Information for teachers about the secondary cohort study

We are inviting all Year 8 pupils at your school to take part in research into how pupils learn mathematics. This is Cycle 2 of a secondary cohort study that is following pupils in around 150 schools from Year 7 to Year 11/13. The study will improve our knowledge of pupils' attitudes, including how much they enjoy maths and how they experience learning maths at school.

Who is conducting the study?

The Observatory for Mathematical Education is based in the School of Education at the University of Nottingham. It identifies trends in mathematics learning, experiences, and attitudes for learners from Reception to university mathematics.

Why are we doing the study?

Succeeding in mathematics at school is important for all learners as it lays important foundations for future success in education, employment and in life in general. Knowing about pupils' enjoyment, attitudes, experiences, and attainment in mathematics - as well as when, how, and for whom, these change - will provide crucial evidence for educators, leaders, and policy makers about how we can best support all pupils to be succeed. This is why we are taking a long view, collecting data annually for a large cohort of pupils in a sample of schools across England.

How does the study work?

All Year 8 pupils in 2025-26 will be asked to complete a paper survey of multiple-choice questions about their experience of learning maths at school. The school will receive a class pack of named pupil survey papers (but no survey for pupils withdrawn by their parent/guardian). The pack will include instructions for the teacher. The Head of Maths will identify a lesson in which the survey gets completed. It should take most classes around 10 minutes to complete though some classes/learners can take up to the whole lesson.

What data is being collected?

Pupils

The school will share a list of pupils in Year 8. Each pupil's name, date of birth, unique pupil number and maths class will be on this list. This will allow surveys to be printed in class packs complete with pupil names. It will also allow us to link pupils' responses to government data. There will be a barcode on the surveys to help us track them and avoid surveys getting mixed up. All the completed surveys for the school will be sent via courier to a data scanning company to record the answers

before shredding the surveys. The survey responses will then be sent to the Observatory digitally and securely.

Parents/guardians

Parents/guardians may choose for their child not to participate in the research using the link to a short form that is included in a letter sent by the school.

Teachers

Teachers will be asked to complete a 10-minute online survey about their teaching of classes in the cohort (i.e. Year 8 in 2025/26). This will include questions about curriculum resources, lesson structure and teaching strategies.

Schools will provide a list of teachers, the year groups they are teaching, and their school email addresses in order for us to be able to send these surveys directly to teachers.

What happens to the information collected for the study?

The data will be stored securely in a dedicated SharePoint site that is only accessible to members of the research team. Data will be deleted as soon as possible after it is no longer needed, and each participant is given a numeric code so that the data they provide is stored anonymously. Data will be stored for a minimum of 14 years and then deleted if no longer in use.

How are we ensuring GDPR compliance?

We are processing personal data based on Article 6(1)(e) of UK GDPR in which processing is legal as it has a basis in public interest. Further details of how we ensure compliance with GDPR are provided in the privacy notice.

Where will the research be published?

We will publish the research in reports, articles, and presentations. No pupil, teacher or school names will be included in these publications.

Where can I find out more information?

If you have questions about the research, contact mathsobservatory@nottingham.ac.uk