



Department
for Education

Statistical First Release

National Pupil Projections - Future Trends in Pupil Numbers: July 2014

Reference	SFR 23/2014
Date	16 July 2014
Coverage	England
Theme	Children, Education and Skills
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Internet	Statistics: Pupil Projections

This statistical release provides national projections for the number of pupils in schools by type of school and age group. Findings presented here update those published in December 2013 (SFR53/2013). The main findings are:

Continued growth in the number of nursery and primary-aged pupils

Births in England have been broadly rising since 2002, leading to increases in primary-aged pupils from 2010. By 2023, the number of pupils in state funded primary schools will increase to 4.661 million, 9% higher than in 2014

...although less growth than previously projected

This mainly reflects a downward revision to the ONS assumption on short-run fertility which has led to a decrease in the expected number of pupils in maintained nurseries and state-funded primary schools. The impact by 2022 (the end of the last projections) is a reduction of around 3% (or 138,000 pupils) compared to previous projections.

Secondary-aged pupils numbers are expected to grow from 2016

Secondary-aged pupil numbers have been declining since 2004. However, this trend will start to reverse in 2016, and by 2020 numbers are expected to exceed their previous 2004 high, as the growth in primary-aged pupils begins to feed through.

London will see increases in Secondary-aged pupils sooner

All regions of the countries are expected to see some increase in the secondary-aged population from 2017. However, London will see growth in this age-range earlier, from 2015 onwards.

Official Statistics Publication

Official Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the National Statistics Code of Practice. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs. They are produced free from any political interference.

1. Introduction

The main changes in this release, compared to the December 2013 publication, include: revised pupil projections which incorporate latest School Census data and the 2012-based ONS population projections; variant projections based on alternative scenarios for future population growth, and; regional breakdowns of future population growth for primary and secondary-aged children.

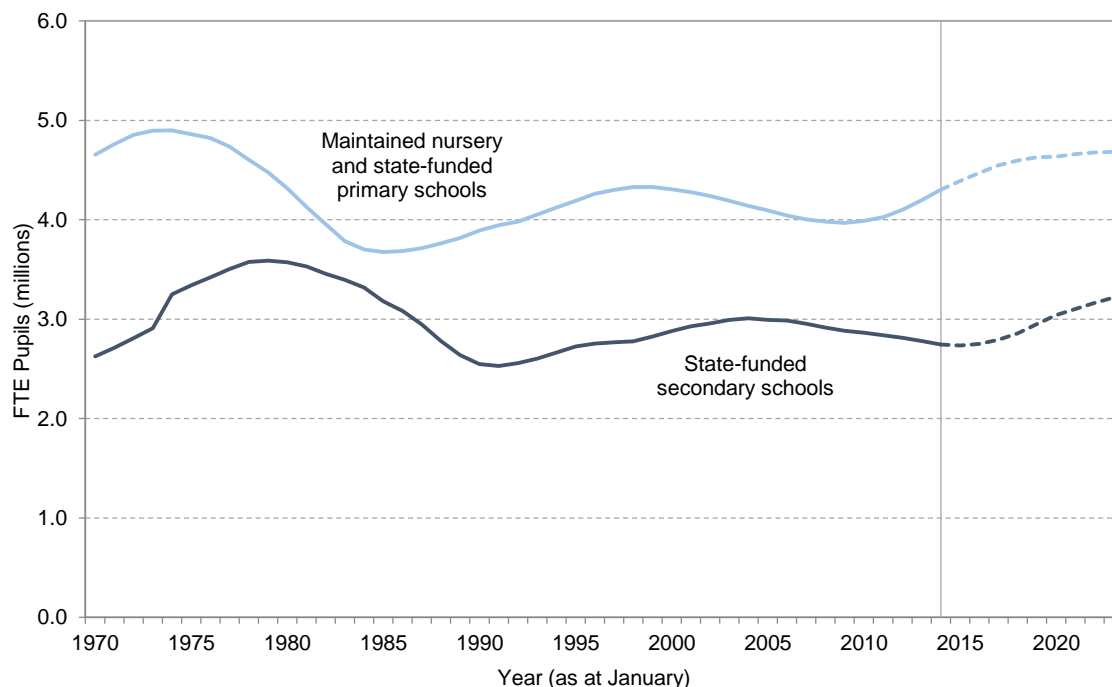
2. National pupil projections (Tables 1-2)

