

P I S A 2 0 0 6

PISA

OECD Programme for International Student Assessment

Information
for *Parents*

What is PISA?

PISA (which stands for **P**rogramme for **I**nternational **S**tudent **A**ssessment) is a test of the skills and knowledge of students aged 15 and 16. It is a project of the **O**rganisation for **E**conomic **C**o-operation and **D**evelopment (OECD) and takes place every three years in countries all around the world. In Ireland, PISA is implemented by the Department of Education and Science, and the Educational Research Centre.

The countries involved work together to produce a test for students that is relevant and interesting to them and which can be used to compare achievements across different countries. PISA tests real-life knowledge rather than knowledge of school subjects.

Each time PISA is carried out, reading, mathematics and science are tested. In 2006, there will be a particular emphasis on science. However, students do not need to be studying science to take part. This is because PISA is not related to a school science syllabus. Instead, it asks about science in real-life situations that should be familiar to students (such as newspaper articles).

Which countries are in PISA 2006?

It is expected that 55 countries will participate in PISA 2006. In addition to Ireland, participating countries include Australia, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Japan, Korea, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States.

How were students selected to participate in PISA?

In Ireland, 165 post-primary schools have been randomly selected to take part in PISA 2006. Then, within each selected school, up to 35 students have been selected at random from all those in the school who were born in 1990. Over 4,500 Irish students will take part in PISA 2006.

What are selected students asked to do?

Students will be tested in their schools in March, 2006. Your son or daughter will be asked to complete the following:

- a written test that includes questions in science, mathematics and reading.
- a questionnaire that asks students' about their school backgrounds, their attitudes to science, how they learn, their educational aspirations, and their familiarity with computers.

All information collected in PISA will be dealt with confidentially. It will not be possible to identify either schools or students as codes/numbers will be used throughout. The results will be used to report the characteristics of large groups of schools and students (for example, the achievements of girls compared to boys), but nothing will be revealed about individual schools or students.

Why should my son/daughter take part in PISA?

PISA provides important information on the relative strengths and weaknesses of the Irish education system, and allows us to compare our system to those of other countries. PISA is particularly useful because it helps us to identify ways in which our educational system can be improved. It is very important that as many students as possible take part so that we can be sure that the results are really representative of students in Ireland, and that reliable conclusions can be drawn from them.

Where can I find out more?

For more information, you can visit:

- the Irish PISA Website: www.erc.ie/pisa
- the International PISA Website: www.pisa.oecd.org

Your child's school will be able to provide you with information on arrangements that have been made for the administration of PISA in the school.

If you have questions about PISA, please contact Eemer Eivers or Gerry Shiel at the Educational Research Centre:
Tel: (01) 837 3789 or Email: pisa@erc.ie



Educational Research Centre

Foras Taighde ar Oideachas