



Autumn 2026 School Census

Quick Guide – Primary & Nursery Phase

START HERE. This guide explains the census timetable, preparation, validation and submission process. It deliberately does not repeat detailed data-item rules; use the Supporting Guide for those.

QUICK GUIDE

Process, dates & submission

SUPPORTING GUIDE

Detailed rules & definitions

CHECKLIST

Final completion checks

CENSUS AT A GLANCE

Census Day: Thursday 1 October 2026

Maintained school submission deadline: Friday 2 October 2026

Maintained schools submit the XML file, Summary Report and Authorisation Report via AnyComms after Headteacher review and authorisation.

1. How the guidance pack works

Use the three documents in sequence:

- Quick Guide – understand the process, dates, submission route and support.
- Supporting Guide – check detailed definitions, eligibility rules, collection periods and 2026/27 data changes.
- Census Checklist – confirm that the required checks and submission steps have been completed.

2. Before Census Day – prepare

- Install or use the latest Autumn Census version supplied by your MIS provider and review the provider's census instructions.
- Update pupil and school records in your MIS before generating the return.
- Use the Supporting Guide to review funding-sensitive items and the new/changed 2026/27 requirements.
- Generate a test return early enough to investigate errors, queries and unexpected changes.
- Review the School Summary Report against your MIS and previous census figures.

DO NOT DUPLICATE EFFORT: The detailed rules for FSM, Pupil Premium, Kinship Care, Managed Moves, Breakfast Clubs, exclusions and Early Years funding are in the Supporting Guide.

3. What needs particular attention in 2026/27?

Use this as a signpost only. Full definitions and recording rules are in the Supporting Guide.

- Free School Meals – new verification date and FSM category; UK country is now mandatory.
- Kinship Care – new Autumn-only indicator for on-roll pupils.
- Managed Moves – new managed move information.
- Government-funded Free Breakfast Clubs – participating schools start daily recording in Autumn 2026; first census return is Spring 2027.

- Suspensions and exclusions – new/revised information and code sets, with some Autumn 2026 activity feeding later returns.

4. Validate the return

- Resolve all errors before submission.
- Investigate queries rather than automatically accepting them; add an explanation where the data is correct.
- Review the School Summary Report for unexpected changes in pupil numbers, FSM, SEN, attendance, exclusions and Early Years information.
- Compare key figures with previous returns and investigate material differences.
- Ask the Headteacher to review the final return and supporting reports before authorisation.

5. Submit the return

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MAINTAINED SCHOOLS: Upload the census XML file, Summary Report and Authorisation Report via AnyComms. Follow the local submission instructions for the signed Headteacher authorisation.

Academies should follow their usual DfE submission arrangements.

6. After submission

- Respond promptly to Hackney Education validation or data-quality queries.
- Make and resubmit amendments where required.
- Review the post-submission quality-assurance information provided through AnyComms.

7. Support and reference links

[DfE – Complete the school census](#)

[DfE – School census data items](#)

[DfE – Unique pupil numbers](#)

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