

Admission to Primary Education 2017

A Guide for Parents

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Glossary of Terms used in this document

Admissions criteria	Criteria drawn up by the board of governors of each school and applied in order to select pupils to be admitted if the school is over-subscribed.
Admissions number	The maximum number of pupils which the school is allowed to admit into primary one (including the reception class, if this is appropriate) determined by the Department of Education.
Compulsory school age	In relation to enrolment in primary school in September 2017, children born on or between 2 July 2012 and 1 July 2013 will have reached compulsory school age, ie any child who reaches his/her fourth birthday on or before 1 July 2017.
Controlled school	Controlled schools are managed and funded by the EA through school boards of governors. Board of governors consist of representatives of transferors – along with representatives of parents, teachers and EA.
EA	Education Authority
Enrolment number	The maximum number of pupils which a school may have on its register at any time as determined by the Department of Education.
Independent Appeal Tribunals	A tribunal set up by the EA, but independent of it, which hears appeals lodged by parents against the decisions of board of governors.
Integrated school	Integrated schools are managed by a board of governors consisting of trustees or foundation governors along with parents, teacher and Department of Education representatives.
Irish medium school	A school or unit within a school where teaching and learning takes place through the Irish language.
Over-subscription	When a school has more requests for places than places available the published admissions criteria will be applied and some children will not be admitted to the school.
Parent	The person who has legal custody of the child.
Reception class	Children enrolled in a primary school, (excluding nursery units), who are aged four but have not reached the lower limit of compulsory school age, and who will be entering primary one the following September. These children will not be following the primary one element of the Northern Ireland curriculum.
Sub-criteria	If within one admission criterion there is over-subscription, some schools will apply a clearly defined set of sub-criteria to identify the children to be admitted.
Voluntary maintained school	Voluntary maintained schools are managed by a board of governors nominated by trustees along with parents, teachers, Department of Education and EA representatives.

Enrolment in Primary School: Key Dates

Wednesday 11 January 2017 <i>(not later than 12noon)</i>	Closing date for receipt of parents' applications to first preference primary schools. Any applications received after this time and date will be considered as late.
Wednesday 29 March 2017 <i>(not later than 4pm)</i>	Final date by which changes of preferences in exceptional circumstances / new applications / new information will be accepted.
Thursday 27 April 2017	Issue of letters by schools advising parents of the primary school for which their child has been accepted; and Issue of letters by EA advising any parents whose children have not been offered a place and advising where places are still available.
Thursday 11 May 2017 <i>(not later than 4pm)</i>	Final date for written notice of intention to appeal against primary schools admission decisions to be received by EA.

Procedure for Enrolment and Further Information

1) Introduction

The Education (NI) Order 1997 gives you, as a parent the right to express a preference as to the primary school which you wish your child to attend. All parents are required to submit an application form for the admission of their child to a primary school in accordance with the arrangements set out below. This document describes the arrangements which the EA has made to enable you to state your preferences and to seek a place for your child in your preferred schools.

Priority will be given to children resident in Northern Ireland at the time of their proposed admission.

2) Children to whom the arrangements apply

If your child falls into any of the following groups the regulations apply to him/her and you must follow the procedure set out below.

- (a) all children born on or between 2 July 2012 and 1 July 2013 - such children must begin their primary education from 1 September 2017 because by that date they will have reached compulsory school age.
- (b) children who are under compulsory school age ie their fourth birthday is after 1 July 2017 and whose parents wish him/her to be considered for a place in a reception group in a primary school from 1 September 2017. Those schools that admit children into reception will indicate this in their admissions criteria. It should be noted that most schools do not have a policy for reception provision and in such cases where this provision exists children of compulsory school age must be given priority. Parents of children in this category may wish to apply for a funded place through the separate pre-school admissions procedure.

