

FAQ on the Primary Online Database

Table of Contents

FAQ on the data collection for POD

- Q1. [Why is POD collecting all these different variables?](#)
- Q2. [Is there a template available that schools can send to parents to collect the data required for POD?](#)
- Q3. [We wish to seek your advice re parents who have refused to allow any information at all be shared with POD/DES.](#)
- Q4. [We are entering data directly into POD and don't have information for one of the compulsory fields, what should we do?](#)

FAQ on the fields in POD

- Q5. [Can schools now collect PPSN?](#)
- Q6. [Why does POD need the mother's maiden name?](#)
- Q7. [Why does POD need the pupil's birth surname and forename?](#)
- Q8. [Why is the question on ethnic or cultural background worded as it is? Why are nationalities included as part of the ethnic or cultural background question?](#)
- Q9. [Our school does not have information on ethnic or cultural background and/or religion of pupils and I'm not clear on why this is required.](#)
- Q10. [Our school already got consent forms filled in for our pupils who are members of the traveller community last year; do we now have to do it again this year for the same pupils?](#)
- Q11. [Our school has collected some of the information on ethnic or cultural background/religion, but many parents are refusing to give consent for the information to be transferred to the Department. Is there any point in recording the information I have, given that it won't be a full return or fully cover the school?](#)
- Q12. [I don't think the Department should be collecting information on ethnicity and so I don't want to return the information on POD.](#)
- Q13. [There was a field on year of arrival in Ireland mentioned in the fair processing notice but I can't see it on POD?](#)

FAQ for schools using the excel template

- Q14. [How can I return the data template securely to Statistics section?](#)
- Q15. [Who should encrypt and send the template file, the school or the software provider?](#)
- Q16. [I am having problems with the encryption software or process, or I'm not sure whether I am encrypting the file properly?](#)

FAQ for schools with Administrative software

- Q17. [How is POD going to work with local school admin software?](#)

General questions on POD and contact

- Q18. [Were principals consulted about the introduction of POD?](#)
- Q19. [Do I complete POD for all pupils or just new entrants?](#)
- Q20. [The POD system is very slow when I log in](#)
- Q21. [Training](#)
- Q22. [How secure is POD?](#)
- Q23. [I have a comment or concern regarding POD.](#)
- Q24. [Who can I contact if I am having problems with POD?](#)

FAQ on the data collection for POD

Q: Why is POD collecting all these different variables?

A: The POD team has issued a Fair Processing Notice (circular 17/2014 available on the Department's website) which explains the reasons for collecting each data item, and the policy of the Department for processing and retaining the data on POD.

Q: Is there a template available that schools can send to parents to collect the data required for POD?

A: A suggested template is available in the POD area of the Department's website. The template is in word format so schools can download and edit as they wish. Completed forms should be retained in the school and not posted into the Department. Please note it is not compulsory for school to use this template.

Q: We wish to seek your advice re parents who have refused to allow any information at all be shared with POD/DES.

A: 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. As POD will replace the National School Annual Census in the next couple of years, all pupils must be on POD in order to be counted for capitation and teacher allocation purposes.

Q: We are entering data directly into POD and don't have information for one of the compulsory fields, what should we do?

A: Because of the way POD is programmed, when entering data directly into POD it is necessary to fill in all compulsory fields before pupil data can be saved. Therefore it is necessary to get the compulsory information where possible.

FAQ on the fields in POD

Q: Can schools now collect PPSN?

A: The Department has consulted with the Data Protection Commissioner in relation to the collection of individual pupil information for the Primary Online Database. They have stated that PPSN can now be collected by schools with the purpose being it is a requirement of the Primary Online Database. We have included a field in POD for mothers' maiden name because, if a school cannot get the child's PPSN, we will have an arrangement in place to obtain the PPSN from the DSP by matching the child details with the mother's maiden name. We will then populate POD with the missing PPSN. Therefore if you have the PPSN of the pupils, the mother's maiden name field will not be compulsory and vice versa.

Q: Why does POD need the mother's maiden name?

A: These are required for validation of the pupil's identity. In cases where PPSN cannot be provided

by the parent or school, the mother's maiden name can be used to help identify the pupil and fill in their PPSN to the database.

Q: Why does POD need the pupil's birth surname and forename?

A: These fields are used to verify and validate the pupil PPSN and ensure that the correct PPSN is associated with each pupil. These fields are not compulsory.

Q: Why is the question on ethnic or cultural background worded as it is? Why are nationalities included as part of the ethnic or cultural background question?

A: The question relates to "ethnic or cultural background", not just ethnicity and so Irish, Chinese etc. are included as categories. The question is taken directly from the question asked in both the 2006 and 2011 Censuses of Population, and will also be asked in the 2016 Census of Population. This question was widely consulted upon by the CSO and tested before inclusion in the 2006 Census.

Q: Our school does not have information on ethnic or cultural background and/or religion of pupils and I'm not clear on why this is required.

Q: I don't think the Department should be collecting information on ethnicity and so I don't want to return the information on POD.

A: In relation to ethnic or cultural background, previously the Department requested information on membership of the traveller community only. The Department consulted with the Data Protection Commissioner, who advises that the most equitable way to collect this type of sensitive information is to give all pupils an opportunity to identify their own ethnic and cultural background and consent to the information being passed to the Department, rather than targeting a particular ethnic or cultural group in the data collection. Data on the number of members of the traveller community in a mainstream school is required to pay the enhanced capitation for travellers. Data on other ethnic groups, such as Roma are required for international reporting purposes.

