

Deferring School Entry

Guidance for parent(s) who feel that their child would benefit from an additional year of Early Learning and Childcare

Curriculum for Excellence

Curriculum for Excellence aims to raise standards and prepare children and young people for their future. The curriculum begins in Early Learning and Childcare and continues to the end of S3 when learners move to the senior phase. Its purpose is to develop the knowledge, skills, attributes and capabilities of the four capacities of Curriculum for Excellence:

- Successful Learners
- Confident Individuals
- Responsible Citizens
- Effective Contributors

It is designed to provide the depth and breadth of education to develop flexible and adaptable young people with the knowledge and skills they will need to thrive now and in the future. Early Learning and Childcare and Primary One are presented together as **Early Level** where learning approaches build on the knowledge, skills, attributes and capabilities explored in Early Learning and Childcare. The continuous focus on Literacy, Numeracy and Health and Wellbeing underpins a clear, shared understanding of progression and high quality learning and teaching in order to meet the needs of all.

When should my child start Primary School?

Traditionally in Scotland almost all children aged between 4 ½ and 5 enrol in primary school in August, at the start of the autumn term. You should make an enrolment application to the Catchment Primary School in the November before he/she is due to start school.

Parents of children whose 5th birthday is in January or February, have the right to start school, or to defer entry to Primary School and have a funded Early Learning and Childcare place for another year.

This does not mean that all parents with children in this age group will choose to take up this option. The parent, the school and the local authority collectively have the responsibility to arrive at the decision, which is in the best interests of the child.

Where the 5th birthday is between the start of the Autumn term (in August) and the 31st December, parents have the legal right to choose not to send their child to primary school until the beginning of the following school session.

However, they do not have an entitlement to an additional funded year in an Early Learning and Childcare setting. The offer of a funded place is at the discretion of the local authority. However, parents can choose to fund their own additional year in a non-local authority setting. Children may only attend local authority provision when they have a funded place to do so.

How should I decide if my child is ready to start Primary School?

By the time children reach the age of 4 or 5 years old, there are already differences in each child's development, learning and levels of independence. All Primary One classes will have a spread of age ranges, abilities and needs.

If you have concerns about whether your child should take up a place in Primary One you should discuss this with the head teacher/manager of the Early Learning and Childcare setting(s) your child attends **as soon as possible**. This enables focussed discussions to be planned and appropriate evidence to be collated.

What else should I consider?

Some questions that should be explored when there are concerns about school entry are:

- What are the current barriers for your child moving into Primary One?
- What strategies are currently being used and what is the impact on the child?
- Has the future primary school been involved in this discussion?
- What could be put in place in Primary One to ensure your child's needs can be met?
- What evidence supports the suggestion that your child's needs cannot be met in Primary One?
- Are there any exceptional circumstances which would suggest another year in nursery would meet the needs of your child?
- Have the possible long term consequences of delaying school entry been fully explained to you e.g. school leaving age, long term impact of child being older than peers?

[How do I apply for an additional year in Early Learning and Childcare?](#)

Staff in your Early Learning and Childcare setting will be able to explain the process and the relevant paperwork that is required. Staff will support parents/carers to make an informed decision and discuss any concerns.

An application form will be completed after discussion with the staff at the Early Learning and Childcare setting. The Head Teacher/ Manager or his/her nominated representative will discuss the application along with yourself and it will be sent to the Education Business Unit, East Lothian Council, John Muir House, Haddington by the closing date on the form (usually around the end of February each year).

For children with birthdays between the start of the Autumn term (in August) and 31st December, the Early Learning and Childcare setting must also submit their recommendation with supporting evidence. The application form also has a section for parents/carers to explain why you are requesting an additional year of Early Learning and Childcare. You will also be asked to agree to the content of this form and provide any supporting information you wish to be considered eg Health professional reports

[What will happen then?](#)

For children with a January / February birthday the additional year will be granted and a funded place, if possible, secured in the nursery of your choice. You will receive confirmation in writing in March/April.

Other applications will then be considered by an Early Years Panel who will look at written evidence from the parents, school and other professionals. The questions mentioned in the section 'What else should I consider?' will form the basis of the Panel's consideration of an application. You will then be informed in writing of the outcome of your application. ***The allocation of a funded Early Learning and Childcare place is not automatic and is at the discretion of the local authority.*** The process does not change in any way your right to choose to defer your child's entry to primary school. It simply acts as a mechanism to support decisions around whether the place will be funded by the Council or must be funded by you.

[Appeals Process](#)

If the deferral application is not agreed and you wish to appeal the Local Authority decision, parents/carers may do so in writing within fourteen days of the notification of the local authority's decision. Parents/carers should provide further information in relation to the deferred entry application.

All appeals will be considered by an Early Years Appeals Panel taking account of the further information provided by parents/carers before a final decision is made.

Parents/Carers will then be informed of the outcome in writing. The outcome of this appeal will be the final decision.

If you disagree with the decision you can still choose to delay entry to Primary One but you would not receive funding to support an additional year of Early Learning and Childcare. Parents can choose to fund their own additional year in a non-local authority setting.

[My child does not go to nursery. What should I do?](#)

Where a child has not attended an Early Learning and Childcare setting, and you are concerned about a child's readiness for school, please contact the Education Business Unit directly. You will then be informed about supporting evidence required from other professionals who know your child, e.g. a Health Visitor, to enable the application to be considered. Parents and the local authority can make a direct Request for Assistance to the Educational Psychology Service.

OTHER INFORMATION

[The Best Start Grant - what happens if I defer my child's start date for Primary 1, or do not plan to send my child to school?](#)

The Best Start Grant is administered by the Scottish Government and provides financial support to families on low incomes at key transition points during a child's early years. It aims to help reduce financial pressure by helping people buy, for example, equipment that they'll need for a baby, or to help with costs when preparing for nursery or school. It's available both to people who work and those who don't, as long as they live in Scotland and get certain benefits or tax credits.

If you have deferred your child's starting school until next year, or have no plans to start school, you should still apply from the beginning of June in the year your child turns 5 (or in the year your child turns 4 if they have a January or February birthday) to the end of the following February. If you apply after this time your application will be too late.

Eligibility for the School Age Payment is based on the age of your child not when they actually start primary school. You do not need to apply for, or take up, a place at nursery or school to receive the School Age Payment. If you defer your child's start at school until a later year, you will receive the payment before the deferred school start date, which could help with costs associated with childcare, travel or educational toys. For more information about the Best Start Grant, or to make an application:

- Visit www.mygov.scot/best-start-grant-best-start-foods/. Or Phone Social Security Scotland's freephone helpline on 0800 182 2222 (8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday). Download a paper application form from www.mygov.scot/best-start-grant-form/. A paper form can also be requested over the phone via the helpline number above. If requested over the phone a freepost envelope will also be provided.

Deferral Process Flowchart

