

Pre-School and Primary Admissions Procedure 2020/21

Questions and Answers

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Are the Pre-School and Primary Admissions procedures going ahead as previously timetabled?

Pre-School Stage 1 and Primary 1

There is no change to the published timetables for Pre-School Stage 1 and Primary 1, these procedures close on 28 April 2020.

Pre-School Stage 2

There is currently no change to this published timetable for Stage 2 which commences on 29 April 2020 and closes on 8 June 2020.

Making decisions on applications

We ask those schools or playgroups, who have applications still to consider, to make appropriate arrangements for timely decisions to be made in line with the Department's timetable and as applicable, in line with your published admissions criteria.

The Education Authority (EA) acknowledges that during these exceptional circumstances some schools or playgroups may encounter logistical limitations or other difficulties or having to make alternative arrangements for those involved in admission decisions e.g. using Skype or telephoning conferencing to continue to make timely decisions on applications.

IMPORTANT NOTIFICATION - Compliance with GDPR

In all cases you should comply with current GDPR regulations. Reminder GDPR information can be accessed [here](#)

If the EA Admissions service still needs to communicate with pre-school/schools, how will they do this?

For general communications:

- Using the general distribution email we hold and have been using for your pre-school/school;
- Via the EA Website

For pupil related information we will continue to exchange applicant and other supporting documents as necessary:

- to schools (connected to C2k) through AnyComms+ (guidance on how to access both within and outside school is available on the Digital Hub and C2K Exchange EN169).
- to nursery schools and playgroups via your school portal email address.

For any other communications we will send to your normal school or playgroup email account.

Please regularly check the communication channels identified above for any information that we may have sent you.

If I still need to access my school network and/or the school portal for online admissions, how do I do this?

For a Pre-School/Primary School the School Portal, as a web-based system, can be accessed from any location (link available on [EA Digital Admissions Hub](#)). As we make preparations for the close of Pre-School Stage 1 and Primary 1 procedures you can no longer allocate or refuse children in the School Portal from **6pm on 20 April 2020**. You will continue to be able to view and as need be print reports should you need to. We will contact Pre-Schools later to advise when the portal will reopen to allow you to process Stage 2 applications.

For access to your school network we understand that schools connected to C2k are guided by Information Sheets ENO24 Accessing MySchool Outside School and ENO88 Accessing SIMS from home (these are available on C2k Exchange). Please note connections from home are currently being prioritised for schools that require access to business critical processes. If you feel you need support to access your C2k school network please refer to ENO88 or contact the C2k Service Desk for further advice on 08706 011666.

For Nursery Schools and Playgroups, **if you are not able** and need to access your network, email account and/or school portal email account (if different), anywhere else other than at your own setting, you should let us know immediately by emailing preschooladmissions@eani.org.uk

How do I get notification of placement letters issued?

The EA placement template letters that would normally be available to schools and playgroups are no longer accessible on the website. Further to [EA Digital Admissions Update No 7](#) issued on 7 April 2020, given the continued uncertainty of the current COVID-19 situation, EA has made arrangements to prepare and issue notification of placement letters to parents/guardians for P1 and Pre-School Stage 1 for receipt on 29 April 2020. [EA Digital Admissions Update No 8](#) issued on 20 April 2020, provides further guidance on the arrangements the EA has made.

The EA will continue to appraise schools and playgroups, when in a position to do so, about any arrangements that may need to be put in place, for the close of the admissions procedures, for Pre-School Stage 2.

What will the EA be including in the Pre-School Stage 1 and Primary 1 placement letters that they are issuing to parents/guardians on behalf Board of Governors and Management Committees?

The letter will outline the application outcome, provide information on the appeals process and link the parent/guardian to the EA website for more information.

In advising the parent/guardian that their child has been offered a place, all letters will advise, that for a small number of schools or playgroups the offer of a place may be conditional on a parent/guardian providing the school or playgroup with verifying information in line with their published admissions criteria and that any school or playgroup in this position, will be in touch with parent(s)/guardian(s) when they are able to do so.

The letter will also advise a parent/guardian that they can communicate their acceptance or non-acceptance of the offer of a place by emailing the school or playgroup and where not accepting the offer, to copy their email to the respective Admissions office.

If I have notification of placement letters prepared and ready to issue for Pre-School Stage 1 or Primary 1 admissions, can I go ahead and issue at the close of procedure?

