



Department  
for Education

## Attendance in education and early years settings during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak – summary of returns to 4 June

### Headline facts and figures

- From 1 June, the government asked schools to welcome back children in nursery, reception and years 1 and 6, alongside children of critical workers and vulnerable children.
- Approximately 91% of settings were open in some capacity on 4 June, up from 80% on 21 May.
- Around half of settings (52%) that normally accept at least one of these year groups were estimated to be open to children in nursery, reception, year 1 or year 6 on 4 June. This is expected to increase during the week commencing 8 June - a number of schools who reported that they were closed to these year groups last week indicated that they expected to be open to at least one of them on 8 June.
- The number of children attending an education setting who have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) was 42,000, up from 23,000 on 21 May.
- The number of children attending who have a social worker was 47,000, up from 37,000 on 21 May.
- Early years settings were also asked to begin welcoming back all children from 1 June. We estimate that 166,000 children were attending early years settings on 4 June – about 10% of the number of children who usually attend in term time.

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## Background

In response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, the government asked education and childcare settings to close from Friday 20 March 2020 to all children except those of critical workers and those classified as vulnerable.

From 1 June, the government asked schools to welcome back children in nursery, reception, year 1 and year 6, alongside children of critical workers and vulnerable children from all years. Early years settings were also asked to begin welcoming back all children from 1 June.

### Education settings survey

To help understand the impact of these decisions, the Department for Education (DfE) established a survey of education settings in England. Settings are asked to report information to DfE each day, including the number of children and staff in attendance if they are open and when they plan to reopen if they are closed.

The narrative in this document focuses on Thursday 4 June to maintain comparability with previous weeks. Comparisons are made to 21 May throughout because 28 May was during half term.

### Local authority early years survey

From 6 April 2020, DfE asked local authorities (LAs) to regularly report similar information for childcare settings. The focus of this survey was narrowed to early years settings from 16 April.

### Data coverage

This data release includes data for education settings from 23 March to 4 June and early years settings from 16 April to 4 June. The data will continue to be published on a weekly basis every Tuesday.

# Non-response adjustment

## Education settings survey

The response rate for the education settings survey has been between 30% and 76%, aside from the four bank holidays where response rate was lower, and 1 May when the response rate was affected by technical issues.

Attendance figures in this release are adjusted to account for settings who do not respond to the survey.

The methodology used to make this adjustment has been revised twice - after the first full week of reporting and from 1 June.

The methodology used between 23 and 27 March 2020 assumed that settings that did not respond were as likely to be open as those that did.

Following review of the first week's response patterns, analysts developed a new methodology that no longer made this assumption. Therefore, non-response is accounted for differently from 30 March onwards. From 1 June, the methodology was updated to account for wider opening of some schools. See the [Methodology](#) section for further detail about methodologies used.

## Local authority early years survey

For the local authority early years survey, figures for the number of settings open and closed and the number of children attending for those LAs which did not respond are estimated based on the proportions reported by LAs which did respond. The national estimate comprises reported figures from LAs which did respond combined with these estimates (see the [Methodology](#) section). From 1 June onwards, this methodology has been revised to take into account the wider opening of early years settings.

