

Non-government schools census guide

A guide to the 2026 Non-government
schools census

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Census

The census is an annual collection completed by non-government schools that receive recurrent funding from the Australian Government. It provides information about schools, their students, and their staff to inform the community and the Australian Government.

Overview and requirements for census

About the census

Conducted annually, the census provides the community and the Australian Government with information about schools and students in Australia. The annual census collects deidentified information about:

- the number of students and staff
- students on a visa
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Information about students with disability is also collected annually as part of the census. The collection about students with disability is called the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability (NCCD). When we refer to the census it includes reference to the NCCD.

Census informs the [My School](#) website, helping parents and the community learn more about Australian schools. The data collected highlights some of the needs of each school's students. The Australian Government also uses the census data to calculate funding and to create informed and tailored policies for Australian schools.

What's new for the 2026 census

- The census is now to be submitted in the Education Funding System (EFS). [Learn more about the EFS.](#)
- The Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability, 2026 NCCD Guidelines have been updated. The Guidelines state that adjustments do not need to occur every day over the 10-week period, the weeks may be non-consecutive, and any amount of adjustment within a school week counts as a 'week'. They now clarify that this flexibility **does not** apply to extensive adjustments, which must be in place at all times.

Important dates for the 2026 census

- **Monday 3 August 2026:** Census opens in the Education Funding System (EFS)
- **Friday 7 August 2026: Census day**
- **Friday 14 August 2026:** Census data and declaration must be submitted in the EFS
- **Friday 21 August 2026:** Census special circumstance applications due by 11:59pm (AEST)

Reference period

The census reference period for students is the 20 school days leading up to and including census day, Friday 7 August 2026.

School holidays, public holidays, weekends and pupil free days (including staff development day(s) are not part of the 20-day census reference period. The department considers a pupil free day is a day when the entire school is not providing education. If any year levels are receiving education while others are not (for example, during parent–teacher interviews or other activities), the day is not considered a pupil-free day for census purposes.

The same reference period applies to all locations of the same school.

Report all staff employed or engaged on census day (Friday 7 August 2026).

Reporting obligations

Legal Obligations

You are required to complete the census under section 77 of the *Australian Education Act 2013*. Providing census data is an ongoing requirement for approved authorities of non-government schools. Failure to complete the census on time and through the requested channel may result in a delay to recurrent funding.

Continued failure to complete the census may lead to the department varying or revoking an approved authority's approval.

Providing false or misleading census information to the Commonwealth is a serious offence and may result in prosecution under Section 137.1 of the *Criminal Code Act 1995*.

Record keeping and census post enumeration audit

Your approved authority must maintain records verifying the eligibility of all students reported in the census for a minimum of 7 years. This is a requirement under section 37 of the Australian Education Regulations 2023 (the Regulations).

Each year after the census, the department conducts the census post enumeration audit (census PE) audit to review a sample of schools' census records. If the department selects a school for Census PE, participation is mandatory under section 39 of the Regulations.

Find more information on [the census PE](#).

Privacy Information

You must inform parents, guardians, staff and students (where appropriate) about the collection of information through the census and advise the Australian Government will collect and use certain information about your school, its staff and the student body as part of the census. A [privacy notice](#) is available on EducationHUB for this purpose. The privacy notice provides information on how we will handle any personal information collected in the census.

Any personal information collected in the census and NCCD is protected by law under the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth) (Privacy Act) and any use or disclosure of that personal information must be in accordance with the Privacy Act, the Act and Regulations, and any other applicable laws.

Please refer to the relevant privacy notice for further information. For enquires about privacy-related matters, email privacy@education.gov.au.

