

DATA LABEL: PUBLIC



EDUCATION EXECUTIVE

ADMISSION TO EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE – POLICY STATEMENT AND PROCEDURE

REPORT BY HEAD OF EDUCATION (PRIMARY, EARLY YEARS AND RESOURCES)

A. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To invite the Education Executive to agree the clear separation of the Early Learning and Childcare admission policy statement from the admission procedure.

To invite the Education Executive to delegate authority to the Head of Education (Primary, Early Years and Resources) to make changes to the procedure where benefits for parents/carers and improved educational outcomes can be realised, in particular benefits arising from the new admission system being developed.

B. RECOMMENDATION

To approve the policy statements and note the procedure, and delegate authority to the Head of Education (Primary, Early Years and Resources) to make changes to the procedure where benefits for parents/carers and improved educational outcomes can be realised.

C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

I	Council Values	Focusing on our customers' needs; being honest, open and accountable; providing equality of opportunities; developing employees; making best use of our resources; working in partnership
II	Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)	<p>The Provision of Early Learning and Childcare (Specified Children) (Scotland) Amendment Order 2020</p> <p>Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014</p> <p>Education (Scotland) Act 1980</p>
III	Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers	Consideration of delegation to Head of Education (Primary, Early Learning and Resources) to modernise and improve procedures where benefits for parents/carers and educational benefits can be realised.
IV	Impact on performance and performance Indicators	-

V	Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement	Our children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed
VI	Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)	Within existing budgets.
VII	Consideration at PDSP	6 December 2022
VIII	Other consultations	Headteachers, Early Learning and Childcare Staff, Parent/Carer Surveys

D. TERMS OF REPORT

Draft policy statements and procedures are attached. These have been considered by the Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel.

A number of initiatives are underway and planned to modernise and improve the Pupil Placement function. These include the introduction of a new support system to increase automation of procedures, reducing bureaucracy and delay in decision making, with the aim of providing a more responsive service to parents/carers. Consideration of greater involvement of schools, and delegation of some decision making to schools, with the aim of improving educational outcomes, is also underway.

For this reason, it is intended that the current procedures will be subject to change where benefits for parents/carers and improved educational outcomes can be realised, and that the Head of Education (Primary, Early Years and Resources) be granted delegated authority to make these changes.

No significant change has been made to the Early Learning and Childcare Admission Policy Statement and Procedure appended to this report, but the opportunity has been taken to ensure it reflects current practice, as follows.

- Reference has been made to the Scottish Government Statutory Guidance in the list of factors that the Council will take account of, in particular the aim or providing flexibility and choice to parents.
- Reference has been removed to granting greater priority to parents requesting more hours, and considering the balance of ante-pre-school and pre-school children in each session, as these have been superseded by Scottish Government Statutory Guidance on flexibility and choice.
- The opportunity has been taken to stress the aim of providing continuity of education and transition from early learning and childcare to primary education, and taking account of this aim in admission decisions, based on feedback from parents/carers on the importance of achieving this continuity.
- Reference has been made to the new opportunity for parents to Buy Additional Nursery Hours, being piloted in a number of Council Early Learning and Childcare establishments.

E. CONCLUSION

It is recommended that the Education Executive approves the policy statements and notes the procedures.

It is intended that the current procedures will be subject to change where benefits for parents/carers and improved educational outcomes can be realised, in particular benefits arising from the new admission system being developed, and that the Head of Education (Primary, Early Years and Resources) be granted delegated authority to make these changes.

F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES

None

Appendices/Attachments:

- 1) Early Learning and Childcare Admission – Policy Statement and Procedure

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Date of meeting: 17 January 2023

DATA LABEL: OFFICIAL


**Policy and
Procedure:**

Author:
Service:
Last Updated:
Date for Review

**Early Learning and Childcare (ELC)
Admissions**

Hannah Haywood
Education Services
December 2022
December 2023

EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE (ELC) ADMISSION - POLICY STATEMENT

Admission Guidelines

When considering Early Learning and Childcare admissions, the Council will take account of the following:

- The Care Inspectorate registered capacity of the establishment.
- The Care Inspectorate adult to child ratios applicable to the provision.
- Scottish Government Statutory Guidance including the aim of providing flexibility and choice.
- The need to achieve best value in early learning and childcare.
- The aim of achieving continuity of education and transition from early learning and childcare to primary education.
- The overall pattern of applications across West Lothian.

