

Supplementary analysis on London school sector

1. Purpose

- The Greater London Authority (GLA) City Intelligence Unit (CIU), and the GLA Universal Free School Meals (UFSM) team, conducted analysis into the London independent school sector (with a particular focus on faith schools and non-maintained special schools (NMSS)). This used publicly available data and insights from delivery of the London UFSM scheme to date.
- This analysis was initially completed in June 2023, to ensure all considerations were made in the policy development of the Mayor's UFSM scheme. It has been kept under review; and updated in June and December 2024, and June 2026. These updates are to inform the extension and ongoing delivery of the UFSM scheme.
- This analysis supplements the findings of an equality impact assessment (EqIA) of the Mayor's UFSM scheme, which was last updated in June 2026.

2. Background

- The Mayor initially allocated £130 million, as part of the budget-setting process for 2023-24, for the provision of the UFSM scheme. This offer was for all Key Stage (KS) 2 children in state-funded primary schools (including academies, state-funded special schools and alternative provision (AP)). This includes those who are not entitled to free school meals (FSM) funded by the government under the national scheme.
- The Mayor's UFSM scheme was subsequently extended for delivery in 2024-25 and 2025-26. The Mayor has confirmed his intention to fund UFSM until the end of his Mayoral term.
- The Mayor's UFSM scheme was designed for state-funded primary schools – partly because it was intended to supplement the national government's FSM scheme. This paper will set out the scope of coverage in more detail.
- The £130 million allocation, referred to above, represented a limited pot of money; this was insufficient to cover every child in London. Therefore, the UFSM scheme has prioritised children in state-funded primary schools, above those in schools that may charge fees or receive alternative income for pupils, which could be used to pay for meals. This is in line with national policy.
- From September 2026, national FSM eligibility will expand to include all children in households receiving Universal Credit; this change removes the £7,400 income cap previously in place. It does not affect delivery of the

Mayor's UFSM scheme for London's state-funded primary schools; but it has wider implications for funding and schools' delivery.

- To assist with the Mayor's policy development, the following section sets out:
 - the key findings and summary of the supplementary analysis undertaken in supporting this policy
 - the actions that will be taken to respond to these needs.
- The EqIA assesses the equality impact of the UFSM scheme, to ensure that:
 - all considerations could be made in the policy development
 - any mitigations were considered from an early stage.
- This analysis relates to independent schools that are registered with the Department for Education (DfE), and meet the requirements of the Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2014 (2014 Regulations).
- Educational establishments that are not registered with the DfE are out of scope for both this analysis, and any consideration of further expanding the Mayor's UFSM scheme. This is because it is against the law to run an independent school that is not registered with the DfE.
- This analysis notes that, within the independent school sector, there are different types of independent schools. These can broadly be defined as "association" and "non-association" schools. Ofsted regulates "non-association" independent schools/the non-state sector; and the Independent Schools Inspectorate (which has been approved by the DfE) regulates "association" schools.
- Within these broad categories relating to the regulation of schools, there are further subcategories of independent schools. These include independent special schools and independent faith schools.
- There are three NMSSs across Hammersmith and Fulham, Haringey, and Hillingdon. In 2024-25 they had a total of 48 pupils in KS2 – of these, 17 were known to be eligible for FSM.¹ NMSSs are covered by government-funded FSM, because they have an identical duty to provide FSM to eligible pupils under the Non-Maintained Special Schools (England) Regulations 2015. The government's school food standards also cover NMSSs. NMSSs are included in the Mayor's UFSM scheme for pupils who are not eligible for national government-funded meals – this ensures that the Mayor's UFSM scheme is in line with national government policy.
- Independent schools, including independent faith schools, do not have to teach the national curriculum. However, they must meet minimum standards set out in the Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2014.

¹ DfE, [Schools, pupils and their characteristics, academic year 2024/25](#), June 2025

