



Education Authority Northern Ireland

Parent Guide to Primary Admissions 2020/2021

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

Tuesday 7 January 2020 at 12 noon (GMT)	Primary application procedure opens with online Citizen Portal available.
Thursday 30 January 2020 at 12 noon (GMT)	Closing date/time for receipt of punctual applications (online Citizen Portal closes). Any applications received after this date will be considered late.
Friday 7 February 2020 at 12 noon (GMT)	Final date for which requests for consideration of changes of preference in exceptional circumstances, new (late) applications and additional information in support of applications will be accepted.
February to April 2020	Education Authority operates a clearing house to process applications according to parental preference.
Tuesday 28 April 2020	Letters posted to parents notifying of their child's primary school placement.
Wednesday 13 May 2020 at 4 pm	Final date/time for appeal form(s) against the decision of a Board of Governors to refuse admission to a child to be received by EA.

Primary Admissions in Northern Ireland

The Education (NI) Order 1997 gives you, as a parent, the right to express a preference as to the primary school which you wish your child to attend. All parents seeking a place for their child in a grant-aided school are required to submit an application form in accordance with the arrangements set out below. This website describes the arrangements which the Education Authority has made to enable you to state your preferences and to seek a place for your child in your preferred schools.

Priority will be given to children resident in Northern Ireland at the time of their proposed admission.

Do I need to apply for a primary one place?

If your child was born between 2 July 2015 and 1 July 2016 they will be due to start primary one in September 2020 and as they will be of compulsory school age you must apply for a place in a primary school.

Exceptions

Special Educational Needs Applications

If your child is undergoing statutory assessment you still need to apply for a primary one place. However, **you should not complete an application if your child has a Statement of Special Educational Needs**. Your child's placement will be arranged through the EA's Special Educational Needs Department.

Children currently enrolled in a Reception Class

If your child is currently enrolled in the Reception Class of a primary school and you wish for them to continue their primary one education at the same school then a new application is not required. However, if you wish to apply for your child to be admitted to a different primary school then you must complete an application for consideration.

Preparatory Departments and Independent Schools

For information on making application to the Preparatory Departments of grammar schools or to Independent Schools you should contact the schools directly.

How do I apply for a Primary One place for the 2020/2021 school year?

The easiest way to apply is online using our Citizen Portal. User guides are available on the EA website at www.eani.org.uk.

You can apply online between:

12.00 noon (GMT) on Tuesday 7 January 2020
and
12.00 noon (GMT) on Thursday 30 January 2020

If you are unable to apply online, paper applications will be available on request from schools or the Education Authority if you need one.

Before you submit your application it is important that you read the admissions criteria of the schools you are interested in sending your child to. When completing the application you will need to make sure you include all the relevant information about how your child meets the criteria as this is what schools will use when applying criteria and making decisions on which children will be offered places.

If you apply after the closing date/time for punctual applications i.e. 12 noon on Thursday 30 January 2020 you will need to complete a paper form as the Citizen Portal will not be accessible and your application will be treated as a late application. *Refer to the section "What happens if my application is late?" for further details.*

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 their admissions criteria.

You may wish to visit schools you are considering applying to by attending their open days/evenings. Details of the dates and times of open days/evenings and schools' admissions criteria will be published on this website and advertised by schools.

Completing your child's application

Before starting to complete your child's application you should carefully read the guidance on this website on the admissions procedure as well as the admissions criteria for each primary school that you wish to nominate as a preference.

You may wish to use the Transport Eligibility Checker to help you determine if your child will be eligible for transport assistance to schools and to check bus routes.

It is important that you carefully choose the name of each school you wish to list as a preference and ensure you have selected the correct school(s). As some schools have similar names you should also check the address along with a local identifier e.g. St Mary's Primary School, Aughnacloy, St Mary's Primary School, Aughlisnafin, etc.

You should complete your application providing all the relevant details about how your child meets the admissions criteria of the schools you have listed as preferences. You must use your child's current home address and not that of a childminder or grandparent.

How many preferences should I list?

It is recommended that you should list at least four primary schools in the order of your preference as there is no guarantee your child will be accepted into the first preference. You can list up to six preferences on the Citizen Portal. If you wish to list more than six preferences you should email the additional preference and reasons for preference to the Education Authority at primaryadmissions@eani.org.uk clearly stating your child's details.

Please note that you cannot list the same preferences more than once. The only exception to this is if you wish to apply for a school which has an Irish Medium Unit and also to the school's English Medium stream in which case you will need to list the school twice. If you apply online then you will be alerted to do so.

You should be aware that after Tuesday 28 April 2020 a number of schools will have allocated all their places. Therefore, it is important that you give very careful consideration to the stated order of your preferences and ensure all relevant information is provided to the first choice school by 12 noon on Friday 7 February 2020.

Previewing and Submitting your application

You should check all the information carefully before submitting the form. You should ensure that *all* relevant information is provided 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. 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).

I have previewed and submitted my application. What happens next?

Once you have successfully submitted your application you will receive an email confirmation from the Education Authority.