Overall pupil numbers¹ (aged up to and including 15²) in state-funded schools³ began to increase in 2011 and are projected to continue rising. The main trends are:

Continued increases in primary aged pupils	Between 2014 and 2023, pupil numbers in maintained nursery and state-funded primary schools ⁴ are projected to increase by 9%.
Short-term national declines in secondary pupils	State-funded secondary ⁵ pupil numbers (aged up to and including 15) started declining in 2005 and are projected to continue to decline until 2015, after which the increases in primary pupil numbers will start to flow through into secondary schools.
Increases in secondary pupils from 2016	By 2023, the number of state-funded secondary pupils aged up to and including 15 is projected to be 17% higher compared to 2014.

Figure 1: State-funded schools: full-time equivalent pupils

Pupil numbers in state-funded schools are expected to grow by 12% from 2014 to 2023



¹ Numbers are full-time equivalent unless otherwise stated.

² All pupil numbers are as at January, by age at previous 31 August.

³ Includes local authority maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools, pupil referral units, City Technology Colleges, Free Schools, all types of academy, University Technical Colleges and Studio Schools.

⁴ State-funded primary school pupils include those in maintained primary schools, primary Free Schools and primary academies.

⁵ Includes maintained secondary schools, secondary academies, secondary Free Schools and City Technology Colleges.

Trends by phase of education

The main trends by phase of education are outlined below. It should be noted these are national projections only and will mask individual trends at the regional or local authority level.

Early years

Numbers have been rising since 2007

The total headcount⁶ of pupils aged less than five in maintained nursery and state-funded primary and secondary schools fell every year between 1999 and 2007 before rising to 974,000 in 2014. By 2023 numbers are projected to increase to around 1.040 million.

State-funded primary schools

Falling birth rates led to declines in primary pupils throughout the 2000s

The full-time equivalent number of pupils of all ages in state-funded primary schools peaked in 1999 at 4.301 million and began to fall in 2000, reaching a low of 3.947 million in 2009, due to the downward trend in birth rates during the late 1990s.

Growth in primary pupils continuing until at least 2023

Births in England have been broadly rising since 2002. In 2010, the number of pupils in primary schools began to increase. By 2018, there are projected to be 4.575 million pupils in state-funded primary schools, an increase of 7% from 2014. By 2023, the number is projected to increase to 4.661 million, 9% higher than in 2014.

Slower rates of growth from 2015 onwards

The number of pupils aged 5 to 6 years in state-funded primary schools increased at an average annual rate of 2.9% between 2010 and 2014. Between 2015 and 2019 pupils from the same age group are projected to grow at the slower average rate of 0.7% per year.

State-funded secondary schools

Secondary-aged pupil numbers have been falling since 2005

State-funded secondary pupil numbers aged up to and including 15 reached a peak in 2004, as a result of the upward trend in birth rates during the late 1980s. A change in this trend caused pupil numbers to decrease from 2005.

Secondary-aged pupil numbers will start growing from 2015

In 2014 the number of full-time equivalent pupils in state-funded secondary schools aged up to and including 15 was 2.741 million. By 2015 this is expected to fall further to 2.734 million. However, from 2016 onwards pupil numbers are projected to rise and are expected to exceed their previous high (in 2004) by 2020.

3. Comparison against previous projections

The main changes to the pupil projections, since the December 2013 release, are due to the inclusion of outturn data for pupil numbers in 2014, taken from the School Census, and the latest ONS mid-2012 based population projections which replace the interim-2011 based projections used previously.

⁶ The tables in this release are presented as full-time equivalents. Pupil headcounts can be found in the supporting data which accompany this release.

Differences in the short-term

Higher outturn pupil numbers in 2014

Outturn pupil numbers were slightly higher than had been predicted for 2014, for both primary and secondary-aged pupils. The total number of pupils in maintained nursery and state-funded primary schools was 13,000 (0.3%) higher than predicted. The total number pupils in state-funded secondary schools was 20,000 (0.7%) higher than expected.

Small increases in short-term pupil projections

Higher outturn pupil numbers, combined with slightly higher population projections for primary and secondary aged pupils in the immediate term, has led to an increase in the pupil projections. By 2016 there are expected to be 50,000 (0.68%) more pupils in state-funded schools than previously projected.

