



Department
for Education



Admissions appeals in England, academic year 2014 to 2015: background and methodology information.

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About this release

This document provides an overview of the Admissions Appeals SR.

It provides further information on the data sources, the appeals process and quality and explains the methodology used in producing the data.

1. About the output: interpretation of the figures

- a) The appeals collections gather data on the progress of all appeals (against not receiving a place at a requested school) from initial submission through to their resolution. All received appeals are described as being lodged. If not withdrawn by the parent the appeals will be considered by a panel hearing – this is described as being heard. The heard appeals breaks down into those which have been rejected and those which have been upheld (ie a place has been made available for the child). This release looks at the number and percentage of appeals which have been lodged, heard and upheld.
- b) The total number of appeals initially lodged by parents can be misleading. Some appeals are resolved before they reach a panel hearing (for example a place at the school could become available via the school's waiting list) and will therefore be withdrawn. In addition parents can lodge appeals for more than one school but only require a single school place.
- c) Figures for the total number of admissions appeals lodged are provided in this publication but the number of appeals actually heard by an appeals panel is considered to be a more reliable indicator. Therefore in tables 2 and 3 rates are calculated for appeals heard and those upheld only.
- d) Because the number of appeals heard can be very small at LA level, there can be significant variation in rates found in favour (calculated as percentage of the appeals heard) which only relate to a numerical difference of one or two appeals being upheld.

2. Methodology

- a) The appeals data is derived from two sources:
- b) The local authorities provided aggregate appeal data for all of their community and voluntary controlled schools via the school admission appeals data collection (APAD), returned to the department in January 2015.
- c) Foundation, voluntary aided and academy schools provided their own appeal data via the spring 2015 school census (admissions appeals module). Community and voluntary controlled schools who are in the process of converting to academies provided their data via either the local authority or school census based on their school type on census day, 15 January 2015.
- d) In each collection, figures are provided on the number of appeals lodged, withdrawn, heard, found in favour and rejected.
- e) In order to improve timeliness, allowing us to report on the current academic year, only appeals lodged by 1 September and relating to entry into the start of the academic year (for any school year) are collected. Therefore appeals relating to an application for a child to move schools during the school year are not included.
- f) Appeals for entry into infant age classes are listed individually. These are a subset of the primary appeals figures. This subset relates to the national curriculum year of the class only, they are not necessarily infant class size appeals (relating to regulations limiting the maximum size of an infant class), although these will be included.
- g) The local authority figures for community and voluntary controlled schools reported on appeals by phase: that is, whether the appeal related to entry into primary (including infant) or secondary school (including middle deemed schools).
- h) The school census returns made by foundation, voluntary aided and academy schools provided total appeals figures (plus the infant appeal subsets). For all through schools it is not possible to identify which appeals related to the primary national curriculum years and those relating to secondary years. As some of these schools have recorded infant appeals, all such all-through schools have been recorded as primary in the appeals dataset. All through community and voluntary controlled schools will have their appeals correctly recorded within the local authority

aggregate return.

- i) Therefore there is a mismatch in the treatment of appeals to all through schools in this dataset.
- j) Appeals against non-admission to a school sixth form and 14-19 schools such as UTCs and studio schools are included.
- k) The admissions dataset used to calculate the rates of appeals lodged and heard is calculated from the spring 2015 school census. It includes all pupils who were on roll on census day and who were identified as a new entrant into a mainstream maintained or academy school between 1 August 2014 and 2 October 2014 (autumn school census day).
- l) Admissions into all through schools have been designated as primary admissions throughout to match the foundation, voluntary aided and academy school appeals (see methodology note 2.8 above). As a consequence the primary admissions total will be slightly elevated and the secondary admissions totals slightly reduced. Although the effect will be very small at England level, it could be more pronounced for certain local authorities.
- m) The designation of the governance of each school was aligned to those used in the SFR Schools, Pupils and their Characteristics: January 2015, published on 16 July 2015.

