

**DIGITAL ADMISSIONS – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR PROVIDERS  
PRE-SCHOOL AND PRIMARY SEPTEMBER 2019 INTAKE**

Throughout this document the term provider refers to primary schools, nursery schools and non-statutory settings participating in the Pre-School Education Programme.

Topic/Issue	No.	Question	Response
1. Account management - providers	1.1	Will providers have only one login to the School Portal?	<p>Each provider will be issued with login details comprised of a username and password. In a primary school a single login will cover P1 and Reception (if applicable). If a school has a nursery unit, a separate login will be provided.</p> <p>Nursery schools with a mixed pattern of attendance will be provided with separate logins for full time and part time applications.</p> <p>Playgroups will have one login.</p>
	1.2	How are login details going to be issued to providers?	Schools will be issued login details via C2k email. Logins will be issued directly to non-statutory pre-school settings.
	1.3	Can a provider have more than one login to enable multiple users to access the School Portal?	No. Only one username per admissions group will be issued as per question 1.1. The provider will be responsible for ensuring that appropriate staff are given access to the Portal.

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			In schools the login will be based on the Principal's email address rather than the info@ address.
2. Application details	2.1	Must parents apply online?	No. The EA has adopted a 'digital first' approach, whilst applying online is the EA's preferred method of application it is not compulsory, Paper application forms will be provided where necessary. See Digital Admissions Update No 2 for details <a href="https://www.eani.org.uk/admissions-comms-updates">https://www.eani.org.uk/admissions-comms-updates</a>
	2.2	Will there be a field that enables parents to record whether or not their child has special / additional needs?	No. GDPR prohibits the collection of information that is not needed for the admission function.
	2.3	Will the application collect information on whether or not a child attended a Surestart programme?	No. GDPR prohibits the collection of information that is not needed for the admission function.
	2.4	Will a parent be guided to know whether or not they are applying for Pre-school/Reception/ Primary based on their child's date of birth?	Yes, if parents do not already know which places they can apply for they will be guided through this on the EA's website.
	2.5	Can a child who has been retained in pre-school for an extra year as a result of a statement apply through the Parent Portal?	No. As in previous years, parents of children with a statement of special educational needs will not be applying through the Parent Portal. The placement of a child with a statement will be managed through the Special Education Department of the EA.
	2.6	Will parents be able to make an application to nursery schools for underage children?	Yes – this is unchanged from previous years. Underage applicants will be considered in Stage 2 of the pre-school admissions procedure.
	2.7	Can a parent use a child's 'known as' surname when making an application?	The parent portal will prompt a parent to use the child's birth certificate name. The legal advice is that The

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			Children (NI) Order 1995 makes it quite clear that where there is a residence order in place in respect of a child, no person shall cause the child to be known by a new surname without the consent of all those with parental responsibility or the leave of the court. Even without a residence order, schools/the EA should never alter the child's surname on the register without the written consent of those with parental responsibility or on production of an appropriate court order.
	2.8	Does a parent have to identify which pre-school their child attends when completing a P1 application?	Yes. When Adding a Child to My Family parents will be presented with a list of funded pre-school settings from which they are asked to select the one their child attends. (This could be 'None' if applicable or if the pre-school attended is not a funded provider, select 'Pre-school not on list'.
	2.9	Does a parent have to complete individual applications if they have twins / triplets?	A parent will register once but he/she will need to add each child to 'My Family' and then make an individual application for each one.
	2.10	Are parents informed that providers receive the information they have provided on the application?	Yes. The EA has reviewed the GDPR statements contained in the Parent Portal and on the paper application forms to inform parents who their information may be shared with.
	2.11	If parent applies online will this mean their details will be stored in the system until next year therefore making process simpler going forward?	Yes – this is already so for the Primary 2019 intake where the majority of children are currently attending funded pre-school settings in 2018/19 school year.
	2.12	Can a parent apply online more than once?	A parent will not be able to apply online more than once

