



Department
for Education

Elective Home Education and Children Missing Education

**Guide for the completion of the 2026 to
2027 aggregate data collection**

Version 0.1 July 2026

Contents

Version History	4
1. Summary	5
1.1 Definition of elective home education	5
1.2 Definition of children missing education	5
When EHE should be deemed CME.....	6
Children who have moved abroad	7
1.3. Statutory requirements	8
1.4. Data Protection and Data Sharing	8
1.5. Legal duties under the General Data Protection Regulation and Data Protection Act 2018: privacy notices	8
1.6. Legal duties under the General Data Protection Regulation and Data Protection Act 2018: data security	9
1.7. Data collection dates	9
Autumn data collection	9
Spring data collection	9
Summer data collection	10
1.8. Changes from previous data collection	10
1.9. Which children to include	10
1.10. Requesting COLLECT access	10
1.11. Completing your return in COLLECT	11
2. Data items	12
Local authority number	12
Total return completion time (in minutes).....	12
Contact forename	12
Contact surname	12
Telephone number.....	12
Email address	12
Section 1 – Electively home educated children on census date	12
1.1 Number of EHE children on census date	12
1.2 Sex of EHE children on census date	13
1.3 Ethnicity of EHE children on census date	13

1.4	Expected year group of EHE children	14
1.5	Primary reason for EHE	14
1.6	Additional child characteristics for EHE children on census date	16
Section 2 – Children missing education on census date		17
2.1.	Number of children missing education on census date	17
2.2.	Sex of children missing education on census date.....	17
2.3.	Ethnicity of children missing education on census date	18
2.4.	Expected year group of children missing education on census date.....	18
2.5.	Additional child characteristics for children missing education on census date 19	
2.6.	Length of time child is missing education as at census date	20
2.7.	Primary reason for CME.....	21
Section 3 – EHE children and children missing education during the previous academic year		23
3.1.	Number of children who started EHE during the year	23
3.2.	Previous school type	23
3.3.	Number of EHE children during the year.....	25
3.4.	Number of EHE children returning to school during the year	25
3.5.	Number of EHE children who leave the local authority area during the year	25
3.6.	Number of section 437(1) notices issued	26
3.7.	Number of school attendance orders issued	26
3.8.	Number of school attendance orders revoked.....	26
3.9.	What support does your local authority offer to EHE children and their families?	26
3.10.	Number of children missing education during the year	27

Version History

This gives details of any changes made to the content of this document.

Version	Comments	Date
0.1	1. Roll over of dates 2. Section 1.11 - Amended the instructions for when specific data items or full sections are not collected	March 2026

1. Summary

This guide details how local authorities should collect and submit data about electively home educated (EHE) children and children missing education (CME) to the Department for Education (DfE). This aggregate data collection is mandatory (see [section 1.3](#) for statutory requirements) and will take place termly over the 2026 to 2027 academic year.

Collecting this data will help local authorities understand the true numbers of EHE children and CME in their area. It will also help to identify local issues that may be driving home education and potentially encourage more joined up working with other authorities who may be experiencing similar challenges. The provision of the data to DfE will help government understand the numbers of EHE and CME nationally and at local authority level, informing policy development aimed at supporting local authorities and future changes to the EHE framework. Please note that the data you provide on EHE/CME may be used as part of potential future funding calculations by the Department.

We would welcome any feedback that could be used to improve and refine future data collections. Feedback can be submitted via the [data collections service request form](#).

1.1 Definition of elective home education

Elective home education (EHE) is a term used to describe a choice by parents to provide education for their children at home - or at home and in some other way which they choose - instead of sending them to school full-time. This is different to education provided by a local authority otherwise than at a school - for example, tuition for children who are too ill to attend school – and for the purposes of this data collection such children should not be included.

1.2 Definition of children missing education

Children missing education (CME) are children of compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school, as set out in Section 436A of the Education 1996.¹ CME are at significant risk of underachieving, being victims of harm, exploitation or radicalisation, and becoming NEET

¹ The term 'children missing education' captures a narrower cohort of children than the term 'children who are absent from education' as used in '[Keeping children safe in education 2023](#)'. 'Children who are absent from education' captures both children missing education (children not registered at school nor receiving a suitable education otherwise) and children registered at a school who are absent for prolonged periods and/or repeated occasions – the latter of which should not be captured in children missing education figures.

(not in education, employment or training) later in life. CME does not include children who are registered pupils of a school but are persistently absent.

