



Information for Parents

PISA Main Study – March 2015

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 70 countries take part*, making PISA the largest study of its kind.
- PISA has assessed the skills and knowledge of 15- and 16-year-olds in three areas – *science, reading and mathematics* – every three years since 2000.
- In Ireland, PISA is carried out by the Educational Research Centre (ERC) in Dublin on behalf of the Department of Education and Skills.
- The PISA 2015 Main Study takes place in Ireland in March 2015.
- PISA 2015 will be the first time that PISA will be administered entirely on computer in most participating countries, including Ireland.

How was my child chosen for the study?

In Ireland, 169 post-primary schools have been randomly selected to take part.

In each school, up to 42 students have been picked at random from all students in the school who were born in 1999.

What will my child be asked to do?

Students will be asked to take a test and complete a questionnaire. Computers will be supplied for the assessment. The computer-based assessment will involve:

- A PISA computer-based test of science, reading and mathematics (2 hours)
- A computer-based questionnaire (50 minutes).

Not all students study science. The PISA tests do not require a knowledge of school subjects as PISA questions are based on real-life situations. All students should be able to complete the assessment, including those not currently studying science in school.

Students don't need to prepare in advance for PISA. There is a practice session before the test begins. Students wishing to look at sample test items should visit www.erc.ie/pisainfo.

What will I be asked to do?

You invited to fill in a parent questionnaire. This should take about half an hour, and can be done online or on the paper-based version. Login details are provided in the letter sent with this information sheet. If you prefer not to complete the questionnaire online, you should complete the enclosed paper version. It can then be returned to the school using the envelope provided.

This is the first time in PISA that we have asked parents for their views. The results will help to develop policies to improve our education system. It is important that as many parents as possible return a questionnaire, so that the results are reliable.

[More info over the page...]

What do the tests and questionnaires ask about?

The *PISA tests* consist of ‘real-life’ tasks in science, reading and mathematics. 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 responses or drag-and-drop.

The *student questionnaire* asks students about their family and home backgrounds, learning environments, attitudes towards science and the environment, health and well-being, educational and occupational aspirations, and use of computers.

The *parent questionnaire* asks for information on the home and family, pre-school education and childhood activities of the PISA student, attitudes of parents towards science and the environment, and views on student well-being and attendance at school.

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.

The OECD will publish *international results in December 2016*. The ERC will also publish *national results* in December 2016. The results will be available online.

We will send each school a report on the average achievement of its students in science, reading and mathematics compared with the national averages at around the same time as the national and international results. The school report will include some information based on students’ and parents’ views from the questionnaires. Information on the performance or views of individual students or on the views of individual parents is not provided.

All information collected in the survey is confidential and it is not possible to identify individual students, parents or schools in the database constructed following the study, since numbers, and never names, are used. Similarly, responses of individual schools, parents or students are never published.

Where can I find out more on PISA?

More information, including results from previous rounds of PISA, is at the PISA national website at www.erc.ie/pisa. International results and reports are at the international PISA website at www.pisa.oecd.org.

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

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Many thanks for your support for PISA.