This information will help the Department to build up a more comprehensive statistical profile of the diversity of our primary school population. Collecting this information has been the practice in many other countries (UK, USA etc.) for many years now, and this data has been a useful aid in ensuring that education departments devise policies that help ensure that all children in the education system can reach their potential.

Schools are strongly encouraged to begin collecting and populating the information on ethnic and cultural background for existing pupils. While the Department recognises that this is an onerous task for some schools to undertake, there is a very long lead time for POD to be fully implemented and so the information can be collected and added to POD on a piecemeal basis as resources allow.

Religion is purely for statistical purposes.

Q: Our school already got consent forms filled in for our pupils who are members of the traveller community last year; do we now have to do it again this year for the same pupils?

A: The wording of the previous suggested consent form issued by the Department stated that information was to be returned to the Department in aggregate form only for the calendar year 2013/2014. The Department is now seeking this information to be entered on POD on an individualised basis. This information is required in order to pay an enhanced capitation grant to schools who have traveller pupils enrolled. It is important that parents of pupils who are members of traveller community who have identified themselves and consented for the information to be stored

by the school are made aware and approve of the transfer of this information to the Department on an individual basis for the 2014/2015 academic year onwards. While it would be preferable for written consent to be obtained again in such cases, the following extract from the Data Protection Commissioners website can be noted.

“Explicit consent need not require a data subject to sign a form in all cases. Consent can be understood to be explicit where a person volunteers personal data after the purposes in processing the data have been clearly explained. Thus a clear explanation on a form, a web page, or the delivery of a script by properly trained telephone staff might be sufficient to demonstrate consent has been explicitly given”

Therefore if schools are not going to seek for consent forms to be signed again in the case of information already obtained on travellers, they should ensure that all parents are made aware in a clear manner that the individualised information will be transferred to the Department from 2014 onwards in order to prepare for the payment of enhanced capitation based on POD data. Parents have the right to object to the information being transferred to the Department if they so wish.

New entrants to the schools should answer the ethnic or cultural question and give consent according to the material set out in the Fair Processing Notice for POD issued by the Department of Education and Skills (Circular 17-14).

Q: Our school has collected some of the information on ethnic or cultural background/religion, but many parents are refusing to give consent for the information to be transferred to the Department. Is there any point in recording the information I have, given that it won't be a full return or fully cover the school?

A: Yes, the information, even if only partially completed, will still be of value from an analytical point of view in the Department, and coverage may improve with time, so we would ask schools to enter all of the information they have on POD. In cases where consent is not given by the parent, there is a “No consent” option available in the ethnicity and religion categories which can be chosen for those pupils. This will allow the Department to monitor the level of non-response to these questions.

Q: There was a field on year of arrival in Ireland mentioned in the fair processing notice but I can't see it on POD?

A: Based on feedback from the pilot it was decided to drop this field.

FAQ for schools using the excel template

Q: How can I return the data template securely to Statistics section?

A: All personal data which is emailed to Statistics section must be encrypted using the instructions forwarded by Statistics section.

Q: Who should encrypt and send the template file, the school or the software provider?

A: Statistics section will accept the file from either the school or the software provider. It is a matter for each school and software provider to decide who sends the file to Statistics Section.

Q: I am having problems with the encryption software or process, or I'm not sure whether I am encrypting the file properly?

A: If after following the steps outlined in the instructions you are having problems, please contact the POD project team for help.

FAQ for schools with Administrative software

Q: How is POD going to work with local school admin software?

A: Most school software providers have begun the process of redeveloping their software to synchronise with the POD system. It may take some time for your provider to complete the development process. Once POD is up and running, schools will be able to run a sync routine that will harmonise the changes made in POD into their admin software. However the solution being put in place differs for each software providers and not all providers are making POD-related updates to their systems so please check the details for your own software provider for more information. Documentation on how each software provider is handling the move to POD are available on our website at <http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Statistics/Primary-Online-Database-POD-/Software-Providers.html> . Following reading this documentation, any specific questions in relation to your local software should be directed in the first instance to your software provider.

General questions on POD and contact

Q: Were principals consulted about the introduction of POD?

A: The Department has consulted with the Management Bodies, the IPPN and the INTO throughout the development of POD. All bodies supported the introduction of an individualised pupil database.

Q: Do I complete POD for all pupils or just new entrants?

A: Data is required for all pupils initially but once the database is populated schools will just need to update their entrants and leavers each September.

Q: The POD system is very slow when I log in

A: The first time you log in to POD and add pupil data the system may be slow, but the speed should improve considerably for subsequent logins.

Q: Training

A: Detailed instruction manuals and step-by-step training videos are available on the Department's website at <http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Statistics/Primary-Online-Database-POD/>. A POD helpdesk has been set up and staff will be available to take your calls and talk you through the process on 01 8892311.

Q: How secure is POD?

A: POD will be hosted by the Department and accessed by schools through the esinet portal. The esinet portal is a secure network managed and controlled by the Department. It may only be accessed through password controlled accounts.

Q: I have a comment or concern regarding POD.

A: All comments and concerns are welcome. In order for Statistics Section to fully consider and respond to your comments, we ask that you outline them in writing by sending an email to pod@education.gov.ie and we will respond as quickly as possible.

Q: Who can I contact if I am having problems with POD?

A: Please contact the POD helpdesk on **01 8892311** or by email at pod@education.gov.ie. Please include your school's roll number on all correspondence.