



Education Authority Northern Ireland

**Parent Guide to Post Primary Admissions
2020/2021**

General information

What age does my child transfer to post primary school?

The usual age group comprises pupils who have attained the age of 11 years by 1 July 2020, i.e. pupils with dates of birth from 2 July 2008 to 1 July 2009, inclusive.

Children with a statement of special educational needs and children applying to an independent school are exempt from the process.

Key Dates in the Post Primary Admissions Procedure for 2020/2021 school year

December 2019 - January 2020	Parents and pupils visit schools on their Open Days/Evenings
26 January 2020	Results of AQE/GL Assessments received
Late January/early February 2020	Parents complete Transfer Forms
5 February 2020	Primary Schools send Transfer Forms to EA
February to 29 May 2020	EA processes Transfer Forms to Post Primary Schools according to parental preference
Saturday 30 May 2020	Parents receive letter notifying of outcome of application

Where can I find out about schools and their admissions criteria?

Use our 'Find a School' section to search for schools in your area and read or download their admissions criteria.

You should also take the opportunity to visit each of the post primary schools you are considering by attending their open days/evenings. Details of the dates and times of open days/evenings and schools' admission criteria will be published on the EA website and advertised by schools.

Other sources of information are -

- School websites
- ETI Inspection reports - ETI website www.etini.gov.uk/
- School Prospectuses
- Annual Area Profiles available on www.eani.org.uk/schools/annual-area-profiles/
- Three years annual application and admission statistics for post primary schools (Year 8) are published along with the admission criteria and in the schools' prospectuses.

There are no league tables published for NI Schools.

Where will I get an application form?

Child attending primary school in Northern Ireland

Your child's primary school will issue you with an application form (known as a Transfer Form). If you have not received a Transfer Form by the end of January 2020 you should contact your child's primary school.

Your completed Transfer Form along with any information as requested by the post primary school should be returned to your child's primary school principal. Completed forms will then be forwarded to the Education Authority for processing.

Please note you should do this in time to allow the primary school to return the transfer form to EA by **5 February 2020**.

Child attending a primary school outside Northern Ireland

A Transfer Form can be requested by emailing postprimaryadmissions@eani.org.uk in January 2020.

Please note that schools are required to give priority to children living in NI at the time of their proposed admission. If you are moving to Northern Ireland use your current address when completing your Transfer Form and provide information indicating when you will be moving to NI along with the address you will be moving to if known. If unknown at the time of completing the form you should provide this to the EA when available by emailing postprimaryadmissions@eani.org.uk. If you have been offered a place at the end of the admission procedure but have not taken up residence in NI by the start of the school year the place may be withdrawn.

You should submit your completed Transfer Form along with any information requested by the post primary school to postprimaryadmissions@eani.org.uk as soon as possible but no later than **4pm Friday 24 April 2020**. Applications submitted after this date will not be processed until after the issue of the placement letters at which point many schools will have allocated all available places. If the Transfer Form is received close to this deadline it may not be possible to process all preferences by **Friday 29 May 2020**.

What to consider when choosing a post primary school

You will help your child decide at which post primary schools he/she will seek a place. In making these decisions you will need to think about the likelihood of your child being able to secure a place at the school. To do this you need to consider the level of competition for places at the school and the extent to which your child might be able to successfully compete for these places (i.e. the degree to which your child meets the school's admissions criteria). To assist you to make these judgements it is essential for you to have important information about:

- The pattern of applications and admissions to a school in previous years. This is the number of applications received in each of the previous few years, and the number of applicants actually admitted in those years. Remember that the pattern of applications may change from year to year. A school that receives fewer applications than it has places available must admit all of those applicants.
- Admissions Criteria - How schools will select children for admission if they have too many applicants. In this situation schools have to use *admissions criteria* to choose which children

to admit. In deciding whether or not to apply to a school, it is important to have a good understanding of that school's admissions criteria.

- Entrance Assessments - For schools which use an entrance test you will need to consider the lowest score, grade or band which was accepted by the school in previous years. This can change from year to year depending on the number of applications the school receives.
- Travel to school - Whether transport assistance will be available to the school. Information on eligibility for transport assistance can be found on the EA website.
- Other useful information about specific schools can be found in Schools' prospectuses i.e. policies on homework, uniform, discipline, the range of examinations taken, extra-curricular activities and schools fees if applicable.

