Department for Education

School preference (child level) data collection 2027

Business and technical specification 1.1

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Assumptions made in creating this specification

A1	The collection will use COLLECT as the data collection mechanism.
A2	The Department for Education (DfE) will only accept submissions in XML format.
A3	There will be two instances of this collection in 2027. Each local authority (LA) will return two files. In March 2027, local authorities will make one return containing details of preferences and offers made in relation to the secondary national offer day (NOD); and in April 2027 local authorities will make a second return containing details in relation to the primary national offer day (NOD).
A4	Local authorities will provide one record per child relating to either an application made on their behalf for a school place, and/or where an offer has been made to parents, as at national offer day.

CBDS (Common basic data set)

This specification must be read in conjunction with the Excel workbook giving the current version of the revised common basic data set (CBDS) database.

1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose and background

This specification describes the requirements for a child level data collection, the school preference data collection 2027. The data to be collected will consist of a) local authority (LA) details, b) local authority level information on the total number of places available, and c) child-level information for those children in scope, including personal details and information about their school preferences and any offer made.

The collection will involve the local authority making two returns, one each to cover admissions applications in relation to both primary and secondary school children.

The specification covers the expected returns to the Department for Education (DfE) and the validation rules which will be applied to the data submitted.

The following diagram outlines the overall scope of the collection:

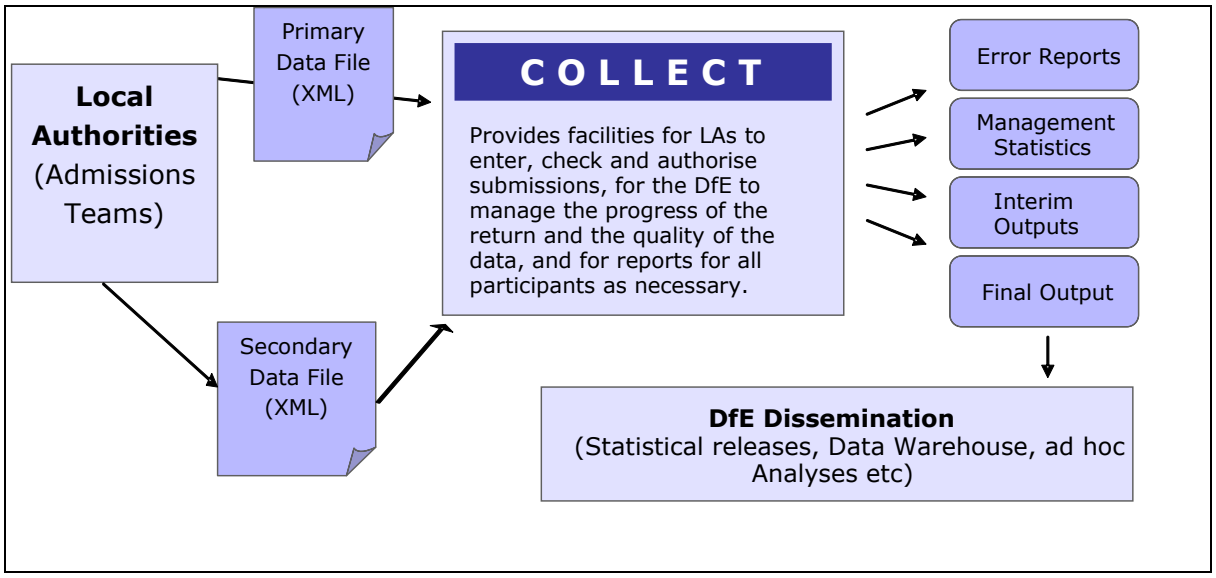


Figure 1 High-level data collection process

This requirements specification consists of:

- This MS Word document containing a narrative, sample XML messages and validation rules.
- The common basic data set (CBDS) MS excel workbook.

1.2 Scope and timing of returns

The Information as to the Provision of Education (England) Regulations 2008 were amended to require local authorities to submit child level data on both primary and secondary school applications and offers made in relation to children resident in their area and are now 'The Information as to Provision of Education (England) (Amendment) (No.2) Regulations 2013'. Data should be provided in relation to all schools forming part of the local authority's coordinated admissions process (including community, foundation, voluntary controlled and voluntary aided schools, and academies and free schools).

The regulations will require a local authority to provide the Secretary of State with a return containing the information specified for this collection within 5 working days of the relevant national offer day. The relevant dates for 2027 are:

- Secondary national offer day – Monday 1 March 2027 (latest date for submission of data Friday 5 March 2027)
- Primary national offer day – Friday 16 April 2027 (latest date for submission of data Thursday 22 April 2027).

The data submitted must be that as of the relevant national offer day.

There will be no facility or requirement for a follow-up collection in September to update preferences and offers made amended as a result of appeals or to include late applications.

Local authorities should only return admissions data for a single entry year. The minority of local authorities who have two admissions years at either primary or secondary level (for example, because of middle deemed secondary schools) must submit only the year with the largest intake.

Late applications should be included only if they have been treated as 'on time' and dealt with in the first round of allocations on national offer day. Late applications that were dealt with on national offer day, but not in the first round of applications, should be removed.

Applications which were late but which one or more of the schools named as a preference were prepared to consider as on time, and therefore the applicant was considered for that school (those schools) in the first round on national offer day, should be included.

