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Reporting Year 2022

**National pupil projections****THIS IS THE LATEST DATA****OFFICIAL STATISTICS****Published**

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**Next update**

July 2023

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This annual release provides national projections for the number of pupils in schools in England by type of school and age.

The projections are based on new mid-2020 ONS national population projections published in January 2022, ONS monthly births data up to and including 2020 and School Census data up to and including January 2022.

ONS's mid-2020 national population projections were the last set before the results of the 2021 census were known. Because of this no variants were produced and therefore these pupil projections only have a single, principal, projection.

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# Headline facts and figures - 2022

projection for 2028

## 4,064,902

Nursery & primary schools, down 532,000 from the population in 2022

projection for 2028

## 3,163,175

Secondary schools, up 37,000 from the population in 2022

- The population attending primary and nursery schools peaked in 2019 and the figures have been dropping since then. This is primarily due to the continued reductions in the birth numbers since 2013, although the larger drop in 2021 may have been connected to the pandemic (for example, parents choosing to home school for reception year).
- The peak in the secondary school population is still projected to be in 2024, followed by a gradual drop to the end of the projection period.
- The population in special schools has been increasing, but is projected to peak around 2024 before starting to drop. This is primarily driven by the decrease in the overall population from that year.
- The number of children in alternative provision schools dropped substantially in 2021 and 2022. Although this is pandemic related, because of the processes required to refer a child to alternative provision it is not expected that these figures will necessarily leap straight back to pre-pandemic levels.

## actual and projected totals in nursery & primary and secondary schools from 2022 to 2028, England

		2022
<b>State nursery and primary</b>	<b>actual population in 2022</b>	4,597,370
	<b>projection for 2023</b>	4,527,132
	<b>projection for 2024</b>	4,440,995
	<b>projection for 2025</b>	4,351,895
	<b>projection for 2026</b>	4,259,398
	<b>projection for 2027</b>	4,163,360
	<b>projection for 2028</b>	4,064,902
	<b>State secondary</b>	<b>actual population in 2022</b>
<b>projection for 2023</b>		3,190,773
<b>projection for 2024</b>		3,230,015
<b>projection for 2025</b>		3,228,360
<b>projection for 2026</b>		3,218,603
<b>projection for 2027</b>		3,196,351
<b>projection for 2028</b>		3,163,175

Source: 2022 pupil projection model

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# National pupil projection results and comparison to previous model results

## Actual (2022) and projected pupil numbers by school type, England

	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
<b>State-funded nursery &amp; primary schools</b>	4,597	4,527	4,441	4,352	4,259	4,163	4,065	3,983	3,911
<i>year on year change</i>		-70	-86	-89	-93	-96	-98	-82	-66
<b>State-funded secondary schools</b>	3,126	3,191	3,230	3,228	3,219	3,196	3,163	3,116	3,071
<i>year on year change</i>		65	39	-2	-9	-23	-33	-47	-46
<b>State-funded special schools</b>	125	128	130	130	129	128	126	124	122
<i>year on year change</i>		3	2	0	-1	-1	-2	-2	-2
<b>Alternative provision settings</b>	11	12	12	13	13	13	13	12	12
<i>year on year change</i>		1	0	1	0	0	0	-1	0
<b>Total state-funded schools</b>	7,859	7,858	7,814	7,723	7,620	7,500	7,367	7,236	7,122
<i>year on year change</i>		-1	-44	-91	-103	-120	-133	-131	-114

- The actual population in state-funded schools in 2022 was 7,859,000. This is projected to decrease by 944,000 (to 6,915,000) over the next ten years to 2032.
- The projection model published in 2021 estimated a population of 7,269,000 in 2032<sup>[1]</sup>, so the updated model shows a decrease of 354,000 on the total at the end of its projection period.
- The difference is primarily due to notably lower birth projections in the mid-2020 ONS national population projections, used for the first time in this set of pupil projections, which are the main drivers of the pupil population.
- The following headlines focus on projections up to 2028 in recognition of the increased uncertainty in projections beyond this point.

## Early years figure

- This age group includes 4 year olds in reception class, which virtually all children attend, as well as the younger ages. Overall it has a higher proportion of children attending part-time and therefore is best reported as a full-time equivalent (FTE) population.
- On that basis the FTE population of under 5 year olds in state funded education is projected to be 721,000 in 2028. This is 13.2% lower than the actual figure for 2022 (830,000).
- This population decrease is due to the lower number of births, both actual to 2020 and also projected into the future by ONS.

