NISRA
Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency

School Meals in Northern Ireland

2019-2020

The purpose of this statistical bulletin is to provide results of the annual data collection relating to the uptake of school meals in grant-aided schools in Northern Ireland in 2019/20.

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Department of Education

Reader Information

Purpose	The purpose of this statistical release is to provide results of the annual data collection relating to the uptake of school meals in grant-aided schools in Northern Ireland in 2019/20.
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Key Points

- 186,722 school meals, both free and paid, were taken by pupils on census day, which equates to a school meals uptake level of 59.5% by pupils present for lunch on the day.

- The school meals uptake level for 2019/20 is 0.1 percentage points higher than the previous year.

- 96,686 pupils in grant-aided schools are entitled to free school meals; this represents 28.4% of pupils.

- The uptake level for free school meals by entitled pupils is 80.5%; this is 0.4 percentage points lower than the previous year.

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INTRODUCTION

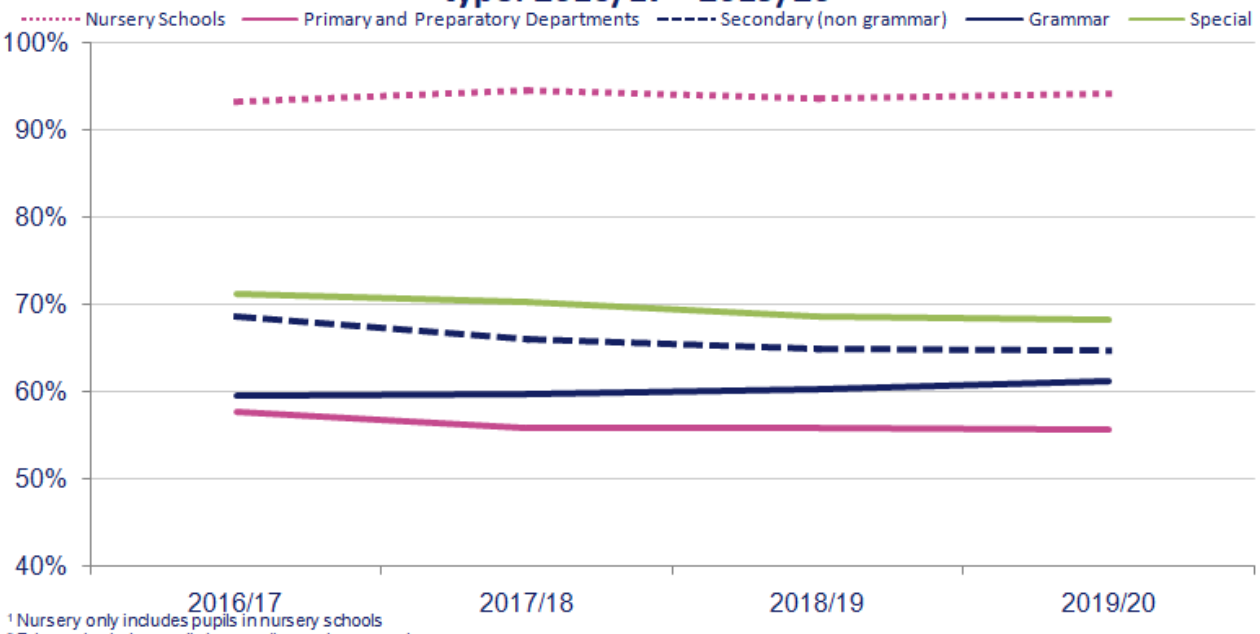
The purpose of this statistical bulletin is to provide results of the latest annual data collection relating to the uptake of school meals in Northern Ireland schools, commonly known as the school meals census. The information was collected with a reference point of 11 October 2019 and relates to all grant-aided schools in Northern Ireland.

Data collected through the school meals census are used by policy teams within the Department of Education and by other users across the education service, most notably by the Education Authority. The data are also used to inform a number of Assembly questions. The Department is responsible for formulating and developing policy and the associated financial arrangements in relation to school meals.

SECTION 1: UPTAKE OF SCHOOL MEALS (FREE AND PAID)

- 186,722 school meals, both free and paid, were taken by pupils on census day. Pupils not taking a school meal are making alternative arrangements for lunch, which can include bringing their own food into school. Almost 41% of meals fall into this category (Tables 1 and 2).
- The school meals uptake level by pupils present for lunch on census day is 59.5%. The 2019/20 school meals uptake level is 0.1 percentage points higher than the previous year (Table 3).
- There is variation in the level of uptake across school types with nursery schools having the highest uptake at 94.2%. This is followed by special schools with 68.4% and secondary schools with 64.7%. Grammar schools and primary/preparatory schools have lower levels of uptake with 61.3% and 55.7% respectively (Table 3).

Figure 1: Uptake of school meals (free and paid), by school type: 2016/17 - 2019/20

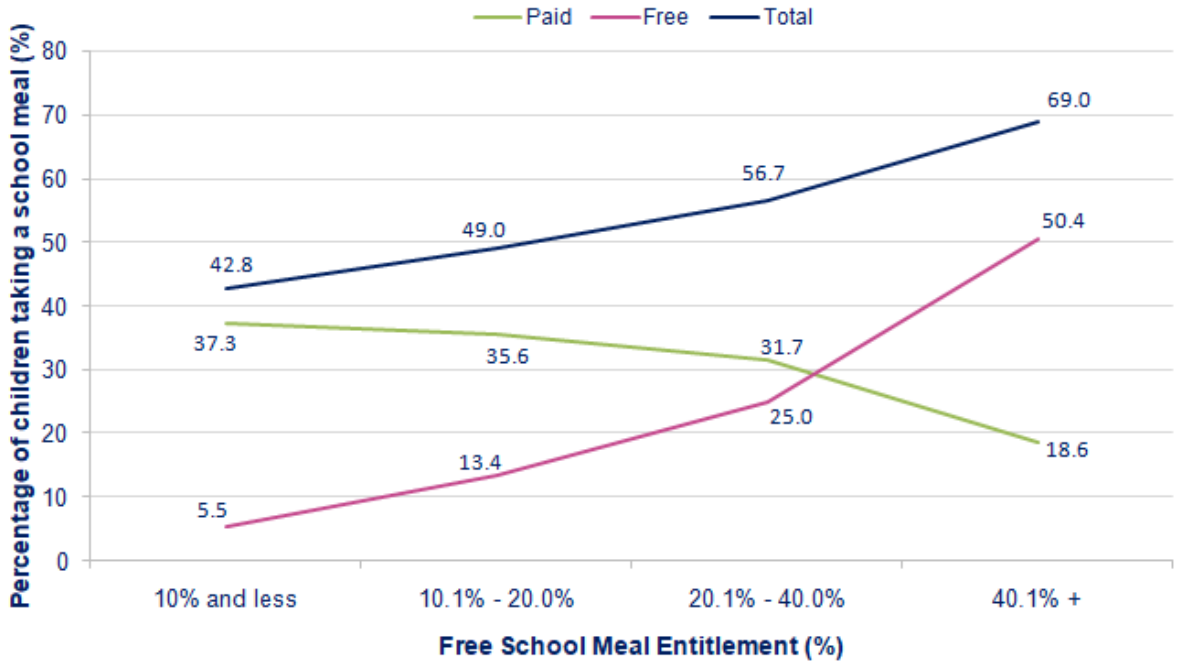


[1] Nursery only includes pupils in nursery schools
[2] Primary includes pupils in reception and nursery classes
[3] Data taken from Table 3

Pupils from the least affluent schools (as measured by FSME) were more likely to take a school meal, rather than make other lunch arrangements. For both primary and post-primary schools the uptake of school meals was lowest in schools where 10% or less of the pupils enrolled were entitled to free school meals (FSME). Uptake increased as the