- After the Mayor's initial 2023 announcement about his proposal to introduce a UFSM scheme, representatives of some of the Charedi community sent submissions. These sought expansion of the Mayor's UFSM scheme to Charedi children attending independent faith schools in Hackney. The representations raised by the Charedi community, in 2024, included the following:
 - Around 78.7 per cent of Charedi children in London attend independent faith schools.
 - Attending independent Charedi faith schools is integral to this community's religious identity and beliefs. Although Charedi children can attend maintained educational settings and academies, in practice most families opt to send their children to independent settings.
 - All independent Charedi faith schools are charitable institutions funded partly by parents and the community. They charge significantly lower fees than other private schools. School meals are not always provided to children attending as part of the benefits, unlike other independent schools.
 - Admission is, in general, not denied to any child whose parents are unable to pay these fees. Many families cannot pay any school fees at all. It is therefore suggested that that these independent faith schools should be distinguished from other independent private schools.
 - Members of the Charedi community have told the GLA that the average Charedi household is almost two-and-a-half times the size of the average UK household. Kosher food is over two-and-a-half times the cost of non-kosher equivalents.
 - Representatives from the Charedi community, who were interviewed as part of Year 1 EqIA development, said that the families in these communities often have minimal savings; and receive housing benefits and tax credits. Such families are facing financial hardship due to the cost-of-living crisis – specifically the rising costs of kosher food.
- In August 2024, a collective of nine Islamic faith independent schools in Tower Hamlets also sent representation. They commended the Mayor's UFSM scheme; but petitioned for its expansion to children in independent schools across London. The reasoning presented for this was that, in their view:
 - families choosing independent education often make significant sacrifices, prioritising their children's education above personal comforts, rather than making the choice because they are very rich or privileged; however, this is not representative of the whole independent sector
 - all children, regardless of their educational setting, should benefit from essential support
 - it would be feasible to implement such a rollout effectively.

- The Mayor has considered representations received; and whether the UFSM scheme should be extended to include some independent schools (such as those serving the Charedi and Muslim communities). It is acknowledged that, according to the information provided on behalf of the Charedi community, some families of children at these independent faith schools are larger than the average family size; and receive housing benefits and tax credits.
- Information about fees charged by independent schools, and the number of children who would otherwise be eligible for national FSM (and therefore would be out of scope for UFSM), is not readily available for the whole independent sector. It is therefore deemed non-viable, as an option, to add an additional filter to the independent sector. This is further explained in the sections below.

3. Key findings of the supplementary analysis²

Annex 2 sets out the data analysis sources and methodology.

- In 2024-25, there were 449 independent schools in London with pupils in the 7-11 age range. These schools had, in total, 50,074 pupils aged 7-11.³
- 84 per cent of these independent schools (379) classified themselves as having no religious character. It has been found that 79 per cent of children aged 7-11, at independent schools in London (39,481), attend a school with no religious character.
- For the 2024-25 academic year, there were 70 registered independent faith-based schools in London with pupils aged 7-11. These schools had 10,593 pupils aged 7-11. The most common type of independent school with a religious denomination was Church of England (17), with a further 30 schools declaring that they were another Christian faith denomination.⁴
- Twelve independent schools with pupils aged 7-11 were Jewish, or said they were of another Jewish faith. These contained 2,140 pupils – or 4 per cent of the total population of pupils in independent schools, in the 7-11 age range.
- A further 11 schools classified themselves as either Islamic or Muslim. These contained 459 pupils – or 1 per cent of the total population of pupils in independent schools, in the 7-11 age range.
- The non-state-funded independent sector is made up of fee-paying schools. There is limited evidence for the scale of fees that are charged. The Independent Schools Council (ISC) Census 2025 found the average day-school fee in London is £7,436 per term.⁵ These fees are largely paid for by the parents. No full central data collection of fees could be found; and not all schools advertise their fees. Some Ofsted reports for independent schools

² To note data used is from 2024/25 as the most recent statistical release at time of drafting.

³ DfE, [Schools, pupils and their characteristics, academic year 2024/25](#), June 2025

⁴ Includes 'Anglican', 'Free Church', 'Methodist', 'Other Christian Faith' and 'Catholic'

⁵ ISC, [ISC annual census 2025](#), May 2025

give an indication of school fees, although some of these reports are several years old.

