



Asbi

Dear Principal,

The Department has developed an electronic individualised database of primary school pupils, called the Primary Online Database (POD). POD will collect individual information on each pupil, including their PPSN. This has been thoroughly piloted with a selection of schools and has been extensively discussed with the education partners and management bodies.

We acknowledge that the move to the new POD database will be challenging and an additional body of work for schools in the short term, but are confident that in the course of time this work will bring significant benefits for schools and allow for the reduction and streamlining of requests for data from schools.

In the near future, POD will

- replace the need for schools to complete the National School Annual Census,
- replace the need for schools to maintain the Clárleabhar,
- facilitate inter-school transfers,
- facilitate the transfer of data from primary to post-primary schools,
- identify pupils who do not make the transition from primary to post-primary,
- allow schools to update DES centrally-held, school-level data such as School Name, Address and Telephone Number. This will provide schools with one point to correct or amend contact details which will then be available to be accessed by all areas across the Department.

In the longer term it is proposed that POD will also share data with the Department of Social Protection, the HSE and the NCSE, and other bodies, eliminating the need for many of the current data requests to schools from these bodies, for example in relation to vaccination programmes, child benefit claims, application for special educational needs.

As part of the transition process schools will still be required to return the current National School Annual Census for the 2014/2015 and 2015/2016 academic years.

POD is a live Database, allowing for the updating of information throughout the year. We are aware that many schools have existing admin software in place. The Department is working with providers of school admin software in order for them to put in place processes which will allow their software to synchronise with POD.

The POD database is accessible through the ESInet portal. This is the same technology that is used for the Online Claim System (OLCS), the Summer Works scheme and other applications.

What Next?

We are now contacting you to request that your school starts to populate the POD database with your individual pupil data from the 15th of September onwards. Schools can enter this data up to the end of March 2015. Data can be entered on a phased basis, it is not necessary to enter all of your pupil information in one go.

For this initial population of POD please do not include pupils

- that were enrolled at 30th September 2014 but who were not expected at that stage to continue to be enrolled in the school for the duration of the school year (e.g. temporary students or foreign-exchange students).

In order to ensure the smooth introduction of POD and transition from the National School Annual Census, we will be putting procedures in place to compare the data entered in POD with the total figures as per the Census returns. Please take care to enter correct enrolment dates for pupils.

A full list of the variables requested and a sample data collection form for schools who wish to use it are available on our website at

<http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Statistics/Primary-Online-Database-POD-/>

How?

Schools have three ways in which they can enter their pupil data to POD:

1. Schools can manually enter individualised pupil data directly into the Primary Online Database by logging on to Esinet at www.esinet.ie (this option is recommended as the easiest for schools without a software provider). This process is straightforward, however, for reference we have prepared instructional videos and training manuals on how to do this. These are available at <http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Statistics/Primary-Online-Database-POD-/>
2. Schools can choose to enter the pupil's details into an excel template provided by the Department and return to us for loading to the Primary Online Database. The template is available by request from pod@education.gov.ie. If you choose this option, please be aware that the template must be encrypted prior to returning to the Department to ensure safe transmission of personal data. Detailed instructions on how to encrypt your file will be sent to you with the excel template.
3. For schools that use admin software, details of the procedures put in place by each of the individual software providers to upload data from current admin systems to POD are available on our website. If you have further queries on these please contact the software providers in the first instance.

A list of all the data items required on each pupil was sent to schools in early 2014, along with Data Protection Guidelines. Following the pilot this list has changed slightly. This is also available on our website. The Data Protection Guidelines, instructional videos and manuals are also available on our website at

<http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Statistics/Primary-Online-Database-POD-/>

The Irish version of the POD screens are not yet available, however note that it is possible to enter names and addresses into POD in Irish.

The introduction of POD will help to eliminate duplication of data requests and allow real-time information to be accessed centrally in the Department thus reducing the response burden on schools.

A POD helpdesk has been set up which will be available to assist schools with any POD queries. If you have any queries or comments please do not hesitate to contact us at pod@education.gov.ie
Please include your school's roll number on all correspondence.

Best regards,

POD Helpdesk – Statistics Section
Department of Education & Skills
Block 2, Marlborough Street, Dublin 1
T: 01 889 2311 E: pod@education.gov.ie

September 2014