



Department
for Education

Phonics screening check data collection guide

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Glossary

ASP	Analyse School Performance (ASP) provides interactive analysis of school and pupil performance data for schools.
COLLECT	Collections On-Line for Learning, Education, Children and Teachers (COLLECT) is a web based data collection tool that will be familiar to those who participated in School Census. COLLECT has been developed and made available by the DfE via DfE Sign-in and facilitates the data collection process. COLLECT enables the transfer of data between local authorities and the DfE. COLLECT includes reports that monitor the quality and completeness of data returns. Validation checking and error reporting is also built into COLLECT.
CSV	A CSV format data file is a text file consisting of a number of text records. Text values are separated by a comma and can optionally be enclosed in double quotes.
CTF	A common transfer file (CTF) is a file that contains statutory information about a child that should be transferred when they move schools and includes unique pupil number (UPN), surname, forename, date of birth, sex, together with other information, for example, assessments, attendance, special educational needs (SEN) and contacts. A complete list of fields can be found in the CTF guide notes .
MIS	Management information system(s) – propriety software system(s) used by schools and local authorities to collect, validate, store, and analyse a range of pupil, school, and workforce data.
XML	XML is the 'EXtensible Markup Language'. It improves the functionality of the web by letting you identify your information in a more accurate, flexible, and adaptable way. XML contains a header followed by a repeating group of data. Government Interoperability Framework encourages the use of XML for data.

Introduction

Purpose of this document

This guide outlines the main requirements and submission arrangements for the 2024 phonics screening check data collection.

This guide relates to the collection of data for:

- pupils in year 1 in the 2023 to 2024 academic year eligible to take part in the phonics screening check; and
- pupils in year 2 who have not previously met the expected standard for phonics decoding and as such are required to take the check.

The phonics screening check will be administered by schools during the week commencing Monday 10 June 2024. The deadline for submission of data to the Department of Education (DfE) by local authorities is Friday 19 July 2024.

This guide is provided to help local authorities and schools:

- understand the purpose of the collection and their legal duties;
- populate their systems with the required data for the collection;
- complete the phonics screening check data return for 2024.

Further guidance to help local authorities and schools return the necessary data to the DfE is provided in the [phonics screening check technical specification](#).

Statutory basis for the collection

The phonics screening check is a statutory assessment for all pupils in year 1. Pupils who do not achieve the expected standard in year 1 should receive support from their school and retake the check in year 2. Pupils who were absent or disapplied from the check in year 1, or did not take the check for other reasons, should also take the check in year 2.

Data from the phonics screening check data collection is used by DfE to publish [statistics](#) at national and local authority level. School level analysis will be made available to schools on Analyse School Performance (ASP) via [DfE Sign-in](#).

The pupil level data collection from all state-funded schools including academies, free schools and special schools is a statutory requirement of the Education (School Performance Information) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014.

Since the data collection is statutory, schools and local authorities do not need to obtain consent from parents for the provision of information to DfE and are protected from any legal challenge that they are breaching a duty of confidence.

Legal duties under General Data Protection Regulation

Privacy notices

The UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) mandates certain safeguards regarding the use of personal data by organisations, including the department, local authorities and schools. UK GDPR gives rights to those (known as data subjects) about whom data is processed such as pupils, parents and teachers. This includes:

- the right to know the types of data being held
- why it is being held
- to whom it may be communicated

For the purposes of data protection legislation, the terms 'process', 'processed' or 'processing' apply to any activity involving the personal data, such as:

- collecting
- storing
- sharing
- destroying
- etcetera – please note: this list is not exhaustive

A privacy notice is a good way to be able to meet data subjects' rights and therefore DfE recommend they are used to explain to pupils and staff how their data is being used in data collections including the alternative provision census.

The department provides suggested wording for [privacy notices](#) that schools and local authorities may wish to use. However, where the suggested wording is used, the school / local authority must review and amend the wording to reflect local business needs and circumstances. This is especially important, as data will be processed that is not solely for use within data collections. As such, to comply with UK GDPR, the privacy notice should contain details of all uses of data within the school / local authority, which may include, for example, information used locally for pupil achievement tracking and (where relevant) the use of CCTV data.

The privacy notice should also include [this link](#) to the gov.uk webpage, which provides information on how the department processes data.

It is recommended that the privacy notice be included as part of a registration pack for pupils, induction pack for staff and be made easily accessible on websites for pupils / parents, as well as potentially featured on the staff notice board / intranet.

They do not need to be issued on an annual basis as long as new pupils and staff are made aware of the notices and they are readily available electronically or in paper format.

Data security

Schools and local authorities have a legal duty under UK GDPR to ensure that any personal data they process is handled and stored securely. Further information is available from the [Information Commissioner's Office](#).

If personal data is not properly safeguarded it could damage your reputation and compromise the safety of individuals. Your responsibility as a data controller extends to those who have access to your data beyond your organisation if working on your behalf, for example, if external IT suppliers can remotely access your information.

It is vital all staff with access to personal data:

- understand the importance of protecting personal data;
- receive appropriate initial and refresher training;
- are familiar with their organisation's data security policy; and
- put policies into practice.

Collection requirements

Data collection timetable

Schools must report pupil level data to their local authority. Local authorities will submit data for their schools to the Department of Education (DfE) via COLLECT. The phonics screening check data collection will open on Monday 10 June 2024. The deadline for submission of data to the DfE by local authorities is Friday 19 July 2024.

There will be a limited opportunity for local authorities to submit late or corrected data, and any late data will only be used to update the National Pupil Database (NPD). Amendments will not be accepted after the collection has closed.