## Summary of data

### Open settings and overall attendance

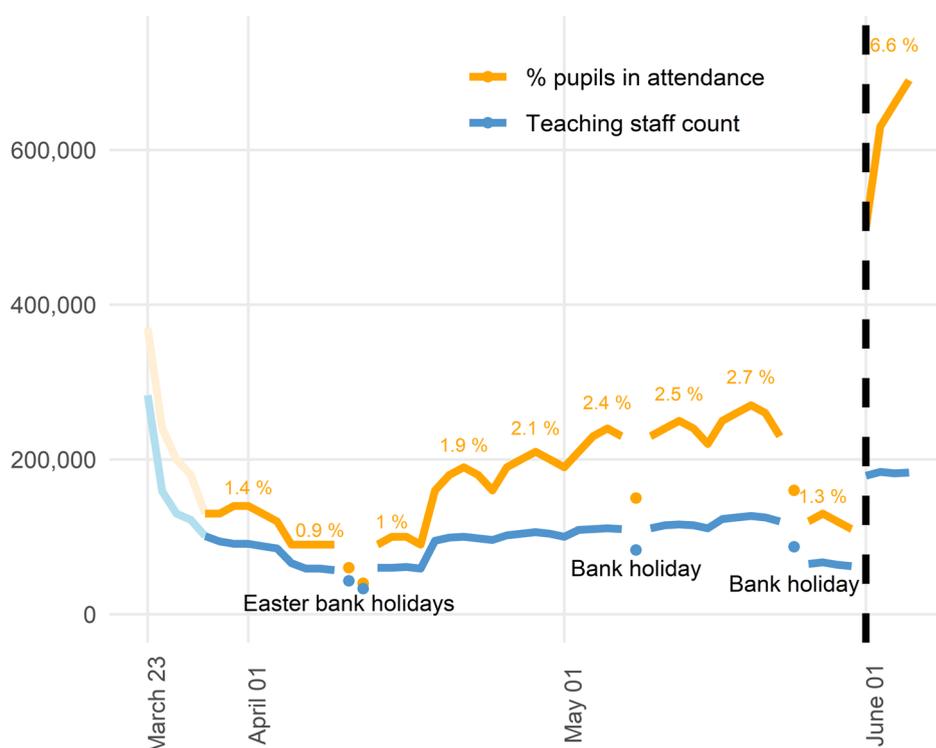
From 1 June, the government asked schools to welcome back children in nursery, reception and years 1 and 6, alongside children of critical workers and vulnerable children.

18,500 education settings responded to the survey on 4 June. This represents 74% of all settings.

The following key findings are adjusted for non-response (see [Methodology](#)):

- We estimate 91% of settings were open on 4 June (around 22,700 settings), up from 80% on 21 May.
- Approximately 659,000 children attended an education setting on 4 June, this represents 6.9% of all pupils who normally attend school. This is an increase from 21 May when around 244,000 (2.6%) were in attendance, which reflects the wider opening of schools to children in nursery, reception and years 1 and 6.

**Chart 1: Attendance of pupils and teaching staff in education settings**



### Reason for attendance

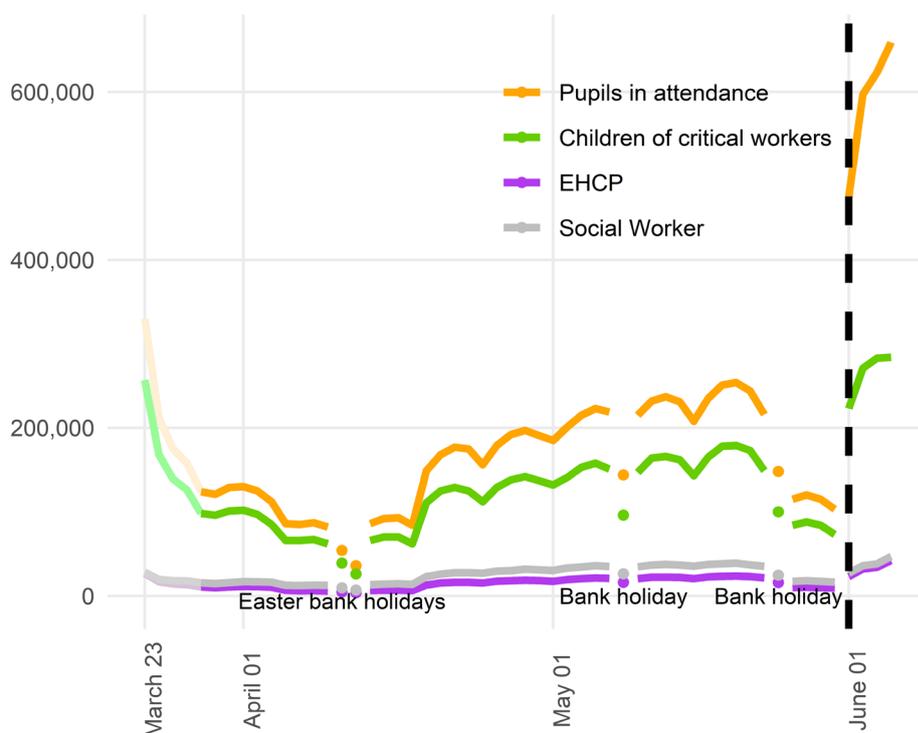
#### Vulnerable children and children of critical workers

From 1 June, a total number of vulnerable children attending is no longer collected. The number of pupils attending with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and with a social worker continues to be collected separately. The number of otherwise vulnerable children attending was collected from 1 June.