Child-level details of those children with an EHC (education health care) plan, where the destination school has been determined in the plan rather than through the coordinated admissions process should not be included in the return (although the places taken up by these children should be included in the 'total number of places on offer' data provided).

1.3 Structure of the collection

The school preference data collection 2027 will consist of header information, including details of the local authority making the return, local authority level information, and child level data. The latter comprises one or more modules (a subset of the child level data).

1.4 Providing information about the local context

DfE would welcome any local contextual information that local authorities can provide alongside the data submission that they feel may add value and background information to the data. For example, DfE carries out verification checks comparing the data submitted by local authorities against the published data for the previous year. Therefore, it would be particularly helpful if local authorities could provide an explanation of any instances where their data is significantly different from the previous year (for example, if there is a significant change in the number of applications made or the percentage of preferences met).

1.5 Main changes

Validation Rule 1530 amended to add LA Codes 944 (East Surrey), 945 (West Surrey)

4 validation rules added 110Q, 115Q, 120Q, 125Q

2 Guidance section - header details

Section 5 describes the XML format for the return of the data. Separate files will be required for (a) secondary, and (b) primary preferences and offers made to the deadlines set out in section 1.2. For both files, the data items required within the header are as follows:

Data item
Survey Collection Name <Collection> (N00600) will be 'PREFSEC' for the secondary return and 'PREFPRI' for the primary return. **Description: Name of the data collection for example 'PREFSEC' – school preference (child level) – secondary return; 'PREFPRI' – school preference (child level) – primary return. These collections are included in CBDS code set CS030**
Survey Year <Year> (N00602) will be '2027'. **Description: The year of the collection**.
Survey Reference Date <ReferenceDate> (N00603) will be '2027-03-01' for the secondary file and '2027-04-16' for the primary file. **Description: The reference date is normally the day of the census or collection go live date and is used as the baseline date from which comparisons with other dates in the return can be made.**
Source Level <SourceLevel> (N00604) will be 'L'. Note for collect developers: This field must be non-editable after loading into COLLECT. **Description: Should be set to L for a local authority system.**
LA <LEA> (N00216) is the LA Number. **Description: Standard DfE three digit local authority number.**
Software Code <SupplierID> (N00617) will be a free format field that can be populated with whatever identifier the software supplier wants to use. Note for collect developers: This field must be non-editable after loading into COLLECT. **Description: Software supplier reference**
Release <Release>, (N00607) is a code / date (or combination) provided by the Software Supplier to assist in identification. Note for collect developers: This field must be non-editable after loading into COLLECT.
Serial No <SerialNo> (N00606) will start at '001' and then be incremented by 1 each time a new file is prepared for submission. Note for collect developers: This field must be non-editable after loading into COLLECT. **Description: An incremented number, generated by a provider's software, enables data collection systems to identify re-submissions.**
Date / Time <DateTime> (N00609) is the Date and Time when the file was prepared or generated in CCYY-MM-DDThh:mm:ss format. Note for collect developers: This field must be non-editable after loading into COLLECT. **Description: Date and time of generation of the return.**

3 Guidance section - local authority level

3.1 Overall description

This section describes the local authority level of the two returns making up the school preference data collection 2027.

Full descriptions of the data items in each of these modules are shown in the common basic data set using the references in this specification.

Local authorities should only return admissions data for a single entry year. The minority of local authorities who have two admissions years at either primary or secondary level (for example, because of middle deemed secondary schools) must submit only the year with the largest intake.

Section 5 contains a sample XML message structure which shows the modular layout.

3.1.1 Local authority admissions module

This module contains details of the total number of admissions places available. Note that only one figure needs to be returned in each of the two returns: a) secondary and b) primary.

a) Number of secondary places on offer (N00645)

This is required only for the return in relation to the secondary national offer day (NOD). It will show the number of admission places in home local authority secondary schools (that is the total of the published admission numbers for all secondary schools part of the local authority's coordinated admissions process) for the 2027 admission year. This figure should include places retained for children with an education health care (EHC) plan.

b) Number of primary places on offer (N00649)

This is required only for the return in relation to the primary national offer day (NOD). It will show the number of admission places in home local authority primary schools (that is the total of the published admission numbers for all primary schools part of the local authority's coordinated admissions process) for the 2027 admission year. This will normally be reception year. This figure should include places retained for children with an education health care (EHC) plan.

4 Guidance section - child level

4.1 Overall description and scope

This section describes the child level of the school preference data collection 2027.

A single child level record should be provided relating to:

- any child to which the local authority made an offer of a school place on national offer day (NOD) regardless of whether an application was made on their behalf, and
- any child where an application was made on their behalf with at least one preference expressed, regardless of whether the local authority made an offer of a school place on national offer day. This should include late applications if treated as 'on time' but should not include late applications that were dealt with on national offer day, but not in the first round of applications (these should be removed). Applications which were late but which one or more of the schools named as a preference were prepared to consider as on time, and therefore the applicant was considered for that school (those schools) in the first round on national offer day, should be included.

A child level record should not be provided for:

- any child with an education health care (EHC) plan, where the destination school has been determined in the plan rather than through the coordinated admissions process.
- any child where an application was not made, and that child was not offered a place by the local authority making the return.
- Any applications made to neighbouring local authorities, even where the schools requested and/or offered are in your local authority.

Duplicate records for the same child should not be provided.

