

Admissions in Mainstream Schools

Implementation date – 11 August 2025

Control schedule

Version control

Approved by		Education, Children and Families Committee	
Version	Date	Author	Comment
1.0	December 2017	Maria Plant	
2.0	15 December 2020	Arran Finlay	
3.0	25 March 2025	Arran Finlay	
Senior Responsible Officer		Jackie Reid	
Author		Arran Finlay, Senior Education Officer	
Scheduled for review		September 2027 for August 2028 implementation	

Subsequent committee decisions affecting this policy

Date	Committee	Link to report	Link to minute

Admission in Mainstream Schools

The title should be concise and refer to the substance of the policy. This will assist users in locating and accessing the policy via the Council Policy Register.

Policy statement

The policy document provides a formal framework for the admissions to mainstream schools.

The policy and associated procedure document will ensure consistency across all schools.

Scope

This policy covers the admission of pupils to **all stages** in mainstream schools, and in particular to those pupils in P1 and S1 in August of any school year.

Definitions

Reserved places: Places reserved for children and young people moving into the school catchment through the academic session.

R.C. school: Roman Catholic school.

School Catchment: An area from which children and young people are eligible to attend a local school. This area is based on the child's home address.

Composite Class: A class in which there are pupils at more than one stage of the primary school

Team Teaching: Team Teaching is where two teachers teach a class that has more than the maximum number of pupils for that particular stage, for example if the Council place more than 25 children in a P1 class there will be two teachers

Mainstream Schools: Schools which meet the needs of the majority of pupils and are non specialist provisions

Placing Request: A request for a placement in a school

Non-Catchment Placing Request: A request for a placement in a school which is not the catchment school for the address of the individual

Department: Children, Education, and Justice Services Department

Exceptional: a pupil whose circumstances are deemed exceptional by the Committee on Pupil/Student Support

Intake Limit: the number of pupils to be admitted into a year group as decided by the Department

In time Catchment Application/Non-Catchment Placing Request – applications received by 24th December each year.

Allocation of Placements

Key principles applied by the Council to the provision of school places:

- Children and young people are admitted to schools in the areas where they stay. These are known as the catchment areas for the school. There are separate catchment boundaries for RC and non-denominational schools at both primary and secondary level, and pupils have the option of attending either of their catchment schools, subject to availability of places, and in the case of Roman Catholic schools, a Roman Catholic baptismal certificate.
- Gaelic medium education (GME) is also available. All primary pupils are eligible to apply for a place at Bun-sgoil Taobh Na Pairce. No experience of Gaelic is expected for enrolment in P1, however an assessment of Gaelic language proficiency is required for entry into other year groups. Entry to the Gaelic Medium Education at James Gillespie's High School is only available to pupils who have attended Bun-sgoil Taobh Na Pairce or have been assessed as being proficient in Gaelic language.
- In areas of the city, for example new building developments, which currently fall outside existing catchment areas, the Council will identify an 'appropriate school' for pupils living in those areas. This is normally based on distance and geography.
- Pupils living in the City of Edinburgh Council area have priority for non-catchment places, over pupils living in other local authority areas.
- The Council aims to provide places for P1 pupils at their catchment school if they are living in a property in the catchment area and register online by 24th December of the year preceding that in which they will start in P1.
- The Council aims to provide places for S1 pupils at their catchment school if they are living in a property in the catchment area by 24th December of the year preceding that in which they will start in S1. They are automatically registered based on the address held by the primary school.
- If families move into a new catchment area after 24th December, then their application for a place, for P1 or S1, in a school will be counted as a late application. Whilst we would hope there is a new catchment space available, if not, then the local authority will allocate a space in a nearby school. The child would also be added to the catchment school waiting list.
- If you move out of your catchment area after 24th December before the start of term, then the P1 or S1 place will be withdrawn. Whilst we would hope there is a new catchment space available, if not, then the local authority will allocate a space in a nearby school.
- If there are P1 or S1 places available after catchment demand is met placing requests for non-catchment pupils will be allocated.
- Entitlement to a place in a school is based upon home address and not on attendance at early years or primary establishments.

- If your child is in P7 and attending an independent school in the City of Edinburgh Council area, you need to [make a placing request](#).

4.3 Class Sizes and Organisation

The council meets the legislation on class sizes, in line with the Education (Lower Primary Class Sizes) (Scotland) Regulations 1999 and through national agreement. This means a class size maximum of:

P1	25 pupils
P2/P3	30 pupils
P4 – P7	33 pupils

In secondary schools practical class sizes (**as set in SNCT guidelines**) are a maximum of 20, non practical class are a maximum of 33 in S1 and S2 and 30 in S3 – S6.

The most efficient arrangement of class size and provision of teaching staff in P1 and S1 for each new session is sought for each school after taking account of demand for catchment places in non-denominational schools and of demand from pupils who are baptised Roman Catholic in RC schools.

P1 intake limits, classroom size restrictions and limits on the overall pupil numbers will be applied where necessary to assist in managing school provision. Additional classes are not normally created specifically to cater for non-catchment placing requests. This includes situations where granting requests in one year would result in the need for additional classes at other year stages.