Figures are reported here for each group of vulnerable children separately. We are developing a methodology to report the total number of vulnerable children in attendance that accounts for the overlap between these groups and will publish these on 16 June.

- 42,000 of the children in attendance on 4 June had an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), up from 23,000 on 21 May. We estimate this represents 15% of all children with an EHCP<sup>1</sup>, up from 8% on 21 May.
- 47,000 of the children in attendance on 4 June had a social worker, up from 37,000 on 21 May. We estimate this represents 15% of all children and young people classified as ‘Children in Need’<sup>2</sup>, up from 12% on 21 May.
- 69,000 of the children in attendance on 4 June were classified as ‘otherwise vulnerable’. This information was first collected on 1 June.
- 284,000 of the children in attendance on 4 June were classed by schools as children of critical workers, up from 173,000 on 21 May. We estimate that this represents 9% of all children of critical workers, up from 6% on 21 May. The number of children of critical workers in attendance may be being under-reported from 1 June. This is because some settings may not be counting all children of critical workers who are now attending in nursery, reception or years 1 or 6.

**Chart 2: Attendance of children classed as vulnerable and children of critical workers in education settings**



<sup>1</sup> This is an estimate based on the January 2019 school census

<sup>2</sup> This is an estimate based on the 2019 Children in Need census

- These children were cared for by 183,000 teaching staff and 238,000 non-teaching staff. From 1 June, settings were asked to include teaching assistants in their count of teaching staff, previously they were asked to include them in non-teaching staff. On 21 May, 125,000 teachers and 87,000 non-teaching staff were in attendance.

### **Settings open for nursery, reception, year 1 and year 6**

On 4 June, we estimate around half of settings (52%) that normally have children in nursery, reception, year 1 or year 6 were open to at least one of these year groups.

This is expected to increase during the week commencing 8 June - a number of schools who reported that they were closed to these year groups last week indicated that they expected to be open to at least one of them on 8 June.

### **Setting types**

Attendance in state-funded nursery and primary schools was higher than the national average on 4 June at 11%, reflecting wider opening to children in addition to those of critical workers and vulnerable children.

Attendance in special schools (incl. residential special schools) was also higher than the national average at 10%.

Attendance in state-funded secondary schools was estimated at 1%.

Attendance at further education settings was low, reflecting the age group of the students.

Table 1: Response rate, % open and % attendance on 4 June by setting type.<sup>3</sup>

Setting type	Response rate	Open	Pupil attendance
State-funded nursery	66%	89%	11%
State-funded primary	80%	94%	11%
State-funded middle	78%	97%	8%
State-funded all-through	79%	95%	4%
State-funded secondary	76%	90%	1%
Special	67%	88%	10%
Independent school	45%	80%	11%
Alternative provision <sup>4</sup>	64%	82%	7-12%
Further education <sup>5</sup>	22%	62%	<1%
Special post 16 institution	43%	73%	34%
Total	74%	91%	7%

## Early years settings

- The response rate to the local authority early years survey was 85%, with 128 out of 151 LAs submitting data by 6pm on 4 June.
- Early years settings were asked to begin welcoming back all children from 1 June. An estimated 33,000 settings were open on 4 June, up from 25,000 on 21 May. This represents 48% of all settings, with 44% closed and 8% unknown.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The following should be noted when considering the setting type breakdowns:

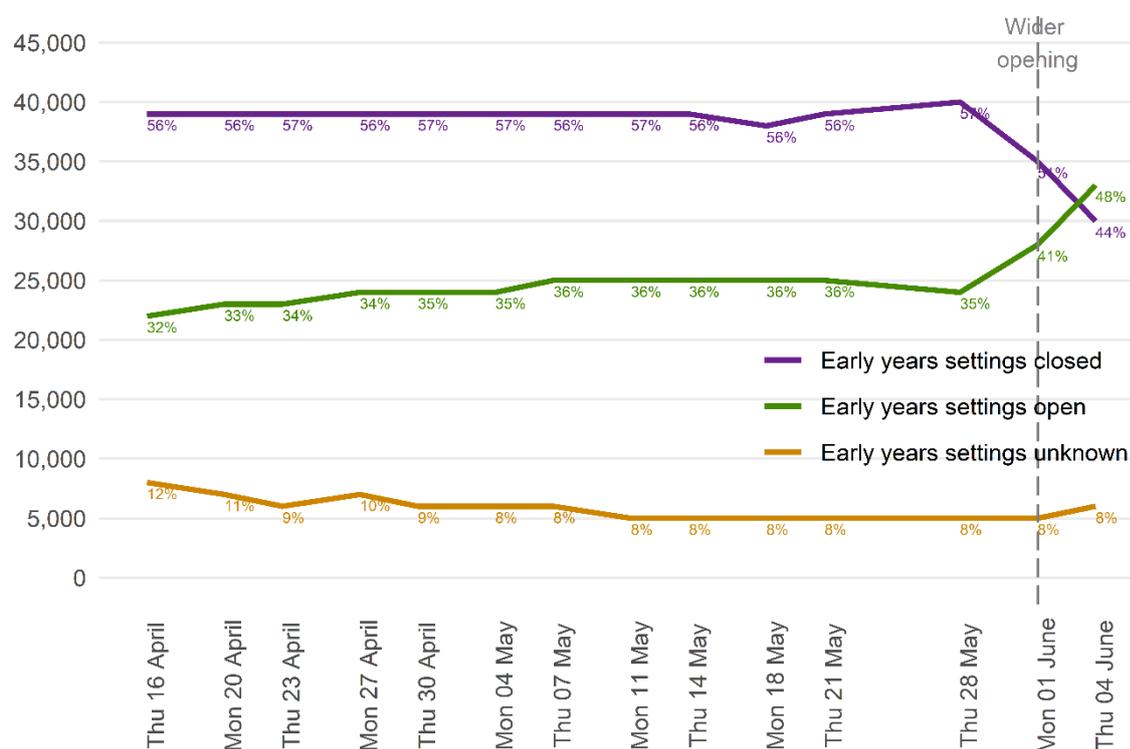
- The response rate varies across setting types and so some are more sensitive to the non-response methodology than others.
- While the methodology for estimating non-response takes into account which schools are eligible to be open to wider years, it does not make consideration of type of setting beyond this. For example, the proportion of schools who are assumed open to pupils in nursery, reception and years 1 and 6 is the same across all establishment types who normally have at least one of these years. Anecdotally we expect this might not hold true in practice, for example, closed independent schools may be less likely to return data. See the [Methodology](#) section for further information on the sensitivity of this assumption.

<sup>4</sup> A range is given to better communicate the uncertainty of attendance in AP settings. Pupils on the roll at these settings will often be enrolled in other settings as well. The upper value uses the total number of pupils who are solely or mainly registered in AP settings as the denominator, while the lower value also includes pupils with subsidiary registration in the denominator

<sup>5</sup> Not all further education (FE) settings are included in the data collection. The education settings survey includes data from general FE colleges, sixth form colleges and specialist FE colleges.

<sup>6</sup> Due to rounding, these do not always sum to 100%.

