



Community Services: Education

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To: Heads of all Educational Establishments

Dear Colleague

EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE (ELC) 600 HOURS

The Children and Young people (Scotland) Act 2014 Act introduced a new concept of early learning and childcare. The term seeks to remove an artificial divide between pre-school for 3 and 4 year olds; and, childcare for 0 – 3 year olds; or, pre-school and wrap around care for 3 and 4 year olds; whereby pre-school is the educational element delivered in short blocks tied to a certain number of hours in a day; topped up by childcare or wrap around care which can be seen as less important to learning.

The current national frameworks for practice and quality assurance of early learning and childcare are Pre-birth to three: Positive Outcomes for Scotland's Children and Families; Curriculum for Excellence early level; Early Learning and Childcare National Practice Guidance: Building the Ambition; and the National Care Standards and Child at the Centre.

STARTING AND STOPPING DATES FOR ELIGIBILITY

Eligible 2 year olds will start the term after their 2nd birthday as outlined below:

Born between	Term
1 March – 31 August	August term*
1 September – 31 December	January term
1 January – 28/29 February	Easter term

* Children whose birthday falls after the first day of term in August (including in-service days) will start in the January following their 2nd birthday.

3 year old children are eligible to start the Monday after their 3rd birthday, unless their birthday falls between March – June, when they will start the following August – the same as school. 4 year old children not currently attending nursery will be eligible for their ELC starting immediately subject to arrangement by the Head Teacher.

Stopping dates are summarised as follows:

Where a child's 5th birthday falls on or between the following dates:	The child will cease to be eligible for Early Learning and Childcare from:	Starting School and Stopping Early Learning and Childcare
1 March – 31 August	August (autumn term) occurring in the year of their 5th birthday	Children will start school in the same year they turn 5, August (autumn term)
1 September – 31 December	August (autumn term) occurring in the year of their 5 th birthday.	Children can start school in the same year they turn 5, August (autumn terms); or; defer entry to school to the August (autumn term) of the following year, but will not be entitled to an additional year of early learning and childcare
1 January – last day of February	August (autumn term) occurring in the year of their 5th birthday	Children can start school the August (autumn term) preceding their birthday, but their entitlement to Early Learning and Childcare continues to the August (Autumn) term occurring in the same year of their birthday.

EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE REGISTRATION

The annual registration period will be fixed for the first week in February each year and the duration will be for one week. Providers are issued with electronic copies of the registration forms, parent information leaflets and any other relevant forms prior to this date. The registration period will be advertised in the local press across the council area and parents are instructed to obtain a registration form and information relating to ELC from the provider of their choice. Completed forms are collated by the providers and checked for eligibility by confirming the child's date of birth. Settings should take a copy of the birth certificate/passport as this detail is required for the Nursery Application Management System (NAMS). Providers are required to enter their registrations onto NAMS by a pre-determined date. Early Years Service will work with settings to administer the registration procedure including the priority criteria. Once all the data has been agreed letters offering places will be sent out by Early Years.

EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE (ELC) – 2 YEAR OLD ADMISSION

Eligible 2 year olds can receive up to 600 hours of ELC. **Please note, only local authority settings which confirm within their conditions of registration (set by the Care Inspectorate) that the age range is from 2 years of age, can accommodate 2 year olds.**

2 year olds may be eligible if their parent is in receipt of one of the following benefits:

- Income support;
- Job seekers allowance (income based);
- Any income related element of employment and support allowance;
- Incapacity benefit or severe disablement allowance;
- Pension credit;
- Universal credit;
- Child Tax Credit (CTC), but not Working Tax Credit, and your income is less than £16,105;
- Both maximum Child Tax Credit and maximum Working Tax Credit and your income is under £6,420 and
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999.

Those aged 2 or over who are (or have been at any point since turning 2) either looked after by a local authority, the subject of a kinship care order or a child with a parent-appointed guardian are also entitled to 600 hours of ELC (pro rata).

