

Education Services	Policy:	Pre School Admission – Policy and Procedure
	Author:	Andrew Sneddon
	Service:	Pupil Placement
	Last Updated:	August 2011

1. Pre-School Provision In West Lothian

Background

Pre-school education is delivered in terms of the Curriculum for Excellence, a single curriculum for ages 3 to 18. The early level of Curriculum for Excellence includes both pre-school and Primary 1 improving the transition from pre-school to primary. The aim of the Curriculum for Excellence is that all children in pre-school and primary school experience stimulating, effective learning in ways that are appropriate to their needs to enable them to develop as successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors.

Pre-school education is provided in nursery schools, nursery classes attached to primary schools, early years centres and partner providers (such as playgroups and private nurseries.)

All pre-school establishments (including partner providers) have suitably qualified staff, including support workers, nursery nurses and teachers, and meet the national standards for staffing and accommodation.

All Council and partner provider pre-school establishments are registered with and regulated by Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (SCSWIS), and are inspected jointly by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education and SCSWIS.

West Lothian Council will provide a pre-school education place for all eligible three and four-year-olds whose parents/carers want one.

Pre-School Establishments

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

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

Pre-school establishments do not have catchment areas. When allocating places, 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 within the 3-18 curriculum. Attendance at a pre-school establishment within a primary school campus does not give a right to transfer to the P1 class at the primary school.

Over Subscription

It is usual for a number of establishments in West Lothian to receive more applications than there are places available. The supply of places is limited by the availability of accommodation, the cost of extending accommodation, and the cost of employing additional staff. Morning places are usually more popular than

afternoon places. **It is not possible for the Council to offer every parent/carer their first choice.**

First, second and third choices of establishment and session (morning or afternoon) can be entered on the application form. It is important to give an alternative choice or choices. **If only one choice is made, and the establishment and session chosen are oversubscribed, it may not be possible to offer any place.**

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 ***Pre-School and Wraparound Admission - Guidance Notes***, parents 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. Children born in January and February whose parents/carers choose to defer entry into primary school will be given an additional year of pre-school education, including funded pre-school education at partner providers. Children born between the first day of term in August and 31 December have no automatic right to an additional year of pre-school education.

Further information can be found in the ***Additional Year of Pre-School and School Education - Policy and Procedure***.

Childcare

Wraparound Care is available at selected pre-school establishments. A list of pre-school establishments where Wraparound Care is available is included in the ***Pre-School and Wraparound Admission - Guidance Notes***. A charge is made for Wraparound Care. Further details are available from ***Pupil Placement***.

Childcare is also provided by partner providers. Further information on Childcare is available from the ***Childcare Information Service***.

Transport

The Council has no statutory duty to provide transport to pre-school establishments.

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 need 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 Team***.

2. The Application Procedure

Applying for a Place in a Pre-School 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 provision. A separate application form must be completed for each child.

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

1. arrange to visit the chosen pre-school establishment, where help will be given to complete the **Application for a Place in Pre-School Education** form. The child's birth certificate must also be taken to the chosen pre-school establishment. The establishment will forward the completed form to Pupil Placement.
2. return the completed **Application for a Place in Pre-School Education** form to Pupil Placement enclosing a copy of the child's birth certificate (NOT the original). Pupil Placement can provide advice on completing the form.

Pupil placement may ask for proof of address, or for the original birth certificate to be taken to the pre-school establishment where the child is granted a place.

To ensure that applications can be considered by the School 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 Pupil Placement as soon as possible.

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.

Applying for Childcare

Parents/carers can apply for Wraparound Care on the Application for a Place in Pre-school Education form. Further information is available in the **Wraparound Care Admission - Policy and Procedure**. Parents/carers can also apply for Wraparound care later by completing the **Application for Wraparound Care** form. The chosen pre-school establishment can give help to complete the application form. **Pupil Placement** can advise on completing the form. Any childcare needed from a partner provider (where available) should be negotiated direct with the partner provider.

