



Early Entry to Primary School: Information Leaflet

Declaration

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If you need this in an alternative format, please contact School Support on 01369 704000.

Introduction

The purpose of this leaflet is to provide you with information about early entry into primary school. This will outline the process involved and important points for consideration. We hope this enables you to make an informed decision on whether you wish to make an application.

What is Early Entry to school?

Councils set a date by which children must have had their fifth birthday to be considered old enough to attend school. Children born on or before this date are regarded as being of school age. Children born after this date are not regarded as being old enough to attend school.

Experience strongly shows that children who start school early may be disadvantaged, both in terms of their experience of education and in terms of educational outcomes. Although it might seem appropriate, in terms of cognitive development, it may not be in terms of their social and emotional development. Consequently, a request for early entry will be granted only in **exceptional circumstances**. Early Entry requests are made for the start of a new school year, however requests for those who move into the area during the school year can be considered at the time.

Early Learning and Childcare

Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) allows children age 3 years to those not yet of school age, the opportunity to learn, experience and interact alongside their peers within developmentally appropriate spaces.

Children are entitled to up to 1,140 hours of funded ELC a year.

All children with birth dates between the second day of the school year and the end of February, are automatically entitled to receive an additional year of funded ELC.

Children due to start school, who have their fifth birthday between March and the first day of term in August, can still apply for an additional year of funded ELC. This is at the discretion of early years.

- Research shows that high quality Early Learning and Childcare contributes positively to the intellectual and social/behavioural development of children.
- The longer children attend high quality Early Learning and Childcare, the greater the benefits:

“Children who experience high quality pre-school for a long duration have the most advantage in intellectual and social development when they do go to school.” (The Effective Provision of Pre-school Education (E.P.P.E) Report)

The Curriculum

The early childhood curriculum is holistic.

'The early childhood curriculum is also about what the child wants to learn within a caring, nurturing environment. While the intentional promotion of specific experiences and interactions are important for young children to learn, so too is a curriculum which values and upholds the rights of the child. The right to a relevant, coherent and child-centred curriculum which recognises and intends to build on what the child already knows.' (Realising the ambition: Being me, Education Scotland, 2020).

'We know from research and practice that the learning experiences provided in the earliest months and years in the child's life are so critical for their future success in life. In Scotland, we have the benefit of curriculum guidance which spans both the ELC sector and the early stages of primary school. Curriculum for Excellence 'early level' is intended to support the implementation of a responsive, continuous play-based curriculum for children aged three to six.' (Realising the ambition: Being me, Education Scotland, 2020).

Learners at an earlier developmental stage, may be supported in their learning by the Pre-Early level foundation milestones. The National Practice Guidance, 'Realising the Ambition: Being me incorporates:

'Relevant aspects of the former Pre-Birth to Three guidance and extending across the child's learning journey into the early years of primary school. This new guidance complements the current policy direction of ELC and early primary education. (Realising the Ambition: Being me, Education Scotland, 2020).

Aspects to consider

Before making an application for Early Entry, you should consider the following & discuss these matters with staff at your child's ELC setting:

- **Your child's development and learning:**
 - Maturity and capacity to cope with change
 - Approach & attitude to learning.
 - Preferred learning style & stage of development.
 - Progress within the Early Years curriculum.
 - Levels of independence and self-help.
- **Your child's emotional and social development.**

Research shows that Early Entry to school may put undue pressure on a child and could increase anxiety. It may have a negative impact on a child's self-esteem and motivation to learn. In contrast, high quality early learning and childcare builds strong foundations for life-long learning.

 - Ability to communicate own feelings and express ideas confidently.
 - Emotional and personal development including self-confidence and esteem
 - Ability to take part in conversations and discussions within a range of groupings and situations.
- **Possible long term implications for your child.** For example, when at the end of secondary school your child may still be too young to leave school along with their peers. Potential difficulties could exist around entering their preferred form of higher education.

Frequently Asked Questions

If my child enters school early, he/she will still be accessing the Early Level of Curriculum for Excellence, so what difference will it make if he/she is in a school setting?

Broadly speaking, children access the Early Level when they enter an Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) setting. Typically, the Early Level will offer a framework for learning over three years, including the Primary One year. Roughly speaking, two thirds of the curriculum will be accessed within the ELC environment. The learning experiences we offer in the ELC setting and Primary One are part of the progression of learning. This allows for greater opportunities for what we call 'deep learning'-where learning is more likely to be secure and can be applied in lots of different situations.