Full descriptions of the data items in each of these modules are shown in the common basic data set using the references in this specification.

The paragraphs below contain guidance.

Section 5 contains a sample XML message structure which shows the modular layout.

4.1.1 Pupil / child identifiers module

This module contains the unique pupil number (UPN), name, date of birth and sex of the child being the subject of the application and/or made an offer. This module is required for each child in scope in both returns: (a) secondary and (b) primary.

UPN (unique pupil number) (N00001)

If the child has a UPN (which should include all of those on the secondary return, unless they have not attended a mainstream school previously) then it should be provided. For the primary return the UPN should be provided if known. Many primary level children will yet to have been allocated a UPN, in which case this field should be left blank.

Surname (N00003)

Forename (N00004)

Middle names (N00005)

Date of birth (N00006)

Sex (N00783)

4.1.2 Home information module

This module contains the current home address of the child being this subject of the application and/or made an offer. This module is required for each child in scope in both returns: (a) secondary and (b) primary. The address can be provided in one of two formats (but not both, or a mixture), which are:

Post code (N00037), must be provided together with the remainder of the address in either

BS7666 (v1.4) address format

SAON (N00030)

PAON (N00031)

Street (N00032)

Locality (N00033)

Town (N00034)

Administrative area (N00035)

Post town (N00036)

A valid BS7666 (v1.4) address will contain a minimum of the ‘PAON’, ‘street’ at least one of ‘locality’, ‘town’ or ‘administrative area’ or ‘post town’ alongside the ‘post code’.

or

Line address format

Address line 1 (N00040)

Address line 2 (N00041)

Address line 3 (N00042)

Address line 4 (N00043)

Address line 5 (N00044)

For line address, the minimum of two address lines must be provided alongside the post code.

4.1.3 Admissions module

This module contains details relating to the admissions application or offer made. This module is required for each child in scope in both returns: (a) secondary and (b) primary.

For each record the:

Admissions entry year group (N00068). Please note that for the primary collection the allowable values for entry year group are '0' and 'R'. To confirm, from the 2020 collection onwards, entry year group 10 is no longer a valid value. Please also see validation rule 056Q.

For each child where an application has been made:

On-line application (N00646) – a flag showing 'True or 1' if the coordinated admissions application was made online. This field should be left blank if no application was made.

Where appropriate:

'NonApplicantOffer' (N00647) – a flag showing 'True or 1' where an application on behalf of a child was not received but the child was subsequently offered a place by the local authority.

'NoPreferenceMet' (N00648) – a flag showing 'True or 1' where an application on behalf of a child was received but the local authority had not been able to make an offer of one of the stated preferences. Note the child would normally be offered an alternative, non-preference, place by the local authority but 'True or 1' should be entered whether this is the case or not. The field should be left blank if no application was made or no preferences declared.

4.1.4 Preference details module

This module contains details about the different schools named as preferences on the application made on behalf of the child – including the ranking of those preferences – and details of the school offered on national offer day (where an offer was made). This module is required for each child in scope in both returns: (a) secondary and (b) primary.

For each preference made (as allowed by specific local authority but up to a maximum of six) the rank of the preference and the local authority number and 'establishment number' should be provided as follows:

Preference rank (N00073)

Local authority (LA) Number (N00216)

DfE establishment number (N00279)

Where multiple preferences are expressed on the application then each preference for an individual child should be a unique combination of local authority (LA) Number and DfE establishment number. Preferences should be returned in order, starting with the preference ranked '1'.

Additionally, details of the school offered on national offer day (where an offer was made) should be provided as follows:

Local authority (LA) Number (N00216)

DfE establishment number (N00279).

4.2 Data relationships

This table shows the valid combinations of data items as set out in section 4 for the scenarios possible within returns.

Scenario	Preference data	Offer data	Non applicant offer	No preference met	On-line application
1 Pupil applied (expressed preferences) and was offered a place in one of their preferred schools	Populated for at least one preference	Populated	False	False	True/False
2 Pupil applied and was offered a place at a school which was not one of their preferences	Populated for at least one preference	Populated	False	True	True/False
3 Pupil applied and was not offered a school place	Populated for at least one preference	Blank	False	True	True/False
4 Pupil did not apply, but was offered a school place	Blank	Populated	True	Blank	Blank

5 Data return format

The school preference data collection 2027 must be submitted to DfE in XML format, as described in this section.

The following general points should be noted for the above formats.

Note: The example provided is for the school preference secondary return (not primary).

5.1 Data items with no values

For the purposes of this collection the ‘no data, no tag’ principle will apply. Within XML, where there is no value for a particular item then the tag should not be shown. If circumstances arise where all of the data items in a container have no value, then that container should not be returned.

Where there is a missing item or value where one is expected or required an error will be generated when the return is loaded into COLLECT. (See section 6, validation checks, for details).