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			unless they purposely use a different email address/home address. A parent is asked to declare that he/she has submitted only one application either online or on paper.
	2.13	How will EA know whether a parent makes more than one application?	A process which is carried out to 'match' applicant data should identify any potential duplicate applications before they are released into the School Portal.
3. Address	3.1	Is the address which providers are verifying based on the child or parent?	It is child's address which requires to be verified. The portal facilitates a separate address to be entered for a parent e.g. if a social worker was making an application for a Looked After Child.
	3.2	Will the Portal accept addresses outside NI?	Yes, including those in the Republic of Ireland.
	3.3	Will postcodes of new builds / new housing developments be picked up by the system?	Yes if the address is contained in the Ordnance Survey Northern Ireland (OSNI) pointer file which is the source of addresses used by the Parent Portal. Addresses can be entered manually if a house does not have a postcode.
4. Admission criteria	4.1	Will parents be able to view criteria through the parent portal?	No. Parents can view admission criteria on the EA website by opening a separate window on their browser.  Whilst criteria cannot yet be viewed from within the Parent Portal for September 2019 applications this is a planned future development.
5. Admission number/number of	5.1	How will playgroups know how many places they are allocated?	The Pre-School Education Group will advise non-statutory settings of the number of funded places

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funded places			allocated to them in the same way as previous years.
6. Alerts	6.1	Will providers be issued with an alert if they are listed as 2nd preference?	Providers will be able to view applications on which they are listed as second (or subsequent) preference when the application has been rejected at first preference on the school's portal.  Alerts will be issued when an application(s) needs actioned.
	6.2	What email address will alerts from the School Portal be issued to?	Email alerts will be sent to the address associated with the login to the School Portal.
	6.3	Will a provider receive an 'alert' if a parent amends their online application?	Yes. The information in the School Portal is automatically updated in this case.
7. Amending a response to an application	7.1	Can a provider change the status recorded for an applicant in the School's Portal e.g. from Refused to Allocated if there is a need to alter the original decision?	A provider can amend the response to an application, where the status allocated has been either Allocated or Refused.
8. Application of criteria to determine which children are to be offered places	8.1	If a provider has received both paper and digital applications - when does it apply its published admission criteria to determine which children should be admitted?	As has been the practice in previous years, providers can only consider applications once the closing date has passed. All applications, online and any paper applications received should be considered at the same time.  First preference applications can be considered immediately after the closing date if all documents have been submitted by parents, if this is not the case providers should wait until after 12 noon on Friday 8

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			February. Also see question 8.2 below.
	8.2	When do providers make their final decisions on which children are to be admitted?	As has been the practice in previous years, providers should consider further preference applications as/when required to do so and allocate the available places to those applicants who best meet the published criteria. This can result in displacement and as is the case in previous years, changes may occur up until the close of the procedure.
9. Changing an application	9.1	If a parent submits an application can they change/edit it?	Yes. A parent can change their paper/online application up until midnight on 31 January 2019.
	9.2	Can a parent change their first preference at any time?	No. A parent can change their paper/online application up until midnight on 31 January 2019. After 31 January a change of preference in exceptional circumstances can be made up until 4pm on Monday 25th March 2019 within primary and Stage 1 of the pre-school procedure by contacting EA in writing.
10. Contacts	10.1	Where can parents access the Parent Portal web address?	Parents can access the online application via the EA website at <a href="http://www.eani.org.uk/admissions">www.eani.org.uk/admissions</a> and clicking 'Start your application'.
	10.2	What is the phone number for the Admissions helpdesk?	The telephone number of the Admissions Helpdesk is 028 9598 5595.
	10.3	What hours will the Admissions Helpdesk operate?	The Admissions Helpdesk will operate from 8.00 am to 8.00pm, Monday to Thursday; and from 8.00 am to 5.00pm on Fridays between Monday 7 January and Thursday 31 January 2019 inclusive.
11. Digital assistance	11.1	What assistance will be provided to help parents apply online?	The EA has created a range of materials for direct use by parents and for providers to use with parents. These

