

Nursery Admissions Policy

Schools, Learning and Education



Improving
Life
through
Learning

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Introduction

Stirling Council is committed to the provision of high quality early years experiences for all children. We aim to provide places that meet the needs and demands of both children and families, to offer them a range of provision from which to choose the best place for their child and to allocate the places using a system that is fair and transparent to all applicants.

This document provides guidance on the admission of children aged 0-5 years into Council nurseries and on the admissions process for children aged 3 and 4 years old only who are accessing places commissioned within partner nurseries or playgroups.

These guidelines are provided for:

- Stirling Council staff to assist in the allocation of all Council nursery places regardless of the child's age;
- Managers of partner nurseries and playgroups to assist in the allocation of commissioned places for 3 and 4 year old children only.

The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 determines the eligibility of children who are entitled to early learning and childcare (formerly known as 'pre-school education'). In all cases, the entitlement is to free early learning and childcare amounting to 600 hours.

Entitled children, whose parents so choose, are placed in either a council nursery or a partnership nursery or playgroup.

Those entitled are:

- All children aged 3 or 4 years old;
- Two year olds who are (or have been since they turned 2) cared for by the local authority (looked after);
- Two year olds who are (or have been since they turned 2) cared for under a kinship care order;
- Two year olds from workless or job seeking households' and/or
- Two year olds from "Low Income" households in receipt of certain Child Tax and Working Tax Credits (please refer to the Charging Policy).

When the demand for places within in a particular nursery or playgroup exceeds the supply it is necessary to have a system for deciding on the allocation of places in a transparent and equitable way. This is what the admissions policy will help us to do.

The Council has a duty to ensure that all entitled children are prioritised when places are allocated.

The admissions policy and procedures help us to gather information on applicants and make decisions on the basis of need.

Partner Services Nurseries and Playgroups

All partner nurseries and playgroups (*Partner Services*) are registered to deliver services for children aged 3 and 4 years old in line with “Curriculum for Excellence 3-18”. In common with Council nurseries, they are subject to inspections by Education Scotland and the Care Inspectorate.

In addition, all partner services are required to meet the criteria set out in their commissioning contract which is intended to help them maintain and improve the quality of their service. The Council is entitled to seek assurance that these establishments meet a minimum standard.

Partner Services participate fully in the admissions process for 3 and 4 year olds.

For general admissions queries, partner services should contact the Early Childhood Co-ordination Officer on 01786 233206.

Entitlement to Early Years Provision

This section of the guidelines details the entitlement that children in each of the age groups have to early years' provision.

Deferred Entrants to P1

Are parents entitled to a continued nursery place if their child's entry to school is deferred?

Parents of children whose birth date is January or February are able to choose to defer their child's entry into primary 1. In such cases, the Council must fully-fund the additional year.

Parents of children whose birth date is September – December are able to apply to the Council for consideration of a deferred year for their child. If the Council grants the request then funding is agreed, however, if the Council does not grant the request then parents may choose to defer their child but they will be asked to pay for the place.

Children whose birth date is March – August should go to primary school; there is no discretion applied for these children.

Children aged 3 & 4 years old

What entitlement do 3 and 4 year olds have to early years' provision?

All 3 and 4 years olds are entitled to a fully funded place, which is 15 hours 50 minutes per week, term time (38 weeks) over an academic session.

Children usually begin nursery at 3 years old and remain there until they go to primary school.

Children aged 3 years old become eligible for a government funded places at the start of the term following their third birthday:

- Children who are 3 between 1st March and 31st August are eligible for a funded place from the start of school-term in August.
- Children who are 3 between 1st September and 31st December are eligible for a funded place from the start of school-term in January.
- Children who are 3 between 1st January and 28th February are eligible for a funded place from the start of school-term in April (after the Easter holiday).

Although we make every effort to accommodate the parent's preferred choice of nursery or playgroup, the level of demand in the case of partner services commissioned places available, means this is not always possible. As we cannot guarantee allocating a place within the first choice establishment, there remains a need to prioritise all applications received against the pointing criteria.

It is also not always possible to guarantee a parent's preferred pattern of sessions, although every effort will be made to accommodate needs.

Children under 3 years

Can we offer nursery places to children aged under 3 years old?

The registration of the nursery by the Care Inspectorate determines whether provision for children under 3 years old can be offered.

Certain 2 year old children are entitled to 600 hours of free early learning and childcare. This entitlement will be delivered in local authority nurseries. However, in exceptional circumstances where a family falls into the category of being entitled and the child is already attending a partnership nursery, the Council may honour that arrangement by paying the cost of 600 hours of early learning and childcare. Payment would be made at the same rate as that for 3 and 4 year old children. This situation should be approved by the Service Manager for Early Years and Early Intervention prior to agreement of continuation of a place.

Entitled is determined as:

- Two year olds who are (or have been since they turned two) cared for by the local authority (looked after).
- Two year olds who are (or have been since they turned two) cared for under a kinship care order.
- Two year olds from workless or job seeking households.
- Two year olds whose parents are on certain welfare benefits (low income families).

Eligibility criteria are set by the Scottish Government.

Any two year old within the following claimant households would be eligible for 600 hours of early learning and childcare:

- Income Support;
- Jobseeker's Allowance;
- Employment and Support Allowance;
- Two year olds from "Low Income" households in receipt of certain Child Tax & Working Tax Credits (see refer to the Charging Policy for the criteria);
- Disability Living Allowance (being replaced by Personal Independence Payments)
- Pension Credit;
- *Where the local authority is satisfied that the household parent(s) are undertaking work related activity or are engaged in family support.

*Such work-related/family support activities may include:

- Job seeking
- Employability pipeline programmes
- Training and studying
- Family support such as participation in parenting programmes
- Family centred based early learning and childcare
- Community childminding

In addition, this includes workless but not on benefits group, including:

- A divorced parent supported by an ex-partner
- A parent with funds from redundancy
- A widowed parent supported by a partners pension or savings
- Students
- Parents on carers allowance
- Young parents living with their parents

Children who are under 3 years old and not entitled to early learning and childcare under the above criteria may still be given a place in a Council nursery; however, such places are offered on a case-by-case basis.

