

PUPIL AND PARENT UNIT

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Circular No: 2008/1

15 January 2008

To: Principals of all Nursery Schools, Principals of all Primary Schools with Nursery Units and Managers of voluntary and private sector providers participating in the Pre-School Education Expansion Programme.

Dear Provider

PRE-SCHOOL ENROLMENT – 2008/09

Notes of Guidance on the procedure for 2008/09 are enclosed along with the stationery which you will require.

I wish to advise you that the Southern Education and Library Board will continue to use the computerised system introduced for the processing of pre-school applications last year.

Details on the pre-school admissions procedure are also contained in:

- a. the Department of Education Circular 2007/12 on Open Enrolment in Nursery Schools: Admission arrangements for September 2008 which was issued in November 2007; or
- b. the Guidance for Voluntary and Private Providers within the Pre-School Education Expansion Programme which was issued in November 2007.

For administration purposes routine enquiries will be dealt with on a geographical basis as follows:

- a. Armagh, Banbridge, Craigavon – Carol (tel 028 3751 2520 or e-mail carol.straghan@selb.org)
- b. Cookstown, Dungannon, Newry and Mourne – Eithne (tel 028 3751 2526 or e-mail eithne.mcardle@selb.org).

I would emphasise the importance of adhering to the procedures attached and documenting decisions taken. Last year over 4979 pre-school applications were processed. 44 intentions to appeal were lodged, 12 of these progressed to appeal, of which one was upheld and 11 dismissed. In addition approximately 51 parents queried the decision of private providers not to offer their child a pre-school place.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mairead Maguire".

Mairead Maguire (Mrs)
Head of the Pupil and Parent Unit
Direct Line (028 3751 2411)
Encs

PREFERENCE BASED PRE-SCHOOL
ADMISSIONS PROCEDURE 2008/09

NOTES OF GUIDANCE

A. HANDLING APPLICATIONS

1. Application Forms/Birth Certificates/Verifying Documents

- 1.1 If a parent delivers the application form please confirm that this is the only application for pre-school education that has been submitted in respect of the child. If a parent indicates that they have already submitted another application form(s) they should be advised that only **one** application is to be completed as per the declaration at the bottom of page two of the form. It is the parent's decision which application remains. A parent is entitled to make a separate application for a reception place in a primary school.
- 1.2 On receipt of an application form by a first preference provider, the check box on the top left hand corner of the front of the application form (PRSE1) should be completed to record the date and time received and initialled by the person who received the form either by hand delivery or by post.
- 1.3 Parents are asked to attach a birth certificate to the application. In cases where a birth certificate has not been attached please record this on the application form in red ink (no b/c).
- 1.4 Where a birth certificate has been received, the details on the application should be checked to the birth certificate for accuracy. The name recorded should be that shown on the birth certificate. Any discrepancies should be clarified with the parent prior to consideration of applications by the Board of Governors or the Management Committee.
- 1.5 The original birth certificate should be attached to the application form and it should be retained by the pre-school setting until the close of the procedure. Birth certificates should not be forwarded to the Education and Library Board unless the application has not been accepted at first preference. Playgroups will be required to forward copies of the birth certificate in order to claim funding for pre-school places.
- 1.6 Where no birth certificate is received, providers should request one from the parents. Providers should accept reasonable alternatives to verify how a child meets a particular criterion.
- 1.7 Check that the number of verifying documents attached matches that recorded on the application form.
- 1.8 Step 4 of the Plan of Action contained in the guidance on Duty to Verify issued by the Department of Education to schools and other providers states that *'In*

cases where applications are not accompanied by verifying documents, it is for the Board of Governors to decide whether or not to contact the applicant to arrange for the provision of documents’.

- 1.9 Where a place has been obtained because false information has been given on the form that place can be removed and awarded to the child who ought to have been admitted.

