



Early Entry to Primary School:

Information Leaflet

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 to make an application.

What is an Early Entry request?

Councils set a date on which children must have had their fifth birthday to be 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.

Aspects to consider

Before making an application, you should consider & discuss the following with staff at the ELC setting:

Cognitive and Communication skills

- Does your child show curiosity and enthusiasm for learning?
- How long can they concentrate on a structured activity?
- Do they recognise letters, sounds, numbers, shapes, and colours?
- Is your child's speech easily understood by familiar and unfamiliar adults?
- Can they engage in conversations and listen to others?
- Can they express needs, feelings, and concerns effectively?
- Do they understand and respond appropriately to questions?

Social and Emotional Development

- Does your child seek out and maintain friendships?
- Are they comfortable interacting with children who are older than them?
- Can they take turns and share?
- How do they manage disagreements with peers?
- Can they participate appropriately in group activities?
- How does your child cope with disappointment or frustration?
- Can they regulate their emotions without needing significant adult support?
- Are they resilient when things do not go their way?
- Do they separate comfortably from parents/carers?

Independence and Self-Care

- Can they manage toileting independently?
- Can they put on and take off coats, shoes, and outdoor clothing?
- Can they organise and look after their belongings?
- Do they manage lunchtime routines independently?
- How do they respond to changes in routine?

Physical Development

- Does the child have the stamina to cope with a full school day?
- Is their fine motor development sufficient for drawing, writing, cutting, and practical tasks?
- Do they seek help appropriately when needed?
- Can they participate safely in physical activities with older children?

Long Term Considerations

- How might being the youngest in the year group affect your child at age 10, 14, or 16?
- Will they cope socially and emotionally with peers who are nearly a year older throughout their school career?
 - Will they continue to thrive long term, not just in Primary 1?

Application Process

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. **December to March:** Review of application by central team including:
 - a. Collection of evidence from ELC setting
 - b. Review of information provided by parents
 - c. Visit from Education Support Officer to produce observation report.
4. **By Easter holidays:** Outcome of application determined.

Application Decision

In line with the principles of **Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC)**, we recognise that every child develops at their own pace and has individual strengths, needs and circumstances. Decisions about an early entry to Primary 1 are therefore made on a **case-by-case basis**, taking account of the unique needs and context of each child.

There is no single factor that determines whether a request will be supported. Instead, we consider a range of information, including the child's wellbeing, development, learning needs, views of parents and carers, and professional advice from those who know the child best.

Our aim is to ensure decisions are made in the **best interests of the child**, supporting them to achieve the right balance of nurture, learning and challenge at the right time. We take an individualised approach to promote positive outcomes and ensure each child receives the support they need to thrive.

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 to: earlyyears@argyll-bute.gov.uk or Early Years, Argyll House, Alexandra Parade, Dunoon PA23 8AJ.

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?

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 their 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 them 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 their 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.