



Department  
for Education

# **School preference (child level) data collections 2014**

**Information for local authorities on  
the submission of 2014 secondary  
and primary level school preference  
and offer data**

**November 2013**

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Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at [service request form](#). Urgent questions during the submission period can be sent by email to: [school.preference@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:school.preference@education.gsi.gov.uk) . This document and the technical specification for the data can be downloaded from the DfE website via: [school preferences data collections](#)

# 1 Section A: Summary of collection

## 1.1 Scope of this document

This guide provides local authorities (LAs) with information about the 2014 secondary and primary school preference and offers child-level data collections. It is intended to assist LAs with returning the required data to the Department for Education (DfE, or hereon in 'the department') and provides information on the scope of the two collections, the data that should be included in the respective primary and secondary returns, and the mechanism for submission. This guide should be read in conjunction with the relevant instructions on how to use the department's COLLECT web-based system and also the technical specification.

## 1.2 Background to the school preference data collection

For a number of years the department has collected annually from LAs secondary school admissions data, at LA level, detailing the applications and offers made for entry into secondary school, as at the March national offer day. Prior to 2014, primary applications and offers were out of the scope of the collection, due to the absence of a primary national offer day. 2014, however, sees the first primary school national offer day on 16 April.

The new data will help the department to identify areas where preference rates are in need of improvement and to monitor progress in increasing choice and competition for good primary and secondary schools.

## 1.3 Summary of changes to the collection from 2014 onwards

For 2014, the coverage of the data collection has been extended and the department now requires LAs to return:

- Separate data returns for primary **and** secondary applications/offers, as at the respective national offer day;
- Individual child-level information in respect of every application or offer that has been made, instead of LA aggregate data.
- Only the largest admissions year should be included in each return.
- The LA has five days from the national offer day (on which the data must however be based) to make the submission.

LAs are no longer required to submit an aggregate report with information at overall LA level, as in previous years. **The two child level data collections replace this previous format.** Please see section B of this guide for the regulations underlying these changes,

and section C for further details on the information that is now required for each applicant or child made an offer.

## **1.4 Uses of the data**

The changes to the data collection will allow the department to obtain more detailed datasets about school preferences and offers, from which statistics at LA level can be calculated. Having access to the underlying data will also make it easier for the department to ensure the accuracy of the statistics produced regarding children receiving first, second preference offers and so forth.

The preference rates for all LAs are currently published in an annual Statistical First Release (SFR) and are used to inform departmental policy making on school choice and access. The child level data will give additional detail which will bring significant benefits in terms of monitoring progress in increasing choice and competition and identifying areas where improvement can be made. The additional primary level collection will allow these benefits to be realised for the first time for primary school provision.

The LA level statistics from the new data collection will continue to be published in a similar format to previous years, but from 2014 the SFR will include two separate tables to cover primary and secondary figures for each LA, and will be published later to allow for the collection and quality assurance of the primary level data. There are no plans at this point to publish school level information as part of this SFR.

## 2 Section B: The regulations

The Information as to Provision of Education (England) Regulations 2008 (SI 2008/4) (as amended by The Information as to the Provision of Education (England) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2013) require LAs to submit (separately) data on primary and secondary school applications made and offers met in relation to children resident in their area. Data should be provided for all schools types who are part of the common admissions process, including community, foundation, voluntary controlled and voluntary aided schools and academies. Free schools, which are academies, should be included but are allowed to opt out of the common admissions process in their first year if required. Where information is available on applications to a new free school then it should be included if at all possible.

Regulation 5 requires an LA to provide the Secretary of State with two reports containing the information specified in Schedule 2 to the regulations, for a) secondary school applications and b) primary school applications. The secondary school report should report on applications made and offers met on 1 March each year (or, in any year in which 1 March is not a working day, on the next working day) containing information correct as that date. The primary school report should report on applications made and offers met on primary level offer day of 16 April 2014, again containing information correct as that date.

In each case the information should relate to applications for admission to a) secondary school or b) primary school during the school year commencing in the August or September of that calendar year.

Schedule 2 specifies the information to be contained in each report.

The regulations are available at [Legislation](#).

