



School and Pupil Census – Spring 2024 Supporting Guidance for LA Maintained Schools

This document is intended to be read in conjunction with the separate Quick Guide and Census Preparation Checklist. If you cannot find the answer to your question within these documents, further guidance produced by the DfE can be found here: [DfE Census Guidance for Schools](#)

- If you still require help, please contact i&a@norfolk.gov.uk and a member of the team will get back to you as soon as possible.
- Any issues relating to your MIS software, please contact your provider directly as the LA cannot advise regarding this. Software providers normally issue guidance to help in the preparation of your census file – we strongly recommend you read this.

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A. Preparing Your Data

(1) Important dates

Familiarisation Period for test files	Closes at 4pm Friday 12 th January 2024
Spring School Census Day	Thursday 18 th January 2024
LA Maintained Submission Deadline	Wednesday 14 th February 2024

LA Maintained Schools must upload and submit to COLLECT no later than Wednesday 14th February 2024. Any LA Maintained school that cannot meet this deadline must email the Intelligence & Analytics Team (I&A) at i&a@norfolk.gov.uk. While this is the final deadline, the sooner it can be submitted after the Census Day the better as we need to get returns approved by the 14th February.

Academies, please note that the Local Authority (LA) is not able to see or assist with your School Census. Academies with any questions relating to completing the school census should contact the DfE helpdesk via email edd.helpdesk@education.gsi.gov.uk

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(2) The importance of data quality

Every school in England has a statutory duty to complete the census each term. It is essential that schools check their MIS data and ensure that there are no errors in their school census file. The return should not be authorised by the school without the approval of the Headteacher. Census data is used in many ways, including calculating a schools funding. It is essential that schools complete the census accurately and in a timely manner to ensure they are funded correctly. Failure to do so could result in a school missing out on funding to which it is entitled or receiving more funding than it is due and having to repay any overpayment.

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(3) Read the guidance

The DfE produce a comprehensive web-based manual for the school census. These web pages include general guidance, recommended notepad entries and technical specifications which are all located on their help pages here: [School Census: Guide to submitting data](#)

The best way to search the web-based manual is to click on 'Data Items':

[Census dates](#)

Find out when the school census will open for each term and what to do in unusual circumstances.

[Changes for 2022 to 2023](#)

Any changes to the information we ask for or how it should be provided since the 2021 to 2022 academic year.

[Which schools and pupils to include](#)

Find out which schools and pupils are in scope for the school census.

[Data items 2022 to 2023](#)

Guidance about every piece of information you need to send us in autumn 2022, spring and summer 2023.

[Generate and submit your return](#)

Information on accessing and using our data collection systems to send us your school census data.

[Check your data](#)

Information on validating your data, resolving errors and checking any funding reports that use your school census return.

By clicking on this link, it will take you to another page, which lists all the data items included on the census (please note this is not listed in alphabetical order). Scroll down the list until you find what you are looking for, then click again on the heading. This will then show you more information about that item. For example:

Pupil's former UPN

Show 

Gender

Show 

Ethnicity

Hide 

You only need to send us this data in the **spring census**.

We require data on ethnicity for all pupils. The school must not ascribe any ethnicity to the pupil. This information must come from the parent / guardian or pupil.

Where the ethnicity has not yet been collected, this is recorded as 'NOBT' (information not yet obtained). Where a parent / guardian or pupil declines to provide ethnicity data, code 'REFU' (refused) is recorded and returned.

[Find an ethnicity code.](#)

Alternatively, you can search the whole collection of pages by using the search bar at the top of the page.

Complete the school census

From: [Department for Education](#)

Published 30 July 2019

Updated: 23 September 2022, [see all updates](#)



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Data items 2022 to 2023

Guidance about every piece of information you need to send us in autumn 2022, spring and summer 2023.

You can also download a spreadsheet of [all the information we ask for](#).

All data items are present within management information systems (MIS) however, may be implemented and named in different ways. Therefore, we'd recommend you also consult your MIS guidance for further information.

