

Information for parents and carers about enrolling their child in an East Lothian Council School

Section 1- general information

What this guide is about

This guide gives you information that may help you when you are considering enrolling your child in an East Lothian Council school and/or want to make a placing request. It is in four sections:

- Section 1 — general information (for example, the law, catchment areas, Catholic education, children with additional support needs, transport, how to get in touch with us)
- Section 2 — enrolling your child in a school
- Section 3 — placing requests
- Section 4 — what happens when you make a placing request.

If you would like to find out more about anything in this guide, please get in touch with us by using the contact information at the end of this guide.

Please note this guide is intended for guidance only. It is not an authoritative statement of law relating to education or schools.

School Information

The following link to the East Lothian Council website allows you to access the contact details and websites for all Primary and Secondary Schools in East Lothian.

https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/directories/210557/schools_and_learning

School Preference

The law allows parents/carers to express a preference for the school they wish their child to attend (such a school is often referred to as a non-catchment school). This is done by making a placing request. The Council as the Education Authority grant these requests wherever possible. In East Lothian many placing requests are granted but it is important to note that not all requests can be met.

Catchment Area

Every school has a catchment area, each catchment area has clear boundaries. Catchment maps are available on the East Lothian Council website. Children living in the catchment area are given priority for places in this school. Entitlement to a place in a school is based on home address and **not** on attendance at an associated school or nursery class.

Catholic Education

In some areas there are separate Catholic schools available for parents wishing their child to be educated in this type of school.

Children with Additional Support Needs

East Lothian has an inclusion policy, with the expectation that children with additional support needs will be educated wherever possible in their catchment school. East Lothian Council recognises that parents can express a preference for the school/provision they wish their child to attend. For further information, please contact School Placements.

Transport

East Lothian Council will award assistance with travel if your child is attending the catchment primary or secondary school and lives more than two miles away, based on the most suitable walking route.

Assistance with travel will not be given if you have chosen to send your child to a non-catchment school.

Composite Classes

Composite classes are formed in the majority of East Lothian primary schools. A composite class is one in which pupils from 2 or more year groups are taught together. The number of pupils in a composite class should be no more than 25. The Head Teacher and staff are best placed to make decisions about the most appropriate class arrangements in their schools. In forming such classes, the Head Teacher will take account of a range of criteria including:

- Meeting learners needs
- Age (stage appropriate)
- Social inclusion
- Gender balance - including children who identify with another gender and children who identify as non-binary.
- Numbers of children per stage - where possible schools will try to have a minimum of 4 pupils at a stage within a composite class.
- Exceptional circumstances

In primary schools, learning and teaching is planned to meet the needs and current achievement levels of individual children. Whether the class is organised as a single year group or as a composite class, our teachers are well able to adapt to the different needs within any class and plan accordingly. Much of the work undertaken in our primary schools is in small groups and teachers plan in such a way to ensure that all pupils progress through Curriculum for Excellence at the appropriate level.

False Information

Please note that East Lothian Council reserves the right to withdraw the offer of a school place if it is gained through the provision of false information.

Section 2 - enrolling your child in an East Lothian Council School

Entry into the new Primary One (P1) and Secondary One (S1) classes is administered by School Placements, which is part of Education & Children's Services.

When is the earliest my child can start school?

Any child whose fifth birthday falls between 1 March 2026 (born 1 March 2021) and the last day of February 2027 (born 28 February 2022) is eligible to start school in August 2026. There is no general intake of P1 children at any other time during the session.

Early entry to Primary School

If your child has not reached the age of 5 by the last day in February 2027 they do not fall within the definition of a 'qualifying child'. Parents/carers cannot normally make a formal placing request for a child to start school early. However, under section 38 of Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act 2000, parental wishes for a child to start school early should be considered if the Authority deems that it would be appropriate given the child's aptitude and ability. If you require information on admission of children under school age to primary school please contact School Placements.

When is the latest my child can start school?