5.2 XML format submission

An XML submission will be a single message consisting of:

- A header
- One local authority level module
- A repeating group containing the data for each child

CBDS number	Data item
	<Message>
	<Header> - see 5.3 below for details
	<LA> - see 5.4 below for details
	<AdmissionsChild> - see 5.5 below for details
	</Message>

5.3 XML header

Separate files will be required for (a) secondary, and (b) primary preferences and offers made to the deadlines set out in section 1.2. A standard XML message header is required for each file. The data items should be populated according to the guidance in

Section 2. The layout (along with example data for school preference secondary) is as follows:

CBDS number	Data item
	<Header>
	<CollectionDetails>
N00600	<Collection>PREFSEC</Collection>
N00602	<Year>2027</Year>
N00603	<ReferenceDate>2027-03-01</ReferenceDate>
	</CollectionDetails>
	<Source>
N00604	<SourceLevel>L</SourceLevel>
N00216	<LEA>999</LEA>
N00605	<SupplierID>Software Supplier Reference</SupplierID>
N00607	<Release>1.4 2027-03-01</Release>
N00606	<SerialNo>001</SerialNo>
N00609	<DateTime>2027-03-04T11:14:05</DateTime>
	</Source>
	</Header>

5.4 Local authority XML message structure

CBDS number	Data item
	<LA>
	<AdmissionsPlaces>
N00645	<SecondaryPlaces>9999</SecondaryPlaces>
	</AdmissionsPlaces>
	</LA>

5.5 Child XML message structure

CBDS number	Data item
	<AdmissionsChild>
	<PupilChildIdentifiers>
N00001	<UPN> A123456789123</UPN>
N00003	<Surname>Surname</Surname>
N00004	<Forename>Firstname</Forename>
N00005	<MiddleNames>Middlename</MiddleNames>
N00006	<DOB>1066-03-24</DOB>
N00783	<Sex>F</Sex>
	</PupilChildIdentifiers>
	<HomeInformation>
N00037	<PostCode>ZZ99 9XX</PostCode>
	<BS7666Format>
N00030	<SAON>2 Flat</SAON>
N00031	<PAON> 123</PAON>
N00032	<Street>Street name</Street>
N00033	<Locality>Inner Area</Locality>
N00034	<Town>Town name</Town>
N00035	<AdministrativeArea>Adminarea</AdministrativeArea>
N00036	<PostTown>Name town</PostTown>
	</BS7666Format>

CBDS number	Data item
	<LineAddressFormat>
N00040	<AddressLine1>AddressA</AddressLine1>
N00041	<AddressLine2>AddressB</AddressLine2>
N00042	<AddressLine3>AddressC</AddressLine3>
N00043	<AddressLine4>AddressD</AddressLine4>
N00044	<AddressLine5>AddressE</AddressLine5>
	</LineAddressFormat>
	</HomeInformation>
	<Admissions>
N00068	<EntryYearGroup>7</EntryYearGroup>
N00646	<OnLineApplication>True</OnLineApplication>
N00647	<NonApplicantOffer>False</ NonApplicantOffer >
N00648	<NoPreferenceMet>False</NoPreferenceMet>
	</Admissions>
	<PreferenceDetails>
	<Preferences>
	Note: For each <PreferenceDetails> container there can be 0 to 6 instances of <Preference> and between 0 and 1 <Offer>.
	<Preference>
N00073	<PreferenceRank>1</PreferenceRank>
N00216	<LEA>999</LEA>
N00279	<Estab>9999</Estab>

CBDS number	Data item
	</Preference>
	<Preference>
N00073	<PreferenceRank>2</PreferenceRank>
N00216	<LEA>991</LEA>
N00279	<Estab>9991</Estab>
	</Preference>
	</Preferences>
	>/PreferenceDetails>
	<Offer>
N00216	<LEA>999</LEA>
N00279	<Estab>9999</Estab>
	</Offer>
	</AdmissionsChild>

5.6 Special notes for XML returns

The standard XML entity references should be used for the following 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 &#233. 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 - see for example Extensible markup language (XML) 1.0 (fifth edition) Section 2.

DfE recommends that the file is given a meaningful name that includes the local authority number (the 3 digit serial number). The file extension should be .xml. This will help users in selecting the correct file to upload to COLLECT.

5.7 XML file generic naming conventions

The following file naming conventions apply:

- The file extension will be XML
- The file name shall be constructed from the following components:
    - Origin Identifier consisting of the local authority Number (3 digits);
    - Collection name where ‘PREFSEC’ indicates school preference (child level) – secondary return;
    - Serial number (3 digits);
- The components should be separated by underscore characters (“_”);
- An example of a file name for this collection would be: 801_PREFSEC_001.XML.

5.8 Secondary and primary returns

As noted at the start of Section 5 of this specification, the XML example file is for the PREFSEC return only. If a PREFPRI (that is - primary) return is being provided, the following should be adhered to:

- File Name: ‘PREFPRI’ - the school preference (child level) primary return (7 digits)
- XML tags:
    - <Collection>PREFPRI</Collection>
    - <ReferenceDate>2027-04-16</ReferenceDate>
    - Include: <PrimaryPlaces> instead of <SecondaryPlaces>

6 Validation checks

This section specifies validation rules that are applied to the data by DfE using COLLECT. They should 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 tables but not appearing in the validation rules - that is, those not shown in the validation rules as "must be present" - should be supplied where available (for example, pupil's middle name).

The table also shows which validations are errors and which ones are queries.

- An error is a failed validation check that must be corrected before the return is submitted.
- A query is one which must be investigated, and potentially corrected, as it identifies data that would usually be invalid. Queries may be accepted with appropriate notepad entries. DfE will accept notes at return level which include the relevant query numbers and pupil identifiers.