Applications for places in Council nurseries for children aged under 3 years should be dealt with under the same procedures as those for older children and should be considered by the local Admissions Panels.

Cross-boundary Nursery Places

Can children resident in other Council areas be allocated places in Stirling Council nurseries or partner centres?

Children resident in other Council areas may be allocated places in Stirling Council nurseries or partner centres only after all eligible applicants from the Stirling area have been allocated places and only if commissioned places are available.

In these cases, parents should be asked to sign a disclaimer form confirming that they are not taking up nursery provision elsewhere. ([Appendix 2](#))

Details of any cross-boundary applicants should also be noted separately on the census of nursery places completed each term.

If a child has additional support needs and is from another authority with whom we have a reciprocal agreement, we would fund the 600 hours if a place was available but we would seek a planning meeting with the home authority regarding any additional support required. We would expect the home authority to pay for any support required. Part of the planning process would be discussion regarding funding of resources.

Can Stirling families apply for nursery places in other Council areas?

Stirling Council recognises that it is not always possible for parents, especially working parents, to access a nursery near to their home. They may wish to apply for a place in a nursery or playgroup near to their work in another Council area. Parents who wish to take up provision in other Council areas should contact the relevant local authority directly for advice on their admissions process.

Nursery Application

How do parents apply for a place in a Stirling Council nursery or partner centre?

All parents should be given a copy of the Nursery Admissions Information Leaflet to assist them in completing their application.

Stirling Council nurseries and partner centres offer a range of different types of provision for children aged 0-5 years, both part-time and full-time. The application process is the same for each type of Council provision and for commissioned 3 & 4 year old places in partner centres.

The same application form should be used in every case. Parents can complete an application form on line or they can be given to parents directly by the nursery or partner centre to which they are applying. All completed forms should be returned directly to the nursery or partner centre. Parents/carers must provide a birth certificate and proof of address with the application form. Please note that the original copy of the birth certificate must be seen by the administrator or a member of the Senior Management Team.

Where parents are applying for a place in a Council nursery which provides for children aged 3-5 years only, applications should be accepted by the nursery once the child has reached 2 years of age.

Where parents are applying for a place in a Council nursery which provides for children aged 0-5 years, there is no restriction on when applications may be accepted. In all instances, parents should be issued with a receipt upon return of the completed, signed application form.

When should parents complete application forms?

Parents are free to apply for a place at any time of year. The majority of Council nursery places or commissioned places in partner centres, however, are allocated annually just after Easter, for the following session beginning in August. Parents should, therefore, be reminded to submit applications during January to March each year.

All nurseries should ensure that reminders about completing application forms are made known to the community by placing notices locally.

If possible, it is often useful if a member of staff from the establishment can discuss the completion of the form with the parent, to ensure there is enough information to assist in assessing the application.

Pre-School Children

It is very important that late applications received from parents of children in their pre-school year are dealt with immediately in order to ensure that a place is found for each child to allow them some early years' experience before moving on to school.

If your nursery or group cannot offer a place you should discuss alternative local options with the parent and make every effort to assist them to find a suitable solution. All Heads of Establishment have a shared responsibility to support parents in finding places that meet the needs of their child and family. Parents must provide a second and third choice nursery on their application form.

What is the register of applicants?

The register of applicants is the list of families who have applied for, but have not yet been offered, a place in a nursery or establishment. This term is used in preference to "waiting list" as the offer of a place is dependent upon the level of priority according to the points system, not upon the length of time since the application was made. As applications can be received at any time during the year, applications should be assessed immediately upon receipt and placed on the register of applicants according to the points.

This could mean that the new applicant will go to the top of the register if they have more points than the existing children on the register. If the new applicant has equal points to those already on the register, the name should be placed alongside those with other applications. It is important to inform parents that the nursery will be in contact when a place becomes available. Caution should be exercised with regard to informing parents of their exact place on the register of applicants. This can change from day to day if new, higher priority applications are received.

Do children already attending have to re-apply each year?

Children already attending a Council nursery or accessing a commissioned place in a partner centre do not have to re-apply each year. These children are referred to as your "returners" for the following year. Returning children should automatically be allocated a place for the following year unless the initial place was clearly awarded on a temporary basis for emergency reasons. Parents of returning children should be given the opportunity to change the sessions allocated to them for the following year if they wish to do so.

If a parent wishes to move their child, however, to another nursery or partner centre, a new application should be submitted to the appropriate establishment. You should not re-allocate that child's place until the parent has confirmed that s/he will not be returning to your nursery or group.

What do I do with the completed application forms when parents submit them?

All parents must complete an application form giving detailed information on their child and the family circumstances. It is important to remember to give parents a receipt for their application.

The information should be provisionally “pointed” by using the points system which looks at a range of factors affecting the child - including the child’s age, where s/he lives and particular family circumstances - and a points total awarded. The children with the greatest number of points are given priority in the allocation of places.

What happens to the provisionally pointed applications?

Where possible all provisionally pointed applications are taken to be agreed at a meeting of the local Area Admissions Panel. A final decision on the allocation of places for each nursery or commissioned places in the case of partner centres will be made at this meeting.

Following the meeting, a letter should be sent to every parent who has submitted an application informing them of the outcome.

What do the Area Admissions Panels do?

The Area Admissions Panels exist to ensure that the needs of children and parents are met and to facilitate the strategic allocation of nursery places in line with the Council’s Nursery Admission Guidelines. They also help in the allocation of places in cases where applications have been made to more than one nursery or playgroup. At the Panel meeting, the provisional pointing decisions made by the Head of Establishment are discussed and where appropriate, ratified. The Panel also looks at the information given by the parent on preferred choice of nursery or playgroup and decides where to allocate a place to each applicant.

There are 7 Area Admission Panels across the Stirling Council area. A list of the members of each of these panels and more detailed information on their operation may be found at the end of this document. ([Appendix 1](#))

Frequency of Area Admissions Panels

Each Area Admissions Panels shall meet twice per year. The meetings will be in April and September.

