



Department
for Education

Early years foundation stage profile 2026

Technical specification version 1.0

December 2025

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Version history

Version	Change history	Author / date
1.0	<p>Changes to the specification for the early years foundation stage profile collection 2025 have been made as listed below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• all dates updated• all links updated	<p>Jon Leyshon 10 December 2025</p>

1. Introduction

This specification covers the return of early years foundation stage profile (EYFSP) to the department for education. These returns will be made using the department's COLLECT system, in XML format. It should be read in conjunction with the current [Common Basic Data set](#) (CBDS) definitions and [assessment components](#).

1.1 Audience and purpose

This specification describes the early years foundation stage profile collection 2026. It will enable local authorities, and software suppliers working on their behalf, to prepare the necessary data and processes to enable data on all children in their reception year in maintained schools and private, voluntary and independent early years settings to be returned to the department.

The following legislation underpins the provision and publication of this information:

- [the Education Act 1996 s29\(3\)](#)

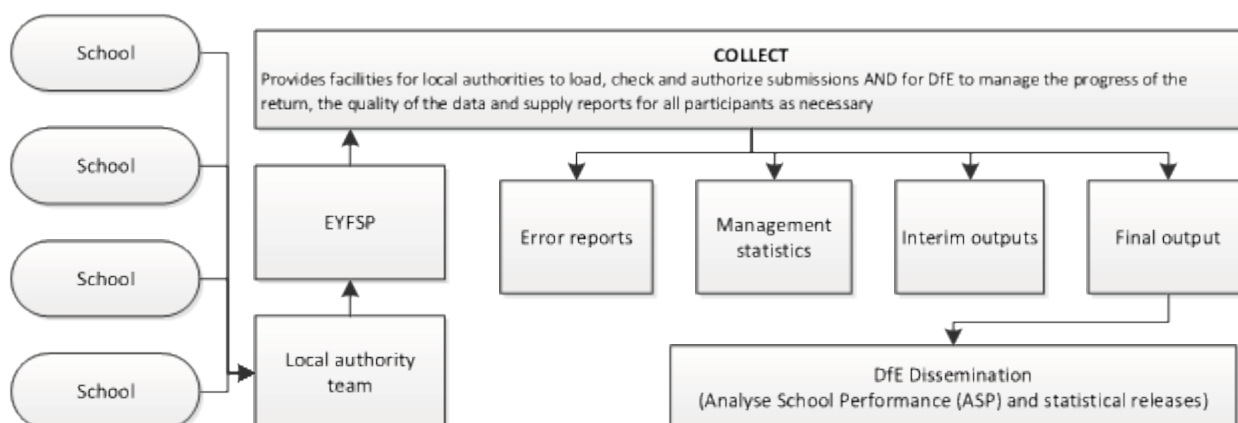
This requirements specification consists of one document containing a narrative, sample XML messages, and validation. Local authorities and suppliers must read this specification in conjunction with the [Common Basic Data Set](#).

1.2 Scope

This data collection process covers any early years provider, including maintained schools or private, voluntary and independent settings, unless the setting has received an exemption from the early years foundation stage framework.

The following diagram outlines the overall scope of the collection:

Figure 1: overall scope of the collection



1.3 Changes for 2026

Changes for the 2026 early years foundation stage profile collection technical specification are:

- all dates updated
- all links updated

1.4 Coverage and timings

The early years foundation stage profile is collected annually and must be completed for all children in the final term of the reception year in which the child reaches ages five (no later than 30 June in that term).

