



Requesting daily data from schools – principles for collection and use

1. Purpose of this document

Good attendance at school is vital for children and young people's education and their wider wellbeing. The pandemic has had an impact on school attendance, and this, coupled with challenges which existed pre-pandemic, will have a negative impact on children's life chances. We have a shared goal to improve attendance, and having better data is one thing that will allow us to achieve that aim. Access to better data at a national, regional and local level will both help highlight particular challenges and identify solutions that are currently working well and can be shared.

We are therefore asking schools to share their school attendance data with DfE, as we explore ways to better collect, use and share attendance data across the system. This document describes the principles and approaches DfE will use when collecting and using data provided by schools as part of this new data sharing project. These principles will remain in place until they are reviewed in September 2022.

2. Why we are asking schools to share data

DfE has ambitions to improve the way we collect, use and share data. We want to increase automated collection as much as possible in order to reduce burdens on schools. We are asking that you help us to test if this ambition is possible, and to help us shape what a solution could look like.

For this first phase of the project, we want to collect data to improve collective efforts to maximise school attendance. Data is critical in our understanding of how the system can best adapt to meet emerging needs.

The creation of the Educational Setting Status form, which provides information about attendance during the pandemic, has given us valuable insights. It has been essential for the management of the pandemic but has also created a burden for schools. Whilst there is value in this collection remaining in place for now, at Easter we will review that ask of schools.

We want to explore how we can establish a timely and **low burden way** of sharing information between schools, MATs and LAs.

Wide participation in this project will increase DfE's ability to explore longer-term solutions that could reduce schools' manual data collection burdens.

3. The data collection mechanism

DfE is asking schools to share the daily data they already record on their management information systems.

The sharing process is simple and quick. There are no additional burdens on schools. We are not asking schools to record new data.

The sharing process will be facilitated by the data aggregator company Wonde, who we know 90% of schools are already working with. Schools using this system will be able to participate in the project.

DfE is requesting pupil level data that covers all attendance data, demographic data and some vulnerable children indicators. Schools will not be asked to share other data.

Schools will receive a request from Wonde to agree to share this specific data. It is a one-off process for schools to provide agreement.

Once a school agrees to share data it is automatically extracted from the Management Information System and sent to DfE each day. No daily action will be required by schools.

Schools can opt-out of this data sharing at any time.

4. DfE use of the data you share

We know that you will want reassurance about how this attendance data may be used. We plan to do the following things:

DfE will use the data to identify national, regional and local trends and patterns on school attendance. We will also explore if it is possible to gain additional policy insight by linking it to other data sources within DfE.

Where the data suggests particular issues in LAs or MATs, we are keen to signpost them to helpful resources. This may include sharing examples of where others working in a similar context have put in place particularly effective approaches.

We want to share data back with the sector and by doing so, gradually reduce manual data collection burdens and better support operational planning MATs will be able to view the data of all participating schools they are responsible for, and LAs will be able to view the data of participating schools within their area. As we increase our understanding of the potential of the data, we will improve the reporting and wider service. We have identified an opportunity to reduce duplication on schools' provision of data to DfE and other parts of the sector. Reducing duplication will take time as we build confidence and trust in this new approach.

This voluntary data will not be used for Ofsted or RSC decision making, for judgements around what constitutes a school causing concern, or for inspection, academisation or decisions to place or remove a school in a Trust. Instead, termly census data will continue to inform these decisions.

All data collected will be subject to data protection rules and no information that identifies a child will be shared publicly.

We will also share analysis with members of the Attendance Action Alliance. We will not share school identifiable level data with them.

At the end of January the data collection will begin.

From February, we will be build our understanding of the data we receive and how we can report it back to the sector in the most helpful way. We are already working with user groups to learn about user needs.

In April we expect to start sharing data back with the system. Once developed, schools, LAs and MATs will be able to view reporting through the [View Your Education Data](#) service. Before then we will conduct user research with MATs, LAs and schools to inform the design of the reporting.

5. Length of this data sharing project

DfE will consider the progress of this project over the summer.

DfE will review the principles in this document in September, seeking feedback from stakeholders as we do so.

6. Working with the sector

DfE wants to be user centred in its approach, working closely with the sector as we develop data sharing mechanisms.

During the project we will welcome feedback from participating schools, MATs, LAs and stakeholders.

DfE is keen to work transparently with the sector, and so we are sharing these principles for data use. Thank you in advance for working with us on this important project.

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