Points System

Age Factors (Please note that only one statement can apply. Max 20 points)	Points
<p>Entitled 2 year old children Priority consideration should be given to children on the Child Protection Register/Complex Learning Support Needs).</p>	20
<p>Deferred Entrants to Primary School January and February birth dates Note: Any child whose entry into P1 has been delayed following agreement by staff, parents and other professionals such as Psychological Services that the child has a particular need and would benefit significantly from an additional year at nursery OR any child whose parents wish to delay entry into P1 and whose birthday falls in either January or February.</p>	10
<p>Deferred Entrants to Primary School September to December birth dates Any child whose entry into P1 has been delayed at the request of the parents due to the child's age <u>and</u> whose birth date falls between September and December and who has already attended nursery the previous year for their "pre-school year entitlement". In a very small number of instances, applications may have had <u>no prior early years experience</u>. These children should be prioritised as if they were in their pre-school year and 10 points awarded.</p>	10
<p>All children, resident within the Council area, who are eligible to enrol for primary education the following year.</p>	10
<p>Children in their ante pre-school year (3 year olds) All children, resident within the Council area, whose date of birth falls within the eligibility dates noted earlier in this guidance.</p>	5
<p>Children under 3 years of age (0-3 year olds) Note: All children resident within the Council area, aged from 6 weeks up to 3 years old.</p>	3
<p>Children in their pre-school year (4 year olds) or ante pre-school (3 year olds) year who live outwith Stirling Council area.</p>	3

Geographical Factors (Please note that only one statement can apply. Max 5 points)	Points
All children who live within the defined catchment area for the nursery.	5
Any child who lives within the Stirling Council area (though not in the particular nursery catchment), whose parent regularly works or is in training within the defined catchment area for the nursery.	3
Children in their pre-school year (4 year olds) who live within the Stirling Council area but outwith the defined catchment area for the nursery.	3
Children younger than their pre-school year (3 year olds or under 3's) who live within the Stirling Council area but outwith the defined catchment area for the nursery.	2
Children in their pre-school (4 year olds) or ante pre-school (3 year olds) year who live outwith the boundaries of the Stirling Council area.	1
Children aged under 3 years old who live outwith the boundaries of the Stirling Council area.	0

Environmental Factors (Please note that only one statement can apply. Max 1 points)	Points
<p>Rural Deprivation Note: Children who live in remote/isolated locations where there is very little possibility of contact with children other than their siblings. Head of Establishment should use their local knowledge and professional discretion in relation to this category.</p>	1
<p>Urban Deprivation Note: Children whose environment is impoverished by lack of safe outdoor play facilities or who live within a designated area of need. Designated areas of need include some areas of Bannockburn, Fallin, Raploch, top of the town, the eastern villages, Cornton and the Cultenhove area of St Ninians. Heads of Establishment should use their local knowledge and professional discretion in relation to this category.</p>	1

Referral Factors (Please note that points may be awarded in more than one category for these factors. Max 5 points)	Points
<p>Children on the Child Protection Register Note: Any child whose name is placed on the Child Protection Register held by Child Protection Services; or any child who would be likely to have their named placed on the Child Protection Register; or any child likely to be received into care without the support of a nursery place. This must be supported by the appropriate referral form from Social Services.</p>	15
<p>Children with Additional Support Needs Note: Any child who has been referred by the Psychological Services who has and additional support need. This must be supported by the appropriate referral form from the Psychological Service.</p>	15
<p>Social Services Referral Note: Any child who has been specifically referred by Social Services staff although not necessarily on the Child Protection Register.</p>	3
<p>Speech Therapy Referral Note: Any child who is considered by a Speech Therapist to have a language disorder which could be improved by the child's attendance at nursery. This will be supported by the appropriate referral form from the Speech Therapist.</p>	1
<p>Health Service Referral Note: Referral forms received from the Health Service (eg. Health Visitor, G.P) may be a method of supporting what parents have put on their application. It may not necessarily gain an extra point. Heads of establishment should use their professional discretion and consult with their Area Admissions Panel over such referrals. The information given on the form must make it clear why it is thought that the child will benefit from attendance at nursery.</p>	1
<p>Additional: In certain circumstances, other professionals may wish to support an application for a nursery place whilst not feeling that it merits the full support of a referral. In these instances a letter of support may be submitted to the nursery. It is left to the discretion of the Head of Establishment, in conjunction with the other panel members, to decide whether the additional support is enough to justify further prioritising an individual's application.</p>	

Social Factors (Please note that points may be awarded in any of these categories a, b or c – up to a maximum of 3 points overall)	Points
<p>Family Stress</p> <p>Note: It is difficult to define” family stress” as levels will vary for individual families and situations. Each should be considered on its own merit. Children in this category may include any child living in a family known to be under stress through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • family breakdown • a disabled or seriously ill member of the family • having three or more children under 5 years living in the home • being a lone adult household • both parents unemployed • migrant/refugees or asylum seekers. <p>Please note that these examples are not exclusive and there may be <u>other</u> reasons for a family being under stress. Heads of Establishment should use their professional discretion and consult with their Local Area Admissions Panel in pointing this category. You may wish to seek letters of support for applications from other agencies (eg. Health Visitors, Social Services etc.).</p>	1
<p>Any Child Whose Lone Parent is Working or in Training</p> <p>Note: It may be helpful to consider this in relation to the stress, not only of being a lone parent, but that which would follow if a job were lost or be unable to be taken up in the absence of a nursery place. Undergoing training or education can also be a major step in obtaining employment which in turn lifts a family out of poverty. This category relates directly to Stirling Council’s statement of its “Vision & Values.”</p>	1
<p>Any Child who comes from a Non-English Speaking Home</p>	1