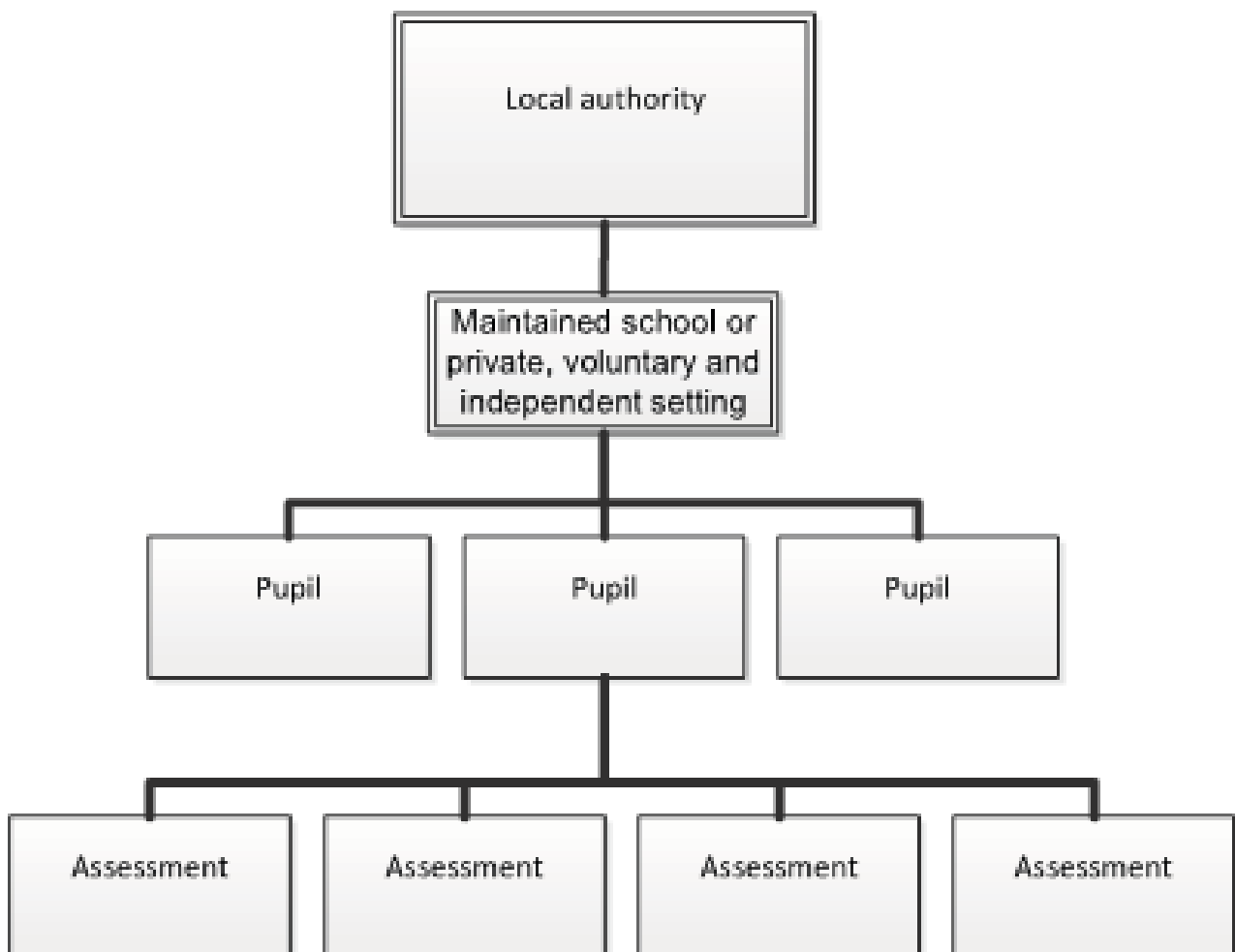
Local authorities will give local guidance on when they require returns from schools / settings to allow the local authority to check and consolidate all data from their schools and private, voluntary and independent settings and return data to the department no later than 31 July 2026.

2. Structure and guidance

2.1 Outline data content

Each return from a local authority will consist of a child level and an establishment level. Each level comprises one or more modules (the term “module” is used to describe a subset of a data level). Both levels will be returned together as a single data return for each school / setting.

Figure 2: outline data structure



2.2 Process

2.2.1 School / settings management information system

A CTF file may be prepared from the school / settings MIS system and exported to the local authority using the school-to-school secure transfer mechanism.

The software will allow the local authority to import into its central management system the CTF created from the school MIS. The validation rules that will be applied to this data are included at [Section 4](#). The local authority software will carry out these checks when the CTF is loaded into the local authority central database / processing system. Any missing subjects or components or results or any invalid values / totals will be reported by the local authority software.