3) Children to whom the arrangements do not apply

- (a) If your child is at present enrolled in the reception class of a primary school you do not need to apply for a place as the child will progress into primary one in that school.
- (b) Children with a completed statement of special educational needs will have a separate process. The EA will discuss with the parent a suitable pre-school/primary school placement for their child. Children who are undergoing statutory assessment for special educational needs should apply for a primary school place. This will ensure that a child is considered for a primary school place in the event that the statutory assessment determines that he/she does not require a statement of special educational needs.
- (c) If you wish your child to attend a preparatory department of a grammar school or an independent school you should apply directly to that school for admission.

4) How to make application for enrolment in primary school

Application forms are available from any primary school or from the EA website: www.eani.org.uk/admissions. Before completing the application form you should carefully

read the notes of guidance attached to the application form and the procedure for admissions and admissions criteria for each primary school available on the EA website.

- You should list at least four schools on the application form. In some areas it would be recommended to list more than four - for example, where schools tend to get more applications than they have places available.
- If you do not list at least four schools, this could reduce the possibility of your child being admitted to a school of your preference. You can list as many schools as you wish. As preferences are processed your child, having met the criteria of one of the schools listed as a high preference school on your application form, may be displaced by another child later in the process who better meets that school's criteria despite listing the school as a lower preference. (See section 7 regarding the displacement of pupils.)
- You will not be asked for further preferences during the process so it is very important that you list all schools where you would accept a place for your child.
- If you have applied directly to a preparatory department of a grammar school you may still express preferences for controlled, maintained, integrated and Irish medium primary schools on the EA's application form.
- You should not enter the same school more than once.

It is the parents responsibility to supply all the information required on the application form eg brothers/sisters attend/attended, close family relationships, religious affiliation etc, and in particular that you state at least four preferences.

You should complete only one application form for your child and send it together with your child's birth certificate and any additional information required by the school's criteria, to the principal of your first preference school. As only one application form is permitted you should list the schools of your choice on this form in your order of preference. This form must be returned no later than 12noon on Wednesday 11 January 2017.

If you change address during the process please inform the EA in writing.

In the event that parents are discovered to have lodged more than one application form, then the first application lodged will normally be treated as the formal expression of parental preference and all other application forms will not be considered.

You will appreciate that, while the EA administers the open enrolment arrangements, it has no power to place your child in a particular primary school. The selection of children for enrolment is a matter for the individual school's board of governors.

5) Change of Preferences

Apart from those necessitated by exceptional circumstances, no changes of preference will be processed if received after 12noon on Wednesday 11 January 2017. If you wish to change your preference, for any reason other than in exceptional circumstances, you must withdraw the original application and submit a new application. If this occurs after 12noon on Wednesday 11 January 2017 your new application will be treated as a late application. If you wish to change your preference because of exceptional circumstances, eg you have

moved house which necessitates a change of preference, you must submit a written request for a change of preference to the EA for approval along with verification of the exceptional circumstances. If approved, the EA will amend the original application form and send it to the new first preference school. If the original form was received on time by the original first preference school, it will be regarded by the new first preference school as a punctual, first preference application.

The final date by which the EA will process any changes necessitated by exceptional circumstances is Wednesday 29 March 2017 at 4pm.

New or additional information after completion of the application form.

If your circumstances change in a way that may be important for the admission process, you should contact the EA in writing to provide this new information. Contact details are included in this document. Wednesday 29 March 2017 at 4pm is also the final date by which the EA will process any additional information or new applications.

Parents should be aware that after Thursday 27 April 2017 a number of schools will have allocated all their places and can only give consideration to a change of preference in the event that a place becomes available. Therefore, it is important that parents give very careful consideration to the stated order of their preferences and ensure all relevant information is with the school of their first choice by 12noon on Wednesday 11 January 2017.

6) Late Applications

Late applications (ie applications received in schools after 12noon on Wednesday 11 January 2017) will be dealt with separately and may only be considered for admission after all *punctual* applications have been dealt with and vacancies still remain within the school's admissions number.

NB: The EA does not have the discretion to treat an application received after 12noon on Wednesday 11 January 2017 as punctual.

7) Consideration of applications by schools

The Department of Education is responsible for determining the number of pupils each school can admit, this is known as the school's admissions number. If a school's admissions number is greater than the number of applications which it receives; all such applicants will be offered places.

