**Spring School Census 2021 – Readiness Bulletin Number 2**

**(Received from DfE 14/01/2021)**

**Purpose**

The purpose of this note is to provide school census contacts with important information in readiness for the 2021 spring school census. All school census contacts should have already received an early warning readiness email (issued 16 December 2020) and the advice offered here should be read in conjunction with that bulletin.

**Data collection timetable and key dates**

The census date for the 2021 spring school census is **Thursday 21 January** with the deadline for approved submissions being Wednesday 17 February. The database will be closed to amendments from schools and local authorities on Wednesday 17 March.

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.

**Unusual circumstances – COVID-19**

Schools must provide pupil level data for pupils who are recorded on the school admission register as at census day, irrespective of whether they attend school on that day. Therefore, pupils who are absent from school on census day, whether the absence is COVID-19 related or for other reasons, should be counted in schools’ census returns in the usual way.

Current funding allocation through the national funding formula (NFF) and the pupil premium is calculated based on the number of pupils on roll and is not affected by pupil non-attendance on census day. However, other data items are dependent on whether a pupil attends school on census day or during census week. Guidance on these items is as follows:

**Free school meals taken and school lunches taken**

As schools are only open for vulnerable children and the children of critical workers, the majority of pupils will not be in attendance in schools on census day. Therefore, schools should record free school meals taken and school lunch taken as the normal situation, for example if a pupil would normally have a school meal on a Thursday they should be recorded as such on the census.

Please note however, any vulnerable pupils or children of critical workers who are absent for reasons other than COVID related or who have chosen to have a packed lunch on census day should not be recorded as having taken a school lunch and any of this cohort of pupils who are FSM eligible should not be counted in the free school meals taken figure.

The Department realises that school opening restrictions could affect census returns for UIFSM. We will confirm future funding arrangements for UIFSM separately.

**Early years - funded hours, extended hours and hours at setting**

Early years provision should remain open and continue to allow all children to attend full time or their usual timetable hours. This includes early years registered nurseries and childminders, maintained nursery schools, as well as nursery classes in schools and other pre-reception provision on school sites. This is the default position for all areas irrespective of national lockdown restrictions. It is the government’s intention for there to be parity of approach between the school census and the early years’ census.

Funded hours, extended hours and hours at setting for pupils who are in attendance during census week should be recorded as normal.

Funded hours, extended hours and hours at setting should be recorded as the number of hours the pupil would normally be expected to attend during census week in the following circumstances:

* • Pupils are absent because they are self isolating
* • Parents have chosen not to send their child to nursery

Where the parent has requested a change to the funded hours entitlement taken at the establishment, schools must record the revised funded hours.

Funded hours, extended hours and hours and setting should be recorded as zero in the following circumstances:

* • The nursery provision has chosen to close
* • Where the child is not attending because the school has chosen to restrict nursery provision to certain groups of children (e.g. vulnerable children and children of key workers)

**Class module**

Schools should record classes as they would normally have been timetabled at the selected time on census day.

**Unit contact time**

The unit contact time should be recorded as the number of hours the pupil would normally have spent at the unit in the census week.

**School childcare**

Schools who provide childcare facilities and due to COVID related reasons have had to temporarily close either some or all of these facilities should record what the school would normally offer.

**School census data collection guidance**

The school census guide for the 2020 to 2021 academic year is available on the [school census website] (https://www.gov.uk/guidance/school-census)

**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] (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/collect-guides-for-schools-and-local-authorities)

**Pupil premium funding**

It was announced in December 2020 that pupil premium allocations for most schools will now be based on data collected as part of the autumn school census. This applies to all schools except for

local authority maintained PRUs and alternative provision academies and free schools who will continue to be allocated funds based on information collected in the spring school census. Details can be found [here] (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium/pupil-premium)

**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] (https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complete-the-school-census/check-your-data) providing examples of what would be regarded as an acceptable

Thank you for your support and cooperation

Kind regards

**Education Data Division Helpdesk**

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