

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

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 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 headteachers and teachers about their school, teaching strategies and the school's learning environment, we can understand different things about the factors that affect learning 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:

- We use headteachers' names to personalise your school study materials, and the headteacher and the school co-ordinator's email address to correspond with you throughout the project
- We may also use contact details of other school staff in connection with the project e.g. IT support staff emails

We collect contextual information on your school from your answers to the TIMSS background questionnaires. In this we collect:

From teachers (teacher questionnaire)

- About you: how you feel about being a teacher, your use of AI, time spent teaching, gender, age range, highest level of formal education, area of study/specialism
- About school/teaching: School environment, pedagogical practice, classroom environment, computer/technology use in lessons, curricula, challenges in teaching

From headteachers (school questionnaire)

- About you: time spent as a Headteacher, years of teaching experience and qualifications
- About school: school characteristics, teaching time, school resources and use of technology, challenges to providing teaching, school climate, family engagement, school emphasis on environmental sustainability, school discipline and safety and pupils' skills on entry

What we do with your data

The answers to the background questionnaire questions help us to understand how the things you tell us about affect the ways that people learn. We do not publish your answers to any question, and you and your school cannot be identified from any report or publication.

We may put the information we collect from you with other information which we already have e.g. information in the national pupil database.

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](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/international-comparisons-of-education).

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 you have participated in the TIMSS study, NFER will pseudonymise your 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 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