



TO THE BOARDS OF MANAGEMENT AND PRINCIPAL  
TEACHERS OF PRIMARY SCHOOLS

**Updating and simplifying the manner in which schools can maintain pupil enrolment and attendance records (Clárleabhar, Leabhar Rolla and Leabhar Tinrimh Laethúil) following the introduction of the Primary Online Database (POD)**

**1. Purpose of this circular**

The purpose of this circular is to advise Boards of Management and Principal Teachers that, with the introduction of the Primary Online Database (POD), the manner in which schools can maintain pupil enrolment and attendance records (Clárleabhar, Leabhar Rolla and Leabhar Tinrimh Laethúil) is being updated and simplified.

This circular is structured as follows:

1. Purpose of circular
2. Summary of key changes
3. Reminder of the requirement to maintain accurate enrolment and attendance records
4. Confirmation that POD replaces the Clárleabhar (Register)
5. Maintenance of the Leabhar Rolla (Roll Book) in electronic format
6. Maintenance of the Leabhar Tinrimh Laethúil (Daily Attendance Book) in electronic format
7. Procurement and contractual matters in relation to an electronic system or package
8. Queries in relation to this circular
9. Appendix 1 – Requirements in relation to using an electronic format
10. Appendix 2 – Updating POD when a pupil leaves or transfers to another school

## **2. Summary of key changes**

Primary schools that have populated all their pupil enrolment data on POD in accordance with the requirements set out by the Department's Statistics Section ([click here for link](#)) are permitted to do the following with effect from the commencement of the 2015/16 school year:

- (i) They no longer need to maintain the Clárleabhar. POD contains the same information and it is not necessary for schools to maintain a duplicate record in the Clárleabhar.
- (ii) If they use an electronic system for recording attendance of pupils, schools no longer need to also maintain the Leabhar Rolla in hard copy format, subject to such electronic system meeting certain minimum requirements as set out in **Appendix 1** of this Circular.
- (iii) If they use an electronic system for recording attendance of pupils, they may use that system as an alternative to the Department's excel version of the Leabhar Tinrimh Laethúil that is available on the Department website, subject to such electronic system meeting certain minimum requirements as set out in **Appendix 1** of this Circular.

Schools should also note the requirement to update POD in accordance with the four steps set out in **Appendix 2** when a pupil leaves a school for any reason including to transfer to another school.

More detailed information in relation to these changes is outlined in the remainder of this Circular. These changes are effective from the commencement of the 2015/16 school year and replace the relevant sections of the previously issued Circulars, Rules and directions in relation to these matters.

## **3. Reminder of the requirement to maintain accurate enrolment and attendance records**

Schools are reminded that irrespective of whether they use electronic or manual systems at school level they have a requirement to maintain accurate pupil enrolment and attendance

records. These records (including any reports from electronic systems) must be made available to the Department (e.g. when a Department Inspector is visiting a school) or an Educational Welfare Officer, if requested.

Department Circular 0028/2013 outlined the simplified arrangements for the maintenance of pupil enrolment and attendance records in the Clárleabhar, Leabhar Rolla and Leabhar Tinrimh Laethúil. With the introduction of POD, these arrangements are being further updated and simplified for those schools that have populated all their pupil enrolment data on POD in accordance with the requirements set out by the Department's Statistics Section.

School authorities are reminded that:

- (i) only those pupils who are enrolled in the school on 30 September and who are expected, at that stage, to remain in attendance in the school for the remainder of the school year can be included in a school's 30 September enrolment return to the Department. Department Circular 0025/2015 confirmed that from the 2016/17 school year this return will be done via POD and will be the basis for grant payments and teacher allocations to each school.
- (ii) The Department's policy for cases that involve any deliberate overstatement of enrolment is to refer them to An Garda Síochána.

#### **4. Confirmation that POD replaces the Clárleabhar**

Primary schools are currently required to maintain a record of their registered pupil enrolments in a hard copy book known as the Clárleabhar. The same information will now be held in electronic format in the Primary Online Database (POD).