2.2.2 EYFSP framework

Schools/settings are expected to assess all pupils under the framework in the [early years foundation stage profile handbook](#) and return data relating to the early learning goals to the local authority. The valid values within A_Comp (<Component> and <ResultQualifier>) allow selection of the early learning goals and results.

2.2.3 Excel spreadsheet

For those schools / settings without a MIS, a spreadsheet (available from department for education) may be completed and exported to the local authority via school-to-school secure transfer or some other secure transfer mechanism.

The software will also allow the local authority to load into its central management system a CSV file created from an early years foundation stage profile Excel spreadsheet (to be supplied to local authorities by the department for education for distribution as necessary) with the export filename of either “EYFSP_XXXX_26.CSV” from schools or “EYFSP_YYYYYY_26.CSV” from early years’ settings, where XXXX is the department for education school number and YYYYYY is the setting’s unique reference number (this is an early year’s setting example with a 6-digit unique reference number; a school CSV would have a 4-digit establishment number).

Below is an example spreadsheet

Table 1: Excel spreadsheet example

School Name	LEA No	School No	URN	Child's Surname	Child's Forenames (see notes)	UPN (see notes)	Sex (M or F)	Date of Birth (DD/MM/YYYY)
TEST ESTABLISHMENT	555		55555	SURNAME 1	FORENAME 1		M	13/02/2021
TEST ESTABLISHMENT	555		55555	SURNAME 2	FORENAME 2	W222222222222	F	31/12/2020

Home Post code	Communication & Language		Personal, Social and Emotional Development			Physical Development		Literacy			Mathematics		Understanding the world			Expressive Arts and Design	
(see notes)	LAU	S	SR	MS	BR	GMS	FMS	C	WR	W	N	NP	P&P	PCC	NW	CWM	BIE
NE12 3LP	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	2	2	1	1	2	2	2	2
SW2 3AB	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2

Note: LAU = Listening, attention and understanding, S = Speaking, SR = Self-Regulation, MS = Managing Self, BR = Building Relationships, GMS = Gross Motor Skills, FMS = Fine Motor Skills, C = Comprehension, WR = Word Reading, W = Writing, N = Numbers, NP = Numerical Patterns, P&P = Past and Present, PCC = People, Culture and Communities, NW = The Natural World, CWM = Creating With Materials, BIE = Being Imaginative and Expressive.

2.2.4 Paper format

For those settings without access to a secure computer, the local authority may arrange some other paper recording system, and then key the data into the centralised local authority system.

2.2.5 Notes about local authority systems

Where any pupil identifying data or contextual data included in the CTF are already present in the local authority database / processing system, there will be a prompt to ask if the existing data will be overwritten by the CTF or CSV import.

The software will allow the local authority to:

- remove and to add pupils
- amend a pupil's identifying data or summary scale scores that have been loaded, and for the area of learning totals and overall score to be automatically recalculated
- re-import corrected CTF and / or CSV files with a prompt to allow the operator to overwrite existing data

2.3 Creating local authority XML results files of individual pupil data

The software will allow the local authority to create separate XML files of individual pupil data by school / setting to load into COLLECT as necessary, even if they still contain errors. The XML will include the following data items:

- local authority number
- establishment (school number) or unique reference number
- unique pupil number (where present)
- surname
- forename
- sex
- date of birth
- home postcode (where present)
- subject, component and result (which will be one of 1, 2 or A)

The name of the individual school / setting XML file will be:

xxxyyyy_FTF_xxxDfE_001.XML where xxx is the local authority number and yyyy is the school establishment number. (The final 3 digits will only be incremented if another XML is created.)

For private and voluntary settings the name of the XML file will be:

xxxxyyyyyy_FTF_xxxDfE_001.XML where xxx is the local authority number and yyyyyy is the setting unique reference number. (The final 3 digits will only be incremented if another XML is created.)

Please note: private, voluntary and independent settings are required to quote their unique reference number, as used for early years census, when making an early years foundation stage profile submission.