Information collected in the census

Characteristics	Regular and special assistance schools	Special schools
Data collected in the census		
Number of students at the school for the year	✓	✓
Number of full-time and part-time students	✓	✓
Number of students in each year level (foundation to year 12)	✓	✓
Number of students in primary (for students aged 4–11) or secondary (for students aged 12–21)		✓
For each year of schooling, the number of:		
Student ages as of 1 July 2026	✓	✓
Student gender	✓	✓
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students	✓	✓
Boarding students	✓	✓
Distance education students	✓	✓
Overseas students	✓	✓
Students on visas	✓	✓
The number of staff at the school, in certain categories on the school's census day:		
Staff gender	✓	✓
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff	✓	✓
Full-time or part-time staff	✓	✓
Staff type	✓	✓
Data collected in the NCCD, at the same time as the Census		
Student's category of disability	✓	✓
Student's level of adjustment	✓	✓
Student's year of schooling	✓	✓
Fraction of full-time study load that student is undertaking (if less than full-time)	✓	✓

How to report students in the census

Describes which students should be reported in the census and how to report student characteristics.

In this section:

- [Student eligibility for reporting in the census](#)
- [How to report student attendance](#)
- [How to report student characteristics](#)
- [How to report day, boarding and distance education students](#)
- [How to report students on visas](#)
- [How to report overseas students](#)

- [How to report students with disability](#)
- [About the NCCD](#)
- [How to report foundation year students](#)

Student eligibility for reporting in the census

Eligible students

A student is eligible to be reported in a school's census if they are a primary or secondary student (including overseas students) and meet all the following criteria set out in section 9B of the Regulations. That is the student:

- is enrolled at the school on census day (7 August 2026)
- is enrolled in a year level the school is approved to provide at that location
- has a pattern of regular attendance at the school, or at school generally, during the year
- attended the school for at least one day during the census reference period.

For students who are not distance education students, the department considers a pattern of regular attendance to be where a student physically attends a school's registered location in accordance with a consistent, pre-determined (agreed), documented, ongoing schedule.

✗ Do not report students who do not meet the above criteria. For students who do not attend during the census reference period and/or do not have a pattern of regular attendance at the school during the year, you may consider submitting a census special circumstance application.

Download: [Reporting a student in the census flowchart](#)

Ineligible students

A student is ineligible to be reported in the census if they do not meet the criteria explained above.

Examples of situations where the department considers a student is ineligible to be reported in a school's census; is where a student:

- is enrolled but did not attend for at least one day during the census reference period
- is enrolled, but did not attend or have a pattern of regular attendance at school generally during the year
- unenrolled or has permanently ceased attending the school location before census day
- is not enrolled at the school – for example, because they are not eligible to enrol at a school location based on relevant state and territory requirements or because they are on a visa which prohibits them from engaging in study as a condition of their visa
- does not have a pattern of regular attendance because:
 - they last attended the school location before census day and will not be returning for the year (including students not returning until the following year). The school may include a student if this is unclear at census time. However, the school should notify the department if the student does not return
 - they are on a visitor's visa and receiving primary or secondary education for less than 6 months (or less than half the school year)

- they are on exchange and receiving primary or secondary education for less than 6 months (or less than half the school year)
- did not receive primary or secondary education because:
 - they did not study school subjects (from foundation to year 12)
 - they did not study any school subjects and only participated in apprenticeships, English as a second language courses, TAFE courses, tertiary subjects, work placements, or a combination of such activities, or
 - they are participating in a foundation program that goes beyond 12 months. This includes students participating in the first 6 months of an 18-month foundation program. For more information, see [how to report foundation year students](#).

How to report student attendance

Full-time students

To include a student as full-time, they must be undertaking a full-time study load for the year level. The department considers a full-time study load to be the minimum workload required to ensure that a student could complete a given year level in a single calendar year. This workload can vary between states and territories, as well as between year levels.

For example, if a student is attending school full time but only undertaking half the study load, they must be reported as 0.5 FTE. This includes students undertaking variable progression rate, extending completion of the year level over more than one year.

Part-time students

A student who is not undertaking a full-time study load is to be counted at the fraction of the full-time study load which the student is undertaking.