- Independent schools do not generally receive state funding. Nor are they bound by any conditions of government, such as following the national curriculum. This means such schools are not subject to associated cost pressures
- There is no central register showing whether meals are included in school fees. A sample method analysis shows that most (but not all) independent schools include the costs of meals in their termly fees. Other schools request that parents keep a meals account topped up with funds, which pupils can draw on by swiping a card each day.
- Across London, there are several independent faith schools that are fee-paying. Many of these provide meals for their pupils; this is covered by the fees paid for children to attend these schools.
- This analysis highlights anecdotal evidence that some independent schools—particularly independent faith schools, such as those serving the Charedi community—may charge optional and/or nominal fees; however, there is no central record of fees charged, and not all establishments publicly advertise their fee structures. It also notes that most independent schools, including high fee-paying institutions, independent faith schools, independent special schools, and others such as independent Charedi community schools, offer bursaries and/or scholarships to support pupils from lower socio-economic backgrounds, which may cover part or, in some cases, the full cost of admission.
- Around half of independent schools are charities.⁶ In 2025 the ISC found that two-thirds of their independent schools had charitable status.⁷
- A briefing from 2011 suggested there were 40 independent Jewish schools, educating around 8,000 pupils. Some schools known to be Jewish have not sought designation as faith schools, so this figure may be understated. In 2011 Ofsted inspections suggested around 60 schools had an Orthodox Jewish character. They are concentrated in the Hackney, Haringey and Barnet areas of London; there is a smaller group in Greater Manchester.⁸
- There is no central register specifying whether an independent school is a limited company or charity; or what fees it charges. Financial information on independent schools is available on the Charity Commission's website. This provides information on income and expenditure; employees; and other financial information, such as assets and liabilities. It does not include any information on fees charged, or spending on items such as school meals. Finding this information on every independent school in London would,

⁶ House of Commons Library, [Independent schools: taxation and charitable status](#), October 2024

⁷ Independent Schools Council, [ISC annual census 2025](#), May 2025

⁸ National Secular Society, [Extract from the briefing for the meeting with Rabbi Baumgarten on the curriculum in Jewish orthodox schools](#)

therefore, require looking at each entry on the Charities Commission individually, as well as their website and Ofsted reports. Such work would require hundreds of additional hours of UFSM officer time – this level of resource requirement would be impractical and unreasonable.

3.1 Socio-economic status

- Poverty is higher amongst pupils attending state-funded schools, compared to children in the independent sector. For the overwhelming majority of private school pupils, their parents are in the top 10 per cent income group.⁹
- Although anecdotal evidence exists, there is no reliable data to assess the socio-economic background of the children who attend strictly Orthodox Jewish schools. It is therefore difficult to reliably ascertain the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on Charedi children; and how this differs from other children attending other independent schools (including children from lower socio-economic backgrounds who attend on means-tested scholarships). However, a lack of readily available data does not mean that Charedi families are not affected by the cost-of-living crisis.

3.2 SEND

- Pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) can be educated in mainstream or special schools in England. The special school sector includes NMSS, alternative and independent schools. Most pupils with SEND attend mainstream settings. Of those in state-funded special schools, most have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).
- The number of children with SEND attending independent schools is on the rise and a recent report by the National Audit Office (NAO) found that state special schools are over capacity.¹⁰ In 2024-25 there were 78 independent special schools¹¹ in London (covering all age ranges).¹²
- The main reason an increasing number of pupils may attend independent special schools is because local authorities have an increasing number of pupils on an EHCP; and numbers are greater than the places available in state schools. Some pupils may need specialist support that is not available in state schools.
- London Councils' research shows that use of independent school provision, for young people with an EHCP, has gone up 31 per cent in London over the past five years.¹³ The NAO report estimated that a place at an independent school costs £61,500, compared to £23,900 in a state special school. This is placing a significant financial burden on local authorities.

⁹ Civitas, [Private schooling in Britain: a snapshot](#), February 2023

¹⁰ National Audit Office, [Support for children and young people with special educational needs](#), October 2024

¹¹ Those independent schools with school type 'Other independent special school'.

¹² DfE, [Schools, pupils and their characteristics, academic year 2024/25](#), June 2025

¹³ Mime and London Councils, [Inclusion in London's Schools](#), November 2024

- GLA officers are in regular contact with boroughs. As part of the GLA-led meetings, non-state-funded schools have been discussed; to date, no issues have been raised about representation from the independent special school sector. In 2024-25, GLA officers were made aware of an enquiry about including NMSSs in the policy.
- Following a review, the UFSM scheme was extended to pupils with SEND in NMSSs from the 2025-26 academic year. Under section 337A of the Education Act 1996, NMSSs are schools for children with special educational needs, which the DfE has approved under section 342 of the Education Act. NMSSs are independent of local authority control; and operate on a not-for-profit basis. They are funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) in the same way as academies.
- In 2024-25 there were three NMSSs in London, across three boroughs.¹⁴
- NMSSs are covered by government-funded FSM, because they have an identical duty to provide FSM to eligible pupils under the Non-Maintained Special Schools (England) Regulations 2015. The government's school food standards also cover NMSSs. Including NMSSs in the London UFSM policy (in line with the national government policy) will ensure that equality impacts for pupils attending NMSSs are mitigated. MD3332 contains further detail on including NMSSs in the scope of the Mayor's UFSM scheme.

