

## Information for Parents/Guardians

### PISA 2018 Autumn Study- October/November 2018

#### 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 since 2000. In the 2018 cycle, reading literacy is the main focus.
- In Ireland, PISA is carried out by the Educational Research Centre (ERC) in Dublin on behalf of, and with support from, the Department of Education and Skills.

#### What is PISA 2018 Autumn Study?

PISA is normally conducted during the spring time (March/April); however, the Department of Education and Skills is concerned about the burden placed on schools at that time of the year when there are mocks/orals for Third year students, Transition Year students are out on work experience and many sporting finals are taking place. This study is to assess the feasibility of carrying out PISA during the autumn instead of spring.

#### How was my child chosen for the study?

In Ireland, 57 post-primary schools have been randomly selected to take part.

In each school, up to 44 students have been picked at random from all students in the school who were born between 1<sup>st</sup> August 2002 and 31<sup>st</sup> July 2003. Your child is one of the students selected to participate in PISA.

#### What will my child be asked to do?

Students will be asked to take a test and a questionnaire. Each student will complete the PISA computer-based test of reading, science and mathematics (2 hours), and a computer-based questionnaire (approximately 50 minutes). This will take place on one morning, on a date in October or November, that has been agreed with the school.

#### What do the tests and questionnaires ask about?

- The *PISA tests* consist of ‘real-life’ tasks in reading, science and mathematics delivered on computer. They are not connected to the Junior or Leaving Cert. About one-third of questions are multiple choice and the remainder are in other formats, such as a typed response or drag-and-drop.
- The *Student Questionnaire* asks students about their family and home backgrounds, learning environments, attitudes and interests in reading, health and well-being, educational and occupational aspirations, and use of computers.

Students don't need to prepare in advance for PISA. There is a practice session before the test begins. However, if students want to look at the kinds of questions that PISA includes, please visit <http://www.oecd.org/pisa/test>

All information collected as part of PISA is used for reporting purposes only, with all responses aggregated to the national level. It will not be possible to identify individual schools or students in any publicly-available database that may be released at the end of the reporting cycle for the PISA 2018 Autumn study (likely to be the at the end of the 2019-20 school year).

Data that are sent to the PISA consortium for scaling do not include any identifying information. The ERC has data sharing agreements with the consortium governing the storage and use of such data in line with GDPR requirements. Any data related to the PISA 2018 Autumn Study that might be used to identify schools or students are stored on the ERC's secure server until the end of the current academic year and are only used for administrative purposes.

Participation in PISA is voluntary. Parents of students selected to participate in the study should contact their child's school in the first instance if they do not wish their son or daughter to take part. Furthermore, through their school, students can request modifications to or removal of their data up to one month after testing.

The ERC is a statutory body. Although operating since the mid-1960s, it was formally established in 2015. Additional information on the ERC's data protection policy can be found at: <http://www.erc.ie/about/corporate-governance/> and for further information on GDPR, see <http://gdprandyou.ie/>.

#### **How are results used?**

PISA is important. It helps us to find ways to improve our education system. We use the information to find out how students in Ireland compare with students in other countries. We also use the results to find out how well our education system is preparing students for life after school. PISA 2018 Autumn Study will help the Department of Education plan for future cycles of PISA.

We will send each school a report on its average achievement in reading, science and mathematics compared with the national averages, in early 2020. The school report will also include some information based on students' views from the questionnaires. We cannot, unfortunately, provide information on the results of individual students. Findings from the most recent cycle of PISA, PISA 2015, are available on our website <http://www.erc.ie/pisa>.

#### **Where can I find out more about PISA?**

More information, including results from previous rounds of PISA, is available on the national PISA website <http://www.erc.ie/pisa>. International results and reports are available on the international PISA website <http://www.pisa.oecd.org>.

If you have any additional queries or concerns, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

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**Many thanks for your support for PISA.**