The validation rules are shown in [Section 4](#) on checks will be reported using the error codes and messages specified in this document. The local authority will be given the option to correct the errors and revalidate and recreate the files as necessary.

Local authorities will zip the individual XML files into a single file for importing into COLLECT.

3. Data return formats

The early years foundation stage profile return must be submitted to the department for education in XML format.

Any missing item or value will result in an error being generated. Within XML, empty tags should not be returned.

3.1 Special notes for XML returns

The standard XML entity references will be used for the following special characters:

Table 2: special characters

Character	Entity reference
Ampersand (&)	&
Left angle bracket (<)	<
Right angle bracket (>)	>
Single quote / apostrophe (')	'
Double quotes ("")	"

For special characters such as é use a character reference such as é This produces a generic XML file, which can be viewed as such in a suitable browser. Details of all such characters are found within the [XML standard documentation](#), section 2.2.

3.2 XML format

Table 3: XML structure of EYFSP return

CBDS number	EYFSP Return 2026 XML Structure	Notes
	<EYFSPfile>	
	<Header>	
N00600	<Collection>Early Years Foundation Stage Profile</Collection>	
N00609	<DateTime>2024-07-27T11:52:21</DateTime>	
N00602	<Year>2026</Year>	
N00216	<LEA>555</LEA>	
N00605	<SoftwareCode>846</SoftwareCode>	
	</Header>	
	<School>	
N00279	<Estab></Estab>	
N00278	<URN>512345</URN>	
	<Pupils>	
	<Pupil>	
N00001	<UPN>A123456789101</UPN>	
N00003	<Surname>SURNAME 1</Surname>	
N00004	<Forename>FORENAME 1</Forename>	
N00006	<DOB>2019-01-01</DOB>	

CBDS number	EYFSP Return 2026 XML Structure	Notes
N00783	<Sex>F</Sex>	
N00037	<PostCode>AB13 3AB</PostCode>	
	<Assessments>	
	<Assessment>	
N00134	<Subject>PSE</Subject>	
N00062	<Method>FA</Method>	
N00063	<Component>E09</Component>	
N00200	<ResultQualifier>FD</ResultQualifier>	
N00064	<Result>2</Result>	
	</Assessment>	
	</Assessments>	
	</Pupil>	
	</Pupils>	
	</School>	
	</EYFSPfile>	

4. Data validation rules

This section specifies validation rules that are applied to the data by the department for education, using COLLECT. They must also be applied, as far as possible, by local authorities prior to loading the data onto the COLLECT system and any issues resolved. Those data items included in the specification but not appearing in the validation rules - that is, those not shown in the validation rules as "must be present" - must be supplied where available (for example, child's unique pupil number). The rules also show which validations are errors and which ones are queries. An error is a failed validation check that must be corrected. A query is one that must be investigated, and potentially corrected, as it identifies data that would usually be invalid.

Syntax:

- Validation checks are expressed as conditions that must be true (errors) or that should be true (queries). The error message shows what is displayed if the condition is not met
- data items are indicated using the XML tag with the CBDS number in parentheses, for example <UPN>
- data groups are indicated using the XML tag only, for example <Assessments>
- single dates or date ranges are sometimes defined in relation to <ReferenceDate>, which is from the XML Header

4.1 Header validation

Table 4: header validation rules

Seq Number	Error/ Query	Validation Check	Error Message
001	Error	<Collection> must be present with a value of “Early Years Foundation Stage Profile”	Document Name missing or invalid. The file must be recreated
101	Error	<SoftwareCode> must be present	SupplierID is missing
110	Error	<Year> must be present and = 2026	Year is missing or invalid

4.2 Establishment level validation

Table 5: establishment level validation – school module

Seq Number	Error/ Query	Validation Check	Error Message
8000	Error	<LEA> must be provided and must be a valid value	Local Authority missing or invalid.