It is a legal requirement that any child who is five years old before the beginning of the autumn term should start school in August 2026 (ie the commencement of the new school session in mid-August).

Although most parents/carers choose to send their child to school as soon as they are eligible to start, when a child is five years old the day after the beginning of the autumn term (ie the commencement of the new school session in mid-August) up to the last day in February of the following year, parents can defer their entry into Primary 1 until the following August when they are nearer six years old and will receive a funded early learning and childcare place.

This does not mean that all parents/carers with children in this age group will choose to take up this option.

If you would like some advice about the best starting date for your child, please talk to the nursery staff or to the school's Head Teacher.

Which primary school should my child attend?

For every address there is a local primary school (the "catchment" school) and for some areas, there is also a local Roman Catholic school. Most parents/carers choose to send their children to their catchment school.

Catchment school maps are available on our website. If you are still not sure which is your catchment school, you should contact schoolplacements@eastlothian.gov.uk

Placement in a primary school is based on home address — attendance in the nursery class does not guarantee a place if they do not live within the school's catchment area.

All parents/carers have the right, however, to request a place for their child in another school. Wherever possible, the education authority must grant these requests. Further information is to be found in Section 3.

P1 enrolment arrangements for starting P1 in August 2026

If your child is age-eligible to start school in August 2026 and you live in the East Lothian Council area you should enrol your child for P1 in your catchment primary school using the online form. If you previously deferred your child's entry to P1 from August 2025 to August 2026, you should also enrol your child for P1 using the online form. In East Lothian, the online enrolment period is during November each year. Please check our website for further information <https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/p1-enrolment> After this period, parents should contact the catchment school direct to enquire about P1 enrolment.

If you are moving address after the P1 enrolment period, please email schoolplacements@eastlothian.gov.uk for further advice on the process you should follow in relation to P1 enrolment.

The following documentation needs to be provided along with the online application and can be uploaded during the application process. We will accept photographs/screenshots of documents as long as we can see the whole document clearly:

- an image/electronic version of a utility bill dated within the last 6 months
- an image/electronic version of your child's birth certificate. **Please note this is not required if your child already attends an East Lothian Council nursery or a funded provider/childminder that is in partnership with East Lothian**

Council

- an image/electronic version of your child's RC baptism certificate (for RC school P1 applications, if applicable)

The parental details and address provided on the P1 online enrolment form will be checked against the Council Tax record to verify residence within the primary school catchment area.

If you have any queries regarding P1 enrolment, please contact:

schoolplacements@eastlothian.gov.uk

Applying for a place in a non-catchment school

Although most children attend their catchment school, parents/carers may make an application for any other school under the management of East Lothian Council. Such a request is known as a non-catchment placing request. You should still submit an online P1 enrolment for the catchment primary school, even if you do intend to make a placing request.

You are required to make a non-catchment placing request in writing. This can be done by downloading and completing a non-catchment placing request form, which can be obtained at

<http://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/schoolenrolandplacingrequests>

You should return the form to us before 31 December 2025. Requests made later than this date will still be considered, but places in the school of your choice may already have been allocated to other children.

More information about making a non-catchment placing request can be found in sections 3 and 4 of this document.

Deferring my child's entry to P1

You should discuss this with your early years setting. The process to defer entry to P1 takes place between December 2025 and March 2026. Application information will be distributed to early years' settings in December 2025. We will continue to hold the allocated catchment P1 place until the deferral decisions have been confirmed. You should still submit an online enrolment for the catchment primary school, even if you do intend to defer entry to P1.

How to register a child in S1

For the new S1 intake, all parents/carers of P7 pupils who are in attendance at an East Lothian primary school will automatically receive written confirmation of the catchment secondary school, serving their **home address**, in mid-November (no further action is normally required if you wish your child to attend the catchment secondary school).

If you would prefer your child to start S1 at another school instead of the catchment school, you have to make a placing request. You can get an application form on the East Lothian Council website from mid-November. The deadline for submission is **31 December 2025**. If you apply for a place after this date, your request will be considered, but the availability of places may be limited.