**Chart 3: Status of early years settings<sup>7</sup>**



- We estimate 166,000 children attended early years settings on 4 June, up from 88,000 on 21 May. This represents approximately 10% of children who usually attend in term time<sup>8</sup>, up from 5% on 21 May. This increase reflects higher numbers of children of critical workers and vulnerable children attending, as well as other pupils now attending due to wider opening. Note that some early years settings may be offering different hours or only opening for certain children, but this information is not collected.
- Approximately 100,000 children of critical workers attended early years settings on 4 June. This represents around 9% of children of critical workers<sup>9</sup> aged 0 to 4 year olds, up from 7% on 21 May. The number of children of critical workers in attendance may be being under-reported from 1 June. This is because some settings may not be counting all children of critical workers following the wider opening of early years settings.
- Approximately 14,000 vulnerable children attended early years settings on 4 June. This represents around 14% of 0 to 4 year olds classified as 'Children in

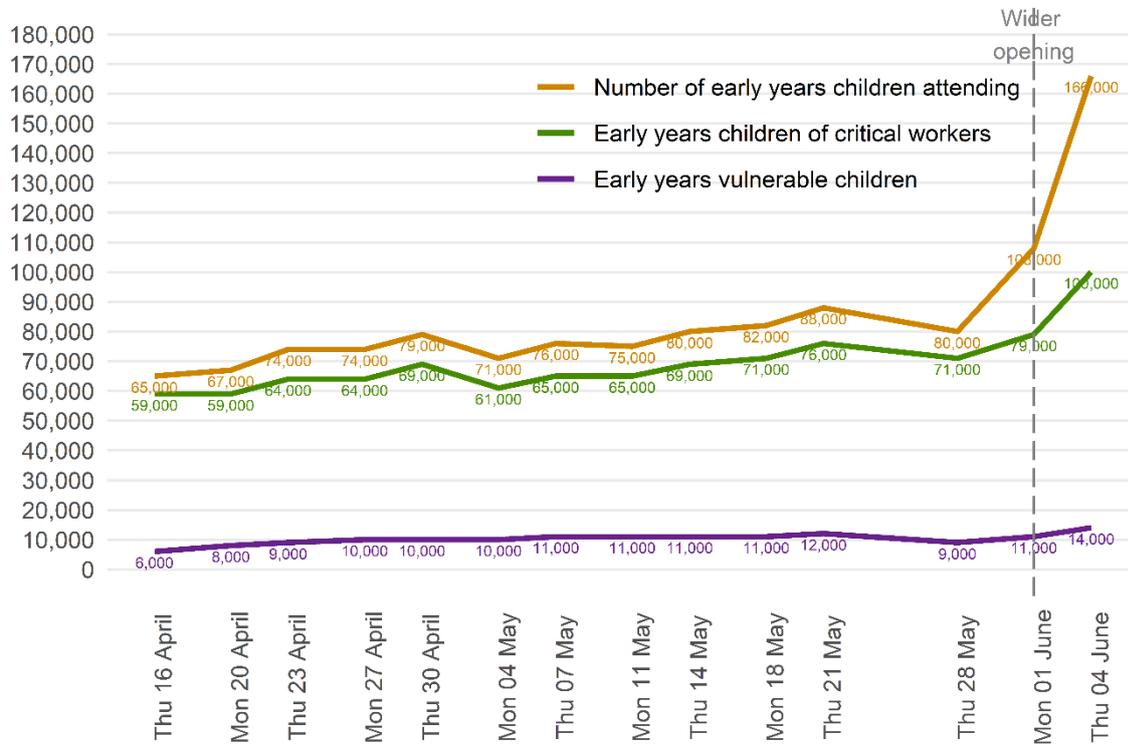
<sup>7</sup> There was no collection on Monday 25 May due to it being a bank holiday.

<sup>8</sup> The number of children in term time was estimated using outputs from the [Childcare and early years survey of parents: 2019](#) and [ONS National Population Projections: 2018 based](#).

<sup>9</sup> Based on DfE analysis of Labour Force Survey data.

Need' or who have an Education, Health and Care Plan<sup>10</sup>, up from 12% on 21 May.

**Chart 4: Attendance of children of critical workers and children classed as vulnerable in early years settings<sup>11</sup>**



<sup>10</sup> 0 to 4 year olds excluding those in Reception classes. This is an estimate based on the 2019 Children in Need census and January 2019 school census. Attendance rates for vulnerable children are presented as a proportion of the estimated number of children aged 0-4 with an EHCP using formal childcare plus the total number of Children in Need aged 0-4. We do not have estimates of the number of Children in Need who usually use formal childcare, so the attendance rate is presented to allow comparisons to be made over time, rather than the proportion of vulnerable children who would usually attend early years settings.