Longer term impacts

Lower ONS fertility assumptions for 2013 onwards

However, the ONS have also revised down their short-run fertility assumption. Previously births were expected to peak in 2014. The numbers of births are now expected to have fallen in 2013 and are projected to gradually increase in the years thereafter.

Falls in the number of nursery and primary-aged pupils.

The reduction in projected births has led to a reduction in the projected number of pupils in maintained nursery and state-funded primary schools in 2022 (the end of the previous projection period) of around 3% (or 138,000 pupils) compared to the projections made previously.

4. Alternative scenarios of future population growth (Tables 3a-3c)

There are inherent uncertainties in projecting the future size of the pupil population. This is particularly true for early aged cohorts, which are more immediately dependent on projections of future birth-rates, than for older-aged pupils.

The 2012-based principal national population projections produced by the ONS are used to derive future trends in pupil numbers. Principal population projections are based on assumptions considered to best reflect demographic patterns at the time they were adopted. However, the ONS also produce a number of variant projection scenarios, based on alternative assumptions of future fertility, net migration and life-expectancy.⁷ An understanding of the overall effect of the uncertainty in the population projections can be obtained by comparing the results of the principal population projections with projections based on the alternative ONS scenarios.

Here we consider the ONS projections which adopt: high and low assumptions for future fertility only; high and low assumptions for future net migration only, and; high and low population scenarios (which combine the impact of high and low fertility, net migration and life-expectancy). **These scenarios are for illustrative purposes only and are not intended to represent the upper or lower limits of what might actually happen.** The main findings are:

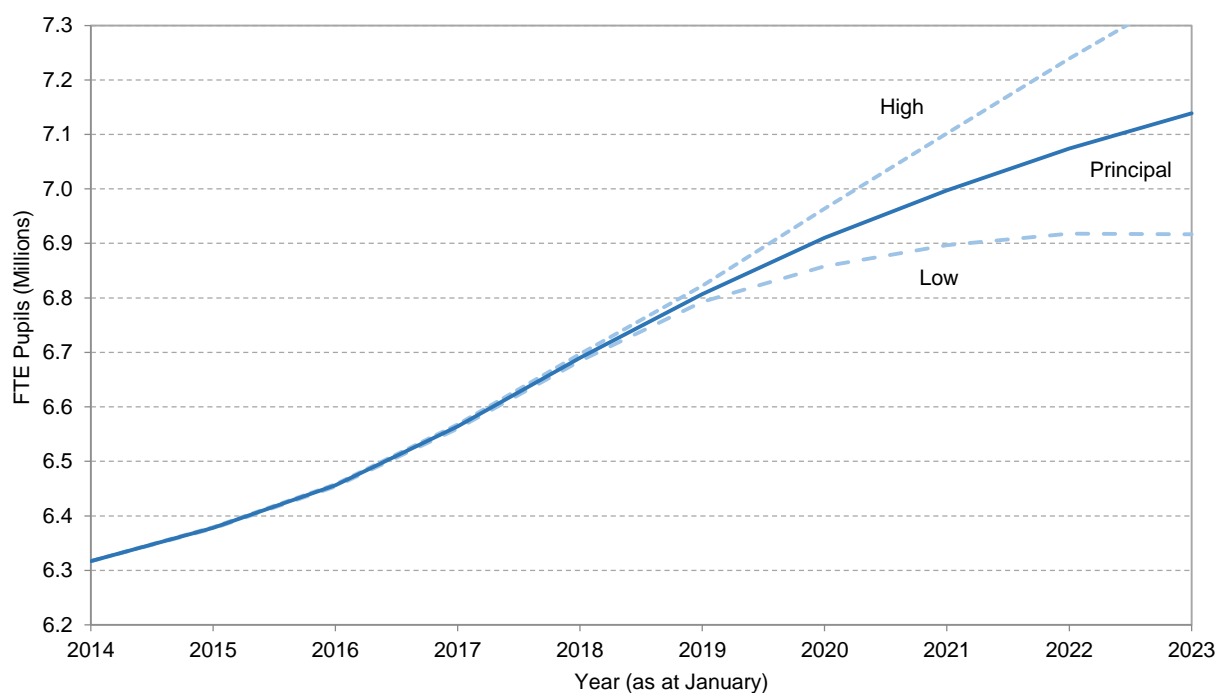
⁷ For further details of the ONS principal and variant national population projections, see ONS releases [here](#) and [here](#).

