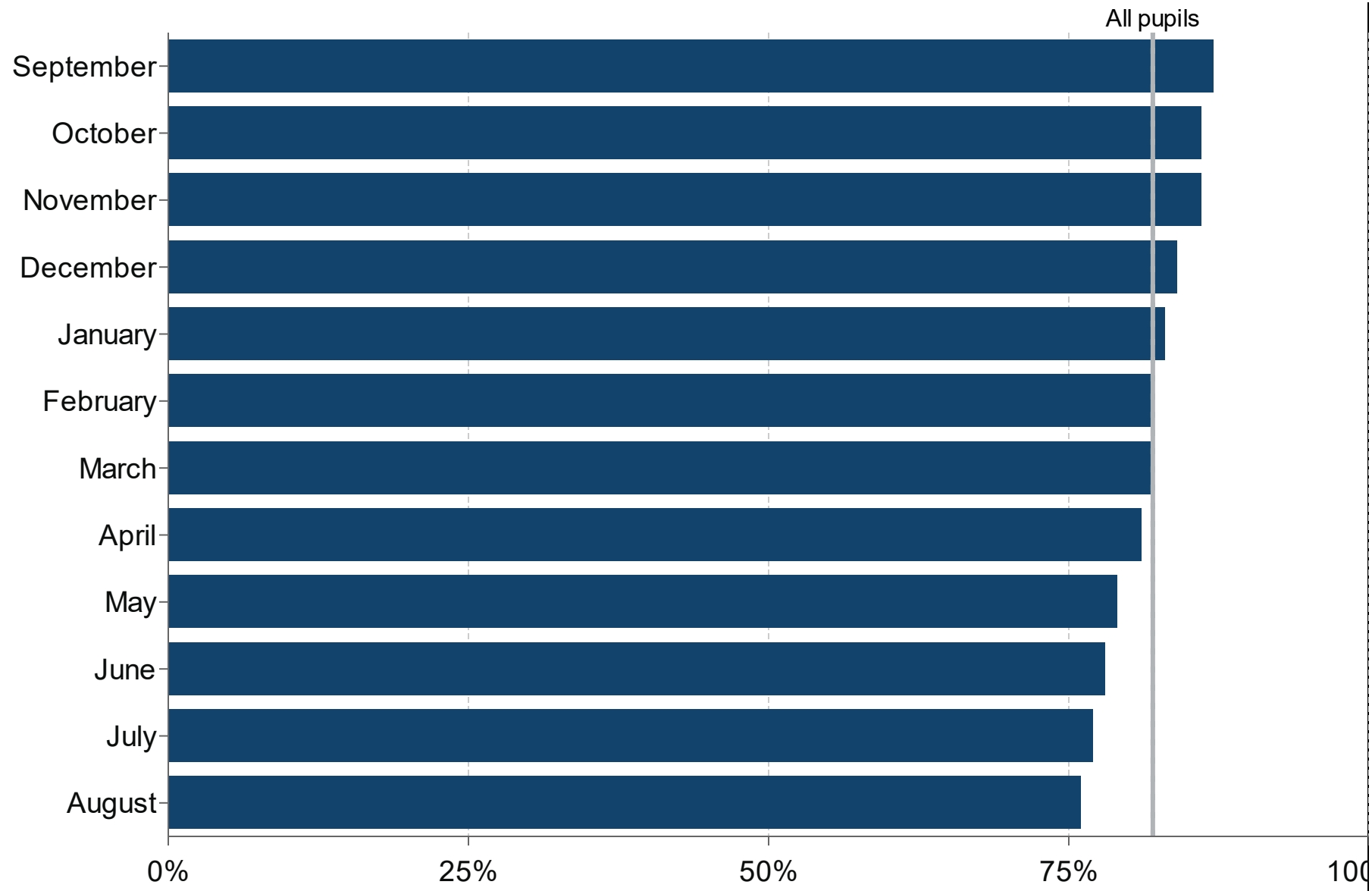
Attainment in the phonics screening check is higher among pupils born earlier in the academic year (older pupils) than those born later (younger pupils).