Hide all sections

School identifiers

Hide

This will then direct you to the correct section of the guidance.

You can also request specific help from the DfE Census helpdesk by completing a Service Request Form – link here: [Data collections service request form](#).

Most software providers will have their own guidance documents to assist you in running the school census module and producing the XML file. Additional guidance can be found on the [ICT Support Pages](#). For any issues relating to your MIS System, please contact your provider directly as the LA Census Team cannot advise regarding this.

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(4) DfE Sign-in (formerly Secure Access and Get Information About Schools (GIAS))

Secure access has been replaced by DfE Sign-in. DfE Sign-in provides local authorities and schools with a single, secure point of entry to departmental IT systems (including COLLECT, school 2 school (s2s), GIAP and GIAS).

New Schools - new local authority-maintained schools will need to contact the DfE Sign-in helpdesk as the department will need to set up a new approver account. The 'approver' will be responsible for adding, editing, or removing other user accounts for their organisation.

The approver will also be responsible for controlling their access to s2s, COLLECT and other applications (where applicable), even if the approver does not have access to these applications themselves. DfE Sign-in approvers can be assigned by providing the details for the proposed approver via the [DfE Sign-in service request form](#).

Once the account has been set up and the approver has been assigned, it is important

that they add any other users who will require access to any of the relevant systems. For example, if the head teacher is the 'approver' but does not complete the school census it is important that they create a new DfE Sign-in user account and link the user to the COLLECT school census groups, otherwise they will not be able to access COLLECT.

Further guidance regarding the 'approver' can be found within the [DfE Sign-in Help](#)

GIAS – We strongly recommend keeping your GIAS record up to date as this helps the department to help schools in key areas including funding, data collection and departmental communications. Also, if there are any differences between your GIAS record and your census return, your census return may show an error which must be resolved.

After logging in, you may see a reminder advising to access GIAS and check the details are up to date. After making any amendments simply click 'Apply' then 'Confirm'; if the record is already accurate, they simply click 'My establishment record is up to date'.

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(5) Spring Census COLLECT familiarisation

The DfE open the COLLECT blade and have a 'beta' release available in the week before the live collection. This is to enable schools to do a test run of their census file, to see what errors and queries there are ahead of the live collection and take the necessary steps to resolve them.

We strongly recommend all schools submit a file during this familiarisation period. This is especially important for any schools completing the census for the first time. Please note that during the familiarisation period, COLLECT reports may still be undergoing development., so may not be a true reflection of your data. **The familiarisation blade for the Spring Census 2024 will be removed from COLLECT at 4pm on Friday 12th January 2024.**

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(6) Make good use of School Summary and COLLECT Reports

The Census return software generates a report summarising the data in the School Census return automatically. This fulfills several purposes:

- It allows school staff preparing the return to check its accuracy and completeness before passing it to the Headteacher
- It allows the Headteacher authorising the return to check its accuracy and completeness before submitting the return to the DfE. This is the school's only opportunity to check these figures (including persistent absenteeism) before it is published in the end of year Performance Tables

The summary should be inspected carefully, and particular attention paid to those sections that might reveal evidence that some individual pupil data was not entered on to the system before generating the return (or may not have migrated during transfer to a new MIS) e.g., free school meals entitlement or number of pupils with SEN.

The DfE also recommends that the school summary be compared to the one for the previous

year to highlight any anomalous data between the years. There are also a number of reports available in COLLECT once your file has been uploaded and submitted. You should check these carefully to ensure the accuracy of your return.

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B. Main changes for school census 2023/2024

(7) Changes for Spring 2024 only

There are no changes to any data items specific to the Spring 2024 census.

(8) New or updated data items in School Census 2023/24

New data items

Sex and Gender Identity

The 'Gender Current' data item has been replaced by the new 'Sex' data item. This change is being rolled out across all DfE collections over the next year or so. The 'Gender ID' data item has been created so schools, children's homes, local authorities, and other institutions can record gender identity for local use should they wish to. The DfE will not collect this data item.

(9) Amendments to existing data items:

There are no amendments to existing data items that we have been notified of by the DfE.

