

To: All local authorities, service children education providers and school's MI suppliers

Autumn School Census 2024 – Readiness Bulletin Number 1

Purpose

The purpose of this note is to provide school census contacts with important information in readiness for the 2024 autumn school census. This will be the first in a series of bulletins and therefore provides some basic information about the autumn school census including arrangements around COLLECT familiarisation.

Why is the school census important?

The school census is the department's primary source of administrative data about pupils attending schools in England. The data collected is vital in supporting a number of the department's strategic objectives and is widely used for the purpose of improving, and promoting, the education or well-being of children in England. For example, the data collected helps us to make sure we are allocating funds where they are needed and that no groups of children are missing out on the education they deserve.

The autumn school census will be used to fund the schools block of the dedicated schools grant and the pupil premium.

Data collection timetable and key dates

The census date for the 2024 autumn school census is **Thursday 3 October** with the LA Submission deadline for maintained schools being **Friday 4 October**.

Autumn census COLLECT familiarisation

A 'beta' release of the 2024 autumn school census live COLLECT blade will be available to you week commencing 9 September. This will remain available until 4pm on Friday 27 September at which point the blade will be removed and cleared out in advance of the start of the live collection on Thursday 3 October.

The department would strongly recommend that, if possible, all schools take the chance to load a file output from their management information system (MIS) into COLLECT during the familiarisation process. This will allow schools to check that all the required data is being output correctly from their MIS into the autumn census return and whether any validation errors or queries are generated against their data when loaded into COLLECT which need to be resolved before the collection goes live. This will be especially important for any schools completing the autumn school census for the first time. Please note that some checks require reference data which is not yet in place so may trigger incorrectly – this will be in place in time for 'go live' so genuine errors will remain at that point.

COLLECT familiarisation will take place on the same system as the live collection and, therefore, can be accessed by logging into COLLECT via [DfE Sign in](#) in the same manner as you would for the live collection. You must submit your data using COLLECT, our centralised data collection and management system.

New reports validation

Unfortunately, there has been an increase in the number of schools making errors in their census return which has in turn significantly impacted their funding allocations. These errors could have been identified if schools had checked the relevant reports that can be run from the reports section of COLLECT. Therefore, we have worked with funding colleagues and have introduced 2 new validation checks to avoid this happening in future:

Report query

This query will trigger if the relevant reports for your school phase or type have not been run, the query will trigger until all relevant reports have been run, however this will not prevent the return from being 'authorised'

DupUPNRprt Error

This error will trigger if the return has unresolved duplicates which impact funding allocations. The return will not be authorised until the error has been resolved. Please note if the return has been previously authorised and a duplicate UPN is introduced at any point during the 'live' collection the return status will revert to 'approved'

Please note as these reports run overnight, the validation will also be run overnight and therefore the errors will not be apparent until the following day.

School census guide

A guide for the 2024-25 academic year is now available [here](#). We would ask that you also look at the section which covers changes since the previous census [here](#).

Notepad entries

Where validation queries are raised in COLLECT, an explanation will be required for these queries in the return level notes field within COLLECT. Please note that the department will require sufficient detail in these explanations to allow the queries to be accepted and returns authorised.

A guide will shortly be available on the [school census website](#) providing examples of what would be regarded as an acceptable notepad entry for queries on the autumn census. Within this workbook there are separate tables for school level queries, pupil level queries and term on term queries. Please note that the examples within this document are only provided for illustrative purposes and should not be used as a simple 'copy and paste' into COLLECT – a relevant explanation for an individual school's circumstances should be provided.

When providing notepad entries please include the query number along with the explanation as this will help DfE to process/ok them in a timely manner.

Further support

A data collection forum is available for all data collection contacts to access. The purpose of the forum is to provide a facility to allow customers to exchange ideas and good practice

relating to specific data collections and related Data Operations systems. To gain access to the forum please complete a [service request form](#)

As always, if you have any queries about any of the points covered in this note, COLLECT or school census in general, please use the [service request form](#).

Please use the [feedback form](#) if you have any comments about the data collection content on the web site, the service offered by the data collection helpdesk, the COLLECT system or any other aspect of our data collection service.

Thank you for your support and cooperation

Kind regards

Data Operations Service Desk