Part-time students must have an FTE between 0.1 and 0.9, rounded to the nearest decimal.

TAFE, tertiary studies and alternative pathways activities

Students may be undertaking school-based subjects while also participating in alternative pathways, accredited by the state or territory as contributing to the relevant year level completion. That is, the alternate pathway is part of the approved curriculum for that year level. Alternative pathways may include:

- apprenticeships
- school-based apprenticeships
- traineeships
- TAFE courses
- university courses
- work placements.

A student completing an alternate pathway accredited by the state or territory as contributing to the relevant year level completion counts towards a student's FTE.

A student completing an alternate pathway not contributing to the relevant year level completion does not count towards a student's FTE and must be reported as a part-time student.

How to report student characteristics

Age

Student ages should be reported in the census as of 1 July 2026.

Gender

The Australian Government recognises that individuals may identify and be recognised within the community as a gender other than the sex they were assigned at birth or during infancy or as a gender not exclusively male or female.

Options to report students are male (M), female (F) and indeterminate, intersex, or unspecified (X).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are students who are of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent, who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, and who are accepted as such by the community in which they live.

Where parents or carers choose not to identify a student as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, the student must be reported as non-stated.

Options for reporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status are: Yes (Y), No (N), or Non-stated (N/S).

How to report day, boarding and distance education students

Day students

A day student is a student who attends school during school hours only. They are not engaged in distance education and are not accommodated in the school's residential facilities.

Boarding students

A boarding student attends the school location for their schooling but is accommodated in the school's residential facilities rather than staying with a parent or guardian.

Distance education students

Distance education students can only be reported at schools:

- that have been approved by the relevant state or territory for distance education (and have advised the department)
- where the state or territory provides funding to the school for distance education students (other than financial assistance provided to the state or territory for the school in accordance with the Act).

To be reported in the census, a distance education student must:

- reside in the state or territory in which the school is located
- not be approved as a home education student (home schooling) in accordance with the law of the state or territory in which the student resides, and
- not be an overseas student

[Read more about distance education.](#)

How to report students on visas

Students on visas

Students on visas are students who are not Australian citizens. This includes both permanent residents and New Zealand citizens.

Students without visas

Students who are not Australian citizens and who do not have a visa, are eligible for inclusion in the census, provided the students meet all other census eligibility requirements. These students will attract Australian Government recurrent funding.

As these students are not Australian citizens, when they are reported in the census, they should be reported in the students on visa count and not reported as overseas students.

Students on bridging visas

Where a student may present a bridging visa, the school must identify whether the bridging or substantive visa is in effect on census day and report the student based on the visa in effect on census day. Use the Department of Home Affairs [VEVO website](#) to identify which visa is in effect on census day and retain evidence of the VEVO check.

Download: [Reporting a student on a visa in the census flowchart](#)

How to report overseas students

Overseas students are students who are on a visa that permits them to travel to Australia for the purpose of undertaking education. Overseas students do not attract Australian Government recurrent funding.

Overseas student visa subclasses include 500, 570, 571, 572, 573, 574, and 575.

Overseas students do not include:

1. a dependent of a person who is receiving sponsorship or scholarship for the purpose of undertaking a course provided by an institution in Australia that:
 1. is a Table A provider or a Table B provider (within the meaning of the *Higher Education Support Act 2003*), and
 2. is meeting the full cost of the education component of the course.
2. a person who is undertaking a course of study provided by an institution or body in Australia under a student exchange program registered by the relevant education authority in the state or territory where the person is undertaking the program, or
3. a person, or a dependent of a person, who is receiving sponsorship or scholarship from the Commonwealth for the purpose of undertaking a course provided by an institution or other body or person in Australia. For more information on the type of visa a student is on, consult the Department of Home Affairs.

Can I report exchange students in the census?

Exchange students are students participating in a student exchange program (SEP) registered by the state or territory education authority. Students participating in a SEP are excluded from being 'overseas students'.

