



SFR 40/2016, 8 September 2016

Improved school census reporting, including of appeals, in 2016

Following last year's publication, some stakeholders expressed concern that admissions appeals were under reported. An investigation was undertaken and brought to light a likely omission of appeals by voluntary aided, foundation and academy schools within the school census. In response, changes were made to the validation of data entered via the admissions appeal module of the January 2016 school census collection. This resulted in a notable increase in the number of schools reporting appeals. In addition, the 2016 census included verification of the recorded governance (type) of each school – whether they are foundation, academy, voluntary aided or community & voluntary controlled. This resulted in a number of schools being recorded as a different type, affecting appeal rates by type of school (table 2).

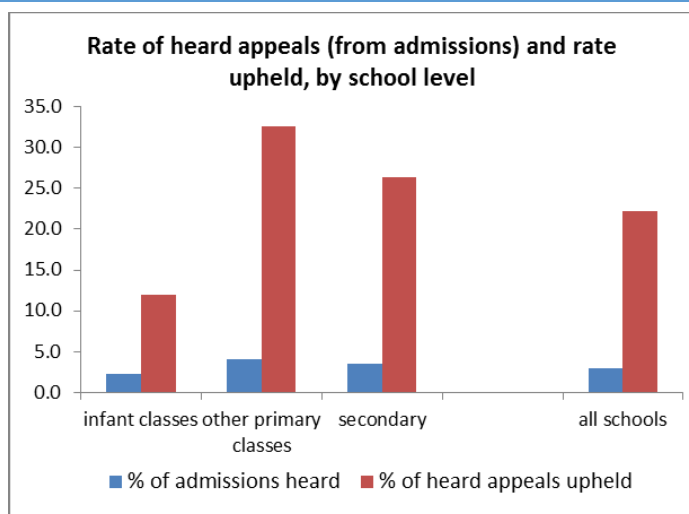
Because of these changes, most of the figures for 2016 are not comparable to those for earlier years and such comparisons are not made in this release. Success rates of appeals heard are unaffected and have been included where appropriate.

See the [statement from the Head of Profession](#) for advice on comparability over time. More information is also available from the methodology document which accompanies this release.

Overall 3.0 per cent of admissions resulted in an appeal being heard

In 2016, there were 62,301 appeals initially lodged, of which 45,784 (3.0 per cent of new admissions) proceeded to a hearing. Ultimately 10,192 (22.3 per cent of those heard) were successful.

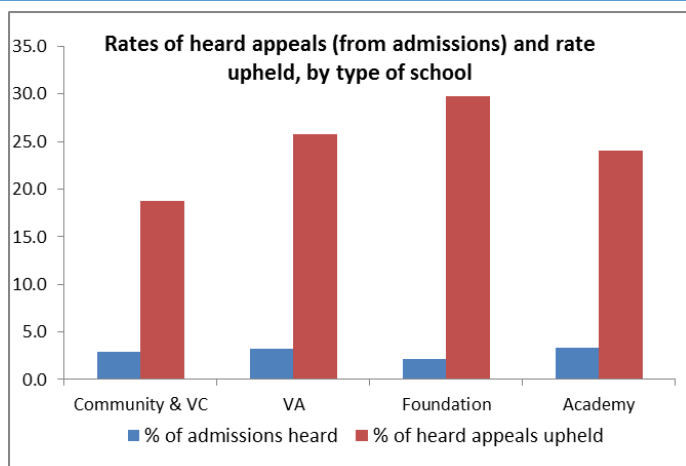
Success rate of appeals varies for primary and secondary schools



Appeals for infant years (reception and years 1 and 2) are the least likely to be successful, with 12.0 per cent of those heard being upheld. Most of these appeals are likely to have been infant class size appeals (where the class size is limited by law to a maximum of 30 children, unless a lawful exemption applies).

Appeals for the other primary years were significantly more likely to be successful in 2016, with 32.5% of those heard being upheld. 26.3% of heard secondary school appeals were upheld. These figures are unaffected by the changes to the data described. Last year 13.1 per cent of infant appeals heard were successful, 33.7 per cent for other primary classes and 27.5 per cent for secondary schools.