<sup>11</sup> There was no collection on Monday 25 May due to it being a bank holiday.

## Methodology

These statistics have been produced quickly in response to developing world events. The Office for Statistics Regulation, on behalf of the UK Statistics Authority, has reviewed them against several key aspects of the Code of Practice for Statistics and regards them as consistent with the Code's pillars of Trustworthiness, Quality and Value.

### Education settings survey

Details of the data requested and how it is collected is available at the [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): attendance recording for education settings](#) webpage. The following education settings were asked to complete the form:

- academies (including free schools and studio schools)
- local authority maintained schools
- local authority nursery schools
- independent schools
- non-maintained special schools
- pupil referral units
- university technical colleges
- FE colleges and sixth form colleges
- special post-16 institutions or specialist colleges

### Validation of submitted data

There are currently no automatic validations on the data submitted by settings. However, checks are carried out to ensure that no setting is double counted (if they submit data more than once per day the latest submission is used). Manual checks are applied to the data during data processing. Comparisons are made to other reported data and information obtained by discussions with schools and local authorities to provide reassurance that the data is a fair reflection of the national picture.

### Response rate

The response rate has been between 30% to 76%, aside from the four bank holidays where response rate was closer to 20% and on 1 May when the response rate was affected by technical issues. Response rates on 13 and 15 May were also slightly lower than usual due to technical issues in accessing the survey.

Since the response rate is not 100%, we estimate the situation in settings who have not responded in order to get a full national picture (a 'grossing methodology'). This methodology has been adjusted when more information about non-responding settings has become available or the survey has changed, as set out below.

### Non-response methodology 23 March to 27 March

On each day we calculated the proportion of responding settings which were open and closed, and the number of children and staff in attendance. These same proportions were then applied to non-responding settings.

### Non-response methodology 29 March to 29 May

Following a full week of returns, we analysed return patterns and developed a new methodology as follows:

- For settings that responded that day, we record whether they are open or closed.
- For settings that did not respond that day, but have previously:
  - If they reported that they planned to close on the next working day, they are assumed to be closed
  - If their most recent return was the previous day and they reported that they planned to open, it is assumed they have remained open.
  - If their most recent return was prior to the previous day and they reported that they planned to open, it is assumed that 50% have remained open.
- For settings that have never responded, it is assumed 50% have remained open.
- Attendance rates are calculated for each individual setting type and use 2019/20 census returns to calculate proportions of all pupils on roll. This is likely to over-estimate attendance in cases where settings are caring for pupils from other settings. This practice may have increased during the Easter break. Analysis of returns suggested the likely effect of this was less than 0.1%.
- When calculating attendance rates for non-responding settings that are assumed open, similar rates are assumed as responding open settings.

The assumption of 50% having remained open was arrived at by choosing a random sample of 50 settings and determining that approximately half had closed via school websites and local authority announcements. Adjusting this assumption by  $\pm 10\%$  changes the estimated open settings by around 1%, whilst it has a negligible effect on the low attendance rate. Additional assumption checking was carried out to better understand the impact of varying the 50% assumption for each setting type. Applying a 10% change to each setting type changes the estimated open rates by between 0 and 3 percentage points, with independent schools most impacted. The impact on estimated attendance rates by setting type was negligible.

The main difference this methodology change made was to better understand the proportion of settings that were open. We also improved the denominator used for further education colleges, this has driven the majority of the decrease in attendance rate. More granular information, such as attendance rates of pupils and teachers saw only minor changes (see table below).

Table 2. Comparison of figures on Friday 27 March using the previous and revised methodologies.

	Previous methodology	Revised methodology
Number of open establishments	23,700	20,000

	Previous methodology	Revised methodology
Proportion of open establishments	96%	81%
Number of pupils attending	140,000	124,000
Proportion of pupils attending	1.6%	1.3%
Teaching Staff	115,000	101,000
Support Staff	92,000	80,000

### Non-response methodology 1 June onwards

From 1 June, settings could be open to children of critical workers and vulnerable children, and those from wider years (nursery, reception, year 1 and/or year 6) or open only to children of critical workers and vulnerable children.