6.1 File header validation

Seq number	Error/ Query	Validation check	Error message
050	Error	**For school preference (child level) – secondary return only**: <Collection> (N00600) must be present and = 'PREFSEC' Note for collect developers: This rule should trigger if PREFSEC is missing or incorrect on initial load. This field should be non-editable after loading into COLLECT.	Survey collection name should be 'PREFSEC'.
051	Error	For **school preference (child level) – primary return** only: <Collection> (N00600) must be present and = 'PREFPRI' Note for collect developers: This rule should trigger if PREFPRI is missing or incorrect on initial load. This field should be non-editable after loading into COLLECT.	Survey collection name should be 'PREFPRI'.
012	Error	<Year> (N00602) must be present and = '2027' Note for collect developers: This rule should trigger if <year> does not equal the survey year on initial load. This field should be non-editable after loading into COLLECT.	Year should be '2027'.
052	Error	For **school preference (child level) – secondary return** only <ReferenceDate> (N00603) must be present and = '2027-03-01'	Reference date must be 01 March 2027
053	Error	For **school preference (child level) – primary return** only <ReferenceDate> (N00603) must be present and = '2027-04-16'	Reference date must be 16 April 2027
014	Error	<SourceLevel> (N00604) must be present and = 'L'	Source level should be 'L'.
017	Query	<SupplierID> (N00617) must be present.	Software code should be present.

Seq number	Error/ Query	Validation check	Error message
019	Query	<SerialNo> (N00606) must be present and a numeric number in the format ‘nnn’. Note for collect developers:	Serial No. should be present.
020	Error	<DateTime> (N00609) must be present and in the format ‘CCYY-MM-DDThh:mm:ss>.	Date/ Time file generated should be in the format 'yyyy-mm-ddThh:mm:ss'.
8000	Error	<LEA> (N00216) must be present and a valid value	Local authority number missing or invalid

6.2 Local authority level validation

Seq number	Error/ Query	Validation check	Error message
086	Error	No Admission Places information is present in the return	The admission places record is blank
082	Error	Where <Collection> = `PREFSEC’ then <SecondaryPlaces> (N00645) must be present and >0	A secondary return is present but there are no school places details provided
083	Error	Where <Collection> = `PREFPRI’ then <PrimaryPlaces> (N00649) must be present and >0	A primary return is present but there are no school places details provided

Seq number	Error/ Query	Validation check	Error message
088Q	Query	Where <Collection> =`PREFSEC': Raise a Query where <SecondaryPlaces> (N00645) for current year collection is >= <SecondaryPlaces (N00645) for previous year collection x 1.08. NB: The actual percentage and difference should be included in the brackets in the query message. Both the previous and current number of places should also be included in the error messages. NB1: A check should be made for a missing or 'zero' value for the previous year. If found, please raise the following message. 'This figure cannot be calculated as the previous year's admissions places was zero'. NB2: If current year admissions places is not completed or not greater than zero, the following message should be raised: 'This figure cannot be calculated as the current year's admissions places is zero'.	The number of secondary school places reported (nnnn) is significantly higher (nn%) than the number reported for the previous year (nnnn). Please check that the figure provided is correct and add a return level note giving the reason (for example, a new free school).

Seq number	Error/ Query	Validation check	Error message
089Q	Query	Where <Collection> =`PREFSEC': Raise a Query where <SecondaryPlaces> (N00645) for current year collection is <= <SecondaryPlaces (N00645) for previous year collection x 0.92. NB: The actual percentage difference should be included in the brackets in the query message. Both the previous and current number of places should also be included in the error messages. NB1: A check should be made for a missing or 'zero' value for the previous year. If found, please raise the following message. 'This figure cannot be calculated as the previous year's admissions places was zero'. NB2: If current year admissions places is not completed or not greater than zero, the following message should be raised: 'This figure cannot be calculated as the current year's admissions places is zero'.	The number of secondary school places reported (nnnn) is significantly lower (-nn%) than the number reported for the previous year (nnnn). Please check that the figure provided is correct and add a return level note giving the reason (for example, a school closure).

Seq number	Error/ Query	Validation check	Error message
090Q	Query	Where <Collection> =`PREFPRI': Raise a Query where <PrimaryPlaces> (N00649) for current year collection is >= <PrimaryPlaces (N00649) for previous year collection x 1.08. NB: The actual percentage difference should be included in the brackets in the query message. Both the previous and current number of places should also be included in the error messages. NB1: A check should be made for a missing or 'zero' value for the previous year. If found, please raise the following message. 'This figure cannot be calculated as the previous year's admissions places was zero'. NB2: If current year admissions places is not completed or not greater than zero, the following message should be raised: 'This figure cannot be calculated as the current year's admissions places is zero'.	The number of primary school places reported (nnnn) is significantly higher (nn%) than the number reported for the previous year (nnnn). Please check that the figure provided is correct and add a return level note giving the reason (for example, a new free school).
091Q	Query	Where <Collection> =`PREFPRI': Raise a Query where <PrimaryPlaces> (N00649) for current year collection is <= <PrimaryPlaces (N00649) for previous year collection x 0.92. NB: The actual percentage difference should be included in the brackets in the query message. Both the previous and current number of places should also be included in the error messages. NB1: A check should be made for a missing or 'zero' value for the previous year. If found, please raise the following message. 'This figure cannot be calculated as the previous year's admissions places was zero'. NB2: If current year admissions places is not completed or not greater than zero, the following message should be raised: 'This figure cannot be calculated as the current year's admissions places is zero'.	The number of primary school places reported (nnnn) is significantly lower (-nn%) than the number reported for the previous year (nnnn). Please check that the figure provided is correct and add a return level note giving the reason (for example, a school closure).

