



Autumn 2026 School Census

Supporting Guide – Primary & Nursery Phase

REFERENCE GUIDE. This document provides the detailed rules, definitions, collection periods and funding-sensitive information behind key census data items. Use the Quick Guide for the census process and submission route, and the Checklist for final completion checks.

QUICK GUIDE \n Process, dates & submission

SUPPORTING GUIDE \n Detailed rules & definitions

CHECKLIST \n Final completion checks

1. New and changed requirements for 2026/27

1.1 Free School Meals (FSM)

From the start of the 2026/27 academic year, all pupils in households receiving Universal Credit are eligible to receive a free school meal where a claim has been made and eligibility has been confirmed by the school or Local Authority. FSM information is required for on-roll pupils.

FSM eligibility is now split into two categories:

The key distinction is eligibility and funding: Targeted FSM applies to pupils who meet the targeted eligibility criteria and have made a claim. It is also the FSM category linked to Pupil Premium eligibility. Expanded FSM applies to pupils who become eligible under the new Universal Credit expansion from 2026/27. Expanded FSM gives entitlement to a free school meal, but it does not, by itself, make a pupil eligible for Pupil Premium.

- Targeted FSM (TFSM) – pupils who meet the targeted FSM criteria. FSM periods issued in Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland should also be recorded as Targeted FSM.
- Expanded FSM (EFSM) – pupils who become eligible under the expanded Universal Credit criteria.

How to record a change of category: If a pupil continues to meet the Targeted FSM criteria, keep the pupil recorded as Targeted FSM and retain the original start date. If a pupil moves from Targeted FSM to Expanded FSM, close the Targeted FSM period and create a separate Expanded FSM period. Do not overwrite the existing Targeted FSM record. The earliest start date for an Expanded FSM period is 1 August 2026.

For every FSM period, schools must record the eligibility start date, eligibility verification date, end date where applicable, UK country and FSM category. The UK country and FSM category are compulsory fields from 2026/27.

FSM eligibility verification

The verification date records when the pupil's FSM eligibility was last checked. For the Autumn 2026 Census, all pupils with a live FSM eligibility period must have been rechecked between 1 June and 1 October 2026 inclusive. Schools should retain evidence of the check for audit purposes.

FUNDING CRITICAL: Without a valid verification date, the pupil will not be counted as FSM eligible and the school will not receive the associated FSM funding. For a new claim, the verification date may be the same as the FSM start date.

Recording changes in eligibility

Where an existing pupil remains eligible under Targeted FSM, keep the original FSM start date and update the verification information rather than creating a new period. Where a pupil moves from Targeted to Expanded FSM, close the existing Targeted period and create a new Expanded period. The earliest permitted Expanded FSM start date is 1 August 2026. Both periods should be

returned where they fall within the collection period so that previous Targeted FSM eligibility continues to be captured for FSM6 purposes.

Where a pupil is no longer eligible under either category, record an end date against the Targeted FSM period. The eligibility verification date should only be completed for live FSM periods.

AUTUMN 2026 COLLECTION PERIOD: Return FSM eligibility periods that started on or before 1 October 2026 where the end date is either not present or falls between 22 May and 1 October 2026 inclusive. Multiple FSM periods may be returned where applicable.

Additional information: [DfE – Free school meals guidance for schools and local authorities](#)

1.2 Children in Kinship Care

The Children in Kinship Care indicator is collected for all on-roll pupils as at census day and is required in the Autumn Census only. The field defaults to ND, so schools only need to change it where a child has been identified as living in kinship care.

- ND – Not declared (default)
- KF – Kinship identified: formal arrangement
- KI – Kinship identified: informal arrangement
- KU – Kinship identified: arrangement unknown

ACTION: Use the pupil's circumstances on Census Day. If kinship care is known but the type of arrangement is not known, use KU rather than assuming the arrangement is formal or informal.

1.3 Managed Moves

Managed moves are permanent transfers arranged to reduce a pupil's risk of exclusion or following a review of an off-site direction. For each managed move within the collection period, record the start date, destination school URN and reason for the move.