Access Factors (Extended Sessions only) (Please note that points may be awarded in any of these categories. Max 4 points)	Points
<p>All parents seeking extended hours provision should complete the Extended Hours Application Form in addition to the main nursery application form. This section should be considered in isolation from the other pointing sections.</p>	
<p>Developmental Needs Note: Any child who is a deferred entrant to P1 and who, from observation by nursery staff where the child already attends, appears to have significant additional support needs. Consideration may also be given to younger children who appear to have significant additional support needs.</p>	1
<p>Family Responsibilities Note: Families who have 2 or more younger siblings at home or who have a dependant relative or other child with special needs living at home. Any additional stress factors within the family such as a child who frequently moves between a number of different care situations, may also be considered at the Head of Establishment's professional discretion.</p>	1
<p>Other Siblings in Nursery or School (in the case of nurseries based in primary schools) Note: Where a child has a sibling already attending the nursery or higher up the school in the case of primary schools, a further point may be awarded.</p>	1
<p>Work/Training/Education Issues Note: Parents who will be <u>unable to take up the offer of a job or to continue working</u> or attending training or further education unless an extended session is available. Consideration may also be given to parents seeking extended hours to enable them to take up additional hours of employment and thereby enhance their family circumstances. Professional discretion should be applied in this context.</p>	1

Geographical/Transport Issues

Note: Any child whose family lives a long distance from the nursery and who do not have access to a car. This is particularly relevant in the rural areas.

Please note that in relation to all of these factors, it is essential that supporting information is sought from the family and any relevant professionals (eg Health Visitors) or agencies. In the case of parents with work/training/education issues, you may seek validating information from the employer/training/education provider.

Where extended session applicants are on equal points following consideration of the above criteria, then the usual guidance relating to shared places and finally, balloting, should be followed.

1

Sessions, Split Places and Catchment Areas

How long is a part-time nursery session?

Sessions for children aged 3 and 4 years old must last a minimum of 3 hours 10 mins and no more than 8 hours per day whether they take place in a Council nursery or within a partner centre.

Children aged 3 and 4 years old have an entitlement to up 600 hours in each year for which a child is eligible, pro rata for 3 year olds depending upon commencement dates. Children aged 2 years of age and who are “entitled” will also receive the 600 hours of early learning and childcare.

Wherever possible however, Stirling Council is keen to meet the needs of parents as well as children and flexible patterns of provision or different lengths of session may be offered. Places commissioned within partner services may follow the 5 x 3hours 10 mins pattern or, as with Council nurseries, the equivalent 15hours 50mins may be offered in a flexible pattern.

Should children under 3 years old be offered the same sessions as older children?

Demand for places for children under 3 years old is very high and there is no fixed session allocation for this age group as there is no formal entitlement to a place.

Places and sessions should be allocated entirely subject to the individual needs of the child or family and availability.

2 year olds who are entitled to early learning and childcare will take priority.

How do I decide who gets a morning, afternoon extended or flexible day session?

Some parents choose that their child attend nursery for 5 x am or 5 x pm sessions per week. Parents are asked to indicate their preferred session on the nursery application form and to give reasons for their preference.

Those parents who wish their child to have an extended or flexible day placement must put this on the application form stating their reasons for this preference.

It is helpful, therefore, to make parents aware that their preferred choice of session cannot always be guaranteed.

Priority in allocating sessions should be given to applicants where work or childcare arrangements indicate that they need specific nursery hours in order to maintain these arrangements.

Sometimes parents of all of the children from a particular community may request the same sessions in order that their children can be together. Parents should be made aware that sessions are allocated on the basis of individual children's needs and this may not always be possible to accommodate.

In terms of the operation of the nursery, it is considered best practice to ensure a mix of 3 and 4 year olds at both morning and afternoon sessions.

What is a split place?

Sometimes Council nurseries or partner centres may not be able to offer the full entitlement of provision per week or parents may not wish their child to attend for the full entitlement. Parents using such nurseries or groups may wish to top up their hours to the total of their child's entitlement within another establishment, this is called a split place.

Parents are asked to indicate on their application form whether they wish to take up their child's entitlement as a split place e.g. some sessions within a Council nursery and some commissioned within a partner centre. This often helps to meet the needs of parents who work part-time as they may purchase additional hours of care within the partner nursery to support their working needs.

If a parent is seeking a split place, they will be required to complete an application form for each establishment they are seeking a place within. Alternatively, the application may be copied by one establishment to the other. The Head of Establishment should make contact with the other to confirm availability before any letter of allocation is sent out.

Parents should be made aware that although every effort will be made to meet their needs, there is no guarantee that it will be possible to offer split places in every case. The allocation of a split place will be dependent upon both of the establishments being able to offer the hours requested.

Where a high number of requests for split places has been received, consideration should be given to the impact of this upon the overall operation of an establishment before sessions are allocated.

What is an extended session? (Standalone)

An extended session refers to any hours offered in a Standalone Council nursery in excess of the usual part-time sessions. The length of the session can vary dependent upon the child's or parent's needs and does not necessarily have to cover the full length of hours that the nursery is open although in some cases it may.

An increasing number of Stirling Council nurseries are able to offer extended sessions. These nurseries can be open from 8.00am until 4.30 / 5.30 pm for up to 50 weeks per year.

Parents accessing more than the total the 600 hours free early learning and childcare entitlement may require to pay for the additional hours under the Council Nursery Charging Policy.

Most private partner nurseries also offer extended hours sessions. Parents are required to pay for any hours they access over and above the 600 hours free early learning and childcare entitlement. This guidance does not apply to extended sessions in partner centres.

Can extended hours be offered on a temporary basis?

Extended hours in Council nurseries may be offered to a parent for a time-limited period to assist in difficult or emergency situations, for example, illness, seasonal work, change of shift pattern or jury duty. In such cases it is acceptable to review or withdraw the additional hours at the end of the specified period so long as the parent has clearly understood the temporary nature of the arrangement.

Temporary allocations of extended hours must be confirmed with the parent in writing to avoid confusion.

How do I allocate extended hours sessions in a Standalone Council Nursery?

Demand for extended hours places in Council nurseries is high and applications always have to be prioritised.

All parents seeking extended hours provision are required to complete an extended hours application form in addition to the main nursery application form, as this helps to gather further information about their needs.

Additional supporting information may also be sought from other sources such as the family GP, Health Visitor or Social Worker.