Entrance Assessments

AQE/GL tests are unregulated entrance assessments organised independently by schools. The EA is not involved in these tests nor does it have information on the scores.

Information on unregulated tests is referred to in the admissions criteria published by schools. However as these tests are unregulated any specific queries regarding scores/grades, arrangements for special circumstances and special provision etc should be raised with the school(s) that you are applying to.

Special Circumstances

Most schools which use entrance assessments will consider medical or other problems which may have affected performance in the test and which are supported by independent documentary evidence of a medical or other appropriate nature. These medical or other problems are commonly referred to as special circumstances.

A parent who wishes to claim special circumstances should read very carefully the requirements set out in the school(s) admissions criteria. This can differ from school to school so it is important to read the admissions criteria for all schools to which application being made.

For further advice on special circumstances the parent needs to contact those schools using entrance assessments directly.

Special Provisions

Special provisions refer primarily to:

- a) pupils whose parents wish them to transfer from schools outside Northern Ireland; or
- b) pupils who have received more than half their primary education outside Northern Ireland.

However, schools may use other definitions in their admissions criteria.

As in the case of 'Special Circumstances' parents/guardians of pupils who may come under special provision need to contact those schools using entrance tests directly. The EA Psychology Service will not be involved in the assessment of these pupils.

Twins or multiple births

A separate Transfer Form must be completed for each child and each will be treated individually by schools. If the children are joint eldest in the family the eldest child box can be ticked on each child's Transfer Form. Parents of twins who have a strong preference for both children to attend the same post primary school should look carefully at the admissions criteria used by the school(s) where they

wish to apply. Some schools use criteria that are more likely to lead to the scenario whereby one twin secures a place but the other does not. This is particularly the case for schools that use academic admissions criteria (i.e. schools which require applicants to sit an entrance test).

Completing your child's application

The Transfer Form is a very important document. It will contain all the information which your chosen post primary schools will use to consider your child's application. When the time comes to complete the form you will receive an information leaflet from your primary school to help you. Primary school principals have a role in advising parents of P7 children about the Post primary Admissions procedure leading to the completion of the transfer form.

Post primary schools may ask for documentation to be attached to the Transfer Form when your form is initially submitted. Refer to the published admissions criteria for the school preferences you have listed and attach any information as requested by the school(s).

Alternatively a school may write during the process or after the offer of a place to request information by a certain deadline. If the school has asked for verifying documents which you do not have, contact the school directly to ascertain what they will accept as an alternative

You will be asked to provide information about your child when completing the Transfer Form. This is very important because:

- If one of your chosen schools has more applicants than places available it will have to choose which children to admit.
- A school will do this by applying its admissions criteria to its applicants.
- The information that you provide about your child when completing the Transfer Form will be what a school will use to see how your child meets its admissions criteria.

The sort of information that will be important for you to provide will vary from school to school. It will often be information like:

- Whether your child has any brothers or sisters already attending the school to which you are applying.
- Whether the child is the eldest child, only child or the eldest boy/girl in the family.
- Entrance test information should be recorded in the manner requested by the post primary school where applicable.
- Whether your child is registered with the EA, as being entitled to Free School Meals.

The above items are only examples, it is therefore vital that you read very carefully the admissions criteria to ensure that you understand what information is needed by **all** the schools you list and provide this information when completing the Transfer Form.

Free School Meal Entitlement (FSME)

The Department has recommended that schools use their admissions criteria to make sure that they admit a fair number of children registered as entitled to Free School Meals.

- To make this possible, the Transfer Form will ask you if your child is *currently* listed on the EA register of children entitled to Free School Meals.
- If this applies to your child you should record this in the appropriate part of Section B on the Transfer Form.

- Your claim of FSME registration will be checked if admission is secured on the basis of FSME.

If your child only becomes registered as entitled to Free School Meals after you have completed their Transfer Form you should contact the EA School Admissions Office in writing up to and including Friday 24 April 2020 at 4.00 pm.

How many preferences should I list?

Parents have the right to express preferences for the schools they would like their child to attend, but no child can be guaranteed a place in any school or any particular type of school (secondary, integrated, grammar, single sex etc). Achieving a grade 'A' in an entrance assessment does not guarantee that a child will obtain a place in a grammar school as schools can be oversubscribed with 'A' grades.

