

REPORT TO: DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL EDUCATION COMMITTEE–
JANUARY 21st 2002

REPORT ON: Provision of Pre School Education Services for Children Deferring Entry to Primary One.

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

REPORT NO: 67-2002

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 This Report sets out proposals for managing provision of pre school education services for children seeking deferred entry to Primary One and seeks approval to make changes to the Nursery Admissions Policy to take account of children deferring entry to primary one.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Committee notes the contents of this Report and:

2.1 Approves proposals to support consistent and effective decision making about additional pre school services for children deferring entry to Primary One

Approves the outlined arrangements for the management of requests for deferrals

Approves the changes to the Nursery Admissions Policy to take account of the management of requests for deferrals

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 The funding of deferred places is included in the pre-school grant made to local authorities for the provision of pre school places.

4.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Nil

5.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

5.1 These proposals will support a fair and equitable decision making process.

6.0 BACKGROUND

6.1 Under current legislation in Scotland, parents/carers of children aged between 4½ and 5 at the start of the school session (those with September to February birthdays) have a choice about enrolling their child for primary school. Children can start school before they are five or can defer their start until the following August.

6.2 Children whose parents/carers wish to defer their child's entry to primary school have not however been entitled to pre-school education provision. Arrangements for placing children deferring entry to primary school in pre-school education facilities have been entirely at the discretion of local

authorities under the terms of the pre-school grant programme. This has resulted in inconsistencies across Scotland with some Councils offering pre-school places to all children deferring primary school entry and others only offering places to children who meet specific criteria.

6.3 A National Deferrals Working Group was set up by the Scottish Executive in July 2000 to report on education provision for children born between September and February.

6.4 This Group made five key recommendations to the Depute Minister for Education. These were:

1. Local Authorities should be placed under a duty to secure additional pre-school education for pre-school children aged 3 or older whose entry into primary school is deferred, where those children have birth dates between 1 January and 28 February
2. Where children have birth dates from September- December, local authorities should have discretion over whether to secure additional pre-school education where their entry into primary school is deferred
3. Local authorities should, collectively (under the aegis of CoSLA or ADES) develop common guidance on the criteria by which the discretion noted in point 2 should be exercised
4. Local authorities, in consultation with partner organisations, should seek to enhance the quality of information available to parents/carers considering when to begin their children's attendance at primary school. A principal aim would be to give parents/carers a clear insight into the nature of primary school education, and its ability to address a range of needs
5. The Scottish Executive should collect information on the numbers of requests for deferral in each local authority area, and the number granted, from school year 2000- 2001 onwards

7.0 CURRENT SITUATION

7.1 In 2001, all children resident in Dundee, deferring entry to Primary One and seeking additional pre school education services were placed. A total of 180 children deferring Primary One entry took up pre school places. 140 of these children had January and February birthdays whilst the remaining 40 had birthdays between September and December. This represented 10% of the total population of pre school children.

8.0 PROPOSAL

It is proposed to produce detailed guidance to schools and to parents to ensure that decisions about additional pre school education provision for children deferring entry to Primary One take full account of the best interests of each child. This will also support the authority in exercising its discretion in relation to provision of services for children with September- December birthdays. Copies of this guidance are attached to this Report (see Appendix 1 and 2).

It is recognised that parents have the best knowledge of their own child. This is supported by early years staff who work with parents to build up a detailed picture of each child's learning and development across the pre school curriculum. Early years staff therefore have an important role in supporting parents in making the best decision for their child, in explaining the factors which may be considered and discussing the concerns and wishes of the parents.

For this reason, it is anticipated that decisions about provision for children will be made through a process of dialogue between parents and staff. This process will be supported by central guidance and criteria. Places in nursery will be available to children with January and February birthdays who wish to exercise their right to defer their child's entry to school.

For children born between September and December, the local authority has discretion over provision. If there is agreement between parents and staff that deferral is in the best interests of the child, then a nursery place will be made available. It is anticipated that the majority of decisions will be agreed in

this way. Where there is not agreement, a central Pre School Admissions Panel will consider the case and make a recommendation about provision to the Director of Education.

This will mean that there is common approach taken to disputed cases, which are likely to be a small minority only. The Panel will have representation from the Education Department, Nursery and Primary Schools and Dundee Educational Psychology Department who will be able to seek additional assessment information where necessary.