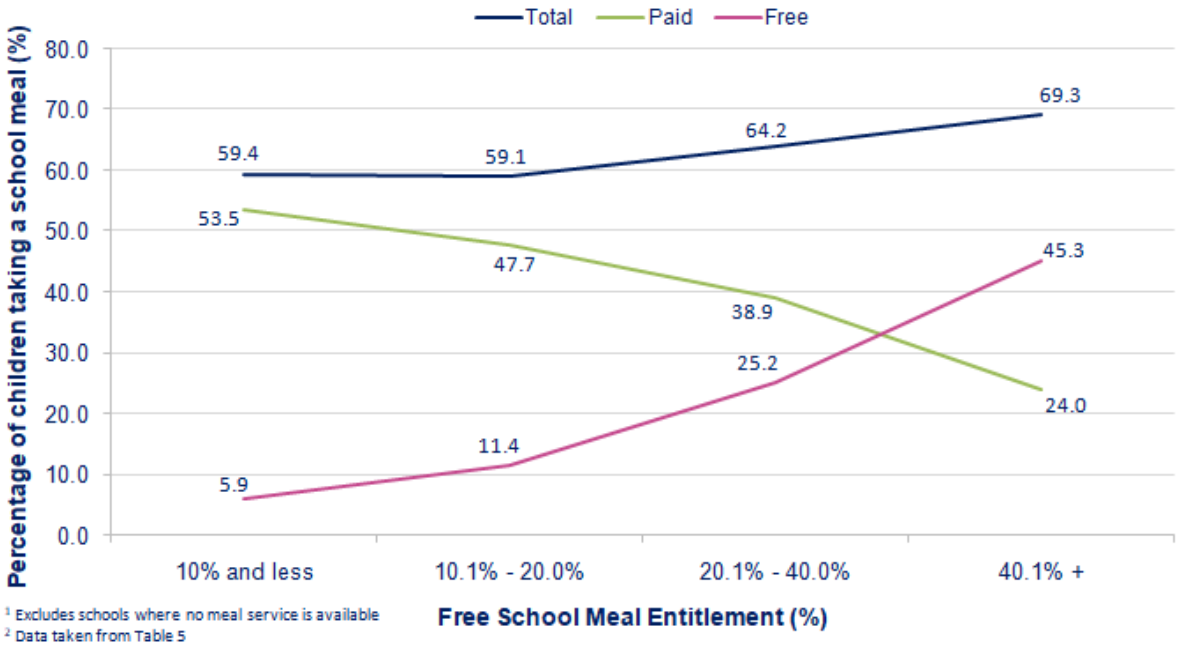
level of free school meal entitlement increased. For example, 69.0% of pupils in primary schools with 40% or more FSME took a school meal compared to 42.8% in primary schools with 10% or less FSME.

Figure 2: Uptake of school meals in primary schools, according to relative FSME 2019/20



[1] Includes preparatory departments, pupils in reception and nursery classes of primary schools. Excludes schools where no meal service is available.
[3] Data taken from Table 5

Figure 3: Uptake of school meals in post-primary schools, according to relative FSME 2019/20

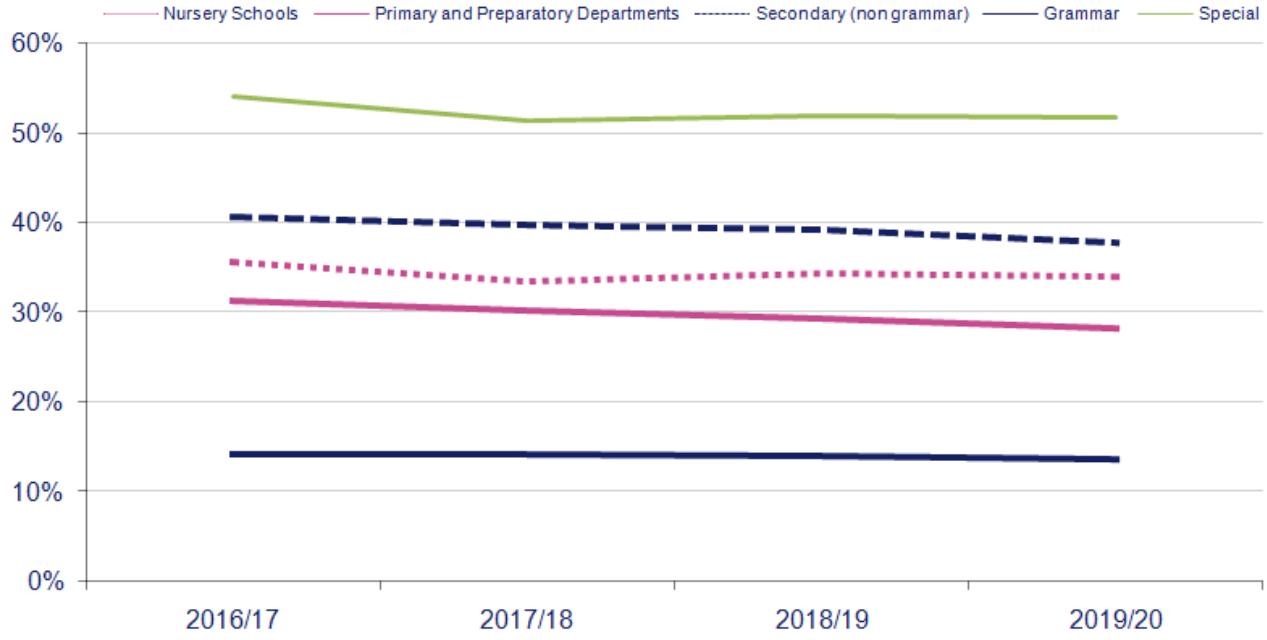


[1] Excludes schools where no meal service is available
[2] Data taken from Table 5

SECTION 2: ENTITLEMENT TO FREE SCHOOL MEALS

- Across all school types, including special schools, 96,686 pupils were entitled to free school meals[1], which is a decrease of 2,456 pupils on the previous year (Table 6). Pupils entitled to free schools meals represent 28.4% of the total school enrolment.
- There are slight decreases in the proportion of pupils that are free school meal entitled in each school type compared to last year. Specifically nursery schools (34.0% compared to 34.2%), special (51.7% compared to 52.0%), primary and preparatory departments (28.3% compared to 29.4%), non-grammar (37.8% compared to 39.2%), and grammar schools (13.7% compared to 14.1%).

Figure 4: Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals, by school type: 2016/17 - 2019/20



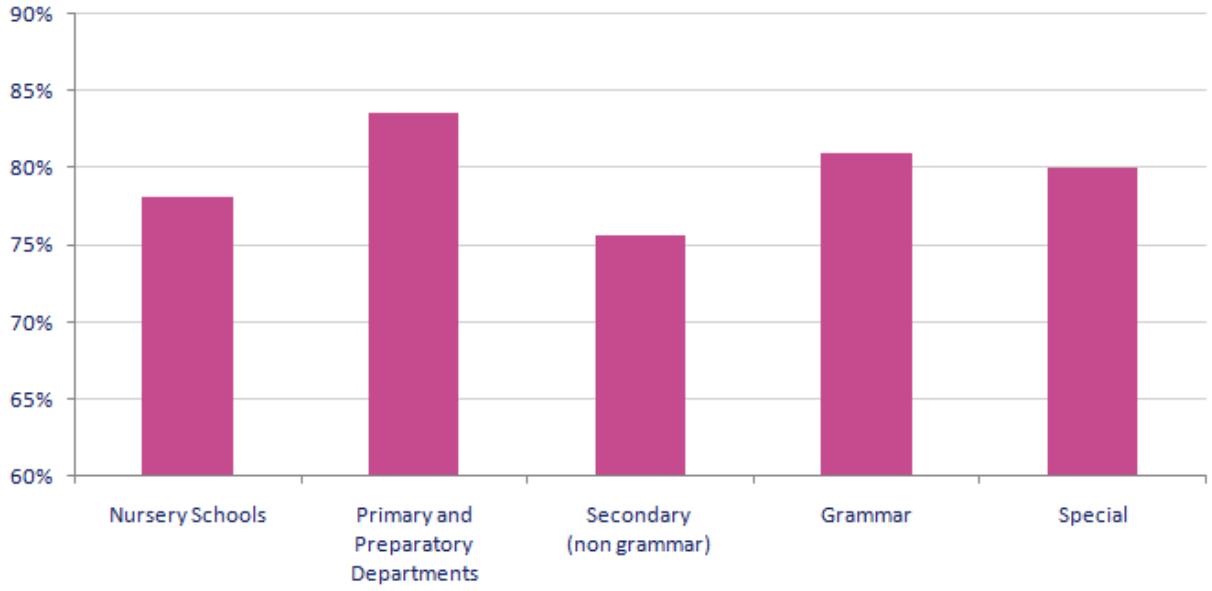
[1] Nursery only includes pupils in nursery schools
[2] Primary includes pupils in reception and nursery classes
[3] Data taken from Table 7

[1] Receipt of Income support or Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance is used as a proxy for free school meal entitlement for pupils in nursery schools and nursery classes in primary schools. Does not include pupils in EOTAS centres.