Seq Number	Error/ Query	Validation Check	Error Message
111Q	Query	<p>COLLECT ONLY CHECK</p> <p>For the following school types, number of pupils is more than 5 less than expected number:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academy converter (34) Academy sponsor led (28) Community school (01) Foundation school (05) Free school (35) Voluntary aided school (02) Voluntary controlled school (03) Service children's education (26) 	<p>Number of pupils is more than 5 less than expected number</p>

Seq Number	Error/ Query	Validation Check	Error Message
112Q	Query	<p>COLLECT ONLY CHECK</p> <p>For the following school types, number of pupils is less than expected number:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local authority nursery school (15) Academy special converter (44) Academy special sponsor led (33) Community special school (07) Foundation special school (12) Free school special (36) Non-maintained special school (08) Pupil referral unit (14) Free school alternative provision (38) Academy alternative provision converter (42) Academy alternative provision sponsor led (43) <p>For the following URN range, the number of pupils is less than expected number:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Private, voluntary and independent early years providers (500000 to 799999) 	Number of pupils is less than expected

Seq Number	Error/ Query	Validation Check	Error Message
120	Error	<p>If <Estab> is present it must be one of the following school types and included in the GIAS reference data table:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academy converter (34) Academy special converter (44) Academy special sponsor led (33) Academy sponsor led (28) Community school (01) Community special school (07) Foundation school (05) Foundation special school (12) Free school (35) Free school special (36) LA nursery school (15) Voluntary aided school (02) Voluntary controlled school (03) Service children's education (26) City technology colleges (06) Other independent schools (11) Non-maintained special school (08) Pupil referral unit (14) Free school alternative provision (38) Academy alternative provision converter (42) Academy alternative provision sponsor led (43) 	Establishment No is invalid or not an expected school type
3782	Error	If <URN> is present it must be in the range 500000-799999	URN is invalid
3783	Error	At least one of <Estab> OR <URN> must be present	Establishment No or URN must be present

4.3 Child level validation

Table 6: child level validation – pupil identifiers module

Seq Number	Error/ Query	Validation Check	Error Message
3800	Error	COLLECT ONLY There should be at least one <Pupil> record present	Please check: No pupils have been recorded
106	Error	<DOB> for <URN> in the range 500000-799999 (PVLs) must be between 1/4/2021 and 31/8/2021	Outside the date range for PVI settings
3781	Error	<u>For Independent schools</u> <DOB> must be between 1/4/2021 and 31/8/2021	Outside the date range for Independent schools
3750Q	Query	<u>All schools except Independent schools</u> <DOB> must be between 1/9/2020 and 31/8/2021	Pupil's Date of Birth is outside expected date range
1500	Error	<u>All schools except Independent schools and PVLs</u> <UPN> must be present	UPN is missing
1510	Error	<UPN> must contain the correct check letter To calculate the check letter: 1. Multiply the individual digits by their weights as follows: digit 2 by weight 2; digit 3 by weight 3; digit 4 by weight 4; digit 5 by weight 5; digit 6 by weight 6; digit 7 by weight 7; digit 8 by weight 8; digit 9 by weight 9; digit 10 by weight 10; digit 11 by weight 11; digit 12 by weight 12; digit 13 by weight 13. 2. Sum the individual results, divide the total by 23, and take the remainder. 3. Calculate the check letter from the result as follows: 0 = A; 1 = B; 2 = C; 3 = D; 4 = E; 5 = F; 6 = G; 7 = H; 8 = J; 9 = K; 10 = L; 11 = M; 12 = N; 13 = P; 14 = Q; 15 = R; 16 = T; 17 = U; 18 = V; 19 = W; 20 = X; 21 = Y; 22 = Z. For calculating the check letter (see above) any alphabetical character at digit 13 is accorded the same numerical value as listed in paragraph 3 above, A=0, B=1, C=2 etc.	UPN invalid (wrong check letter at character 1)

