



October 2022

Understanding the Features of Effective School Groups: Invitation to participate in research, EPI DEEP survey

Dear colleague,

We would like to invite you and your schools to take part in the EPI Decisions in Education in England Panel Survey (EPI DEEP survey). This study is being conducted by researchers at the Education Policy Institute and is part-funded by our partners GL Assessment.

The [Education Policy Institute \(EPI\)](#) is an independent, impartial and evidence-based research institute that aims to promote high quality education outcomes for all children and young people, regardless of social background. EPI has a strong reputation for producing high quality evidence-based research and is regularly quoted in parliament and national media.

More information about the study can be found in the information sheet and privacy notice below.

To complete the autumn survey, [click here](#). You will be asked for some key information about your school group.

I look forward to hearing from you in the hope that you can participate.

Ever,
David

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads 'David Laws'.

David Laws,
Executive Chairman, Education Policy Institute

EPI DEEP survey: Information sheet

What is the aim of this study?

The EPI DEEP survey is primarily aimed at leaders who are part of school groups, including MATs and local authorities, as well as federations, dioceses and other types of trust like co-operatives and learning partnerships. Questions are suitable for leaders of primary, secondary and special schools.

Most schools in England do not work in isolation, but are part of wider groups and networks, such as academy trusts, federations, charitable trusts, dioceses, and other schools in the local authority.

This project seeks to understand *how schools work together in groups*, and what are the *key features of effective school groups*. In this study, the notion of ‘effectiveness’ goes beyond pupil progress and attainment, and looks also at pupil inclusion, workforce sustainability and financial health.

This work will highlight the best examples of school groups, which not only achieve the best results for children and young people, but do so whilst also demonstrating strength in inclusion, workforce, and financial sustainability.

The study will support school leaders by providing detailed analysis of *how the most effective school groups achieve their outcomes* and will also provide evidence for policymakers on accountability, inclusion and school improvement. As part of this study, **we invite you to participate in a new longitudinal survey named the EPI Decisions in Education in England Panel Survey (‘EPI DEEP survey’)**.

Key information on what this study will involve for you is included in this document. **To complete the autumn survey, [click here](#)**. You will be asked for some key information about your school group.

What does taking part in the research involve?

We will ask staff in your school group to complete two online surveys per academic year.

Within each academic year, one survey will cover school finances and workforce, and the other will cover pupil outcomes and pupil inclusion.

Each survey can be answered by group-level leaders **and/or** school leaders.

For group-level leaders (e.g. CEOs, Executive Heads, Directors of Education of Diocese Education Boards, LA Directors of Children’s Services) each survey takes around 10-15 minutes.

For school leaders (e.g. Headteacher or equivalent, or Assistant/Deputy heads) each survey takes around 20-25 minutes.

While not compulsory, we request that CEOs and other group-level leaders encourage as many of their school leaders as possible to take part.

The school-level surveys will ask about the approach taken to certain areas of education and school administration. The school-level survey is therefore essential to understanding educational practice within your group. The group-level surveys will ask about the degree of centralisation employed in the setting of direction and the implementation of key policies related to school finances, workforce, pupil inclusion and pupil outcomes.

The first survey opened in Summer Term 2022 and covered school finances and workforce. The next survey will open on Monday 7th November 2022. Thereafter, DEEP surveys will run one survey in the Autumn Term and one in the Summer Term of each academic year for at least two years.

Your school group does not have to commit to responding to every survey. Nevertheless, we hope you will consider giving your time twice per academic year to provide a complete picture of your group's work across the topics of finance, workforce, pupil outcomes and inclusion.

We may also invite you or members of your leadership team to participate in optional interviews.

You and your leadership team's responses will be treated in the strictest confidence. Only anonymised survey data will be published.

To complete the autumn survey, [click here](#). You will be asked for some key information about your school group.

Privacy notice: Your rights, and how we will process and store your data

What personal data does EPI use for this survey?

EPI uses email addresses to invite school groups to take part in this study.

We have identified these email addresses using publicly available sources, including the government website Get Information About Schools and internet searches of school group websites.