In order to accommodate the above arrangements the Nursery Admissions Policy has been updated. This will mean that children with January and February birthdays will have priority for placing alongside all other age eligible children.

9.0 CONSULTATION

9.1 This report has been the subject of consultation with the Directors of Social Work, Finance, Support Services and with Head Teachers of Nursery and Primary Schools.

10.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information), were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above Report.

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Director of Education

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Date

APPENDIX 1

DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

DEFERRED ENTRY TO PRIMARY ONE

INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE TO NURSERY AND PRIMARY HEADTEACHERS

Introduction

1.1 These notes accompany the Draft Guidance prepared by the Association of Directors of Education Pre Fives Sub Group, to support local authorities in managing deferrals.

1.2 In Dundee decisions about deferral will be made by parents and early years staff in partnership. The key role of the early years professional, based on their expert knowledge of the child, will be to provide, clear, relevant and consistent advice to parents. This advice should be based on the individual profile kept to track each pre school child's learning and development over time. In addition the criteria included in Appendix 1 of these notes should be used to inform the process.

1.3 The key aims of this process are to ensure that decisions are:

Centred on the best interests of the child
Made in full collaboration with parents
Made consistently and fairly across the City

2.0 Children who are four in January and February 2002

2.1 These children have a right to enrol for school and we would continue to expect that the majority of children in this age group would begin their primary schooling in August 2002.

2.2 However there is now an entitlement for children in this age group to receive funded pre school provision where parents decide to defer primary school entry. For this reason where it is clear that the parental wish is to defer entry to school, additional funded pre school services will be offered. However it is important that parents are well informed and supported in making this decision.

2.3 For children in this category the Application Form for Additional Nursery Services (Form ANS) should be completed and a copy signed by both parents and nursery/ primary head sent into the Early Years and Childcare Team.

2.4 Where a child in this category is not currently attending a pre school provision, it is important that the parent can access advice from a nursery or primary school in their area.

3.0 Children who were four between September and December 2001

3.1 Once again these children have the right to start school in August 2002 or to defer entry until August 2003. However if parents of children in this age group decide to defer their child's entry to school, the provision of additional pre school

services is at the discretion of the local authority. For this reason it is vital to ensure that a consistent and fair decision making process is in operation across the City.

3.2 The role of the early years staff is to provide high quality, well informed information to parents to ensure that they have as much information as possible on which to base their decision.

3.3 Parents should complete the Application Form for Additional Nursery Services (Form ANS) in which the school will be asked to prioritise the child's need for an additional pre school service in discussion with parents. Prioritising should take account of the child's pre school profile, the professional knowledge of the child and the parent's perspectives and views. Priority 1 should only be given to children who have clearly identified special educational needs.

3.4 Once the prioritising has been done both the parents and the head teacher of the nursery/ primary school should sign the form. A copy must then be sent into the Early Years and Childcare Team so that demand levels can be calculated.

3.5 Where there is not agreement between the child's parents and early years staff or where the child's need for additional pre school services is seen as low (Priority 3), a central Pre School Admissions Panel will consider individual cases and make a recommendation to the Director of Education. For these cases the child's Profile will be considered and where necessary additional information will be sought. This Panel will also monitor the demand for deferrals from across the City in order to identify trends and patterns.

4.0 The Central Pre School Admissions Panel

4.1 This Panel will be chaired by the Early Years and Childcare Officer and will include representation from nursery and primary schools, Dundee Educational Psychology Service and the Pre School Home Visiting Service.

4.2 The panel will consider individual applications for additional pre school provision for children with September to December birthdays where there is not agreement between parents and early years staff. It is anticipated that the majority of decisions will be agreed at school level and that the Panel will consider only a minority of cases. The Child's Individual Pre School Profile will be used as a mechanism to support the Panel's recommendations. Approval for the Panel's recommendations will sought from the Director of Education.

4.3 The panel will also monitor the management of the process across the City particularly to ensure consistency of approach.

5.0 Guidance for Parents

5.1 A new fact sheet has been produced to provide information to parents about how deferrals will be managed. This should be issued to all parents wishing to defer their child's school entry.