Pre-Schools/Schools can send letters that are already prepared if they are able to. We are aware that pre-schools/schools have additional information specific to their individual arrangements e.g. re verifying documents or uniform details etc which they want to share with parents/guardians.

If I have already prepared placement notifications, can I email to parents/guardians?

Yes, whilst adhering to GDPR guidance, notification of placements may be emailed to parents/guardians, as long as an email address is available for every applicant. The e-mail should be sent **for receipt** on the date that letters are to be received i.e. 29 April.

Will parents/guardians be given a timescale for advising of their acceptance or decline of an offer?

In the letter from the EA a parent/guardian has been asked to email a school/playgroup their acceptance or decline of the offer and to copy the relevant EA admissions office where they have declined the offer. There has been no timescale given in the letter. As you will be receiving the responses from parents/guardians each school/playgroup can use their own discretion as to how to follow up any outstanding responses in advance of the start of the new academic year.

Will the placement letter from the EA be communicated in Irish where the offer of a place is in an Irish Medium school/playgroup?

EA continues to endeavour to promote the provision of Irish Medium Education, but as this Covid-19 contingency measure requires the printing and distribution of over 45,000 letters, EA is unable to offer this service for individual schools/playgroups. However, schools/playgroups that wish to communicate in Irish the offer of a place with parents/guardians may continue to do this when they are able to do so.

If the parent/guardian does not receive their Pre-School Stage 1 or Primary 1 placement letter due to postal delays how can they find out the outcome of their application?

As it is possible that due to Covid-19 that some post may take longer to deliver than usual, the Citizen Portal will open on Wednesday 29 April and parents/guardians who had applied online can log in to view their child's pre-school (target age Stage 1) or primary 1 placement. Guidance on how to log in and access placement offers will be accessible for 29 April. Parents/Guardians will also be able to contact the [Admissions Helpdesk](#).

The Board of Governors or Management Committee are only in a position to issue a conditional offer for the child of Pre-School or Primary 1 age as this offer is subject to receipt of verifying documents, how will I obtain these documents to finalise the offer of a place?

In advising the parent/guardian that their child has been offered a place, all letters will advise, that for a small number of schools or playgroups the offer of a place may be conditional on a parent/guardian providing the school or playgroup with verifying information in line with their published admissions

criteria and that any school or playgroup in this position, will be in touch with parent(s)/guardian(s) when they are able to do so.

Schools or Playgroups in this position will need to make their own arrangements taking into account how they can do this in line with any GDPR requirements or indeed the current PHA guidance on social distancing and 'Stay at Home' campaign. These are challenging times whilst you continue to make arrangements for your admissions intake and it is recommended that all guidance is followed. You could make arrangements to receive the information securely, whether by post or email from the parent(s)/guardian(s).

I need to access information from the School Portal for Pre-School Stage 1 or Primary 1 admissions, can I still do this?

Access to the School Portal closed from 6pm on Monday 20 April 2020 as data needs to be finalised and sent for the printing of letters. As a result no further changes can be made after this time. The EA Pre-School Admissions office has been in contact with a small group of schools/playgroups and will continue to liaise with this group regarding the finalisation of preference decisions for Stage 1.

You will continue to be able to view and as need be print reports should you need to, but you will not be able to allocate or refuse.

We will contact Pre-Schools later to advise when the portal will reopen to allow you to process Stage 2 applications.

Our Pre-School setting offers a morning and afternoon session, when do I advise a parent/guardian which session their child has been placed in?

Pre-School legislation enables parents to list full-time or part-time preferences, it does not recognise morning and afternoon sessions as preferences therefore the placing of a child in a morning or afternoon session is not part of the preference based admissions process. If this relates to the provision offered in your pre-school, you should make the necessary arrangements to inform a parent/guardian when you are able to do so.

A parent/guardian has informed our school/playgroup of a change of address – who do I need to tell?

For Pre-School/Primary the [Applicant and Pupil Details Correction Form](#) (Accessible on the Digital Admissions Resource Hub) should have already been forwarded to primaryadmissions@eani.org.uk or preschooladmissions@eani.org.uk as appropriate.

If you had not previously notified EA of a change, you should now email the above mailboxes with the details. Please note that while we will be unable to avoid a letter going to the original address, a separate letter can be issued to the new address.

Will Covid-19 have an impact on the School Admissions Appeals Process?