### 3 Section C: Changes since March 2013

**The changes to this information since it was issued for the 2013 collection are:**

1. There will now be two separate collections, the first to cover entry into secondary school and the second, new, collection to cover entry into primary school.
2. The primary school collection will be based on the position as at the new primary level national offer day of 16 April 2014.
3. The data collection mechanism will now be the COLLECT (Collections On-Line for Learning, Education, Children and Teachers) system rather than the spreadsheet format used for secondary preferences in 2013 and earlier.
3. LAs have five working days, including the national offer day itself, to provide the returns. However, each return must be based on the position as at offer day.
4. LAs should only return admissions data for a single entry year. The minority of LAs who have two admissions years at either primary or secondary level (e.g. because of middle deemed secondary schools) must submit only the year with the largest intake. Previously data could be submitted for more than one year, but only the figures for the largest year were included in the final dataset. Thus the information used in the final dataset and SFR will remain the same.
5. Returns will be made on a child level basis rather than an LA total as before. For each child the following information will be required:
  - Personal details (UPN, surname, first name, middle names, date of birth and gender);
  - Home postcode and address details (either BS7666 or line address format);
  - The LA and Estab of each preference expressed, in preference order;
  - The LA and Estab of the school offered;
  - Whether the application was made online (True/False/blank);
  - Whether the record is for a child who did not make an application but to whom the local authority has decided to make an offer (True/False);
  - Whether any of the child's preferences could be met (True/False/blank).
6. A figure for the total number of either a) secondary or b) primary school places available within the local authority should also be provided.

## 4 Section D: Applications to be included in the return

**Each year parents apply to their LA for a place for their child at one of their preferred schools. Information on how applications which fall outside the normal timetable and process should be dealt with is given here:**

1. On time applications

Only those applications which the LA treated as if they were on time should be included. Applications which arrived after the closing date should therefore only be included if they were treated by the LA as if they are on time.

2. Schools in another LA

It is the responsibility of an LA to record the details of applications by and offers to all applicants living in their area (home applicants). This will include applications made by home applicants for schools in another local authority area.

3. Withdrawn applications

If a parent withdraws their application before an offer is made, their application should not be counted in the return.

4. Middle schools

Middle schools will be part of the admissions process applicable to whether they are deemed to be primary or secondary schools, and will be processed as such within the LA. If as a result of having middle schools an LA has more than one admissions year at either primary or secondary level they are required to submit preference and offer data at the appropriate level in respect of the year which has the most places available. For example, if an LA has 3,000 places available as part of the common admissions process for entry into year 7, and 1,000 places for entry into year 9, then only the figures for year 7 should be provided in the secondary level return.

5. All through schools

Applications for entry into all-through schools should be recorded as part of the admissions process within which they are made and processed. Thus children applying, as part of the primary admissions process, for entry into the first year of the all-through school will be recorded in the primary return. Children applying to enter the school at the secondary entry point for the LA (normally year 7) will be recorded in the secondary return. Children already attending the school who are automatically provided with a place at secondary level, and did not have to complete a common application form, do not need to be included.



## 6. Additional preferences

If (for example) an LA allows most parents to express four preferences but allows a small number of parents to express five preferences owing to their particular circumstances, those parents who expressed five preferences should be counted as if they expressed four preferences. If they are offered a place at their fifth preference school, this should be counted as if they were offered a place at their fourth preference school.

The department uses the data that LAs submit on the number of preferences expressed (between three and six) to work out how many preferences each local authority offers. If the parents that expressed five preferences were not counted as if they had expressed four preferences, it may result in the published data stating that the authority offered five preferences when it would be more appropriate for it state that the authority offered four preferences.

## 7. Preference offered

The highest preference offer should be recorded in all cases, regardless of whether that offer was subsequently accepted or whether that offer was later withdrawn.

## 8. Appeals

An appeal against the school offered can only be instigated once the offer made is known by the parents, who then have 14 days to decide whether to appeal. This return is based on national offer day and therefore any appeals will not have been logged at that point. They should therefore be ignored.

## 9. Re-expressing preferences

Any offer that does not relate to a preference expressed on the original common admissions form (for example where parents have been allowed to re-express their preference) should be recorded the same as for all offers, and the NoPreferenceMet field should be populated with 'True'.

## 5 Section E: Further detail on the information to be included

Regulations Schedule 2 paragraph	Field	Description	Additional notes
1	DFE Number	3 digit number allocated to each local authority with education responsibilities	
2	LA Name	Name of local authority	
3	Report date	<p>For the secondary return 1 March (or the next working day where 1 March is not a working day).</p> <p>For the primary return 16 April (or the next working day where 16 April is not a working day).</p>	The report date should refer to the relevant national offer day.

n/a	National Curriculum year of admission	<p>The National Curriculum year to which the data relates.</p> <p>At primary level this will be reception year (R) in most cases.</p> <p>At secondary level the NC year will be Year 7 for most local authorities, but may be different for the minority of local authorities with a 3 tier school system.</p> <p>In either return, where there is more than one year of admission, e.g. to middle school and upper school, records should be provided for children entering the largest admission year only.</p>	<p>In previous years, if data for more than one admissions year was provided by an LA, only that for the largest intake was entered into the dataset and included in the SFR. Therefore the requirement to only submit a single year's data will not affect the information reported on each LA or the timeseries dataset.</p>
4	Sum of admission numbers	<p>The total number of secondary or primary school places available in the area of the authority for the entry year for which a return is being made. To include all places available, whether allocated through national offer day or not.</p>	<p>The Planned Admission Number (PAN) figure for all schools should be used, regardless of whether any of their places were not available to national offer day applicants (e.g. because they were allocated to an SEN pupil with a statement).</p>