## State-funded nursery & primary schools

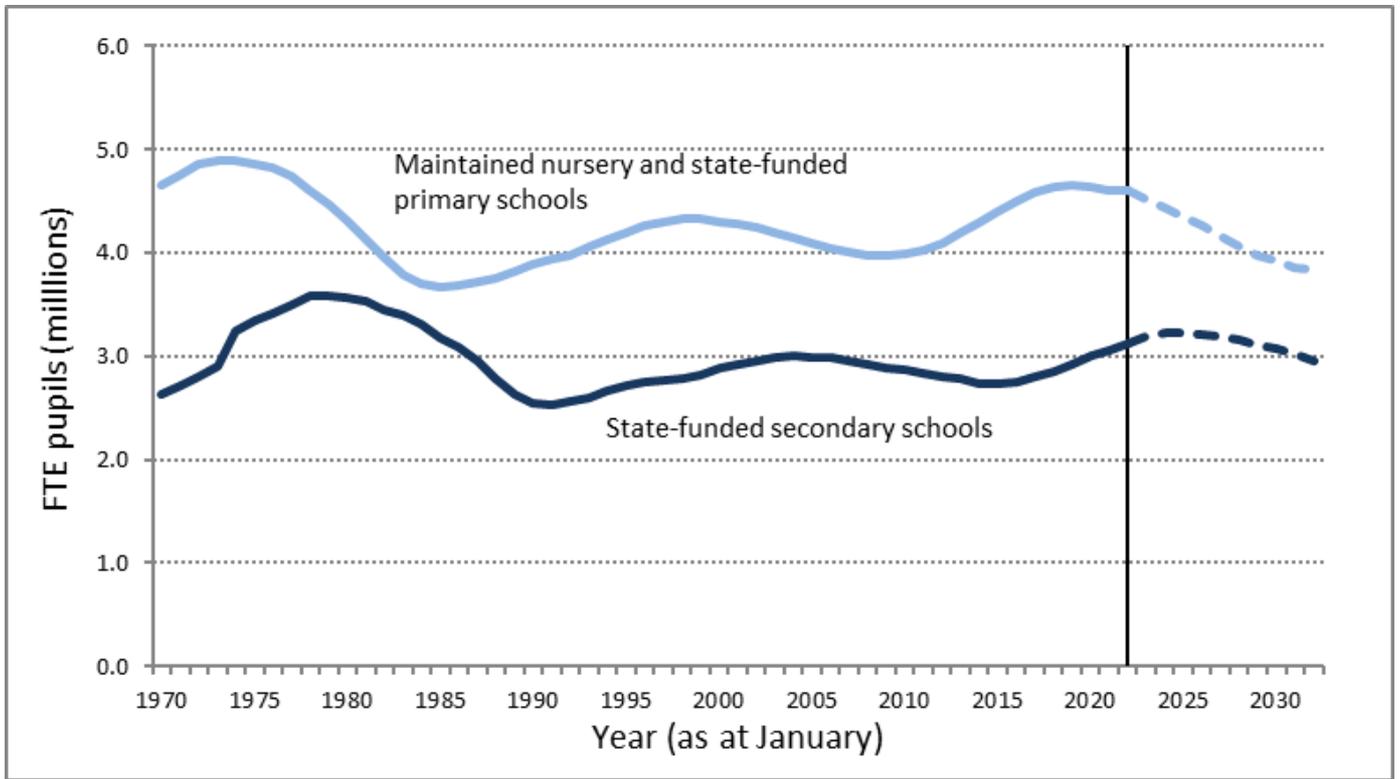
- The overall population in these school types is projected to be 4,065,000 in 2028. This is 532,000 lower than the actual figure in 2022 (4,597,000).
- The figure for 2028 is 168,000 lower than was forecast in the model published in 2021, a difference of -4.0%.

## State-funded secondary schools

- The secondary school population is projected to be 3,163,000 in 2028. This is 37,000 higher than the total in 2022 (3,126,000).
- The figure for 2028 is 4,000 lower than was forecast in the model published in 2021, a difference of -0.1%.
- The pattern of change in the secondary school population (peaking in 2024 then very slowly starting to drop) is unchanged.

<sup>[1]</sup> Figure not previously published

## Time series of actual and projected nursery & primary and secondary school population



## Components of change



There are several elements which affect the results of the projections. The key elements, and how they affect the results, are detailed below.

### Births

- The number of births feed directly into the projections but also affect how births are projected in the future.
- The birth rate increased for over a decade until 2013, when it dropped notably. After a short period of stability the rates dropped again from late 2016 onwards.
- This period of lower births has fed into ONS's projections of the number of births expected in future years. The mid-2020 ONS national population projections, used for the first time in this set of pupil projections, contain notably lower birth projections.

### Participation rates

- These are calculated based on the number of pupils attending school (from the School Census) measured against the ONS total population figures.
- This factor is particularly important in the early years, since parents can choose whether or not to send their children aged under 5 to school.
- This factor is affected by the unusual patterns in the 2021 school census data. For example, the large drop in the number of children recorded as attending state-funded alternative provision (17% lower compared to the 2020 census) would have dropped the participation rate for that school type substantially.
- The participation rate feeds into the calculations of the projected numbers for that particular school type. However, now we also had access to 2022 school census data we could start to assess the longevity of the effect of the pandemic and, if needed, adjust the methodologies accordingly. See further information in 'Methodology'.

### Immigration

- Direct immigration of pupils born outside the UK has a small effect on the school age population. However, the birth rate, which has a larger effect, is in turn affected by any increase in the number of children born to non-UK born women (who can have higher fertility rates). For more information on this see the methodology section.

## Alternative scenarios



This projection model is underpinned by ONS's mid-2020 national population projections. As this is the last set published before the results of the 2021 census were known ONS did not produce their usual range of variants (for example, high fertility) which we use to create variant pupil projection scenarios. These pupil projections therefore only have a single, principal, projection.

Further explanation is given in the methodology document accompanying this release.

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## Further information



More information on the census data which forms the start of the pupil projection model, and the differences seen in 2021, can be found in the publication 'Schools, Pupils and their Characteristics' published on Explore Education Statistics (EES) [here](#).

More information on ONS's national population projections and their projection methodology can be found [here](#).

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### Methodology



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- meet identified user needs
- produced according to sound methods
- well explained and readily accessible

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## Contact us



Ask questions and provide feedback

If you have a specific enquiry about National pupil projections statistics and data:

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