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Primary Online Database (POD)

To: The Boards of Management and Principal Teachers of Primary Schools

Introduction

This circular provides supplementary information on POD and also updates Section 4 of Primary Circular 25/2015. All other sections of Primary Circular 25/2015 still apply.

1. *Progressions for the 2016/2017 academic year*

   Schools are advised that the Progressions module will be open from the 1st of June until the 31st of October 2016. Schools must progress their students from the 2015/2016 academic year to the 2016/2017 academic year and **only then** enter their new entrants for the 2016/2017 academic year. Detailed instructions on this process will be emailed to schools and will also be available on the Department's website. Schools are reminded that training manuals and instruction videos are also available on the website.

2. *Annual Census returns*

   As previously outlined, from 2016/2017, the enrolment counts on POD will become the basis for grant payments and teacher allocations. The annual Census returns process, which indicates the number of pupils enrolled as of the 30th of September, will now be made through POD. It is imperative that schools have progressed to the 2016/2017 academic year prior to submitting their annual Census returns through POD. The Census returns process must be completed by the 30th of October. Detailed instructions on this process will be emailed to schools and will also be available on the Department's website. Training manuals and instruction videos will also be available on the website.

3. *Requirements for schools to ensure all pupils are counted on POD for capitation purposes*

   As the enrolment counts on POD will become the basis for grant payments and teacher allocations, it is imperative that a record exists on POD for each pupil enrolled in the school. The

following arrangements will apply in relation to the population of POD for the academic year 2016/2017 onwards:

1) In relation to all new enrolments to primary schools from 2016/2017 onwards, schools must ensure that parents/guardians are fully informed of the requirement on schools to transfer data onwards to POD and parents/guardians should be made fully aware that they are giving their child's details for this purpose, in addition to providing it for the purpose of local school administration. Schools should be cognisant of this when enrolling new pupils to their school in the future.

2) The Department is satisfied that there is a clear legal basis for the onward transfer of data from   schools to POD. The Department understands that, despite this, a very small minority of parents/guardians may express concerns about data that they are providing to the school being transferred onwards to POD. The Fair Processing Notice contains information on the purpose, legal basis for data collection and retention policy of the data, and schools are requested to alert parents/guardians to the fact that this information is now available on the Department's website.

   The Department is satisfied that the information in the Fair Processing Notice will provide clarity and reassurance to any parents who may have concerns. However, in the very small minority of cases where, despite all efforts by schools and the clarifications provided by the Department, the parent/guardian of a pupil still very strongly objects to the onward provision of data to POD, the Department recognises that a practical arrangement must be made in order to ensure that schools are not adversely affected and that a record can be made for all pupils on POD. Therefore, for these cases the following arrangements will apply:

   a. Parents/guardians who continue to object to the onward provision of data to POD need to put their objections in writing to the school in order for their wishes to be carried out. Note that verbal objections will **not** be sufficient in this regard, as schools will be required by the Department to maintain written records of objections. Parents/guardians who object should be given every opportunity to provide their objections in writing to the school. *

   b. Schools that are in receipt of a letter from a parent/guardian outlining their objections to the onward provision of data to POD can create a partial record for that pupil on POD, using the guidelines available on request from the POD Helpdesk. This will ensure that a record is created for the pupil which will be counted for grant payments and teacher allocation purposes. In these cases, schools will be required to have a corresponding letter from that pupil's parent/guardian objecting to the transfer of certain data available on file in the school. These records must be available for future inspection on request by the Department's Inspectorate.

5.   Transferring of sixth class pupils' details to post-primary schools

This is being examined for the future and is not currently available.

6.   Eircodes

In line with Government policy, the Department of Education and Skills is promoting the use of Eircodes. From September 2016, POD will include a field for Eircode as part of the address information. The Department asks that, in the cases where schools have a pupil's Eircode, they enter this as part of the address information.

7.   POD Helpdesk

Schools are reminded that the POD helpdesk is available Monday to Friday from 8.30 to 5.00. The helpdesk can be contacted via e-mail at pod@education.gov.ie or by phone at 01-8892311.

Signed:

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Contacts

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*Please note that paragraph 2(a) of this circular was amended on 11th July 2016