If a parent's preferred ELC establishment has more applications than places, the following will be considered:

- Children living in West Lothian will have priority over children living outwith West Lothian.
- Children should not be expected to move ELC establishment when progressing from their ante-pre-school year to their pre-school year, or when deferring entry to primary school.
- How close the school is from the child's home by a suitable walking route, with the aim of offering parents/carers placement within a broad geographic area based on a town or locality, generally within a 1.5 miles distance from home to ELC establishment.
- The catchment primary school to which the child is likely to progress.
- The school(s) attended by sibling(s).
- Special medical, physical or educational need.
- Any other information provided.

Within each grouping of children with the same or similar circumstances, the oldest children should have priority.

The above are not in any priority order. The Council can decide to admit a child to any ELC establishment in special circumstances as determined by the Council.

EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE ADMISSION - PROCEDURE

1. Background

1.1 Pre-School Establishments

A list of pre-school establishments, along with their opening times, is included in the ***ELC Admission - Guidance Notes***.

All West Lothian Council ELC establishments are non-denominational (not linked to a particular religion) even if they are located within a denominational (Roman Catholic) school campus.

West Lothian Council ELC establishments do not have catchment areas. When allocating places, however, significant account is taken of where a child lives, and the school that they are likely to attend in P1, in order to maximise continuity of education and transition within the 3-18 curriculum.

Attendance at an ELC establishment within a primary school campus **does not** give a right to transfer to the P1 class at the primary school.

1.2 Over Subscription

It is usual for some ELC establishments in West Lothian to receive more applications than there are places available. The supply of places is limited by the availability of accommodation (registered capacity), the cost of extending accommodation, and the cost of employing additional staff.

First, second and third choices of ELC establishment and session (morning, afternoon and or 2 full days) can be entered on the application form. **It is not possible for the Council to offer every parent/carer their first choice of either session or location.**

Therefore, it is important to provide an alternative choice or choices (if appropriate). **If only one choice is made, and the establishment and session chosen are oversubscribed, it may not be possible to offer any place.**

1.3 Eligibility

There are three intakes of children each year, in August, January and April. Children who are eligible and have been granted a place to start in January may start from the day of their third birthday if a place is available at that time. Eligibility dates are included in the ***ELC Admission - Guidance Notes***. Parents/carers should refer to this document to determine their own child's intake.

Children are of primary school age if they are five before 1 March in their first year of primary school.

Parents/carers of children born between the first day of term in August and the end of February may decide to defer a child's entry into primary school until the start of the school session following the child's fifth birthday. Further information can be found in the ***Additional Year of ELC and School Education - Policy and Procedure***.

1.4 Buy Extra Nursery Hours

Parents and carers have told us that they would like to be able to buy extra hours in our nurseries. We don't have space to do this in all of our nurseries,

but where we do have spare spaces parents and carers can buy extra nursery hours for their children. Further details are available from our website <https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/extra-nursery-hours> or you can e-mail buyextranurseryhours@westlothian.gov.uk.

Childcare/ additional hours are also provided by partner providers at a cost to the parent/carers.

1.5 Transport

The Council has no statutory duty to provide transport to ELC establishments.

1.6 Children with Additional Support Needs

West Lothian Council has a policy, and a legislative duty, to integrate children with additional support needs into mainstream education. Children who require significant additional support to attend pre-school education will normally be identified at an early stage by the local professionals from health, social policy and education, who will determine the level of support required. Further details are available from the **Additional Support Needs Service** based in the Civic Centre, Livingston, or you can e-mail ASNManager@westlothian.gov.uk

2. The Application Procedure

2.1 Applying for a Place in a ELC Establishment (including partner providers)

Applications can be made after a child's second birthday. Decisions will not be made at this time, but applying at this time helps the Council plan future provision. A separate application form must be completed for each child.