SECTION 3: UPTAKE OF FREE SCHOOL MEALS

- There were 77,210 free school meals taken by pupils across all school types, this is a decrease of 2,228 on the previous year (Table 9). This represents 41.4% of all meals provided by schools.
- When considering the number of free school meals provided as a proportion of the number of pupils with actual entitlement to free school meals[2], uptake of free school meals was 80.5% (Table 9). In this regards, the 2019/20 free school meals uptake level is 0.4 percentage points lower than the previous year.
- There is variation in the level of uptake of free school meals by those entitled across school types. The chart below shows that uptake is highest in primary and preparatory departments (83.6%). This is followed by grammar schools and special schools, with 81.0% and 80.0% uptake respectively. Uptake in nursery schools is 78.1% and is lowest in secondary schools with 75.6% (Table 9).

Figure 5: Uptake of free school meals, by school type 2019/20



[1] Nursery only includes pupils in nursery schools
[2] Primary includes pupils in reception and nursery classes
[3] Data taken from Table 9
[4] See background notes 12, 14, and 15

[2] For the purposes of calculating uptake the actual entitlement figure for nursery schools and primary schools with nursery pupils is based on full-time pupils only and excludes pupils counted under the proxy measure of free school meal entitlement (receipt of Income Support or Income Support Jobseeker's Allowance). This change was introduced in 2016/17 so figures for previous years are not directly comparable. See background note 15.

NOTES FOR READERS

Official Statistics

1. This is an Official Statistics publication. Official statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the Code of Practice for Statistics. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs. They are produced free from any political interference.
2. For general enquiries about the Code of Practice for Statistics, contact the National Statistics Public Enquiry Service on
   Tel: 0845 601 3034
   Minicom: 01633 812399
   E-mail: info@ons.gov.uk
   Fax: 01633 652747
   Letters: Customer Contact Centre, Office for National Statistics, Room D265, Government Buildings, Cardiff Road, Newport, South Wales, NP10 8XG
3. You can also find Official Statistics on the Internet: https://www.ons.gov.uk/

School meal provision

4. The Education Authority is responsible for the day to day operation of the school meals service in all grant-aided schools, with the exception of voluntary grammar schools and grant-maintained integrated schools, where the responsibility lies with the Trustees/Boards of Governors.
5. The service is provided in line with the Approved Arrangements for the Provision of Milk, Meals and Related Facilities made under Articles 58 and 59 of the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986 drawn up by the Department of Education (DE), which will be referred to as 'the Arrangements' in the remainder of this document. (https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/school-milk-and-meals-background)
6. Two main types of school meal service exist:
   - A traditional meal comprising a main course and dessert; and
   - A cash cafeteria service, where items are priced separately.

Free school meal provision

7. With regard to free school meal provision the following terms are used:
   - Eligibility: When a pupil within a family meets one of the criteria contained in paragraph 6 of the Arrangements for the provision of milk, meals and related facilities.
   - Entitlement: When an application for free school meals is made on behalf of a pupil and the application is successful.
   - Uptake: When a pupil who is entitled to free school meals makes use of the free school meal provision by taking a free school meal.
8. Certain categories of pupils are entitled to free school meals. Details of the qualifying criteria are contained in paragraph 6 of the Arrangements. The Education Authority is responsible for administering the award of free school meals. Entitlement to free school meals is widely used as an indicator of deprivation.
9. An additional eligibility criterion was added to the Arrangements with effect from 27 September 2017 to reflect the roll-out of Universal Credit as part of Welfare Reform.

School Meals Census

10. The main statistics in this statistical bulletin have been derived from the annual school meals data collection, commonly known as the school meals census. The data collection for the 2019/20 school meals census was undertaken by the Department, with data collected directly from each grant-aided school. Prior to 2012/13 the former ELBs were responsible for the collection of data in relation to schools in the controlled and maintained sectors and provided a collated return for their area to the Department.
11. The 2019/20 school meals census figures in this statistical bulletin are based on information as at 11th October 2019[3]. Some tables in this statistical bulletin include data on school enrolments and the number of pupils entitled to free school meals. Data on school enrolments and free school meal entitlement (FSME) were collected as part of the annual school enrolments data collection exercise and are also based on information as at 11th October 2019.
12. In nursery and primary schools, new pupils often have a phased introduction to school with some pupils not starting school until late October. Also new pupils may have a shorter day initially, without a lunch break. The school meals census date is usually the Friday of the first full week in October. This means that not all pupils will have started school, or be staying for lunch break. While pupils due to start later in the month will be counted in school enrolment, and free school meal entitlement figures, they will not be present to take a meal and will not therefore be counted in school meals census figures. Figures presented for free school meal uptake in nursery and primary schools, but particularly nursery, will therefore be lower than would be the case with a later census date.
13. In schools with a cash cafeteria system, school meal numbers are calculated from lunchtime income. Schools also include income from sales at morning break but income from breakfast clubs is not included (from the 2012/13 data collection onwards)[4]. The cost of a fixed price meal is used to convert income from lunch and break-time sales to equated meal numbers. Equated meal numbers will not exactly match pupils present for meals.
14. There were 6,815 pupils who were recorded as being present on census day but schools indicated they were not availing of a school lunch break. These pupils were mainly in nursery and primary schools. This will include part-time nursery pupils and primary pupils whose school day, by census date, did not yet include a lunch break. From the 2012/13 school meals census data onwards these pupils have been excluded from the count of pupils present for meals for the purposes of calculating uptake of school meals.
15. From 2016/17 onwards the figures presented for uptake of free school meals by pupils entitled in nursery schools and primary schools with nursery units has changed. The denominator used in the calculation of the percentages is now based on full-time pupils only and excludes pupils counted under the proxy measure of free school meal entitlement (receipt of Income Support or Income Based Job Seeker's

[3] If school meals were not being provided by the school on census day or are not typical of a normal day, the school could choose to conduct the census on the nearest day on which meals are provided. This may mean that dual registered pupils could be included in both their main and subsidiary schools' figures.

[4] During the 2016/17 data validation process it emerged that some schools may have erroneously included breakfast income in 2016/17 data returned to the Department. While some breakfast income may be have been included in the data it is not considered to have a big impact on the final estimates of school meal uptake.

Allowance). Data was not available to enable the revision of figures for previous years. For this reason caution should be used in drawing any comparison between data from 2016/17 onwards and data from previous years. This change affects Table 8 and Table 9.

16. There were 13 schools indicating that they do not provide a school meals service. One of these schools was open at the reference date but did not have any pupils. Nine are nursery schools where none of the pupils have a lunch break included as part of their hours of attendance. A total of 40 pupils at the remaining 3 schools do receive a lunch break. These 45 pupils are recorded as 'making other lunch arrangements' and are included in the count of pupils present for lunch when calculating percentage uptake of school meals (Tables 3 and 8).
17. Some figures have been estimated for a school that did not make a return for the 2019/20 school meals census.
18. From the 2013/14 data collection onwards the previous categories of 'other lunch arrangements' and 'taking own food' have been merged together to create a 'pupils making other lunch arrangements' category, which includes pupils taking their own food. This was due to difficulties, expressed by some schools, in capturing accurate data for the categories previously used.
19. Free school meal entitlement (FSME) data for special schools was not validated prior to 2014/15.
20. Figures for primary schools may include nursery and/or reception pupils attending primary schools and preparatory departments.
21. Information presenting uptake of school meals in Northern Ireland, England and Scotland was discontinued as policy differences between the regions and availability of up-to-date information for other regions make comparisons difficult.
22. The figures in this statistical bulletin may be subject to minor revision and these will be notified in accordance with our revisions policy. This can be accessed at https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/education/Revisions%20policy.pdf
23. More detail about the collection of data on school meals can be found on the DE website. This can be accessed at https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/school-meals-data-collection-and-validation
24. The Statistics and Research section of the DE website (https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/topics/statistics-and-research-1) also presents data from the school meals census. Statistics on school enrolments, school performance, pupil attendance, teacher numbers, pupil:teacher ratios, school leaver destinations and qualifications may also be accessed via the website.

General

25. The following symbols may be used in the tables in this statistical bulletin:

    * = Relates to fewer than 5 cases

    # = Number (5 or more) suppressed to prevent disclosure of small numbers elsewhere

    - = Indicates no schools in this category

Further enquiries

26. For more details about the statistics contained in this statistical bulletin, to request further information and analysis, or to provide any feedback on this publication please contact:

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27. Press enquiries should be made to the Department's Press Office at the same address, telephone (028) 9127 9268/ fax (028) 9127 9271.

