What is PISA?
Programme for International Student Assessment

PISA is...
» A very rich source of data on student performance and how this is linked to student, teacher, school and system factors.
» An independent examination of our education system over time, to consider impacts of policy decisions and related programmes.
» The gold standard in comparative education research, going to great lengths to ensure results can be compared over time and, where appropriate, between countries.
» A measure of student performance at a New Zealand level, and for different groups of students, to monitor progress against goals such as raising national achievement and reducing inequity.
» 3-yearly since the year 2000.
» Big! In 2015 students from 70 countries took part. 80 countries are taking part in PISA 2018.
» Influential. PISA-related reports are provided to Ministers and findings from this study inform key policy decisions.

PISA from a school’s perspective
» For most schools, PISA is a one-day event involving a random sample of their 15-year-olds.
» To minimise disruption, a School Coordinator acts as the contact person and helps prepare for the testing day. Schools are given an honorarium (equiv. 1 teacher release day) for this.
» Independent test administrators conduct the study in schools.
» The OECD sends quality monitors to some schools to ensure the study is the same around the country and world.
» The principal, or a delegated person, completes a school background questionnaire. This provides essential context for understanding the achievement data.
» Schools are selected using statistical methods to give us the most accurate picture across New Zealand. Schools cannot volunteer or be substituted.
» Each participating school receives a summary of their students’ performance and perceptions, alongside national comparisons. Many schools have told us this is a very valuable resource.
PISA from a student’s perspective

» A computer-based 2-hour achievement test and 55-minute background questionnaire.
» Each student in a school sits a different set of test questions.
» Questions cover reading, mathematics and science.
» Receives a Certificate of Appreciation from the Ministry of Education.

What does PISA assess?

» The questionnaire and assessment framework are designed by education experts from around the world.
» The assessment aims to understand how well education systems prepare children with the competences they will likely need for success and informed citizenship after finishing school.
» PISA looks at factors that contribute to achievement. This includes aspects of family background, the school environment, what happens in the classroom, and students’ attitudes, experiences and perceptions.
» All publicly released assessment questions are online at oecd.org/pisa/pisaproducts/pisa-test-questions.htm
» The test assesses competences in scientific, mathematical and reading literacy. Reading is the major subject in 2018, so students will see more reading questions than maths or science.

Recent New Zealand findings

» Our students score above the OECD average in science, reading and mathematics.
» A relatively high 20% of our students are top performers in at least one PISA subject. We have one of the highest proportions in the OECD of top performers in science and reading.
» New Zealand performance has stayed stable since 2012. Some countries have fallen, so we now compare more favourably.
» Overall, New Zealand boys perform slightly better than girls in mathematics. In reading, girls perform much better than boys.
» There is a wider performance gap between the top ten percent and bottom ten percent of our students than in most countries.
» Socio-economic (dis)advantage has a stronger impact on achievement here than in many countries. However, compared to earlier cycles of PISA, socio-economic background is not such a strong predictor of how well a student will achieve.