

# Paper based Registers

“Back in the day”, school registers were taken on paper. Each form had a book of gridded paper for a register. At form time the teacher would make a slash mark “/” for present and write “O” or “A” for absence, “L” for late, etc. Being on paper meant that they didn’t need any special tech and it was easy for anyone to fill out a register to make sure students were in class, but it came with some problems.

- If a register was left on a desk anyone could change it – or it might get lost
- Mistakes were difficult – and messy – to correct, which could make the register difficult to read
- Statistics could only really be produced once a term as it took a really long time to do
- If a register was taken at form time it was difficult to check that students then went to all their lessons

However, paper registers are easy to carry around – especially for a fire drill or moving to a different classroom – or for PE teachers, teaching outside.

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# Optical Mark Recognition (OMR)

OMR works by little boxes being filled in by pencil on a special sheet and then scanned in an OMR machine into a computer program.

The hardware required is fairly cheap and can be used for other purposes (like marking multi choice tests).

It also means that data can be analysed on a daily basis without an exceptional amount of work. This means it's easy to spot trends in attendance for individuals and groups.

However, scanning the sheets still requires some work - they still need to be collected from the teachers and then put into the machine. Also, as this takes time, the data is not 'real time' – there's a delay, unlike some of the other systems. Sometimes there are scanning problems, too – corrections are difficult to do, and folded or messy registers will not scan correctly.

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A photograph of a 'PUPIL REGISTRATION FORM 1' from the SIMS system. The form features a grid for marking attendance. The columns are labeled 'MONDAY', 'TUESDAY', 'WEDNESDAY', 'THURSDAY', and 'FRIDAY', each with sub-columns for 'am' and 'pm'. The rows are numbered from 01 to 28. A 'Student Name' column is on the left. The form includes instructions: 'Mark as this' and 'Use only HB pencil when completing this form.' There are also checkboxes for 'Student Absent', 'Student Late', and 'Student Present'. A 'SHEET NUMBER' box is in the top right corner.



# Card Systems



## Smart Cards

- Have a chip built in
- Like staff badges at DEC
- Students “beep in” to each lesson

## Swipe Cards

- Magnetic stripe
- Like a Tesco Clubcard or hotel keycard
- Students “swipe in” to each lesson

ID Cards can be used for lots of things other than registration, including paying for food, photocopiers; borrowing from the library; access to rooms/gates and more. Both types are fairly cheap to buy but you do need to put readers in every classroom which can add up quickly.

Registration with these cards is ‘real-time’ – the mark is recorded on the system the precise second you arrive and scan in.

There might be some problems, though, including what would happen if you forget your card or if someone ‘borrows’ a card to sign in for another student so they can skip classes. Also, you must consider what to do if the ICT system breaks – there’s no paper to fill a register on.

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# Biometric Methods

“Biometric” comes from two words meaning “life” and “measure” – we measure something that is a unique part of your living being like fingerprints or the pattern of your iris, inside your eye. Think of how our lunch system at school works.

Biometric methods are still controversial with some people – they may be worried that the government or police might get access to the records.

The hardware is more expensive than the other systems and there is still the question of what to do if the ICT system fails.

There’s nothing for students to lose, though, and no one can fake your mark on the register for you, either. This is another system with ‘real-time’ registration, meaning that the data is recorded the second you scan in and can be analysed immediately.

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