Birth Certificate

You now need to bring or send your child's birth certificate to the school you have listed as 1st preference. You should do this as soon as possible as it is required by the school to check that your child is of compulsory school age.

Other Documentation in support of an application

Some schools also ask for additional documentation to support or verify information on your child's application. This documentation may be requested at the time of application, during the process or at the time placement letters are issued. You should follow the requirements of individual schools and ensure you bring or send your documents within the required deadlines. The admissions criteria will indicate if verifying documents are being requested at the time of application. If so you will need to provide to the 1st preference school the information for any preference(s) listed preferably by 30 January 2020, or by 12.00 noon on Friday 7 February 2020 at the latest.

If you do not supply documents requested this could lead to the withdrawal of a place or the inability of a school to offer a place to your child.

If a school has asked for verifying documents which you do not have, you should contact the school directly to ascertain what they will accept as an alternative.

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's application is not accepted by your first preference school it will then be considered by your second preference school. The process will be repeated until a place has been allocated or all preferences that you have listed have been exhausted. Places will be allocated to those who best meet the admission criteria.

How and when will I be notified of placement?

A letter will be posted to you on Tuesday 28 April 2020 for receipt on Wednesday 29 April 2020.

The letter will be sent by the school in which your child has been placed.

However, in the unlikely event that your child is not offered a place by any of your preferred schools the letter will be sent by the Education Authority. You will then be asked to consider further preferences of primary schools for your child to attend and a list of those schools which still have places available at the close of the admissions procedure will be accessible on this website.

Details of the appeals procedure will also be accessible on this website at the end of the admissions procedure.

Applying to an Integrated Primary School

If you list an integrated primary school as a preference on your online application you will be presented with an additional question (specific to this preference only) which asks you to select your child's community background from a drop down menu of Protestant, Catholic or Other/None. You may provide any additional information relating to a school's criteria in the 'Preference Reasons Continued' section for each school listed e.g. if you are in a mixed religion marriage.

The details that you provide will only be disclosed to the relevant primary school at the point when your child's application is required to be considered by that school (and will not be shared with any other school listed).

It is important that you provide the detail requested so that integrated schools can apply their criteria to the different categories.

If you complete a paper application you will need to carefully read the admissions criteria of the school and follow their instruction on how this information is to be submitted to their school.

If you choose to indicate your child's religion on the Education Authority's paper application form (which is not recommended) then you should be aware that this is done at your own discretion and in the knowledge that this 'special category data', in terms of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), may be seen by other individuals or schools that you have

listed as preferences, and the Education Authority takes no responsibility for any use made of it by any person.

What happens if my application is late?

During the admissions procedure when schools are applying their criteria punctual applications will be considered before late applications are considered.

The application procedure opens on 7 January 2020 at 12noon (GMT) and an application submitted by the closing date of 30 January 2020 at 12noon (GMT) will be treated as a punctual application.

An application received after 12noon (GMT) on 30 January 2020 will be treated as a late application.

All late applications will have to be made on paper as the online Citizen Portal will not be accessible after the closing date/time. You can submit a late application at any time but only those received by 12.00 noon on 7 February 2020 will be processed during the admissions procedure. Late applications received after this date will not be considered until the admissions procedure has ended on 28 April 2020.

Having a late application could reduce your child's likelihood of gaining a place in your preferred school i.e. should the school you are applying to receive more applications than it has places available it will firstly consider all punctual applications (including second and subsequent preference applications) before your application is considered.

I'm planning to move house, what address should I use?

The address you use on your child's application must be the home address at which they are currently resident. It cannot be that of a childminder or grandparent's home or any other address which is not their normal residence.

If you are planning to move house before the beginning of the school year you should indicate this on your application form under 'Preference Reasons' giving as much information as possible about the planned date of moving and address, if known.

If you move house during the admissions process you must inform the Education Authority in writing preferably by email to primaryadmissions@eani.org.uk providing your child's name and date of birth and indicating the new address and when your child's address changed. The Education Authority will ensure the school(s) to which you have applied is notified. You may be asked for documentation to verify your move. Please note that where a school uses distance from school within its admissions criteria this will apply to the child's current home address at the time of application.

Living outside Northern Ireland at time of application

You can still make an application for a primary place. However, priority is given to children residing in Northern Ireland at the time of their proposed admission.

If you are moving to Northern Ireland, when completing the application, you must use the address you are residing at the time of the completion of your application. Boards of Governors can only use a new address once your child is residing at the new address. You should notify the Education Authority in writing when you have moved and you will need to provide verification of your move.

Adding new/additional information

During the admissions procedure if your circumstances change in a way that may be important for the admissions process you should contact the Education Authority in writing or by emailing primaryadmissions@eani.org.uk to provide this new information. Noon on Friday 7 February 2020 is the final date/time by which the Education Authority will consider the information. After this date new/additional information will not be processed until after 28 April 2020.