CME **does not** include children who:

- Are older or younger than compulsory school age²
- Are receiving suitable EHE, or the local authority has not had an opportunity to assess whether they are receiving suitable EHE
- Are registered at a school, even if they are persistently or severely absent
- The local authority have confirmed are no longer resident in the local area³

CME **does** include children of compulsory school age who are not registered at a school and are not receiving suitable education elsewhere, even if these children:

- Are in the process of applying for a school place, even children within the first 15 days of the application process
- Have been offered a school place for a future date but have not yet started
- Are receiving EHE, **if** this education is unsuitable
- Have been recorded as CME for an extended period: for example, where their whereabouts is unclear or unknown⁴

When EHE should be deemed CME

An EHE child whose education is deemed unsuitable should no longer be classified as an EHE child and should be classified as CME. Therefore, there should be no double-counting between data items 1.1 and 2.1.

Section 436A of the Education Act 1996, is a duty on local authorities to make arrangements to try and identify children of compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at schools and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school. Although there is no legal obligation on local authorities to classify a child as CME at a particular stage of the statutory process under sections 436A and 437 of the Act, we would expect a local authority classify a child as CME once they have deemed

² A child reaches compulsory school age on or after their fifth birthday. If they turn 5 between 1 January and 31 March, then they are of compulsory school age on 31 March; if they turn 5 between 1 April and 31 August, then they are of compulsory school age on 31 August. If they turn 5 between 1 September and 31 December, then they are of compulsory school age on 31 December. A child continues to be of compulsory school age until the last Friday of June in the school year that they reach sixteen.

³ If there is evidence to suggest the child has moved to a different local authority area or country, contact should be made with the named person in the new authority/country using secure communication methods. The local authority should maintain a record of the child's details until they are located or attain school leaving age.

⁴ The local authority should maintain a record of the child's details until they are located or attain school leaving age.

that the child is not receiving suitable education (which would include having insufficient information to reach such a conclusion).

If local authorities have not had an opportunity to assess whether a child is receiving suitable education, that does not mean that the child should automatically be classified as not receiving suitable education. Not knowing does not mean the child is not being suitably educated, though the local authority may ultimately reach this conclusion if they have asked for information and not received satisfactory responses.

Children who have moved abroad

Ground E (regulation 8(1)(e)) of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 states that the name of a pupil of compulsory school age who is not a boarder is to be deleted from a school's register if they have stopped coming to school and no longer live a reasonable distance from school. If the school knows that the family is moving abroad, once the pupil has completed their final day at school and moved out of the area, the school must delete the pupil's name from the admission register and the pupil's information should then be transferred to the Lost Pupil Database via the [S2S system](#). See Section 7 of the Department's [Working together to improve school attendance guidance](#) for more information.

A pupil's name can only be deleted from the admission register for a reason set out in regulation 8 of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended. The Department's [CME guidance](#) states:

- Where a pupil has not returned to school for ten days after an authorised absence or is absent from school without authorisation for twenty consecutive school days, the pupil can be removed from the admission register under regulation 8(1)(f) or (h) when the school and the local authority have failed, after jointly making reasonable enquiries, to establish the whereabouts of the child. This only applies if the school does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend because of sickness or unavoidable cause.

Through joint reasonable enquiries, the pupil's location may be narrowed down with enough precision to enable the school to delete the pupil from the school roll on a different ground (e.g., regulation 8(1)(e) when a non-boarding pupil has stopped attending and no longer normally lives a reasonable distance from the school) or take action in relation to the pupil's absence (e.g., attendance legal interventions as set out in Section 6 of the [Working together to improve school attendance guidance](#)).

1.3. Statutory requirements

The completion of this data collection is a statutory requirement on local authorities under [Section 29\(1\) of the Education Act 1996](#) which requires LAs to give Secretary of State any information they require for the purpose of carrying out their functions under the Act.

1.4. Data Protection and Data Sharing

Data from which it is possible to identify children, parents and staff (in any medium, including within a MIS) is personal data.

The UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA 2018) put in place certain safeguards regarding the use of personal data by organisations, including the department, local authorities and schools. Both give rights to those (known as data subjects) about whom data is processed, such as children, their parents / carers and staff. This includes (amongst other information that the department is obliged to provide) the right to know:

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

As data processors and controllers in their own right, it is important that local authorities process all data (not just that collected for the purposes of this data collection) in accordance with the full requirements of the UK GDPR. Further information on the UK GDPR can be found in the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) overview of the [UK General Data Protection Regulation \(GDPR\)](#).

1.5. Legal duties under the General Data Protection Regulation and Data Protection Act 2018: privacy notices

Being transparent and providing accessible information to individuals about how you will process their personal data is a key element of UK GDPR and the DPA 2018. The most common way to provide such information is through a privacy notice. Please see the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) website for [further guidance on privacy notices](#).