Scope of collection

All state-funded schools including academies, free schools and special schools are required to follow the [2024 assessment and reporting arrangements \(phonics screening check\)](#) for the phonics screening check and submit pupil level data to their local authority if they have:

- year 1 pupils in the 2023 to 2024 academic year; and/or
- year 2 pupils in the 2023 to 2024 academic year who did not meet the expected standard for phonics decoding in the 2023 Phonics screening check.

Independent schools are out of scope for the phonics screening check collection.

Data quality

It is important data collected by schools and local authorities is accurate and complete. Data must be submitted for all eligible pupils. Guidance on eligibility can be found in the [2024 assessment and reporting arrangements \(phonics screening check\)](#). The ARA also provides information to local authorities and schools about moderation to ensure practitioner judgements are consistent.

Expected lists of schools

DfE will update COLLECT with an expected list of schools. The expected list is created from the spring School Census and includes all schools with year 1 or year 2 pupils expected to take the check in 2024. Local authorities can view the expected list when the collection goes live on Monday 10 June 2024. Local authorities should check the expected list for missing or incorrect schools and advise DfE using the [data collections service request form](#). If the expected list does not contain the correct schools, local authorities will not be able to load their data returns.

Local authorities will ensure data is collected from every expected school and includes all eligible pupils, including those disapplied (which could include whole cohorts in special schools) or absent for the check.

Year 2 pupils

In April 2024, DfE provided local authorities with an indicative number of year 2 pupils in each school expected to take the phonics screening check. Local authorities were advised to share this information with their schools and use it to validate data returns from schools.

Data requirements

Schools must submit the following data items to their local authority:

- Local authority number (3-digit number)
- Etab number of the school (4-digit number)
- Academic year (this year will be 2024)

Schools must submit the following data items to their local authority for each eligible pupil:

- Surname
- Forename
- Unique Pupil Number (UPN)
- Date of birth
- Sex
- National curriculum year group
- Phonics mark (where pupil took the check - see [Phonics mark](#))
- Phonics outcome (where pupil did not take the check - see [Phonics outcome](#))

Phonics mark

Schools must report the phonics mark for all pupils who have taken the check. This is the actual mark achieved in the check and should be a number in the range 0-40.

Phonics outcome

This field is not required if a pupil met the expected standard (Wa) or is working towards the expected standard (Wt). If these values are included in a file returned to DfE it will be accepted and the Phonics outcome will be removed. For pupils who did not take the check, the Phonics outcome field should be populated with one of the following values as appropriate:

- A (Absent)
- D (Disapplied)
- L (Left the school)
- Q (Maladministration)

Reporting arrangements

School recording and reporting options

The vast majority of schools will use a Management Information System (MIS) to record and export the data required for the data collection. DfE provides a spreadsheet to local authorities for schools that are unable to use their MIS for the collection in exceptional circumstances.

School Management Information System (MIS)

The school Management Information System (MIS) will allow entry of phonics screening check results. There are four stages to the submission of phonics screening check data to DfE:

1. School enters individual pupils' phonics screening check results into their MIS
2. School creates a Common Transfer File (CTF) for secure submission to their local authority
3. Results (in all formats) are loaded into the local authority central database or processing system
4. Local authority software creates school XML export files to load into the phonics data collection on COLLECT

Further details of these stages are included in the [phonics screening check technical specification](#).

Phonics screening check spreadsheet

DfE can provide local authorities with a phonics screening check data collection spreadsheet. The spreadsheet is for schools to use in exceptional circumstances, where they are unable to use their MIS for the recording and submission of data for the phonics screening check collection. The spreadsheet is available on request by local authorities using the [data collection service request form](#).

The spreadsheet Export function creates a CSV file that contains the data to load into the local authority's central processing system. The CSV file cannot be imported directly into COLLECT and must be loaded into the local authority central software. Schools must return data to their local authority using the spreadsheet securely to safeguard personal data.

Local authority data reporting format

Local authorities will submit a XML file for each school which contains data for all eligible pupils. The XML file will be created by local authorities' central processing system software. The separate school XML files will be zipped and imported into COLLECT where the respective school files will be extracted. Successfully loaded data is then subjected to

validation. For more details of the specific validation rules that will be applied, please see the [phonics screening check technical specification](#).

After data validation is complete, local authorities can view their data return, observe the validation outcomes and take action in response to any validation errors. Local authorities may need to query any error with schools and return to COLLECT to correct the data or add a note to explain why it is acceptable. Local authorities must approve the data so DfE can consider it finalised. Three types of errors/queries are flagged in the collection:

- Errors are flagged where a specific criteria has not been met that needs to be corrected, for example a pupil's surname has not been provided.
- OK Errors are flagged where a specific criteria has not been met, but the Department will accept them as valid in certain circumstances.
Queries are flagged where it may be acceptable to not meet criteria in specific circumstances, for example a pupil has a date of birth outside an expected range. These error messages usually start with 'please check', for the LA to confirm if the value is acceptable in this circumstance.

DfE has provided software specifications to commercial suppliers of local authority database processing systems, and to local authorities who design their own systems for this purpose. Local authority processing software will accept a school Management Information System (MIS) CTF export file and the DfE spreadsheet CSV export file and create the necessary DfE export file. Local authorities will fully meet the statutory requirements for the submission of data using appropriate software to create the necessary file.

Use of COLLECT

A [COLLECT user guide](#) is available for local authorities.

DfE Sign-in

User names and passwords for COLLECT are managed by the [DfE Sign-in](#) system. Each local authority has delegated approver(s) who allocate access to departmental systems that use [DfE Sign-in](#). If you require access to the phonics screening check data collection on COLLECT, please contact the delegated approver in your local authority.

More information is available at [Create a DfE Sign-in account](#).

Help and support

For support during the phonics screening check data collection, please contact DfE using the [Data collections service request form](#).



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