



Information for Schools

PISA 2018 Field Trial – March 2017

OECD Programme for International Student Assessment

What is PISA?

The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is a project of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). *About 80 countries take part*, making PISA the largest study of its kind. PISA assesses the skills and knowledge of 15- and 16-year-olds in three areas – *reading literacy, science, and mathematics* – every three years. The first cycle of PISA took place in 2000, and in 2018, reading literacy will be the main focus.

In the PISA 2018 Field Trial, which takes place in March 2017, *about 2,000 students in 40 schools in Ireland will be assessed*. In the Main Study, approximately 6,000 students in 165 schools will be assessed during March and April 2018.

Please note that all data collected for PISA 2018 will be stored securely and kept confidential within the ERC. No information given by Schools (from principals, teachers, pupils or parents) is available or is accessed by the Department of Education and Skills.

How is PISA carried out?

Internationally, PISA is implemented on behalf of the OECD by an international consortium of institutions. The lead institution is the Educational Testing Service (ETS) in the USA. Key decisions are made by the PISA Governing Board. Each OECD country has a voting representative on this Board.

PISA is managed on a day-to-day basis by the PISA National Project Manager and other staff from the National Centre in each country. In Ireland, the Educational Research Centre (ERC) is the National Centre. The ERC is a statutory body under Section 54 of the Education Act (1998) which carries out independent research on all levels of the Irish education system and implements PISA on behalf of the Department of Education and Skills (DES).

A National Advisory Committee oversees the implementation of PISA in Ireland, and advises on aspects of the assessment, survey administration, and reporting of results.

What is involved?

In Ireland, 40 schools have been sampled to take part in the Field Trial in March 2017. Test Administrators, working with support staff (***not staff in the schools***) will administer PISA. All PISA Test Administrators are trained by the ERC.

Students will be assessed in their schools on an agreed date in March 2017. About 60% of PISA students are in junior cycle (mostly Third years), while the remainder are in Transition year and Fifth year. In each school, ***the 60 students who have been selected to take part will be assigned to one of three sessions (20 in each session)*** and asked to complete the following tasks:

- PISA computer-based test of reading literacy, science and mathematics (2 hours);
- Computer-based questionnaires (70 minutes).

What is involved for your school?

Nominating a person as School Contact:

The ERC will need to liaise with schools to gather information on eligible students and to prepare for the testing date. Therefore a contact person for the study, known as the *School Contact*, will need to be identified in each selected school. The School Contact can be a member of staff such as a School Principal, Deputy-Principal, subject teacher, resource teacher or career guidance teacher.

School Contacts' Role:

After the test date is confirmed with each School Principal in early December, the School Contact will take over all communications with the ERC and PISA Test Administrators.

Tasks that the School Contact will be asked to carry out include:

- *Reviewing* a list of all students in the school who were born in 2001. This will involve checking that each student on the list is still present in the school and adding information for any newly-enrolled eligible students. The ERC will send the student list to participating schools in January 2017.
- *Identifying* students who will not be eligible to participate in the assessment (e.g. due to Special Educational Needs, or lack of familiarity with the language of instruction). The ERC will send instructions on student eligibility to participating schools in January 2017.
- *Notifying* staff, students and parents about the assessment. In February 2017 the ERC will provide a pack for each participating student and their parents, which will include a letter to parents, a parent information sheet, an information sheet for students, and a parent questionnaire.
- *Assisting* the Test Administrator on the morning of the assessment. It is expected that the School Contact will be available for the first hour of the assessment day to direct the Test Administrators and Technical Support Personnel to the assessment rooms, to assist with the assignment of students to the correct session and to give a brief introduction to the students. The School Contact should be available during the assessment in case of any student-related issues.
- Each school is permitted to redeem one day's supervision and substitution pay from the DES to accommodate these tasks.

Once the School Contact person has been nominated most communications between January and March will be sent directly to him/her; therefore, please inform them of the list of tasks above (we enclose two copies of this sheet, one for the School Contact and one to keep as a record).

Please note:

- We may be in touch with you in December to confirm details provided on the School Participation form.
- A member of the PISA research team will contact each School Principal in December to confirm the testing date for March 2017.

What does the assessment consist of?

PISA tests: Consist of 'real life' tasks in reading literacy, science and mathematics. About one-third of questions are multiple choice and the remainder are in other formats, such as a written response or drag-and-drop. *There is no need for students to prepare in advance of PISA*. Before the assessment, students take part in a practice session to familiarise themselves with the format of the PISA test. Students may wish to look at sample items on www.oecd.org/pisa beforehand.

PISA Student questionnaire: Students are asked about their demographic, family and home backgrounds, learning environments, attitudes towards reading literacy, health and well-being, educational and occupational aspirations, and familiarity and engagement with ICTs.

Online School questionnaire: Principals of participating schools are asked to complete a 45-minute online school questionnaire about school resources, management, policies in areas such as assessment and school organisation.

Parent questionnaire: Parents of students are asked to complete a 40-minute parent questionnaire. The parent questionnaire seeks information on parental and home background, pre-school education and childhood activities of the PISA student, attitudes to reading literacy, student well-being and attendance at school.

How are results used?

The data collected during the Field Trial in March 2017 will be used to refine the tests and questionnaires for use in the Main Study in March 2018. In addition, procedures, particularly as they relate to computer-based testing, will be reviewed and refined based on our experiences with Field Trial schools.

Each school will receive a report on its results, compared to the national average, at the end of 2017.

Following the Main Study in March 2018, the OECD will publish *international results in December 2019*. The ERC will publish national results in December 2019 also, with further secondary reporting planned for the first half of 2020.

Where can I find out more on PISA?

More information, such as the list of countries participating in PISA, the individuals on the PISA National Advisory Committee, information materials and national reports, are at the PISA national website at www.erc.ie/pisa. The results for the latest cycle of the Main Study (2015) will be released on 6th December 2016. Information on national and international results and reports are available at the international PISA website at www.oecd.org/pisa/.

If you have any additional queries or concerns please contact:

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Many thanks for your support for PISA.