



Falkirk Council

Children's Services

EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE

ADMISSION POLICY

Updated 10.04.18 (as per Education Executive)

This policy supersedes all previous statements on Early Learning and Childcare Admission

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NURSERY EDUCATION ADMISSION POLICY

PURPOSE

To provide an effective framework for allocation of all early learning and childcare places across Falkirk Council.

UNDERPINNING PRINCIPLES

The underpinning principles of this policy will:

- ensure a fair and equitable allocation of early learning and childcare places
- ensure that all children with additional support needs will be provided with suitable early learning and childcare places
- ensure that all early learning and childcare places will be allocated using the same criteria.

COURSE OF ACTION TO BE FOLLOWED

The allocation of all early learning and childcare places is carried out centrally and this policy will be implemented at all times.

The timetable to ensure that parents are informed timeously of the allocation of places will be adhered to.

WHO SHOULD IMPLEMENT THE POLICY

The policy will be implemented by the Early Learning and Childcare Admissions Officers and all relevant Clerical Officers at all times and overseen by the Early Learning and Childcare Provision Coordinator.

REVIEW

The policy will be reviewed by Falkirk Council Children's Services during session 2019/20 in preparation for the expansion to 1140 hours in August 2020.

GENESIS OF THE POLICY

This policy was developed by a working group established by Falkirk Council Children's Services after consultation with appropriate stakeholders.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Admission Policy provides guidelines for all staff who implement the authority's policy in the provision of early learning and childcare.
- 1.2 The policy reflects the goals and values of Falkirk Council. The Council is committed to improving the quality of life for local people by working with all communities, sectors and groups to deliver high quality services which are accessible, accountable, responsive and provide value for money.
- 1.3 Early years establishments work within the principles of Curriculum for Excellence to provide
- an inclusive approach that ensures equality, dignity and privacy for all
 - a safe and stimulating environment where children and adults learn together
 - a planned curriculum, based on prior learning and play experiences, that develops the whole child
 - appropriate challenges through which all children will realise their own potential
- 1.4 We seek to provide learning experiences which will enable all young people to achieve their potential and participate in the development of a fair and caring society.
- 1.5 The policy takes into account changes necessitated by the implementation of the Children (Scotland) Act, 1995, the Childcare Strategy, the Human Rights Act 1998, the Standards in Scotland's Schools Etc Act 2000, Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004, Children and Young People (Scotland) Bill.
- 1.6 The provision of a flexible integrated early learning and childcare service to young children and their families where care and education are inter-dependent is a priority of Falkirk Council.
- 1.7 The terms 'pre-school child', 'child in pre-school year' and 'ante-pre-school child' are used throughout this document and each has a precise meaning:

Pre-School Child means

- (a) a child who is under school age and has not commenced attendance at primary school (other than a nursery class in such a school); and
- (b) a child who has attained school age but has not commenced attendance at such a school.

Child in pre-school year means that it is expected the child will commence at primary school (other than a nursery class in such a school) the following August.

Child in ante-pre-school year means that it is expected the child will commence at primary school (other than nursery class in such a school) not in the following August, but in August one year later.

2.0 ADMISSION POLICY

- 2.1 The policy of Falkirk Council is to secure a nursery place for all children in their ante-pre-school year, their pre-school year and to provide for children with additional support needs. Falkirk Council will secure these places in a variety of settings to include nursery class, early learning and childcare centres and commissioned partner nurseries or playgroups.

- 2.2 Places will be allocated with consideration of parental choice. Wherever possible, places will be provided in response to these preferences.
- 2.3 A child in his/her ante-pre-school year will be eligible for entry to early learning and childcare after the child's third birthday as follows.
- For children who reach 3 years of age between 1st March and 31st July the start date will be at the beginning of the Autumn Term (August)
 - For children reaching 3 years between 1st August and 29th February of the following year the start date will be month after the child's 3rd birthday
- 2.4 All nursery provision is non-denominational.
- 2.5 **A nursery class must have at least eight children who attend on a regular basis before it is deemed viable to ensure an appropriate educational experience.**
- 3.0 **APPLICATION PROCEDURES FOR EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE PLACES**
- 3.1 Children's Services will ensure that information about applying for places and the date for the receipt of completed application forms are fully advertised in the community through posters and newsletters.
- Children's Services will also ensure that information is made available in a variety of ways including council website, and will also ensure that information is made available in local newspapers.
- 3.2 Parents should indicate a second and third choice of nursery. If a place is not available at the first choice nursery the allocation team will then allocate at the second or third choice nursery where necessary. The application for the first choice nursery will remain on a waiting list should a place become available.
- 3.3 Application forms can be handed in to any educational establishment or One Stop Shop. The receiving establishment should take a copy of the child's birth certificate and proof of address (eg utility bill) and send to
- Early Learning and Childcare Admissions Officer
Sealock House
2 Inchyra Road
Grangemouth
FK3 9XB
- Applications to be allocated for the forthcoming academic session should be submitted by 31st March.
- 3.4 Parents will be asked to bring the child's birth certificate and to provide valid proof that the address given for the child is the address at which they are ordinarily resident.
- 3.5 The choice of nursery provision can have an influence on the availability of the parent's preferred primary school. Information regarding primary school admissions criteria can be found in Service Circular 1, the Admission Policy.
- 3.6 All Headteachers/Nursery Managers are required to make all staff aware of the council's processes regarding delayed entry to primary school.

- 3.7 Parents are entitled to nationally agreed hours of early learning and childcare. For most children this will be taken as a regular sessions of five days of the week, however other patterns of attendance may be agreed to suit the parent and their childcare needs.

For further information Parents can contact the Nursery Admissions Team on 01324 506661.

For pre-school year children the entitlement will be offered from August to June.

For ante-pre-school year children the entitlement will be offered pro rata depending on the entry date (as detailed in 2.3)

In some Early Learning and Childcare Centres there will be an allocation of places which are available for parents to purchase. Priority for extended or full-time places will be given to accommodate the childcare needs of parents who are working or studying. Parents should apply directly to the relevant Early Learning and Childcare centres are detailed below:

Camelon Early Learning and Childcare Centre	01324 501800
Denny Early Learning and Childcare Centre	01324 504270
Heathrigg Early Learning and Childcare Centre	01324 851574
Larbert Early Learning and Childcare Centre	01324 503560
Rannoch Early Learning and Childcare Centre	01324 508700
Queen Street Early Learning and Childcare Centre	01324 508610
Woodburn Early Learning and Childcare Centre	01324 501870
Bonnybridge Early Learning and Childcare Campus	01324 503162
Kinneil Early Learning and Childcare Campus	01506 778362
St Margaret's Early Learning and Childcare Campus	01324 506782

The rates charged per place by Falkirk Council nurseries will be decided annually at the time of finalising the Council's budget.

- 3.8 There may be occasions when, in the best interest of the child and family, an extension to the child's normal entitlement is provided at no extra charge.

These are likely to be for families where a child:

- has additional support needs
- is living in a situation where the child's development is impacted upon by the health of the parent or of the child
- is living in a social situation which indicates actual or possibility of danger to life, or health, or of emotional damage which will impact on the child's development and progress
- is in need of extra support because of family crisis
- is defined as 'looked after' as specified in the Children (Scotland) Act 1995.

Places will be allocated at the discretion of the Early Learning and Childcare Coordinator and are normally at no extra cost.

4.0 DEFERRAL TO PRIMARY EDUCATION: ENTITLEMENT PROVISION PROCEDURES

- 4.1 Information regarding delayed entry can be found in Service Circular 47.

5.0 ALLOCATION PROCEDURE

- 5.1 Early learning and childcare entitlement for all pre-school children is normally 5 morning sessions or 5 afternoon sessions or a pattern agreed between nursery and parent.

Parents' preferences for allocation of 5 morning places or 5 afternoon places or another agreed pattern should be taken into account wherever possible.

- 5.2 Parents of children due to start in August will be informed during the first 2 weeks in May by letter if a place is available for their child.

Where a place is not available, a letter informing the parent will be sent during the first 2 weeks in May. This letter will include the information relating to the reason for no allocation at first choice and will also provide details in relation to the waiting list for the parent's preferred choice.

6.0 ADMISSION PROCEDURE

- 6.1 Headteachers and Nursery Managers will inform parents of the arrangements for induction of children eligible for early learning and childcare.

- 6.2 Entry for new children to nursery is phased to benefit the children and families.

All children returning will start on the first day of term. Children new to the nursery will be phased in as soon as possible but no later than one month following the child's third birthday.

- 6.3 It is expected that all pre and ante-pre-school children will be offered a nursery place, although this will not always be the first choice nursery. Children with additional support needs will be given priority (see section 6.4).

This includes:

- Any child who has been referred by the Psychological Service or Health Service advising of additional support needs. This will be supported by the appropriate documentation outlining the child's needs for support in nursery.
- Children who are referred by Social Work Services, that is to say any child who has been specifically referred by Social Work Services (usually the family Social Worker), though the child may not necessarily be on the Child Protection Register. Children who are looked after either temporarily or long term as specified in the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 are also in this category. Also see 3.8.
- Children who are disabled or affected by disability, that is to say any child who is disabled or who is a member of a family with a disabled person where this disability has an effect on the child's normal life. Such claims should be verified by the Early Learning and Childcare Provision Coordinator in consultation with health professionals if necessary.
- Children who are affected by parental illness, that is to say any child who is affected short term by the emergency admission to hospital of the parent or affected long term by a parent's ill health. Such claims must be verified and catered for within current staffing allocations and may be time-limited.