2. List of Preferences

- 2.1 If a parent delivers the application form, please take a few minutes to check the following details:
 - a. that more than one preference has been listed particularly in known areas of over-subscription;
 - b. that either the FT or PT box has an entry for each preference listed; and
 - c. that an official stamp has been obtained if a parent is claiming social disadvantage. If the form is not certified by the Social Security Agency ask the parent to take it back to the Social Security Agency for verification.
The onus is on parents to ensure that the stamped application form is submitted to the first preference setting by 12 noon on Wednesday 23 January 2008.

3. Late Applications

- 3.1 Punctual applications are those received by 12 noon on Wednesday 23 January 2008. Any applications received after 12 noon on 23 January 2008 to 18 April 2008 inclusive should be marked ‘late’. The Department of Education have stated that in considering applications pre-school providers should give priority to all children in their final pre-school year. Consequently the following order of priority will apply in considering the allocation of places available:
 - a. Punctual applications for children in their final pre-school year;
 - b. Late applications for children in their final pre-school year;
 - c. Punctual applications for children in their penultimate pre-school year (nursery schools only);
 - d. Late applications for children in their penultimate pre-school year (nursery schools only).
- 3.2 The procedure for late applications continues at second and subsequent preference stages.
- 3.3 Applications received after 18 April 2008 should not be processed but are to be held by the receiving provider to be considered only if a place is available after 2 May 2008. If an application form is sent into the Board after 18 April 2008 then it will be sent to the provider to be held for consideration.

If your setting is undersubscribed the child can be accepted, if oversubscribed then he/she can only be considered if a vacancy arises (See Section D).

Step 4 of the Plan of Action contained in the guidance on Duty to Verify issued by the Department of Education to schools and other providers states that *‘Applications ultimately not supported by the required verifying documents should, in line with a pre-school’s obligation to apply its admissions criteria correctly, not be considered for admission before those that are so supported’.*

4. Consideration of Applications by the Board of Governors/Management Committee

Pre-school providers should consider all applications for admission in accordance with the timetable issued by the Department of Education in November 2007. Applications (at first and subsequent preference stages) should be considered in relation to the criteria published in the Board's Pre-School Information Booklets and the number of children which you can admit.

4.1 First Preference Stage

a. Children Selected for Admission in Accordance with the Criteria

You should retain the application forms of all those children who are **provisionally** being offered a place at this stage and complete **(Form OE/PRSEA1 2008)** giving details of all pre-school children which the setting has provisionally '**selected**'. Insert surname, forename, gender, date of birth, address, postcode and indicate under which criterion each child is being selected. The form should be returned to the Pupil and Parent Unit **no later** than Friday 1 February 2008.

Regardless of whether your setting has allocated all its places or not, parents should not be advised either verbally or in writing at this time that their child has been provisionally offered a place as this may change at second or subsequent preference stages.

b. Children Not Selected for Admission

Some children may not be offered a place, either because you have already reached your admissions number/number of funded places allocated or because the applicants do not meet your admissions criteria. For these children the application forms, birth certificates and original verifying documents should be returned to the Pupil and Parent Unit by **Friday 1 February 2008**. These will be forwarded to the next preference provider for consideration. You may wish to consider sending these to the Board by recorded delivery to minimise the risk of loss of personal data. You are advised to keep a copy for your own reference.

FORM OE/PRSENA1 2008 should be completed giving details of the children which your setting is unable to select. Insert surname, forename, gender, date of birth, address, and postcode and indicate under which criterion the child has **not** been selected.

Again parents should not be advised either verbally or in writing at this time that their child has not been offered a place as the child may be offered a place by the second or subsequent preference provider.

c. Nursery Schools with dual pattern of attendance

Settings with full-time and part-time places – Where a parent has nominated the setting at 1st and 2nd preference (eg 1st preference – FT, 2nd preference – PT) and the applicant is not accepted at 1st preference you should retain the application for consideration at second preference stage.

Record the name on form OE/PRSENA1 2008 and indicate that the application is **HELD** – This will then be considered with any further 2nd preferences that will be forwarded to you by the Pupil and Parent Unit.

d. Documentation

I would ask you to ensure that all details entered on the forms are completed for each child in accordance with the 'Notes of Guidance on Recording Pupil Details in School and Education and Library Board Records' which were issued with Board Circular 2007/84 on 5 June 2007.

e. Summary Sheet at First Preference Stage

At the end of the first preference stage, you should complete the Summary Sheet at First Preference Stage Form OE/PRSE1 2008. The form should be returned to the Pupil and Parent Unit no later than **Friday 1 February 2008**.

