



Department
for Education

School attendance data collection impact assessment

February 2022

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1. Introduction

In July 2020, The Children's Commission published a report detailing that 120,000 teenagers (1 in 25) were at risk at falling through the gaps of education and social care (Source - [Coronavirus crisis could see a lost generation of vulnerable teenagers falling through gaps in the school and social care systems.](#))

At present The Department for Education only records attendance on a termly basis and this does not give enough data for DfE to make timely interventions to support vulnerable children such as those outlined in the report.

Synopsis of Programme

To inform operational and policy decisions throughout the pandemic we needed to understand attendance on a more frequent basis, resulting in the move to daily collections in March 2020. This was a major change for the sector and required the development of a bespoke, manual, voluntary data collection known as the Educational Settings (EDSET) form.

This new daily functionality has proved invaluable, with the data provided helping to shape the government's response to the pandemic and offering new insights into the attendance pattern of pupils.

The use of daily attendance data during the pandemic has shown that there is an opportunity to improve data flows between DfE and schools, LAs and MATs and open the way to more timely data being collected.

As we move into Covid Recovery work it is vital that children attend school and continue their learning to achieve the best possible outcomes they can. The Children's Commissioner, Ofsted and Office for Health Improvement and Disparities all raise concerns about the disproportionate impact COVID has on vulnerable children, including mental health and the increased risks of self-harm. See links:

- [Education recovery in schools: autumn 2021 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- [4. Children and young people - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- [Damage to children's mental health caused by Covid crisis could last for years without a large-scale increase for children's mental health services | Children's Commissioner for England \(childrenscommissioner.gov.uk\)](#)

Applying the lessons learnt from the pandemic has informed our approach to automating the collection of attendance data daily. Schools and MATs are dealing with unprecedented challenges, we don't know what the long-term impacts of the COVID pandemic are on children's education, wellbeing and mental health. We do know termly, or even weekly absence data collection will not enable the level of analysis required to

support schools and MATs in taking early action, identifying trends and issues requiring immediate action and support children in their care.

To be able to collect daily attendance data we have procured Wonde who will ask schools to agree to share their daily attendance data with DfE. Once agreement is given the school does not have to take any further action, Wonde will connect to their management information system on a daily basis, extract the data and share it with DfE.

This change of frequency and method of collection does not require schools and MATs to do anything in addition to their current data collection method. About the personal data and the processing

The personal data items we will be processing

Demographics

Surname, forename, Date of Birth, sex, ethnicity, (ethnicity is special category data)

Unique pupil number, school unique reference number, local authority code

All attendance sub codes as requested in the voluntary data collection known as the Educational Settings (EDSET) form.

Vulnerable Child Indicators

This is an expansion of existing data collection, it will change the method of collection and frequency to daily collection for data currently being collected via a different frequency and method:

Child looked after, child previously looked after - annually collected via Local Authorities in the SSDA903 return.

SEN support, education health and care plan, free school meals including FSM6, pupil premium - collected in the termly school census data collection. (special category data).

Child in Need & Child Protection (not in first phase).

2a Lawful basis for processing personal data

Public task (Article 6 (1)(e)) - the processing is necessary for the organisation to perform a task in the public interest or for the organisation's official functions, and the task or function has a clear basis in law.

3. Is a data processor being used?

We are using a data processor (Wonde). Wonde will be working under the terms of a DfE contract to collect attendance data from the school Management Information System and securely transfer it to DfE daily. This collection is done using a standard interface that allows pupil level data to be shared securely. Under the contract Wonde can only collect the data that DfE has said they can collect, and they can only transfer it to DfE in the agreed way.

Wonde already have established working relationships with schools and MATs and are trusted by 19,204 schools to process pupil data as the schools contracted data processor. Using a secure portal Wonde ask the school to give agreement to share their data with DfE for the new daily frequency and via this new means. The process is quick and simple, all schools need to do is click 'yes' if they want to give agreement. This is a one-off process, once the school agrees to share data in this way it will be automatically extracted from their Management Information System and sent to DfE each day. Schools can revoke agreement at any time should they wish to do so.

This is not a new data collection. The data Wonde will extract under the terms of the contract with DfE is already processed by DfE through the termly school census which schools have a statutory obligation to complete, SSDA903 and the EDSET collection. This collection is changing the frequency (to daily from termly, annually) and the method from using our COLLECT data base to the data being extracted with the school's agreement by Wonde from their Management Information System.