We are currently investigating how and when admissions appeals may be able to take place, given the ongoing pandemic. Parents/guardians who wish to make an appeal against the decision of a Board of Governors, not to admit their child, will be advised of their right to appeal and the date by which their appeal form will need to be submitted. Information on the appeals process will be updated on the EA website www.eani.org.uk/admissions as and when more details are finalised.

The Admissions staff will be in touch with the respective schools for which an appeal(s) has been lodged, to collate the information in line with the appeals procedure.

Parents/Guardians may want to contact our school or playgroup to enquire how the published admissions criteria was applied to their child.

As standard procedure when informing a parent/guardian of their right to appeal in accordance with the school admissions appeals procedure, they are advised that they may wish to contact the school which has not selected their child for admission to discuss the reason why he/she was not offered a place, so as to assist them in deciding whether to appeal the decision. In accordance with the published admissions criteria, it is only the Board of Governors and/or its selected admissions committee, who can advise a parent/guardian how the criteria was applied to their child.

There is no right of appeal against the decision to refuse a child admission in a voluntary/private playgroup, but as the Management Committee are responsible for applying its published admissions criteria if oversubscribed with applications for funded places available, a parent/guardian is advised to make contact with the respective playgroup, if they wish to find out why their child was refused a funded place.

A parent/guardian will be directed to the EA website to find contact details of schools/playgroups, therefore, you should endeavour to make arrangements for parental enquiries to be dealt with as appropriate.

A parent/guardian may want to contact our school or playgroup to find out where their child is on our waiting list?

Where a waiting list is in place it is only the school or playgroup who can advise a parent/guardian as to what their waiting list policy is and as applicable, the child's position on that list.

A parent/guardian will be directed to the EA website to find contact details of schools/playgroups, you should endeavour to make arrangements for parental enquiries to be dealt with as appropriate.

Is it anticipated that the 2020-2021 academic year will still be at the beginning of September?

We are all living through ever changing unprecedented and challenging times in light of COVID-19. The EA will continue to be guided by the decisions taken by the Government, the Minister of Education and the Department of Education. The EA remains committed in continuing to deliver critical essential services and the admissions service remains our priority.

When should we contact parents/guardians about induction arrangements, collation of data collection information (if applicable); or uniform information?

This will depend on the position of each school or playgroup and you should endeavour to keep a parent/guardian informed when you are able to do so.

How will a parent/guardian know how to make contact with our school or playgroup?

The EA will be directing parents/guardians to its website to find this information <https://www.eani.org.uk/search-schools>.

Would it be advisable for our school or playgroup to have a notice on our website or have an autoreply message on our email account to advise customers of any contingency contact arrangements due to the exceptional COVID-19 circumstances?

Whilst this is a matter for each school and playgroup to make their own decisions, and many of you may have this already in place, we would recommend this in line with good customer service practice i.e. if there is a change to normal business. This could be done through a number of forms of communications e.g. whether diverting telephones or providing a voicemail with an option to leave a message and making arrangements to check these as regularly as you can, or by accessing your school/playgroup emails remotely or providing an auto message such as:-

Due to the current COVID-19 pandemic we are working on a restrictive basis. Your email will be attended to as soon as practically possible.

Are parents/guardians aware to be mindful that due to Covid-19 some schools/playgroups may be working on a restrictive basis but will endeavour to respond to enquiries?

Yes, parent/guardians are reminded that during this unprecedented time there may be some changes to normal business and to have patience when making contact.

Update on entering the children's details on SIMS (Primary or Nursery Unit)

You may be aware that we have been liaising with our software provider to develop an automatic link to upload pupil details to SIMS. We acknowledge your patience while development work on this area has been taking place. We can now report that C2k and EA, having conducted testing of the file transfer facility, are not satisfied with the current process. Unfortunately, it will not be possible to offer this facility to schools for 2020-2021 admissions. Schools should, therefore, key pupil details into SIMS and refer to the C2k guidance 'Admissions Procedures Primary 2020' which is available on C2k Exchange. This work does not have to be completed prior to issue of placement letters but rather in advance of the pupil's start date.

Who can I contact about the admissions procedure if I have a query?

Should you have any queries or need support the Admissions staff continue to be contactable as follows:-

Telephone Number 028 9598 5595 or by emailing

preschooladmissions@eani.org.uk or primaryadmissions@eani.org.uk