4.4 Oversubscribed Roman Catholic Schools

Where catchment applications for denominational schools exceed the available school capacity, or would cause accommodation issues at a future stage, priority will be given to baptised Roman Catholic pupils for P1 and S1. Additional staff will not normally be employed to support a P1 intake greater than that required to meet the RC baptised catchment demand unless by doing so resolves potential accommodation issues at another school.

Where a Roman Catholic school is oversubscribed, the following actions will be taken for P1 and S1:

- Priority will be given to catchment Baptised Roman Catholics (BRC) in allocating places.
- If there are insufficient places for all catchment BRC then BRC may be prioritised into other RC schools.
- Non BRC, or BRC who do not obtain a place at their catchment RC school and who choose not to be prioritised into another RC school, would be given places at their non-denominational catchment school.

4.5 Oversubscribed Non-Denominational Schools

At times when there are oversubscribed non-denominational schools the decision may be made to prioritise placing requests out of the school.

4.6 Reserved Places

- One place per class will be reserved at the discretion of the council for pupils moving into a school catchment in each class in primary school and two places reserved for each team-teaching class where possible.
- In secondary schools one reserved place at the discretion of the council for every 40 incoming catchment pupils will be kept at each year stage where possible.
- In some areas of the city new housing developments mean that there is the potential for higher-than-normal movement into catchment areas. Where it is possible to do so, in these areas additional places may be reserved in each class to try and ensure that pupils moving into the area can obtain a place at their catchment school.
- Where possible a reserved place shall be maintained until a child moves into the catchment. Where this happens, the reserved place is given to the child and is no longer available. If placing requests appeals are granted either by the Appeal Committee or a Sheriff this may result in fewer reserved places being available due to the increased class size.
- For families already living within a catchment area, a place may be reserved for 6 school weeks, to allow time for the pupil to transfer between schools. Places cannot be held for non-catchment pupils.
- Available catchment places can be held **for up to 18 school weeks/or at the discretion of the council**, for children of serving members of the Armed Forces, who have proof that they are being posted to Edinburgh. (Check for Jackie)

4.7 Team Teaching and Composite Classes

Team teaching and composite class are part of the organisation in many primary schools.

Arrangements in primary schools may be implemented where catchment numbers are expected to exceed capacity based on P1 class sizes of 25. This normally involves raising the P1 intake to multiples of 30 to meet the class size 30 at P2 and P3. Team teaching classes may be organised at other stages in primary schools.

Regardless of the type of class, the same selection criteria must be used for all classes in each school. Head Teachers will use a range of criteria. The selection criteria include:

- Meeting learners needs
- Age (stage appropriate)

- Friendships
- Gender balance
- Exceptional circumstances

Not all the above criteria need to be used but more than one criterion must be used. The specific criteria chosen will vary across schools, and professional judgment will be used to best meet the needs of learners in individual schools. More information held in the “**Class Organisation in Primary Schools**” procedure.

4.8 Academies

We currently have Academies for Football, Dance and Music in some of our schools. Places are held for each of these academies.

Applications are made direct to the Academies.

Implementation

The policy will be implemented from 11th August 2025. The policy will be shared on the City of Edinburgh Council website. The School Handbook will be updated to reflect the new policy. The policy and procedure will be reviewed in September 2027 for August 2028 implementation.

Roles and Responsibilities

The City of Edinburgh Council’s Service Director for Education has overall responsibility for this policy.

The P1/S1 Intakes Advisory Group is formed from relevant council teams annually to determine intake limits for each school and advise the Committee on Pupil/Student Support.

The City of Edinburgh Council’s Customer Transactions Team are responsible for the day-to-day administration of the procedure for P1 and S1 and advising parents of policy. The responsibility will transfer to Headteachers at the start of session.

Headteachers are responsible for advising parents of the policy and the administration of other stages.

The Council delegates to Children, Education and Justice Services, the function of managing the provision of school places using principles and practices that are in line with the [Education \(Scotland\) Act 1980](#) and other relevant legislation.

Related documents

- [Education \[Scotland\] Act 1980](#)
- [The Education \[Appeal Committee Procedures\] \[Scotland\] Amendment Regulations 2006](#)
- [The Education \[Lower Primary Class Sizes \[Scotland\] Regulations 1999](#)
- [The Education \(Lower Primary Class Sizes\) \(Scotland\) Amendment Regulations 2010](#)
- [Organising Classes in Primary Schools](#)
- <https://www.armedforcescovenant.gov.uk/about-the-covenant/>

Integrated impact assessment

All new and revised policies must be subject to an integrated impact assessment to ensure that the Council is compliant with legislation.

The impact is

- Maintained catchment reserved places for Secondary pupils, at discretion of Education department
- Streamlined gathering of P1 enrolment information – now online application

For further information: <https://orb.edinburgh.gov.uk/equalities/equalities-1/2?documentId=463&categoryId=200238>

Risk assessment

The risks associated with policy non-compliance must be assessed and detailed in this section.

- If policy and procedure is not followed in a timely manner, there is a risk of pupils being out of education for a longer period of time than is necessary.

Review

September 2027 for August 2028 implementation.