4. How the data will be obtained

The data fields to be collected are recorded in the school management information systems (MIS). Wonde ask schools via a secure portal to give agreement to share their data with the DfE. Once this agreement is received Wonde can connect to the MIS to extract the data as set out in the specification (detailed above).

Wonde will transfer this data to us daily. It is important to note that we are not collecting any new data, this reflects census collections. The change is to the frequency which will be daily compared to termly, annual publishing as part of census.

The technical detail for this is as follows: Data will be collected from the 3rd Party Aggregator (Wonde) via their API interface and landed in the Data Directorates Transient Zone, where it will be scanned for vulnerabilities before being made available for use.

5. What security measures are in place?

Personal data which includes the special category data being collected on pupils may become available to organisations outside DfE, Schools, LAs and MATs This could result

in a loss of trust and reputational impacts if this were to happen. If the data is lost or altered this could impact on DfE's ability to perform our duties as it could distort results for analysis and research. Within DfE, data is stored and processed within Microsoft Azure cloud hosting which is based in the Republic of Ireland and the Netherlands. DfE's use of Microsoft Azure hosting has approval from the Cabinet Office and meet all the relevant guidelines for holding and processing personal and restricted data. This includes ensuring the systems comply with the Data Protection Legislation and other relevant legislative obligations that apply to data rated at OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE.

DfE has robust safeguards and controls in place to ensure this data, as with all our data, is handled securely and in accordance with relevant data protection regulations. This data will be allocated an information asset owner who will be responsible for controlling access to the data to only those with a justified and legal need to access the data and will be responsible for completing ongoing periodic reviews to ensure that the data will be retained for no longer than is necessary for the purposes for which the data was originally collected.

DfE has received the required Offshoring Approval for using Microsoft Azure.

We have worked with our DfE lead security information officer to ensure security colleagues were satisfied that the requirements of Article 32 were met, and this includes the secure hub used by Wonde. Security colleagues confirmed this before we signed the contract.

All access to the data will be authenticated via an Identity and Access Management solution (controlled by DfE). Authorisation to see data will be controlled via role-based access rules.

6. Who will be involved in the processing of personal data?

Schools and MATs are the Data Controller for the initial data collection as required in law for the School Census Data Collection.

DfE becomes the data controller at the point they receive the data collection via the secure hub.

Wonde is acting as DfE's data processor in accordance with the terms of the contract with DfE. All data collected is stored in Wonde's secure hub.

Wonde has satisfied the terms of our contract with regard to our security requirements

MATs as the accountable body and data controller for academy schools for the initial data collection as required in law until they transfer it to DfE.

LAs as the accountable body (and data controller) for maintained schools and all children living within their boundary (or placed in care out of Authority) for safeguarding purposes

No data will be collected without the agreement from the school in compliance with the data fields outlined above (detailed in the contract)

DfE access will be managed through tokens from Wonde. The token provides access permission for DfE to data held by Wonde. It is generated in Wonde's secure portal. The token contains a code that DfE use when retrieving data from Wonde. These access tokens will be tightly managed and keys need to be changed on a periodic basis (3 months) OR when someone in an operations/support leaves who has had direct access to the token information.

7. Retention periods

66 years – Due to the unprecedented challenges schools, MATs and children are facing data will need to be kept to enable long term analysis to be conducted. COVID will have a long-term impact on the education of children, we will need to be able to monitor the impact throughout their school life and into employment. The expectations of the job market and working patterns have changed as a result of COVID, we will need to understand the relationship between education and earnings as a result of these changes.

The effects of COVID and long COVID are as yet unknown and will need to be kept under review.

Reviews will be conducted annually to ensure the data remains necessary for our purposes. Data that is deemed unnecessary will be destroyed or archived as appropriate. All archived data will be anonymised so it can no longer be linked to an identifiable person. If archived periodic reviews will be carried and the data disposed of when it is deemed unnecessary to hold. As part of the review, we will consider whether data can be anonymised.

The data will be refreshed (as it changes in the source system) daily.

All deletions will be managed by the Data Controller (Schools) at source in their MIS system. The only deletions DfE will need to make is for any records which have been identified as incorrect, these will be reviewed upon receipt of notification and deleted as required.