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Table 1: Number and type of meals taken on school meals census day, by school type and school management type: 2019/20

		Meals provided by school			Other meals[1]	
School Type	Management Type	Paid school meals[2]	Free school meals	All school meals[2]	Pupils making other lunch arrangements (including own food)	Total[1]
Nursery Schools[3]	Controlled	1,190	716	1,906	88	1,994
	Catholic Maintained	563	605	1,168	102	1,270
	TOTAL	**1,753**	**1,321**	**3,074**	**190**	**3,264**
Primary[4] and Preparatory Departments	Controlled	22,050	17,581	39,631	38,191	77,822
	Voluntary	1,017	17	1,034	465	1,499
	Catholic Maintained	25,519	21,749	47,268	31,118	78,386
	Other Maintained	974	1,270	2,244	1,483	3,727
	Controlled Integrated	893	1,105	1,998	2,095	4,093
	Grant Maintained Integrated	1,922	1,305	3,227	2,889	6,116
	TOTAL	**52,375**	**43,027**	**95,402**	**76,241**	**171,643**
Secondary (Non Grammar)	Controlled	8,299	6,935	15,234	11,531	26,765
	Catholic Maintained	11,028	12,299	23,327	10,979	34,306
	Other Maintained	135	332	467	361	828
	Controlled Integrated	632	701	1,333	1,322	2,655
	Grant Maintained Integrated	4,108	3,032	7,140	1,960	9,100
	TOTAL	**24,202**	**23,299**	**47,501**	**26,153**	**73,654**
Grammar	Controlled	5,310	1,289	6,599	6,916	13,515
	Voluntary	24,770	5,727	30,497	16,559	47,056
	TOTAL	**30,080**	**7,016**	**37,096**	**23,475**	**60,571**
Post-Primary Total		**54,282**	**30,315**	**84,597**	**49,628**	**134,225**
Special	Controlled	1,064	2,336	3,400	1,622	5,022
	Catholic Maintained	26	170	196	53	249
	Other Maintained	12	41	53	14	67
	TOTAL	**1,102**	**2,547**	**3,649**	**1,689**	**5,338**
All Grant-aided Schools	Controlled	37,913	28,857	66,770	58,348	125,118
	Voluntary	25,787	5,744	31,531	17,024	48,555
	Catholic Maintained	37,136	34,823	71,959	42,252	114,211
	Other Maintained	1,121	1,643	2,764	1,858	4,622
	Controlled Integrated	1,525	1,806	3,331	3,417	6,748
	Grant Maintained Integrated	6,030	4,337	10,367	4,849	15,216
	GRAND TOTAL	**109,512**	**77,210**	**186,722**	**127,748**	**314,470**

Source: NI school meals census 2019/20

Notes:

[1] Excludes pupils present on school meals census day whose school day did not include a lunch break, including part-time nursery pupils and some P1 pupils (see background note 14).
[2] Paid meal figures presented are equated meals: Where schools have a cash cafeteria system for lunch the meal numbers are calculated based on lunchtime income. Income from morning break provision is also included in the calculation of meal numbers (see background note 13).
[3] Only includes pupils at nursery schools.
[4] Includes pupils in reception and nursery classes of primary schools.

Table 2: Percentage and type of meals taken on school meals census day, by school type and school management type: 2019/2020

		Meals provided by school			Other meals[2]	
		Paid school meals[3]	Free school meals	All school meals[3]	Pupils making other lunch arrangements (including own food)	
School Type	Management Type	%	%	%	%	Total[1]
Nursery Schools[4]	Controlled	59.7	35.9	95.6	4.4	*100.0*
	Catholic Maintained	44.3	47.6	92.0	8.0	*100.0*
	TOTAL	**53.7**	**40.5**	**94.2**	**5.8**	***100.0***
Primary[5] and Preparatory Departments	Controlled	28.3	22.6	50.9	49.1	*100.0*
	Voluntary	67.8	1.1	69.0	31.0	*100.0*
	Catholic Maintained	32.6	27.7	60.3	39.7	*100.0*
	Other Maintained	26.1	34.1	60.2	39.8	*100.0*
	Controlled Integrated	21.8	27.0	48.8	51.2	*100.0*
	Grant Maintained Integrated	31.4	21.3	52.8	47.2	*100.0*
	TOTAL	**30.5**	**25.1**	**55.6**	**44.4**	***100.0***
Secondary (Non Grammar)	Controlled	31.0	25.9	56.9	43.1	*100.0*
	Catholic Maintained	32.1	35.9	68.0	32.0	*100.0*
	Other Maintained	16.3	40.1	56.4	43.6	*100.0*
	Controlled Integrated	23.8	26.4	50.2	49.8	*100.0*
	Grant Maintained Integrated	45.1	33.3	78.5	21.5	*100.0*
	TOTAL	**32.9**	**31.6**	**64.5**	**35.5**	***100.0***
Grammar	Controlled	39.3	9.5	48.8	51.2	*100.0*
	Voluntary	52.6	12.2	64.8	35.2	*100.0*
	TOTAL	**49.7**	**11.6**	**61.2**	**38.8**	***100.0***
Post-Primary Total		**40.4**	**22.6**	**63.0**	**37.0**	***100.0***
Special	Controlled	21.2	46.5	67.7	32.3	*100.0*
	Catholic Maintained	10.4	68.3	78.7	21.3	*100.0*
	Other Maintained	17.9	61.2	79.1	20.9	*100.0*
	TOTAL	**20.6**	**47.7**	**68.4**	**31.6**	***100.0***
All Grant-aided Schools	Controlled	30.3	23.1	53.4	46.6	*100.0*
	Voluntary	53.1	11.8	64.9	35.1	*100.0*
	Catholic Maintained	32.5	30.5	63.0	37.0	*100.0*
	Other Maintained	24.3	35.5	59.8	40.2	*100.0*
	Controlled Integrated	22.6	26.8	49.4	50.6	*100.0*
	Grant Maintained Integrated	39.6	28.5	68.1	31.9	*100.0*
	GRAND TOTAL	**34.8**	**24.6**	**59.4**	**40.6**	***100.0***

Source: NI school meals census 2019/20

Notes:

[1]Figures may not add due to rounding.

[2] Excludes pupils present on school meals census day whose school day did not include a lunch break, including part-time nursery pupils and some P1 pupils (see background note 14).

[3] Paid meal figures presented are equated meals: Where schools have a cash cafeteria system for lunch the meal numbers are calculated based on lunchtime income. Income from morning break provision is also included in the calculation of meal numbers (see background note 13).

[4] Only includes pupils at nursery schools.

[5] Includes pupils in reception and nursery classes of primary schools

Table 3: Uptake of school meals (free and paid) - number and percentage of pupils present for lunch on school meals census day, by school type and school management type: 2016/17- 2019/20