The department provides suggested wording for [privacy notices](#) that local authorities may wish to use. However, where the suggested wording is used, the local authority **must review and amend** the wording to reflect local business needs and circumstances. This is especially important, as the local authority will process data that is not solely for use within departmental data collections.

It is recommended that the privacy notice is made available to data subjects via the internet as well as handed out in paper form or placed on an accessible noticeboard. Privacy notices do not need to be issued on an annual basis as long as new children, parents and staff are made aware of the notices and they are readily available electronically or in paper format.

1.6. Legal duties under the General Data Protection Regulation and Data Protection Act 2018: data security

Providers and local authorities have a (legal) duty under the UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018 to ensure that any personal data they process is handled and stored securely. Further information on data security is available from the [Information Commissioner's Office](#).

Where personal data is not properly safeguarded, it could compromise the safety of individuals and damage your reputation. Your responsibility as a data controller extends to those who have access to your data beyond your organisation where they are working on your behalf; for example, where external IT suppliers can remotely access your information. The '[Responsible for information](#)' page provides further guidance and advice.

It is **vital** that all staff with access to personal data understand the importance of:

- protecting personal data
- being familiar with your security policy
- putting security procedures into practice

As such, you should provide appropriate initial and refresher training for your staff.

1.7. Data collection dates

Local authorities should return their data by the 'return date' listed below to allow for error correction and authorisation by DfE before the final 'database closure date' after which no further amendments can be made.

Autumn data collection

- Census date - Thursday 1 October 2026
- Return date - Friday 23 October 2026
- Database closure date - Friday 6 November 2026

Spring data collection

- Census date - Thursday 14 January 2027

- Return date - Friday 5 February 2027
- Database closure date - Friday 19 February 2027

Summer data collection

- Census date - Thursday 20 May 2027
- Return date – Friday 11 June 2027
- Database closure date - Friday 25 June 2027

1.8. Changes from previous data collection

There are no changes from the previous years cycle.

1.9. Which children to include

Section 1 of the data collection covers children who are electively home educated (EHE) who are resident in your local authority area on each of the census dates.

Section 2 of the data collection covers children missing education (CME) who are resident in your local authority area on each of the census dates.

Section 3 covers EHE and CME children who were resident in your local authority area in the previous academic year (1 September 2025 to 31 August 2026). This section is only included in the Autumn collection.

Sections 1, 2 and 3 cover EHE children and CME of compulsory school age⁵

1.10. Requesting COLLECT access

The method for local authorities to submit their data to the department is via [COLLECT](#), our centralised data collection and management system.

Contact your local authority approver, if:

- you want to request a DfE sign-in username or password so you can access COLLECT

⁵ A child reaches compulsory school age on or after their fifth birthday. If they turn 5 between 1 January and 31 March, then they are of compulsory school age on 31 March; if they turn 5 between 1 April and 31 August, then they are of compulsory school age on 31 August. If they turn 5 between 1 September and 31 December, then they are of compulsory school age on 31 December. A child continues to be of compulsory school age until the last Friday of June in the school year that they reach sixteen.

- 'EHE and CME' is not on the list of collections you can see in COLLECT

If you do not know who your approver is, use the [DfE sign-in request form](#).

If you've forgotten your password, use [DfE sign-in](#) to reset it. You'll need to click 'start now' and then the 'I've forgotten my password' link.

[COLLECT guides](#) are available for assistance with submitting your return.

For queries about submitting your data, contact us using our [data collection service request form](#).

1.11. Completing your return in COLLECT

Local authorities will be able to submit data via on screen entry in [COLLECT](#), DfE's centralised data collection system.

Once data has been entered into COLLECT, if there are any outstanding queries, errors or data quality issues and add a return level note to explain the reasoning for these.

Where data for a specific data item is not collected (e.g. reason for CME), use the relevant 'unknown' or 'not recorded' category and record the corresponding listed category as zero.

Where full sections are not recorded, leave the section blank to allow differentiation between missing data and true zero counts. A return level note must be included to explain why the data is missing.

Please utilise the Summary Report available in COLLECT which summarises your data return. This can be useful to download or print out to ensure all data items are correct and to gain sign off from senior management.

Once you have completed the data return and you are happy it is accurate, please press the 'submit' button. By submitting EHE and CME data to DfE, local authorities are confirming:

- Their return has received internal sign-off
- Data is accurate
- Their consent to publication of the data at local authority level, at DfE's discretion

After data has been submitted, DfE will check your data and may contact you if necessary. Once DfE are content with your data, it will be authorised.

2. Data items

Local authority number

The local authority 3-digit code identifies a particular local authority. The local authority represents where the children are resident.