4. Issues with extending UFSM scheme to independent schools

- The UFSM scheme is intentionally set up in line with national government policy, which only funds the state-sector and NMSSs. If the scheme were extended beyond this scope, it would give rise to considerable complexity in the operation of the scheme. This would also add an extensive burden on the London borough councils – many of whom do not have dedicated teams to deliver FSM or UFSM policies, but rather rely on their existing resource and staffing infrastructures to deliver the UFSM scheme (e.g., generalist officer-level or education posts). Adding this layer of administrative complexity is likely to give rise to extra burdens on officers in boroughs; and prevent the programme from operating as intended, or from meeting the objectives set out in MD3224.¹⁵
- Issues include the following:
 - Much of the practical implementation of the UFSM scheme is done by the boroughs (e.g., handling the school funding, liaising with caterers, etc). This is possible because of the long-established relationship between the boroughs and the state-funded schools in their area. These relationships do not readily exist between the boroughs and non-state-funded independent schools; so a wholly different, more time-consuming and costly method for implementation would need to be devised.

¹⁴ DfE, [Schools, pupils and their characteristics, academic year 2024/25](#), June 2025

¹⁵ GLA, [MD3224 Primary School Universal Free Schools Meal Provision 2024-2025](#), January 2024

- There is no readily available administrative structure for boroughs to implement a scheme, in the non-state-funded independent sector, by which only families in poverty or who are suffering financial hardship could benefit. This would be complex, and take time and resource, to set up.
- There are no national food standards for independent schools; and no existing commissioning or contracts between local authorities and fee-paying schools.
- In most cases, the boroughs are acting as responsible bodies for the GLA's grant funding; and then providing on-grants to the eligible schools in their area. Those schools will then use the on-granted funds to procure catering services. However, in a limited number of cases, some boroughs will use the GLA's grant funding themselves, to procure catering services on behalf of the eligible schools in their area. This means the borough is responsible for defining the delivery detail of this policy in any greater detail than set out in the GLA grant conditions and guiding principles. In Year 1 it was assessed (in consultation with boroughs and London Councils) that asking boroughs to extend beyond state schools would place a significant extra burden on them (and in some cases, would pose a significant risk to delivery of the whole scheme). Discussion with boroughs and London Councils took place before Year 2 of the scheme, and the situation remained the same.

5. Other support available to families affected by the cost-of-living crisis, that will benefit families whose children attend independent (including faith) schools

- The UFSM scheme is just one measure within a range of steps the Mayor is taking to help Londoners deal with the cost-of-living crisis. Many of these are available to all families in London (including those who do not attend a state-funded school).
- In July 2025, the Mayor invested £6 million in the Holiday Hope programme, to provide free holiday activities for children and young people across London. The programme will increase young people's access to youth spaces and positive opportunities, and provide food, during the challenging holiday period.
- The Mayor's Fund for London (MFL) champions opportunities for young Londoners, starting with food as the foundation. Kitchen Social is one of its programmes, ensuring under-resourced young Londoners can access healthy, nutritious meals, fun, and skills building opportunities during all thirteen weeks of the school holidays. Kitchen Social continues to focus on addressing the growing and serious issue of children and young people facing food insecurity and social isolation outside of term time as well as evenings and weekends. Currently, 100 hubs are supported across London boroughs, with leaders from a range of faith groups, youth centres, schools and adventure playgrounds. The charity is a key delivery partner of the

Mayor's Holiday Hope activity alongside the Mayor's Violence Reduction Unit and other partners.

- MFL has been growing its food and essentials social enterprise (MFFL Solutions) into an income-generating solution to meet the need across the city and to generate income to invest back into delivery. This has successfully delivered food boxes, hygiene packs and corporate volunteering experiences, with strong demand from local authorities and existing partners.
- Since 2017, MFL has worked with over 600 community organisations in 32 London boroughs, supporting over 160,000 children and young people by providing over 2.1 million nutritious meals in partnership with the Mayor.
- This support includes funding and opportunities during school holiday time for communities who have protected characteristics such as faith/religious groups and those with no recourse to public funds. Currently three Kitchen Social Hubs provide support to young people from the Charedi and wider Jewish community. Over twenty five seasonal recipes from food recipe kits have been developed including dedicated Kosher meal kits and ingredients, and these are distributed across London during each school holiday.
- For an overview of the charity's impact in 2025, supporting over 62,00 young Londoners, see the latest Impact Report.¹⁶
- The Mayor has put into place a wide range of support to families across London. This includes:
 - warmer homes
 - dedicated advice delivered through Family Hubs
 - championing and promoting the London Living Wage
 - help to navigate the cost-of-living crisis.
- The Mayor is also investing £2.2 million to help low-income families access millions in financial support that they are entitled to.
- Free, independent advice will be delivered, in collaboration with local authorities, across 12 London boroughs and 26 local advice agencies. This will be done through Best Start Family Hubs and children's centres, in partnership with London Citizens Advice and the London Legal Support Trust.
- Advice will be delivered in Best Start Family Hubs and children's centres, and their wider networks, for parents and carers of children aged up to 19 (or up to 25 for those with SEND).
- The Mayor and his officials are committed to continuing to work with local communities (including the Charedi community) to look at further ways to minimise the impact of the ongoing cost-of-living crisis.