Success rates also vary for different school types



The rate of appeals being heard (as a proportion of new admissions) and the chance of their success varies by school type. Overall, the rate of appeals heard was 3.0 per cent, but varied from 2.1 per cent (foundation) to 3.3 per cent (academy).

Once the appeals were heard, those relating to foundation schools were the most likely to be successful at 29.7 per cent of heard appeals. The lowest success rate was 18.8 per cent for community & voluntary controlled schools. The percentage of heard appeals which were successful for all schools was 22.3 per cent.

Advice from Head of Profession on comparability over time

The appeals figures recorded this year are the first to be received since improvements to the school census were made in January 2016. There are two changes:

- Improvements in validation mean that more appeals have been reported to DfE this year. This followed concerns that some voluntary aided, foundation and academy schools were under-reporting the number of appeals. Further prompts in the school census mean that the number this year (62,301 appeals lodged) is higher than in previous years (54,600 lodged). However, as much of this will be due to additional validation it is impossible to determine the actual change in number of appeals between 2015 and 2016.
- Improvements to the recording of school type were also implemented. This affects the recording of the governance of a number of schools. These changes mean that the figures by school type are not comparable with the appeals figures published in 2015.

Given these changes, we cannot infer that there has been an increase in the actual appeal numbers or reach conclusions about changes to the rate of appeals lodged and heard over time.

The rate of appeals which are successful are broadly unaffected by the changes. This is because they are calculated as a percentage of appeals heard. Therefore users of the statistics can say that overall, 22.3 per cent of heard appeals in 2016 were successful, compared to 22.8 per cent in 2015.

Further analysis will be undertaken before the next census in January 2017 to try to quantify the past and future effect on the number of appeals recorded.

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Contents

1.	Headline results	4
2.	Primary results	5
3.	Secondary results	6
4.	List of Tables.....	7
5.	National Statistics	8
6.	Technical Information.....	8
7.	Get in touch.....	8
	Media enquiries	8
	Other enquiries/feedback	8

About this release

This statistical first release (SFR) provides information about admissions appeals. Appeals can be made when an applicant has not received an offer of a place into their first preference school. They can appeal for a place at any school ranked higher than the one they were offered.

The release reports on appeals relating to admissions at the start of the 2015 to 2016 academic year. It is based on appeals lodged with the appropriate admissions authority by 1 September 2015.

The publication details, by school phase, the number and percentage of appeals lodged and the number which are heard by an appeals panel. Of those heard, the number and percentage which are found in the parent's favour (that is, upheld) is also given. The data is additionally broken down by school type (community and voluntary controlled, voluntary aided, foundation and academy) and, separately, by local authority.

Improvements have been made to the 2016 school census which means that the appeal figures and rates are not comparable with those published last year. Therefore the figures have been treated as a break in the time series and have not been measured against figures in previous years. Any rise in the figures reported this year should not be interpreted as an increase in the number of appeals lodged, heard or successful in 2014 and 2015. More details are provided in section the methodology document which accompanies this release.

In this publication

The following tables are included in the SFR:

National tables (Excel .xls)

Local authority tables (Excel .xls)

Underlying data (open format .csv and metadata .txt)

The accompanying quality and methodology information document, provides information on the data sources, their coverage and quality and explains the methodology used in producing the data.

Feedback

We are changing how our releases look and welcome feedback on any aspect of this document at infrastructure.statistics@education.gsi.gov.uk.

1. Headline results

Voluntary aided, foundation and academy schools report their appeals figures in the spring school census. After an investigation into the likely omission of appeals by some schools, the admissions appeals section in the January 2016 census had additional checks added for schools who reported having received no appeals. The subsequent census return showed a notable increase in the proportion of schools reporting that they had received appeals. Analysis of local authority records and previous year's appeal data has shown that at least some of this increase is due to schools reporting their appeals for the first time, rather than a general increase in appeals received. However, the exact breakdown (and how many appeals there would have been in previous years if the census checks had been in place) cannot be specified.