Seq Number	Error/ Query	Validation Check	Error Message
1520	Error	Each pupil <UPN> must be unique across all pupils in the Estab	More than one pupil record with the same UPN
1530	Error	If <UPN> is present Characters 2-4 of <UPN> must be a valid post April 1999 LA code or a recognised "pseudo LA" code (001-005, 201-213, 301-320, 330-336, 340-344, 350-359, 370-373, 380-384, 390-394, 420, 660-681, 701-708, 800-803, 805-808, 810-813, 815-816, 820-823, 825-826, 830-831, 835-841, 845-846, 850-852, 855-857, 860-861, 865-896, 908-909, 916, 919, 921, 925-926, 928-929, 931, 933, 935-938, 940-943)	UPN invalid (characters 2-4 not a recognised LA code)
1540	Error	If <UPN> is present Characters 5-12 of <UPN> must be numeric	UPN invalid (characters 5-12 not all numeric)
1550	Error	If <UPN> is present Characters 13 of <UPN> must be numeric or A-Z omitting I, O and S	UPN invalid (character 13 not a recognised value)
1580	Erroe	<Surname> must be present	Pupil with last name missing
1590	Error	<Forename> must be present	Pupil with forename missing
1600	Error	<DOB> must be present	Pupil's date of birth is missing
1610	Error	<Sex> must be present and a valid value	Pupil sex missing or invalid

Table 7: child level validation – home information

Seq Number	Error/ Query	Validation Check	Error Message
2340	Error	<p><PostCode> must be present and a valid format. Valid formats are:</p> <p>An nAA Ann nAA AAn nAA</p> <p>AAnn nAA AnA nAA AAnA nAA</p> <p>where 'A' is alphabetic and 'n' is numeric. Also valid:</p> <p>BFPO n BFPO nn BFPO nnn</p>	Postcode is missing or invalid

Table 8: child level validation – assessments

Seq Number	Error/ Query	Validation Check	Error Message																																																																								
3779	Error	<p>Each of the following combinations of parameters must be present once and once only, and only these combinations are valid.</p> <table> <tr> <th>Subject</th><th>Method</th><th>Component</th><th>ResultQualifier</th></tr> <tr><td>COM</td><td>FA</td><td>E01</td><td>FD</td></tr> <tr><td>COM</td><td>FA</td><td>E02</td><td>FD</td></tr> <tr><td>PSE</td><td>FA</td><td>E03</td><td>FD</td></tr> <tr><td>PSE</td><td>FA</td><td>E04</td><td>FD</td></tr> <tr><td>PSE</td><td>FA</td><td>E05</td><td>FD</td></tr> <tr><td>PHY</td><td>FA</td><td>E06</td><td>FD</td></tr> <tr><td>PHY</td><td>FA</td><td>E07</td><td>FD</td></tr> <tr><td>LIT</td><td>FA</td><td>E08</td><td>FD</td></tr> <tr><td>LIT</td><td>FA</td><td>E09</td><td>FD</td></tr> <tr><td>LIT</td><td>FA</td><td>E10</td><td>FD</td></tr> <tr><td>MAT</td><td>FA</td><td>E11</td><td>FD</td></tr> <tr><td>MAT</td><td>FA</td><td>E12</td><td>FD</td></tr> <tr><td>UTW</td><td>FA</td><td>E13</td><td>FD</td></tr> <tr><td>UTW</td><td>FA</td><td>E14</td><td>FD</td></tr> <tr><td>UTW</td><td>FA</td><td>E15</td><td>FD</td></tr> <tr><td>EXP</td><td>FA</td><td>E16</td><td>FD</td></tr> <tr><td>EXP</td><td>FA</td><td>E17</td><td>FD</td></tr> </table>	Subject	Method	Component	ResultQualifier	COM	FA	E01	FD	COM	FA	E02	FD	PSE	FA	E03	FD	PSE	FA	E04	FD	PSE	FA	E05	FD	PHY	FA	E06	FD	PHY	FA	E07	FD	LIT	FA	E08	FD	LIT	FA	E09	FD	LIT	FA	E10	FD	MAT	FA	E11	FD	MAT	FA	E12	FD	UTW	FA	E13	FD	UTW	FA	E14	FD	UTW	FA	E15	FD	EXP	FA	E16	FD	EXP	FA	E17	FD	Assesasments are either missing or invalid
Subject	Method	Component	ResultQualifier																																																																								
COM	FA	E01	FD																																																																								
COM	FA	E02	FD																																																																								
PSE	FA	E03	FD																																																																								
PSE	FA	E04	FD																																																																								
PSE	FA	E05	FD																																																																								
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EXP	FA	E16	FD																																																																								
EXP	FA	E17	FD																																																																								
002	Error	<Subject> must be present	Subject is either missing or invalid																																																																								
005	Error	<Method> must be present and = FA	Method is either missing or invalid																																																																								