Total return completion time (in minutes)

The time taken by local authority staff to collate data for the return, inclusive of time taken to enter the data into COLLECT. Please record as the total number of minutes. For example, 2 hours and 30 minutes should be recorded as 150 minutes.

Contact forename

Forename of the local authority staff member who completed the return for contact purposes, should there be any issues with the data return.

Contact surname

Surname of the local authority staff member who completed the return for contact purposes, should there be any issues with the data return.

Telephone number

Telephone number of the local authority staff member who completed the return for contact purposes, should there be any issues with the data return.

Email address

Email address of the local authority staff member who completed the return for contact purposes, should there be any issues with the data return.

Section 1 – Electively home educated children on census date

1.1 Number of EHE children on census date

The total number of children of compulsory school age who are resident in the local authority area who are electively home educated on census date.

An EHE child whose education is deemed unsuitable should no longer be classified as an EHE child and should be classified as CME. Therefore, there should be no double-counting between data items 1.1 and 2.1.

1.2 Sex of EHE children on census date

The total number of EHE children on census date (as recorded in 1.1) by sex (female, male or unknown). Sex should be recorded as detailed on the child's birth certificate or gender recognition certificate. The unknown category should be used where the sex of the child is unknown to the local authority including where the parent/guardian refused to provide the child's sex as detailed on the child's birth certificate or gender recognition certificate.

1.3 Ethnicity of EHE children on census date

The total number of EHE children on census date (as recorded in 1.1) by ethnicity. The local authority must not ascribe any ethnicity to a child. This information must come from the parent/guardian or child.

Where the ethnicity has not yet been collected, this is recorded as 'NOBT' (information not yet obtained). Where a parent/guardian or child declines to provide ethnicity data, code 'REFU' (refused) is recorded and returned.

DfE main code	Description
WBRI	White British
WIRI	White Irish
WIRT	Traveller of Irish heritage
WOTH	Any other white background
WROM	Gypsy/Roma
MWBC	White and Black Caribbean
MWBA	White and Black African
MWAS	White and Asian
MOTH	Any other Mixed background
AIND	Indian
APKN	Pakistani
ABAN	Bangladeshi
AOTH	Any other Asian background
BCRB	Black Caribbean
BAFR	Black African
BOTH	Any other Black background
CHNE	Chinese
OOTH	Any other ethnic group
REFU	Refused

NOBT	Information not yet obtained
------	------------------------------

1.4 Expected year group of EHE children

The total number of EHE children on census date (as recorded in 1.1) by expected year group based on their age:

- Reception
- Year 1
- Year 2
- Year 3
- Year 4
- Year 5
- Year 6
- Year 7
- Year 8
- Year 9
- Year 10
- Year 11
- Unknown

1.5 Primary reason for EHE

The total number of EHE children on census date (as recorded in 1.1) by reason for EHE.

If there is more than one reason why the child is EHE, record only the primary reason given by the parent/guardian. The reason should relate to when the child first started to be home educated and not the current reason for EHE.

Reason for EHE	Explanation and examples
Physical health	Child is EHE due to one or more physical health conditions e.g. autoimmune illness.
Mental health	Child is EHE due to one or more mental health conditions e.g. anxiety.
Health concerns relating to COVID-19	Child is EHE due to underlying health conditions which increase their, or a member of their families, risk of serious illness from COVID-19 or anxiety regarding COVID-19 transmission.
Did not get school preference	Child is EHE as they did not receive their first choice of school preference and their parents were unhappy with any other option. This should be used in cases where it was the parent's choice as opposed to there being no school place available, in which case 'Difficulty in accessing school place' should be used.
Permanent exclusion	Child is EHE as they were permanently excluded from their previous school and parent did not want or get alternative education arrangements (e.g. alternative provision).
Risk of school exclusion	Child is EHE as parents chose to remove the child from school before the child was excluded.
Difficulty in accessing a school place	Child is EHE as there are no suitable school places available e.g. for geographical reasons such as moved home and no suitable school with available places or difficulty in accessing a school that meets the child's needs. This should be used in cases where there is no school place available, as opposed to the preferred choice not being available.
Offered a school place but not yet accepted	Child is EHE as they have been offered a school place but have not yet accepted the school place offered and are receiving suitable home education in the meantime.
Did not apply for a school place at compulsory school age	Child is EHE as they did not apply for a school place upon turning compulsory school age and are receiving suitable home education.
Philosophical or preferential reasons	Child is EHE as the parent prefers to home educate in order to follow child-centred, flexible approaches to learning instead of mainstream education, or parent feels their child is more suited to home education.
Religious reasons	Child is EHE as their religious views were not compatible with the school ethos or curriculum e.g. in regard to relationships and sex education.