Additionally, the staff to child ratio is reduced within the Primary One classroom.

The transition into Primary Two should also be considered and thought given to whether the child will still be accessing the Early Level or whether he/she will be able to move towards the First Level of Curriculum for Excellence.

My child can already count to ten, recognise letters and read some words. Surely the school setting will better meet his needs?

The early childhood curriculum is holistic. Whilst these are all important skills, Curriculum for Excellence encourages us to look at the needs of the "whole child". This will include looking closely at your child's social and emotional wellbeing and providing him/her with lots of opportunities to develop these skills.

My child is "bored" at nursery. Surely it is better to go to school?

If this is your perspective, it is important that you engage in discussion with your child's Key Person and Manager of the nursery. It is the responsibility of ELC staff to ensure that your child meets a suitable and consistent level of challenge in learning. This will enable them to make the best possible progress during their time at nursery.

If my child's birthday was just a few days earlier, she would have the entitlement to go to school. How can a few days make a difference?

All children with birth dates between the second day of the school year and the end of February, are automatically entitled to receive an additional year of funded ELC. Many parents take up this offer, knowing that the longer their child stays in a quality ELC setting, the greater the benefits to their long term learning.

If a child enters school early, they will always be the youngest in their class. Later in secondary school this may have other implications, in terms of sitting formal exams at an early age or going on to further education at an earlier age.

My child's peer group are going up to school. Isn't it better for my child to go too so that her social needs are met?

The peer group of the child is important, but it is not solely a strong enough reason for a child to enter school, particularly if other aspects of a child's learning are not yet sufficiently developed. There may well be opportunities for the child to keep relationships with their first peer group out with the ELC setting. In addition, ELC staff will try to encourage friendships in the nursery.

My child will be able to leave school at an earlier age when he has completed his school education. This gives him/her greater opportunities surely?

This depends on a number of factors, including entry to higher education, where occasionally a minimum age of entry is needed. It may also affect other wider life situations such as when your child can sit their driving test.

Application Process

Should you wish to continue applying for Early Entry, the process and timescales are outlined below:

1. **October:** Parent approaches ELC setting and Head teacher of receiving school to begin discussion.
2. **Mid November:** Online application form to be completed by parent (application form opens at the beginning of P1 registration week).
3. **March:** Review of application:
 - a. Collection of evidence from ELC setting
 - b. Observation visit from Early Years Service and P1 class teacher or promoted member of staff from receiving primary school.
 - c. Formal Assessment is undertaken of child by Early Years Education Support Officer and observed by Headteacher/ promoted staff member of receiving school.
4. **By End of Term 3:** Decision reached:
 - a. Application refused
 - b. Application approved & arrangements made to ensure smooth transition to Primary School.

Points to note:

- The needs of the child will be central throughout the process.
- The Early Learning and Childcare provider will be expected to give as full and comprehensive a report as possible, paying attention to the child's holistic development and experience of Early Years Curriculum (breadth, challenge, application).
- Parental views and opinions will be given due weighting throughout the process.
- The assessment will be conducted at the receiving school by the Education Support Officer, Early Years, and observed by the receiving Head teacher/promoted member of staff. This will include a number of activities which will enable staff to gain as full a picture as possible of the child's abilities across the main areas of learning and development. It will also enable staff to assess the child's approach to learning. The tasks are intended to be like the activities provided within the Early Learning and Childcare setting.

Outcome of Application

- Decisions will be made within the following context:
 - that ELC settings provide the challenge, enjoyment, depth and relevance, personalisation and choice important to young children's development.
 - the early childhood curriculum offered within ELC, inside and out, is ideally suited to meeting the needs of young children, promoting emotional and social development, self-esteem and confidence.
 - young children need opportunities to develop their ideas and thinking through play, investigation and talk with other children and key adults.
 - the core learning environment within ELC affords anticipated experiences and opportunities which are thoughtfully differentiated to meet the needs of all children.

Appeal

If an application for early entry to primary school is turned down, parents can appeal if they wish within two weeks of the decision. Appeals should be made in writing to earlyyears@argyll-bute.gov.uk or Early Years, Argyll House, Alexandra Parade, Dunoon PA23 8AJ.

Parents/carers will be contacted with an invitation to attend an appeal meeting where they will be given the opportunity to present their case, along with Education and Early Years representatives. A panel of local Elected Members will make the final decision.