

Protocol for the request of Data

Divesting survey

Background

A Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary school sector was established in March 2011 to facilitate a structured consultation process and to advise the Minister for Education and Skills on how the primary education system can provide a sufficiently diverse range of primary schools and on how all primary schools can become more inclusive. The report of the Forum Advisory Group was published in April 2012 and the Minister outlined his action plan in response to the report in June 2012.

Survey Process

As part of his overall response to the recommendations of the Advisory Group, the Minister started a new process to look at transferring some schools run by the Catholic Church to other school patron bodies in 44 areas¹ around the country. This process was undertaken initially on a pilot basis in the following areas: Arklow, Castlebar, Whitehall (including Kilmore West and Beaumont), Trim and Tramore. Surveys are now being carried out in the remaining areas .

The next step in this process involves asking all the parents/guardians of all children aged 0 to 12 years old in these areas to tell us what type of school they would like their children to attend. The intention is to identify the level of demand from parents/guardians for a wider choice of school type in areas where that choice is currently limited. The responses of parents/guardians will be used to consider what changes, if any, could be made to widen the choice of primary schools in these areas.

The Department of Education & Skills will publish detailed reports on the survey outcomes. This will be done in a manner that fully respects the confidentiality and data protection rights of all those who respond.

The survey outcomes will allow us to identify the level of parental demand for a wider diversity of school choice in the selected areas. Where such demand is identified, the options for a possible transfer of ownership of some schools will be considered further in partnership with the patrons and school communities concerned.

Reason for collection of Personal Data

The purpose of the divestment surveys is to establish the views of local parents on the need for additional school types in the identified areas. If there is significant demand for additional school types in an area, then an examination will take place to establish how this demand can be met. This may involve the transfer of a school or schools in the area from one form of

¹ Please note that Kildare Town has been removed from the original list of areas to be surveyed following consultation with Patron bodies.

patronage to another in order to align overall provision with the locally expressed demand.

Given the important position of a school in its local community, it is vital that any examination of options for the future of schools in a local area is based on an accurate representation of the views of parents or guardians in that area.

School provision is dependent on the number of pupils locally who will actually attend any particular type of school. It is necessary to avoid a situation where changes are made that are not supported locally and that may therefore result in a particular school having empty places while other schools are under unnecessary pressure.

It is therefore important for the Department to be able to validate all survey returns to verify that each respondent resides in or close to the area being surveyed and that they have children who will potentially attend one of the schools in the area.

For this reason each respondent is being asked for a number of personal details including name, address, PPSN and number of children and the date of birth of those children. We will electronically match the data collected in this survey against relevant data in other Government Departments to verify that respondents reside in or close to the area and have children who will potentially attend one of the schools in the area.

In carrying out these data matching exercises we will be mindful of our responsibilities to protect the rights and privacy of individuals in accordance with the Data Protection Acts 1998 and 2003.

Data retention

Once the data has been analysed and the report on the individual area has been published the data will be anonymised by small area, as defined by the Central Statistics Office, and personal data such as name and PPSN will be deleted from the database. All information collected in the survey will be treated as strictly confidential. Security standards will be implemented to prevent unauthorised access, and it will be subject to the Data Protection Act.

Legislative Basis for Requests

It is a function of the Minister for Education & Skills to plan the provision of education in recognised schools.

The Department of Education and Skills is a specified body under the Social Welfare Consolidation Act 2005 and is therefore allowed by legislation to use a PPS number.

Section 262(4) of the Social Welfare Consolidation Act 2005 states that:

“ (4) A person shall give to a specified body his or her personal public service number and the personal public service numbers of his or her spouse and children, where relevant, as required by the body for the purposes of the persons transaction.”

Summary of Procedures Regarding Requests for Personal Information from Relevant Persons

1. Information supplied to the Department of Education & Skills by a relevant person shall be transmitted by secure means and will be stored in a secure manner.
2. The Department of Education and Skills will adhere to Data Protection guidelines and legislation.
3. Access to data will be restricted to those persons within the Department of Education and Skills directly working on the survey process.
4. All data received will not be retained and will promptly be securely deleted or destroyed by the Department of Education and Skills on completion of the validation exercise.
5. The Department of Education and Skills will not disclose, share or otherwise provide data received by it in response to a request from a Department/ public body/ agency/ to any other public body or third party.