As in previous years, pupils born in September were the highest performing group (87% met the expected standard in year 1, up from 86% in 2025), while pupils born in August were the lowest performing group (76% met the expected standard in year 1, up from 73% in 2025). The gap between September born children and August born children was 12 percentage points in 2026, a 2 percentage point decrease from 2025.

Chart | Table

▶ Export options

Percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in the phonics screening check in year 1 by month of birth, 2026 (England, state-funded schools)



Footnotes

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Explore and edit this data online

Use our table tool to explore this data.

Explore data

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Phonics attainment by school characteristics

> Further information is available via the table tool and data files, including attainment by phase and school religious character.

There were 15,803 state funded mainstream primary schools with year 1 phonics screening check results in 2026.

In recent years there have been substantial changes to the makeup of school types in England. The proportion of LA maintained schools with phonics results decreased from 68% in 2019 to 51% in 2026. There have been corresponding increases in the proportion of sponsored and converter academies to 11% and 35% respectively in 2026. It should be noted that the conversion of schools from one type to another means that the headline figures capture not only change in performance but also change in school type. While the number of free schools with phonics results has increased to 330, free schools make up a very small proportion of schools (2%

in the years 2023 to 2026).

Similar to 2025, attainment levels in mainstream academies and free schools as a group in 2026 (83%) is slightly higher than those in local authority maintained mainstream schools (82%).

Among academies, converter academies had a slightly higher proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard (84%) as all state funded mainstream schools (83%), while sponsored academies had a slightly lower proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard (82%).

▶ Export options

Phonics screening check attainment in year 1 by school type, 2025 to 2026 (England, state funded mainstream schools)

		State funded mainstream schools	Local authority maintained	Academies and free schools	Academy sponsor led	Academy converter	Free schools
Number of schools	**2024/25**	15,870	8,616	7,254	1,743	5,200	311
	2025/26	15,803	8,099	7,704	1,772	5,602	330
Percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard	**2024/25**	81%	80%	81%	79%	82%	85%
	2025/26	83%	82%	83%	82%	84%	87%

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Data symbols

Footnotes

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Show 3 more footnotes

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Phonics attainment by region and local authority

This section includes phonics year 1 attainment at regional and local authority level. Further information is available in the underlying data, including phonics year 1 and by the end of year 2 attainment at

regional and local authority level by pupil characteristics.

Attainment by region

Attainment in the phonics screening check has increased for all regions compared to 2025.

London was the highest performing region in 2026, as in previous years, with 84% of pupils meeting the expected standard. This is an increase from 82% in 2025.