In the event of the number of applications being greater than a school's admissions number the governors will apply the school's published admissions criteria to all such applicants to determine which children will be offered places up to the school's admission number. Responsibility for drawing up and applying a school's admissions criteria rests with the board of governors.

If your child is not accepted by your first preference school the application form and any documents attached will be sent to your second preference school. The process, already described, will be repeated until all preferences have been considered. Places will be allocated to those who best meet the schools' admission criteria.

8) Notification of placement

Primary schools are not permitted to advise parents of the outcome of applications before Thursday 27 April 2017.

Letters will be issued on Thursday 27 April 2017 by the primary school the child has been placed in.

In the unlikely event that your child is not offered a place by the time the general notification of placement is issued, the EA will advise you of those schools in which places are still available and ask you to state which of these schools you would wish your child to attend.

Waiting Lists – please refer to each individual school’s policy if you wish your child’s name to be placed on a waiting list should a vacancy arise in an over-subscribed school after Thursday 27 April 2017.

9) Appeals arrangements

If your child has not been accepted by a school of your preference you may appeal the decision of the board of governors.

Independent tribunals will be established by the EA to consider appeals. These tribunals will decide on whether or not a school has correctly applied its admission criteria but will not be able to question the validity of the admissions criteria themselves.

You will be advised of your right to appeal against the decision of a Board of Governors’ at the time of notification of school placement.

If you wish to appeal the decision of a board of governors in not accepting your child, you should notify the EA in writing by 4pm on Thursday 11 May 2017. If your letter indicating your intention to appeal is not received by this date and time it will not be processed. Recorded delivery or email is recommended. Letters/emails notifying of an intention to appeal should be sent to the clerk of the Tribunal (primary), c/o the Education Authority. Contact details are provided on page 10.

An appeal form and details of the appeals procedure will be issued to you on receipt of your written intention to appeal.

An appeal tribunal considers the evidence that was available to the board of governors of a school at the time it was making its decision on admission to the school.

An appeal can only be upheld if a tribunal finds that the admissions criteria were not applied or not correctly applied and that if the admissions criteria had been correctly applied by the school, the child would have been admitted to the school within the admissions number for the school.

If an appeal tribunal should find that a board of governors did not apply its admissions criteria correctly and that the child would have been admitted if it had, the tribunal will award that child a place at the school concerned.

It is the parents' responsibility to ensure that any documentation arrives with the EA by the specified date.

Note: The advice which has been given is based on the Education (NI) Order 1997 and the related regulations. While every effort has been made to ensure that the information is accurate, it is given as guidance and not as an authoritative interpretation of the law. It should be noted that any additional information, which was not available to the board of governors at the time of the allocation of places, cannot be taken into account by an Independent Appeal Tribunal.

The information contained in this document relates to the 2017/18 school year and is correct at November 2016. Any changes made to the arrangements set out in this document during the 2017/18 school year will be published on the EA website.

Additional information

10) Admission to years two to seven

Where parents wish to transfer their child from one primary school to another they should complete Form AP1 which can be downloaded from the EA website or obtained from the Open Enrolment Section of the EA. The application form should be returned directly to the primary school and parents should be informed, in writing, of the result of their application as soon as possible after their application has been received and normally within two weeks.

11) Transport assistance to primary schools:

Eligibility

Transport assistance is provided in accordance with Department of Education circular 1996/41 – School Transport (updated 2009). The Education Authority has a statutory responsibility for the provision of transport assistance to facilitate the attendance of non-fee paying pupils, resident in Northern Ireland, at a grant aided school. The circular states:-

“Where there is/are suitable school/schools within statutory qualifying distance (2 miles) from a pupil's home and a pupil attends a more distant school, transport assistance will be provided only where the pupil has been unable to gain a place in any suitable school/schools within statutory qualifying distance”.

Suitable school - A suitable school is defined as:

Primary : controlled, maintained, integrated, Irish medium or other voluntary (ie Church of Ireland maintained).