4.2 Second Preference Stage

- a. Board receives the application forms (and any original documentation which was attached) for those children not being selected, from first preference settings (by Friday 1 February 2008).
- b. Board forwards application forms and any attached documents along with the pre-printed form OE/PRSEFP 2008 for completion to second preference providers. If you would like this pre-printed form e-mailed to you please contact Carol Straghan or Eithne McArdle at the e-mail addresses listed on the covering letter to advise them of this.

Where a parent has not listed a second preference, the board will retain the application form in order to advise the parent on 2 May 2008 that their child has not been offered a pre-school place. Please note that unlike primary applications (where a child is of compulsory school age) the board will not be seeking additional preferences for pre-school settings).

- c. Board of Governors/Management Committee reapplies criteria to **all** children. Some children who were provisionally selected for admission at first preference stage may be displaced at this stage. Remember – a second or further preference can displace a provisionally accepted first preference if the application meets a higher statutory criterion or meets the same statutory criterion but meets a higher sub-criterion as determined by the provider.
- d. The pre-printed form - Form OE/PRSEFP 2008 is completed to notify the Board as to which children are selected or not selected for admission at 2nd preference stage (by Friday 15 February 2008). Again, I would emphasise that parents should **not** be advised whether or not their child is being offered a place.
- e. Where a child in **not selected** the application form(s) should be returned to the Board (as at 4.1 b).

- f. Children provisionally selected at first preference and who are displaced should be recorded on the bottom of Form OE/PRSEFP 2008 and the original application forms returned to the Board.

4.3 Third and subsequent Preference Stages

The procedures are reapplied as in paragraph 4.2. This clearing house continues for all applications received up to and including 18 April 2008 until the child is selected by a provider named on the form or all preferences named have '**not selected**' the child.

4.4 Changes of Preferences

Changes of preferences are only processed by the Pupil and Parent Unit where there are 'exceptional circumstances' eg moving area. In all other cases the parent must withdraw the original application and submit a new application (this would be treated as a late application). **Friday 18 April 2008** is the final date by which change of preferences in exceptional circumstances or new applications will be accepted or by which new/additional information relating to the admissions criteria can be submitted.

4.5 Adherence to Timescale

The success of the procedure depends on strict adherence to the return dates specified at each preference stage. It is advisable to arrange the dates of Board of Governors/Management Committee meetings now to comply with the timescale. If it is not possible to convene the necessary meetings arrangements should be made to delegate the responsibility for considering applications to ensure that deadlines are met. Where necessary, this delegation should be recorded in the minutes of the Board of Governors or the Management Committee.

B. PRE-SCHOOL STATIONERY

A supply of the following forms is enclosed:

Title	Form Reference
Summary Sheet at First Preference Stage (Only one form as applicable to your setting)	OE/PRSE1 (FT) OE/PRSE1 (PT) OE/PRSE1 (MP)
Report on First Preference Applications - Selected	OE/PRSEA1 2008
Report on First Preference Applications – Not Selected	OE/PRSENA1 2008
Letter re Placed Child (issued by Provider) as applicable to your setting - Full-time place Part-time morning place: Nursery schools/units Part-time afternoon place: Nursery schools/units Part-time place: Other providers	Dated 2 May 2008 PLFT PLPTAM PLPTPM PLPT(PG)
Letter re Unplaced Child (issued by SELB and enclosed for information only)	Dated 2 May 2008 UP
Letter re Unplaced Child (applications received after 18 April 2008)	Dated 2 May 2008

C. EXEMPLAR LETTER(S) FOR NOTIFYING PARENTS THAT THEIR CHILD IS BEING OFFERED A FUNDED PLACE.

- 1.1 On and **not** before **Friday 2 May 2008** providers will issue letters to parents of children accepted. A sample '**Notification of placement letter**' is attached according to the type of provision offered. No information should be removed from the sample letter, but it may be amended to include details of your localised induction arrangements. Parents **SHOULD NOT** be informed of their children's placement **before 2 May 2008**.