In the event of the catchment primary or secondary school being oversubscribed, School Placements will contact you.

How to register a pupil into P1 and S1 after August 2026, and at all other stages

In the first instance parents/carers should make contact with the school directly (preferably in writing) to enquire if they have space for their child in the relevant year group. You should include the name and address of the pupil, date of birth and a contact telephone number.

Children living in the catchment area are given priority for places in the local school. In the Roman Catholic school where there are more catchment pupils than places available, priority is given to the catchment pupils who have been baptised Roman Catholics.

At other stages, if requesting a place in a secondary school parents should also include the courses the pupil is currently taking.

Pupils moving into East Lothian will be placed in the appropriate school stage based on their date of birth.

Section 3 - placing requests

Parents/carers have the right to express a preference for a particular school that they want their child to attend. This is normally done by completing a non-catchment placing request application form. This form is available from the East Lothian Council website from mid-November (link below):

<http://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/schoolenrolandplacingrequests>

The closing date for P1 non-catchment placing requests is 31 December 2025.

The closing date for S1 non-catchment placing requests is 31 December 2025.

Please note that for both new P1 and S1 intake you can only make one placing request at a time per pupil. If you enter two or more schools on the form, only the first will be considered. If your initial placing request is refused you can make a second request for another school.

Granting a request

While most requests are granted, in certain cases this is not possible for various reasons. Any reason for refusal of the placing request will be explained at that stage. Once a pupil has been offered a place, the offer will not be withdrawn unless the place was obtained on the basis of false information.

A pupil moving into a catchment area cannot take a place from a non-catchment pupil already admitted to the school.

Priority for places

Pupils living in a school's catchment area have priority over those from outside. Roman Catholic children living in the catchment area of a Roman Catholic school have priority over non-Catholics.

Consideration of requests

When there are fewer requests than places available, all the requests are usually granted. When there are more placing requests than places available, the Head of Education will consider the request and decide which pupils will be granted a place. Parents are not interviewed but each individual case is examined and the circumstances mentioned in the written application are taken into account.

Reasons given by parents for placing requests

The Council Committee for Education has decided that the following factors may be taken into account:

- pupil living in East Lothian
- certified medical reasons for wanting a particular school
- access for the disabled
- brother or sister continuing to attend the school requested
- educational course available only at the school requested
- parents' kind of work or place of work
- behavioural problems of pupil
- road safety
- ease of travel to school
- nearness of home to school
- attendance at the catchment primary school (for a secondary school request)
- parents' affinity with the religious beliefs of the school
- having suffered or likely to suffer bullying or racial harassment
- parents' affinity with the aims and philosophy of the school

Parents/carers do not have to mention any of these if they do not wish to. Alternatively, they may give one or even several reasons. Mention of any of these factors does not guarantee that a placing request will be granted.

Refusals

If a request is refused, reasons will be given. The grounds on which a place may be refused are set by the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 (as amended), such as:

- where another teacher would have to be provided to accommodate the pupil
- where money would have to be spent on the school
- where it would be detrimental to the child's education
- where it could affect order and discipline in the school or the educational well-being of other pupils
- where it would prevent the Council from reserving places

Other matters considered by the Head of Education

When requests are considered other factors may be taken into account, apart from those given by parents/carers. These include:

- legal requirements affecting the school building and accommodation
- maximum class size
- the effect of admission on composite classes (classes containing pupils from more than one school year)

Appeals

Further information on appeals is to be found at the end of Section 4.

Section 4 - what happens when you make a placing request

These guidelines have been approved by the Council Committee for Education for dealing with placing requests. They are also intended to help parents make a placing request.