n/a	Child level data	<p>In previous years an LA total was submitted for each field giving total numbers of applications, 1<sup>st</sup> preference offers, etc. These totals will no longer need to be calculated by the authority. Instead, individual data should be submitted for every child where either a) an application for a school place was submitted on their behalf (regardless of whether an offer was made), or b) where no application was made but the authority decided to make an offer of a school place. The information provided for each child (see below) will allow the department to calculate the total number of offers, preference offers etc. at LA level.</p>	<p>Children with an SEN statement that names a school should not be included in this return.</p> <p>Do not count any applications which were treated as late applications. However, it is acceptable to include any applications which arrived after the application closing date but which the LA treated in the same way as on time applications.</p>
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5a-h	Personal details	<p>For each child, provide their personal details, consisting of:</p> <p>Surname, first name and middle name (if any);</p> <p>UPN (if any);</p> <p>Date of Birth;</p> <p>Gender;</p> <p>Home address;</p> <p>Admissions entry year group (see NC year of admissions details above).</p>	<p>It would be expected that secondary level pupils would have a UPN number, although there may be exceptions. At primary level, the children will generally not have a UPN but where one has been allocated it should be provided.</p> <p>The address must include the home postcode and then the address in either B7666 or line format. If provided in B7666 then PAON, street and at least one of locality, town or administrative area, or post town should be provided. If provided in line format then at least two address lines must be provided – all in addition to the postcode.</p>
6	Online applications	For each applicant, whether their application was submitted online.	

7	Preferences expressed	For each child for whom school preferences were expressed on their application, provide the LA and DfE Estab number of each preference in the rank order in which they were submitted.	<p>For each applicant, no school should be listed as a preference more than once.</p> <p>The number of preferences entered should be no more than the number allowed by your authority (between three and six).</p> <p>Please see the technical notes for details of the preference order in which the data should be submitted for each child.</p>
8a-c	Offers	<p>For each child, state (Y/N) whether an application was made on their behalf in the NonApplicantOffer field.</p> <p>Where an offer was made to a child, submit the LA and DfE Estab number of the offer.</p>	<p>Some authorities, if they are aware of pupils currently in one of their schools who are of an age to be moving to secondary school, but for whom an application has not been received, will make them an offer of an available place at one of their schools. This is not expected to be a common occurrence.</p> <p>It is expected that an offer of a school place will have been made to the vast majority of applicants.</p>
9	Preference offer	For each applicant, state (Y/N) whether the offer made was of one of their preferred schools.	<p>For this field – NoPreferenceMet - a positive (Y) response is required when no preference offer could be made to the applicant. If an offer of a preferred school was made the entry should be N.</p> <p>Where an application was not made for the child, but the authority has decided to make them an offer, this field should be left blank.</p>

Other			
	Subject	Description	
A	Time limit for submitting return	You can submit your return up to five working days after national offer day – i.e. by Friday 7 March for the secondary return and Thursday 24 April for the primary return. However, the return must be based on the position on national offer day	
B	Which offers to include in the return	All offers made must be included, whether they are of a preferred school or not and even if you are aware that the parents are intending to turn the offer down.	

## 6 Section F: Providing information about the local context

The department would welcome any local contextual information that LAs can provide alongside the data submissions that they feel may add value and background information to the data. This can be provided by email

using: [secondary.preference@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:secondary.preference@education.gsi.gov.uk)

For example, alongside the routine validation checks the data will undergo when submitted to COLLECT<sup>1</sup>, the department will carry out a number of additional verification checks on the data submitted including, at secondary level, checking it against the data submitted for the previous year. Therefore, it would be particularly helpful if LAs could provide an explanation of instances where, for secondary schools, their data is significantly different from the previous year's data e.g. if there is a significant change in the number of applications made or the percentage of preferences met. Another example of useful information would be if the authority has any new free schools who did not take part in the common admissions process.

Any such contextual information should be provided to the same deadline as the data collections – Friday 7 March for secondary and Thursday 24 April for primary.

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<sup>1</sup> For details of the validation checks see the technical specification (available via the [school preference data collection webpage](#))



## 7 Section G: Submitting the data

### 7.1 Methodology

In a change to previous years, the data will need to be submitted via [COLLECT](#) (Collections On-Line for Learning, Education, Children, and Teachers) from the department's website. This is the route by which a number of data collections from LAs and schools are sent securely to the department.

Sections C & D and the technical specification (available via the [school preference data collection webpage](#)) give details of the data which is required to be provided. Once you have generated and checked the data, through your MIS system, the data should be loaded and submitted in COLLECT. Note LA level totals no longer need to be provided.