The Department is now confirming that primary schools that have populated all their pupil enrolment data on POD in accordance with the requirements set out by the Department's Statistics Section no longer need to maintain the Clárleabhar. POD will replace the Clárleabhar. This change is effective from the commencement of the 2015/16

school year. If a school wishes, it may continue maintaining the Clárleabhar in hard copy but this will not be a mandatory requirement. It is intended that schools will be enabled to print a hardcopy of their registered pupil enrolment data from POD for their own records or as may be required from time to time by the Educational Welfare Service of TUSLA.

TUSLA has confirmed to the Department that in the case of primary schools, a school's pupil enrolment records on POD will be regarded by it as the "register" for the purposes of Section 20 of the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000.

POD is an electronic live database of primary school pupils which will collect individual information on each pupil, including their PPSN, and which will track pupils through their primary education. Schools must ensure that it is kept accurate and up to date to reflect any changes in the pupils attending the school.

The requirement under Section 20 of the Act to remove a pupil from the school register in circumstances where the school has been notified that (a) the pupil is registered in another school or (b) registered with TUSLA as receiving education in a place other than a school or separately for any other reason will be met by means of updating the status of the pupil on POD. In this regard it should be noted that the pupil's education record remains on POD but the status of it is updated to reflect the fact that the pupil is registered in another school or is registered with TUSLA as appropriate. This functionality in relation to updating POD will be available from the beginning of the 2015/16 school year.

The 4 steps to be carried out to update POD when a pupil leaves a school including for inter school transfers are set out in **Appendix 2**.

Further information on the POD procedures is available on the Department's website at

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

Any queries in relation to POD can be e-mailed to [pod@education.gov.ie](mailto:pod@education.gov.ie)

## 5. Maintenance of the Leabhar Rolla in electronic format

The purpose of the Leabhar Rolla is to record the daily and cumulative attendance of individual pupils. Department Circular 0028/2013 outlined simplified arrangements for the maintenance of the Leabhar Rolla.

The Department is providing primary schools, that have populated all their pupil enrolment data on POD in accordance with the requirements set out by the Department's Statistics Section, with an option to use an electronic system for recording the daily attendance of pupils to replace the current hard copy Leabhar Rolla with effect from the commencement of the 2015/16 school year. These records can now be maintained electronically, subject to such an electronic system meeting certain minimum requirements as set out in **Appendix 1**.

Schools that opt to use an electronic system to record daily attendance must use the data entered on POD in setting up the system. As changes are made to POD, the school must update its electronic records. Complete data integrity must be maintained between POD and a school's electronic records.

It is a matter for the Board of Management of each school to decide whether to continue maintaining the Leabhar Rolla in hard copy or to maintain the record of daily attendance in electronic format. Whichever system is adopted should be used consistently throughout all the classes in the school.

With effect from the commencement of the 2015/16 school year, schools therefore have the option of:

- (i) using an electronic system to record and generate reports on the daily attendance of pupils (subject to it meeting the minimum requirements set out in Appendix 1)  
or
- (ii) maintaining a hard copy of the Leabhar Rolla, requests for which may be submitted to [requestrollbooks@education.gov.ie](mailto:requestrollbooks@education.gov.ie)

A pupil's PPSN is the unique identifier when setting up a pupil's enrolment data on POD. POD then generates a unique Pupil ID number for each pupil. Schools must use this POD generated Pupil ID number (not the actual PPSN) as the unique identifier when using:

- a) an electronic system to maintain the record of daily attendance in electronic format
- b) maintaining a hard copy of the Leabhar Rolla. However, due to the space restrictions in the hardcopy Leabhar Rolla it is sufficient to record the last 5 digits of the POD generated Pupil ID number in column A (or another unused column) of the Leabhar Rolla.