A new methodology was needed to account for this among the non-responders, and to distinguish between settings not open to wider years who normally have pupils from those years and those who do not, such as secondary schools and further education colleges.

Following a full week of returns, we analysed return patterns and developed a new methodology as follows:

- For settings that responded that day, we record i) whether they are open or closed to vulnerable children and critical workers, and ii) whether they are open or closed to children from wider years, or if this is not applicable.
- For settings that did not respond that day, but have since 1 June:
  - If they reported that they planned to be closed on the next working day, they are assumed to be closed. Settings are asked this question separately for i) children of critical workers and vulnerable children and ii) children from wider years. Therefore settings are categorised separately accordingly.
  - If their most recent return was the previous day and they reported that they planned to open, it is assumed they have remained open.
  - If the setting is normally open to wider years, their most recent return was prior to the previous day and they reported that they planned to open for one or both groups – 40% are assumed to be open to children of critical workers and vulnerable children only and 30% are assumed to be open to these children and those from wider years.
  - If the setting is not normally open to wider years, their most recent return was prior to the previous day and they reported that they planned to open then 50% are assumed to be open.
- For settings normally open to wider years that have never responded, it is assumed 40% are open to children of critical workers and vulnerable children only and 30% are assumed to be open to these children and those from wider years.
- For settings not normally open to wider years that have never responded, it is

assumed 50% have remained open.

- Attendance rates are calculated for each individual setting type and use 2019/20 census returns to calculate proportions of all pupils on roll. This is likely to over-estimate attendance in cases where settings are caring for pupils from other settings. This practice may have increased during the Easter break. Analysis of returns suggested the likely effect of this was less than 0.1%.
- When calculating attendance rates for non-responding settings that are assumed open, similar rates are assumed as responding open settings.

To arrive at these assumptions, a random sample of 125 non-responding settings was chosen, stratified by school type and region. Information about the open status of 51 of these schools was captured by contacting them by phone on 4 June. Information about a further 50 settings was obtained via school websites.

Additional assumption checking was carried out to better understand the impact of varying the assumptions on each setting type. Adjusting all assumptions by  $\pm 10\%$  changes the estimated open settings by around 3%, whilst it has a negligible effect on the attendance rate ( $<0.5\%$ ).

Additional assumption checking was carried out to better understand the impact of varying the assumptions on each setting type. Adjusting all assumptions by 10 percentage points<sup>12</sup> changes the estimated open rates by between 2 and 5 percentage points, with the exception of further education settings and independent schools, where open rates changed between 7 and 8 percentage points. This reflects the low response rates among these settings. The impact on estimated attendance rates by setting type was negligible – less than 1 percentage point for all settings.

Unadjusted data from 1 to 5 June has been made available in the accompanying data tables for comparisons with adjusted figures.

### **Data for children of critical workers**

Schools are asked to provide a count of the number of children of critical workers attending.

The proportion of children of critical workers in attendance is based on an estimate of the number of pupils who have a critical worker parent derived from the Labour Force Survey.

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<sup>12</sup> Note that this adjusts the number of settings who typically have pupils in nursery, reception or years 1 or 6 that are assumed open by 20 percentage points and all other settings by 10 percentage points. For example, if all assumptions are reduced by 10 percentage points, the figures used are:

- For settings normally open to wider years that have never responded, it is assumed 30% are open to children of critical workers and vulnerable children only and 20% are assumed to be open to these children and those from wider years.
- For settings not normally open to wider years that have never responded, it is assumed 40% have remained open.

The number of children of critical workers in attendance may be being under-reported from 1 June. This is because some settings may not be counting all children of critical workers who are now attending in nursery, reception or years 1 or 6.

### **Data for vulnerable children**

Before 1 June, schools were asked to provide a count of the number of vulnerable children attending. Schools were also asked to provide a breakdown of both these figures for pupils with an EHC Plan and those with a social worker. Some schools provided a count of critical workers with either EHC Plans or a social worker but did not include these in their respective counts for vulnerable children. Therefore, our estimate of the number of vulnerable children may be an undercount. The data suggests the effect of this is c5%.