Where it has been decided that the data is no longer required and can be deleted and destroyed, the data will be destroyed in line with DfE practices employing a process of "secure sanitisation", required under "Information Assurance Standard No. 5 - Secure Sanitisation" ("IS5") issued by the former National Technical Authority for Information Assurance (CESG), now National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC).

8. Processing data outside of the United Kingdom

Wonde stores school data within Amazon Web Services data centre in Ireland. This ensures data is stored in EEA and can be freely transferred between Ireland and the UK under the current UK/EU GDPR adequacy decision.

This has been reviewed by Neil McIvor, Chief Data Officer as part of the off-shoring approval process and approval has been given.

9. Are cookies or similar technologies used?

No

About necessity, proportionality, lawfulness and data quality

10. The context of processing personal data

Schools, Local Authorities, Multi Academy Trusts and DfE will have more timely data:

- allowing for earlier trend analysis and indication of issues enabling significantly speedier interventions
- better supporting safeguarding actions protection children from harm
- reduce persistent absence, identify trends, better able to support vulnerable children including children with caring responsibilities
- Inform any support and interventions a child needs to enable them to be in school and help them achieve the best possible outcomes they can
- inform operational and strategic decision making
- support budgetary/funding decisions by identifying where money needs to be spent, including where MATs need to prioritise their spend.
- able to identify trends where investment may be needed.

We have plans in place to work with the sector to play this data back to them to facilitate a better understanding amongst schools, MATs and LAs of their own performance at pupil level, and compare with the sector. This will inform any necessary improvement plans and more timely interventions. This will be done using View your Education Data (VYED) which will present the data in a report using Microsoft Power BI. We have chosen to use VYED because it is a reporting mechanism already in use that schools, LAs and MATs can have secure access to their data. We have chosen to use VYED as it is a tool already used by the sector and uses Power BI to report and visualise the data.

We will start receiving the data from our contractor Wonde on or just after the 7th February 2022. We aim to start sharing this back to the sector from April. Before we are able to share we will be carrying out data validation checks to ensure strong data quality.

Reporting back to the sector using [VYED](#) will give:

- Schools the ability to view all their pupil level data.
- MATs will have the ability to view the data of all participating schools they are responsible_for
- LAs will have the ability to view the data for all pupils living in their area.
- All users will have access to aggregated data for comparator purposes

This is an improvement to reporting of this data currently, which is only published termly, annually following the census collections. We are collecting the same data fields as the Census collections, and simply increasing the frequency of the data availability and automating how it is collected. This will enable schools, Local Authorities, Multi Academy Trusts and DfE to make more timely decisions based on up to date data, supporting early identification of risks/issues and support a pupil may need to improve their attendance at school.

We want to share data back with the sector and by doing so gradually reduce manual data collection burdens and better support operational planning.

11. Data minimisation

The data fields proposed are already collected as part of census collections, we are not collecting any new data fields. We are collecting the minimum needed to understand persistent absence and to safeguard children.

12. How we will ensure data quality

Once the data has been retrieved it is placed into a secure area where all the data is scanned for vulnerabilities. This secure area is called the Transient Zone and once all files have been scanned the data will be available for the use.

13. Lawful basis for processing special categories of data

Substantial Public interest based in law (Article 9(2)(g)) - processing is necessary for reasons of substantial public interest, on the basis of Union or Member State law which shall be proportionate to the aim pursued, respect the essence of the right to data protection and provide for suitable and specific measures to safeguard the fundamental rights and the interests of the data subject.

The impact on individuals and their rights

14. How will this benefit data subjects?

This improved frequency and collection method is expected to benefit data subjects as we will be able to identify concerns about pupils' attendance quicker and therefore offer support and solutions quicker. It will help with safeguarding.

There are no blockers in terms of data subjects being able to exercise their rights in Data Protection Legislation. If a data subject request is received the DfE will consider them on a case by case basis and will respond guided by the law on whether rights are granted or not.

No negative effects are expected.

15. Access to privacy information

Data subjects and their parents in many cases will be informed about this processing via specific DfE privacy notices, supported by guidance and data principles on the new process and the data protection concerns they may have. We are planning a series of webinars for schools and a video to make it easier for schools, children, parents and carers to understand how data will be used.

Schools will be updating their privacy notices to explain that they will be sharing this data with DfE and what the purpose is. DfE will be assisting in this by providing templates that schools may wish to use.