You should list at least four preferences as there is no guarantee your child will be accepted into the first preference. You should list at least one non-grammar school. Please note that you will not be asked for further preferences during the procedure. You will only be asked for further preferences if your child is unsuccessful in obtaining a place at the end of the admissions process at which point many schools will have filled all available Year 8 places.

There is no maximum number of preferences. You cannot list preferences more than once. Please make sure you state clearly the name of each school. As some schools have similar names you should state the name of the school on your form as per the admissions criteria along with a local identifier e.g. St Mary's College Omagh, St Mary's College Ballymena, St Mary's College Newry, etc.

Previewing and Submitting Application

Before signing the Transfer Form, please note:

- You should check all the information carefully before signing the form. You should ensure that all relevant information is provided when completing the Transfer Form to enable all the schools you have listed as preferences to consider your child's application. You and you alone are responsible for ensuring that all relevant information is provided.
- If you do not provide relevant information you may reduce the chance of your child being admitted to a school of your preference
- It is also your responsibility to ensure that the information you provide is correct. Post primary schools may verify information provided as part of your child's application and information found to be false or misleading can lead to non-admission.

The information that you provide on the form or in support of your application is covered by the provisions of the Data Protection Act 2018 – General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Your signature on the form is deemed to be an authorisation by you to allow the EA to use such information for the purpose of processing your application.

The completed and signed Transfer Form should be passed by your child's primary school to the EA by Wednesday 5 February 2020.

Adding new/additional documentation

If your circumstances change in a way that may be important for the Post primary Admissions process e.g. a change of address, you should contact the EA Admissions Office at

postprimaryadmissions@eani.org.uk. Friday 24 April 2020 at 4.00 pm is the final date by which the EA will process any additional information or new applications. After this date additional information and new applications will not be processed until after Friday 29 May 2020.

Changing Preference

Changes of preference before the Transfer Form is sent to the post primary school can be forwarded to the EA by email or post on or before 4.00pm on Wednesday 4 March 2020. Apart from those necessitated by exceptional circumstances, no changes of preferences will be processed between Thursday 5 March 2020 and Friday 29 May 2020 (inclusive).

Change of preference due to exceptional circumstances

Between Thursday 5 March 2020 and Friday 24 April 2020 (not later than 4.00pm) changes of preference can only be accepted in exceptional circumstances. This is usually because you have moved to live in a different area and it is no longer feasible for your child to attend the original schools.

If you wish to change your preference due to exceptional circumstances you must submit a request in writing to the EA on or before 4.00 pm on Friday 24 April 2020. Verification of the exceptional circumstances must be provided. If approved, the EA will amend the original Transfer Form and send it to the new school(s).

Examples of documents to verify an address change include –

- Tenancy agreement;
- Rates bill;
- House sale contract.

Examples of documents to verify family related circumstances -

- Letter from family support officer;
- Medical information;
- Letter from employer in the case where you have changed jobs since the submission of your application.

Make sure that you discuss the school preferences with your child in advance of submitting the Transfer Form. Also consider how your child will travel to the schools listed and whether or not you are eligible for transport assistance. This is important as the following types of situation are not considered to be exceptional circumstances -

- Transport arrangements, unless there has been a change of address;
- Parent/child changing their mind following further consideration of the preferences listed;
- Parent becoming aware that another child or children have or have not applied to a particular school;
- Publication of a development proposal for a school for which a decision has not yet been made.

The EA will write to you following consideration of your request.

After 24 April 2020 changes of preference in any circumstances will not be processed until after Friday 29 May 2020.

How are admissions decisions made and by whom?

The Department of Education is responsible for determining the number of pupils each school can admit, this is known as the school's admissions number. If a school's admissions number is greater than the number of applications which it receives; all applicants will be offered places.

In the event of the number of applications being greater than a school's admissions number the Board of Governors will apply the school's published admissions criteria to all applicants to determine which children will be offered places up to the school's admission number. Responsibility for drawing up and applying a school's admissions criteria rests with the Board of Governors.

If your child is not accepted by your first preference school the Transfer Form and any documents attached will be sent to your second preference school. The process, already described, will be repeated until all preferences have been considered. Places will be allocated to those who best meet the schools' admission criteria.

How and when will I be notified of placement?

A letter will be posted to you on Friday 29 May 2020 for receipt on Saturday 30 May 2020. The letter will be issued by the school in which your child has been placed.

If your child is not offered a place the EA will write to you and provide you with information on schools which still have places available at the close of the admissions procedure.