¹⁶ Mayor's Fund for London, [Impact Report 2025](#), 2026

6. Data considerations

- All existing data of independent schools (as defined by the 'types of school' guidance published by the DfE) is considered in this document.¹⁷
- Comprehensive data on the financial standing of the independent school sector is limited.
- This analysis of independent schools takes into account a range of information (as described elsewhere in this paper), including the DfE datasets, to assess the potential impacts of UFSM on fee-paying independent schools.
- There are several types of independent schools in London: some have charitable status, others are faith-specific, and some cater to special needs.
- These types of independent schools cannot be isolated in the DfE datasets. Therefore, this analysis – unless explicitly mentioned – covers the total level of all fee-paying independent schools in London.
- Only establishments that operate within regulation have been considered in this analysis. Any unregulated schools would not be within scope for this policy. This is because it is against the law to run an independent school that is not registered with the DfE.
- The ISC Census and Annual Report 2025 is a comprehensive data source, illustrating where independent schools sit in the UK's education landscape.¹⁸ It is based on a survey carried out by all 1,423 UK schools belonging to the constituent associations of the ISC.
- The Charity Commission's website contains financial information on independent schools that are charities. This provides information on income and expenditure; employees; and other financial information such as assets and liabilities. It does not include any information on fees charged, or spending on items such as school meals.
- This information and assessment of the independent sector will continue to be monitored by the GLA throughout Year 2 of the scheme.

¹⁷ DfE, [Types of school: private schools](#), accessed April 2026

¹⁸ ISC, [Census and Annual Report](#), 2025

Annex 1 – Further background

Mayor’s UFSM Scheme

- In 2023-24 the Mayor provided funding of £130 million to give FSM to pupils in state-funded primary schools (including state-funded schools; schools for those with SEND; and AP schools) for the next academic year. In January 2024, he announced he would be extending the scheme for a further academic year, at a cost of £140m. He has since confirmed that he will make the scheme permanent for as long as he is the Mayor of London.
- The Mayor’s UFSM scheme covers state-funded primary schools, pupil referral units and special schools. This includes faith schools (but not independent schools) and, from September 2025, NMSSs.
- From September 2026, national FSM eligibility will expand to include all children in households receiving Universal Credit. This change does not affect delivery of the Mayor’s UFSM scheme for London’s state-funded primary schools; but it has wider implications for funding and schools’ delivery.

State versus independent pupils: longitudinal outcomes

- Analysis by the Office for National Statistics found that government-funded FSM pupils earned less than their peers. Half of FSM recipients went on to earn £17k or less; but the top-earning 10 per cent of former independent school pupils were earning £71k or more at age 30. This remains the case even when matching educational level and secondary school attainment. The earning gap between a total of 93 independent school students and FSM students was also shown to widen as they got older. Part of this overall gap in lower earnings is because people from income-deprived backgrounds are significantly less likely to continue to higher education.¹⁹

Charitable status in independent schools

- As educational institutions, independent schools can take charitable status. The Charities Act 2011 defines a charity as an institution that is established for charitable purposes only; and is subject to the jurisdiction of the High Court. The Charities Act 2011 lists descriptions of a charitable purpose, and states it must be for public benefit.
- Advancing education is one description of a charitable purpose; and so, independent schools are capable of being charities. Educational charities, like all other charities, must demonstrate they are for the public benefit. There is no statutory definition of what this means.
- The DfE does not regulate the charitable status of independent schools. However, in 2022, the government said around half of independent schools in England were registered as charities.

¹⁹ Impact on Urban Health, [Investing in Children’s Future: A Cost Benefit Analysis of Free School Meal Provision Expansion](#), October 2022

- Most recently, the ISC's 2025 School Census found that two-thirds of its member schools across the UK had charitable status.²⁰ However, not all independent schools are affiliated with the ISC.
- Charitable status has associated advantages, including relief from business rates.

Scholarships and bursaries in high fee-paying independent schools

- According to the ISC Annual Census, over a third of all pupils in their independent schools receive help with their fees.²¹
- Almost £550m of fee assistance from schools is means-tested, of which over £510m is in the form of means-tested bursaries.²²

Jewish children in Jewish schools

- The Institute for Jewish Policy Research issued a statistical bulletin for 2018-19 to 2020-21. This found that, in 2020-21, there were 12,284 Jewish pupils in mainstream Jewish schools in London; and 13,960 Jewish pupils in strictly Orthodox Jewish schools.²³

Muslim children in Islamic or Muslim schools

- There are only a few Islamic or Muslim schools in London; for these, the data collected and published by the DfE does not distinguish between different types.

²⁰ ISC, [Census and Annual Report](#), 2025

²¹ ISC, [Census and Annual Report](#), 2025

²² ISC, [Census and Annual Report](#), 2025

²³ Institute for Jewish Policy Research, [Numbers of Jewish children in Jewish schools, 2018/19 to 2020/21](#), 8 December 2021

Annex 2 – Data analysis and methodology

The following four data sources have been reviewed to inform this assessment. As noted in this paper, data on the independent/private school sector is limited.

1. DfE data

This provides a count of all independent schools, and their pupil numbers; and breakdown by borough and faith/non-faith category. There is no further breakdown to determine whether these schools are mainstream private; private faith; or neither (such as those serving the Charedi community). The data on 'religious character' of schools is limited. The DfE's breakdown extends only to 'Jewish' and 'other Jewish faith'; no further breakdown is available.

2. Ofsted data

The GLA has reviewed five years' worth of Ofsted data on school inspections for private schools.

Whilst this data does list the actual school names and their unique reference number, there are some key gaps/caveats – namely, the following:

- Not all private schools are inspected in the London data. A count of 212 schools show that they were inspected between September 2023 and April 2024
- Ofsted data does not give any further breakdown (including details of fees).

3. ISC

The ISC has a directory of independent schools in London by borough; and provides their pupil numbers, denomination, and termly fees.²⁴ However:

- not every independent school is a member of ISC (as many as 50 per cent of schools may not be part of ISC)
- there is no readily accessible data to allow further analysis.

4. Independent school search service

SchoolSearch is an online directory of independent schools in the UK, with an age breakdown. This dataset is not complete, and does not have any accessible data to interrogate.

²⁴ ISC, [Independent schools in London Area](#), accessed May 2026

Data overview

- Analysis of the independent schools sector in London primarily uses DfE datasets, based on information for the January 2024-25 School Census (henceforth, this will be referred to simply as DfE data).²⁵
- The DfE data breaks down independent schools in London only by certain protected characteristics – notably the age of their pupils, and the school’s religious character (see **Figure 1 in Annex 2**).

Gaps and limitations

- Unlike state schools, the DfE data does not include the rates of FSM eligibility for independent schools.
- Data on uptake rates for these pupils is not available, unlike data for those in state-funded primary schools.
- The DfE data for independent schools is also categorised by the age of pupils. **Annex 2, Figure 1**, shows data for pupils aged 7-11. Nevertheless, this does not entirely correspond to KS2 pupils in Years 3-6; this represents another limitation.
- Income profiles of the households to which the pupils in independent schools belong are also missing. It is therefore not possible to ascertain whether these pupils are necessarily more or less likely to be eligible for government-funded FSM.
- Data is also lacking for catering costs at independent schools, which are likely to differ from those at state-funded primary schools. Moreover, independent faith-based schools could have different costs themselves, due to any food preparation requirements relating to faith.
- There is no available data on the proportion of pupils with religious beliefs attending multi-faith independent schools. This is also the case for the school sector as a whole.
- There are some unregistered schools in London. Of all the unregistered schools across England, investigated by Ofsted, 23 per cent are in London. AP is the most common type of unregistered school type, accounting for 28 per cent. General education providers account for 26 per cent of unregistered schools; and places of religious instruction account for 21 per cent.²⁶

²⁵ DfE, [Schools, pupils and their characteristics, academic year 2024/25](#), June 2025

²⁶ DfE, [Unregistered schools management information](#), October 2025

GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

Annex 2, Figure 1: The number of pupils aged 7-11 attending independent schools in London, broken down by borough and by the school's religious denomination, 2024-25²⁷