To assist schools with their accountability, DfE will provide regular (Bi-Annual or Termly updates to the programme including an updated DPIA and list of data shares).

DfE have created specific communications and Questions and Answers on the new process and data protection,. This will enable them to understand the impact of the changes and decide whether to agree and be able to explain to parents, carers and children what the benefits are if asked.

DfE will develop a video and cartoon to be available in May 2022 for parents to explain this daily data collection. From September 2022 we will issue a letter for all parents via schools to explain what child data DfE collects and processes for what purpose. In October 2022 we will develop an information pack for all prospective parents applying to schools this will explain how DfE will collect and process their child's data.

16. What control do individuals have over their data?

The data is processed under Public Task and therefore Data Subjects do not have the right to erasure or the right to portability.

They can ask the data to be rectified or completed if it's wrong,

It is a statutory requirement for schools to provide the data outlined above to the DfE. If any errors in the data are identified the data subject can ask for the data to be rectified by contacting the school or by contacting DfE Data Protection Team

The data subject also has the right to object, data subjects can exercise this right by contacting the DfE Data Protection Team.

17. Consultation

We have not consulted individuals DfE already collect attendance information about pupils from schools via the school census data collection. We have developed a specific privacy notice for parents/children to explain why we are changing the frequency and method of collection, we are asking schools to make this available to parents via their websites and it has been made available to schools via DfE communications in our google drive for schools and MATs, It is published on Wonde's secure hub and gov.uk.

Legislation

School Census Collection - section 537A Education Act 1996 and the regulations made under that power – such as the Education (Information About Individual Pupils) (England) Regulations 2013

Requirement for schools to record attendance data: section 537A and section 434 Education Act 1996 – and regulations made under those powers including the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 and the 2013 regs referred to above

Legal duty for a parent to ensure their child is in school:

The primary duty is section 7 Education Act 1996.

We have not consulted with the data subjects as this is not a new data collection, we have engaged with the sector as follows:

Star Chamber (External Scrutiny Board) – general support given, offered to help shape the solution by way of a user group and receive updates on progress and next steps.

Conversations with the Local Government Association (LGA) Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) Trade Unions (TU's) Local Authorities (LAs) Multi Academy Trusts (MATs) – supportive of the proposition, made it clear we need to communicate the

value to the sector and that this must not place additional administrative burdens on schools. Best practice shared along with potential uses for the data.

18. The right of access

We have an established SAR process as highlighted in the privacy notice, this can be accessed via the link in the privacy notice.

For further information and how to request your data, use the '[contact form](#)' in the [Personal Information Charter](#).

19. The right to rectification

They can ask the data to be rectified or completed if it's wrong.

20. The right to erasure

Not applicable

21. The right to restrict processing

DfE has a process in place to comply with this right via our standard 'contact' process as highlighted in our privacy notice.

If you have any questions about how your personal information will be used, [contact us](#) and enter 'School's attendance data collection' as a reference.

Identification, assessment and mitigation of risks

Describe the source of the risk	Describe the nature of potential impact on individuals.	Impact 1=Very Low 5 = Very High	Likelihood 1=Very Low 5 = Very High	Overall Risk Impact x Likelihood	Mitigation	Residual Risk 1=Very Low 5 = Very High
Data subjects not aware that their personal data is being shared in this way.	Parents may have concern about what their child's pupil level data will be used for	2	1	2	<p>This data is collected through census now.</p> <p>The change is the frequency and method in which the data is transferred to the DfE.</p> <p>No pupil level data will be shared other than with the school and relevant LA or MAT</p> <p>Data transfer and storage is secure and compliant with DfE requirements for Data Protection and GDPR</p>	1
Data could be lost or shared in error with third parties as part of the sharing back to schools,	Personal data on individuals might become available to organisations outside the DfE / schools, Local Authorities and	2	1	2	Data transfer and storage is secure and compliant with DfE requirements for Data Protection and GDPR	1

Local Authorities and Multi Academy Trusts	Multi Academy Trusts				Rule based permissions will be in place using the VYED platform	
Data could be processed or retained for longer than is necessary	This may expose the department to challenge	2	1	2	Regular reviews will be in place to determine if data should still be processed or retained can be disposed of Data is securely destroyed in line with agreed retention schedules.	1



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