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			<p>materials are available on the admissions area of the website or in the Digital Admissions Hub. A full list of support materials for providers and parents is available in the Digital Admissions Hub.</p> <p>A number of these materials have been translated.</p> <p>The EA will be providing drop in digital assistance sessions in targeted areas. Details of these will be published on the EA's website.</p> <p>The Admissions Helpdesk will operate for extended hours (see Question 10.3)</p>
	11.2	Will the 'Digital Admissions – Parent Portal Guidance' be available in other languages?	Yes, this leaflet is available in Polish, Portuguese and Lithuanian. Parents/Providers will be able to translate it to a number of other languages if required using the Browse Aloud feature on the EA's website.
	11.3	Will the portal be translated?	No – the portal is only available in English at present.
	11.4	Can providers assist parents to complete the online application?	The EA would encourage providers to give assistance to parents applying online if required.
	11.5	If schools wish to host information sessions and allow parents to use the computers to fill out applications, are they going to be able to access their emails on C2kni network?	<p>Access to webmail sites such as Hotmail, Outlook.com is controlled by each individual School.</p> <p>By default, access to webmail sites is generally blocked by C2k internet filtering policy unless nominated. School user accounts (which are used to log on to devices) are</p>

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			<p>made members of the Internet Advanced security group. Making members of security groups can be carried out by the C2k Manager in each school. Full details of how to do this are contained in the C2k Information Sheet EN039 – Managing Internet Filtering (which is also available on C2k Exchange). It can take several hours for changes to security groups to replicate across the C2k network so C2K advises schools to ideally make these changes at least one day before they are generally required.</p> <p>School devices have to be logged on with a C2k account – either a named account of a member of staff or a guest account. It would be best practice for schools to create Guest User Accounts (EN030) and add them to the Internet Advanced group (EN039 – appendix B). This should be done in advance of hosting information sessions.</p> <p>Please note that the above only applies to Primary Schools and Nursery Units within Primary Schools. Nursery Schools or Playgroups are excluded.</p>
	11.6	Can pre-school providers host information sessions and allow parents to use the computers to fill out applications?	Playgroups will need to consider how they manage this depending on their IT arrangements/security.



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12. Late applications	12.1	Can a late application be made online?	No - as the online portal closes at midnight on Thursday 31 January 2019 late applications have to be submitted on paper.
13. Mixed pattern attendance in nursery schools/nursery units	13.1	Will a parent be able to list a mixed pattern nursery school/unit as 1st and 2nd preference (i.e. where a nursery school/unit has full time and part time availability)?	Yes – a parent will be able to list both full time and part time as separate preferences. This can be consecutively but is not necessarily the case, e.g. 1 Provider A full-time place 2 Provider B full-time place 3 Provider C part-time place 4 Provider A part-time place
	13.2	Will a parent be able to add AM / PM (part time sessions) as a preference?	No – pre-school legislation enables parents to list full time or part time as preferences, it does not recognise morning and afternoon sessions as preferences.
	13.3	Will the process encourage / prompt parents to choose FT and PT for their 1st and 2nd preferences?	No – guidance to parents will recommend that they list at least four preferences but the order of preferences is a matter for parents.
14. Paper application	14.1	Are paper applications still available and from where?	The EA is taking a digital first approach to transacting with its stakeholders, this means that digital (online) will be the first option to be explored/offered. Whilst seeking to encourage parents to apply online, as outlined in the Equality Screening document a paper application form will be accepted. However, the EA is not providing a bulk supply of application forms as in previous years. A pdf version of the application form has been issued electronically to schools/providers for printing off in response to specific requests for a paper application