Where possible, we verified these email addresses using data that has been provided to us, for example when individuals and organisations have worked with us or communicated with us in the past. Our use of personal data that is provided to us is regulated by our privacy policy, which states that we only ever use this personal data in a limited number of ways, including where it is necessary in order to carry out our own lawful interests, provided your rights don't override these. Our privacy policy can be found [here](#).

What personal data does EPI collect?

The personal information we collect and process is provided to us directly by you in the surveys and, where relevant, interviews. This includes:

- Name, email address and telephone number of main contact in the school group
- Role title of survey respondent

- Views on the strengths and weakness of the school and school group in various topic areas in the academic years relevant to the survey

What is EPI's legal basis for processing your personal data?

EPI requires a legal basis for processing your personal data.

EPI's legal basis for contacting you to ask if you wish to take part in this study is our legitimate interest in contacting relevant organisations in order to achieve a representative and sufficiently large sample for the purposes of this research.

EPI's legal basis for collecting and processing your responses to surveys and interviews conducted in this study is covered by:

- GDPR Article 6 1 (f): "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 personal data"

The study fulfils one of EPI's core business purposes (rigorous data analysis, research and the exchange of information and knowledge to help inform the public and hold government and decision-makers to account) and we deem that it will not cause damage or distress to the data subjects. It has broader societal benefits and will contribute to the evidence base on effective practices in the school system in England.

How will personal data be used?

You and your leadership team's responses will be treated in the strictest confidence. Only anonymised interview and survey data will be published.

EPI will use your personal data and responses solely for research purposes and to produce anonymous, statistical research findings and insights.

The data collected via interviews and surveys form part of a wider study of the performance of school groups which also uses government administrative data to derive performance metrics. In our final reports we intend to publish names of school groups alongside their performance metrics, which will be constructed from government administrative data such as the National Pupil Database, School Census, and the School Workforce Census.

Interview and survey data will be linked to school and group performance metrics for further analysis.

We will draw generalisations from the survey and interview responses where relationships are evident between responses and performance metrics. **Survey and interview responses will be discussed in aggregate and as such individual groups and schools will not be identifiable.**

Where we do publish individual responses, for example pulling out a quote from interviews, these will be anonymised. In these cases, we will apply statistical disclosure controls to ensure that the source is not identifiable through other contextual information such as school location or performance.

The data and findings produced by this project will also inform and contribute to other EPI projects which serve our mission of promoting high quality education outcomes for all children young people, regardless of social background. Where survey and interview data are used to inform other EPI projects, the same approach to anonymity will be applied.

How will EPI ensure that personal data is secure?

Survey data will be collected and stored with EPI's Smart Survey account. Smart Survey is ISO27001 certified, meaning they have an information management system that ensures they follow best practice with regards to preventing cyber-attacks and keeping their clients' data safe. They are also certified under the Cyber Essentials Plus scheme and are able to tender to public sector organisations. More information can be found [here](#).

Survey and telephone interview data will be processed and stored in accordance with EPI's Management of Sensitive Data policy, EPI's Information Security policy and the Data Protection Act.

No personal data will be stored or transferred outside of the UK or the European Economic Area.

Our GDPR-compliant privacy policy can be read [here](#).

Who will my personal data be shared with?

The survey will be administered using online survey software Smart Survey. Their privacy policy can be found [here](#).

We may also share suitably anonymised datasets resulting from this study with third party organisations. Such data shares will be subject to agreements between EPI and third party organisations with aims that are consistent with those of this study. Contact details will not be shared with third parties.

How long will EPI retain personal data?

We keep your data only for as long as is necessary for the purposes of this longitudinal study. We will review the data that we hold no later than September 2023.

What rights do I have over my personal data?

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

Who do I contact to exercise my rights or for any other question about the study?

If at any time you wish to exercise any of these rights and/or withdraw your data from the study, please email deep.survey@epi.org.uk.

If you have a concern about the way this project processes personal data, we request that you raise your concern with EPI in the first instance via info@epi.org.uk for the attention of EPI's Head of Analysis. If you remain 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/>.

For any other question about the study, please email deep.survey@epi.org.uk.

How do I sign-up for the study?

We hope you consider taking part in this research.

To complete the autumn survey, [click here](#). You will be asked for some key information about your school group or local authority.

If you have any questions, please email deep.survey@epi.org.uk.