(10) Deleted Data Items

Deleted data items

Sex and Gender Identity

The 'Gender Current' data item has been replaced by the new 'sex' data item.

More information regarding these changes can be found in the DfE web-based manual:

[School Census: changes from previous school census](#)

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c. Common errors and issues – things to look out for

Many schools have made errors in previous census submissions resulting in loss of funding. To avoid this, please be aware of the following:

(11) Suspensions and Permanent Exclusions

Suspensions and Permanent Exclusions records are to be kept accurately and up to date within your MISystem. Also ensure you have followed the correct procedures to report these to the Local Authority Attendance and Exclusions Team. When the DfE performed quality checks on the data provided by Norfolk schools, many exclusions were found to be missing from census returns and several had not been reported to the Local Authority.

For the Spring 2024 census collection, the DfE require all suspensions and permanent

exclusions with **start dates** between **10 April 2023** and **31 December 2023**.

The DfE only expect schools to provide data about a permanent exclusion once it has been upheld by the governing body or Independent Review Panel (IRP). Collecting data for the previous two terms will make sure that any exclusions still going through the review process at time of the census are not missed and would be picked up in the following term, where the review result was later determined as upheld. This means some exclusions may be returned on two consecutive censuses. This will not result in double counting of exclusions in national statistics, as only the latest information returned for each term will be used. The DfE need this data for both on and off roll pupils.

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(12) Youth Support Services Agreement (legal requirement for issuing Privacy Notices)

This field should be completed for all pupils who are aged 12 and above as at 31/08/2023. What this refers to is whether a Privacy Notice (formerly known as a Fair Processing Notice) has been issued, as the Privacy Notice asks for Youth Support Services Agreement. If you have sent a Privacy Notice and received no response you should enter 'SNR (Sought No Reply)'.

If the parent has responded and refused permission, you should enter 'No'. If the parent has responded and given permission record 'Yes'. If you have yet to send out Privacy Notices you should record 'UNS (Unsought)'. In a number of cases, we have found that 'Unsought' is being returned in the census files. This would indicate that a Privacy Notice has not been issued to parents advising them of their (or their child's) rights.

This is a legal requirement so please ensure these are issued and the field is correctly completed – if not, you will be in breach of GDPR.

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(13) Enrolment status

This is particularly important for those students who are dual registered. Most pupils will be recorded on the census as 'C Current – Sole Responsibility'. Dual Registered pupils should be recorded as 'M Dual Registered – main school' or 'S Dual Registered – subsidiary school'. Only one school can be recorded as main school, and this is generally the one the pupil attended first.

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(14) Part time pupils and absence reporting

Use of the part time indicator has caused some confusion. Compulsory school aged pupils should never be on a part-time indicator.

On rare occasions a medical condition or re-integration package may prevent a child from attending full time, but by agreeing to a part-time timetable the school is authorising the pupil absences. Therefore, pupils of statutory school age must always be recorded in the Census as full-time.

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(15) Attendance and absence reporting

For pupils that are present at a supervised educational activity that is off site and approved by the school, it is important the alternative provider and the school have an agreement in place to share attendance information. The onus is on the school to contact the alternative provider and establish these arrangements. The school must not assume that a pupil is present at the 'supervised educational activity' just because he/she is expected to be there.

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(16) UPNs

UPNs are used to facilitate the tracking of pupils' movement and progress within the maintained school system in England. Therefore, when a child joins a school, all efforts should be made to trace their **permanent** UPN. This should be in the CTF (Common Transfer Format) file you receive from the previous school. If you have not had the CTF and have been unable to obtain the UPN from the previous school, please email the Intelligence & Analytics Team at i&a@norfolk.gov.uk and we will trace one for you if possible. If a temporary UPN has been allocated in the meantime, remember to change this as soon as possible and certainly before submitting your census return.