To apply for a place, parents/carers should:-

1. Complete the Application for ELC form on line, attaching a copy of the child's birth certificate. The Education Customer Support team (Pupil Placement) may also ask for proof of address in necessary.
2. If you are unable to complete the form on line. You can arrange to visit the chosen ELC establishment, where help will be given to complete the **Application for an ELC place** form. The child's birth certificate must also be taken to the chosen ELC establishment. The establishment will forward the completed form and a copy of any relevant documents to the Education Customer Support team (Pupil Placement) based in the Civic Centre, Livingston. To ensure that applications can be considered by the ELC Placement Panel, application forms must be returned by **15 March** for August and January places. Application forms must be returned by **15 November** for April places.

Application forms and additional information received after these dates will be considered, but places will be limited once placement decisions have been made by the School Placement Panel.

If a child's circumstances change (for example, their address) after submitting the application form, parents/carers must inform Education Customer Support team (Pupil Placement) by e-mail as soon as possible (pupilplacement@westlothian.gov.uk).

Once a child has been offered a place, the offer will not be withdrawn, unless false information is provided, or information is deliberately withheld, in which case the Council may withdraw a place.

2.2 Applying for an Additional Year of ELC

Children whose fifth birthdays occur after the start of the school session and before 1 March of the following year are able to enter Primary 1 in the session in which their fifth birthday occurs. They are also able to defer entry into Primary 1 until the beginning of the session after the one in which their 5th birthday occurs. Parents/carers of children whose birthday falls within this range of dates can make the choice whether their child will start primary school or have an additional year of Early Learning and Childcare.

Parents/carers who are considering deferring their child's entry to primary school should ask for advice from staff in their child's early learning and childcare establishment before making a decision. Parents/carers should read the **Application for an Additional Year of ELC Policy and Procedure** and must complete the **Application for an Additional Year of Early Learning & Childcare** form.

3. The Decision Making Procedure

The Council will consider and decide on all applications for ELC, additional hours and applications for additional year of ELC for children born between the first day of term in August and 31 December.

When sessions (morning, afternoon or 2 full days) at particular establishments are oversubscribed, the factors set out in the **ELC Admission Policy Statement – Admission Guidelines** will be considered. The Council will consider all information provided in the application form. It is therefore important that all relevant information is included on the form.

The factors taken account of in the **ELC Admission Policy Statement – Admission Guidelines** are not in priority order, but when making its decision the ELC Admissions Panel will decide how to prioritise these factors, taking account of all the information provided by applicants, and the overall pattern of applications across West Lothian.

Within each factor, priority will also be given. For example, when considering whether the applicant has a 'brother or sister who attends the establishment', an applicant having a brother or sister will have priority over one who does not.

All places will be granted until the child becomes eligible for school. **There is no need to reapply for a ELC place, unless parents/carers want to request an alternative session or establishment.**

Parents/carers will be informed of the decision by letter or e-mail. For August and January placements, letters or e-mails will be issued by the end of May. For April placements, letters or e-mails will be issued by the end of February. Decision letters for an additional year of ELC will be issued in March.

There is no right of appeal if the Council does not grant a place.

4 Other Information

4.1 Waiting Lists

Waiting lists may be kept when applications received for a particular session (morning, afternoon or 2 full days) exceed the number of places. Waiting lists are prioritised in line with the **ELC Admission Policy Statement – Admission**

Guidelines and decisions made by the Council. Parents/carers will be informed if a place becomes available. Waiting lists will only last one year, and will not be taken account of in the next year's placement decisions.

4.2 Mid-session Applications

Applications may be made at any time, for example if parents/carers move into West Lothian, or move house within West Lothian. Applications other than those received by the relevant deadline for August, January and April entry will be considered. Decisions on all applications will be made in line with policy and the previous decisions of the Council.

4.3 Non-Attendance

If a child does not attend their ELC placement regularly or is absent for more than two weeks without agreement from the ELC establishment, the place may be withdrawn.

4.4 Customer Satisfaction

Each school session a number of parents/carers may be asked to complete a short questionnaire in relation to their satisfaction with the admissions process.