Whilst the right of appeal only exists in relation to nursery schools/units, the paragraph must still be included in letters issued by voluntary or private providers to parents in order that they are aware of their right of appeal if their child was not offered a place by a nursery school or nursery unit that was listed as a higher preference.

- 1.2 The template has been designed to allow you to write in details if you do not have easy access to computers or photocopiers. The template can also be e-mailed on request.
- 1.3 The template includes a return slip for the parent to confirm to the school/playgroup, acceptance of the place offered. Whilst this acceptance is not stipulated in the Department of Education Circular, the return date on the reply (ie Friday 9 May 2008) will allow providers to have confirmation of acceptance of a place. You are advised not to reallocate a place unless written confirmation of non acceptance has been received from parents.
- 1.4 The board will write to the parents of any child who applied for a pre-school place but was **not** selected for admission by **any** provider and whose application was submitted by 18 April 2008.

Return of Verifying Documents

- 1.1 Any original verifying documents should be returned at the close of the procedure, however if your school is oversubscribed copies of all application forms and any original documents which were attached should be retained in case they are required for an appeal.
- 1.2 If a parent requires an original verifying document to be returned during the procedure, she/he should be advised to contact the Pupil and Parent Unit.
- 1.3 The Pupil and Parent Unit will return verifying documents to the parents of unplaced children.

D. EXEMPLAR LETTERS FOR NOTIFYING PARENTS OF THE OUTCOME OF APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED AFTER 18 APRIL 2008

On and not before Friday 2 May 2008 providers will issue letters to parents of children whose applications were submitted after 18 April 2008 and whose applications are being held for consideration after 2 May 2008. This letter is only to be used by oversubscribed providers where an application is received after 18 April 2008.

The application form, birth certificate and any verifying documents should be enclosed with this letter which advises the parent to contact the Board for information on pre-school settings that still have vacant places. A copy of the form and attachments should be taken so that it can be considered in the event of future vacancies. Parents who submit an application after 18 April 2008 have been advised in the pre-school booklet to contact the provider after 2 May 2008 to determine if a place exists as the clearing house system does not operate after this date.

If you are undersubscribed at 2 May 2008 this letter is not applicable as the late applicant can be offered a place and advised of such by using the relevant placed letter which should be issued with all other placement letters on 2 May 2008.

E. NOTIFICATION OF ADMISSION OF CHILDREN TO RECEPTION CLASSES

In those areas where reception classes are still available in primary schools parents have a right to make application on behalf of their children to both reception and nursery classes. If both applications are successful it is for the parent to decide which place to accept. This year the date for notifying parents of the outcome of applications for reception places is 4 April 2008.

F. RECORDS OF PROCEEDINGS

Parents dissatisfied with the decision of a Board of Governors in the selection of children have the right to appeal to an independent tribunal, therefore it is essential that Governors keep a detailed record of proceedings regarding the selection of children for admission (it is useful to keep a copy of unsuccessful application forms). There remains no right of appeal against voluntary/private providers. Parents who have been unsuccessful in obtaining a playgroup or private day nursery place for their child will be advised to contact the provider to discuss the reason for this.

G. CONTACTS

For administration purposes routine enquiries will be dealt with on a geographical basis as follows:

- a. Armagh, Banbridge, Craigavon – Carol (tel 028 3751 2520 or email carol.straghan@selb.org).
- b. Cookstown, Dungannon, Newry and Mourne – Eithne (tel 028 3751 2526 or email eithne.mcardle@selb.org).