This change to using the POD generated Pupil ID number as the unique identifier in the Leabhar Rolla or when maintaining daily attendance records in electronic format must be made for all new and existing pupils before the end of 2015. This is important as it ensures there is a clear and easily verifiable linkage between a pupil's enrolment record on POD and his/her daily attendance record held by the school. Up to now this linkage was done by using the Clárleabhar number as the pupil identifier in the Leabhar Rolla.

Schools using an electronic system must ensure that it provides that a pupil's name will be recorded as removed from the roll on the electronic system on the next school day following 20 consecutive absences. Schools are reminded of the requirement under the Education Welfare Act 2000 that they must also notify the Education Welfare Service of TUSLA when the aggregate number of school days on which a pupil is absent during a school year reaches 20 days.

Schools are also reminded that the roll should be called at the same time each day, normally within the first hour after the commencement of the school's 5 hour 40 minute day.

## **6. Maintenance of the Leabhar Tinrimh Laethúil in electronic format**

The purpose of the Leabhar Tinrimh Laethúil is to record summary information in relation to daily, monthly and annual attendance of pupils. Please note that it is not necessary to have a separate record for boys and girls.

Circular 0028/2013 advised schools that the Leabhar Tinrimh Laethúil would no longer be available in hard copy and provided schools with details of how to access an electronic excel format from the Department website. Schools now have two options:

- (i) Schools that continue to use the hard copy version of the Leabhar Rolla may opt to use the Excel sheet provided on the Department website.
- (ii) Schools that opt to use an electronic system for recording the attendance of pupils may use that system to generate reports of the information normally recorded in the Leabhar Tinrimh.

## **7. Procurement and contractual matters in relation to an electronic system or package**

The procurement process for an electronic system or package is a matter for each school and all initial and recurring costs associated with any electronic system or package purchased is a matter for each school.

If a Board of Management decides to maintain these records in electronic format it is responsible for ensuring that any electronic system or package that it uses, or intends to use, meets the minimum level of requirements that are set out in **Appendix 1** of this Circular.

Before entering into a contract (or renewing an existing contract) for the maintenance of its records in electronic format, the Board must ensure the following:

- (a) The Procurement process complies with relevant public procurement requirements;
- (b) The electronic system or package satisfies all of the minimum requirements (including those relating to appropriate audit controls) set out at **Appendix 1**;

- (c) Ownership of the pupil attendance records (including all historic records) that are hosted and/or stored in an electronic format will remain with the school. The school is responsible for ensuring that its records are held in an appropriate and secure manner;
- (d) All records that are maintained in electronic format comply with data protection legislation requirements.

If a school already uses an electronic system or package it must establish that it meets the minimum requirements set out in **Appendix 1**. If it does not meet these requirements (and the school wants to continue with an electronic format) then the school should either arrange with the existing provider for any gaps to be rectified or change to a new provider at the next renewal date.

## **8. Queries in relation to this circular**

Queries in relation to this circular should be e-mailed to the Department at:

[schoolgovernance@education.gov.ie](mailto:schoolgovernance@education.gov.ie)

Queries in relation to data protection, including data retention, may be dealt with by accessing [www.dataprotectionschools.ie](http://www.dataprotectionschools.ie).

Queries in relation to the archival and storage of official records that are no longer being used should be dealt with by contacting the National Archives at: [mail@nationalarchives.ie](mailto:mail@nationalarchives.ie).

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## Appendix 1

### Requirements in relation to using an electronic format

1. The electronic system must meet the following minimum requirements:
  - (a) Accurately record the information currently required by the hard copy Leabhar Rolla and the Department's Daily Attendance Excel sheet (as set out in Department Circular 0028/2013);
  - (b) Store all records in a secure manner and ensure that the integrity of these records is protected;
  - (c) Have appropriate audit controls that generate an easily viewable and accessible audit trail. As part of audit controls, it must be capable of generating at school level:
    - (i) a log of all data entries (including any subsequent changes to or deletions of previously entered data) providing details of the relevant system user and a record of the time and date of each data entry and in the case of any changes or deletions, the reason entered on the system for each;
    - (ii) an audit trail on a specific pupil to indicate all data entries, changes and deletions made in respect of that pupil, including details of each system user concerned and records of the time and date for all entries, updates, changes and deletions made;
    - (iii) the date and time of printing and the name of the system user who printed the record must be automatically included in all records that are printed from the system;
    - (iv) controls to ensure access to the system, including the ability to update records on the system, must be on a needs only basis and operate through the use of secure passwords.