- Under the high **fertility assumption**, total pupil numbers are predicted to be 2.8% (200,000 pupils) higher by 2023, compared to the principal projection. This compares to being 2.7% lower (193,000 pupils) under the low fertility assumption scenario.
- Under the high **net migration assumption**, total pupil numbers are predicted to be 0.4% (29,000 pupils) higher by 2023, compared to the principal projection. This compares to being 0.4% lower (29,000 pupils) under the low net migration scenario.
- Under the high **population assumption**, total pupil numbers are predicted to be 3.2% (230,000 pupils) higher by 2023, compared to the principal projection. This compares to being 3.1% lower (222,000 pupils) under the low population scenario.

Figure 2 below shows the combined impact of the ONS high and low population assumptions (which combine varying assumptions for high and low fertility, high and low net migration and high and low life-expectancy). The chart shows that varying the scenarios does not have a significant impact until 2019, as it takes several years for changes in birth rates to feed through and affect the size of the school aged population.

Figure 2: Comparison of alternative scenarios for projected pupil numbers aged 5 to 15

The alternative ONS scenarios take several years to have an impact on predicted pupil numbers.



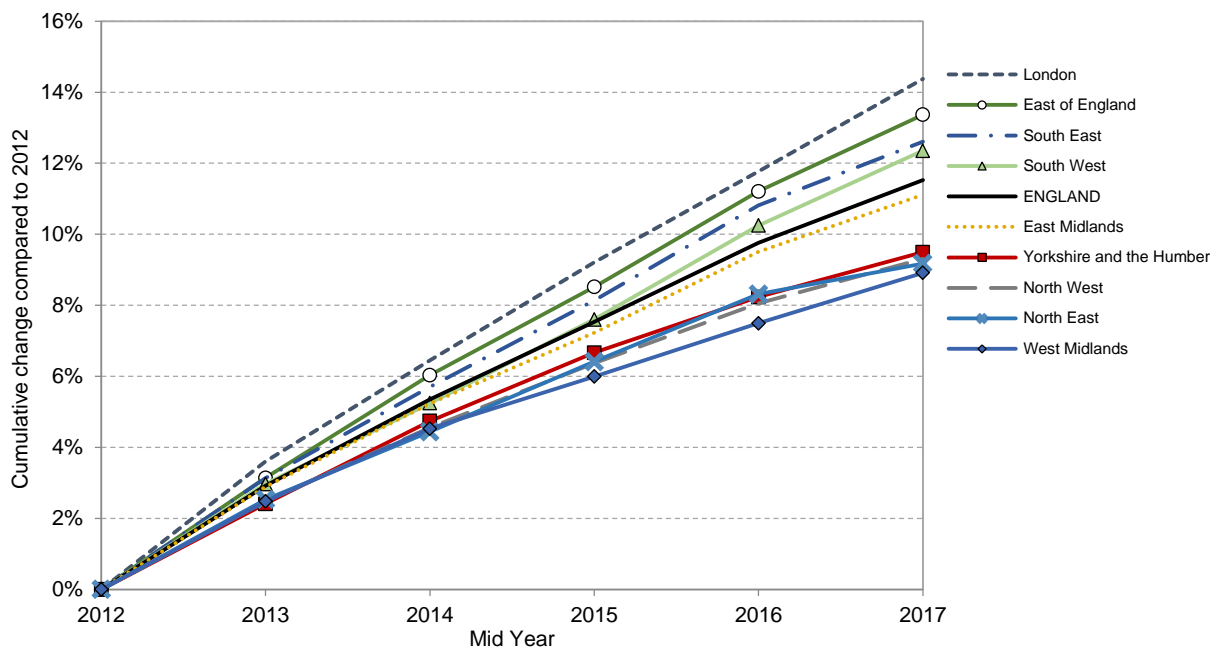
5. Regional trends (Figures 3a-3b)

The long-term projections of pupil numbers presented here are made at a national level only. However, projections produced by ONS provide information on the school-aged population in each region. These data are presented in Figures 3a and 3b.