Procedure

1. All placing requests will be acknowledged on receipt. If you have not received an acknowledgement within 14 days, you should contact School Placements.
2. If there are no grounds for refusing a placing request, it will be granted. You will be informed of this decision after the 15 March and before the end of April. If the request is granted the place at your catchment school may be allocated to another child.
3. If the school you specify has more placing requests than places, then pupils living within the school's catchment area will have priority. However, no pupil who has been properly admitted to a school will have to transfer against the parent's wishes to accommodate a pupil who has subsequently moved into the catchment area. A "proper" admission is one made on the basis of correct information from the parents.
4. In the case of Roman Catholic schools, where applications from those living within the catchment area exceed the number of places available, priority will be given to those applicants who declare an affinity with the religious beliefs of the school. In such cases, it must be established that the pupils concerned have been baptised in the Roman Catholic Church before the 31 December in the year prior to entry to P1.
5. Where there are more placing requests than places in a school, the factors listed in section 3 will be taken into account in allocating places. This will be done according to the particular circumstances of each individual case. While the factors will be taken into account, it is not guaranteed that a request will thereby be given priority or granted.
6. Before a placing request is refused, it will be considered by the Head of Education in the case of entry to primary school (P1) or secondary school (S1), and by the Head Teacher in all other cases. They will consider written information supplied by you when making your request. It is therefore in your interest to include any information and supporting documentation relevant to the factors listed when making a request. You should not wait until the refusal of a placing request before providing all relevant information. If your request is refused, you will be

given the reasons for that decision and placed on a waiting list. A place will be reserved at your catchment school. You have the opportunity to make a second preference request at this stage.

7. In considering placing requests, the Head of Education will take into account, among other things, the following factors:
 - (a) the design capacity of, and physical education space in the school requested, in terms of:
 - The School Premises (General Requirements and Standards) (Scotland) Regulations 1967
 - Legislation on Health and Safety, Building Control and Fire Precautions.
 - Other relevant safety standards relating to school accommodation.
 - (b) the appropriate normal maximum class size as determined by legislation and as defined in the Conditions of Service for Teaching Staff, which form part of the Authority's contract of employment with an individual teacher.
 - (c) the educational desirability of normally not creating additional composite classes.
 - (d) the retention of places for pupils moving into the district during the academic year. The Education (Scotland) Act 1980 (as amended). The Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act 2000.

Waiting Lists

If a placing request is refused, your child's name is placed on a waiting list for a place at the requested school. Waiting lists are held until the end of the school session. For the vast majority of applicants, their place on the waiting list will be formed by giving priority to those with siblings continuing to attend the school and then by distance (nearest to the requested school). Pupils who are resident in East Lothian and who do not have siblings continuing in attendance at the school are prioritised over pupils not resident in East Lothian who do not have siblings continuing in attendance at the school. Distances are calculated using the shortest driving route to a main entrance of the requested school if over 2 miles or safest walking route accompanied by an adult to a recognised point of entry to the school campus if under 2 miles. Please note that safe walking routes are considered to be those on a recognised walking surfaces and not through grass playing fields or agricultural land.

Appeals

As required by law, the Council has set up an "Independent Appeal Committee" to consider appeals from parents against the Council's decision to refuse a placing request. Appeals must be lodged, in writing, no later than 28 days of the refusal letter being received. Parents/carers can present their cases to the Appeal Committee in

person, or with the help of a representative or friend. Details of the appeals procedure will be made available to parents/carers if the Authority refuses their request.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Further Information

Further information on any of these points may be obtained from:

School Placements
East Lothian Council
Education & Children's Services
John Muir House
HADDINGTON
EH41 3HA

Email: schoolplacements@eastlothian.gov.uk

Website: <http://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/schoolenrolandplacingrequests>

or

Choosing a School—Guide for Parents, available on the Scottish Government Website:
www.scotland.gov.uk

This publication provides information on the relevant legislation.

More information regarding the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, can be found on the following website:
www.legislation.gov.uk

Education Scotland: <https://education.gov.scot/>

Parent Zone Scotland: <https://education.gov.scot/parentzone/>