This table shows the number of pupils aged 7-11 attending independent schools in each local authority (LA), during the 2024-25 academic year. It is further broken down by religious denomination.

| LA | Anglican | Church of England | Free Church | Islamic | Jewish | Methodist | Muslim | No religious character | Other Christian faith | Other Jewish faith | Roman Catholic | Total |
|------------------------|----------|-------------------|-------------|---------|--------|-----------|--------|------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|----------------|-------|
| Barking and Dagenham | | | | | | | | 49 | | | | 49 |
| Barnet | | | | 72 | 29 | | | 2166 | | 234 | | 2501 |
| Bexley | | 153 | | | | | | 196 | | | | 349 |
| Brent | | | | 28 | | | | 549 | | | | 577 |
| Bromley | | | 398 | | | 182 | | 896 | 174 | | 64 | 1714 |
| Camden | | 353 | | | | | | 2858 | | | 391 | 3602 |
| City of London | | 159 | | | | | | 394 | | | | 553 |
| Croydon | | 75 | | | | | | 1683 | | | 68 | 1826 |
| Ealing | | | | | | | | 975 | | | 327 | 1302 |
| Enfield | | | | | | | | 545 | | | 42 | 587 |
| Greenwich | | | | | | | | 1154 | | | | 1154 |
| Hackney | | | | 27 | 353 | | | 2551 | | 1524 | | 4455 |
| Hammersmith and Fulham | | 120 | | 37 | | | | 1992 | | | | 2149 |
| Haringey | | | | | | | | 521 | 655 | | | 1176 |
| Harrow | | 133 | | | | | | 1035 | | | | 1168 |
| Havering | | | | | | | | 166 | 92 | | | 258 |
| Hillingdon | | | | 20 | | | | 1469 | | | | 1489 |
| Hounslow | | | | | | | | 776 | | | | 776 |
| Islington | | | | | | | | 252 | | | | 252 |

²⁷ DfE, [Schools, pupils and their characteristics, academic year 2024/25](#), June 2025

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------------------------|-----------|-------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| Kensington and Chelsea | | 148 | | | | | | 3681 | | | 64 | 3893 |
| Kingston upon Thames | | | | | | | | 961 | 498 | | | 1459 |
| Lambeth | | | | | | | | 767 | | | | 767 |
| Lewisham | | 374 | | | | | | 334 | | | | 708 |
| Merton | | 427 | | | | | | 965 | | | 196 | 1588 |
| Newham | | | | | | | 69 | 333 | 20 | | | 422 |
| Redbridge | | 129 | | | | | 62 | 1095 | | | 43 | 1329 |
| Richmond upon Thames | | 691 | | | | | | 2617 | 165 | | 100 | 3573 |
| Southwark | | | | | | | | 1495 | 59 | | | 1554 |
| Sutton | | | | | | | | 631 | | | | 631 |
| Tower Hamlets | | | | | | | | 799 | | | | 799 |
| Waltham Forest | | 423 | | 94 | | | 25 | 79 | | | | 621 |
| Wandsworth | | | | 25 | | | | 3407 | 616 | | | 4048 |
| Westminster | 23 | 389 | | | | | | 2090 | | | 243 | 2745 |
| Total | 23 | 3574 | 398 | 303 | 382 | 182 | 156 | 39481 | 2279 | 1758 | 1538 | 50074 |

Annex 2, Figure 2: The number of independent schools in London that have pupils aged 7-11, broken down by borough and by the school's religious denomination, 2024-25²⁸

This table shows the number schools which have pupils in the 7-11 age range in each borough during the 2024-25 academic year. It is further broken down by what religious denomination that independent school is listed as.

| LA | Anglican | Church of England | Free Church | Islamic | Jewish | Methodist | Muslim | No religious character | Other Christian faith | Other Jewish faith | Roman Catholic | Total |
|------------------------|----------|-------------------|-------------|---------|--------|-----------|--------|------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|----------------|-------|
| Barking and Dagenham | | | | | | | | 4 | | | | 4 |
| Barnet | | | | 1 | 1 | | | 26 | | 3 | | 31 |
| Bexley | | 1 | | | | | | 4 | | | | 5 |
| Brent | | | | 2 | | | | 10 | | | | 12 |
| Bromley | | | 1 | | | 1 | | 10 | 1 | | 1 | 14 |
| Camden | | 2 | | | | | | 23 | | | 3 | 28 |
| City of London | | 1 | | | | | | 3 | | | | 4 |
| Croydon | | 1 | | | | | | 20 | | | 1 | 22 |
| Ealing | | | | | | | | 15 | | | 1 | 16 |
| Enfield | | | | | | | | 10 | | | 1 | 11 |
| Greenwich | | | | | | | | 10 | | | | 10 |
| Hackney | | | | 1 | 1 | | | 21 | | 7 | | 30 |
| Hammersmith and Fulham | | 1 | | 1 | | | | 15 | | | | 17 |
| Haringey | | | | | | | | 6 | 2 | | | 8 |
| Harrow | | 1 | | | | | | 9 | | | | 10 |
| Havering | | | | | | | | 3 | 1 | | | 4 |
| Hillingdon | | | | 1 | | | | 9 | | | | 10 |