Priority is given to children from the Stirling Council area:

- Who have significant developmental needs or who have been referred to the nursery by Social or Health Services where it has been indicated that the child would benefit from longer sessions;
- Where there are significant family responsibilities;
- Where there are work, education or training issues;
- Geographical isolation or transport issues.

The Access Factors section in the Points System provides more information on this. When allocating extended sessions, the pointing criteria in this section should be considered independently of the other criteria. All applicants would then be allocated between 0 and 4 points in terms of priority for extended sessions.

It is essential that the needs of individual families are discussed with them when allocating extended places.

Parents must also be given information on the Council's Nursery Charging Policy. This should include information on the range of exemption and reduction criteria that may apply according to their family circumstances.

What is a flexible session (Nursery Class) and Purchase of Additional Hours

A flexible session refers to any hours offered in a nursery class in excess of the usual part-time sessions. The length of the session can vary dependent upon the child's or parent's needs and does not necessarily have to cover the full length of hours that the nursery is open although in some cases it may.

All nursery classes are able to offer flexible sessions and these can be purchased by parents dependant on availability.

What is a flexible session (Nursery Class) and Purchase of Additional Hours

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All nursery classes are able to offer flexible sessions and these can be purchased by parents dependant on availability.

Catchment Areas

Each school has its own geographic area called a catchment area. Normally, your child will attend your local catchment school. If you wish your child to attend another nursery you must put this nursery as your first choice on the Nursery Application Form.

In the case of nurseries based in primary schools, the catchment area generally matches that of the school although there are a very small number of exceptions. Catchment areas are only relevant to Council nurseries and only if demand for places exceeds supply.

Making Difficult Decisions

What happens when applicants have the same number of points?

Sometimes you may have more applications than you have places and all applicants may have the same number or equal points.

In the first instance, you should review each application again and consider whether to go back to the parent or contact any supporting professionals to see if there is any further relevant information about the child's or family's needs which may assist you in prioritising their application.

If after doing this, the applicants still have equal points, you should consider shared places.

What is a shared place?

When two children in the same nursery or playgroup split the allocation of sessions between them, we refer to this as a shared place. A shared place usually follows a pattern of dividing the sessions into lots of 2 / 3 sessions per week with one child attending 2 sessions and the other attending 3 sessions.

It is advisable to keep the number of shared places to a minimum where possible as a high number of shared places can be difficult to manage.

How do I allocate shared places?

All proposed sharing arrangements must be discussed with the families involved before being put into place to reassure them that decisions on sharing arrangements have been made in an equitable way.

Arrangements for shared places should be organised immediately after parents of children who have been allocated full places have been informed. You may need to hold a ballot to help you to allocate shared places.

If additional places become available during the year, shared places may be converted to full places so long as there are no applications of higher pointed priority on the register of applicants.

Can I ballot for places if applicants have equal points?

Once shared places and other criteria have been considered, if there are still large numbers of applicants in excess of remaining vacant places, random allocation through balloting may take place as a last resort.

You may also wish to ballot to assist you in allocating any shared places.

Balloting should only take place when all concerned parents have been consulted and have indicated that they wish this to happen before they will consider accepting a place in another establishment. This is particularly important in the case of balloting for pre-school year places.

All Heads of Establishment of partner centres should inform the Early Years and Early Intervention Service Manager if a ballot is to take place.

How do I conduct a ballot?

Where possible, balloting should take place at a meeting of the local Area Admissions Panel to reassure parents that it has been conducted fairly.

If this is not possible and balloting is to take place within the establishment, the following people should be present:

- Head of Establishment or his/her representative
- Parent representative whose child's name is not included in the ballot
- Administrative support to minute the meeting and record the result

The Head of Establishment should remind all present that the information is of a confidential nature and that information about the register of applications should not be disclosed.

Where twins are to be included in the ballot, both names should be entered on the one ballot paper allowing a place for each if the ballot paper is drawn.

After the required number of names has been drawn to fill the available places, the ballot should continue to establish priority children to be added the register of applicants should any further vacant places become available.

Can I review a child's nursery place once allocated?

Normally, the information given on the application form should be assumed to be correct. If however there is doubt about the accuracy of the information the Head of Establishment may ask for further information.

If a place is offered and circumstances change before the child starts, all new circumstances should be considered when deciding if the offer should be honoured. However, any decision must be based on the best interests of the child.

If the child is already attending the nursery and family circumstances change, the child must be allowed to continue with the placement. In cases where the child has an extended hours place, the Head of Establishment may discuss with the family the possibility of reviewing this and the place becoming part-time.

What should I do if a child does not attend once they have accepted a place?

Although attendance at nursery is voluntary, it is desirable for children to have a regular pattern of attendance. There may be occasions, however, when attendance becomes irregular or may stop altogether.

Heads of Establishments should take every possible step to discuss the situation with parents, carers or other agencies and to encourage and offer support to the family in resuming attendance. The family should be contacted by telephone, letter or through a home visit to discuss the situation to try to encourage attendance.

The placement should only be reviewed once such avenues have been explored. No child should be removed from the nursery roll without serious consideration of the implications for the child.

Can I allocate places to children who do not live within my catchment area?

Parents are free to apply to any Stirling Council nursery or partner centre they wish. However, in the case of Council nurseries their application will be given greatest priority in their local nursery.

Subject to capacity, places may be allocated to children who do not live within the catchment area.

In the case of nurseries based within schools, however, parents of children living out with the catchment should be made aware that being offered a place within the nursery does not guarantee that their child will be able to be accommodated in Primary One. Normal enrolment and placing request procedures must be followed for school placements.

What happens about nursery places when a family moves house within the Stirling Council area during the course of a year?

Children already attending a Stirling Council nursery whose family move house within the Council area do not have an automatic right to transfer to a place within the nursery nearest their new home.

Notwithstanding this, the Council is keen to ensure that every effort is made to offer places which are appropriate to the child's or family's circumstances. Therefore, when a family moves into an area, a new application form for the local nursery must be completed and any application received should be prioritised and treated as a late application.

A place should be allocated where capacity allows and advice / support offered to find a suitable alternative where there is no spare capacity.

