THE CHALLENGE

Standardised testing has become a key feature of children’s educational experiences. In primary school, the key stage tests in year 2 and year 6 are significant in the volume of data collected, what happens with it afterwards and how it continues to affect pupils long after they have left their primary schools.

This data is sent to the Department for Education where it will be incorporated into the National Pupil Database to which third party companies have access. Companies used standardised testing data to profile and benchmark students which helps to identify those who can bring up or down a school’s overall attainment. Furthermore, the National Pupil Database follows a pupil even when they have reached Higher Education.

The usage of data collected from standardised testing, once grouped with a multitude of other data, goes beyond benchmarking with some local authorities using it as part of a master data management system.

This system can be used to inform decisions made in children’s social care and to identify risk factors – a flawed approach that goes beyond the purpose and intentions of the test design, designed to test a system not an individual child.¹

¹ https://defenddigitalme.org/research/the-state-of-data-2020/report/#h.ky0248jkn4s

“"I didn’t know this, there is a database of every school child including their home address.”

Jo Phillips, January 19, 2020, BBC Papers
https://youtu.be/y8a-570vl8

YOUR RIGHTS

- Everyone who has been in education since 1996 can ask for a copy of their own records.
- There is no way to opt out of the National Pupil Database but institutions collecting the data must comply with data protection laws. We believe the Department for Education fails to do so by not informing families thoroughly what the personal data collected from SATS and other tests will be used for, or that it can be given away.
- See our further factsheets about making a subject access request and the National Pupil Database.

TAKE ACTION

- Schools should uphold objections from parents and pupils to key stage assessment tests but since they have an obligation in law, it is very hard for schools to respect parents’ wishes and not enter children for national tests. It’s much easier if a school chooses to not enter a whole year group or class.
- Parents and young people can ask for a copy of their own records – do this by making a subject access request.
- Writing to your MP takes no more than a few minutes of your time, but can have a real impact. You can tell them why the issues matter to you, and why you want them to take action on your behalf. You can use this draft text but please edit to be in your own voice. The Parliamentary email service will block identical copied-and-pasted messages.

https://defenddigitalme.org/my-school-records/my-records-my-rights/

defenddigitalme is a call to action to protect children’s rights to privacy. We are teachers and parents who campaign for safe, fair and transparent data processing in education, in England, and beyond. For more information see http://defenddigitalme.org/ (September 2022 v.1.0)