		2016/17		2017/18		2018/19		2019/20	
School Type	Management Type	School meals provided [1]	Uptake[2] %	School meals provided [1]	Uptake[2] %	School meals provided [1]	Uptake[2] %	School meals provided [1]	Uptake[2] %
Nursery Schools[3]	Controlled	1,812	*94.7*	1,847	*96.8*	1,802	*96.0*	1,906	*95.6*
	Catholic Maintained	1,086	*90.9*	1,088	*91.1*	1,084	*90.0*	1,168	*92.0*
	TOTAL	**2,898**	***93.2***	**2,935**	***94.6***	**2,886**	***93.6***	**3,074**	***94.2***
Primary[4] and Preparatory Departments	Controlled	41,548	*53.8*	39,957	*51.2*	39,935	*51.1*	39,631	*51.1*
	Voluntary	1,084	*68.7*	1,079	*67.4*	1,110	*71.2*	1,034	*69.0*
	Catholic Maintained	47,909	*61.6*	47,304	*60.4*	47,427	*60.5*	47,268	*60.5*
	Other Maintained	2,213	*65.5*	2,253	*63.0*	2,290	*62.1*	2,244	*60.4*
	Controlled Integrated	1,994	*50.5*	2,009	*50.3*	2,057	*49.5*	1,998	*48.8*
	Grant Maintained Integrated	3,128	*54.0*	3,030	*50.6*	3,183	*53.7*	3,227	*52.8*
	TOTAL	**97,876**	***57.7***	**95,632**	***55.8***	**96,002**	***55.9***	**95,402**	***55.7***
Secondary (Non Grammar)	Controlled	15,733	*63.2*	15,246	*60.3*	15,307	*59.3*	15,234	*57.5*
	Catholic Maintained	24,016	*71.6*	23,115	*69.0*	23,036	*67.9*	23,327	*68.0*
	Other Maintained	383	*60.3*	444	*65.7*	404	*55.9*	467	*57.1*
	Controlled Integrated	1,219	*54.7*	1,132	*50.0*	1,217	*48.5*	1,333	*50.2*
	Grant Maintained Integrated	6,625	*76.6*	6,674	*76.1*	6,852	*75.4*	7,140	*78.5*
	TOTAL	**47,976**	***68.6***	**46,611**	***66.1***	**46,816**	***65.0***	**47,501**	***64.7***
Grammar	Controlled	7,292	*54.0*	7,010	*51.8*	6,929	*51.7*	6,599	*48.9*
	Voluntary	28,405	*61.2*	28,832	*62.0*	29,222	*62.9*	30,497	*64.8*
	TOTAL	**35,697**	***59.5***	**35,842**	***59.7***	**36,151**	***60.4***	**37,096**	***61.3***
Post-Primary	**TOTAL**	**83,673**	***64.4***	**82,453**	***63.2***	**82,967**	***62.9***	**84,597**	***63.2***
Special	Controlled	3,159	*70.5*	3,225	*69.8*	3,310	*68.3*	3,400	*67.7*
	Catholic Maintained	183	*84.3*	181	*79.0*	185	*74.0*	196	*78.7*
	Other Maintained	56	*74.7*	52	*69.3*	53	*72.6*	53	*79.1*
	TOTAL	**3,398**	***71.2***	**3,458**	***70.2***	**3,548**	***68.6***	**3,649**	***68.4***
All Grant-aided Schools	Controlled	69,544	*57.0*	67,285	*54.5*	67,283	*54.2*	66,770	*53.6*
	Voluntary	29,489	*61.4*	29,911	*62.2*	30,332	*63.1*	31,531	*65.0*
	Catholic Maintained	73,194	*64.9*	71,688	*63.3*	71,732	*63.1*	71,959	*63.1*
	Other Maintained	2,652	*64.9*	2,749	*63.5*	2,747	*61.2*	2,764	*60.1*
	Controlled Integrated	3,213	*52.0*	3,141	*50.2*	3,274	*49.1*	3,331	*49.4*
	Grant Maintained Integrated	9,753	*67.6*	9,704	*65.7*	10,035	*66.8*	10,367	*68.2*
	GRAND TOTAL	**187,845**	***61.1***	**184,478**	***59.5***	**185,403**	***59.4***	**186,722**	***59.5***

Source: NI school meals census 2016/17 - 2019/20

Notes:

[1] Meal figures presented are equated meals: Where schools have a cash cafeteria system for lunch the meal numbers are calculated based on lunchtime income. Income from morning break provision is also included in the calculation of meal numbers (see background note 13).

[2] Uptake is expressed as the number of school meals provided (free and paid) as a percentage of the number of pupils present for lunch on census day. Pupils present for lunch excludes pupils present on school meals census day whose school day did not include a lunch break, including part-time nursery pupils and some P1 pupils (see background note 14).

[3] Only includes pupils at nursery schools.

[4] Includes pupils in reception and nursery classes of primary schools

Table 4: Number and percentage of school meals provided (free and paid) by type of meal provision, school type and school management type: 2019/20

		Traditional meals		Cash cafeteria meals[1]	
School Type	**Management Type**	**Number**	**%**	**Number**	**%**
Nursery Schools[2]	Controlled	1,906	*100.0*	0	*0.0*
	Catholic Maintained	1,168	*100.0*	0	*0.0*
	TOTAL	**3,074**	***100.0***	**0**	***0.0***
Primary[3] and Preparatory Departments	Controlled	39,058	*98.6*	573	*1.4*
	Voluntary	872	*84.3*	162	*15.7*
	Catholic Maintained	46,257	*97.9*	1,011	*2.1*
	Other Maintained	2,244	*100.0*	0	*0.0*
	Controlled Integrated	1,998	*100.0*	0	*0.0*
	Grant Maintained Integrated	3,227	*100.0*	0	*0.0*
	TOTAL	**93,656**	***98.2***	**1,746**	***1.8***
Secondary (Non Grammar)	Controlled	473	*3.1*	14,761	*96.9*
	Catholic Maintained	1,904	*8.2*	21,423	*91.8*
	Other Maintained	353	*75.6*	114	*24.4*
	Controlled Integrated	0	*0.0*	1,333	*100.0*
	Grant Maintained Integrated	234	*3.3*	6,906	*96.7*
	TOTAL	**2,964**	***6.2***	**44,537**	***93.8***
Grammar	Controlled	0	*0.0*	6,599	*100.0*
	Voluntary	1,689	*5.5*	28,808	*94.5*
	TOTAL	**1,689**	***4.6***	**35,407**	***95.4***
Post-Primary Total		**4,653**	*5.5*	**79,944**	*94.5*
Special	Controlled	3,274	*96.3*	126	*3.7*
	Catholic Maintained	196	*100.0*	0	*0.0*
	Other Maintained	53	*100.0*	0	*0.0*
	TOTAL	**3,523**	***96.5***	**126**	***3.5***
All Grant-aided Schools	Controlled	44,711	*67.0*	22,059	*33.0*
	Voluntary	2,561	*8.1*	28,970	*91.9*
	Catholic Maintained	49,525	*68.8*	22,434	*31.2*
	Other Maintained	2,650	*95.9*	114	*4.1*
	Controlled Integrated	1,998	*60.0*	1,333	*40.0*
	Grant Maintained Integrated	3,461	*33.4*	6,906	*66.6*
	GRAND TOTAL	**104,906**	***56.2***	**81,816**	***43.8***

Source: NI school meals census 2019/20

Notes:

[1] Cash cafeteria meal figures presented are equated meals: Where schools have a cash cafeteria system for lunch the meal numbers are calculated based on lunchtime income. Income from morning break provision is also included in the calculation of meal numbers (see background note 13).

[2] Only includes pupils at nursery schools.

[3] Includes pupils in reception and nursery classes of primary schools

Table 5: Uptake of school meals (free and paid) - number and percentage of pupils present for lunch on school meals census day, according to relative free school meal entitlement, by school type: 2019/20

		Paid school meals			Free school meals			All meals provided[4]		
Proportion entitled to free school meals	School Type	School meals provided [1]	Uptake[2]	%	School meals provided	Uptake[2]	%	School meals provided [1]	Uptake[2]	%
10% and less	Nursery Schools[3]	157	*79.7*		16	*8.1*		173	*87.8*	
	Primary[4] and Preparatory Departments	6,043	*37.3*		885	*5.5*		6,928	*42.8*	
	Secondary (non grammar)	0	-		0	-		0	-	
	Grammar	11,636	*53.5*		1,291	*5.9*		12,927	*59.4*	
	Post-primary	**11,636**	***53.5***		**1,291**	***5.9***		**12,927**	***59.4***	
	Special	0	-		0	-		0	-	
	All Grant-aided Schools[5]	**17,836**	***46.8***		**2,192**	***5.7***		**20,028**	***52.5***	
10.1% - 20.0%	Nursery Schools[3]	258	*61.0*		99	*23.4*		357	*84.4*	
	Primary[4] and Preparatory Departments	17,748	*35.6*		6,694	*13.4*		24,442	*49.0*	
	Secondary (non grammar)	1,924	*40.4*		589	*12.4*		2,513	*52.8*	
	Grammar	13,307	*48.9*		3,064	*11.3*		16,371	*60.2*	
	Post-primary	**15,231**	***47.7***		**3,653**	***11.4***		**18,884**	***59.1***	
	Special	0	-		0	-		0	-	
	All Grant-aided Schools[5]	**33,237**	***40.4***		**10,446**	***12.7***		**43,683**	***53.1***	
20.1% - 40.0%	Nursery Schools[3]	739	*66.2*		316	*28.3*		1,055	*94.5*	
	Primary[4] and Preparatory Departments	21,863	*31.7*		17,216	*25.0*		39,079	*56.7*	
	Secondary (non grammar)	16,130	*37.5*		11,125	*25.8*		27,255	*63.3*	
	Grammar	5,137	*44.3*		2,661	*22.9*		7,798	*67.2*	
	Post-primary	**21,267**	***38.9***		**13,786**	***25.2***		**35,053**	***64.2***	
	Special	299	*28.5*		349	*33.3*		648	*61.8*	
	All Grant-aided Schools[5]	**44,168**	***35.1***		**31,667**	***25.2***		**75,835**	***60.3***	
40.1% +	Nursery Schools[3]	599	*39.2*		890	*58.2*		1,489	*97.4*	
	Primary[4] and Preparatory Departments	6,721	*18.6*		18,232	*50.4*		24,953	*69.0*	
	Secondary (non grammar)	6,148	*24.0*		11,585	*45.3*		17,733	*69.3*	
	Grammar	0	-		0	-		0	-	
	Post-primary	**6,148**	***24.0***		**11,585**	***45.3***		**17,733**	***69.3***	
	Special	803	*18.8*		2,198	*51.3*		3,001	*70.1*	
	All Grant-aided Schools[5]	**14,271**	***21.1***		**32,905**	***48.7***		**47,176**	***69.8***	

Source: NI school meals census 2019/20

Notes:

[1] Meal figures presented are equated meals: Where schools have a cash cafeteria system for lunch the meal numbers are calculated based on lunchtime income. Income from morning break provision is also included in the calculation of meal numbers (see background note 13).

