

Policy:	Additional Year of 'Early Learning & Childcare' and School Education - Policy and Procedure
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1. INTRODUCTION

The Council is committed to the pursuit of educational excellence and aims to make the best possible educational provision for all, taking full account of the needs of each individual child or young person.

An additional year of education does not meet the needs of children with Additional Support Needs (ASN). Their needs should be addressed through the Integrated Assessment Framework.

This policy applies to all children and young people, aged 3-18 and follows the principles of Curriculum for Excellence. It sets out how the Council will decide on individual requests for additional years within all stages of education.

It is assumed for almost all children and young people that they will move through 'early learning & childcare', primary and secondary stages, and onto post school education, along with their same age peer group.

2. ENTITLEMENT TO AN ADDITIONAL YEAR OF EARLY LEARNING & CHILDCARE (Previously referred to as 'Pre-school Education').

Children whose 5th birthdays occur after the start of session and before 1 March of the following year are eligible to enter Primary 1 in the session in which their fifth birthday occurs. They also have a statutory right to defer entry into Primary 1 until the beginning of the session after the one in which their 5th birthday occurs.

For children whose 5th birthdays fall in January or February, there is an entitlement to an additional year of 'Early Learning & Childcare'. Children whose birthdays fall between the start of session and the end of December have no such entitlement but may still defer entry to Primary 1. However, there may be exceptional circumstances where these children may be granted an additional year of 'Early Learning & Childcare'.

Children whose 5th birthdays occur between 1 March and the start of the next school session must start Primary school in the session after their fifth birthday occurs.

Updated eligibility dates for each school session are included in the ***Pre-School and Wraparound Admission - Guidance Notes***.

3. APPLICATION PROCEDURE FOR AN ADDITIONAL 'EARLY LEARNING & CHILDCARE' YEAR

Applying for an Additional Year of 'Early Learning & Childcare' - January and February Birthdays

Children whose birthdays are in January and February are entitled to an additional year of 'Early Learning & Childcare', including funded 'Early Learning & Childcare' at partner providers (playgroup nursery or private nursery), and this will be granted automatically when applied for. Applications must be received by the end of February. Applications received after this date will be considered, but places may not be available if they have been granted to other applicants. Parents/carers who are considering deferring their child's place at primary school should ask for advice from staff in their child's establishment before making a decision. Parents/carers should complete the **Application for an Additional Year of 'Early Learning & Childcare'** form (available online).

Applying for an Additional Year of 'Early Learning & Childcare' - September to December Birthdays

Children born between the first day of term in August and 31 December have no automatic right to an additional year of 'Early Learning & Childcare'. Parents/carers who are considering deferring their child's place at primary school should ask for advice from staff in their child's establishment before making a decision. Parents/carers should complete the **Application for an Additional Year of 'Early Learning & Childcare'** form (available online). Parents/carers should also make an application for admission to Primary School.

Applications must be received by the end of February, and decisions will be made in March. Applications received after the end of February will be considered by a second meeting of the School Placement Panel in June, but places may not be available if they have been granted to other applicants. Parents/carers may request that applications refused in March are reconsidered in June if additional information is available.

Applying for an Additional Year of 'Early Learning & Childcare' at an 'Early Learning & Childcare' Establishment Run by Another Council

Parents/carers can apply for their child to go to an 'Early Learning & Childcare' establishment that is not in West Lothian.

Parents/carers of children with a January or February birthday should apply to the Council that runs the 'Early Learning & Childcare' establishment. That Council will decide whether to grant the place. If a place is granted parents/carers should inform Pupil Placement that a Primary 1 place will not be needed for another year.

Parents/carers of children born between the first day of term in August and 31 December must apply both to Pupil Placement (to decide whether funding will be given) and the Council that runs the 'Early Learning & Childcare' establishment (to decide whether a place is available.) Applications must be received by the end of February, and decisions will be made in March by the School Placement Panel. The other Council will decide whether a place is available, and will inform parents/carers of the time-scale for making decisions.

4. DECISION MAKING PROCEDURE

The 'Early Learning & Childcare' establishment will provide evidence and a recommendation in relation to the application. The 'Early Learning & Childcare' establishment will forward this to Pupil Placement by **6 March** each year.

Each application will be considered by the School Placement Panel. The School Placement Panel will consider whether progression to primary would be detrimental to the child's educational development or whether an additional year of 'Early Learning & Childcare' would be detrimental to the child's educational development. The Panel will also consider the particular circumstances of the case.

If an additional year of 'Early Learning & Childcare' is granted, a place will be offered within the Council's 'Early Learning & Childcare' provision and will be financed by the Council. Once such a place is granted and written confirmation of acceptance by the parent is received, the Primary 1 place, if previously allocated, will be withdrawn.

If an additional year of 'Early Learning & Childcare' is not granted, the Council will neither fund nor accommodate a further year of 'Early Learning & Childcare'.

If a parent/carer who initially requested and was granted an additional 'Early Learning & Childcare' year chooses not to take that offer, but wishes to obtain a Primary 1 place instead, their decision must be confirmed in writing. Parents/carers should note that the availability of Primary 1 will be very limited, as, depending on the time of year, places may already have been allocated.

There is no right of appeal if the Council does not grant an additional year of 'Early Learning & Childcare'.

5. CONSIDERATION OF AN ADDITIONAL YEAR OF SCHOOL EDUCATION (at the same stage)

Evidence from research supports the view that it is beneficial for almost all children and young people that they will move through 'Early Learning & Childcare', primary and secondary stages, and onto post school education, along with their same age peer group, both with regard to social and emotional development and educational progress. The available research also demonstrates that children and young people who repeat a year tend to suffer from longer-term disadvantage, such as poorer mental health outcomes, negative attitudes towards learning and behavioral problems. However, there may **occasionally** be exceptional circumstances in which an additional year at the same stage of education can be considered.

Where a parent/carer requests an additional year for their child, at the same stage of school education, discussion will take place between the Head Teacher and the school's Education Officer. The views of the child or young person will also be taken into account.

Should an additional year be agreed in principle, there can be no guarantee of placement within the child's or young person's existing establishment as all places may already be taken up.

If the request is refused there is no right of appeal.