In all cases, if the parent chooses to travel to the nursery where the child originally attended, then they must be allowed to keep that place even though they no longer live within that particular nursery catchment area.

Informing Parents of the Outcomes of Applications

Standalone Nurseries

How do I let parents know about the outcome of their application?

All parents must be notified in writing to inform them of the outcome of their child's application for nursery.

Letters to parents allocating:

- Pre-school year places
- Eligible 3 year old and 2 year old places*
- Under 3 years places (where appropriate)

should be sent out on a Council wide agreed date. The date will be agreed with nursery Heads of Establishment in advance of the Panel Meetings.

*Places may be allocated at the April Panel Meeting to children who will be 3 years old by 31st August and those eligible 2 year olds

A further meeting of the Admissions Panels should be arranged for September to review the allocation of places and to allocate any places to eligible late applicants.

Sample letters may be found at the end of this section of the guidance should you wish to use them.

Ensuring that all parents receive notification of the outcome of their application at the same time avoids delay should a parent have applied to more than one establishment and subsequently been offered more than one place.

The letters issued at this stage may include details of the child's proposed start date if you wish or you may indicate that you will contact parents at a later date to arrange this.

What do I do if I cannot offer a place?

A letter must be sent to all unsuccessful applicants to your nursery or playgroup as well as to those who have been allocated places.

If the child is aged under 3 years old and has no particular level of priority according to the Points System, you should inform the parents that you regret that a place cannot be allocated at this time. However, their application will be held on the register of applicants and re-considered should a place become available.

All eligible 2, 3 and 4 year old children, however, are entitled to a place within the Stirling Council area.

If you are unable to allocate a place in your nursery or group to an eligible 2, 3 or 4 year old child, you should contact the parent's second choice of establishment to check whether they can offer a place.

Your letter should then inform parents that although you cannot allocate a place, you have passed their application to their second choice of establishment. It is important that you check whether this establishment still has places available prior to issuing such a letter.

Sample letters may be found at the end of this document should you wish to use them.

What do I do about applications for places for 3 year olds who are not yet eligible?

All parents must receive a letter following Panel Meetings regarding their application.

Where you have applications from parents whose child will be 3 years old after 31st August (and thus eligible for a place from the start of term in January / April), you should inform them that you cannot offer a place at this stage but that their application will be reconsidered during the course of the year.

If you are confident that you will have capacity within your nursery or group you may indicate that it is very likely that a place will be offered nearer the time of their child's birthday. It may not be wise, however, to guarantee this, as further applications may be received during the year from families with higher priority.

Entry Arrangements

For children attending Council nurseries for the first time only, arrangements should be staggered for phased entry. Where children are returning to the nursery or where they are coming to the nursery with previous early years experience there is no need to stagger entry.

In all cases, all children should have started attending by the end of the 3rd week of term.

When arranging phased entry it is important that consideration is given to the needs and expectations of parents who may not understand why some children have started a number of weeks before their child. It is helpful if you are able to explain to parents the system you use for phasing entry and indicate that flexibility is possible according to individual needs and circumstances.

Area Admissions Panels

Why do we have Admissions Panels?

The purpose of an Area Admission Panel is to ensure that the needs of children and parents are met and to facilitate the strategic allocation of nursery places within the framework of Stirling Council Nursery Admission Policy.

The Panel should discuss the allocation decisions made by each Head of Establishment, ratifying them where appropriate, and should provide a support mechanism for them as well as for applicants and referring professionals.

It also facilitates the allocation of places in cases where applications have been made to more than one nursery or playgroup, and opens the way for smoother, more effective allocation.

The Panel will offer support in the allocation of places where a number of applicants have equal points and will allow additional or supporting information on applications to be more easily accessed.

Who are the members of the admissions panel?

Area Admission Panels should be made up of:

- All Heads of Establishment of Council nurseries in the designated area or their representatives
- All Managers of any local private sector partner nurseries
- All Managers of any local voluntary sector partner nurseries or representatives from playgroup management committees
- A representative from the Children and Families Team
- A Health Visitor from the local area
- A representative from the Educational Psychological Service

The Panel will also be attended by representatives from the Education Service to offer support and advice.

What is the role of each panel member?

Each nursery/playgroup Head of Establishment should assess and provisionally point the applications made to that nursery or group prior to them being submitted for the Panel Meeting.

Where a Head of Establishment chooses to delegate the responsibility to a representative from their establishment, their representative must be given all relevant information on the applications to the nursery and details of vacant places. As all members of the Panel participate in the decision making process, representatives should be of an appropriate level of seniority to make decisions or should have that authority delegated to them.

Colleagues in other parts of the service or from other agencies, bring their own professional perspective and can provide knowledge and insight not necessarily available to the nursery or playgroup. Receiving advance notice of applications to be discussed allows panel representatives to consult with their colleagues on individual cases as appropriate. It is important that representatives of other parts of the service or agencies understand that the professional voice of their service is vital to the panel, even when applications from users of their own service appear to be few.

It is essential that all panel members endeavour to prioritise attendance at the meetings in order to ensure that the needs of all families are met.

Who chairs the Admissions Panel meetings?

Each of the 7 Admissions Panels has a nominated chairperson who is usually one of the Heads of Establishment on the Panel. However, there may be occasions when another representative of Education takes on this role.

In order that the panel system operates smoothly and effectively, the chair of the Panel should:

- Arrange dates and venues for meetings, notifying all panel members well in advance. The main allocation meeting will take place at a central location on a fixed date but the chair is responsible for arranging any other meetings.
- Feedback decisions or updated information on any previous applications to the panel members during the meeting, in addition to considering new applications
- Arrange for minutes to be taken at the meeting, this refers to the 'able / unable to be allocated' grids detailed later in this guidance. Additional notes must also be submitted with these grids.
- Send copies of the minute/note to all panel members and to the Early Childhood Co-ordination Officer.

How do I prepare for the Admissions Panel meetings?

All Heads of Establishment should forward details of applications received by them well in advance of the panel meeting to the Early Childhood Co-ordination Officer. A pro-forma grid is available to assist with this.