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(17) Free School Meal eligibility

To minimise the impact of the rollout of universal credit and the introduction of a net-earned income threshold to determine eligibility for free school meals, transitional arrangements have been put in place to ensure that no pupil loses a meal as a result of these changes. Therefore, **you should not record any FSM end dates unless advised to do so by the local authority or the Department for Education.**

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(18) Nursery age children attending PVI Settings

Nursery children solely attending an early years PVI setting (even if it is on the school site) should **not** be recorded on the maintained school roll. If you wish to record them in your management information system, their enrolment status should be 'Guest'. These children would be counted in Early Years data collections and should **not** be included in the School Census. Only pupils attending local authority nursery classes should be included as on roll in the School Census return to avoid double funding.

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(19) Early Years Funded Hours (for 2, 3 and 4-year olds)

The school should record **the total number of hours spent in education provision at the school which are funded by the LA under the free entitlement to education for under 5's based on the definitions contained within.** This will be required for all Reception age pupils and younger pupils in local authority nursery classes.

Children solely attending an early years PVI setting (even if it is on the school site) should not be recorded as on roll and should not therefore be included in the School Census.

Some three and four-year-olds are also eligible for the extended childcare and attract an additional 15 hours a week.

Please note that Norfolk LA funds Reception year pupils the maximum 15 hours per week except where the additional 15 hours have been claimed. For information on how the extra 15 hours is claimed and eligibility for this please see

Schools early years website: [Early Years Additional Funded hours](#)

www.gov.uk website: [free childcare and education for 2 to 4-year-olds](#)

Any additional hours which are funded by other means e.g., the parent, should NOT be included against Funded Hours. This situation is only likely to affect some nursery age pupils. Hours spent in 'childcare' and breaks where pupils are not receiving education should not be included. Extended school services (e.g., breakfast and after school clubs) should also be excluded.

The data collected in the Spring Census will be used to determine the Early Years block of the Dedicated Schools Grant allocation. If schools fail to enter funded hours for any applicable Nursery or Reception age pupils, they will not receive the funding.

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(20) Early Years Hours at Setting (for 2, 3 and 4-year old's)

Hours at setting are collected for the same pupils and schools for whom funded hours are collected – see above. This will be collected in each term. It is important to align the counting of hours, already used in the private, voluntary, and independent nursery provision sector, in order that the Dedicated Schools Grant is properly allocated.

This should be **the total number of hours spent in education provision at the school irrespective of who funded the hours**. A maximum of 30 hours can be input for each child - for dually registered pupils only record the actual hours attending each school. This will be required for all Reception age pupils and younger pupils in local authority nursery classes. Children solely attending an early years PVI setting (even if it is on the school site) should **not** be recorded as on roll and should **not** therefore be included in the School Census.

Hours spent in 'childcare' and breaks where pupils are not receiving education should not be included. Extended schools services (e.g., breakfast and after school clubs) should also be excluded.

In summary – unless additional hours are purchased by other means the Funded Hours will be the same as the Hours at Setting. Children not yet legally on roll at the LA maintained school and who solely attend an early years PVI setting (even if it is based on the school site) should not be included in your census. If a child attends both a LA maintained nursery class and a PVI setting the hours should be split accordingly.

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(21) School lunches taken

This data item is collected from all school types with infant pupils on roll in each census. Data collected via this data item is used to inform the allocation of funding following the introduction of universal infant meal funding, so it is essential that this is correctly recorded.

This data item indicates whether a pupil has taken a 'school lunch' on census day; where 'school lunch' is defined as food made available by the school for consumption by the pupil as his/her midday meal on a school day. As this data item relates to lunches on census day it is not anticipated that schools will be in a position to complete this data item until the lunch take up of infant pupils on census day is known.

This data item will be collected from all school types with an appropriate age range for the following pupils only regardless of whether they are FSM eligible or not:

- (22) all pupils on roll on census day in reception (i.e., NCYearActual = 'R')
- (23) all pupils on roll on census day in year 1 (i.e., NCYearActual = '1')
- (24) all pupils on roll on census day in year 2 (i.e., NCYearActual = '2')
- (25) all pupils on roll on census day aged 4 to 6 not following the national curriculum in reception (NCYearActual = 'X' AND pupil born between 1st September 2016 and 31st August 2019 inclusive).

