

# Research on support provided by schools to pupils in Years 7-to-11 who return to school following absence: privacy notice for pupils and parents/carers

The purpose of this document is to explain what personal information (data) will be collected from pupils as part of this research project, why we are collecting it, and who is responsible for keeping it safe.

The project will run from September 2024 to March 2025. It will involve visits to 10 mainstream secondary schools identified as doing particularly innovative or effective work in supporting pupils to return to school following absence. Each visit will involve interviews with senior leaders, pastoral/attendance leads and focus groups with young people.

Further information about the project can be found on our information sheets, which are available from our [website](#).

## 1 Why are we collecting this data?

The [National Foundation for Educational Research](#) (NFER) is collecting personal data as part of a research project into strategies mainstream secondary schools use to support pupils' return to school following absence.

The project will examine how pupils feel during school absences, the different strategies schools use to support their return, and any additional support that schools or pupils believe could help make the return to school more comfortable and effective. For the purposes of data protection legislation, NFER is the data controller, meaning NFER is responsible for deciding how any personal data is used.

## 2 What is the legal basis for processing activities?

The legal basis for processing personal data is covered by GDPR Article 6 (1) (f), which states that:

‘processing is necessary for the purposes of the legitimate interests pursued by the controller or by a third party except where such interests are overridden by the interests or fundamental rights and freedoms of the data subject which require protection of the personal data’.

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We have carried out a legitimate interest assessment, which demonstrates that the project fulfils one of NFER’s core business purposes (undertaking research, evaluation and information activities). The research has broader societal benefits, and project will provide new insights into how schools support pupils’ return to school after absence, with the aim of preventing short-term absences from escalating into long-term issues. It cannot be done without processing personal data, but processing does not override the data subject’s interests.

We do not intend to collect or process special category personal data for this project. However, it is possible that pupils may reveal information related to their physical or mental health to us during the focus group discussions.

Therefore, a separate legal basis for processing special category personal data has been identified:

GDPR Article 9 (2) (j) which states ‘Processing is necessary for archiving purposes in the public interest, scientific or historical research purposes or statistical purposes in accordance with Article 89(1) based on Union or Member State law which shall be Public proportionate to the aim pursued, respect the essence of the right to data protection and provide for suitable and specific measures to safeguard the fundamental rights and the interests of the data subject.

The processing is unlikely to cause substantial damage or substantial distress to participating pupils and no measures will be created or decisions taken about individuals as a result of the research.

### **3 How will personal data be obtained?**

NFER will collect personal data from pupils in years 7 to 11 via focus groups. The interviews will be conducted in person as part of visits to 10 case-study schools.

### **4 What personal data is being collected by this project?**

The focus groups will collect the following information from pupils in years 7 to 11:

- name, school and trust names
- age and year group
- feelings about being absent from school
- views on support they received to help them to return to school following an absence, and whether any additional forms of support might be helpful.

We do not plan to collect any special category personal data from pupils. However, it is possible that pupils may reveal information about their physical or mental health during the focus groups. Transcripts of the focus groups will be de-identified prior to analysis which will make it difficult to

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link this personal information back to individuals and we will take care to ensure no potentially identifying information is included in the reporting.

## 5 Who will personal data be shared with?

The focus groups with pupils will be undertaken in person. They will be audio recorded so the research team can ensure the notes they produce are accurate. The recording will not be listened to by anyone outside of the research team and research participants' permission to record will be asked at the start of the focus group.

No individuals or schools will be named in the final report.

The findings from the research will be published in a final report, which will be made freely available online in 2025.

## 6 Is personal data being transferred outside of the United Kingdom (UK)?

No personal data is being stored or transferred outside of the UK by NFER for this project.

## 7 How long will personal data be retained?

NFER will retain personal data until the report is published in March/April 2025. Personal data, such as names and focus group audio recordings will be deleted within six months of the publication of the final research report.

## 8 What rights do I have over my personal data?

Pupils, or their parents/carers, can withdraw their data from being processed at any time during the project. Should a pupil or their parent/carer withdraw from the research, any personal data provided by the pupil up to that point will still be used unless you indicate otherwise.

Under certain circumstances, you have the right:

- to request access to information that we hold about you (subject access request)
- to have your personal data rectified, if it is inaccurate or incomplete
- to request the deletion or removal of personal data where there is no compelling reason for its continued processing
- to restrict our processing of your personal data (for example, permitting its storage but no further processing)
- to object to our processing

- not to be subject to decisions based purely on automated processing where it produces a legal or similarly significant effect on you

If at any time you wish to exercise any of these rights and/or withdraw your data from the project, please contact the Project Leader Matt Walker ([m.walker@nfer.ac.uk](mailto:m.walker@nfer.ac.uk)).

If you wish to make a subject access request, restrict or object to processing, please contact our Compliance Officer ([compliance@nfer.ac.uk](mailto:compliance@nfer.ac.uk)).

## 9 Who can I contact about this project?

NFER is responsible for the day-to-day management of this project. Contact the Project Leader Matt Walker ([m.walker@nfer.ac.uk](mailto:m.walker@nfer.ac.uk)) with any queries.

If you have a concern about the way this project processes personal data, we request that you raise your concern with us in the first instance (see the details above). If you are still dissatisfied, you can contact the Information Commissioner's Office, the body responsible for enforcing data protection legislation in the UK, at <https://ico.org.uk/concerns/>.

## 10 Last updated

We keep this privacy notice under review to make sure it is up to date and accurate. Any changes will be noted.