

Education, Children and Families Committee

10am, Tuesday, 11 December 2012

Primary School Deferrals

Item number	8.1
Report number	
Wards	All

Links

Coalition pledges	P5
Council outcomes	CO1
Single Outcome Agreement	SO3

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Executive summary

Primary School Deferrals – Update

Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide an up-date to the Education Children and Family Committee on deferring children's entry into P1 and is a follow up from the report presented to Education, Children and Families Committee in November 2011 entitled "Getting the Best Start to Positive Destinations."

This report should be taken in the context of this previous report which gives an historical perspective on the authority's work in this area.

Recommendations

The committee is recommended to:

1. Commend the research and implementation programme.

Measures of success

The work with parents and staff to discuss the implications of deferred entry has:

- Ensured that we are making more appropriate use of deferrals
- Ensured that the figures for Edinburgh are more in line with figures across Scotland
- Ensured that there is effective transition from nursery to Primary 1
- Enabled us to redirect existing resources to priority needs and support effective transitions

Financial impact

This initiative has enabled us to make more efficient use of resources by

- Ensuring that appropriate use of deferred entry to primary 1 is in place across the authority
- Enabling us to make use of existing resources more efficiently at a time when there is an increase in the pre- school population

Equalities impact

There are considered to be no infringement to the rights of the child with this initiative. Where the benefits of another year in nursery have been fully identified by staff and discussed with parents, funding for an additional year in nursery will still be available. Children who are five between the January and March in the year following their entry to primary one have an automatic right to funding for another year in nursery if requested.

The initiative has promoted the benefits of identifying early any concerns about a child's progress and supporting transition to primary 1.

The initiative reduces the risk of young people reaching statutory school leaving age before completing their education

By ensuring that we are selective in our use of deferrals we are able to ensure that, at a time of increasing demand on pre school places, more children can receive their entitlement to pre school education.

Sustainability impact

There are no adverse economic, social and environmental impacts from this report.

Consultation and engagement

Throughout 2011 and 2012 roadshows have taken place across the city to explore the topic of deferred entry. These have been well attended by staff and parents. Evaluation data from parents attending the roadshows suggests that they welcomed the opportunity to discuss the issue with council staff. The roadshows for 2012 have just been completed and evaluations will be analysed to plan future delivery.

Briefings on the research have also been given to head teachers and the managers of partner provider nurseries.

A small case study took place this year to follow up children where their parents had applied for funding for another year in nursery and this had been turned down.

Background reading / external references

["Getting the Best Start Towards Positive Destinations" Education, Children and Families Report, 15 November 2011 Item 11](#)

Primary School Deferrals - Update

1. Background

- 1.1 If a child is not yet aged 5 at the start of a school session their parent has a right to delay their entry into primary school until the following session after they have turned 5. If a child's birthday is between the start of January and the end of February the council automatically funds the child's additional year in nursery (automatic deferral). If a child's birthday is between mid August (the start of the school session) and the end of December the funding for an additional year in nursery is provided at the discretion of the council (discretionary deferral). If an application for discretionary deferral is turned down by the council the parent still has an option to fund the child's additional year in nursery themselves.
- 1.2 From 2005/6 to 2009/10 Edinburgh had the highest number of children in receipt of a deferred entry to primary 1. This figure was 3 times higher than figures for authorities of a similar size and the figure was rising.
- 1.3 In 2009 a working group was formed to review the research on this issue, the procedures and information materials available for parents and staff.

2. Main report

- 2.1 Following a series of roadshows in 2010-2011 in the 5 neighbourhood areas to share the research on deferred entry, and a revision to the procedure for application, there was a 37% reduction in applications for discretionary deferrals. In 2011-12 there was a further 20% reduction in applications following further road shows and sharing of information
- 2.2 The reduction in the number of deferrals in the last 2 years has enabled us to meet an increasing demand for pre school places across the city and began to release resources to enable more development and support work to take place. For example, larger nursery classes have been allocated an additional resource to support work with parents and transitions.
- 2.3 Psychological Services undertook research to follow up children where an application for funding for an additional year in nursery had been unsuccessful. This was a small scale study to find out how they had managed the transition to P1. On settling in to P1, most of the children were reported to be doing well academically and socially and not requiring any additional support. One third of the parents reported that moving to P1 was the correct decision in hindsight for their child. The remainder were as yet undecided. Where the transition was

carefully supported by nursery and P1 staff, this was appreciated by parents and we have fed this back to staff.

- 2.4 New guidance on supporting effective transition in early years has been produced and shared with all relevant settings and at key events such as the early years conference. The guidance is in line with the Curriculum for Excellence and the early level.
- 2.5 At recent briefings, schools, nurseries and parents are being encouraged to adopt an “interactionist” approach when looking at the issue of “readiness” for school. In this approach everyone should identify where a child is in their learning and make adjustments to support them in taking next steps. This is also in keeping with current research and the principles of Curriculum for Excellence.

3. Recommendations

The committee is recommended to:

- 3.1 Commend the research and implementation programme.

Gillian Tee

Director of Children and Families

Links

Coalition pledges	P5: Seek to ensure the smooth introduction of the Curriculum for Excellence and that management structures within our schools support the new curriculum
Council outcomes	CO1: Our children have the best start in life, are able to make and sustain relationships and are ready to succeed
Single Outcome Agreement	SO3: Edinburgh’s children and young people enjoy their childhood and fulfil their potential
Appendices	