Details of how to set up COLLECT access, including changes to accessing the system, are found in Annex A. A separate COLLECT guide will be published shortly giving details of how to submit the school preferences datasets.

### 7.2 Coverage

Every child for whom an application for a school place has been submitted (regardless of whether an offer was made), and every child where no application was submitted but the local authority decided to make an offer of a school place, should be included in the return.

### 7.3 Deadline

LAs are required to submit the data within five working days of national offer day. In 2014 secondary national offer day falls on Monday 3 March and data should be submitted by the end of Friday 7 March. Primary offer date is Wednesday 16 April and, allowing for Easter, data should be submitted by the end of Thursday 24 April. Note the data should reflect the position as on offer day, not on the day on which it was submitted (if later).

### 7.4 Validation checks

On loading of your LA's data the COLLECT system will automatically run a number of verification checks and you will receive an error notification if any of them fail and the data requires amendment. You may also receive a query notification, to ask you to check certain figures to ensure they are correct – for example, where the values look unusual but could logically still be correct in some situations.

If this occurs you will need to correct the errors in the data and then resubmit the data to the department until all the error notices are no longer present. If the corrections have

been successful, COLLECT will show no further error notices and the data can be authorised. If any queries do not require amendments, COLLECT has the functionality for LAs to add a note to the data item, specifying that it is correct.

## 7.5 Further checks

Additional sense checks will be undertaken by the department and where there are concerns or queries about the figures, the department will contact the LA concerned to ask for further information. This may result in rejecting the submissions for changes to be made. We will complete these additional checks by 14 March (secondary return) or 2 May (primary return).

As described in section E, if there is anything about your LA's data, at either primary or secondary level, which you think may give the department cause to query the figures, then it would be advisable to enter notes in COLLECT or send an email giving further information. An example of this would be if, at secondary level, you are returning figures for a different NC year to that submitted previously (for example because of a move away from a middle school system).

## 7.6 Authorisation

For each return, once the data has been checked and accepted by the department the status on COLLECT will change to Authorised and your LA's return will be complete.

## 7.7 Further assistance

The helpdesk will be available by email if you have any queries about this collection. They can be reached by emailing [secondary.preference@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:secondary.preference@education.gsi.gov.uk) or, for queries concerning COLLECT, by submitting a query at [Service feedback form](#)

## 7.8 September submission

Previously an LA could choose to submit an additional collection in September. Now a September collection is neither required nor requested by the department.

## **8 Section H: Publication of the data**

### **8.1 Changes**

The LA level statistics will continue to be published in a similar format to previous years, but from 2014 the SFR will include two separate tables, with commentary, to cover primary and secondary figures for each LA. The SFR will be published later to allow for the collection and quality assurance of the primary level data.

### **8.2 Level of publication**

Although data will be collected at pupil level, the department will continue to publish school application and offer data at LA level, as before.

### **8.3 Where will the data be published?**

The department will publish the data on the Publications: Statistics section of the gov.uk website, as an Official Statistic, at: [publications: statistics](#). The secondary level data will allow LAs and admission forums to compare outcomes with previous years, or compare themselves with areas with similar characteristics, and will contribute to local discussion on how to improve the system and provision of places for parents. Primary level data is being collected for the first time in 2014 but will over time contribute to a new timeseries to be used in the same way.

## Annex A

### Requesting COLLECT access and registering contact details

To access the COLLECT system please copy the URL [secure access](#), paste it into your browser and save it as a favourite for ease of access throughout the collection.

An enhanced version of COLLECT secure access is being launched on 9 December 2013, and will be in place for this collection. This enhanced version will introduce an 'approver' role within each organisation to allow authorised users in Schools and LAs to create and administer accounts for individuals to access connected systems with their own set of login credentials.

An **Approver** will have the same access as an **End User** (these are the school and LA users of COLLECT, S2S and KTS, and any future connected applications), but with additional user management privileges to enable them to administer SA accounts for individuals within the same organisation.

Within an LA, the Contact Liaison Officer (CLO) will undertake the approver role and to make this change there will be a "one off" process for the CLO to claim the approver role. This process will be initiated on first log in to secure access from 9 December 2013 and should be undertaken as soon as possible from that date.

There will be no change to the day to day operation of secure access for 'other' i.e. non approver LA users but any requests for new accounts or changes to existing accounts from 9 December should be directed to the respective LA CLO rather than the SA service desk.

Guidance on secure access, including the service request form is available at [secure access guide](#) and this site will shortly be updated to reflect the changes detailed above. Once the approver has been set up in your LA they will be able to arrange any COLLECT accounts required to enable this collection to be submitted.



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This document and the technical specification for the data can be downloaded from the DfE website via: [school preferences data collections](#)

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