

DE/2026-037 – Freedom of Information Request

Request:

English as Additional Language (EAL) children who are learning English as a second language in Primary schools throughout Northern Ireland, and also those whose first language is English.

Department Response:

I refer to your request under the above legislation for information about EAL children in primary schools in Northern Ireland. This request, received on the 5 March, was for:

- *How many EAL children who are learning English as a second language in Primary schools throughout Northern Ireland, and also those whose first language is English.*

I can confirm that the Department holds the information requested. The table below shows the number of pupils in primary schools by home language group and newcomer status for the 2025/26 school year.

Primary Pupils by Home Language and Newcomer Status, 2025/26

Home Language Group	Non-newcomer	Newcomer
Pupils whose home language is not English or Irish (i.e., potential EAL/Newcomer)	3,041	14,952
Pupils whose home language is English	156,301	0

Source: NI school census

Notes:

Data is based on pupils enrolled on Census day i.e. Friday 10 October 2025 Figures for primary includes nursery, reception and year 1 - 7 classes.

A home language is a language that is most commonly spoken by the members of a family for everyday interactions at home. Not all pupils with a home language other than English or Irish are classified as newcomers.

A newcomer pupil is one who has enrolled in a school, but who does not have the satisfactory language skills to participate fully in the school curriculum, and the wider environment and does not have a language in common with the teacher, whether that is English or Irish. This has previously been referred to as English as an Additional Language. It does not refer to indigenous pupils who choose to attend an Irish medium school.