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			<p>where a parent cannot access the online system or chooses not to.</p> <p>Parents applying to Irish medium settings will be able to do so through the online portal. However, if they wish to complete their application in Irish, they may obtain a copy of a translated application form which has been supplied to Irish-medium providers as outlined in the Equality Screening document.</p>
	14.2	When should providers give parents paper applications?	<p>The EA would encourage providers not to distribute copies of the paper application at an open day. The application form will not be published on the EA's website and you are asked not to publish it on your provider website.</p> <p>Paper applications should be issued in response to specific requests where a parent cannot access the online system or chooses not to.</p>
	14.3	Should paper applications be sent to the EA?	<p>As was the case in previous years, application forms and any attachments should only be sent to EA if the child is being refused admission.</p> <p>The School Admission Service will issue instructions on what to do with paper applications in January 2019.</p>
	14.4	Can paper applications be accepted until 12 midnight on 31st January 2019?	Yes – the period during which punctual online and paper based applications can be made is the same i.e. between

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			<p>2 January and midnight on 31 January 2019.</p> <p>Paper applications can be accepted after this date but 4.00pm on Monday 25<sup>th</sup> March is the last date for receipt of new applications that will be processed before issue of letters on 9 May 2019.</p>
	14.5	How do paper applications get added to the system?	<p>Providers cannot key applications to the portal.</p> <p>The School Admission Service will issue instructions on what to do with paper applications in January 2019.</p> <p>(The EA will key paper applications to the back office system once a provider submits its return. Thereafter the summary details e.g. name, address and DOB will show in the School Portal but the paper application will be issued to second or subsequent preference providers if required.)</p>
15. Placement	15.1	How are parents notified if/where their child is being offered a place?	This is unchanged. Providers will write to parents of children whom they are admitting and the EA will write to parents of children who have not secured a place.
	15.2	Can providers email parents to notify them of their placement instead of sending a letter?	Yes providers may email placement letters to parents as long as an email address is available for every applicant. The e-mail should be sent for receipt on <b>10 May 2019</b> .
	15.3	Will EA issue a Final Placement list to each provider of the children being offered a place?	No – this will not be necessary as providers will be able to see this information in the School Portal.

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16. Preferences	16.1	Do parents have to type the actual name of the provider they are selecting as a preference?	No. Parents will select the provider from a drop down menu. The name will reflect what is contained in the published admission criteria and in the website search function. A search facility exists to assist parents finding a provider.
	16.2	Is there a maximum number of preferences a parent can list on the online application?	Yes. As was the case with the paper application form previously used a parent will be able to list six preferences online. They are advised to contact the EA if they wish to list more than six preferences.
17. Retention of records	17.1	Will providers still have to retain paper copies of application forms/ verification documents etc for audit purposes?	The EA will review its audit requirements and confirm whether there is a need to issue updated guidance.  The Department of Education has been asked to review its advice to schools on disposal of records.
18. SIMS/document upload	18.1	At what stage do schools enter details of applicants into SIMS?	As stated in the Draft School Portal User Guide, schools should not enter details of applications to SIMS until the EA/C2k issues further instructions on this matter in January 2019.
	18.2	Will the School Portal be linked to SIMS?	Integration with SIMS is a planned future development.
19. Social disadvantage	19.1	How will providers know if a child is socially disadvantaged?	Parents who have applied online and who are claiming priority because of social disadvantage should tick the appropriate box in the application. They will be directed to a Benefit Verification Form which they must have stamped by the Social Security /Jobs and Benefits Office to confirm that they are in receipt of a qualifying

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			<p>payment. This should then be sent by the parent directly to the first preference provider.</p> <p>A parent who submits a paper application for a pre-school place must get Section C of the application form stamped to verify entitlement.</p> <p>See update No 2b on Social Disadvantage for further details.  <a href="https://www.eani.org.uk/admissions-comms-updates">https://www.eani.org.uk/admissions-comms-updates</a></p>
	19.2	Where can parents obtain a Benefit Verification Form for Social disadvantage?	<p>From 2 January 2019 parents who choose to apply online will be able access the Benefit Verification Form from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://www.eani.org.uk/benefitverification">www.eani.org.uk/benefitverification</a>;</li> <li>• providers; or</li> <li>• their local Social Security or Jobs and Benefits Offices.</li> </ul> <p>See update No 2b on Social Disadvantage  <a href="https://www.eani.org.uk/admissions-comms-updates">https://www.eani.org.uk/admissions-comms-updates</a></p>
20. Temporary variation/ temporary flexibility	20.1	At what point do schools apply for a Temporary Variation/ temporary flexibility?	This is unchanged from previous years. Schools applying for a temporary variation/temporary flexibility should do so as soon as possible.
	20.2	What is the procedure for temporary variation requests?	This is unchanged from previous years. However schools could use the download and export facility within the School Portal to cut and paste details of the applicants