Applying for an Additional Year of Pre-School Education - January and February Birthdays

Children whose birthdays are in January and February are entitled to an extra year of pre-school education, including funded pre-school education 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, and read the **Application for an Extra Year of Pre-School Education Policy and Procedure**. Parents/carers should complete the **Application for an Additional Year of Pre-School Education** form.

Applying for an Additional Year of Pre-School Education - 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 pre-school education. 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, and read the **Application for an Extra Year of Pre-School Education Policy and Procedure**. Parents/carers should complete the **Application for an Additional Year of Pre-School Education** form. Parents/carers should also make an application for admission to Primary School.

Applications will be considered by the School Placement Panel. 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. **Parents/carers should also make an application for admission to Primary School in case their application for an additional year of pre-school education is not successful.**

3. The Decision Making Procedure

The School Placement Panel will consider and decide on all applications for pre-school education, wraparound care and applications for additional year of pre-school education (children born between the first day of term in August and 31 December).

When sessions (morning or afternoon) at particular establishments are oversubscribed, the factors set out in the **Pre-School Establishments – Admission Guidelines** (Appendix 1) will be considered. The School Placement Panel 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 **Pre-School Establishments – Admission Guidelines** are not in priority order, but when making its decision the Pre-School Admission 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.

Children in the year before they are eligible to start primary school are in their 'pre-school year'. Children in the year before their pre-school year are in their 'ante-pre-school year'. In making its decisions the School Placement Panel will ensure that morning and afternoon sessions have an appropriate mix of pre-school and ante-

pre-school children, as this will benefit the social and educational development of all children.

Parents/carers who request less than full time attendance will receive less priority than those who request full time attendance. It is not possible to grant a mixture of morning and afternoon sessions, as this would take up places that could be occupied by two children.

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

Parents/carers will be informed of the decision of the School Placement Panel by letter. For August and January placements and wraparound care decisions, letters will be issued by the end of May. For April placements and wraparound care decisions, letters will be issued by the end of February. Decision letters for an additional year of pre-school education will be issued in March.

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

4 Other Information

Waiting Lists

Waiting lists are kept when applications received for a particular session (morning or afternoon) exceed the number of places. Waiting lists are prioritised in line with the Pre-School Establishments – Admission Guidelines and decisions made by the School Placement Panel. 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.

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 by Pupil Placement. Decisions on all applications will be made in line with policy and the previous decisions of the School Placement Panel.

Non-Attendance

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

Customer Satisfaction

Each school session a limited number of /carers may be asked to complete a short questionnaire.

**Pre-School Establishments
(West Lothian Council or West Lothian Council Partner Providers)**

Admission Guidelines

When considering pre-school admissions, account is taken of the following:

- The design of the nursery or playgroup and its accommodation.
- The appropriate normal maximum class size (as set out in the conditions of service for teaching staff, which form part of our contract of employment with each teacher.)
- The need to achieve best value in provision of pre-school education and wraparound care.
- The aim of achieving continuity of education within a broad geographic area based on a town or locality, generally within a 1.5 miles home to pre-school establishment distance.
- The overall pattern of applications across West Lothian.

In every case pupils living in West Lothian will have priority over pupils living outwith West Lothian.

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

- Children who need deferred entry into primary school should be able to continue at the same pre-school establishment.
- Children should not be expected to move pre-school establishment when moving from ante-pre-school year to pre-school year.
- Special medical, physical or educational need.
- The catchment primary school to which the child is likely to progress.
- The school(s) attended by sibling(s).
- How close the school is from the child's home by a suitable walking route.
- Whether or not the Council provides transport.
- The number of sessions applied for, with greater priority granted to children requesting more sessions.
- The balance of pre-school and ante-pre-school children within morning and afternoon sessions.
- Any other information provided.

In pre-school establishments with wraparound care children who have had an application for wraparound care granted will be given priority.

Within each category or grouping of children with the same 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 pre-school establishment in special circumstances as determined by the Council.