Seq number	Error/ Query	Validation check	Error message
097Q	Query	Where <Collection> =`PREFSEC’: Where <Collection> = `PREFSEC: Raise a query where number of pupils in the current collection with a <NonApplicantOffer> (N00647) = False/0 is >= number of pupils in previous year’s collection with <NonApplicantOffer> (N00647) = False/0 x 1.08. NB: The actual percentage and difference should be included in the brackets in the query message. Both the previous and current number of applications should also be included in the error messages. NB1: A check should be made for a missing or `zero’ value for the previous year. If found, please raise the following message. ‘This figure cannot be calculated as there are no applications for the previous year.' NB2: If there are no applications for the current year the following message should be raised: ‘This figure cannot be calculated as there are no applications for the current year.'	The number of secondary school applications reported (nnnn) is significantly higher (nn%) than the number reported for the previous year (nnnn). Please check that the figure provided is correct and add a return level note giving the reason (for example, a new free school).

Seq number	Error/ Query	Validation check	Error message
098Q	Query	Where <Collection> is `PREFSEC': Raise a query where number of pupils in the current collection with a <NonApplicantOffer> (N00647) = False/0 is <= number of pupils in previous year's collection with <NonApplicantOffer> (N00647) = False/0 x 0.92 NB: The actual percentage difference should be included in the brackets in the query message. Both the previous and current number of applications should also be included in the error messages. NB1: A check should be made for a missing or `zero' value for the previous year. If found, please raise the following message. 'This figure cannot be calculated as there are no applications for the previous year.' NB2: If there are no applications for the current year the following message should be raised: 'This figure cannot be calculated as there are no applications for the current year.'	The number of secondary school applications reported (nnnn) is significantly lower (-nn%) than the number reported for the previous year (nnnn). Please check that the figure provided is correct and add a return level note giving the reason (for example, a school closure).

Seq number	Error/ Query	Validation check	Error message
099Q	Query	Where <Collection> is `PREFPRI': Raise a query where number of pupils in the current collection with a <NonApplicantOffer> (N00647) = False/0 is >= number of pupils in previous year's collection with <NonApplicantOffer> (N00647) = False/0 x 1.08. NB: The actual percentage difference should be included in the brackets in the query message. Both the previous and current number of applications should also be included in the error messages. NB1: A check should be made for a missing or `zero' value for the previous year. If found, please raise the following message. 'This figure cannot be calculated as there are no applications for the previous year.' NB2: If there are no applications for the current year the following message should be raised: 'This figure cannot be calculated as there are no applications for the current year.'	The number of primary school applications reported (nnnn) is significantly higher (nn%) than the number reported for the previous year (nnnn). Please check that the figure provided is correct and add a return level note giving the reason (for example, a new free school).

Seq number	Error/ Query	Validation check	Error message
0100Q	Query	Where <Collection> is `PREFPRI': Raise a query where number of pupils in the current collection with a <NonApplicantOffer> (N00647) = False/0 is <= number of pupils in previous year's collection with <NonApplicantOffer> (N00647) = False/0 x 0.92. NB: The actual percentage difference should be included in the brackets in the query message. Both the previous and current number of applications should also be included in the error messages. NB1: A check should be made for a missing or `zero' value for the previous year. If found, please raise the following message. 'This figure cannot be calculated as there are no applications for the previous year.' NB2: If there are no applications for the current year the following message should be raised: 'This figure cannot be calculated as there are no applications for the current year.'	The number of primary school applications reported (nnnn) is significantly lower (-nn%) than the number reported for the previous year (nnnn). Please check that the figure provided is correct and add a return level note giving the reason (for example, a school closure).
084	Error	At least one <AdmissionsChild> module must be present for each return	A return is present but there are no child details provided.
085	Error	Within each return, pupils should only be included from the same entry year.	The return includes pupils from more than one entry year. Data should be provided for the largest entry year only.
110Q	Query	<NoofPlacesinLA> is equal to <TotalNumberofOffersMade>	Please check: you have reported the same total number of places available as the total number of offers made

6.3 Child level validation (including Home Information Module and Admissions and preference modules)

Seq number	Error/ Query	Validation check	Error message
1510	Error	If UPN is present <UPN> (N00001) 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, that is A=0, B=1, C=2 and so forth.	UPN invalid (wrong check letter at character 1)
1520	Error	Each <UPN> (N00001) (where not blank) must be unique across all pupils within the data return	More than one pupil record with the same UPN.