²⁸ DfE, [Schools, pupils and their characteristics, academic year 2024/25](#), June 2025

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------------------------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| Hounslow | | | | | | | | 13 | | | | 13 |
| Islington | | | | | | | | 6 | | | | 6 |
| Kensington and Chelsea | | 1 | | | | | | 24 | | | 2 | 27 |
| Kingston upon Thames | | | | | | | | 10 | 1 | | | 11 |
| Lambeth | | | | | | | | 7 | | | | 7 |
| Lewisham | | 1 | | | | | | 5 | | | | 6 |
| Merton | | 1 | | | | | | 10 | | | 1 | 12 |
| Newham | | | | | | | 1 | 4 | 1 | | | 6 |
| Redbridge | | 1 | | | | | 1 | 9 | | | 1 | 12 |
| Richmond upon Thames | | 2 | | | | | | 18 | 1 | | 1 | 22 |
| Southwark | | | | | | | | 8 | 1 | | | 9 |
| Sutton | | | | | | | | 7 | | | | 7 |
| Tower Hamlets | | | | | | | | 14 | | | | 14 |
| Waltham Forest | | 1 | | 1 | | | 1 | 1 | | | | 4 |
| Wandsworth | | | | 1 | | | | 23 | 5 | | | 29 |
| Westminster | 1 | 3 | | | | | | 22 | | | 2 | 28 |
| Total | 1 | 17 | 1 | 8 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 379 | 13 | 10 | 14 | 449 |

GREATERLONDONAUTHORITY

Annex 3: Independent school sector in England – technical detail

Background

1. An 'independent school' is defined by the DfE as a school that is either:

- not maintained by a local authority
- not an NMSS

and at which full-time education is provided for either:

- five or more pupils of compulsory school age
- at least one pupil of compulsory school age, who either:
 - is looked after by a local authority (within the meaning of section 22 of the Children Act 1989)
 - has a statement of special educational needs, or an EHCP.

Regulatory framework

2. The DfE, through the Secretary of State, acts as the regulator for independent schools in England. The DfE:

- registers independent schools
- sets independent school standards that those schools must meet
- commissions inspections against those standards
- acts where schools fail to meet the standards.

3. Independent schools in England must be registered by the Secretary of State for Education (the independent schools regulator) before operating. It is a criminal offence to operate an independent school that is not registered. If convicted, a person could be subject to an unlimited fine and/or imprisonment for up to six months.

4. Independent schools, including independent faith schools, do not have to teach the national curriculum. However, they must meet minimum standards set out in regulations. These include standards relating to the quality of the curriculum, which must:

- be broad and balanced
- allow children to make progress
- include lessons in written and spoken English.

Unregistered schools in England and London

5. An unregistered school is an educational establishment that meets the legal definition of a school that is independent (private), but is not registered with the DfE. It is against the law to run an independent school that is not registered with the DfE (the regulating body for this kind of school).
6. In 2019, Ofsted estimated that as many as 6,000 children in London are being educated in unregistered school settings.²⁹
7. Almost a quarter of the unregistered schools Ofsted inspected (23 per cent) were in London, with the rest evenly spread across the country. A fifth (21 per cent) were faith schools – including 36 Islamic or Muslim schools, 18 Jewish schools and 12 Christian schools.
8. Further robust data on unregistered schools is lacking. However, a briefing on Jewish independent schools identifies a significant problem with Orthodox Jewish boys leaving the regulated school system at 13, and being educated in unregistered 'yeshivas'. About 1,000 boys aged 13-16 in Hackney alone are thought to be 'missing', in this sense.³⁰

²⁹ Ofsted, [Unregistered school management information](#), May 2024

³⁰ National Secular Society, [Extract from the briefing for the meeting with Rabbi Baumgarten on the curriculum in Jewish orthodox schools](#)