



Department
for Education

National Pupil Database: data flows and data sharing

The National Pupil Database Coverage

The National Pupil Database (NPD) contains detailed information about pupils in schools and colleges in England. The data includes:

- test and exam results, prior attainment and progression at different key stages for pupils in the state sector
- attainment data for students in non-maintained special schools, sixth-form and further education colleges
- where available, information on pupils in independent schools

The database also includes information about pupils' characteristics, such as:

- gender
- ethnicity
- first language
- eligibility for free school meals
- special educational needs (SEN)
- pupil absence and exclusions

Data Sharing

The department will only disclose pupils' and/or children's personal information where legislation allows it to do so, and it is in compliance with the [Data Protection Act 1998](#). There is specific legislation which allows the department to share individual pupil data from the NPD with persons named in the [Education \(Individual Pupil Information\) \(Prescribed Persons\) \(England\) Regulations 2009 \(Amended\)](#). This includes schools, local authorities, other government departments and agencies. These regulations also allow the department to disclose individual pupil data, subject to the [Data Protection Act 1998](#), to persons who, for the purpose of promoting the education or well-being of children in England are:

- Conducting research or analysis;
- Producing statistics; or
- Providing information, advice or guidance.

The term, *promoting the education or well-being of children* covers (for example); any research/analysis/tools which increase the evidence base in terms of what proves successful in education or child care, improves accountability or provides more information to improve parental/pupil choice.

To be granted access to extracts of the NPD, requestors must comply with strict terms and conditions covering the confidentiality and handling of data, security arrangements, retention and use of the data. Further details of the requirements placed on data requestors can be found below.

DfE support this data sharing as high quality research and analysis drives up the quality of the education system by giving system leaders, teachers and policy-makers access to high quality evidence on what works, improves pedagogy and helps drive a culture of evidence-based practice. The further use and analysis of data can also drive accountability and school performance by enabling analysis of school performance to further enhance schools knowledge it terms of what is effective and successful. Easily accessible analysis and data tools can provide parents and young people with better, or more accessible, information to make more informed choices about their education and/or future career. In some cases, information held may be used in order to contact children for the purpose of further educational research. When we do this, we insist that relevant pupil/parent consent is requested at first contact.

Third parties can:

- Analyse the information we share with them to identify evidence of what supports educational practices and children's wellbeing;
- Publish summary analyses of their work and reports/tools from their analyses;
- Assist in "*what works?*" trials to develop evidence-based teaching and pedagogical practice

where these activities fall under the remit of promoting the education or well-being of children in England.

They must not:

- Publish or disclose individual children's details
- Contact children or parents for anything other than taking part in an approved research project
- Use the raw data to directly market products or services to children or their parents
- Sell on individual children's details

The Department does not charge for providing extracts from the NPD.

The Department publishes a [list of external requests for data from the NPD](#), which includes details of the requestor organisation, project aims and tier of data requested (recorded from 1 August 2012 onwards). Further information about the range of data available in the NPD, including example data, can be found in '[data sources by year](#)' and '[example data files](#)'.

DfE make template privacy notices available to schools/LAs which they can use to inform pupils/parents how they use pupil data and include links to the onward use of this data by DfE. We make it clear what information we hold, why it is held, the uses DfE and its partners make of it and publish a statement on our [website](#) setting this out.

Data Retention

Initially, the data held in the NPD is used both for operational purposes (for example, to allocate funding or to enable effective operations in schools) and analytical purposes, after which it is retained over a longer timeframe for historical, statistical or research purposes. The Data Protection Act contains an exemption (s33(3)) that allows us to keep the data indefinitely for historical, statistical or research purposes.

A retention period is set for any extract of the NPD we provide to third parties and is usually between 6 months to 3 years depending on the aims of the project.

Department for Education Data Flows

Data is supplied to the Department for Education (DfE) by schools, Local Authorities and Awarding Bodies. These data are either sent directly to DfE or via RM Education, a contractor working on behalf of DfE.

DfE contract RM Education to link data and create relevant outputs so we can track pupil progression etc. for use in Performance Tables (PT) and [the National Pupil Database](#) (NPD).

This data is used in the Department for a number of reasons including internal research to inform policy development and for the creation of the [Performance Tables](#). This data is also used to inform a range of [other DfE publications](#) as well as disseminated, as appropriate, back to schools and LAs through [RAISEonline](#) and [Key to Success](#).

Once collected, pupil-level data is held in the NPD. From here, data can be made available to DfE analysts with a relevant business need and can also be shared with external requestors who are promoting the education or well-being of children in England. After careful scrutiny of data requests and requestors, DfE may choose to share data with these third party requestors, where relevant legislation and the DPA allows. See [here](#) for a list of such data requests since April 2012.

The below diagram gives a pictorial representation of these data flows:

