



**Clackmannanshire  
Council**

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# **Education Services**

## **Information for Parents & Carers on Deferred Entry to School**

## **Deferring Your Child's Entry to School : Information for Parents & Carers**

Under current legislation, parents of children aged 4 years old at the start of the school session in August (ie. those with birthdays on or after the first day of term in August up to the end of February the following year) have a **choice** as to whether their child starts primary school in that year.

Children whose 5<sup>th</sup> birthday falls after the start date of the school can start school before they are 5 years old or can have their start date *deferred* until the following August.

**Most parents choose to send their child to school as soon as s/he is eligible to start.**

This information leaflet explains what you should do if you do not wish to send your child to school before s/he is 5 years old.

### **Reasons for Deferral**

The Council's Education Service understands the importance of the decision to send your child to primary school ahead of their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday. It is our aim to help you make the best decision for your child.

You may wish to defer your child's entry to primary school for a number of reasons, however, you should consider carefully the following questions about your child:

- How positive is your child's approach and attitude to learning?
- To what extent does your child take responsibility for own learning?
- To what extent does your child show confidence when undertaking new or challenging tasks?
- To what extent does your child demonstrate organisational skills?
- To what extent does your child make choices and express preferences?
- To what extent does your child show enthusiasm and motivation without needing to be promoted?
- To what extent does your child show determination and perseverance when undertaking new or difficult tasks?
- How well does your child cope with change and new routines?
- How well does your child take part in conversations and discussions within a range of groupings and situations?
- How well does your child make him/herself understood?
- How well does your child listen to and follow instructions?
- To what extent does your child follow routines and observe boundaries?
- To what extent does your child negotiate and co-operate with others?
- To what extent does your child show sensitivity to the needs and feelings of others?
- To what extent does your child demonstrate problem solving skills?
- How well developed is your child's self-care routines?
- How well does your child look after and organise own possessions?
- How well developed is your child's self-awareness of and responsibility for own safety?
- How well co-ordinated is your child?
- To what extent is your child able to establish relationships and friendships with peers?

By the time they reach the age of 4 or 5 years old, there are already differences in each child's development, learning and levels of independence. You may be considering deferring your child's entry to school simply because you feel that **your child is not yet ready** to enter Primary 1.

Different processes apply according to the reasons why a child is deferring and also according to when they have their birthday.

You should discuss with the Head or Manager of the nursery or group your child attends your thoughts about your child's strengths and abilities before considering a deferred entry to primary school.

### **Late Birthdays – January / February Birth Dates**

Parents of children with late birthdays, close to the end of February cut-off date for school entry, are sometimes concerned about whether their child is ready to start school.

If your child's birthday falls within **January or February** and you wish to defer entry to primary school, your child is now **entitled to an additional year** of part-time provision within a Council nursery or partner centre. The Council will continue to fund your child's place in his/her deferred year.

You should speak directly to the Head or Manager of the nursery / centre your child attends. They will ask you to **complete a deferred entry application form** but you should be assured that this is purely for central monitoring purposes. Your child is automatically **prioritised** for a continued place.

### **August (after the start of term) / December Birth Dates**

If your child's **birthday falls on or after the first day of term in August and the end of December**, the situation is more complex should you wish to defer entry. Your child may be offered a continued nursery place but this is **subject to the Councils discretion**.

Your child has no automatic entitlement and no central government funding is made available for these places.

You must **complete a deferred entry application form**. An individual assessment is made of each application for deferred entry received for children with August (after the start of term) to December birth dates.

**Where it is agreed that your child will significantly benefit** if their entry to school is deferred, a continued nursery funded place may be offered. The cost of this place will be met by the Council.

**Where it is NOT agreed that your child would benefit significantly** from deferring entry, they may still be offered a continued place but you will be asked to meet the cost of that place.

## Research

It is important to highlight that currently the concept of a child's 'readiness for school' is widely contested. *Curriculum for Excellence* is underpinned by the philosophy that educational establishments should be equipped to provide appropriate educational experiences for children regardless of their chronological age, their previous attainment and previous experiences. In that regard, educational establishments should be *ready for children*. It is no longer considered appropriate to expect all children to reach a particular level before they are deemed to be 'ready for school'. Research suggests that the decision to defer/delay school entry may have little beneficial impact and, in fact, could lead to difficulties in the future. Children with general development delay are likely to require additional support at school regardless of their age at entry to primary 1. For many children with additional support needs, an additional year in nursery is not necessarily an effective intervention. However, there are certain issues which may mean that a deferred/delayed school entry is a positive intervention for the child (e.g. long term illness: premature birth). Each case must therefore be considered individually.

## Changing Your Decision

In all cases you should enrol your child at your catchment primary school. This usually happens in January of each year. This also safeguards your child's place in primary 1 should your application for a funded deferred place be unsuccessful and you do not wish to pay for the additional year.

If the deferred entry application is granted, the child's enrolment at their catchment school will automatically be withdrawn by Education Services.

## How are decisions made about my deferred entry application if my child has an August (after start of term)- December birth date?

Decisions about deferral are best made as part of the ongoing profiling of your child and the dialogue with you which should take place in the nursery or group your child attends.

The information gathered about your child within their Profile should form a sound basis for discussion with you.

In considering the best decision for your child, we take into account your child's profile in all aspects of their development.

Your views will also be an important consideration so it is helpful if you complete the application form as fully as you can.

## Who will make the decision if I decide to apply for deferred entry to school for my child?

All applications for deferred entry for children with **August (after start of term) to December birth dates only** are considered by a **panel of early years professionals**. This panel includes representatives from the early years part of the Psychological

Service, Heads and Managers of nurseries within Clackmannanshire Council areas and a Senior Manager from Education.

The Head or Manager of the nursery or group your child attends is asked to submit information with regard to your child as part of the application process.

Once a decision has been reached you will be informed in writing. Decisions will normally be made **during the month of April** in order to link to the admissions process for entry to nursery in August.

### **What will happen if I do not agree with the decision of the panel?**

If you do not agree with the decision reached by the panel, **you can ask for the decision to be reviewed**. Advice on how to do this will be included in the letter sent to you.

All of the information considered by the Panel plus any additional information you wish to add, would be re-considered by a different group of early years education professionals.

**The outcome of the review is final**