Figure 3a below shows that by 2017, all regions in England are projected to have an increase in their primary-aged population (aged 5 to 10) compared with 2012. This ranges from around 14% in London to around 9% in the North West, North East, West Midlands and Yorkshire and the Humber.

Figure 3a: Population aged 5 to 10: Percentage change compared to 2012

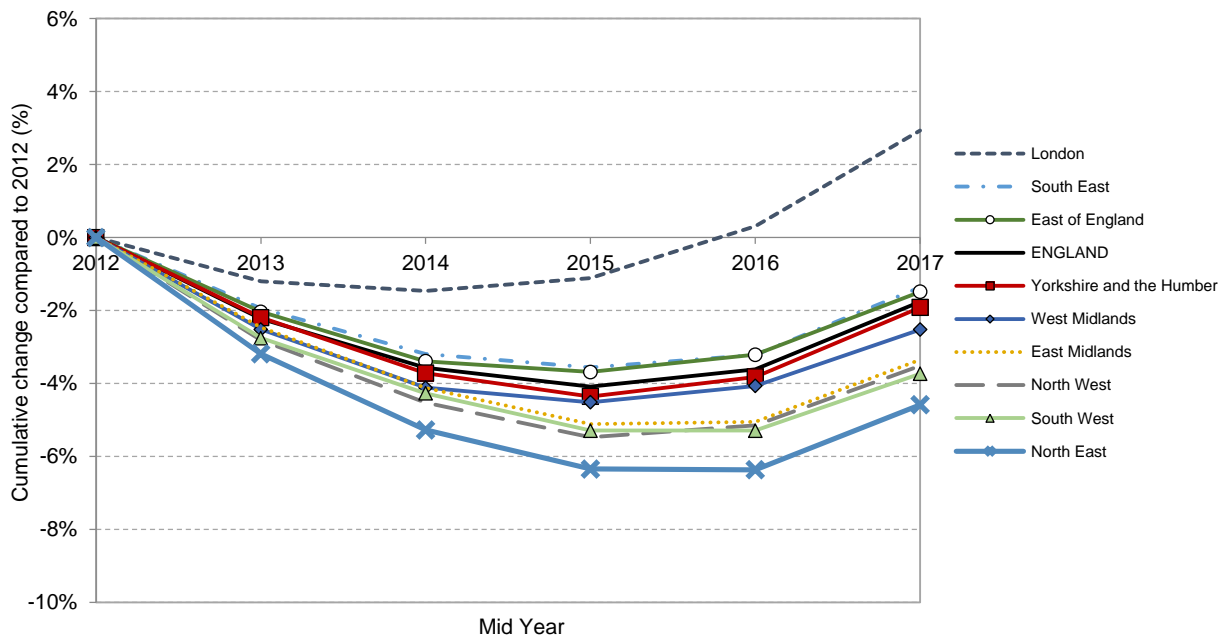
Primary aged population growth in London continues to outpace the rest of country



The population aged 11 to 15 is projected to have declined in all regions in 2013 and 2014, as shown in figure 3b below. In 2015, the 11 to 15 population in London is projected to stabilise, but elsewhere this age group will continue to decline until 2016, when numbers in all regions, except the North East and the South West, will start to increase. The North East and the South West are predicted to experience their first annual growth in this age group in 2017.

Figure 3b: Population aged 11 to 15: Percentage change compared to 2012

In 2017 all regions will be experiencing growth in the secondary aged population



6. List of tables and charts

The following tables are available in excel format on the department's statistics website:

Table 1:

State-funded schools: Full-time equivalent number of pupils (aged up to and including 15) by type of school in England: January 2003 to 2014 (actual) – January 2015 to 2023 (projection)

Table 2:

All schools: Full-time equivalent number of pupils by age group and by type of school in England: January 2008 to 2014 (actual) – January 2015 to 2019 (projection)

Table 3a:

State-funded schools: Comparison of the full-time equivalent number of pupils aged 5 to 15 based on varying net migration assumptions in the underlying population projections in England: January 2014 (actual) - January 2015 to 2023 (projection)

Table 3b:

State-funded schools: Comparison of the full-time equivalent number of pupils aged 5 to 15 based on varying fertility assumptions in the underlying population projections in England: January 2014 (actual) - January 2015 to 2023 (projection)