6.0 Application Form for Additional Nursery Services

6.1 These notes include a re-drafted application form (Appendix 2) for parents seeking deferral. All applications should be recorded on these forms and signed copies should be returned as soon as possible to the Early Years and Childcare Team. The information contained within these forms will be used to calculate levels of demand and to identify potential over demand in any areas.

7.0 Criteria to Inform Decision Making at School Level

7.1 Considerable thought has been given to developing criteria to support school staff in providing advice to parents. The following list covers the broad areas which should be considered and discussed with parents. It is important that where relevant the Child's Profile shows clearly where there are concerns about the child in relation to these criteria. The key factors to consider should focus on the child's:

approach and attitude to learning
 ability to communicate own needs, feelings and ideas
 levels of independence and self help
 emotional and personal development, including self- confidence and esteem
 relationships and friendships with other children and adults

7.2 This list outlines in more detail the areas which should be considered: 3

ability to take responsibility for own learning
 confidence in undertaking new or challenging tasks
 organisational skills
 ability to make choices and express preferences
 preferred learning style and approach and ability to adapt this
 enthusiasm and motivation
 determination and perseverance to a task in the face of challenge
 help seeking strategies
 independence in undertaking tasks
 ability to cope with change and new routines

ability to take part in conversations and discussions within a range of groupings and situations
 ability to make self understood
 ability to listen to and follow instructions

ability to follow routines and boundaries
 expression of personal needs
 emotional resilience
 confidence in expressing ideas and feelings
 ability to negotiate and co-operate
 sensitivity to the needs and feelings of others
 problem solving skills

confidence in managing own personal care
 ability to look after and organise own possessions
 awareness of and responsibility for own safety
 co-ordination and fine motor control

management of feelings and impulses
 ability to care for others

ability to establish relationships and friendships with peers
current peer group relationships and friendships

8.0 Timescales

8.1 Discussions about deferrals should be ongoing with parents. In addition where staff believe that a child may benefit from additional pre school provision, the child's Profile should include information in support of this.

8.2 It is also important that parents are not rushed into making decisions. Children develop rapidly at this stage- the decision about whether to defer school entry should ideally evolve throughout the child's pre school year. For this reason parents should be advised to enrol their child for primary school at the same time as other parents. They should also be reassured that they can withdraw this enrolment if the decision is to return their child to a pre school provision.

8.3 The key points in the decision making process will be as follows:

Enrolment for Nursery Advertisement in the press- **first week of February**

Information and ANS application forms issued to parents

Applications for Deferrals returned to Office **before 15th March 2002**

January/ February decisions **ratified by 26th April 2002**

Places formally allocated to eligible ante and pre school children **26th April 2002**

Straightforward Sept- Dec decisions **ratified by 3rd May 2002**

Panel decisions (for all applications received by 15th March 2002)- **May 31st 2002**

Appendix 2

Pre School Services in Dundee for Children whose Parents wish to Delay Primary School Entry

Guidance for Parents
(For issue after February 6th 2001)

Children who will be 4 years old between 1st September 2001 and 28th February 2002 have the right to start primary school in August 2002. However if you feel that your child may be too young to start school, you can decide to delay your child's start until August 2003.

Children who will be four in January or February 2002

If your child will be 4 in January or February 2002, he/ she is entitled to a funded part time pre school place from August 2002 until June 2003. You can discuss what is the best plan for your child at your nursery. Staff there know your child well and will be able to talk to you about the kinds of things you might find helpful to consider in making this important decision.

If you wish your child to continue in the nursery after the summer you will be asked to complete an application form and return it to your child's nursery. Nursery places will be available for all children in this age group whose parents wish to delay primary school entry.

If you return your application form to the nursery before the end of February 2002, you can expect to be allocated a nursery place at the same time as younger children in the week ending April 26th 2002.

Children who will be four between 1st September and 31st December 2001

If your child will be four between 1st September and 31st December 2001 you have the right to delay your child's start to primary school until August 2003. The Council is committed to providing a part time pre school education place for all children who need it. If you wish your child to continue nursery after the summer you will be asked to complete an application form outlining your reasons for this. You should then discuss this with staff at your child's nursery. Staff will be able to support you in making the best decision for your child.

If there is agreement that an additional pre school year is in the best interests of your child, then an additional funded part time pre school place will be provided. If your application form is returned to the nursery before the end of February 2002, then you can expect to be allocated a pre school place in the week ending May 3rd 2002.

