

## **DATA PROTECTION DECLARATION – TIMSS 2023 EARLY LEARNING SURVEY AND PUPIL QUESTIONNAIRE**

### **Identity and contact details of controllers:**

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### **For which purpose are data collected and processed?**

The data collected during the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS 2023) will be used exclusively for scientific purposes. TIMSS is an educational research project sponsored by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA). The Educational Research Centre (ERC) is administering TIMSS in Ireland at the request of, and on behalf of, the Department of Education. This is in accordance with one of the functions (“carrying out national and international assessments of the attainment levels and academic achievement of students and reporting on such assessments to the Minister”) set out in the ERC’s Establishment Order as a statutory body (which can be viewed in full at: <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2015/si/392/made/en/print>). The ERC’s legal basis for processing personal data as per GDPR (Article 6) is “the performance of a task carried out in the public interest or in the exercise of official authority vested in the controller”.

### **Which information is requested?**

The parents or legal guardians of Fourth Class pupils in the participating schools are invited to complete the TIMSS 2023 Early Learning Survey/Home Questionnaire to provide the study with information about early learning activities and language(s) spoken at home, occupation and educational background of the parents/guardians, whether the child and parents/guardians were born in Ireland, home resources, opinions regarding the child’s school, and whether you have experienced negative behaviour by another student.

The pupils in the participating schools are asked to complete the TIMSS 2023 Pupil Questionnaire in order to provide the study with information about pupils’ gender, age, country of birth, home resources, language(s) spoken at home, and opinions regarding the school environment and mathematics and science lessons.

- In order to ensure that TIMSS is based on scientifically selected samples of pupils and schools, schools are expected to co-operate with the administration of TIMSS in their school where requested to do so (Department of Education Circular 0056/2011).
- Parents/guardians and pupils will not be disadvantaged in any way by non-completion of the questionnaire, and respondents are permitted to skip individual questions or to discontinue answering the questions at any time.
- By filling in and returning a completed questionnaire, a study participant is agreeing to the collection and processing of their data within the questionnaire.
- Withdrawal of agreement to the processing of data without stating any reason can be made by any participant up to 4 weeks after the tests have been administered.
- Any participant who wants to remove or amend their information can contact the Educational Research Centre (at 01 837 3789 or [timss.ireland@erc.ie](mailto:timss.ireland@erc.ie)). If an individual withdraws from the study no additional data will be collected for that individual. Some information on withdrawals and exclusions is retained to validate the sample and to inform future administrations (e.g., to see if girls are more likely to withdraw from participation in the study).
- Queries related to how personal information is protected can be directed to the ERC's Data Protection Officer ([data.protection@erc.ie](mailto:data.protection@erc.ie)).

### **What kind of data are collected?**

Data from answers to the questions from pupils and their parents or legal guardians of pupils participating in TIMSS are collected and stored. This is in the form of numbers representing selections (for example, a multiple-choice question, or yes/no selection). If the survey for parents/guardians is completed online rather than on paper, there is further logging information stored including IP address, the first and latest log-in time, the number of times a respondent has logged in in total, the number of the current question, and whether or not the questionnaire has been submitted.

Pupils who take the computer-based assessment provide a complete time-stamped set of responses to the test items. These responses are stored as raw responses. In addition, process data on navigation behavior, and tool use is collected with corresponding timestamps. Pupil questionnaire responses are collected without navigation data and are not time-stamped.

This information cannot, in and of itself, be used to identify individual respondents by name. However, a numeric unique identifier (ID) is recorded to uniquely identify each pupil. This ID has no connection to any other existing ID-system and was only assigned for the purpose of study administration. The relationship between this ID and the pupil's name, is known to the school coordinator, test administrator, and the Educational Research Centre. It is not, however, shared with the IEA or any third parties.

### **Where, how and for how long are data from TIMSS stored?**

TIMSS data are stored securely on servers located in Europe and cannot be accessed by any external parties or systems. The online questionnaire data collected in TIMSS 2023 DC using the Online SurveySystem are stored on Microsoft Azure servers that are located in Amsterdam, Netherlands. Data are processed centrally at the IEA in Hamburg, Germany. All data arriving for data processing are submitted without names – only the student ID numbers.

Moreover, any ERC and IEA employees who access the data for processing have been suitably briefed on what constitutes an acceptable treatment of data and have signed a confidentiality agreement.

***The data are stored as follows:***

Anonymised TIMSS data will be archived for research purposes for an indefinite amount of time so that it remains available for scientific analyses. These responses eventually result in a database that allows researchers to compare education systems worldwide (see ‘Public accessibility’ below).

***At the ERC, the data are stored as follows:***

Data linked to individuals are stored until the international database is released (expected to be February 2025 for this cycle of TIMSS). At that point (or earlier in the cycle where possible), all data are anonymised so that there is no possibility of an individual study participant being identifiable.

Response and process data are stored initially on servers located in Germany belonging to RM Solutions, and then processed centrally at the IEA in Hamburg, Germany. All data arriving for data processing are submitted without names – only the pupil ID numbers.

**With whom and how are data from TIMSS shared?**

As part of initial processing, the ERC shares some data from TIMSS with its subcontractors (e.g. for data entry for paper questionnaires). All subcontractors have signed a Data Processing Agreement and confidentiality agreement with the ERC.

Data are sent from the Educational Research Center to the IEA, via a secure FTP, in a pseudonymous form, that is: processed in such a manner that the personal data can no longer be attributed to a specific data subject without the use of additional information (any such additional information being kept separately and subject to technical and organisational measures to ensure that the personal data are not attributed to an identified or identifiable natural person).

TIMSS is directed by the International Study Center (ISC) based at Boston College, USA, and most of the data analyses occur there. Response data are required for the analysis but are sent to the ISC, via a secure FTP server, in a pseudonymous form. ISC employees who access the data for analyses have signed a confidentiality agreement. The transfer of the data to our partners in third countries, is safeguarded by appropriate and suitable legal, technical, and organisational measures such as a Data Processing Agreement and European Standard Contractual Clauses.

The data are also shared back, again over secure FTP server, with the Educational Research Centre.

**Related data**

Along with the parents and pupils, principals and teachers are also asked to complete a questionnaire. Information coming from these sources is linked to that from pupils and parents in the final international research database (IDB).

**Public accessibility**

The final international research database will be accessible to the public from the following sites:  
<https://www.iea.nl/data> (Amsterdam, Netherlands)  
<https://timssandpirls.bc.edu/index.html> (Boston, USA)

All data in the database are anonymous and cannot be linked to individuals.

**Automated decision-making and profiling**

We do not conduct any automated decision-making, including profiling, as referred to in Article 22 GDPR.

**Rights of Data Subjects**

Data Subjects are entitled to the rights set out in Articles 15-20 GDPR.

Data Subjects have the right to lodge a complaint with a supervisory authority. The relevant authority in Ireland is:

Data Protection Commission

21 Fitzwilliam Square South

Dublin 2

D02 RD28

Website: [www.dataprotection.ie](http://www.dataprotection.ie)