[2] Uptake is expressed as the number of school meals provided (free and paid) as a percentage of the number of pupils present for lunch on census day. Pupils present for lunch excludes pupils present on school meals census day whose school day did not include a lunch break, including part-time nursery pupils and some P1 pupils (see background note 14).

[3] Only includes pupils at nursery schools.

[4] Includes pupils in reception and nursery classes of primary schools

[5] Does not include pupils attending EOTAS centres.

Table 6: Number and percentage[1] of pupils entitled to free school meals by school type: 2016/17 - 2019/20

		2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Total enrolment	Nursery Schools[2]	5,864	5,837	5,832	5,824
	Primary[3] and Preparatory Departments	181,302	183,453	184,245	183,711
	Secondary (non grammar)	77,432	77,727	79,377	81,662
	Grammar	62,981	62,818	62,862	63,423
	Special	5,407	5,735	5,959	6,174
	All Grant-aided Schools[4]	**332,986**	**335,570**	**338,275**	**340,794**
Entitlement to free school meals	Nursery Schools[2]	2,085	1,952	1,997	1,983
	Primary[3] and Preparatory Departments	56,681	55,536	54,117	52,011
	Secondary (non grammar)	31,461	30,866	31,080	30,833
	Grammar	8,978	8,951	8,848	8,665
	Special	2,922	2,949	3,100	3,194
	All Grant-aided Schools[4]	**102,127**	**100,254**	**99,142**	**96,686**
Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals[1]	Nursery Schools[2]	*35.6*	*33.4*	*34.2*	*34.0*
	Primary[3] and Preparatory Departments	*31.3*	*30.3*	*29.4*	*28.3*
	Secondary (non grammar)	*40.6*	*39.7*	*39.2*	*37.8*
	Grammar	*14.3*	*14.2*	*14.1*	*13.7*
	Special	*54.0*	*51.4*	*52.0*	*51.7*
	All Grant-aided Schools[4]	***30.7***	***29.9***	***29.3***	***28.4***

Source: NI school census 2016/17 - 2019/20

Notes:

[1] Percentages express the number of pupils entitled to free school meals in a particular category (e.g. those at primary school) as a proportion of the total pupil enrolment in the same category.

[2] As school meals are not universally available to children in pre-school education, receipt of Income Support or Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance is used as a proxy for free school meal entitlement. Only includes pupils at nursery schools.

[3] Includes pupils in reception and nursery classes of primary schools

[4] Does not include pupils attending EOTAS centres.

Table 7: Number and percentage[1] of pupils entitled to free school meals, by school type and school management type: 2019/20

School Type	Managment Type	Pupils entitled to free school meals	Free school meal entitlement %
Nursery Schools[2]	Controlled	1,201	*29.3*
	Catholic Maintained	782	*45.5*
	TOTAL	**1,983**	***34.0***
Primary[3] and Preparatory Department	Controlled	22,300	*26.6*
	Voluntary	19	*1.2*
	Catholic Maintained	25,196	*30.3*
	Other Maintained	1,475	*36.3*
	Controlled Integrated	1,354	*30.8*
	Grant Maintained Integrated	1,667	*24.2*
	TOTAL	**52,011**	***28.3***
Secondary (Non Grammar)	Controlled	10,113	*34.3*
	Catholic Maintained	15,550	*40.6*
	Other Maintained	468	*52.3*
	Controlled Integrated	1,098	*37.2*
	Grant Maintained Integrated	3,604	*36.0*
	TOTAL	**30,833**	***37.8***
Grammar	Controlled	1,760	*12.4*
	Voluntary	6,905	*14.0*
	TOTAL	**8,665**	***13.7***
Post-Primary	**TOTAL**	**39,498**	***27.2***
Special	Controlled	2,966	*51.0*
	Catholic Maintained	187	*66.3*
	Other Maintained	41	*53.9*
	TOTAL	**3,194**	***51.7***
All Grant-aided Schools	Controlled	38,340	*27.9*
	Voluntary	6,924	*13.6*
	Catholic Maintained	41,715	*33.8*
	Other Maintained	1,984	*39.4*
	Controlled Integrated	2,452	*33.4*
	Grant Maintained Integrated	5,271	*31.2*
	GRAND TOTAL	**96,686**	***28.4***

Source: NI school census 2019/20

Notes:

[1] Percentages express the number of pupils entitled to free school meals in a particular category (e.g. those at primary school) as a proportion of the total pupil enrolment in the same category.

[2] As school meals are not universally available to children in pre-school education, receipt of Income Support or Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance is used as a proxy for free school meal entitlement. Only includes pupils at nursery schools.

[3] Includes pupils in reception and nursery classes of primary schools.

Table 8: Number and percentage of pupils taking free school meals as a proportion of all school meals provided and as a proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals[1], by school type and school management type: 2019/20

School Type	Management Type	Free school meals taken by pupils present	Free meals as a proportion of all school meals provided[2] %	Free school meals taken as a proportion of pupils entitled[1] %
Nursery Schools[3]	Controlled	716	*37.6*	*75.2*
	Catholic Maintained	605	*51.8*	*81.8*
	TOTAL	**1,321**	***43.0***	***78.1***
Primary[4] and Preparatory Department	Controlled	17,581	*44.4*	*79.7*
	Voluntary	17	*1.6*	*89.5*
	Catholic Maintained	21,749	*46.0*	*87.0*
	Other Maintained	1,270	*56.6*	*88.4*
	Controlled Integrated	1,105	*55.3*	*81.9*
	Grant Maintained Integrated	1,305	*40.4*	*80.8*
	TOTAL	**43,027**	***45.1***	***83.6***
Secondary (non grammar)	Controlled	6,935	*45.5*	*68.6*
	Catholic Maintained	12,299	*52.7*	*79.1*
	Other Maintained	332	*71.1*	*70.9*
	Controlled Integrated	701	*52.6*	*63.8*
	Grant Maintained Integrated	3,032	*42.5*	*84.1*
	TOTAL	**23,299**	***49.0***	***75.6***
Grammar	Controlled	1,289	*19.5*	*73.2*
	Voluntary	5,727	*18.8*	*82.9*
	TOTAL	**7,016**	***18.9***	***81.0***
Post-Primary	**TOTAL**	**30,315**	***35.8***	***76.8***
Special	Controlled	2,336	*68.7*	*79.0*
	Catholic Maintained	170	*86.7*	*90.9*
	Other Maintained	41	*77.4*	*100.0*
	TOTAL	**2,547**	***69.8***	***80.0***
All grant-aided schools	Controlled	28,857	*43.2*	*76.3*
	Voluntary	5,744	*18.2*	*83.0*
	Catholic Maintained	34,823	*48.4*	*83.9*
	Other Maintained	1,643	*59.4*	*84.5*
	Controlled Integrated	1,806	*54.2*	*73.8*
	Grant Maintained Integrated	4,337	*41.8*	*83.1*
	GRAND TOTAL	**77,210**	***41.4***	***80.5***

Source: NI school meals census 2019/20

Notes:

[1] For the purposes of calculating uptake of free school meals by pupils entitled the denominator used is based on full-time pupils only and excludes pupils counted under the proxy measure of free school meal entitlement (receipt of Income Support or Income Support Jobseeker's Allowance). This only applies to nursery and primary schools. See background note 15.

[2] Percentages express the number of pupils taking free school meals in a particular category (e.g. those at primary school) as a proportion of all school meals provided in the same category.

[3] Only includes pupils at nursery schools.