Parent who wish to apply for funding for their 2 year to receive 600 hours (pro rata) of ELC should follow the below steps:

- Parents/carers should contact the Early Years Helpline on 01369 708503 and request an application pack;
- When the parent has chosen their preferred provider they should phone the nursery/ childminder to check whether there are available spaces;
- Completed packs should be given to the Head Teacher. The application will then be entered to NAMS and the job centre form sent to Early Years for verification;
- The application will be checked by the Early Years' Service and confirm the child's place in writing;
- Parents who require support to fill out the forms should contact Early Years, speak to their Health Visitor or Jobcentre Plus.

TRANSPORT

ELC provision has no entitlement to transport, unless in exceptional circumstances. Applications for assistance with transport will only be considered if the child is accessing their nearest setting (unless Gaelic provision) and they reside at least 10 miles away from their setting.

EARLY ENTRY TO PRIMARY SCHOOL

Experience strongly indicates that children who start school early may be disadvantaged, both in terms of their experience of education and in terms of educational outcomes. Although a child may seem intellectually ready for school they may not be physically, socially or emotionally ready. Children who have not developed all the skills needed to help them cope at school may struggle not only in the early stages of school, but at key transitional stages later on, for example with transition to secondary school and at exam times. Because of this, a request for early entry will be granted only in **exceptional circumstances**.

The following points should be considered by all those involved, when considering early entry to primary school:

- The child's approach to learning;
- The ability of the child to communicate his or her own needs, feelings and ideas;
- The level of independence and self- help skills that the child demonstrates;
- The personal and emotional development of the child, including self- confidence and esteem;
- The physical development of the child and
- How well the child has developed relationships with other children and adults.

Application process is as follows:

January - Parent approaches ELC setting and Head Teacher of receiving school to begin discussion.

By end of February - Application form to be completed by parent and submitted to the ELC setting, a copy of application should be sent to Early Years.

March - Collection of evidence from ELC setting combined with observation visit from Early Years Service and P1 class teacher or promoted member of staff from receiving primary school. Formal Assessment is undertaken of child by Early Years Service and observed by Head Teacher/ promoted staff member of receiving school.

End of Term 3 - Decision reached, either application refused or granted, if granted the appropriate arrangements made to ensure child's transition to primary school is as smooth as possible.

DEFERRED ENTRY

Children who are 4 years of age in January and February are automatically entitled to an additional year of nursery.

ADDITIONAL YEAR OF EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE

Children that turn 4 years of age between 1st September and 31st December can apply for an additional year of ELC; however it is at the Council's discretion if it is granted.

Application process is as follows:

February - The appropriate application form must be completed (issued prior to registration week by Early Years) during registration week for parents who wish to defer entry to P1 or for parents who are applying for an additional year of ELC for their child. Completed applications should be returned to their setting who will email applications to Early Years (return date will be confirmed on application form, which is received by schools prior to registration week).

March/April - Applications will be considered by the Early Years Service and decisions will be reached as follows:

Children with January and February birthdays are automatically entitled to an additional year of Early Learning and Childcare. Confirmation letters will be issued to parents by Early Years.

Children with September to December birthdays, whose entitlement is at the discretion of the authority, will be considered for an additional year of Early Learning and Childcare following liaison with ELC staff at the child's ELC provider and taking account of his/her:

- Approach and attitude to learning;
- Ability to communicate own needs, feelings and ideas;
- Levels of independence and self help;
- Emotional and personal development, including self-confidence and esteem and
- Relationship and friendships with other children and adults.

Letters confirming decisions made will be issued to parents by Early Years.

Additional Year of ELC Appeal Procedure:

Where the Local Authority has not agreed to an additional year of Early Learning and Childcare for children with birthdays in September to December and parents disagree with the decision they should write to the Education Manager for Early Years who will arrange for an Education Officer to carry out an independent assessment of the child. Following the assessment there will be no further right of appeal.

Parents should register their child for Primary 1 at the school within their catchment area, irrespective of their wish to defer their child's entry. This is due to parents having the right to withdraw their application at a later date or it may be refused by the authority.

IMPORTANT POINTS:

1. Under section 51 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, education authorities must deliver the mandatory amount of early learning and childcare within a minimum framework of sessions which are no less than 2.5 hours; and no more than 8 hours a day in duration. This must be over a minimum of 38 weeks a year (or pro rata). (<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/People/Young-People/legislation>)
2. No establishment is denominational in character and children should be admitted without reference to religious belief.