Please note that where a pupil is in receipt of a school lunch (i.e., school lunch taken is TRUE) this does not mean that the pupil should also be recorded as eligible for free school meals. Pupils in receipt of a free lunch as part of the infant pupil universal lunch entitlement should only be recorded as FSM eligible where the pupil meets the FSM eligibility criteria and has made a claim.

Covid related absences are no longer classed as unusual circumstances. Therefore if, for example, an infant pupil is absent on census day due to covid they should not be recorded as having taken a school lunch.

Circumstances such as severe weather conditions or religious observances are classed as unusual and may affect census day in that the numbers of pupils or staff who are not present on that day are abnormally high.

In these circumstances, where school lunches taken are affected, a day and time when the situation is regarded as normal is to be substituted. You could use the next normal day, an earlier day in census week or the previous Thursday where that reflects the normal situation. Where other days or times are used, schools must record these for audit purposes.

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(22) Top-up funding indicator

This indicator is a true/false flag to indicate those pupils on roll for whom the school receives top-up funding on census day. This data item is required for pupils of all ages and in all schools. In Norfolk, schools can apply to their Cluster for top-up funding for a pupil or student identified as requiring additional support costing more than a specified threshold. In many cases the period for which top-up funding is paid may not be defined but the top-up funding will - as with SEN provision - be subject to periodic review.

The specified cost threshold for additional SEN support varies according to the type of school. For primary and secondary mainstream schools and academies, the threshold from April 2014

is £6,000 per pupil per annum in all cases, except where an exemption has been authorised under the relevant regulations. SEN top-up funding can be paid in respect of individual pupils whose additional support costs more than this and is for the excess costs over the threshold.

For primary and secondary mainstream schools and academies, the top-up funding indicator in the census should therefore only be set for individual pupils whose total costs exceed £10,000 (including the basic budget element of £4,000 plus £6,000 SEN) and for whom your school has received element 3 high-needs top-up funding from the Cluster to help with the excess costs for that child. If an individual child's total costs do not exceed £10,000 then the top-up funding indicator should not be set for that child. The indicator should not, for example, be set for children with low-level or no assessed SEN receiving minimal additional support (such as attendance at group classes) that have been paid for from Cluster funding.

However, where there is a designated special unit or resourced provision attached to a mainstream school or academy, the school or academy receives £10,000 per place which is intended to cover not only a proportion of the pupil's additional support costs, but also their core education as well. For any such unit or resourced provision at a school or academy, and for all special schools, special academies and special free schools, the funding they receive is £10,000 per place, and the top-up funding will be for costs in excess of this amount. For PRUs, AP academies and AP free schools, which are in receipt of funding of £8,000 per AP place, the top-up funding will be for costs over this threshold.

In schools it is expected that **most** pupils for whom top-up funding is paid will also have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health, and care plan (EHCP). However, this does not mean that all statemented and EHCP pupils will receive top-up funding, or indeed that it is limited to those with statements or EHCPs. It is possible to have children with no statement or EHCP who have significant needs and whose costs exceed the threshold. Note however that if you record a non-statemented or EHCP child as receiving top-up funding you will need to add an explanatory note to your census return in COLLECT.

Note that all pupils in PRUs and special schools receive some funding from the high needs budget so *all* pupils in these school types should have this indicator set. Please refer to the [DfE guidance](#) for further information. Your SENCO should already be aware of any specific pupils receiving top-up funding. However, if you need further help, please direct any queries about school budget allocations to the Schools Finance team.

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(23) Previously Looked-After Children

This data item will identify those children on roll on census day who were looked after immediately before adoption, being placed on a special guardianship order (SGO) or Child Arrangement Orders. Schools are now asked to include in this data return all children adopted from care and not just those who were adopted from care after 30th December 2005. This data item will therefore identify all eligible children on census day who will attract Pupil Premium Plus funding of £2,530 this financial year. The Norfolk Virtual Schools website ([The pupil premium and other funding - Schools \(norfolk.gov.uk\)](#)) is a very useful resource for this area and we recommend visiting this for further information.