[4] Includes pupils in reception and nursery classes of primary schools

Table 9: Uptake of free school meals - number and percentage[1] of pupils entitled to free school meals, by school type: 2016/17 - 2019/20

		2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Free school meals taken by pupils present	Nursery Schools[2]	1,279	1,230	1,238	1,321
	Primary[2] and Preparatory Departments	47,354	45,658	44,955	43,027
	Secondary (non grammar)	24,709	23,680	23,628	23,299
	Grammar	7,356	7,273	7,116	7,016
	Special	2,393	2,374	2,501	2,547
	All grant-aided schools	**83,091**	**80,215**	**79,438**	**77,210**
Pupils entitled to free school meals	Nursery Schools[2,3] (excluding part-time pupils and proxy FSME)	1,799	1,679	1,714	1,692
	Primary[2,3] and Preparatory Departments (excluding part-time pupils and proxy FSME)	55,963	54,852	53,482	51,493
	Secondary (non grammar)	31,461	30,866	31,080	30,833
	Grammar	8,978	8,951	8,848	8,665
	Special	2,922	2,949	3,100	3,184
	All grant-aided schools (excluding part-time pupils and proxy FSME)	**101,123**	**99,297**	**98,224**	**95,867**
Free school meals taken as a proportion of pupils entitled[1]	Nursery Schools[2,3] (excluding part-time pupils and proxy FSME)	*71.1*	*73.3*	*72.2*	*78.1*
	Primary[2,3] and Preparatory Departments (excluding part-time pupils and proxy FSME)	*84.6*	*83.2*	*84.1*	*83.6*
	Secondary (non grammar)	*78.5*	*76.7*	*76.0*	*75.6*
	Grammar	*81.9*	*81.3*	*80.4*	*81.0*
	Special	*81.9*	*80.5*	*80.7*	*80.0*
	All grant-aided schools (excluding part-time pupils and proxy FSME)	***82.2***	***80.8***	***80.9***	***80.5***

Entitlement Source: NI school census 2016/17 - 2019/20
Uptake Source: NI school meals census 2016/17 - 2019/20

Notes:

[1] Percentages express the number of free school meals taken in a particular category (e.g. those at primary school) as a proportion of the number of pupils entitled to free school meals in the same category.
[2] The nursery figures only include pupils at nursery schools. The primary figures include pupils in reception and nursery classes of primary schools.
[3] For the purposes of calculating uptake of free school meals by pupils entitled the free school meal entitlement figure used is based on full-time pupils only and excludes pupils counted under the proxy measure of free school meal entitlement (receipt of Income Support or Income Support Jobseeker's Allowance). This only applies to nursery and primary schools. Figures prior to 2016/17 are not directly comparable. See background note 15.

Table 10: Adults taking school meals, by school type: 2019/20

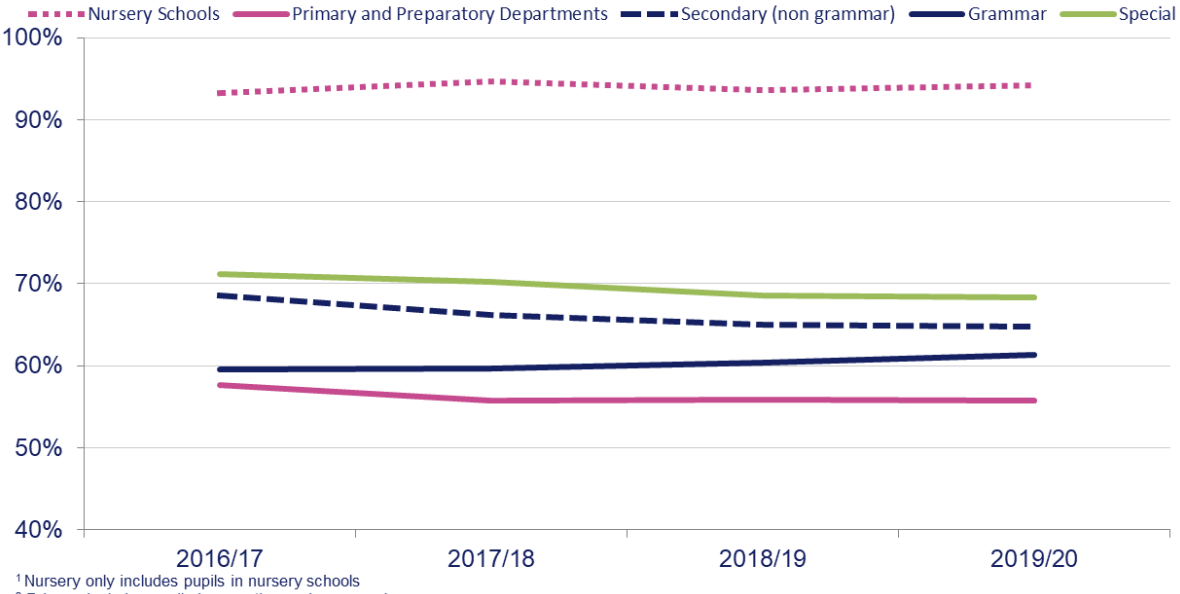
	Adults taking school meal (free or paid)	Adults taking free school meal[1] %
Nursery Schools[2]	306	*90.5*
Primary[3] and Preparatory Departments	5,788	*88.9*
Secondary (non grammar)	2,756	*82.5*
Grammar	1,789	*62.0*
Post-Primary Total	**4,545**	***74.4***
Special	707	*99.0*
All grant-aided schools	**11,346**	***83.8***

Source: NI school meals census 2019/20

Notes:

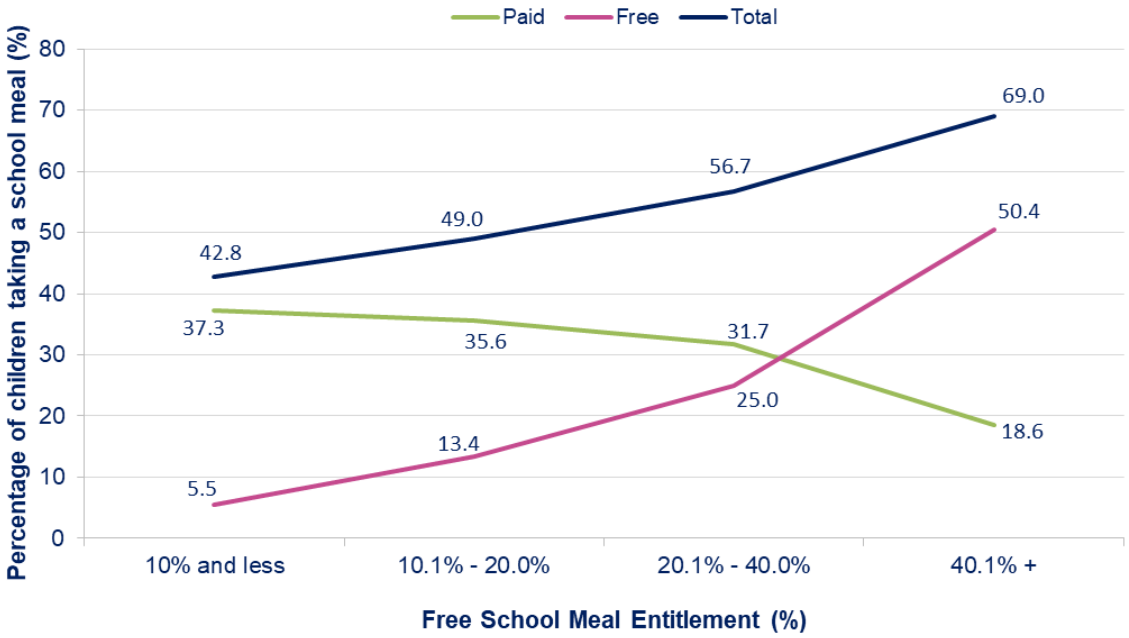
[1] Depending on their terms and conditions kitchen staff and mid-day supervisors may be entitled to a free mid-day meal.
[2] Only includes nursery classes in nursery schools.
[3] Includes reception and nursery classes in primary schools.