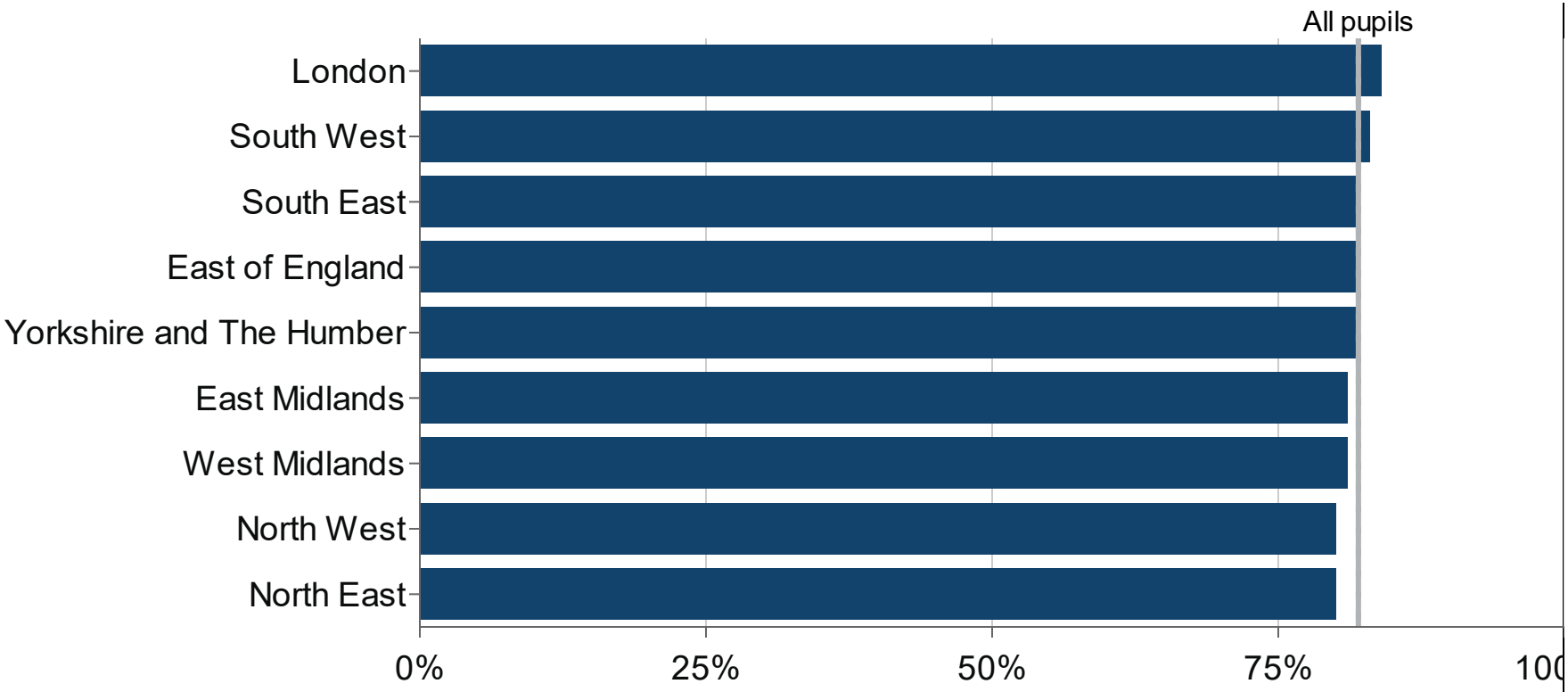
The lowest performing regions in 2026 were the North East and North West, with 80% of pupils meeting the expected standard. This is up from 78% in 2025, when these were also the lowest performing regions.

The gap between the highest attaining region (London) and the lowest attaining region (North East) was 4 percentage points in 2026, unchanged from 2025.

Chart | Table

▶ Export options

Percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in the phonics screening check in year 1 by region, 2026 (England, state funded schools)



Footnotes

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The map below shows the percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in the phonics screening check in year 1 by local authority. This map shows a complex picture of attainment across England, with a range of high and low attainment in different areas.

Attainment in year 1 in the phonics screening check was highest in Richmond upon Thames (91%) and Wokingham 89%) in 2026. Richmond upon Thames saw an increase in attainment of 3 percentage points compared to 2025, and Wokingham saw an increase of 2 percentage points compared to 2025. Richmond upon Thames and Wokingham have been the highest performing local authorities since 2023.

Attainment was lowest in South Tyneside (77%) and Middlesbrough (77%). South Tyneside saw a decrease in attainment of 1 percentage point compared to 2025, while Middlesbrough saw an increase in attainment of 2 percentage points compared to 2025.

Chart | Table

Some rows and columns are not shown in this table as the data does not exist in the underlying file.