However if there is not agreement that an additional pre school education place is in the best interests of your child, then the head teacher of your child's nursery will ask for your agreement to pass your child's application to the Pre School Admissions Panel. This Panel will be chaired by a Senior Officer of the Council and will consider all the information available and will take account of your views. The Panel may seek additional information about your child in order to ensure that as much information as possible is considered. All information will be confidential. The Director of Education will make a decision after hearing the Panel's recommendations.

If it is agreed that additional pre school provision should be made for your child, then a funded part time place will be allocated in the week ending 24th May 2002.

If it is not agreed that additional pre school provision should be made then you will have the choice to enrol your child for primary school or to make arrangements to access pre school provision at your own expense.

Children who have not attended pre school services before

If your child will be four between September 1st 2001 and February 28th 2002 and has not attended pre school provision before, you can seek advice at any nursery or primary school in your local area. For a list of nurseries, please contact the Early Years and Childcare Helpline on 01382 433900.

The arrangements outlined above have been put in place to ensure that decisions are made as fairly as possible and that these decisions are fully informed by the views of parents and nursery staff.

We are very committed to ensuring that you can share any issues or concerns that you may have. If you wish to discuss any of the information in this leaflet you should contact a member of staff at your child's nursery. All nursery staff are aware of the Council's policy and can advise you further.

Appendix 3 Updated Nursery Admissions Policy

1 PART TIME ADMISSIONS

All children who are in their pre-school year (born between 1st March 1998 and 28th February 1999) are entitled to a part time place in a pre school education facility. In addition children who will be three (born between 1st March 1999 and 28th February 2000) can also take up a part time place after their third birthday. This leaflet provides information about admissions to Education Department Nursery Schools and Classes.

Part time places are available in the mornings or afternoons. All daily sessions last for 2½ hours.

Part time places are allocated on the basis of the following:

Category 1: Children living in the local area*¹ who are in their pre-school year, including those with who are four years old in January or February 2002.

Category 2: Children living in another local area*¹ of Dundee who are in their pre-school year, including those with who are four years old in January or February 2002.

Category 3: Children living in the local area*¹ who are three.

Category 4: Children living in another local area*¹ of Dundee who are three.

Category 5: **Children who have had their fourth birthday between September and December 2001 and for whom an additional pre school year is recognised to be in their best interests**

Category 6: Children living outwith Dundee.

*¹ Guidance which defines the local area is available in Nursery Schools and Classes

2 EXTENDED HOURS SERVICES (only available in Nursery Schools)

Additional services are available to parents whose child requires childcare at the beginning, middle or end of the day. These services are charged for at the following rates*²:

8.15am - 9 00 am	£8 per week + snack cost
11.30am - 12.45pm	£5 per week + school lunch cost
3.15 pm - 4.15 pm	£10 per week + snack cost
3.15pm - 5.15 pm	£20 per week + snack cost

These services are limited and priority will go to children of parents in employment or training.

3 FULL TIME PROVISION (only available in Nursery Schools and some Nursery Classes)

The places available in this category are available, in the first instance, to two different groups - children in need and children with parents in employment or training. However these services are limited and priority will go to children in need.

These services will be charged for *². Arrangements for full time provision and for charging are currently under review. Further information will be available in April 2002.

*² It may be possible for these charges to be waived or reduced for families in particular circumstances. Information about services for children in need is available from your nearest nursery school or class.

4 DEFERRED ENTRY TO PRIMARY SCHOOL

Under current legislation in Scotland parents/carers of children aged between 4½ and 5 at the start of the school session (those with September to February birthdays), have a choice either to enrol their child for primary school or to apply for an additional pre school place. Information for parents about this is available at local primary or nursery schools.

5 ENROLMENTS

Enrolments for the session 2002- 2003 will begin in February 2001. If you wish to enrol your child for Nursery School or Class, please go along to your nearest Nursery. Children can only attend one Education Department Nursery School or Class. If you would like a list of Nursery Schools and Classes in Dundee please telephone the Early Years and Childcare Helpline (01382 433900).



**DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL
EDUCATION DEPARTMENT**

**UPDATED POLICY ON ADMISSION
TO NURSERY SCHOOLS AND CLASSES**

February 2002

