

3 – 5 years ELC Information & Application Guidance for August 2026 / 2027

Early Learning and Childcare Entitlement (ELC)

Children aged **3 to 4 years** are entitled up to **1140 hours of funded Early Learning and Childcare (ELC)**. This is funded by Inverclyde Council and starts from the **term after your child's 3rd birthday**. The exact start date and number of entitled hours, depends on your child's date of birth and the intake term shown below.

Date of Birth Range	Intake Term	Entitled hours
1 March – 31 March	AUGUST	1140
1 April – 30 April		
1 May – 31 May		
1 June – 30 June		
1 July – 31 July		
1 August – 31 August		
1 September – 30 September	JANUARY	642
1 October – 31 October		
1 November – 30 November		
1 December – 31 December		
1 January – 31 January	APRIL	294
1 February – last day February		

APPLYING FOR A 3-5 YEAR EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE PLACE

You must complete an application form if your child is eligible for a funded ELC place.

Inverclyde Council offers places through which gives families flexibility in how and where ELC hours are accessed.:

- Local Authority Nurseries and Schools
- Approved Funded Childminders
- Approved Private / Voluntary / Independent (PVI) Nurseries

APPLICATION DATES AND ALLOCATION PROCESS

Key Dates for 2026

Application forms are only available at the **start of the new term in January** for the year your child becomes eligible.

There is an application window for 3–5-year applications to be presented at the annual allocations panel

Applications submitted between:

- **6 January – 17 January**

These applications will be:

- Presented to the **Annual Admissions Panel** (usually held in late February / early March)
- You will receive your child's allocated ELC place **by email in late March**

Applications submitted after 17 January will be classed as **late applications** and will be considered after the main allocation process.

To improve your chances of securing your preferred choices, we strongly recommend applying within the main January window although there is no guarantee

ELC APPLICATION TIMELINE - SESSION 2026 / 2027				
APPLICATION FORMS SUBMITTED		PRESENTED AT	ELC PLACES RELEASED	ELC PLACE - ACCEPT OR DECLINE
5 January 2026 – 16 January 2026		Annual Allocation Panel	18 March 2026	27 March 2026
17 January 2026 – 4 April 2026 classed as a late application		Post Admissions panel	21 May 2026	29 May 2026
Forms received after 4 April 2026 will not be looked at until after the 6 June 2026				
HOW EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE IS DELIVERED				
Local Authority Establishment				
Local Authority establishments, delivery ELC in Nursery Classes / Schools, Early Learning Centre's and Family Centre's. There are a variety of models and are available either term time or extended year.				
Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Mon – Fri 6 hours per day over 38 wks Over term time	2 ½ days Mon & Tues, Wed (am) / Extended year	2 ½ days Wed (pm) Thu – Fri / Extended year	5 x am Mon – Fri / Extended year	5 x pm Mon – Fri / Extended year
Approved Funded Provider Childminder				
Childminders set their own opening hours and delivery models. You must contact the childminder directly to discuss your needs before applying.				
Full ELC hours	This is where you can access your ELC hours fully delivered with a childminder			
Blended Care hours	This is where you can access your ELC hours split between a childminder and another funded provider setting. A blended care place will be delivered as term time and will be 15 hours at each provider only. PVI and Local Authority establishments will deliver 15 hours of ELC as 2 ½ days or 5 half sessions this will be individual to each establishment. Example1: Blended 1 - 9am - 3pm Mon & Tues & 9am - 12pm / Wed Example 2: Blended 3 – 9am - 12pm / Mon - Fri			
For more information, please see leaflet all about Childminders and how they deliver ELC hours				
Approved Funded Provider Private / Voluntary / Independent Nursery				
Private, Voluntary and Independent providers will also have their own operating models and may have a separate application process.				
You should contact them directly to discuss availability and arrangements before submitting your application.				

Do not reside in Inverclyde Council but wish to take your child's entitled hours at an Inverclyde ELC provider
This would be classed as a Cross Boundary Application – this is where you are requesting to access your child's entitled hours in different local authority from which you reside. The application form should be completed. This application is then taken to the cross-boundary admission panel and is presented to the Council that you reside for consideration – This is a different process and timeline to Inverclyde residents - Please refer to the cross-boundary leaflet for further information and process.

APPLICATION FORM
Application forms are only available from Local Authority / Approved Childminder or Approved PVI provider Applications Forms must be submitted to the first-choice provider.
COMPLETING MANDATORY SECTION IN ELC APPLICATION FORM

1a	You must provide: • Child's birth certificate or Passport • Proof of address: ○ Council Tax bill ○ Tenancy agreement ○ Lawyer's letter confirming house purchase ○ Gas or Electric utility bill Forms will NOT be accepted without this evidence. Childcare arrangements cannot be used as proof of residence.
1b	Family details – This information must reflect any parent named on your child's birth certificate and must be completed. Must include details of all parents named on the birth certificate and be fully completed. Please ensure email and contact details are legible and correct as ELC offers will be emailed.
1c	All health information must be completed, including: • GP details • Health Visitor details Incomplete health sections will result in the form being rejected.
2a	Only complete if another child in your family already attends the same ELC establishment in a deferred or pre-school year.
2b	This is for information only – You may or may not know this at this point. ELC places and Primary School places have no connection.
3	You must list at least 3 choices in priority order, including: • Establishment • Attendance model This can be at a Local authority establishment / Approved Funded Provider Childminder or Approved Funded provider Private / Voluntary or Independent Nursery or across 2 providers this would be a blended or split place. Please note, we will always aim to ensure preferred choices are allocated, however, there is no guarantee of this. Applicants may find that the preferred establishment / operating model is full. In this situation, in ensuring the authority meets its statutory duty, an alternative place will be offered that is not stated on the application form submitted. Every attempt will be made to offer a suitable place within the Early Learning and Childcare defined area, however, this is not guaranteed.
4	You must initial each box to confirm you understand the information and requirements. If you do not understand or require further information, please contact the provider where they will be able to assist you. By signing the form, you confirm: • All information is correct • You will inform the provider of any changes • False information may risk the offer being withdrawn