Lifestyle choice	Child is EHE due to their family's lifestyle choice. This could be as their family travels regularly e.g. service children, Gypsy/Roma, Traveller of Irish heritage, child actors, circus performers etc.
Suggestion/pressure from the school	Child is EHE as they have been off-rolled by the school e.g. to suggest home education for a child who is not attending school regularly, or behavioural needs are not being met at the school.
Dissatisfaction with the school - general	Child is EHE as they left their previous school due to general dissatisfaction e.g. unhappy with the curriculum of the school, ethos of the school, member of school staff etc.
Dissatisfaction with the school - SEND	Child is EHE as they left their previous school because their needs were not met or there was inadequate SEND provision.
Dissatisfaction with the school - bullying	Child is EHE as they left their previous school because of bullying which was not resolved.
Parent/guardian did not give reason	The reason why child is EHE was not provided by parents or parents refused to give a reason.
Other	Any other reason not listed above.
Unknown	The reason child is EHE is unknown to the local authority.

1.6 Additional child characteristics for EHE children on census date

Record any characteristics for EHE children on census date (as recorded in 1.1) that apply from the following:

- **Child in need** - A child in need is defined under the Children Act 1989 as a child who is unlikely to reach or maintain a satisfactory level of health or development, or their health or development will be significantly impaired without the provision of children's social care services, or a child who is disabled. To record a child as 'a child in need', they should have a children in need plan.
- **Child protection plan** - A child becomes the subject of a child protection plan if they are assessed as being at risk of harm, at an initial child protection conference.
- **Looked after child** - Under the Children Act 1989, a child is looked after by a local authority if he or she falls into one of the following:

- is provided with accommodation, for a continuous period of more than 24 hours [Children Act 1989, Section 20 and 21]
- is subject to a care order [Children Act 1989, Part IV]
- is subject to a placement order
- **SEN support** - Where a pupil is identified as having SEN, schools should take action to remove barriers to learning and put effective special educational provision in place. This category will only be relevant for children who have previously been enrolled at a school where they were identified as requiring SEN support.
- **Education, health and care plan** - An EHC plan details the education, health and social care support that is to be provided to a child or young person who has SEN or a disability. It is drawn up by the local authority after an EHC needs assessment of the child or young person has determined that an EHC plan is necessary, and after consultation with relevant partner agencies.
- **English as an additional language** - A child's first language is not English - that is, where the child has been exposed to a language other than English during early development and continues to be exposed to this language in the home or in the community. The local authority must not ascribe a specific language to the child. This information must come from the parent or guardian, or the child.

Children may meet more than one criterion therefore record all that apply for each child. Record only characteristics that were applicable on census date for each child, although we do acknowledge SEN support information may be historic.

Section 2 – Children missing education on census date

2.1. Number of children missing education on census date

Total number of children of compulsory school age who are resident in the local authority area who are not in suitable education on census date.

2.2. Sex of children missing education on census date

The total number of children missing education on census date (as recorded in 2.1) by sex (female, male or unknown). Sex should be recorded as detailed on the child's birth certificate or gender recognition certificate. The unknown category should be used where the sex of the child is unknown to the local authority including where the parent/guardian refused to provide the child's sex as detailed on the child's birth certificate or gender recognition certificate.

2.3. Ethnicity of children missing education on census date

The total number of children missing education on census date (as recorded in 2.1) by ethnicity. The local authority must not ascribe any ethnicity to a child. This information must come from the parent/guardian or child.

Where the ethnicity has not yet been collected, this is recorded as 'NOBT' (information not yet obtained). Where a parent/guardian or child declines to provide ethnicity data, code 'REFU' (refused) is recorded and returned.

DfE main code	Description
WBRI	White British
WIRI	White Irish
WIRT	Traveller of Irish heritage
WOTH	Any other white background
WROM	Gypsy/Roma
MWBC	White and Black Caribbean
MWBA	White and Black African
MWAS	White and Asian
MOTH	Any other Mixed background
AIND	Indian
APKN	Pakistani
ABAN	Bangladeshi
AOTH	Any other Asian background
BCRB	Black Caribbean
BAFR	Black African
BOTH	Any other Black background
CHNE	Chinese
OOTH	Any other ethnic group
REFU	Refused
NOBT	Information not yet obtained

2.4. Expected year group of children missing education on census date

The total number of children missing education on census date (as recorded in 2.1) by expected year group based on their age:

- Reception
- Year 1

- Year 2
- Year 3
- Year 4
- Year 5
- Year 6
- Year 7
- Year 8
- Year 9
- Year 10
- Year 11
- Unknown

