

Briefing for the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee on petition [PE2181](#): Remove teachers' ability to backdate and alter school records, lodged by Paul Blaker on behalf of Accountability Scotland

Brief overview of issues raised by the petition

The petitioner claims that local authorities or schools have backdated records on the support of a child. These records are made on [SEEMiS](#).

The petitioner raised [this issue at the Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee in November 2024 during a session on the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman](#).

There were [reports in August 2025](#) that East Dunbartonshire Council had been censured by the Information Commissioner's Office for backdating education records. In a separate case, [the SPSO found that a Fife Council](#) school "had not consistently recorded incidents reported in pastoral and other recording systems".

Legal obligations

Data protection legislation in the UK – the UK General Data Protection Regulation, the Data Protection Act 2018 and some provisions in the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025 – govern the use of personal data. Personal data are any data which can allow a living individual to be identified. They include data which do not on their own allow a person to be identified but can be combined with other available data to do so.

School records contain personal data which allow individual pupils to be identified. They are therefore personal data under data protection legislation and subject to the relevant rules and requirements.

There are additional protections for "special category data" – basically data dealing with particularly sensitive subjects, such as health and racial or ethnic background. School records may also deal with special category data and, where they do, they will be subject to additional requirements.

Data protection legislation contains a range of requirements around the way personal data must be dealt with and the rights of the people whose data is being processed. Key to this regime are the "data protection principles". These are that personal data must be:

- processed lawfully (under one of the grounds set out in data protection legislation), fairly and transparently

- collected for specified purposes and not processed in a manner which is incompatible with those purposes
- accurate and, where necessary, kept up to date
- kept in a form which permits identification of individuals for no longer than is necessary for the purposes they were collected
- processed in a manner which ensures appropriate security (including protection against unauthorised or unlawful processing).

In addition, the person or body responsible for processing the data must be able to demonstrate compliance with these principles.

Data protection is a reserved policy area and the Information Commissioner's Office is responsible for overseeing compliance with data protection legislation. Separately, individuals can take court action to enforce their own data protection rights, and some actions which breach data protection law are criminal offences.

From information in a BBC news article on the case relating to East Dunbartonshire Council (Andrew Picken, "[Council rapped after school bullying 'whitewash' claim](#)", 25 August 2025), it would appear that the Information Commissioner's Office has issued a decision about the way the local authority responsible for the incident highlighted in the petition handled the personal data in question.

The Information Commissioner's Office noted that changing the date an entry was recorded as having been made was a breach of the requirement for transparency as outlined in the principles above. It may also impact on the requirement for accuracy.

The Information Commissioner's Office told the local authority to change the functionality of the SEEMiS system to prevent backdating in this way. The BBC article contains a statement from the council stating it has taken action to address this issue.

What is SEEMiS?

SEEMiS Group LLP is owned by the 32 Local Authorities. Each of the 32 Local Authorities in Scotland have chosen to become members of the LLP.

Originally SEEMiS was the management information system (MIS) provider for the 12 local authorities that came from the ex-Strathclyde Region. However, over the past couple of decades, the remaining 20 local authorities migrated away from their previous MIS providers to SEEMiS.

SEEMiS holds the core student records for students in Local Authority schools in Scotland. Each Local Authority decides on the functionality within the SEEMiS system they wish their schools to use and will provide the required direction, policy and procedure to their own users of our system on what they

should collect and store. The core student record is also used to gather the data aligned to the Scottish Government student and staff censuses.

Pastoral notes on SEEMiS

SPICe asked SEEMiS about the issues raised in the East Dunbartonshire case highlighted above. SEEMiS was aware of the case and, from the information available to them, it appeared that the issue was in relation to Pastoral Notes within the system.

The ability of staff or teachers to backdate or update records in Pastoral Notes is intended to align with the day-to-day practice in schools. Teachers or Pupil Support staff may not be able to update records immediately and may create or update records at the end of the day or at a point in the week where they have non-contact time. Furthermore, the initial note may have been created by administrative support staff and then further notes input to the system by teaching or support staff.

Previously, local authorities could access a record of the history of an entry, from SEEMiS and it was possible to see when a change had been made to the notes and by whom but not what the note content change was. Following the East Dunbartonshire case, this was identified as an issue and changes were made to the system in December 2023, which means that any request from a local authority will also now include the note content history for notes created after this date.

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Senior Researchers

7 October 2025

The purpose of this briefing is to provide a brief overview of issues raised by the petition. SPICe research specialists are not able to discuss the content of petition briefings with petitioners or other members of the public. However, if you have any comments on any petition briefing you can email us at spice@parliament.scot

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