To be eligible for the census, a SEP student must meet the census [eligibility criteria](#).

Examples of situations where the department considers a SEP student is ineligible to be included in the school's census, is where a student is:

- on exchange and receiving primary or secondary education for less than 6 months (or less than half of the school year)
- on exchange and has completed their formal schooling in their own country.

How to report students with disability

The department collects data on students with disability using the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability (NCCD) model.

To be eligible for the census, students with disability must meet the census eligibility and the following criteria. That is the student:

- has a disability as defined in section 4 of the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (see appendix 4 of the [NCCD Guidelines](#))
- has been provided with an adjustment(s) for a minimum of 10 weeks of school education (in the 12 months leading up to and including census day) to address the functional impact of a disability.

Schools must have documented evidence of the adjustments provided. For:

- examples of supporting evidence, see section C.5 of the 2026 NCCD Guidelines.
- guidance on what qualifies as 10 weeks of school education, refer to section C.3.1 of the 2026 NCCD Guidelines.

What information is reported for each student with disability?

In reporting students with disability, you will need to provide the department with the following information:

- disability category (see appendix 3 of the NCCD Guidelines)
 - physical
 - cognitive
 - social-emotional
 - sensory
- level of adjustment (see [NCCD Quick Guide](#))
 - support provided within quality differentiated teaching practice (QDTP)
 - supplementary
 - substantial
 - extensive

About the NCCD

The NCCD provides the community and government with information about Australian school students who receive adjustments due to disability. Adjustments help a student with disability take part in education on the same basis as other students.

Information about students with disability (NCCD) is collected annually as part of census.

A school's approved authority must provide information for each student with disability that is reported in the census. This includes the student's:

- level of adjustment
- broad category of disability.

Funding from the Australian Government for students with disability is based on the NCCD. NCCD data is also used to inform improvements to students with disability programs. The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority ([ACARA](#)) annually publish high-level, de-identified NCCD data.

NCCD reporting is required under the Australian Education Regulations 2023. Non-government schools provide NCCD data in August each year.

Visit the [NCCD portal](#) for more information and resources. Useful information includes:

- [NCCD Quick Guide](#)
- [examples of evidence](#) to support reporting students with disability
- [infographic explaining what it means to have 10 weeks of adjustments](#)
- [guide on selecting levels of adjustment](#).

How to report foundation year students

The Regulations define 'foundation' as 'the year of schooling (which must not be longer than 12 months) immediately before year 1'. For Australian Government recurrent funding purposes, this means students who participate in a foundation program that goes beyond 12 months can only attract recurrent funding for a single year (which is the year immediately before year 1).

Students who repeat a foundation year of schooling due to lack of educational attainment or development can be reported in the census and attract recurrent funding for the repeated year of schooling.

Reporting in the census

It is important that schools report foundation year students correctly in the census. Schools with multi-year learning stages must ensure students are only reported as foundation students in the census for a single year, being the year before year 1.

Reporting examples

Below are examples of how to report students in foundation year programs:

- A student is enrolled in a mid-year intake foundation program at the start of term 3 and the 18-month program finishes in December the following year. The student should not be reported in the census for the first 6 months of the foundation program. The student is only eligible to be reported in the census for the year of attendance immediately before year 1 (the second year).
- A student is enrolled in foundation at the beginning of the school year in a 12-month 'year' of schooling that finishes in December of the same year. Due to a lack of educational attainment or development, the student will repeat the same year of schooling. This student is eligible to attract a second year of foundation recurrent funding and can be reported in the census as a foundation student for both years.

- A 4 year-old student is considered ready to start school and is enrolled in a program at a school which offers multi-year learning stages, commencing with pre-primary (such as Montessori Stage 1 ages 3 to 6, or Steiner programs). This student is only eligible to be reported in the census as a foundation student if they progress to year 1 the following year

How to report staff in the census

Explains which staff should be reported in the census and how to record their characteristics and FTE.