2.5. Additional child characteristics for children missing education on census date

Record any characteristics for children missing education on census date (as recorded in 2.1) that apply from the following:

- **Child in need** - A child in need is defined under the Children Act 1989 as a child who is unlikely to reach or maintain a satisfactory level of health or development, or their health or development will be significantly impaired without the provision of children's social care services, or a child who is disabled. To record a child as 'a child in need', they should have a children in need plan.
- **Child protection plan** - A child becomes the subject of a child protection plan if they are assessed as being at risk of harm, at an initial child protection conference.
- **Looked after child** - Under the Children Act 1989, a child is looked after by a local authority if he or she falls into one of the following:
 - is provided with accommodation, for a continuous period of more than 24 hours [Children Act 1989, Section 20 and 21]
 - is subject to a care order [Children Act 1989, Part IV]
 - is subject to a placement order
- **SEN support** - Where a pupil is identified as having SEN, schools should take action to remove barriers to learning and put effective special educational provision in place. This category will only be relevant for children who have previously been enrolled at a school where they were identified as requiring SEN support.
- **Education, health and care plan** - An EHC plan details the education, health and social care support that is to be provided to a child or young person who has SEN or a disability. It is drawn up by the local authority after an EHC needs assessment of the child or young person has determined that an EHC plan is necessary, and after consultation with relevant partner agencies.

- **English as an additional language** - A child's first language is not English - that is, where the child has been exposed to a language other than English during early development and continues to be exposed to this language in the home or in the community. The local authority must not ascribe a specific language to the child. This information must come from the parent or guardian, or the child.
- **In receipt of free school meals (FSM)** – Where a child was in receipt of FSM the last time they were on a school roll. Do not count include children who got a free lunch only due to the universal infant FSM entitlement.

Children may meet more than one criterion therefore record all that apply for each child. Record only characteristics that were applicable on census date for each child, although we do acknowledge SEN support and receipt of FSM information may be historic.

2.6. Length of time child is missing education as at census date

The total number of children missing education on census date (as recorded in 2.1) by the length of time CME:

- < 2 weeks
- 2 weeks to 4 weeks
- > 4 weeks to 8 weeks
- > 8 weeks to 12 weeks
- > 12 weeks to 26 weeks
- > 26 weeks to 52 weeks
- > 52 weeks
- Unknown

This is calculated as the census date minus the start date of the being CME. One week is seven calendar days. The start date is when the child became CME (e.g. the date the child was removed from a school roll or the date they moved into England).

For children who are now CME while awaiting a school place but were on another school roll when they applied for their school place, their CME start date should be the date the child was removed from roll at their previous school and therefore became CME (i.e. not registered at a school and not receiving suitable education).

The total number of children recorded under each length category should be the same as the figure provided in item 2.1 (number of children missing education on census date).

Local authorities that record long-term CME separately to the CME reported in item 2.1 should not include these long-term cases in item 2.6.⁶

2.7. Primary reason for CME

The total number of children missing education on census date (as recorded in 2.1) by reason for CME. If there is more than one reason why the child is missing education, record only the primary reason.

Reason for CME	Explanation and examples
Moved from another LA area in England and not yet applied for a school place	Child is CME as they have moved from another LA in England and have not yet applied for a school place and are not receiving suitable education elsewhere in the meantime.
Moved from another country and not yet applied for a school place	Child is CME as they have moved from another country (including Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland) and have not yet applied for a school place and are not receiving suitable education elsewhere in the meantime.
Waiting for the outcome of a school application/admissions appeal	Child is CME as they have applied for a school place and are awaiting the outcome of either the application or their appeal against a school application decision, and are not receiving suitable education elsewhere in the meantime.
Offered a school place but not yet accepted	Child is CME as they have been offered a school place but have not yet accepted the school place offered and are not receiving suitable education elsewhere in the meantime.
Accepted a school place and waiting to start	Child is CME as they have accepted a school place and are waiting to start and are not receiving suitable education elsewhere in the meantime.
Did not get school preference	Child is CME as they did not receive their first choice of school preference and they have not accepted a place at an alternate school. This should be used in cases where it was the parent's choice as opposed to there being no school place available, in which case 'Difficulty in accessing school place' should be used.
Unsuitable home education	Child is CME as their elective home education was deemed unsuitable. Government guidance is available on elective home education .

⁶ The Department's statutory [CME guidance](#) states local authorities should maintain a record of a child's details until they are located or attain school leaving age. Local authorities may choose how to maintain this record.