Seq number	Error/ Query	Validation check	Error message
1530	Error	If <UPN> (N00001) is present Characters 2-4 of <UPN> (N00001) must be a valid post April 1998 LA code or 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, 835-837, 838, 839, 840, 841, 845, 846, 850-852, 855-857, 860, 861, 865-896, 908, 909, 916, 919, 921, 925, 926, 928, 929, 931, 933, 935-38, 940, 941, 942, 943, 944, 945)	UPN invalid (characters 2-4 not a recognised local authority code).
1540	Error	If <UPN> (N00001) is present Characters 5-12 of <UPN> (N00001) must be numeric	UPN invalid (characters 5-12 not all numeric).
1550	Error	If <UPN> (N00001) is present Character 13 of <UPN> (N00001) must be numeric or A-Z omitting I, O and S	UPN invalid (character 13 not a recognised value).
1560Q	Query	There should not be two or more pupils in the return with the same surname (N00003), forename (N00004), middle names (N00005), date of birth (N00006) and post code (N00037). NB: This must be an OK-able query.	Please check: Duplicate child records with the same surname, forename, middle names, date of birth and post code. This will be ‘Okable’ in COLLECT.
1580	Error	<Surname> (N00003) must be present	Pupil with last name missing.
1590	Error	<Forename> (N00004) must be present	Pupil with forename missing.
1600	Error	<DOB> (N00066) must be present.	Pupil’s date of birth is missing.
054Q	Query	<DOB> (N00066) should be on or before 31 August 2023 that is, pupil should not be younger than 4 on year of admission	Please check: Child shown is younger than 4 years old.

Seq number	Error/ Query	Validation check	Error message
055Q	Query	<DOB> (N00066) should be on or after 1 September 2011 that is, pupil should be eligible to enter secondary education (yrs 7-11).	Please check: Pupil's date of birth indicates they are already 16 years of age prior to the start of the 2027 to 2028 academic year and not eligible for secondary education (yrs 7-11).
1610	Error	<Sex> (N00783) must be present and – 'F' or 'M'	Pupil's sex is missing or invalid.
092	Error	Pupil's home information details are missing This error must be 'OK-able'	The home information details are missing for this pupil. Please enter the correct home information details. If it is not possible to provide home information details for this child, please provide a return level note explaining why.
2340	Error	<PostCode> (N00037) must be provided and must be in a valid format. Valid formats are: An nAA Ann nAA AAn nAA AAnn nAA AnA nAA AAnA nAA where 'A' is alphabetic and 'n' is numeric. Also valid: BFPO n BFPO nn BFPO nnn This error must be 'OK-able'	Pupil's post code not provided, or in an unrecognised format. If it is not possible to provide a post code in the valid format for this child, please provide a return level note explaining why.

Seq number	Error/ Query	Validation check	Error message
2350	Error	<AddressLine1> (N00040) or <PAON> (N00031) must be present. This error must be 'OK-able'	Insufficient address information provided.
2380	Error	If <PAON> (N00031) is present, at least one of <Street> (N00032), <Locality> (N00033), <Town> (N00034), <Administrative Area> (N00035) or <PostTown> (N00036) must be present This error must be 'OK-able'	Please check: Where dwelling is present, at least one of the street, locality, town, administrative area or post town must be shown.
2400	Error	If <AddressLine1> (N00040) present, one of <AddressLine2> (N00041) <AddressLine3> (N00042) <AddressLine4> (N00043) or <AddressLine5> (N00044) must be present. This error must be 'OK-able'	Where first line present, at least one other address line must also be present.
2445Q	Query	If <AddressLine1>, <AddressLine2>, <AddressLine3>, <AddressLine4> or <AddressLine5> present, <PAON> (N00031), <Street> (N00032), <Locality> (N00033), <Town> (N00034), <AdministrativeArea> (N00035) or <PostTown> (N00036) should not be present. This error must be 'OK-able'	Address information drawn from two conflicting formats.
115Q	Query	The number of applicants per LA where <FirstPreferenceLA> and <FirstPreferenceEstab> are not null but <SecondPreferenceLA> and <SecondPreferenceEstab> are null should not be equal to or greater than 20% of the total number of applicant records for that LA.	Please check: More than 20% of pupils do not have a second preference reported.

Seq number	Error/ Query	Validation check	Error message
120Q	Query	For any special schools listed, then total places offered should be less than or equal to 2. For COLLECT developers: A reference list of special schools within scope of each collection will be provided prior to the collection, based on GIAS data.	Please check: the number of special school offers you have reported is greater than expected. Please check to ensure you have not included any children with an EHC plan on your return
125Q	Query	**For school preference (child level) – secondary only:** Where <Collection> = 'PREFSEC': there is at least one 'EntryYearGroup' value which is not equal to '7'	Please check: for the Secondary Preference Collection, we would expect entry year values of '7' only
093	Error	Pupil's admissions details are missing	The admission details are missing for this pupil. Please enter the correct admission details.
096	Error	There is more than one admissions module for the child	More than one admissions record is present. There must be only one admissions record for each child.
094	Error	Child has more than one offer.	There is more than one offer recorded. Please remove the invalid offer.
056Q	Query	For **school preference (child level) – secondary return** only: <EntryYearGroup> (N00068) must be present and one of '4', '5', or '6', '7', '8' or '9'. For **school preference (child level) – primary return** only: <EntryYearGroup> (N00068) must be present and either `0' or 'R'.	Admissions entry year group is missing or invalid.

