Information for Parents on the New Primary Online Database (POD)

Why is the Department introducing POD?

The Department has developed an electronic individualised database of primary school pupils, called the Primary Online Database (POD). Individualised databases are now in place covering pre-primary, post-primary, PLC and third level education - the lack of individualised information on primary school pupils presents a very significant data gap for monitoring the progress of learners throughout the education system. An online system will help to eliminate duplication in data requests to schools and allow real time information to be accessed centrally in the Department for school inspections and other administrative functions and reduce the response burden on schools.

Is it compulsory to include my child on POD?

All pupils must be on POD in order to be counted for school's capitation payment and teacher allocation purposes.

Does the school need my consent to put my child's details on POD?

The Department has consulted with the Data Protection Commissioner in relation to the collection of individual pupil information for the Primary Online Database. As both religion and ethnic and cultural background are considered sensitive personal data categories under Data Protection legislation, it is necessary for each individual pupil's parent/guardian to identify their own religion and ethnic or cultural background, and to consent for this information to be transferred to the Department of Education and Skills. All other information held on POD was deemed by the Data Protection Commissioner as non-sensitive personal data and therefore does not require written permission from parents for transfer of the information to the Department.

Are schools allowed ask for my child's PPSN?

Schools, as the provider of a public service, are allowed to ask for a pupil's PPSN as long as there is a valid purpose for collecting it. The Department has consulted with the Data Protection Commissioner and they have stated that PPSN can now be collected by primary schools with the purpose being it is a requirement of the Primary Online Database to validate pupil identity. PPSN is already collected for the ECCE and by post-primary schools.

Why do you need my child's PPSN?

A PPS number is an individual's unique identification number for all dealings with the Public Service, including Social Welfare, tax, education and health services. Having the PPSN on the database will help ensure that there are no duplicate records in the system i.e that two schools do not have the same child on their roll. In the future we will be able to track pupils from early childhood education, to primary school and onto post-primary, which will allow us to ensure that every child in the State of compulsory school age is in education.

Who will have access to my child's details?
POD will be hosted by the Department and accessed by schools through a secure network managed and controlled by the Department called Esinet. It may only be accessed through password controlled accounts. Only the school that the pupil attends and a small number of Department staff will have access to an account.

Who will the data be shared with?

The Department proposes in the future to share some of the personal data stored on POD with other State bodies. These are:

- Central Statistics Office, under the Statistics Acts to assist with the compilation of national statistics.
- The National Council for Special Education, under the Education Welfare Act, in order to assist in supporting resource allocation in relation to pupils with special educational needs.
- The Child and Family Agency, under the Education Welfare Act, to ensure that each child of compulsory school age is in receipt of an education.
- To meet the Department's business needs in regard to the allocation of resources to schools, the Department will share a limited amount of each pupil's personal data, including a child's PPS number with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform PPSN validation service, or directly with the Department of Social Protection Client Identity Database area, in order to validate the identity of each pupil and ensure that the correct resource allocation is granted to each school. The legal basis for this sharing of data is set out in Social Welfare Acts.