Difficulty in accessing a school place	Child is CME as there are no suitable school places available e.g. for geographical reasons such as moved home and no suitable school with available places or difficulty in accessing a school that meets the child's needs. This should be used in cases where there is no school place available, as opposed to the preferred choice not being available (in which case 'did not get school preference' should be used).
Dissatisfaction with the school - general	Child is CME as they left their previous school due to general dissatisfaction e.g. unhappy with the curriculum of the school, ethos of the school, member of school staff, bullying which was not resolved etc.
Dissatisfaction with the school - SEND	Child is CME as they left their previous school because their needs were not met or there was inadequate SEND provision.
Mental health	Child is CME as they left their previous school because their needs were not met or their parent felt that mental health was a barrier to their ability to attend.
Physical health	Child is CME as they left their previous school because their needs were not met or their parent felt that physical health was a barrier to their ability to attend.
Parental decision not to register at school	Child is CME due to the parental decision not to register their child in suitable education, examples include indecision about EHE, dissatisfaction with the school system, transient families (e.g. Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families).
Did not apply for a school place at compulsory school age	Child is CME as they did not apply for a school place upon turning compulsory school age and are not receiving suitable education elsewhere.
Challenging a School Attendance Order	Child is CME as they are not deemed to be receiving suitable education, while their parent/guardian is providing evidence for or challenging a School Attendance Order.
Believed to have moved to another LA area in England	Child is CME as they are believed to have moved to another LA area and enquiries are being/have been conducted to locate the child.
Believed to have moved to another country	Child is CME as they are believed to have moved to another country (including Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland) and enquiries are being/have been conducted to locate the child.
Unknown	The reason child is CME is unknown to the local authority and enquiries are being conducted. This includes cases where parents will not disclose the reason a child is CME.
Reason not recorded	The reason the child is CME has not been recorded or is not collected by the LA.
Other	Any other reason not listed above.

If any CME are captured under 'Other', please enter the reason(s) in the return level notes in COLLECT. Local authorities that have not yet begun using the reasons listed in the guidance, should use the 'Other' category and provide a breakdown of any other reason(s) recorded in the notes.

Where reason for CME is not collected by the LA, please use the 'reason not recorded' category and record other categories as zero.

Section 3 – EHE children and children missing education during the previous academic year

Data in this section will only be collected during the Autumn term data collection and refers to EHE children and children missing education in the previous academic year (1 September 2025 to 31 August 2026).

3.1. Number of children who started EHE during the year

The total number of children of compulsory school age who were resident in the local authority area whose start date of EHE fell between 1 September 2025 to 31 August 2026 inclusive. This will include children who moved into the local authority area who were previously EHE in another local authority or country.

EHE is a term used to describe a choice by parents to provide education for their children at home - or at home and in some other way which they choose - instead of sending them to school full-time. This is different to education provided by a local authority otherwise than at a school - for example, tuition for children who are too ill to attend school – and for the purposes of this data collection such children should not be included.

3.2. Previous school type

The total number of children who started EHE in the year (as reported in 3.1) by their previous school type. For children who had have multiple EHE periods in the year, record the type of school they most recently left.

- **None, previously not of compulsory school age** – for children who did not attend an early years provider (either in the private, voluntary or independent sector or nursery provision in any school type) and were below compulsory school age before starting EHE
- **Early years provider** – Children who attended early years provision in the following settings:
 - Nurseries (private or voluntary)
 - Pre-schools and pre-school playgroups (private or voluntary);
 - Childminders

- Maintained nursery schools
- Children's centres
- Nursery provision in any school type, including independent schools
- **Local authority maintained school** - This includes primary and secondary schools which are maintained by a local authority. This also includes foundation schools.
- **Academy** - Academies are state-funded independent schools that are accountable to the Secretary of State for the management of the school through a legally-binding Funding Agreement. They have more freedom than maintained schools over things like the length of the school day, the curriculum, and how they spend their money. Converter academies, that is previously maintained primary and secondary schools which converted to an academy, should also be included.
- **Free school** - Free schools are academies created not to replace any existing previous school but as a result of local or charitable initiatives, by agreement with the Secretary of State.
- **Independent school** - An independent school is one which is neither maintained by a local authority nor is in receipt of grants from the Department and funding is primarily from fees charged to local authorities and parents for pupils placed there.
- **Special school** – Includes:
 - Local authority maintained special schools - special schools which are maintained by a local authority
 - Academy special schools - special academies are previously maintained or non-maintained special schools which converted to an academy
 - Special free schools – Special free schools are special schools established through the free school application process
 - Non-maintained special schools – Non-maintained special schools are non-profit-making schools run by charitable trusts and approved by the Secretary of State as a special school under Section 342 of the Education Act 1996, as amended by the Schools Standards and Framework Act 1998. They may receive grants from the Department for capital work and equipment but funding is primarily from fees charged to local authorities and parents for pupils placed there.
 - Independent special schools - An independent school is one which is neither maintained by a local authority nor is in receipt of grants from the Department and funding is primarily from fees charged to local authorities and parents for pupils placed there. While there is no legal category, independent schools which cater wholly or mainly for children with SEN are deemed to be independent special schools.
- **Alternative provision** – Alternative provision is full- or part-time education arranged by:

- local authorities, either directly or working with schools, for pupils who, because of permanent exclusion, illness or other reasons, would not otherwise receive suitable education
- schools for pupils to improve their behaviour off-site, or during a suspension
- **Pupil referral unit** - A pupil referral unit (PRU) is a school maintained by a local authority to make provision for pupils who are out of school for reasons such as exclusion or illness. Children who were dually registered in both a PRU and another school should be recorded under the type of other school they attended.
- **Home educated outside the local authority area** – Children who moved into the local authority area during the academic year who were previously EHE in another local authority area or country.
- **Educated elsewhere/unknown** – Educated in a setting not detailed above, or the previous education setting is unknown.

3.3. Number of EHE children during the year

The total number of children of compulsory school age who were resident in the local authority area who had a period of EHE during the 2025 to 2026 academic year. This is children whose start and/or end date of EHE fell between 1 September 2025 to 31 August 2026 inclusive and will be a cumulative count of children across the year.

This will also include children whose period of EHE started before 1 September 2025 but ended on or after 1 September 2025, or they were still EHE at 31 August 2026. If a child has multiple episodes of EHE during the year only count the child once.

3.4. Number of EHE children returning to school during the year

The total number of children (of compulsory school age who were resident in the local authority area who ended a period of EHE and enrolled at a school between 1 September 2025 to 31 August 2026 inclusive. This includes children who enrolled at a school located in a different local authority area or country.

If a child moves between EHE and school multiple during the academic year only count the child once.

3.5. Number of EHE children who leave the local authority area during the year

The total number of EHE children of compulsory school age who left the local authority area between 1 September 2025 to 31 August 2026 inclusive. This will include EHE children who move to another local authority area, move to another country or children who die.

This does not include children who enrolled at a school in a different local authority area or country. They should be recorded under data item 3.4.

3.6. Number of section 437(1) notices issued

The total number of notices issued by the local authority under [section 437\(1\) of the Education Act 1996](#) between 1 September 2025 to 31 August 2026 inclusive. This is a notice requiring the recipient to satisfy the local authority that their child is receiving suitable education. If they do not, the authority may have to serve a school attendance order.

3.7. Number of school attendance orders issued

The total number of school attendance orders issued by the local authority between 1 September 2025 to 31 August 2026 inclusive.

If it appears to the local authority that a child of compulsory school age is not receiving a suitable education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise, then they must begin procedures for issuing a School Attendance Order (under [section 437\(3\) of the Education Act 1996](#)). The order will require the child's parents to register their child at a named school. If they fail to comply with the order the parent can be prosecuted.

3.8. Number of school attendance orders revoked

The total number of school attendance orders revoked by the local authority between 1 September 2025 to 31 August 2026 inclusive.

3.9. What support does your local authority offer to EHE children and their families?

Record the level of support the local authority offers EHE children and their families for the following:

- Advice about EHE
- Signposting to sources of assistance
- Distribution of useful information
- Resource development
- Examination access
- Discounted access to amenities
- Preferential access to services
- Other (please specify – free text field)

Use the drop-down menu to select from 'not at all', 'sometimes' or 'extensively'. A response is required for each option. Complete the 'other' free text field box with any other types of support offered by the local authority.

3.10. Number of children missing education during the year

Total number of children of compulsory school age who were resident in the local authority area who were not registered at school or otherwise receiving suitable education during the 2025 to 2026 academic year and will be a cumulative count of children across the year.

This is children whose start and/or end date of being CME fell between 1 September 2025 to 31 August 2026 inclusive. This will also include children whose period of being CME started before 1 September 2025 but ended on or after 1 September 2025, or they were still CME at 31 August 2026. If a child has multiple episodes of being CME during the year only count the child once.

Please refer to [section 1.2](#) for the definition of CME.



Department
for Education

© Crown copyright 2026

This publication is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0, except where otherwise stated. To view this licence, visit nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3.

Where we have identified any third-party copyright information, you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

About this publication:

enquiries <https://www.gov.uk/contact-dfe>

download www.gov.uk/government/publications

Follow us on X: [@educationgovuk](https://twitter.com/educationgovuk)

Connect with us on Facebook: facebook.com/educationgovuk