In this section:

- [Staff eligibility for reporting in the census](#)

Staff eligibility for reporting in the census

Report staff employed or engaged on census day (Friday 7 August 2026).

Eligible staff

- staff who work with students from foundation to year 12
- staff with an FTE greater than 0.1
- staff absent from their position for less than 4 weeks (excluding school holidays)
- emergency and casual relief staff (teaching or non-teaching) are only included in the census if they are employed in the position of a staff member who is absent for 4 continuous weeks or longer (excluding school holidays for teaching staff)
- staff employed under government-sponsored employment schemes.

Ineligible staff

- cleaners
- boarding staff
- tutors not employed by the school
- staff who only work outside regular school hours (for example, before or after school care).

How to report staff FTE (full-time equivalent)

Eligible staff with a full-time workload at the school location are reported as full-time staff. These staff have an FTE of 1.0.

Eligible staff with a less than full-time workload at the school location are reported as part-time staff. These staff have an FTE between 0.1 and 0.9.

How to report staff characteristics

Report staff according to their 'major function' rather than their type of appointment. If a staff member spends 70% of their time at work teaching and 30% on administration duties, report them under their 'major function' of teaching. Include a staff member in either the full-time or part-time only section of the staff tables.

How to report principals

A principal is a person nominated by the approved authority as being responsible for the overall control and administration of the school.

You may report different principals if your school has multiple locations. If one principal works across multiple locations, report the principal as part-time at each location (total FTE must not exceed 1.0).

How to report teaching staff

Teaching staff impart the school curriculum and provide information and support services to students. Teaching staff spend most of their work time with students either in direct class contact or on an individual basis. These include:

- deputy principals
- teachers
- permanent relief teachers
- specialist subject teachers
- librarians
- chaplains imparting the school curriculum
- undergraduate students working as teaching staff.

How to report specialist support

Specialist support functions help students or teaching staff in developing the school curriculum. While these staff may spend most of their time in contact with students, they are not employed or engaged to impart the school curriculum. These include:

- student support services, such as career adviser or student counsellor or liaison officer
- educational development, such as staff and curriculum development
- school psychologists, guidance officers, social workers, pathway planning officer
- sports coordinator
- school nurse.

How to report building operations and other

Building operations, general maintenance and other staff are those involved in the care of buildings and grounds. These include those staff providing associated technical services and other janitorial staff. This includes:

- building or grounds maintenance staff
- technical services and general maintenance staff
- canteen staff
- IT support staff
- staff not included in other staffing categories.

How to report administrative and clerical

Administrative and clerical staff are responsible for the general administrative functions at the school. This includes:

- classroom assistants, teacher aides and education support officers
- library assistants
- bursars/school administrators.

How to report executive staff

Executive staff undertake senior administrative functions, broader than that of a single school. This can include regional directors, chief executive officers etc.

The executive staff option is only available for some approved system authorities or diocese offices. Report staff with similar functions at schools as administrative and clerical staff. Teaching staff should be reported at the location they are working at on census day and should not be reported at a system/diocese office.

Help and Support

If you cannot find what you're looking for on EducationHUB, please use the relevant contact details below.

Non-government schools census

For enquiries relating to the Non-government schools census:

- visit the <https://www.educationhub.gov.au/census> page
- email schools@education.gov.au
- call 1800 677 027 (select option 2, then option 1).

EFS Technical Support

For technical support with the EFS:

- email schools@education.gov.au
- call 1800 677 027 (select option 1).

NCCD Students with disability

For enquiries relating to NCCD:

- email NCCDSupport@education.gov.au
- search [NCCD frequently asked questions](#)
- email an [NCCD key contact](#) in non-government.

Census special circumstance applications

For enquiries relating to census special circumstance applications:

- email specialcircumstances@education.gov.au
- call 1800 677 027 (select option 2, then option 1).