- To reduce the risk of exclusion for a pupil who has not yet been excluded.
- Following a period of exclusion and a decision to transfer.
- Following review of an off-site direction placement.

1.4 Government-funded Free Breakfast Clubs

START RECORDING AUTUMN 2026 – FIRST RETURN SPRING 2027: Participating schools must keep a daily electronic attendance register for eligible pupils. Do not include parent-paid breakfast clubs or clubs funded through other organisations.

This applies to eligible pupils with enrolment status C, M, F or O who are aged 4–10 as at 31 August and are in Reception to Year 6, or aged 4–10 with NCYearActual = X.

- Spring 2027 collection: 1 August to 31 December 2026.
- Summer 2027 collection: 1 January to 28 March 2027.
- N00855 records possible sessions; N00856 records sessions attended. FBC0 is the default attendance code, FBC1 records attendance, FBC2–FBC4 full closures and FBC5–FBC7 partial closures.

1.5 Suspensions and Permanent Exclusions

Schools should review suspension and permanent exclusion records carefully. The module applies to both on-roll and off-roll pupils in the relevant school types; nursery schools are excluded. Suspensions and permanent exclusions are collected for the previous two terms.

AUTUMN 2026 COLLECTION PERIOD: Return all suspensions and permanent exclusions with start dates between 1 January and 31 July 2026.

For the Autumn Census, a permanent exclusion should only be returned once it has been upheld by the governing body or Independent Review Panel (IRP), following the appeal window where applicable. From the Spring Census onwards, all exclusions are returned regardless of status. Because the collection covers the previous two terms, some permanent exclusions may appear in two consecutive censuses while a review is completed; this does not result in double counting in national statistics.

For each suspension or permanent exclusion, record the appropriate category, start date, reason(s) and SEN provision at the time of exclusion. Up to three reasons may be recorded. For suspensions, record the actual number of sessions suspended, counting only sessions the pupil would normally have attended.

Changes from Autumn 2026 – collected from Spring 2027

The exclusion reason code set is expanded from the Autumn 2026 term and will first be collected in the Spring 2027 Census. Schools should also capture review information from Autumn 2026, including the review category, result, review date, reinstatement date and, for an IRP, whether an SEN expert was requested.

- N00836 / CS132 – Reason for Cancellation.
- N00844 – Reinstatement Date following a Cancelled Exclusion.
- N00857 / CS137 – Exclusion Review Category.
- CS010 linked to N00685, N00686 and N00687 has been updated.
- CS105 Exclusion Review Reason has been updated.

Transferred from APEX to the School Census: N00650 Review Date / Date of Independent Review Panel; N00651 Exclusion Review Result; N00652 Exclusion Reinstatement Date; and N00653 SEN Expert Indicator.

ACTION: Ensure school processes capture the additional information when exclusions, cancellations and reviews take place during Autumn 2026 so it is available for the Spring 2027 return.

Additional information: [DfE – School suspensions and permanent exclusions](#)

2. Funding-sensitive data reminders

2.1 Pupil numbers

Under the DfE School Funding Arrangements, the number of pupils on roll (excluding Nursery pupils) in the Autumn 2026 Census is used to calculate school budgets. Pupils need to be on the admission register and in attendance before or on 1 October 2026 in accordance with Regulation 5 of the Education Regulations 2006.

[Education Regulations 2006 – Regulation 5](#)

Hackney Education finance allocates Nursery funding termly according to the number of pupils on roll on enumeration day in October, January and May. Schools therefore need to ensure Nursery pupils are on roll by 1 October 2026 for Autumn-term funding. Reception-aged pupils should also be on roll by this date unless parents have formally requested deferred entry.

2.2 Universal Infant Free School Meals

This data informs the allocation of universal infant meal funding. Include pupils in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2, excluding those absent or taking a packed lunch. A pupil receiving a universal free school meal should only be recorded as FSM eligible where they meet the FSM eligibility criteria and a claim has been made.

2.3 Top-Up Funding

The Top-Up Funding indicator is used within high-needs funding arrangements, research and benchmarking. It is therefore important that schools complete the indicator accurately for applicable pupils.

