An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Circular Number 0033/2025

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

Update to the capturing/entry of pupil ethnicity to the Primary Online Data (POD) and the Post-Primary Online Database (PPOD).

Changes with effect from 2025/26 school year

1. Introduction

This circular provides supplementary information on the Primary Online Database (POD) and the Post-Primary Online Database (PPOD) in light of the upcoming introduction of the National Equality Data Strategy, and adds to section 5 of Circular 50/2015.

2. Changes being introduced

The following is added as an addendum to section 5 of Circular 50/2015. Currently, when transferring data to POD or PPOD, schools are permitted to leave certain data fields blank, and this is accepted by the system. This includes the data field related to a pupil's ethnicity and religion. Commencing with new entrant records created for the 2025/26 school year ethnic or cultural background will be included as a mandatory field, that is, the response given by the parent/guardian must be provided and it will no longer be permissible for this field to be left blank. Additionally, the recommended list of ethnic or cultural backgrounds will be updated in line with the latest Census of Population. It is a matter for schools to update their enrollment forms (where necessary) to ensure they are up to date with the latest ethnic/cultural background categories.

3. Revised ethnic/cultural background categories for 2025/26

To keep POD and PPOD in line with the recommendations from the Central Statistics Office, the categories of ethnicity are being updated based on the latest Census 2022. Schools should note the inclusion of two additional categories recommended by CSO: "Asian or Asian Irish – Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi" and "Other, including mixed background – Arabic". A write in space should be provided alongside the option "Other, including mixed background – all others". It will not be permissible to leave this value blank,

where a parent/guardian has explicitly provided no consent for the ethnicity of the pupil to be captured, this must be returned on POD/PPOD using the option "No consent".

The following options are acceptable on an enrolment form / entry to POD/PPOD

- [ ] White Irish
- [ ] Irish Traveller
- [ ] Roma
- [ ] Any other White Background
- [ ] Black or Black Irish – African
- [ ] Black or Black Irish – Any other Black background
- [ ] Asian or Asian Irish – Chinese
- [ ] Asian or Asian Irish – Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi
- [ ] Asian or Asian Irish – any other Asian background
- [ ] Other, including mixed background – Arab
- [ ] Other, including mixed background – all others: [_____]
- [ ] No Consent

4. Missing data values versus explicit no consent

In collecting pupil data, missing data values occur when a response is absent, which creates uncertainty around whether the respondent did not see the question, if the question was asked at all, or chose not to answer it. This ambiguity can complicate data interpretation. On the other hand, a response indicating "no consent" clearly shows that the respondent intentionally opted not to provide this information. Understanding this difference is essential, as it helps distinguish between unintentional non-response and deliberate refusals, leading to more accurate analysis and insights. While it will now be mandatory for schools to provide a value for ethnic/cultural background for new entrants to their school, the right of parents/guardians to not provide ethnic/cultural background for their children remains unchanged. The main difference is a blank/missing value will no longer be acceptable in place of explicit returning "no consent" if that is the case.

5. Reason for changes

Enhanced capitation rates exist for pupils of certain ethnic/cultural backgrounds. As such it is vital that this information is captured accurately and returned to the Department. In addition, the department will have additional reporting/monitoring requirements under the upcoming National Equality Data Strategy that requires it to ensure that its data on ethnic/cultural background is accurate. The UN's Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 also requires reporting on ethnic and cultural minorities in educational settings.

6. Circulation and Queries

Please ensure that copies of this circular are provided to all members of the Board of Management and its contents are brought to the attention to parents/guardians of incoming pupils.

This Circular can be accessed on the Department's website under https://www.gov.ie/en/circulars/

Individual queries should be forwarded as follows:

For Primary Schools: Email: POD@education.gov.ie or by contacting the POD helpdesk Phone: 01-8892311

For Post Primary Schools: Email: PPOD@education.gov.ie or by contacting the PPOD helpdesk Phone: (090) 648 4128

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