Figure 1: Uptake of school meals (free and paid), by school type: 2016/17 - 2019/20



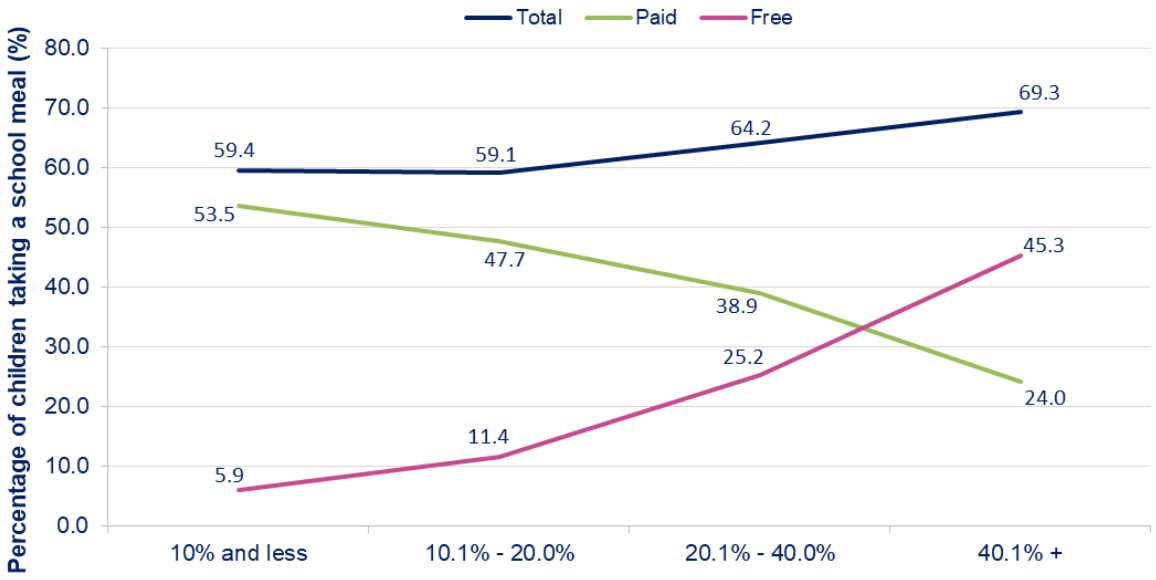
[1] Nursery only includes pupils in nursery schools
[2] Primary includes pupils in reception and nursery classes
[3] Data taken from Table 3

Figure 2: Uptake of school meals in primary schools, according to relative FSME 2019/20



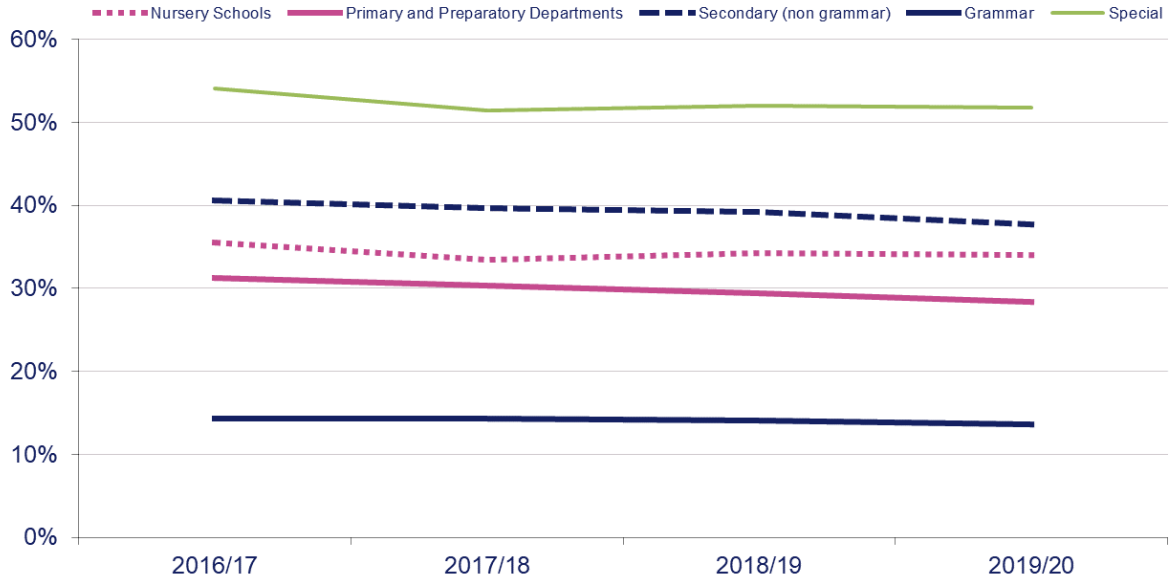
[1] Includes preparatory departments, pupils in reception and nursery classes of primary schools. Excludes schools where no meal service is available.
[3] Data taken from Table 5

Figure 3: Uptake of school meals in post-primary schools, according to relative FSME 2019/20



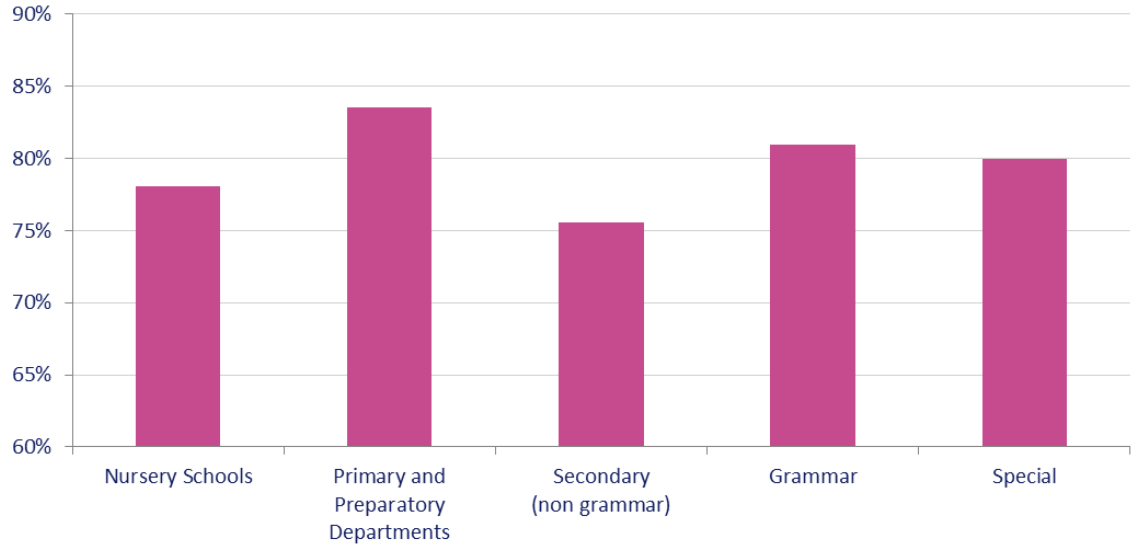
[1] Excludes schools where no meal service is available
[2] Data taken from Table 5

Figure 4: Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals, by school type: 2016/17 - 2019/20



[1] Nursery only includes pupils in nursery schools
[2] Primary includes pupils in reception and nursery classes
[3] Data taken from Table 7

Figure 5: Uptake of free school meals, by school type 2019/20



[1] Nursery only includes pupils in nursery schools
[2] Primary includes pupils in reception and nursery classes
[3] Data taken from Table 9
[4] See background notes 12, 14, and 15

Notes

School Management Types

Controlled schools are owned and managed by the Education Authority through Boards of Governors. Primary and secondary school Boards of Governors consist of representatives of transferors (mainly the Protestant Churches) along with representatives of parents, teachers and the Education Authority. Controlled nursery, grammar and special school boards of governors consist only of representatives of the latter 3 categories. Within the controlled school sector there are a number of integrated schools and a small but growing number of Irish-medium schools.

Catholic maintained schools are voluntary schools owned by trustees (appointed by the Roman Catholic Church) and managed by CCMS through boards of governors. Board of Governors consist of members nominated by the trustees along with representatives of parents, teachers and the Education Authority. Within the Catholic maintained sector there are a small number of Irish-medium schools.

Other maintained schools are voluntary schools owned by trustees and managed by Boards of Governors which consist of members nominated by trustees along with representatives of parents, teachers and the Education Authority. This sector includes a number of Irish Medium schools.

Voluntary grammar schools are owned by trustees and managed by Boards of Governors which consist of members nominated by trustees along with representatives of parents, teachers, the Department and, in most cases, the Education Authority. (Voluntary grammar schools vary in the rates of capital grant to which they are entitled depending on the management structure they have adopted, with the vast majority entitled to capital grants of 100%.)

Grant-maintained integrated schools are owned and managed by their Boards of Governors, which consist of foundation governors along with representatives of parents, teachers and the Department.

All of the above are types of grant-aided school. Independent Schools do not receive any funding from the Education Authority or the Department of Education.

Further background notes can be found within the School Meals Statistical Bulletin at:

https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/school-meals-201920-statistical-bulletin-30-april-2020