2.4 Early Years funded hours and eligibility codes

Funded early years entitlement hours are collected for eligible pupils in nursery provision. Check funded hours and eligibility codes in the Hackney Provider Portal and make sure the pupil is recorded consistently in both the portal and the school MIS.

- Funded Hours – eligible 2-, 3- and 4-year-olds as applicable.
- Extended Funded Hours – additional hours for eligible 3- and 4-year-olds with a valid working-parent eligibility code.
- Expanded Funded Hours – eligible children from 9 months to 2 years with working parents and a valid eligibility code.

Portal support: synergysupport@hackney.gov.uk

2.5 Pupil Premium

Pupil Premium provides additional funding for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and is linked to Targeted FSM eligibility recorded through the School Census. Pupils may be eligible where they are aged 4 or above and in Reception to Year 11, or aged 4 to 15 where National Curriculum year groups do not apply, and they meet the Targeted FSM criteria with a claim made.

IMPORTANT: Expanded FSM does not extend Pupil Premium eligibility. Pupils receiving Expanded FSM should not be treated as Pupil Premium eligible solely because they receive a free school meal.

- Do not include pupils receiving a free school lunch solely through UIFSM.
- Do not include pupils eligible only through Expanded FSM.
- Do not include pupils attending nursery schools or nursery classes under this Pupil Premium route.

2.6 Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP)

The Early Years Pupil Premium is additional funding for early years settings to improve the education they provide for disadvantaged 9-month-olds, 2-year-olds, 3-year-olds and 4-year-olds in nursery classes. For every pupil receiving EYPP, the census also needs the basis on which the child is receiving the funding.

Schools should record the appropriate EYPP basis for funding:

- RE – economic reasons: the child qualifies through the benefits-related FSM criteria.
- RO – other reasons: the child qualifies because they are in care, or have left care through adoption, a Special Guardianship Order or a Child Arrangements Order.
- RB – both reasons: the child qualifies through both economic and other reasons.
- RU – unknown basis: the school knows the child receives EYPP funding from the Local Authority but does not know the underlying reason.

WATCH OUT: Pupils aged 4 at the start of the academic year who are in Reception or above are eligible for the school-age Pupil Premium and are not eligible for EYPP.

Additional information: [DfE – School Census data items 2026 to 2027 \(Early Years Pupil Premium\)](#)

2.7 Language / EAL [used for funding]

EAL funding is triggered when a child is recorded as having a first language other than English in the October Census. For the first three years after an EAL child is allocated their UPN, the child is eligible for funding and the funding follows the child.

Timing is important. If a child enters the school after the October Census date, their funding will be allocated from the April following the next October Census; the funding will still continue for three years. Funding is available for pupils in Years 1 to 11. Where a child is recorded as EAL in Reception, funding starts in April of Year 1 and continues for three years.

ACTION: Check that the first-language information held in the MIS accurately reflects the information provided by the family. The October Census record determines when EAL funding is triggered.

3. Other important data-quality checks

UPNs

Resolve temporary UPNs wherever possible and ensure the pupil's earliest permanent UPN is held in the MIS. A new permanent UPN should only be generated where the school is certain the pupil has not previously attended an English state-funded school.

Enrolment status

Check Current, Dual Main and Dual Subsidiary registration carefully. Only one school can be recorded as the main school for a dual-registered pupil.

Part-time pupils

Use the part-time indicator appropriately. Compulsory-school-age pupils should not normally be recorded with a part-time indicator.

SEN Unit / Resourced Provision

Use these indicators only where the provision is formally recognised by the Local Authority.

Attendance

Check attendance data and resolve missing marks. The Autumn 2026 attendance collection period is 6 April to 31 July 2026.

Alternative Provision

For the Autumn 2026 Census, include alternative provision placements that are open on Census Day and placements that ended between 21 May 2026 and 30 September 2026 inclusive. Check that the placement details held in the MIS are complete and accurate for all applicable pupils.

4. Further support

The links within the relevant sections above are intended for additional DfE information on FSM, suspensions and permanent exclusions, and EYPP. For the census process, submission route and maintained-school deadline, use the Quick Guide.

Hackney census support: Noelia.Rufete-Gil@hackney.gov.uk