Where there is no suitable school within statutory qualifying distance from a pupil's home, transport assistance will be granted provided there is EA or public transport already available to or in the vicinity of the school attended.

Parents should also note that the transport policy makes no exceptions for those parents who disregard the requirements to apply to all suitable school(s) within the qualifying distance of a pupil's home on the basis of possible rejection by those school(s).

Applicants are required to demonstrate that they were unsuccessful in gaining admission in all nearest school(s) in the same category within statutory qualifying distance in order to qualify for assistance – application is made by listing a pupil's order of preference on the application form.

The categories of school do not extend to take account of other factors such as range or nature of curriculum provided, proficiency at particular sports, relationship with parish boundaries, patterns of enrolment, or single sex/co-educational schools. Preference expressed on these or similar grounds will not qualify for transport assistance if an otherwise suitable school exists within the qualifying distance and the chosen school lies outside the limit.

Applying for Transport Assistance

All applications for transport must be made on-line for the 2017/2018 Academic Year. Further information on how to apply on-line will be made available nearer the time through schools and the Authority's website.

Means of assistance

Transport assistance for eligible pupils can be provided by a variety of means including the issue of sessional tickets (commonly referred to as 'bus passes') for public transport, the operation of Authority vehicles, the hire of buses/taxis or a financial payment.

Where there is no 'suitable school' within statutory qualifying distance (2 miles) of the child's home, transport will be provided to the school in which the child is enrolled, provided that a suitable Authority or public transport service to, or in the vicinity of the school is already available.

The Authority is not obliged to provide transport where either the service is deemed unsuitable or the cost of doing so could be regarded as an unreasonable public expenditure. Parents must satisfy themselves when seeking admission to schools for their children that a suitable transport service is available. Gaining a place in a school does not automatically commit the Authority to providing transport assistance.

The Authority is not required to provide 'door to door' transport. Parents are responsible for ensuring the safety of their children on the journey to and from a designated bus stop if necessary.

Special educational needs

Special transport arrangements may be provided for children under a statement of special educational needs who are enrolled at approved special schools or learning support centres attached to primary schools. For more information please see the website www.eani.org.uk/transport

Transport on medical grounds

Pupils who have medical problems will only receive transport assistance if they have fulfilled the provisions of the current transport policy as outlined above.

Further information on how to apply for transport under medical grounds is available on the website www.eani.org.uk/transport

Non-eligible pupils

A pupil who resides under the qualifying distance is not normally eligible for transport assistance. It is a parents' responsibility to put in place whatever arrangements they consider appropriate to facilitate their child's education at school. Parents of pupils who would not be eligible for Transport assistance may wish to make contact with their local bus company regarding the purchase of a travel ticket.

It should be drawn to the attention of parents that the transport eligibility criteria and transport arrangements may alter during their child's time at any particular school and this should be taken into consideration when making their school selection.

Further information on applying for transport assistance can be found on the EA website.

12) Free school meals and school uniform allowance

Information in relation to applying for free schools meals and school uniform allowance can be accessed on the EA website at: <http://www.eani.org.uk/i-want-to/apply-for-free-school-meals-school-uniform-physical-education-clothing-allowance/>

13) Education Authority contact details

<p>Armagh Office 3 Charlemont Place The Mall Armagh BT61 9AX Tel: 028 3751 2526 / 028 3751 2406 Email: admissions-sr@eani.org.uk</p>	<p>Ballymena Office County Hall 182 Galgorm Road Ballymena BT42 1HN Tel: 028 2566 1252 Email: admissions-ner@eani.org.uk</p>
<p>Belfast Office 40 Academy Street Belfast BT1 2NQ Tel: 028 9056 4080 Email: admissions-br@eani.org.uk</p>	<p>Dundonald Office Grahamsbridge Road Dundonald BT16 2HS Tel: 028 9056 6200 Email: admissions-ser@eani.org.uk</p>
<p>Omagh Office 1 Hospital Road Omagh BT79 0AW Tel: 028 8241 1458 Email: admissions-wr@eani.org.uk</p>	

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