It will be up to those who have parental responsibility (adoptive parents, special guardians and carers of former looked after children on Child Arrangement Orders) to decide if they wish to declare their children's status to schools. Parents should be asked to provide supporting evidence, for example, a photocopy of the adoption order. Parents may conceal

sensitive information (e.g., the name of the birth parents) if they wish.

Schools are reminded that this is a particularly sensitive data item, and of the need for confidentiality. Schools should ensure that, as for other pupil level data items, they comply with their responsibilities with respect to GDPR when processing this data.

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(24) Unique Learner Number

ULNs will be required for pupils on roll on census day aged 14 and over. ULNs will be collected in each census. Previously the return of ULNs has been voluntary.

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(25) Pupil Reconciliation Module (not collected for nursery schools, specials or PRU)

This module is collected in the spring census only, but some schools seem to struggle with it. The purpose of this reconciliation is to check that the number of registered pupils for whom the return contains individual pupil data is consistent with the number of pupils reported in classes as taught - after allowing for the fact that some registered pupils may not have been in class at the selected time.

To enable the pupil reconciliation to be carried out the software will ask you to enter the number of pupils in each of the following groups:

- a. pupils engaged in private study at the selected time
- b. pupils attending another school at the selected time
- c. pupils attending FE college [not collected for: primary or middle-deemed primary]
- d. pupils attending work experience [not collected for: primary or middle-deemed primary]

The software will then execute the reconciliation and generate an error message if pupil numbers do not agree. The reconciliation consists of the following calculation:

- i. number of pupils from this school scheduled to be in the class at the selected time summed over all classes as taught
- ii. plus, pupils engaged in private study at the selected time
- iii. plus, pupils from this school who were part time pupils not scheduled to be in attendance at the school at the selected time
- iv. plus, pupils attending another school at the selected time **must equal** number of pupils on roll on the spring census day for whom individual pupil data have been provided (not including any guest pupils).

The two must be reconciled before your file can be submitted.

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(26) Class Activity (collected for Primary and all-through schools only)

This again is a problem for some schools and will cause validation errors which the school must resolve before submission. The data item highlights a single activity that takes place in a classroom, e.g., private studies, group project work.

Primary and all-through schools with infant classes are to ensure that the selected period is one when the class (key stage and/or reception) is engaged in **academic activity** rather than

the excepted activities of PE/games, music, singing, drama and watching television or listening to the radio.

This change of selected period should be enacted for all classes in the school and not just for the infant classes.

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(27) Infant Class Sizes

[The School Standards and Framework Act 1998 \(Infant Class Sizes\) \(Modification\) Regulations 1998](#) limits the size of an infant class during an ordinary teaching session to 30 pupils per school teacher. Infant classes are those in which the majority of children turn 5, 6 or 7 during the course of the school year i.e., reception and key stage 1 classes.

Any primary or all-through school that appears to have infant classes (reception and/or KS1) in breach of the legal class size limit of 30 pupils per a single school teacher (as a result of teachers being on PPA time, those reporting classes with 'excepted activities' or any other circumstances) will be contacted by the department for further details. An explanation or the 'exception reason' will be sought. Where necessary, the Secretary of State has the power to direct schools to comply.

From spring 2020, where a key stage 1 and / or a reception class reports 31 or more pupils per teacher, schools must record in their MIS where this is due to:

- any pupils within the class recorded as excepted
- a teacher being on planning and preparation time or learning manager time and the class is being supervised by a teaching assistant

[The School Admissions \(Infant Class Sizes\) \(England\) Regulations 2012](#) prescribe certain limited circumstances in which pupils may be admitted as exceptions to the infant class size limit.

These must be resolved within COLLECT by adding the total number of children who are covered by an exception to the relevant box in the Classes Section of your return (Spring Census only). For any cases where no exception exists a full explanatory note will need to be added to the Return Level notes page as to why the class is over the legal size limits before finally submitting your return.

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