Table 3c:

State-funded schools: Comparison of the full-time equivalent number of pupils aged 5 to 15 based on varying population assumptions in the underlying population projections in England: January 2014 (actual) - January 2015 to 2023 (projection)

Figure 1:

Maintained nursery and state-funded primary and secondary schools: Full-time equivalent (FTE) number of pupils (aged up to and including 15) by type of school: January 1970 to 2014 (actual) – January 2015 to 2023 (projection)

Figure 2:

Comparison of the full-time equivalent number of pupils aged 5 to 15 based on varying the assumptions that underlie the ONS population projections in England: January 2014 (actual) – January 2015 to 2022 (projection)

Figure 3a:

Population aged 5 to 10 (age at mid-year): Percentage change in population size compared to 2012 by Government Office Region in England: Mid-2012 to Mid-2017

Figure 3b:

Population aged 11 to 15 (age at mid-year): Percentage change in population size compared to 2012 by Government Office Region in England: Mid-2012 to Mid-2017

List of tables (cont.)

When reviewing the tables, please note the following:

Date of Count	<p>Figures relate to January of the year shown. For years up to and including 2014 they are firm actuals from the School Census and related censuses⁸. Figures for 2015 and later years are projected.</p>
School Types	<p>“Maintained” refers to public sector schools maintained by local authorities.</p> <p>“State-funded schools” include maintained nursery, primary, secondary and special schools, all academy types, alternative provision settings, City Technology Colleges, Free Schools, University Technical Colleges and Studio Schools.</p> <p>“State-funded primary schools” include maintained primary schools, primary academies and primary Free Schools.</p> <p>“State-funded secondary schools” include maintained secondary and all-through schools, secondary and all-through academies, secondary academies and all-through Free Schools, City Technology Colleges, University Technical Colleges and Studio Schools. However, state-funded secondary schools do not include all-through special schools and special academies.</p> <p>“State-funded special schools” include maintained special schools, special academies, special Free Schools and general hospital schools.</p> <p>“Non-maintained special schools” constitute a separate category of school.</p> <p>“Alternative provision settings”⁹ include pupil referral units, alternative provision academies and alternative provision Free Schools, but not other types of alternative provision.</p> <p>“Independent schools” include all schools that are not state funded, except non-maintained special schools.</p>
Age (measured at the previous 31 August except where stated)	<p>Under 5 = ages up to and including rising 5s.</p> <p>Rising 5s = pupils aged 4 at previous 31 August who became 5 by 31 December.</p> <p>Primary ages = 5 to 10.</p> <p>Secondary ages = 11 to 15.</p> <p>Post-16 = 16 and over.</p>
Part-time and full-time equivalent	<p>Part-time pupils assumed to represent half of a full-time pupil to give totals as full-time equivalents. Until 2002, only pupils aged under 5 could be recorded as part-time. From 2003 to 2011 inclusive, state-funded schools could record part-time pupils of any age. From 2012, all pupils aged 5 to 15 as at the previous 31 August are recorded by state-funded schools as full-time. However, all pupils aged under 5 or over 15, and pupils of any age in independent schools, may be recorded as part-time.</p>

⁸ The related censuses are the School Level Annual School Census and Pupil Referral Unit Census. In this document “School Census” is taken to include these related censuses.

⁹ Only registered alternative provision settings that are directly state-funded are included here. Non-registered alternative provision settings (which can be indirectly state funded where places are commissioned by schools and local authorities) are not included.

11. Background notes on the pupil projections

Projection Method

The Pupil Projection Model (PPM) produces national projections for the number of pupils by age and school type. It uses ONS population estimates and projections, information on birth registrations in England and data derived from the School Census. Population estimates and projections are modified from their original mid-year basis to simulate the definitions used in the School Census (a January count with pupils' ages as at the previous 31 August). A comparison of a series of past years of pupil numbers and population estimates provides a starting point for the PPM. School Census data inform assumptions about future proportions of the school population by type of school. The PPM currently uses the most recent ONS population projections, based on the population at mid-2012. These population projections incorporate findings from the 2011 UK Census.¹⁰

Population projections are based on estimates of the resident population. The population includes all usually resident persons, whatever their nationality. Long-term migrants are defined as individuals who change their country of usual residence for a period of at least a year, so that the country of destination becomes the country of usual residence. Pupils who are short-term migrants, and are staying in England for less than a year are included in the School Census and are therefore reflected in the pupil projections. They are not separately identifiable.