▶ Export options

Percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in the phonics screening check in year 1 by local authority, 2026 (England, state funded schools)

		2025/26
North East	**County Durham**	78%

	Darlington	80%
	Gateshead	79%
	Hartlepool	80%
	Middlesbrough	77%
	Newcastle upon Tyne	79%
	North Tyneside	83%
	Northumberland	82%
	Redcar and Cleveland	81%
	South Tyneside	77%
	Stockton-on-Tees	80%
	Sunderland	80%
North West	**Blackburn with Darwen**	83%
	Blackpool	78%
	Bolton	81%
	Bury	81%
	Cheshire East	86%
	Cheshire West and Chester	81%

Cumberland	79%
Halton	78%
Knowsley	79%
Lancashire	79%
Liverpool	80%
Manchester	77%
Oldham	78%
Rochdale	78%
Salford	79%
Sefton	82%
St. Helens	82%
Stockport	84%
Tameside	77%
Trafford	86%
Warrington	86%
Westmorland and Furness	81%
Wigan	81%
Wirral	82%

	Wirral	82%
Yorkshire and The Humber	**Barnsley**	87%
	Bradford	79%
	Calderdale	82%
	Doncaster	83%
	East Riding of Yorkshire	82%
	Kingston upon Hull, City of	82%
	Kirklees	81%
	Leeds	81%
	North East Lincolnshire	81%
	North Lincolnshire	80%
	North Yorkshire	83%
	Rotherham	80%
	Sheffield	80%
	Wakefield	86%
	York	83%
East Midlands	**Derby**	77%
	Derbyshire	80%

	Leicester	80%
	Leicestershire	83%
	Lincolnshire	81%
	North Northamptonshire	81%
	Nottingham	78%
	Nottinghamshire	82%
	Rutland	85%
	West Northamptonshire	84%
West Midlands	**Birmingham**	82%
	Coventry	80%
	Dudley	81%
	Herefordshire, County of	81%
	Sandwell	79%
	Shropshire	80%
	Solihull	85%
	Staffordshire	83%
	Stoke-on-Trent	79%

	Telford and Wrekin	81%
	Walsall	80%
	Warwickshire	81%
	Wolverhampton	79%
	Worcestershire	82%
East of England	**Bedford**	81%
	Cambridgeshire	82%
	Central Bedfordshire	81%
	Essex	82%
	Hertfordshire	83%
	Luton	82%
	Norfolk	80%
	Peterborough	81%
	Southend-on-Sea	85%
	Suffolk	81%
	Thurrock	84%
London	**Barking and Dagenham**	83%

Barnet	84%
Bexley	83%
Brent	83%
Bromley	86%
Camden	85%
City of London	c
Croydon	84%
Ealing	83%
Enfield	83%
Greenwich	82%
Hackney	85%
Hammersmith and Fulham	86%
Haringey	84%
Harrow	86%
Havering	82%
Hillingdon	84%
Hounslow	83%

	Islington	83%
	Kensington and Chelsea	83%
	Kingston upon Thames	82%
	Lambeth	81%
	Lewisham	81%
	Merton	86%
	Newham	83%
	Redbridge	83%
	Richmond upon Thames	91%
	Southwark	80%
	Sutton	84%
	Tower Hamlets	81%
	Waltham Forest	85%
	Wandsworth	86%
	Westminster	84%
South East	**Bracknell Forest**	82%
	Brighton and Hove	81%

	Buckinghamshire	83%
	East Sussex	80%
	Hampshire	82%
	Isle of Wight	79%
	Kent	81%
	Medway	79%
	Milton Keynes	86%
	Oxfordshire	82%
	Portsmouth	79%
	Reading	81%
	Slough	84%
	Southampton	81%
	Surrey	85%
	West Berkshire	82%
	West Sussex	81%
	Windsor and Maidenhead	82%
	Wokingham	89%
South West	**Bath and North East Somerset**	84%

South West	Bath and North East Somerset	84%
	Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole	84%
	Bristol, City of	80%
	Cornwall	84%
	Devon	84%
	Dorset	84%
	Gloucestershire	83%
	Isles of Scilly	c
	North Somerset	85%
	Plymouth	84%
	Somerset	82%
	South Gloucestershire	85%
	Swindon	82%
	Torbay	85%
	Wiltshire	83%

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Data symbols

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Footnotes

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