- (d) Facilitate oversight by the Board of Management, by providing for read only access to be available, if requested, to the Chairperson of the Board of Management;
- (e) Be capable of generating historical attendance records and include a facility to secure and report information for defined dates and for individuals;
- (f) Include appropriate back-up provision to safeguard data and records against power or system failure or other contingency and,
- (g) Allow for legitimate updating of records outside of the normal timeframes for same e.g. a power cut on a given day might prevent a school from updating its data on that day. It is recognised that access to an electronic system may not always be possible (for technical or other reasons) at the time when required and that from time to time, it may be necessary to input data records (such as the roll call) to the system at a later stage when such access is restored. However, the system must provide that where data entries are made outside of the normal timeframes (e.g. after the normal period allowed for roll call) the system user concerned must be required to input the reason for same and that all such late entries are clearly identifiable and distinguishable (e.g. by the records being displayed in a different colour from others) from other records. In any case where data entries are made outside of the normal timeframes, the school is required to print and retain a copy of same and this must be made available to the Department if requested.

## Appendix 2

### **Four steps to be followed to update POD when a pupil leaves a school for any reason including when the pupil transfers to another school**

The four steps outlined below must be followed to update POD when a pupil leaves a school for any reason including when the pupil transfers to another school.

Please note that the POD system will automatically categorise a pupil as a “leaver” from a school at the end of their last class year in the school (e.g. at the end of 6<sup>th</sup> class).

It is important to note that a pupil’s education record remains on POD and the only change that occurs is that the status of the pupil’s education record is updated to reflect the fact that the pupil has left a school or is transferring to another school.

#### **Step 1:**

The first school updates the pupil’s enrolment record on POD by marking the pupil as a “leaver” on POD, recording the reason for same from the menu of options provided on the POD system and recording the actual leaving date of the pupil. If the pupil is transferring to another school and the name of the new school is known at this stage then this should also be recorded on POD and this will result in the new school being automatically notified about the forthcoming transfer of the new pupil via the POD system. If the name of the new school is not known at this stage then Step 1 must still be completed by the first school.

It is very important that Step 1 is completed in a timely manner and no later than 2 days after the actual leaving date of the pupil except where the school did not know or could not reasonably have known that the pupil had left the school. In this regard, where a pupil is absent for 20 consecutive days in a school year and there is no information that indicates that the pupil is returning to the school then such a pupil must be recorded as a “leaver” on POD and this must be done within 2 days after the 20<sup>th</sup> consecutive day absence.

**Step 2:**

The second school has an obligation under Section 20(2) of the Education Welfare Act 2000 to enter the pupil on its register on the day on which the pupil first attends that school. This can be done by the school by updating the pupil's education record on POD. If the first school has already done Step 1 then this is a seamless process. If the first school has not already done Step 1 then the second school will get a "PPSN conflict" message on the POD system and a notification will automatically issue to both the first and second school of the requirement to do Step 1 and each school will receive the name and contact details of the other school. When Step 1 is done Step 2 can then be completed.

**Step 3:**

When Step 2 is completed the second school has an obligation under Section 20(3) of the Education Welfare Act 2000 to notify the first school in writing of the enrolment of the pupil in its school.

**Step 4:**

Following receipt of this letter the first school shall record receipt of same in the school's notes section of POD. The completion of this step complies with the first school's obligation under Section 20(4) of the Education Welfare Act 2000 to remove the pupil's name from its register.