

School Survey on Mixed-Age Classes

Privacy Notice for School Staff

1 Why are we collecting this data?

The Nuffield Foundation has commissioned the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), in partnership with researchers currently at University of Nottingham (who will move to Manchester Metropolitan University in September 2026) to conduct a piece of research exploring the extent and impact of mixed-age teaching (or mixed age classes) in mainstream primary schools in England.

The survey phase of the research aims to help us understand how schools are responding to changing pupil numbers, in particular the opportunities and challenges associated with mixed-age classes. The results will be used to develop practical recommendations for practitioners on why, when, and how to adopt mixed-age teaching along with advice on key considerations, barriers and opportunities. It will also provide evidence to help national and local policymakers provide more targeted funding, support, advice and professional development for schools.

NFER and the University of Nottingham are currently joint data controllers for the project. NFER is leading the survey stage and will make decisions about how and what personal data about school staff is used for the research and will process data to deliver the project. The University of Nottingham (Manchester Metropolitan University once the researchers move) is the data controller for the interview, focus group and observation stage and the associated privacy notice can be found [here](#).

This privacy notice covers staff data collected through the survey for the purpose of this research.

2 What is the legal basis for processing activities?

To process this personal data, the legal basis for processing this data is:

Article 6 (1) (f): processing is necessary for the purposes of the legitimate interests pursued by the controller or by a third party, except where such interests are overridden by the interests or fundamental rights and freedoms of the data subject which require protection of personal data, in particular where the data subject is a child.

A legitimate interest assessment has been undertaken. It demonstrates that it is within NFER's interests in undertaking this research to collect and analyse data on schools' use of mixed-age teaching approaches. The research fulfils one of NFER's core business purposes (undertaking research, evaluation, and information activities). It has broader societal benefits because - despite widespread use of multi-grade classes - there is a lack of high-quality recent research on multi-grade teaching and its impact. The research will investigate the extent, drivers, and impact of multi-grade teaching in England's mainstream primary schools to fill this evidence gap, thereby informing education policy and practice. The research cannot be done without processing personal data, but processing does not override the data subject's interests.

3 How will personal data be obtained?

We will use publicly available contact details to approach schools to participate in the survey. Additional personal data will be collected directly from participating schools through online surveys administered using Tivian.

4 What personal data is being collected for this project?

The following personal data will be collected from surveyed school staff:

- Job role/title
- Name
- Email address

Survey participants will be offered a £10 voucher to thank them for their time completing the survey. Their name and email address will be collected if they accept this offer for the purposes of sending them the voucher.

Survey participants will also be asked if they are happy to be contacted by NFER or our partners at University of Nottingham/Manchester Metropolitan University for further research on topics related to mixed-age classes and demographic change, including (for some schools) an invitation from University of Nottingham/Manchester Metropolitan University researchers to participate in case studies on mixed age classes. If participants say they are happy to be contacted for these purposes, then their name and email address will be collected to enable this contact.

The survey will collect information from school staff about the delivery of mixed-age classes in their primary schools, including the structure of classes in a school and views on the opportunities and challenges of using mixed-age teaching. Respondents will also be asked about how their schools are responding to falling pupil numbers. Finally, there are some optional, open questions for respondents to share their views on mixed-age teaching or falling pupil numbers where they do not feel these views were captured by the rest of the survey.

5 Who will personal data be shared with?

NFER shares personal data with the following data processors to deliver this research:

Tivian's online survey tool will be used to collect expressions of interest and data for the online survey. Tivian's privacy notice is available [here](#).

NFER intends to share an anonymous dataset of survey responses with their research partners, who will be working at University of Nottingham/Manchester Metropolitan University by then. All direct and indirect identifiers will be removed from this data to ensure it is fully anonymous and no respondents can be identified from it.

No other personal data will be shared with University of Nottingham/Manchester Metropolitan University, unless you agree to be contacted about future research opportunities. If you agree to be contacted about future research opportunities then we may share your name and email address, as provided, with our partners, so they can contact you about participating in school case studies. It will not be possible for researchers at University

of Nottingham/Manchester Metropolitan University to link this information to your survey responses.

To further our understanding of mixed-age classes and how this type of provision relates to pupils' outcomes, we will request pupil-level data from the NPD for all schools responding to the survey. This is subject to approval from the Department for Education. To achieve this, we will share the survey data with the Department for Education and the Office for National Statistics, who would host the matched data on their Secure Research Service. This data would contain an identifier of each respondent's school, for matching, but no pupils or teachers would be identifiable through this work.

6 Is personal data being transferred outside of the UK?

NFER only stores personal data in the UK.

The online survey data collected via Tivian stores survey responses in Azure and AWS data centre infrastructure in the European Union.

7 How long will personal data be retained?

All other personal data held by NFER will be deleted within four months of publication of the final report. The report is expected to be published in summer 2027. For respondents who agree to be contacted for further research purposes, data will be retained for up to one year.

8 Can I stop my personal data being used?

NFER handles personal data in accordance with the rights given to individuals under data protection legislation. Under certain circumstances data subjects have the right:

- to request access to information that is held about them (a data subject access request).
- to have personal data rectified if it is inaccurate or incomplete.
- to request the deletion or removal of personal data where there is no compelling reason for its continued processing.
- to restrict processing of personal data (for example, permitting its storage but no further processing).
- to object to processing
- to data portability (allows data subjects to obtain and reuse their personal data across different services)
- not to be subject to decisions based purely on automated processing where it produces a legal or similarly significant effect.

Although we value your participation you can stop completing and withdraw from the survey at any time. Unless otherwise instructed, we will use any data and survey responses we have collected up to that point in our analysis.

Please note that withdrawing your data will not be possible once analysis has commenced (this will be the day after the closing date of the survey). If you wish to withdraw your data or correct errors in it, please contact: mixedageresearch@nfer.ac.uk

To exercise any of these rights, please contact NFER's Compliance Officer at compliance@nfer.ac.uk

You can read further information about your data protection rights at the [Information Commissioner's Office \(ICO\)](#).

9 Who can I contact about this project?

NFER is responsible for the day-to-day management of the research. Please contact the research team at: mixedageresearch@nfer.ac.uk

If you have any questions about the way NFER processes personal data, please contact the Compliance Officer using the email address provided above, or you can make a complaint as outlined in our [Complaints Policy](#).

After we have responded, if you remain dissatisfied, you have the right to raise a complaint about data protection issues with the Information Commissioner's Office, the body responsible for enforcing data protection legislation in the UK, at <https://ico.org.uk/concerns/>

Further information on this project can be found [here](#).

10 Updates

We keep this privacy notice under review to make sure it is up to date and accurate. Any changes will be noted. The date when this privacy notice was last updated is shown in the footer at the bottom of this document.