USEFUL LINKS:

- Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014
<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/People/Young-People/legislation>
- Early Learning and Childcare Information for Parents
<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/registering-your-child-nursery>
- Deferred Entry to School Parent Information Leaflet
<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/registering-your-child-nursery>
- Assistance with transport Parent Information Leaflet
<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/registering-your-child-nursery>
- Early Entry to Primary School – Parent Information Leaflet
<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/registering-your-child-nursery>

ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL: COMMUNITY SERVICES, EARLY YEARS

Admissions Policy - Guidelines for Staff on Standard Circular

1. INTRODUCTION

These guidelines are provided to assist those who will be implementing the policy. Their purpose will be to promote equity and consistency in its application as well as ensuring those in the greatest need obtain a service.

In an ideal world, every child would have a place on request, which meets parental requirements, but hard choices sometimes have to be made. Sometimes, especially in areas where there are more children, the demand for places within a nursery can be greater than those available. It has been agreed there are some family and geographical circumstances which will give children priority for admission. If there are not enough places to meet demand, a ballot will be held.

The first step in making those choices will be an agreement to prioritise applications as per priorities set below.

2. PRIORITY SYSTEM FOR ALLOCATION OF PLACES

A priority system for allocating places has been agreed as follows:

Priority 1

For children deferring entry from P1 and staying at nursery an additional year of funding has been agreed by Argyll and Bute Council.

Priority 2

- (i) Children on the child protection register or identified through child protection procedures.
- (ii) Referral from social work department where the child is deemed to be in need where:
 - The placement would help the child remain within the family environment rather than be looked after by the local authority.
 - The child is subject to a statutory order.
 - The placement would support the child's return to the family.

Priority 3

Referrals from the undernoted professionals where there are concerns about the development of the child, parent or family.

- Education establishments
- Health agencies
- Education psychology services
- Social work services
- Voluntary sector agencies.

This priority refers to children who require support as a result of circumstances which are placing the child, parent or family at an education, social or health disadvantage. This includes children who are adversely affected by the disability of any other person in the family or it may include children with English as an additional language where a high level of support is needed.

Priority 4

Elder sibling attends same ELCC setting/school.

Priority 5

Reside within catchment area of school.

Priority 6

Children whose parents are required to purchase a regular pattern of additional day care from the same provider.

Priority 7

(i) Children outwith Argyll and Bute requesting an ELCC place within Argyll and Bute will be placed only once all eligible children residing within Argyll and Bute have been placed.

(ii) Children out with Argyll and Bute will not be placed within Argyll and Bute if placing them incurs extra costs for Argyll and Bute.

It is particularly important that confidentiality is respected with regard to the priority status of any application. It is not necessary for other parents to know the status of any application or why a place has been awarded.

ADMINISTRATION OF THE BALLOT FOR ELC PROVISION

1. If, after registration week, an ELC setting has received more application forms than capacity available a ballot will be required.
2. Early Years Team must be contacted to advise a ballot is required. A meeting will be arranged to categorise application forms by the Head Teacher.
3. Set the date on which the ballot is to take place.
4. Inform the parents concerned of the ballot date. On the ballot day the names of the children on separate ballot slips should be laid out for checking by those present.
5. From the parents or staff present a person is to be nominated to place the ballot slips into the ballot box.
6. From the parents or staff present a person is to be nominated to draw out the slips.
7. Places should be allocated as slips are drawn out.
8. Once all the places are allocated, slips should continue to be drawn out and the Nursery Application Management System (NAMS) waiting list amended.
9. In the event of any child selected for a place not taking up that place, the place will be offered to those children on the waiting list in the order of the draw.
10. Those children not receiving a place need to be moved to the 2nd choice provider therefore the Early Years Helpline should be notified with the details of the children in order for this to be carried out.

This document will be subject to ongoing review in the light of the development of ELC education. Please let your Head of Service know of any suggestions for improvement.

Yours sincerely

Executive Director of Community Services

July 2016

