

Admission to Primary Education 2018

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 2018, children born on or between 2 July 2013 and 1 July 2014 will have reached compulsory school age, i.e. any child who reaches his/her fourth birthday on or before 1 July 2018.
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 10 January 2018 <i>(not later than 12noon)</i>	Closing date for receipt of parents' applications by first preference primary schools. Any applications received after this time and date will be considered as late.
Wednesday 28 March 2018 <i>(not later than 4pm)</i>	Final date by which changes of preferences in exceptional circumstances / new applications / new information will be accepted.
Thursday 26 April 2018	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.
Friday 11 May 2018 <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 Admission to Primary One in a Grant Aided School

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 seeking a place for their child in a grant-aided school are required to submit an application form 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 and you wish to apply for a primary school place you must follow the procedure set out below.

- (a) all children born on or between 2 July 2013 and 1 July 2014 - such children must begin their primary education from 1 September 2018 because by that date they will have reached compulsory school age.
- (b) children who are under compulsory school age i.e. their fourth birthday is after 1 July 2018 and whose parents wish him/her to be considered for a place in a reception group in a primary school from 1 September 2018. 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. Information on applying for a pre-school place is available on the EA website www.eani.org.uk/admissions

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. School Starting Age

An information leaflet entitled 'School Starting Age – A Guide for Parents' is available on the EA website; www.eani.org.uk. In addition to containing some information outlined in this document, the School Starting Age leaflet includes information on the legislation that determines compulsory school age, making your own arrangements to educate your child of compulsory school age and advice on what to do if you have concerns about your child settling into primary school.

5. 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 read carefully the notes of guidance attached to the application form, the procedure for admissions and the admissions criteria for each primary school that you wish to nominate as a preference. The application form, notes of guidance and the admission criteria for all grant-aided primary schools are 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 grant aided 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 as to how your child meets the published admission criteria e.g. brothers/sisters attend/attended, 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 12 noon on Wednesday 10 January 2018.

If you change address during the process you must 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.

6. Change of Preferences

Apart from those necessitated by exceptional circumstances, no changes of preference will be processed if received after 12 noon on Wednesday 10 January 2018. 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 12 noon on Wednesday 10 January 2018 your new application will be treated as a late application. If you wish to change your preference because of exceptional circumstances, e.g. you have moved house which necessitates a change of preference, you must submit a written request for a change of preference to the EA in writing or by e-mailing primaryadmissions@eani.org.uk 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 28 March 2018 at 4pm.

Submission of 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 by e-mailing primaryadmissions@eani.org.uk to provide this new information. Wednesday 28 March 2018 at 4pm is the final date by which the EA will process any additional information or new applications.

Parents should be aware that after Thursday 26 April 2018 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 12 noon on Wednesday 10 January 2018.

7. Late Applications

Late applications (i.e. applications received in schools after 12 noon on Wednesday 10 January 2018) 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 12 noon on Wednesday 10 January 2018 as punctual.

8. Consideration of applications by schools

The Department of Education is responsible for determining the number of pupils each school can admit to Primary 1, 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 or the time for the process has lapsed. Places will be allocated to those who best meet the schools' admission criteria.

9. Notification of placement

Primary schools are not permitted to advise parents of the outcome of applications before Thursday 26 April 2018.

Letters will be issued on Thursday 26 April 2018 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 provide information on 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 26 April 2018.

10. 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 Admission Appeal 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 in deciding to refuse a child admission. The actual substance of the admissions criteria cannot be challenged in an appeal tribunal.

You will be advised of your right to appeal 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 not to admit your child, you should notify the Clerk to the Tribunal (Primary) in writing by 4.00 pm on Friday 11 May 2018 via:

E-mail  admissionappeals@eani.org.uk

Post  Primary Admissions, 3 Charlemont Place, The Mall, Armagh BT61 9AX

If your written intention to appeal is not received by this date and time it will not be processed. Recorded delivery or email is recommended. 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. 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 appeal tribunal.

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.

11. Note

The advice which has been provided 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.

The information contained in this document relates to the 2018/19 school year and is correct at November 2017. Any changes made to the arrangements set out in this document during the 2018/19 school year will be published on the EA website.

Additional information

12. Admission to years two to seven

If you should wish to transfer your child from one primary school to another you should complete form AP1 which can be downloaded from the EA website or obtained from any school. You should submit the AP1 form directly to the school you wish your child to be considered for. Forms may be completed for different schools at the same time. The school will respond to you in writing when a decision has been made, normally within 10 working days. There is no deadline for applications. The AP1 form provides information on the circumstances where you have a right of complaint or appeal if your child is refused admission by a school.

13. 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 (i.e. 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 qualifying distance.

Applying for Transport Assistance

All applications for transport must be made ON-LINE via the Authority's website at www.eani.org.uk/i-want-to/get-advice-on-home-to-school-transport/apply-for-school-transport/

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/i-want-to/apply-for-school-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/i-want-to/apply-for-school-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 www.eani.org.uk/i-want-to/apply-for-school-transport/

14. 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/fsm/>

15. Education Authority Contact Details

Admissions Helpdesk  **0300 200 7824**

E-mail  primaryadmissions@eani.org.uk

Post  Primary Admissions, 3 Charlemont Place, The Mall, Armagh BT61 9AX