Relationship with School Capacity publication

This release presents the Department's main national-level pupil projections. The statistical release '*School capacity: academic year 2012 to 2013*' was published on 14 April 2014 and is a separate publication using a different methodology. It includes local authorities' own forecasts of future pupil numbers, based on local-level information, such as inter-authority movement of pupils. The national pupil projections presented in the current release are produced within the Department, at national level only. They are based on the mid-2012 population projections from ONS and cover a longer time period (up to 2023) than in the school capacity release. Differences in the methodologies used by individual local authorities for pupil number forecasts mean that the aggregated totals in the school capacity release will differ from the national-level projections presented here, but trends are broadly similar.

Changes from previous releases

As in the March and December 2013 releases, this release does not include projections for pupils aged 16 and over. Post-16 projections were not published due to on-going work to reassess the existing projections for this age group. They are not published in this release because the projections that were included in previous releases were aligned to overall 16-18 participation rate projections produced for the Education Funding Agency 16-19 Funding Statement. This has been replaced with a much simpler funding letter to 16-19 education and training providers which does not include projections that are comparable with the pre-16 projections in this publication. This is a permanent change.

Consistent with the December 2013 publication, this Official Statistic update removes dual-registered pupils from schools classified as Alternative Provision Setting. This removes double

¹⁰ Further information on the methodology and assumptions underlying the ONS 2012-based population projections is available [here](#).

counting in pupil numbers from this school type, present in previous statistical releases. This means the time series from 2002 to 2010 has been removed.

Accuracy

Actual pupil counts for years up to 2014 have been derived from data collected via the School Census. The figures for 2014 and later years are projections and are subject to increasing margins of error. There is less certainty about the smaller categories, such as particular age bands or smaller categories of school. Factors which may contribute to differences between projections and actual data include:

- The underlying population trend, which depends on assumptions about births, mortality and migration;
- Participation among pupils aged under 5 and over 15, which may differ from the rates assumed;
- School reorganisation by local authorities, which may affect the balance between primary and secondary schools;
- Variations in the proportions attending different school types, such as independent schools;
- The introduction of new Government policy.

Specifically with regard to pupil referral units and alternative provision, a new approach to exclusions is currently being trialled in 11 local authorities where schools will retain responsibility for provision for pupils whom they have excluded. The outcome of this trial may lead to some reduction in the future number of pupils in pupil referral units and alternative provision academies and Free Schools, and corresponding increases in the number of pupils in other types of school. As there is only limited evidence on how schools will choose to react to this policy, no forecast of the effect of this new approach has been made at present.

There will be changes to the special educational system from September 2014 as a result of the Children and Families Bill. It is too early to quantify the effects of these changes and so they are not reflected here.

Pupil projections rely heavily on the population projections produced by ONS which are widely used across government for planning purposes. National population projections are National Statistics, which means they undergo regular quality assurance reviews and are produced free from political interference. The projections are produced using demographic assumptions about future levels of fertility, life-expectancy and net-migration, based on analysis of trends and expert advice. The assumptions are agreed in liaison with the devolved administrations, following consultation with key users of projections in each country and advice from an expert academic advisory panel.

Revision

The PPM is updated annually. This publication is produced using the final July 2014 PPM and there are no plans to make any revisions to this publication. If a revision is necessary, this will be made in accordance with the Department's revisions policy¹¹. Updated population projections are expected to be released in 2015 and will make use of data obtained from the January 2015 School Census.

7. Want more?

Want previously published figures?	They are still available via SFR links. For the latest data, visit Statistics: Pupil Projections (here).
Want more information on trends in schools, pupils and their characteristics?	Latest and previous releases of the SFR 'Schools, pupils and their characteristics', can be found here
Want more information on population projections?	Information on population projections and the ONS projections methodology can be found here .

8. Got a query? Like to give feedback?

Any enquiries should be addressed to the following:

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If non-media	William Teager Department for Education, 5th Floor, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London, SW1P 3BT. 02077838448. Email : PupilPopulation.PROJECTIONS@education.gsi.gov.uk

¹¹Details of the Department's revision policy can be found [here](#).



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