The second data improvement affects the calculation of the appeal rates in table 2. Up to and including 2015 schools recorded their own governance type and this was not verified separately. For this SFR, the appeals data was captured from all relevant schools but the breakdown of the number of pupils admitted to each school type was derived from the governance information provided by the school.

This has been improved in the 2016 census with the schools' governance type now checked against other records, such as edubase, and corrected where necessary. As a consequence a number of schools are recorded as being a different governance, and the number of schools recorded as being a foundation school has increased notably. This change affects the appeals rate by school type reported in table 2 only. The number of new admissions in foundation schools has increased but this is due to the number of schools identified correctly as foundation schools rather than a real increase. Correctly recording these schools as foundation in 2016 will have resulted in a drop in the calculated appeal heard rate as the number of new admissions into foundation schools will be higher.

Table A

Admissions appeals, all maintained and academy schools, 2015-16

Admissions	1,505,774
Admission appeals lodged by parents	
Number	62,301
Percentage of admissions	4.1
Appeals heard by an appeals panel	
Number	45,784
Percentage of admissions	3.0
Appeals decided in parents' favour	
Number	10,192
Percentage of appeals heard	22.3

Overall 62,301 appeals were lodged relating to a school place at the start of the 2015-16 academic year, which was 4.1 per cent of new admissions. These admissions, and appeals relating to them, cover both entry into the first year of a school and also new admissions into other years, for example due to a house move. Not all lodged appeals are heard as an appeal can be withdrawn (for example because the child has been offered a place at the school via the waiting list). This SFR focuses on the number of appeals which actually reach the stage of being heard by the appropriate authority. In 2015-16 this was 45,784, or 3.0 per cent of new admissions.

Overall the number of appeals which were successful was 10,192 - a success rate of 22.3 per cent.

Table B
Appeals heard and upheld, by type of school, 2015-16

	Appeals heard		Appeals upheld	
	Num	%	Num	%
Community & voluntary controlled	18,822	2.9	3,532	18.8
Voluntary aided	5,408	3.2	1,393	25.8
Foundation	1,762	2.1	523	29.7
Academy	19,792	3.3	4,744	24.0
Total	45,784	3.0	10,192	22.3

A detailed breakdown of the number of appeals by the type of school can be found in table 2. Combined figures for community & voluntary controlled schools are provided by local authorities as aggregated totals. They reported the lowest percentage of appeals being upheld (18.8 per cent of those heard). The highest percentage found in favour of the applicant was foundation schools with 29.7 per cent of appeals heard being successful. However, foundation schools had a smaller rate of appeals heard – 2.1 per cent of new admissions into foundation schools – than other school types (between 2.9 per cent for community & voluntary schools and 3.3 per cent for academies).

2. Primary school results

At primary level the rate of appeals lodged was 3.8 per cent of new admissions, with 2.6 per cent heard by an appeals panel.

The primary level data is further split into infant (reception and years one and two) and other primary classes (generally years three to six). For the infant classes, the rate of appeals lodged was 3.3 per cent of admissions into those years, with 2.3 per cent then heard by an appeals panel. For the other primary classes the figures were higher at 6.1 per cent and 4.1 per cent respectively.

There are legal restrictions in place which require infant classes (reception and years 1 and 2) to be limited to 30 children. This reduces the possibilities for appeal for these years, and indeed the figures show that the success rate was notably lower for infant years (12.0 per cent) than they were for the other primary years (32.5 per cent).

There was further variation in the rate of appeals heard and successful within both infant and other primary levels by school type. For infant classes, 9.5 per cent of appeals heard relating to community and voluntary controlled schools were successful, compared to 19.1 per cent for voluntary aided schools. For other primary classes, however, the school type with the lowest success rate was academy schools at 28.0 per cent, rising to 38.5 per cent for foundation schools.

Figures are provided at LA level, both for infant classes, total primary appeals (including the infant appeals), and secondary classes. Because the number of appeals heard in each local authority can be very small, large differences in rates of appeals upheld (calculated as percentage of the appeals heard) can be driven by the results of a small number of appeals. Therefore some caution should be used when comparing figures within this dataset.

