

DfE privacy notice – The Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) 2027 (for parents)

This privacy notice explains how Department for Education (DfE) uses (processes) any personal data you give to us, or any that we may collect about you for the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) in 2027. This Privacy Notice should be read alongside [Privacy information: members of the public - GOV.UK](#) and this has further information on the standards you can expect when we collect, hold or use your personal information.

For the purpose of data protection legislation, the [DfE is the data controller for personal data](#) processed by DfE. DfE and IEA are the joint data controllers for the personal data processed in England as part of TIMSS 2027 and NFER are our data processors.

The TIMSS 2027 study is organised by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) and is being carried out by National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) who have been contracted by the Department for Education (DfE) to deliver the project in England.

NFER receive your and your child's personal data and are processing it on behalf of DfE and IEA so that England can participate in the TIMSS 2027 study. Studies such as TIMSS show us how education in England compares to that in other countries around the world; what we are good at, and where we can do better. By asking about home, school and what they think about the subjects they study and their lessons, we can understand different things about the ways that people learn and find ways to make schools better for everyone.

More information about the TIMSS study is available from www.nfer.ac.uk/timss27England.

Purpose and lawful basis for processing

The lawful basis we rely on for this processing of your personal data is Public Task, under article 6(1)(e) of the UK GDPR. This allows us to process personal data when this is necessary to do our work as a government department.

When we use your special category data it is because we have a substantial public interest under article 9(2)(g) of UK GDPR.

Full details about how we process special category data are given in the [DfE appropriate policy document](#).

Data we collect

We collect and use the following personal information:

From your child:

- Your child's name, gender, date of birth and unique pupil number (UPN)
- information on what your child has learnt about maths and science from their answers to the TIMSS assessment questions
- whether your child was born in a UK country or not and how often they speak English at home
- what your child thinks about maths and science, their experiences of school and their availability to resources at home (such as books). We also collect information on activities outside of school and their experiences related to environmental sustainability and financial literacy.

We invite parents of children in Year 5 to complete a short questionnaire. In this we collect:

- how often your child speaks English at home, information about your child's early learning experiences, what you do together at home, availability of resources at home (such as books) and your views about things related to your child's school from your answers to the TIMSS home questionnaire
- whether you were born in a UK country or not, highest qualification and job type from your answers to the TIMSS home questionnaire

We also collect and use details about:

- pupils in receipt of pupil premium

We collect and use special category data, this includes details about:

- racial or ethnic origin
- health or disability - pupils with special educational needs and disability (SEND)

Full details about how we process special category data are given in the [DfE appropriate policy document](#).

What we do with your data

We put the information we collect from your child, including their test results and their answers to questions about home and school with other information which we already have. This includes information in the national pupil database provided to us by your child's school such as their marks in national curriculum tests. Some of the information we ask for, or which we already have and will use in TIMSS is called special category personal data.

For parents of Year 5 pupils, your questionnaire responses will be linked to

your child's data. No names of parents or children are ever recorded in the final dataset and you can choose whether or not you wish to respond to any question.

There is no questionnaire for parents of pupils in Year 9.

All this information is analysed and reported on, to help us explore how factors such as school context, teaching practices, and pupil characteristics are linked to achievement in mathematics and science across countries around the world.

Previous TIMSS reports that illustrate how the data is used can be viewed at [International comparisons of education - GOV.UK](#).

Who we share your data with

We sometimes need to make personal data available to other organisations.

We will only share your personal data with others where it is lawful, secure and ethical to do so. For this project:

- We are employing NFER to process personal data on our behalf. After your child has participated in the TIMSS study, NFER will pseudonymise their personal data (i.e. they will remove their name and anything else which could be used to identify them or their school and replace it with a code) and they will send it to organisations in other countries who are part of the international consortium of organisations that run TIMSS (IEA and their partners). They will put the pseudonymised data with that from the other (approximately 70 countries) taking part in TIMSS.
- We may share your child's data including the information we collect in TIMSS, and the information from the national pupil database with other people and organisations who want to use it for research. The data will be shared in pseudonymised format. This data sharing is lawful because the law allows us to collect, and to share personal information for the purposes of research and statistical analysis that is in the public interest pursuant to Regulation 3(6) of the Education (Individual Pupil Information) (Prescribed Persons) (England) Regulations 2009.

How long we will keep your personal data

We only keep your personal information for as long as we need it. We decide how long to keep your information based on what we need and also what the law says. All data is securely and permanently deleted at the end of the retention period. We call this our retention and disposal schedule.

- DfE keep your personal information for 20 years unless it needs to be retained for longer. Under Data Protection legislation, and in compliance with the relevant data processing conditions, personal data can be kept for longer periods of time when processed purely for archiving purposes in the public interest, scientific or historical

research, and statistical purposes.

- NFER, our data processor, retains international survey data for 12 months after the release of the International and National reports (released in December 2028). NFER expect to delete in December 2029.

Storing personal data outside the UK

When DfE stores personal data outside the UK, we will make sure we comply with the data protection law and take additional steps to keep your personal data safe, which can include additional technical/security arrangements, contractual agreements and data sharing agreements.

NFER (on our behalf) will send the data from your child's responses to the TIMSS 2027 study to IEA and their contractors. The data will be pseudonymised by removing names and anything else which could be used to identify them or their school and replace this with a code prior to release.

TIMSS is directed by the International Study Centre (ISC) based at Boston College, USA, and most of the data analysis occurs there. The transfer of the data to the USA, as a third country, relies on Standard Contractual Clauses and is safeguarded by appropriate and suitable technical and organisational measures.

Data processors

A data processor is an organisation that processes your information on DfE's behalf. DfE uses a data processor for the following activities:

- NFER processes your data on behalf of DfE and IEA so that England can participate in the TIMSS 2027 study.

Your rights

We are relying on public task for this processing, this means you have the right to:

- be informed about the collection and use of your personal data – this is called the 'right to be informed'
- ask us for copies of the personal information we have about you – this is called the 'right of access', also known as a subject access request (SAR), data subject access request (DSAR) or right of access request (RAR)
- ask us to change any information you think is not accurate or complete – this is called the 'right to rectification'
- ask us to stop using your information – this is called the 'right to restriction of processing'
- object to us processing your information, in certain circumstances
- [complain to the Information Commissioner's Office \(ICO\)](#) if you feel we have not used your information in the right way

How to make a subject access request (SAR)

See [Requesting your personal information](#) for more on what you're entitled to ask us, or any of our executive agencies, and your rights about how your information is collected and used.

There are legitimate reasons why we may refuse your information rights request, which depend on why we are processing it.

How to contact us and how to make a complaint

If you would like more information about how we process your personal data or your data protection rights, you can contact our Data Protection Officer.

You can do this in the following ways:

- Using our secure [online contact form](#)
- Or in writing to:

Data Protection Officer
Department for Education
2 St Paul's Place
125 Norfolk Street
Sheffield
S1 2FJ

If you have any concerns about our use of your personal information, you can make a complaint to the Data Protection Officer at:

Department for Education
2 St Paul's Place
125 Norfolk Street
Sheffield
S1 2FJ

You can also complain to the ICO if you are unhappy with how we have used your data by writing to:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

Helpline number: 0303 123 1113

ICO website: <https://www.ico.org.uk>

Changes to this privacy notice

We may change this privacy notice and we encourage you to check this privacy notice from time to time.

Date last updated: 17 September 2026