Seq Number	Error/ Query	Validation Check	Error Message
003	Error	<Component> must be present and a valid value	Component is either missing or invalid
004	Error	<ResultQualifier> must be present and = FD	Result Qualifier is either missing or invalid
3751	Error	<Result> must be present and a valid value For <Component> E01-E17, <Result> must be equal to 1,2 or A	Result is either missing or invalid
3801	Error	<Assessment> (<Subject> = COM, <Component> = E01 and <ResultQualifier> = FD) must be present	COM E01 (Listening, Attention and Understanding Component) Result missing
3802	Error	<Assessment> (<Subject> = COM, <Component> = E02 and <ResultQualifier> = FD) must be present	COM E02 (Speaking Component) Result missing
3803	Error	<Assessment> (<Subject> = PSE, <Component> = E03 and <ResultQualifier> = FD) must be present	PSE E03 (Self-Regulation Component) Result missing
3804	Error	<Assessment> (<Subject> = PSE, <Component> = E04 and <ResultQualifier> = FD) must be present	PSE E04 (Managing Self Component) Result missing
3805	Error	<Assessment> (<Subject> = PSE, <Component> = E05 and <ResultQualifier> = FD) must be present	PSE E05 (Building Relationships Component) Result missing
3806	Error	<Assessment> (<Subject> = PHY, <Component> = E06 and <ResultQualifier> = FD) must be present	PHY E06 (Gross Motor Skills Component) Result missing
3807	Error	<Assessment> (<Subject> = PHY, <Component> = E07 and <ResultQualifier> = FD) must be present	PHY E07 (Fine Motor Skills Component) Result missing
3808	Error	<Assessment> (<Subject> = LIT, <Component> = E08 and <ResultQualifier> = FD) must be present	LIT E08 (Comprehension Component) Result missing
3809	Error	<Assessment> (<Subject> = LIT, <Component> = E09 and <ResultQualifier> = FD) must be present	LIT E09 (Word Reading Component) Result missing
3810	Error	<Assessment> (<Subject> = LIT, <Component> = E10 and <ResultQualifier> = FD) must be present	LIT E10 (Writing Component) Result missing

Seq Number	Error/ Query	Validation Check	Error Message
3811	Error	<Assessment> (<Subject> = MAT, <Component> = E11 and <ResultQualifier> = FD) must be present	MAT E11 (Number Component) Result missing
3812	Error	<Assessment> (<Subject> = MAT, <Component> = E12 and <ResultQualifier> = FD) must be present	MAT E12 (Numerical Patterns Component) Result missing
3813	Error	<Assessment> (<Subject> = UTW, <Component> = E13 and <ResultQualifier> = FD) must be present	UTW E13 (Past and Present Component) Result missing
3814	Error	<Assessment> (<Subject> = UTW, <Component> = E14 and <ResultQualifier> = FD) must be present	UTW E14 (People Culture and Communities Component) Result missing
3815	Error	<Assessment> (<Subject> = UTW, <Component> = E15 and <ResultQualifier> = FD) must be present	UTW E15 (The Natural World Component) Result missing
3816	Error	<Assessment> (<Subject> = EXP, <Component> = E16 and <ResultQualifier> = FD) must be present	EXP E16 (Creating with Materials Component) Result missing
3817	Error	<Assessment> (<Subject> = EXP, <Component> = E17 and <ResultQualifier> = FD) must be present	EXP E17 (Being Imaginative and Expressive Component) Result missing

5. Valid values

Valid item values must be in the list or range specified in the common basic dataset, subject to the exceptions and restrictions below.

Local authority codes (CBDS item number N00216, codeset CS003) for this collection only covers ENGLAND local authorities. Coverage also excludes local authority codes:

- 001, 003, 167
- codes starting with 6 and 7 except 702 (service children's education, which is valid)
- XXX, MMM and NAA



Department
for Education

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