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			for whom the temporary variation is being sought into the Department of Education pro-forma or to submit to the Pre-School Education Group in cases of temporary flexibility.
21. Timetable	21.1	What are the key dates for the admission procedure?	The key dates for the various admission procedures are contained in DE Circular 2018/17 Open enrolment in nursery, primary and post primary schools – timetables <a href="https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/de-circular-201817-open-enrolment-nursery-primary-and-post-primary-schools-timetables">https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/de-circular-201817-open-enrolment-nursery-primary-and-post-primary-schools-timetables</a>
22. Verifying documents	22.1	Do parents receive an email to remind/prompt them to bring verifying documents to their first preference provider?	Yes. The email issued to parents following submission of an online application reminds them to take the documents to their first preference provider not later than <b>12 noon on Friday 8 February 2019.</b>
	22.2	How are parents advised that they have to send ALL documentation, even that required by their second or subsequent preferences providers to their first preference?	Parents are advised of this on both the online application and paper application. The introduction of online admissions has not changed this requirement.
	22.3	How is supporting evidence/verifying documentation passed on to second and subsequent preferences?	Whether an application has been made online or on paper when an applicant has been refused admission the supporting documentation should be sent to the EA for onward transmission to the next preference provider as promptly as possible.

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	22.4	If supporting evidence e.g. a birth certificate has not been submitted by 8 February, should the application be considered late?	<p>No – if an online application has been submitted, it will be a punctual application. Paper applications submitted by midnight on Thursday 31 January 2019 are also punctual.</p> <p>It is a matter for providers to consider their approach to managing evidence that has not been submitted, in the same way that they would have done in previous years, if supporting evidence had not been attached to the paper application form.</p>
	22.5	Where do providers record/ add verified documentation on the School Portal?	This facility within the School Portal is not being utilised. Each provider will be required to consider documentation to satisfy themselves whether it verifies if the applicant meets their specific admission criteria and to maintain a record of this as it may be required in the event of an appeal.
	22.7	Should providers have to issue a receipt for a birth certificate?	There is no change in current practice regarding receipts. It is a matter for the provider to decide whether to do this, but the EA would recommend that providers do issue timed and dated receipts for documentation submitted by parents.
23. Viewing/Printing applications	23.1	How do providers view all details on an individual application?	Providers should click on each specific child's name to see all details entered by the parent.

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	23.2	Will providers be able to view all applications at all preferences?	The EA has refined the view of applications so that providers will only see first preferences initially. Once an applicant is refused admission their application will be visible to second and subsequent preference providers. When a provider is required to action an application it will be prompted to do so.
	23.3	Will preferences be ranked in order of admissions criteria in the School Portal?	No. The Portal will not apply admissions criteria. However providers can download a list of applications and export them to Excel where they can be sorted, filtered and information added to suit a provider's individual requirements. Instructions on how to do this will be contained in the updated version of the School Portal User Guide.
	23.4	Can we print digital applications?	Yes. It is recommended that providers wait until the closing date before printing.
	23.5	Will providers be given instructions on how to export information from the School Portal and how to merge these details into Microsoft or other products?	Yes. These instructions will be included in the School Portal User Guide.
24. Technical questions	24.1	What browsers does the portal work on?	The portal works on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internet Explorer Version 10 (32 &amp; 64 bit)</li> <li>• Internet Explorer Version 10 (32 &amp; 64 bit)</li> <li>• Safari (latest version)</li> <li>• Chrome</li> <li>• Edge</li> </ul>