Changes of preference(s)

Depending on when you decide to change your preferences different rules apply:

Before 12 noon on Thursday 30 January 2020

If you wish to change your preferences before 12 noon on Thursday 30 January 2020 and had applied using the online Citizen Portal you can make changes to your application by logging in to your account and clicking on 'Change your application'. On-screen warnings will indicate that your application is unsubmitted and that it cannot be processed unless you resubmit it. You can add/delete preferences and/or change the order of preferences listed using the arrow keys on the 'Your preferred Pre-Schools/Schools' page. Ensure that you also update your reasons for preference as appropriate. You should preview your form and satisfy yourself that all the information is correct before ensuring to submit your application by the closing date/time of 12 noon on Thursday 30 January 2020. It is your responsibility to ensure you have resubmitted your application otherwise it cannot be processed. Remember if you had supplied your child's birth certificate and any other documentation to the original first preference school you will need to retrieve it and bring it to your new first preference school.

If you have applied using a paper application you will need to withdraw it from the school and complete and submit a new application to your new first preference school by the closing date/time of 12 noon on Thursday 30 January 2020.

Between 12.00 noon on Thursday 30 January 2020 and 12.00 noon on Friday 7 February 2020

Apart from those necessitated by exceptional circumstances, no changes of preference will be processed if received after 12 noon on Thursday 30 January 2020. If you wish to change your preference, for any reason other than in exceptional circumstances, you must withdraw your original application by emailing primaryadmissions@eani.org.uk and submitting a new paper application.

If this occurs between 12.00 noon on Thursday 30 January 2020 and 12.00 noon on Friday 7 February 2020 your new application will be processed within the admissions procedure as a

late application. *Refer to the section “What happens if my application is late?” for further details.*

If you wish to change your preference due to exceptional circumstances you must submit a request in writing or by emailing primaryadmissions@eani.org.uk to the Education Authority on or before 12.00 noon on Friday 7 February 2020. Verification of the exceptional circumstances must be provided. If approved, the Education Authority will send you a pro-forma to complete with your new list of preferences (in order of preference) and including your reasons for preference as they relate to the admissions criteria. If the original application was received by the closing date/time then your ‘changed’ application will be processed within the admissions procedure as a punctual application.

After 12.00 noon on Friday 7 February 2020

After 12.00 noon on 7 February 2020 changes of preference in any circumstances will not be processed until after Tuesday 28 April 2020.

Applying for a Reception place in the school year September 2020 - June 2021

What is a Reception Class?

A small number of primary schools have a Reception class/group for children who are aged four at the date of their admission but who are not yet compulsory school age (i.e. children whose fourth birthday is after 1 July in a year).

Children in Reception classes do not follow the primary one element of the Northern Ireland curriculum and **cannot** be admitted until they reach their fourth birthday.

Children who are not of compulsory school age will only be selected for admission after all children of compulsory school age have been allocated a place.

Which schools have Reception provision?

You can use the ‘Find a School’ search facility to find out if a primary school in your area has a reception class

Schools that admit children into reception classes will also indicate this in their admissions criteria.

It should be noted that the majority of primary schools do not have reception provision and where it does exist children of compulsory school age must be given priority. Therefore you should consider applying for a funded pre-school place through the separate pre-school admissions procedure. For further information access the Pre-School Admissions Guide

How do I apply for a Reception place in a primary school?

The easiest way to apply is online using our Citizen Portal. User guides are available on the Education Authority website at www.eani.org.uk.

You can apply online between:

12.00 noon (GMT) on Tuesday 7 January 2020
and
12.00 noon (GMT) on Thursday 30 January 2020

If you are unable to apply online, paper applications will be available on request from schools or the Education Authority if you need one.

Before you preview and submit your application it is important that you read the admissions criteria of the schools you are interested in sending your child to. When completing the application you will need to make sure you include all the relevant information about how your child meets the criteria as this is what schools will use when applying criteria and making decisions on which children will be offered places.

If you apply after the closing date/time for punctual applications i.e. 12 noon on Thursday 30 January 2020 you will need to complete a paper form as the Citizen Portal will not be accessible and your application will be treated as a late application. *Refer to the section "What happens if my application is late?" for further details.*

Can I apply for a pre-school place and a place in a reception class?

Yes you may apply for both a pre-school place and a place in a reception class. These are two separate application procedures and therefore you will need to complete two separate applications.

Duplicate Applications

You can only make one application for your child. Otherwise you will have made a false declaration. In the event that parents are discovered to have lodged more than one application for a child, then the first application lodged will normally be treated as the formal expression of parental preference and all other applications will not be considered.

Parents disagree on which schools to apply to/priority order for preferences

In cases where parents cannot agree on the preferences for their child they should endeavor to do so as soon as possible to minimise the risk of their child being unplaced. If mutual agreement is not possible ultimately you may need to obtain a Specific Issues Order from the court. If you require further advice you should contact the Education Authority.

Can I defer my child starting Primary One?

There is no legislative provision for deferring the normal age of starting primary school and as your child is compulsory school age then he/she is due to attend primary 1 unless he/she has a statement of special educational needs that says the child should remain in a pre-school setting.

Should you feel that your child is not ready to attend primary one you should read the information available in the document School Starting Age: A Guide for Parents which is available on the Education Authority website.