The proportion of vulnerable children in attendance was based on an estimate of the total number of pupils who are either classed as Children in Need or have an EHCP. This is derived from the Children in Need and School Censuses.

From 1 June, a total number of vulnerable children attending is no longer collected. Schools are asked to provide a count of the number of children of critical workers, with an EHCP, with a social worker and otherwise vulnerable attending.

Figures are reported here for each of these group of vulnerable children separately. We are developing a methodology to report the total number of vulnerable children in attendance that accounts for the overlap between these groups and will publish these on 16 June.

### **Local authority early years survey**

LAs are asked to complete an online survey from the DfE on provision in early years settings twice weekly (by 6pm on a Monday and Thursday). Each data point represents the most recent data submitted by an LA up until 6pm on any given day. Where no data has been submitted by an LA since Thursday 16 April then an estimate is produced.

### **Validation of submitted data**

Basic validity checks of LA data returns were conducted and checks were carried out to ensure that no LA was double-counted. Comparisons were made to other reported data to provide reassurance that the data is a fair reflection of the national picture.

### **Response rate and non-response methodology**

The response rate by LAs to the survey on Thursday 28 May at 6pm was 85%. The data returned was then “grossed up” based on either data previously submitted or data the Department for Education already holds to estimate the total numbers of open settings and children attending those settings:

- The total national numbers of early years settings, vulnerable children and children of critical workers were estimated from a combination of data including Ofsted data and DfE data, and then broken down to LA level. For LAs which have responded previously we carry forward their data submitted up to one week previously. For LAs never responding, or not responding in the past week, we estimate proxy figures for the number of settings open and closed and the

number of children attending. These estimates are based on the proportions of settings open and closed and children attending reported by LAs who did respond. A national estimate is arrived by combining the reported and estimated figures. From 1 June this methodology was revised to take into account the wider opening of early years settings to include all children, whereas previously the methodology for estimating the number of children attending early years settings was based on estimates of the numbers of critical worker children and vulnerable children only.

- Where the LA reported on fewer providers than in the DfE estimate, the providers for which no information was submitted have been assumed to be in the 'unknown' category.
- The take-up percentages are calculated using estimates of the number of providers in an LA and the estimated number of children in a childcare place in term time.
- This approach assumes no non-response bias from LAs not submitted data.
- The sum of the estimates for open and closed providers is not the total number of providers nationally, as the status of some providers is unknown.
- The estimation methodology will be refined as more data is collected.

### **Overlap between education settings and local authority early years surveys**

Because the LA survey covered school-based early years settings, there is likely to be a very small degree of overlap between the early years data collection and the schools attendance data which includes school-based nurseries. We do not have enough detailed data to assess the size of this overlap during the current Covid-19 outbreak, but for context, around a third of children who were in a funded childcare place in January 2019 were taking their place at a school-based provider. Children currently attending school-based early years settings will be counted in both collections.

### **Methodology for estimating total number of early years providers**

Following the publication on 21 April, DfE has improved its methodology for estimating the total national number of EY providers in England. This has resulted in fewer settings overall with unknown status, which has in turn decreased the percentage of settings with 'unknown' status. As a result, the percentage of open and closed settings have both increased compared with using the previous methodology. Using the previous approach, 26% settings were estimated to be open, 45% were closed and 30% unknown on 16 April. The new methodology changes these figures to 32%, 56% and 12% respectively. The number of providers estimated to be open is unaffected by this methodological change. The time series has been created using the new methodology only.

### **Useful links**

- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): attendance recording for educational settings](#)

- [Supporting vulnerable children and young people during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) outbreak - actions for educational providers and other partners](#)
- [Actions for early years and childcare providers during the coronavirus outbreak](#)
- The [Prime Minister's speech](#) regarding closing education settings
- Latest published information on [school and pupil numbers](#)
- [Actions for education and childcare settings to prepare for wider opening from 1 June 2020](#)

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