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Information note for Parents on the Primary Online Database.

Dear Parent,

As you may be aware, the Department of Education and Skills is currently developing an individualised database of primary school children, called the Primary Online Database (POD).

Individualised data coverage has already been in place for a number of years at pre-primary, post-primary and third level education, and is an extremely valuable resource in monitoring the progress of all students through the education system, including vulnerable subgroups, developing education policy, forward planning, and underpinning payments and teacher allocations to education institutions. The new system at primary level will allow the Department to identify children leaving the education system early or not making the transfer from primary to post primary level. It also will in time deliver benefits to schools and parents by reducing form filling and allowing records to be transferred between schools automatically as your child moves school.

The Department is now in the process of rolling out and populating POD across all primary schools. This means that schools are now being asked to provide individual details about your child, including your child's PPS number, name, address, date of birth and nationality, into the POD system. A full outline of all of the data requested, the reasons for collecting each piece of data, and how the data will be used, accessed, stored, shared and retained is given in the POD Fair Processing Notice available on the "POD" area of the Department's website www.education.ie or on request from Statistics section. A Frequently Asked Questions document is also available on the website which outlines answers to some of the regular queries from parents we have received to date.

The Department takes the protection of your child's data very seriously. All data on POD is stored on the Revenue Commissioners servers, with the same security protections in place as for Revenue records. Within the Department, only a limited number of Statistics section staff will have access to the individual records. Two optional pieces of information requested about your child, religion and ethnic or cultural background, are considered under Data Protection legislation to be sensitive personal data and require your written consent in order for the data to be transferred to the Department. The current retention policy for POD data is for POD records to be maintained until the pupil reaches the age of 30. This is to allow longitudinal analysis in line with the national and international priorities for lifelong learning, and to allow for pupils to obtain their record from the Department in the future.

A POD helpdesk is in place to answer queries and provide any further information you may require, and is staffed from Monday to Friday 8:30am to 5pm. The helpdesk staff can be contacted by email at pod@education.gov.ie or at 01 8892311.

Best regards,

Diarmuid Reidy
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