Seq number	Error/ Query	Validation check	Error message
057	Error	If <NonApplicantOffer> (N00647) is ‘True or 1’ then <OnLineApplication> (N00646) must be blank or missing and <Preference> container should be blank or missing.	A non applicant offer has been reported, but it has also been stated that an on-line application has been made and/or there is at least one school preference. This cannot be the case.
058	Error	If <NonApplicantOffer (N00647) is ‘False or 0’ then <OnLineApplication> (N00646) must be present and one of ‘True or 1’ or ‘False or 0’	Neither a non applicant offer nor an on-line application has been reported – both cannot be blank.
059	Error	<NonApplicantOffer> (N00647) must be present and one of ‘True or 1’ or ‘False or 0’	Non applicant offer must be present and a valid value
060	Error	If present, <NoPreferenceMet> (N00648) must be one of ‘True or 1’ or ‘False or 0’	No preference met is present but has an invalid value.
061	Error	If <NonApplicantOffer> (N00647) is ‘True or 1’ then <NoPreferenceMet> (N00648) must be blank or missing.	Non applicant offer has been reported, but also no preference met. This cannot be the case since there are no preferences for a non applicant offer.
062	Error	If <NonApplicantOffer> (N00647) is ‘False or 0’ then <NoPreferenceMet> (N00648) cannot be blank or missing.	No preference met cannot be missing unless the child is a non applicant
063	Error	Where <PreferenceRank> (N00073) is present <LEA> (N00216) must be present and a valid value	Local authority number missing or invalid for preferences

Seq number	Error/ Query	Validation check	Error message
064	Error	Where <PreferenceRank> (N00073) is present <Estab> (N00279) must come from a range of current schools in the LA This must be an 'OK-able Error'.	DfE establishment number missing or invalid for preferences. If a dummy code has been used (for example, for new provision, 2nd site of a 2-site school, or aptitude place) please add a return level note giving the school name and (as needed) entry route for each dummy code. NB: Independent schools should not be included in this collection
065	Error	Where <Offer> container is present <LEA> (N00216) must be present and a valid value	Local authority number missing or invalid for school offered
066	Error	Where <Offer> container is present <Estab> (N00279) come from a range of current schools in the LA This must be an 'OK-able Error'.	DfE establishment number missing or invalid for school offered. If a dummy code has been used (for example for a new provision, 2nd site of a 2-site school, or aptitude place) please add a return level note giving the school name and (as needed) entry route for each dummy code. NB: Independent schools should not be included in this collection
067	Error	Where <NonApplicantOffer> (N00647) is 'True or 1' then <Preferences> container must be blank or missing	Child is identified as having a non applicant offer, but preferences are shown.
068	Error	Where <NonApplicantOffer> (N00647) is 'False or 0' then <Preferences> container must be present	Child is identified as not having a non applicant offer, but no preferences are shown

Seq number	Error/ Query	Validation check	Error message
069	Error	Where <NonApplicantOffer> (N00647) is ‘True or 1’ then <Offer> container must be present	If a non applicant offer has been made, offer details must be present.
070	Error	If <NoPreferenceMet> (N00648) = ‘False or 0’ then <Offer> container must be present and <Offer><LEA> (N00216) and <Offer><Estab> (N00279) must equal one of <Preference><LEA> (N00216) and <Preference><Estab> (N00279)	It has been reported that one of the child’s preferences have been met, but the offer details provided do not match any of the preferences reported.
071	Error	If <NoPreferenceMet> (N00648) = ‘True or 1’ AND <Offer> container is present then <Offer><LEA> (N00216) and <Offer><Estab> (N00279) must not equal any of <Preference><LEA> (N00216) and <Preference><Estab> (N00279)	It has been reported that no preferences have been met for the child, but the offer details match one of the preferences provided.
072	Error	Where <PreferenceRank> (N00073) = ‘1’ then <NonApplicantOffer> (N00647) must by ‘False or 0’	Preferences recorded where no application shown.
073	Error	If <Preferences> container is not present then <NonApplicantOffer> (N00647) must be ‘True or 1’	A child must have a non applicant offer if no preference details are present.
074	Error	For each instance of <Preferences> container <PreferenceRank> (N00073) must be present and equal to ‘1’, ‘2’, ‘3’, ‘4’, ‘5’ or ‘6’	Preference rank missing or invalid
087	Error	For each instance of <Preference> container the <PreferenceRank> (N00073) must be different	One or more preference ranks have been repeated across the listed preferences

Seq number	Error/ Query	Validation check	Error message
095	Error	Each <PreferenceRank> (N00073) must run in consecutively and in numerical order. There must be no gaps between the preference ranks.	Preferences must be ranked from 1 downwards in the order requested by the applicant. There must be no gaps between the preferences. If a preference is removed, the preferences lower in the order must be moved up and the list re numbered.
080	Error	If <Offer> container is not present then <NoPreferenceMet> (N00648) must be ‘True or 1’ AND <PreferenceRank> (N00073) = ‘1’ must be present	Child is identified as having no offer details, but no preference met = `False’ and/or the first preference details is missing
081	Error	For each instance of <Preference> container the combination of <LEA> (N00216) and <Estab> (N00279) must be different	Duplicate preference shown.

Version history

Version	Main changes	Author/Date
V0.1	• All through: Update of dates for new collection • Validation Rule 1530 amended to add LA Codes 944, 945 • New validations rules introduced: 110Q, 115Q, 120Q, 125Q	Simon Summers; COG; July 2026
V1.0	This is the base lined version of the specification	Simon Summers; COG; August 2026
V1.1	Minor updates: • References to COLLECT notes amended to 'return level notes', as item level note functionality is no longer available. • 115Q – correction made to rule logic and error message amended for clarity	Simon Summers; COG; November 2026

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