- Children already attending the nursery, who are granted funded deferred entry places by Falkirk Council, retain a place although, not necessarily in the same facility. NB: children with September-December birthdays who have not been granted a funded deferred place are allocated a place as outlined in 6.5.
- Children who come from a non-English speaking home, that is to say any child whose use of English is minimal or non-existent.

6.4 **Priority System for Nursery Classes for All Other Children**

After places have been allocated for special circumstances as outlined in 6.3, in order to allocate places appropriately and because local demand for a specific facility can exceed supply, then the criteria for allocating places set out in Table 1 should be taken into account.

6.5 **Reserved Places**

Requests for a nursery place from pupils living outwith the primary school catchment area will not be granted where this would prevent the education authority from retaining reserved places at the specified nursery.

Reserved places means the number of places, in the opinion of the education authority, which are reasonably required to accommodate nursery pupils likely to become resident in the catchment area of the school.

Reserved places will be defined annually on an individual nursery class basis, taking into account the planned operational capacity of the nursery for the coming school session and the projected number of new houses to be built in the school's catchment.

Reserved places will only be applied to nursery classes that are attached to primary schools. They will not apply to Early Learning and Childcare Centres or Campuses and partner provided nurseries.

6.6 Names of children may be received throughout the session for various reasons and these names will be placed on the waiting list. In all cases, priority will be given in accordance with the principles laid out in 6.3 and 6.4.

The place of children on the waiting list can alter according to the priorities of individual children. This is because older children or those with special needs may be added to the waiting list throughout the session.

If a child has been offered a place in the nursery which is not the parents' first choice, then the child's name should remain on the waiting list of the first choice establishment if this is what the parents want. The child will be considered for a place according to the priorities as set out in 6.3 and 6.4 as will all children named on the waiting list.

Table 1 – Criteria for Allocating Early Learning and Childcare Places

Priority is given in the following order:

School Catchment Area

1	Children as stated in 6.3 within the school catchment area (ASN).
2	Children who have applied for an additional pre-school year (deferred year), where the intention is for them to remain within their existing establishment.
3	Children who are in their pre-school year and who live within the school catchment area.
4	Children who are in their ante pre-school year and who live within the school catchment area.

Allocation Area (i.e School Cluster Area)

5	Children as stated in 6.3 within the Allocation Area (ASN).
6	Children who are in their pre-school year, or who have applied for a deferred year and live within the designated area of the Area Allocations Group but outwith the school catchment area.
7	Children who live in allocation area with a sibling in the requested establishment.
8	Children who are in their ante pre-school year and live within the designated area of the Area Allocations Group but outwith the school catchment area.

Falkirk Council Boundary

9	Children as stated in 6.3 within Falkirk Council boundaries (ASN).
10	Children who are in their pre-school year or who have applied for a deferred year and who live within Falkirk Council boundaries but outwith the designated area of the Area Allocations Group.
11	Children who live within Falkirk Council boundary with a sibling in the requested establishment.
12	Children who are in their ante pre-school year and who live within Falkirk Council boundaries but outwith the designated area of the Area Allocations Group.

Other Local Authority Area

13	Children in outwith the Local Authority Area who have applied for an additional pre-school year (deferred year).
14	Children who are in their pre-school year and who live outwith the Falkirk Council boundaries.
15	Children who are in their ante pre-school year and who live outwith the Falkirk Council boundaries.

7.0 ATTENDANCE

Although enrolment and attendance at nursery is voluntary, it is desirable for the child to have a regular pattern of attendance. There may be occasions, however, when attendance becomes irregular or may stop. Staff should take every possible step to discuss the situation with parents, or other agencies and to encourage and offer support to the family.

A record of attendance using Falkirk Council Children's Services attendance records should be maintained daily and monitored regularly.

No child should be removed from the nursery roll without prior discussion with the parent and other involved professionals.

8.0 APPEALS PROCEDURES

- 8.1 Parents who wish to appeal against a decision affecting their pre-school child should be advised to write to the Director of Children's Services giving background to their concerns.
- 8.2 The Director of Children's Services will take appropriate action and will ensure that the appeal is fully investigated and considered by appropriate Staff. The parents will receive a written response advising them of the outcome.