**PREFERENCE BASED PRE-SCHOOL ADMISSIONS 2008/2009 SCHOOL YEAR
SUMMARY SHEET AT FIRST PREFERENCE STAGE**

NAME OF PROVIDER: _____ **DENI REF NO:** _____

Admission Number/ Number of Funded Places **Part-Time**

APPLICATIONS – PART-TIME (INCLUDES MORNING AND AFTERNOON)

1	Number of 1 st preference applications received –	Grand TOTAL
	- final _____	
	- penultimate _____	<input type="text"/>
2	Number of children provisionally selected at first preference stage as listed on Form OE/PRSEA1 2008.	<input type="text"/>
3	Number of places still available.	<input type="text"/>
4	Number of children not selected and application forms returned to the board as listed on Form OE/PRSENA1 2008	Grand Total
	- final _____	
	- penultimate _____	<input type="text"/>

Signed (for Board of Governors/Management Committee)

Date

TO BE RETURNED TO THE PUPIL AND PARENT UNIT, NO LATER THAN FRIDAY 1 FEBRUARY 2008.

2 May 2008

Parent/Guardian of:

Dear Parent/Guardian

Application to Pre-School Education - September 2008

I write to advise you that your preferred pre-school provider(s) has/have been unable to select your child for admission for a funded place for the 2008/2009 school year.

Each of the providers listed on your child's application form received more applications for funded places than their admissions number and consequently had to apply their admissions criteria to select children.

If you had nominated either a nursery school or a nursery unit on your child's application form there is provision for appeal against the decision(s) of the Board(s) of Governors of the school(s) in not selecting your child. An appeal may only be made on the grounds that the Board of Governors did not apply or did not correctly apply its criteria for selecting pupils for admission to the school(s), in deciding not to admit your child. You may wish to contact the nursery school or nursery unit which has not selected your child for admission to discuss the reason why he/she was not offered a place to assist you in deciding whether to appeal the decision.

If you still wish to appeal you must write to The Clerk of the Appeal Tribunal (Nursery), Southern Education and Library Board, 3 Charlemont Place, The Mall, ARMAGH, BT61 9AX.

Your intention to appeal must be received in writing by **4.00 pm on Wednesday 14 May 2008**. Please give your child's name, address, date of birth and name of nursery school/unit you wish to appeal against. If you do not receive an official appeal form within 7 working days please contact the Pupil and Parent Unit, Southern Education and Library Board, 3 Charlemont Place, The Mall, ARMAGH, BT61 9AX (028 3751 2526 or 028 3751 2520).

An Appeals Tribunal cannot uphold an appeal on any grounds other than those related to a school's admissions criteria. **It should be noted there is no right of appeal where a parent has indicated that they would prefer a morning part-time place but an afternoon place has been offered (or vice versa). There is also no right of appeal against a decision by a voluntary or private provider (playgroup) not to admit your child. Parents who have been unsuccessful in obtaining a playgroup or private day nursery place for their child should contact the provider to discuss the reason for this.**

A list of pre-school providers who, according to our records, may still have funded places is enclosed for your information. If you want to have your child considered for one of these places, please contact the provider where funded places remain. Your original application form (and other documents where applicable) is enclosed to give to the provider where funded places remain. If you wish you may also contact any private or voluntary provider of your choice directly with regard to a fee-paying place for your child.

Yours faithfully

Mairead Maguire (Mrs)
Head of the Pupil and Parent Unit
Direct Line (028 3751 2411)
MM/sm
Encs

LETTER – UNPLACED PRE-SCHOOL CHILD AFTER 18 April 2008

2 May 2008

Parent/Guardian of:

Dear Parent/Guardian

Application to Pre-School Education - September 2008

I refer to your application, which was received after the deadline for processing applications (ie 18 April 2008) and regret to inform you that as this setting is fully subscribed the Board of Governors /Management Committee was unable to consider your application for a pre-school place in September 2008.

I enclose your application form (and other documents where applicable) and would advise you to contact the Pupil and Parent Unit (Tel No: 028 37512520 or 028 37 512526) for information on any pre-school settings that still have vacant places.

I would reassure you that your child's name will remain on our waiting list and will be considered for a place should a vacancy occur.

I regret I cannot give a more favourable reply.

Yours faithfully

Principal/Playgroup Leader/Manager

Encs

