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

Spring School Census 2025 – Readiness Bulletin

Purpose

The purpose of this note is to provide school census contacts with important information in readiness for the 2025 spring school census.

Data collection timetable and key dates

The census date for the 2025 spring school census is **Thursday 16 January**.

We strongly encourage schools and local authorities to submit their census returns to the department as soon as possible so that we can provide additional support where needed. Schools or local authorities should contact us straight away if they anticipate any issues in making a complete census return.

Known issues

Unfortunately, some of the validations for childcare have been specified incorrectly:

E2984 this error should have been specified for one specific childcare type, and should not have referred to the opening, closing time fields or the 8AM to 6PM fields. We have updated the latest XSLT being sent to software suppliers.

E2985 this error should have been specified against the 8AM to 6PM field only and should have excluded 'under 5' childcare. The validation has been updated to reflect the correct fields in the latest XSLT file sent to software suppliers

E2987 and E2988 are new validations to ensure the correct data has been provided for 'after' school childcare and 'holiday' childcare. The new validations have been implemented in the latest XSLT being sent to software suppliers.

E2167, we identified that if a school record SEN type 'DS' for a pupil more than once, E2167 will not trigger. We have updated the XSLT to account for this.

We acknowledge at this late stage that not all software suppliers will have sufficient time to implement these changes in their software prior to the spring census going live. However, any of these validations which trigger when the return is uploaded to COLLECT will be genuine.

Software supplier issue

We have been made aware of a problem affecting one software system. The issue is that the new two digit attendance reason codes have been truncated to one digit when the data is pulled into the census return. This impacts codes J1, Y1-Y7 and C1 and C2.

Reason codes J1 and Y1-Y7 will be pulled through as code J and code Y which are invalid codes and will trigger errors on the return. It is a slightly different issue for attendance reason codes C1 and C2 as these will be pulled through as code C, which is a valid attendance reason code. Therefore, these must be checked and amended where relevant.

We have been informed by the software supplier that they are resolving this issue. If you think you have this issue, please contact your software supplier directly for further information.

Ethnicity codes

You may be aware that, from the start of the current (2024/25) academic year, 4 additional ethnicity codes were added to the Common Basic Dataset (CBDS) for use within your management information systems and for return to the Department via statutory data collections (including the upcoming 2025 spring census).

The new codes were additions to the Asian / Asian British and Black / African / Caribbean / Black British categories and are shown in the table below:

DfE Common Basic Data Set (CBDS)

Ethnicity major	Ethnicity minor
Asian / Asian British	Indian
	Pakistani
	Bangladeshi
	Chinese
	Asian British – NEW ADDITIONAL CODE ADDED FOR 2024/25
	Asian Welsh – NEW ADDITIONAL CODE ADDED FOR 2024/25
	Any other Asian background
Black / African / Caribbean / Black British	African
	Caribbean
	Black British – **NEW ADDITIONAL CODE ADDED FOR 2024/25**
	Black Welsh – **NEW ADDITIONAL CODE ADDED FOR 2024/25**
	Any other Black / African / Caribbean background

The Department are currently reviewing these new codes, and how they interact with other ethnicity standards in use across government, and therefore we request that in the short term these new categories (those highlighted in the table above) are **not used** for any new or refreshed collections of ethnicity data (for example, when a new child joins a school). If you have already recorded ethnicity using these new codes, it is not necessary for you to re-collect or re-record this data and they will be accepted in our data collections as a valid value.

We will be in touch with further information and advice once the review is completed.

Report query and DupUPNRprt Error

This query and error which were introduced as part of the Autumn 2024 census will remain in place for the Spring 2025 census and moving forward.

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.

COLLECT user guides

To assist schools and local authorities with using the COLLECT system to make a successful school census return, we have published COLLECT user guides on the school census website. These can be found here

Funding update and COLLECT funding reports

This is a reminder that the data collected via the 2025 spring school census will be used in the calculation of the pupil premium (for pupil referral units, alternative provision academies and alternative provision free schools only), early years pupil premium, the early years block of the dedicated schools grant and universal infant free school meals and therefore it is vitally important that the census data for your schools are submitted promptly and accurately.

Funding reports showing pupil numbers for both the early years block of dedicated schools grant and pupil premium allocations (including the early years pupil premium) are available via the reports section in COLLECT. It is essential that these funding reports are checked and verified in conjunction with LA Finance Officers in advance of the spring school census database closing to amendments from schools and local authorities on 12 March. Amendments to the database will not be possible after this date and, consequently, this will be your only opportunity to contest your funding pupil numbers.

To assist with using and interpreting these funding reports, funding report user guides have been published on the School Census website

COLLECT duplicate reports

There are 2 different duplicate reports which are available for schools and local authorities to run in COLLECT and a separate guidance document has been published for each report. These guides are available on the [School Census website](#):

    (i)   duplicate report – Same UPN

    (ii)   duplicate report – Same Person Different UPN

Other COLLECT reports

We would like to remind you of the other reports available to local authorities to assist in ensuring that census returns include the correct data which will be used for funding allocations. These are:

- Pupil number report
- UIFSM report
- FSM summary report

These reports will allow schools to identify anomalies in their data which can impact funding calculations for dedicated schools grant, pupil premium allocations and universal infant free school meals.

Term-on-term validation

Details of term on term queries which are applied as part of the school census is available on the [School Census website](#)

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 is available on the [School Census website](#) providing examples of what would be regarded as an acceptable notepad entry for queries on the spring 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 us 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 data collections 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 operations service desk, 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

Department for Education