As an example of this, the proportion of appeals upheld for all primary schools varied at local authority level from 54.0 per cent (Halton, based on 63 appeals heard) to 0.0 per cent (Kensington & Chelsea and Brighton & Hove). The latter two heard 25 and 45 appeals retrospectively, whereas the local authority with

the highest number of appeals heard for all primary schools was Birmingham with 1,373 (of which 4.8 per cent were upheld).

3. Secondary school results

At secondary level the rate of appeals heard was higher than at primary, at 4.5 per cent of new admissions, with 3.6 per cent being heard by an appeals panel.

The success rate was higher than for primary schools as a whole at 26.3 per cent. However, a better comparison is against other primary classes, as these do not have the restrictions of infant class sizes. Other primary class appeals were more likely to be successful, at 32.5 per cent against 26.3 per cent.

As for primary appeals, the breakdown of appeals by school type shows a notable variation. Foundation secondary schools had the lowest rate of appeals heard, 2.4 per cent, but the highest rate of those being successful at 33.5 per cent. Voluntary aided schools had the highest proportion of appeals heard (4.6 per cent of new admissions), but it was academy schools which had the lowest success rate (25.0 per cent of appeals heard being upheld).

Again the local authority data showed significant variation, both in the number of appeals heard and in the success rates for those that were. However, a small number of appeals being heard can affect the figures significantly. For example, Knowsley had 100 per cent of their secondary appeals upheld, but this related to just two appeals. The next highest local authority, Sunderland, had 97.1 per cent of 35 heard appeals being upheld.

At the other end of the scale, the lowest appeals success rate was Lewisham with 1.6 per cent (of 64 hearings) being upheld. The local authority with the highest number of appeals heard was Kent with 2,132 (of which 38.0 per cent were upheld).

4. List of tables

The following tables are available in Excel format on the department's statistics [website](#):

National tables

Table 1

Total appeals by parents against non-admission of their children to primary and secondary local authority maintained schools and academies, entry into the start of the 2015/16 academic year, England.

Table 2

Appeals by parents against non-admission of their children to primary and secondary local authority maintained schools and academies, by type of school, entry into the start of the 2015/16 academic year, England

Local authority tables

Table 3

Appeals by parents against non-admission of their children to primary and secondary local authority maintained schools and academies, entry into the start of the 2015/16 academic year, by local authority area.

When reviewing the tables, please note that:

- The time series usually provided in table 1 has been removed because the improvements to the data which means that 2015/16 appeals is not comparable with the previous two years.
- Increased flexibility (through the academy and free school programmes) allows schools to choose their own school terms, which could include starting in August, and a number of schools exercise this option. To allow for this the admissions totals used in this SFR have been calculated including august admissions.
- The number of new admissions is calculated using the pupil level January 2016 school census and is based on the pupils' entry dates and the school they are recorded as attending, both in 2016 and also in the previous academic year. Schools converting to academies or amalgamating (for example individual infant and nursery schools combining into a single primary school) sometimes change both the entry dates of all of their existing pupils and their school codes. All attempts have been made to allow for this when calculating the number of new admissions but it is possible that for a very small number of schools the number of new admissions has been over-counted.
- The Code of Practice for Official Statistics requires we take reasonable steps to ensure that our published or disseminated statistics protect confidentiality. These data tables have been assessed as not requiring suppression to preserve confidentiality.

5. National statistics

The United Kingdom Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

Designation can be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics:

- meet identified user needs;
- are well explained and readily accessible;
- are produced according to sound methods, and
- are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.

Once statistics have been designated as National Statistics it is a statutory requirement that the Code of Practice shall continue to be observed.

The Department has a set of [statistical policies](#) in line with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

6. Technical information

A quality and methodology information document accompanies this SFR. This provides further information on the data sources, their coverage and quality and explains the methodology used in producing the data, including how it is validated and processed.

7. Get in touch

Media enquiries

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Department
for Education



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Reference: [SFR 40/2016]



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