3. The appeals process

- a) Each LA coordinates admissions to all the state-funded schools in its area. It receives applications for all children resident in its area, and sends offers of a school place on National Offer Day.
- b) Under the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 parents have the right to submit an appeal, to an independent appeal panel, against a decision to refuse their child admission to a school for which they have expressed a preference. The process by which this works, including the required timetable for the lodging and hearing of appeals, is set out in the admissions and appeals codes. These were last updated in February 2012.
- c) Applicants have the right of appeal against all schools for which they were not offered a place, if that school was placed as a higher preference than the one they were offered.
- d) The appeal is made directly to the relevant admissions authority for that school. This is the local authority for community and voluntary controlled schools and the school's governing body for voluntary aided, foundation and academy schools.
- e) If the appeal panel finds in the favour of the parent, then that decision is binding on the admissions authority concerned, who are therefore required to find the child a place at the school.

4. Accuracy and reliability

- a) 150 LAs provided a return for all of their mainstream community and voluntary controlled schools via the school admission appeals data collection (also known as APAD) in January/February 2015. City of London has no community or voluntary controlled schools and the Isles of Scilly has one school which all children attend – therefore these two LAs do not submit a return.
- b) The APAD return includes 'clean data submit' which means that an LA can only submit its return if it contains no errors or queries. The return then undergoes additional checks and verification within the department.
- c) Mainstream voluntary aided, foundation and academy schools submitted their appeal data as part of their 2015 spring school census return (in the admissions module). The data was submitted to the standard school census checks made by the department. A school's appeals figures were designated to their school phase and governance based on how each school was recorded in the

underlying data of the 'Schools, Pupils and their Characteristics, January 2015' SR. This holds the phase and governance, as recorded in Edubase, on spring census day, 15 January 2015.

- d) The final appeals dataset was calculated, using the above returns, within the department. The school census admissions module requires schools to provide their total number of appeals loaded, withdrawn, heard, rejected and upheld, and of those which were for infant classes. For all through schools recorded in this dataset it is not possible to divide the total number of appeals into those which are for the primary school years and those for secondary. It has therefore been necessary to designate the all through schools reported via the school census admissions module as primary schools in order to ensure that the infant appeals are correctly designated.
- e) The APAD return for community and voluntary controlled schools separately records the number of appeals for primary, infant and secondary phases. Therefore in this instance appeals relating to all through schools should have been correctly designated by the LA making the return. Overall, however, the designation of any all through voluntary aided, foundation and academy school into primary, as described above, will mean that the number of appeals into the secondary years could be underestimated, and the number into primary years underestimated. There were 99 affected schools in this dataset.
- f) The admissions denominator used to create the rates for the number of appeals lodged and heard was calculated within the department from the pupil module of the spring 2015 school census. It calculated the number of new admissions (i.e. a pupil starting at a new school between 1 August 2014 to 2 October 2014 (autumn census day)) using the entry date of the pupil and the LA and Estab codes of the school the pupil is recorded as attending. Additional checks were made to identify if a school converting to an academy adjusted all pupils to a new entry date, and to identify if the child was in reality an existing pupil of that school.
- g) The admissions figure calculations depended on the LAs correctly recording the pupils' entry dates in the school census. It also required additional processing to identify past and present establishment codes for converting schools (required to identify whether a pupil has moved schools), correct recording of the phase and governance of the schools, and correct recording of the conversion dates of academies. There are significant differences in the admissions figures for some LAs between 2013-14 (when the new appeals time series began) and 2014-15. It is not known the margin of uncertainty for these figures but the processing methodology has been thoroughly reviewed and the actual processing quality assured.
- h) There are no planned revisions to this statistical release. However, if at a later date we need to make a revision, this will comply with the [departmental revisions policy](#).
- i) The Code of Practice for Official Statistics requires us to take reasonable steps to ensure that our published or disseminated statistics protect confidentiality. The tables produced for this SFR have been assessed and it has been determined that suppression was not required to protect confidentiality.

5. Accessibility

- a) The SR text is published in pdf format so that it is accessible to all users irrespective of their choice of software. Care is also taken to ensure that the document meets accessibility guidelines. Key figures are highlighted in the SR text which draws out the key messages such as changes over. Small tables or charts illustrating key figures are also included in the text.
- b) Each SR is accompanied by formatted excel tables with clear titles which allow general users to find more detail than can be provided in the SR text. Any important limitations or inconsistencies in the data are mentioned in footnotes so that users don't have to refer to the text or this document.

6. Got a query? Like to give feedback?

If from the media	Press Office News Desk, Department for Education, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BT. 020 7783 8300
If non-media	Helen Bray, Infrastructure and Funding Directorate, Department for Education, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BT 0370 000 2288 admissions.appeals@education.gsi.gov.uk



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