This will enable the Early Childhood Co-ordination Officer to circulate details to all panel members in sufficient time for them to gather any additional information they may have about particular applicants and will allow them to highlight multiple applications.

When do the Admissions Panels meet?

Area Admission Panels should meet often enough to ensure that due consideration is given to all applications and that the uptake of places reviewed. Two meetings should normally take place annually:

- one in time for the allocation of places for the main intake for the following school year (meeting in April).
- one to review the uptake of places and make any late allocations where applications have come in over the summer or for children aged 3 after 31st August (meeting in September).

However, some Panels may feel that more frequent meetings are necessary. This is a decision for individual Panels.

All Panel meetings for the main allocation will take place concurrently at a central location. This facilitates the sharing of information and alleviates some of the difficulties caused where families apply to establishments who attend different panels. The Early Childhood Co-ordination Officer will notify all panel members of the dates on an annual basis.

Parents should be made aware that their application will be discussed by the Area Nursery Admission Panel. This information is included in the parents' information leaflet that should be issued to all applicants.

What should I bring to the Panel meeting?

Heads of Establishment should bring the following information to panel meetings:

- Details of proposed allocation of places for ratification by the Panel. (Pro-forma grid).
- Details of any applications received after submission of the pro-forma grid to the Early Childhood Co-ordination Officer.
- Any applications which cannot be placed in your nursery / group. The Panel may then consider whether any other nursery/group in the panel area is able to offer a place.
- Note of any remaining vacant places.

Some Heads of Establishment also choose to bring all of the application forms received in order that any queries (e.g. regarding a parent's first choice) may be answered at the meeting.

What will be discussed at the Panel meeting?

Each Head of Establishment should put forward at the Panel meeting her/his proposal for the allocation of places, offering individual applications for discussion as appropriate. The Panel should ratify these proposals where no difficulty arises.

Any applications which need further consideration should be fully discussed by the Panel and support given to the appropriate Head of Establishment in making decisions as to the appropriate allocation of places.

If there are applicants whose individual needs cannot be met by the nursery or playgroup to which they have applied, or for whom there is simply no place currently available, the Panel should endeavour to find suitable places in other nurseries or groups in the area, in order of priority.

All information on individual applications discussed at the Panel meeting should be treated as strictly confidential.

What should be minuted at the Panel meetings?

The minute of all Panel meetings should contain the following information:

- The total number of applications brought by each nursery or playgroup to the Panel meeting.
- The number of places allocated by each nursery or playgroup to children in their pre-school year, children aged 3 years and children aged under 3 years (where appropriate).
- Details of any applications where the Panel advised the Head of Establishment to seek further information (record the child's name and date of birth, also the reason for seeking further information).
- Details of any applications held for re-consideration at the next meeting.
- Details of any applications where it has not been possible for any of the Panel members to allocate a place.
- Date of the next Panel meeting.

The minute (along with the accompanying 'able / unable to be allocated' grids found in Appendices 1 & 2) as described above, should be sent as soon as possible following the meeting to Early Childhood Co-ordination Officer. Copies of the grids detailing all applicants for each establishment should be appended. This enables the Service to deal promptly with any appeals or issues arising from the nursery admissions process.

Advice and support for the Panel may be obtained from the Early Childhood Co-ordination Officer.

Who are the members of my Panel?

A list of the members of each of the Area Admission Panels will be found at the end of this document.

Admission Panel Membership List 2017

Appendix 1

1) Bannockburn/Borestone/Braehead/ Cambusbarron/St. Ninians Panel

NURSERY GROUP / NAME	CONTACT	TEL. NO.	EMAIL ADDRESS
Park Drive Nursery – Chair Admin Support	Alison Paterson (Acting)	01786 816766	parkdnu@stirling.gov.uk
Bannockburn Nursery	Audrey Ross	01786 813274	bannps@stirling.gov.uk
Braehead Nursery	Mairi Breen	01786 462770	braeps@stirling.gov.uk
Hillview Family Centre	Lynsey Graham (Acting)	01786 446283	hillviewcafc@stirling.gov.uk
Borestone Nursery	Gillian Robertson	01786 237984	boreps@stirling.gov.uk
Cambusbarron Nursery	Lorraine Dollard	01786 472809	cambps@stirling.gov.uk
St. Ninians Nursery	Carolyn Morrow	01786 237975	stninps@stirling.gov.uk
PARTNER SERVICES			
Acrewood Nursery	Rhona MacDonald	01786 462621	admin@acrewoodnursery.com
Bright Beginnings Nursery (Stirling)	Tricia Brownlee	01786 462233	bbstirling@bertramuk.com
Cambusbarron Playgroup	Lynn Milne	01786 450538	cambusbarronplaygroup@hotmail.co.uk
St. Ninians Playgroup	Elaine Paterson	0775 774 1073 (P/grp Mobile)	stniniansplaygroup@hotmail.com

2) Raploch/Riverside/Wellgreen Panel

NURSERY/GROUP NAME	CONTACT	TEL: NO.	E-MAIL ADDRESS
Raploch Nursery – Chair Admin Support	Dennise Wallace	01786 272337	raplnu@stirling.gov.uk
Wellgreen Nursery	Lynsey Graham (Acting)	01786 447217	wellgreennu@stirling.gov.uk
Riverside Nursery	Kay Robertson	01786 474128	rvrsdeps@stirling.gov.uk
Baker Street Nursery	Grace McKim (Acting)	01786 473453	bakerstnu@stirling.gov.uk
PARTNER CENTRES			
Little Stars (Stirling)	Katherine Clark	01786 445552	stirlinglittlestars@hotmail.co.uk
Whitecraigs Nursery	Cheryl Barrie	01786 475533	manager@whitecraignursery.co.uk

3) Eastern Villages Panel

NURSERY/GROUP NAME	CONTACT	TEL: NO.	E-MAIL ADDRESS
Fallin Nursery – Chair Admin Support	Lucy Paulin	01786 237915	fallinnu@stirling.gov.uk
Cowie Nursery	Karen McLaughlin	01786 237954	cowienu@stirling.gov.uk
East Plean Nursery	Ruth Donnelly	01786 813286	epleanps@stirling.gov.uk
PARTNER SERVICES			
The Meadows Nursery	Janice Roy	01786 815554	jroy@themeadownursery.co.uk

4) Aberfoyle/Callander/Killin Panel

NURSERY/GROUP NAME	CONTACT	TEL: NO.	E-MAIL ADDRESS
Killin Nursery/Killin & Criannarich Nursery - Chair	Elizabeth Hancock	01567 820889	killinnu@stirling.gov.uk
Aberfoyle Nursery	Maxine Barwick	01877 382278	aberps@stirling.gov.uk
Callander Nursery	Tanya Starkey	01877 331576	callaps@stirling.gov.uk

5) Balfroon/Croftamie/Killlearn/Strathblane/Arnprior/Fintry Panel

NURSERY/GROUP NAME	CONTACT	TEL: NO.	E-MAIL ADDRESS
Arnprior Nursery - Chair	Irene McPherson (Acting)	01786 870729	arnpriornu@stirling.gov.uk
Balfroon Nursery	Angus Black	01360 440027	balfps@stirling.gov.uk
Croftamie Nursery	Irene McPherson (Acting)	01360 660147	croftnu@stirling.gov.uk
Fintry Primary	Yvonne Gibb	01360 860204	fintryps@stirling.gov.uk
Killlearn Nursery	Pamela Craigie	01360 550430	killlearnps@stirling.gov.uk
Strathblane Nursery	Sharon Cassidy	01360 770608	strathbps@stirling.gov.uk
PARTNER SERVICES			
Heron House	Gabi Heron	01360 550162	heronhousekilllearn@gmail.com
Mulberry Bush	Mairi MacIver Clark	01360 550916	mulberrybush@btconnect.com

6) Bridge of Allan/Cornton Panel

NURSERY/GROUP NAME	CONTACT	TEL: NO.	E-MAIL ADDRESS
Cornton Nursery - Chair	Kate O'Neill	01786 237910	corntnu@stirling.gov.uk
Bridge of Allan Nursery	Lina Horsburgh	01786 832050	bofaps@stirling.gov.uk
PARTNER SERVICES			
Beaconhurst School	Laura John	01786 832146	l.john@beaconhurst.stirling.sch.uk
Bright Start Day Nursery	Kirsty Bright	01786 474712	brightstartsbridgeofallan@gmail.com
Lecropt Nursery	Lorna Jack / Vicki Allan	01786 834596	lecroptnursery@tiscali.co.uk

7) Dunblane/Doune Panel

NURSERY GROUP/NAME	CONTACT	TEL. NO.	EMAIL ADDRESS
Doune Nursery – Chair	Lindsay McNair	01786 842734	dounenu@stirling.gov.uk
Dunblane Nursery	Sarah Starrs (Acting)	01786 822351	dunbps@stirling.gov.uk
Newton Nursery	Jane McManus	01786 237920	newtonps@stirling.gov.uk
St. Mary's Episcopal School	Heather White	01786 822740	stmaryeps@stirling.gov.uk
PARTNER SERVICES			
Arnhall Nursery	Norma McFarlane	01786 822391	arnhall@peartreenurseries.co.uk
Dunblane Nature Kindergarten	Carole Wass	01786 821590	dnk@bertramuk.com
Old Doune Road Nursery	Lorna Jack / Jill McGurk	01786 822854	manager@olddouneroadnursery.co.uk
Dunblane Community Pre-school	Jennie Stewart	0792 024 9631 (P/group mobile)	braeportplaygroup@googlemail.com
Wee Acorns	Susan Deeming	01786 826982	wee.acorns@hotmail.co.uk
Red Kite Community Nursery	Tracey Stewart / Lorna Duff	01786 841752	enquiries@redkitecommunitynursery.org.uk

Sample Letters: Allocation Letter

Dear Parent

I am pleased to inform you that your child has been allocated a *morning / afternoon / extended hours / full-day / shared place (*delete as appropriate) in _____ nursery / playgroup.

Child's Name:

Time of Sessions Offered:

Starting Date:

Starting Time:

In order to ensure your child's place you must complete and return the slip below by: *Insert Date*

Additional Paragraph for applicants out-with catchment (school based nurseries only):

Please note that although we are in a position to offer your child a nursery place, we cannot at this stage guarantee that a place will be available in Primary One, as your home address is outwith the school catchment area. If you wish your child to be considered for a place in Primary One in this school please contact me directly for advice on placing requests.

I should be grateful if you would also let me know if you are unable to take up the offer of the nursery place by completing and returning the slip.

Yours sincerely

Head of Establishment

Unable to Allocate – Transfer to Second Choice

Dear Parent

I regret to inform you that at the meeting of the Area Nursery Admission Panel held on _____ it was not possible to allocate a place to your child. Unfortunately, the nursery received more applications from parents than we had places available and at this stage we are not able to meet your needs.

I would like to assure you that your child's name will remain on the register of applicants and will be considered along with all other unplaced applicants should a place in this nursery become available in the future.

I note from your application that your second choice of nursery is _____. As I understand that this establishment may still have vacant places I have transferred a copy of your application to the head / manager for their consideration.

Information on other nurseries or groups which may have vacancies is also available from the Early Childhood Co-ordination Officer on 01786 233206

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require any further information or if you have a change in circumstances which may affect your application.

Yours sincerely

Head of Establishment

More Information Required

Dear Colleague

The application for a nursery place for _____ (*Child's Name*),
D.O.B. _____ in _____ Nursery was recently discussed by the Area
Admissions Panel.

Unfortunately, it was felt that the information given in the *application / support letter / referral
form was insufficient to warrant a priority place at this stage.

Should you have any additional information with regard to this child or family's needs, I should
be grateful if you would contact me as this would enable me to ask the panel members to re-
consider the application at the next meeting to be held on.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Head of Establishment

Schools, Learning and Education

7 - 13 Wolfcraig, Dumbarton Road, Stirling FK8 2LQ

Stirling Council

Phone 0845 227 7000

Email info@stirling.gov.uk

<http://www.stirling.gov.uk>

