



Admissions Q&A

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1. Waiting Lists prior to 1st Feb 2020

Q: What happens to waiting lists in existence prior to the commencement of the relevant provision on 1 February 2020?

A: Where applications or expressions of interest were received by the school before 1 February 2020 and where a school had also before 1 February 2020, confirmed in writing that the applicant had been placed on a list for the purposes of allocating school places in the year concerned, places on such waiting lists remain valid and a school may apply a selection criterion based on such a waiting list. However, such waiting lists will cease to exist, as set out in the act, five years from the commencement of section 62 i.e. on 31 January 2025.

2. Waiting Lists – how long remain valid

Q: For how long do waiting lists remain valid?

A: Waiting lists for school places are only valid for the one school year.

An annual admissions process should be run each year, and places are offered, or waiting list is developed, in line with school's admission policy.

3. Determining Class Size for purpose of admissions

Q: How do we determine when a class is full, or how do we set maximum number in a class?

A: Regarding when a class is full, the minimum Department guidelines is 23 students.

It is up to the board of management to determine what number of pupils constitutes a full class. As part of preparing the annual admissions notice each year, the Board should review the rational for the numbers of pupils in each class, and agree and minute the maximum numbers for each class. Therefore, subsequently, if a parent makes a section 29 appeal, the Board will be able to demonstrate that the class size was agreed in advance.

4. Deferral of Place

Q: Can an offer of a place in school be deferred until following year?

A: Places can no longer be deferred as the admissions process is completed annually.

Parents/guardians wishing to defer a place will need to reapply again through the standard admissions process for the following school year.

[If applicant has applied under the old school policy, pre 1st February 2020, whereby the school is still working off those old waiting lists, the place could be deferred for 1 year]

5. Late Applicants & Prioritisation

Q: Are late applicants prioritised on waiting list if they meet a criteria (sibling/school planning area etc.)?

A: No prioritisation categories apply to late applicants (e.g. sibling/school planning area etc.) - they just get added to the next space on the waiting list.

6. Sibling Policy application

Q: Does the sibling policy apply for a junior infant applicant if the sibling is currently in 6th class?

A: No. Both children must be in school at same time, so if sibling is in 6th class, and junior infant applying for following September, sibling policy does not apply.

Q: If a junior infant has been offered a place for September, does sibling policy apply to their sibling who is seeking a place in another class group? I.e. When is a child deemed enrolled in school (for the purpose of being a sibling)

A: POD usually open school progressions in June, this enables them to move their existing pupils into the new academic year. Once POD is in the new academic year the school must choose a valid enrolment date which should reflect when the school year starts typically the end of August beginning of September. JI and new entrants should only be added to POD once they are physically present in the school.

The understanding is the date that a child is enrolled is the date that the child first attends the school i.e. generally August/ September and not the date that the school place is accepted.

Thus, if a junior infant has been offered a place for September, and their sibling is seeking a place in another class group, sibling policy would not apply as the junior infant has not yet commenced school (and won't do until start of the school year).

7. Multiple Births (Twins/Triplets) when offering places

Q: How are multiple births (twins/triplets) counted when offering places?

A: We would generally recommend that twins/triplets be counted together/as one entry in lottery, so if one gets a place, the other(s) get a place.

Q: What happens when have only one place remaining and twins are #1 and #2 on waiting list?

A: Our template policy offers the option of placing the twins as one entry into the lottery, but it still does not factor in the difficulty of only having one place remaining and twins at 1 and 2 place on waiting list.

There is no one solution unfortunately and schools may approach this differently. I would think that the most common approach, in keeping focussed on what is best for the child/children, is to allow both twins entry, and thus absorb an additional child into the class in question.

8. Children leaving to attend Reading/Language/Behavioural school

Q: How do we cater for a child who has left school to attend a reading school – do they lose their school place or do we retain their place in the class?

A: Once children leave school to go to a Reading/Language/Behavioural School, they are no longer enrolled in your school, and you cannot retain places for those children. They will have to reapply for a place on their return.

However, you could add a priority category to your Admissions Policy, to give preference to those children returning. This could be the first priority category, above siblings, in the event of oversubscription.

The wording used should be quite explicit though, that it applies to children returning from other schools attended for educational purposes, and ideally reference the exact school names that children in your area would attend.

Example from another policy would be:

Applicants who are returning from approved placements in classes recommended by professionals that were deemed crucial to the child's development ie: Reading school, language class, St. Anne's etc.

If you do make these additions to your Admissions Policy, please send on to admissionpolicies@educatetogether.ie for approval.

9. Children leaving school for one/more school year for parents to work abroad/equivalent

Q: Family are moving abroad for work/personal reasons for 1 school year, and we have been asked to retain the place for the pupil for following year. Can we hold the place?

A: Schools may not retain places for students from year to year. It is a parent's decision, for whatever reason, to leave the country with their children for the year and the school cannot retain a place for them on their return.

Students should not be included on POD for the academic year if they are not in attendance and they should be removed from the roll and marked as leaving from the previous academic year with the end of June as their leaving date.

If this school is not oversubscribed, then there should not be an issue with the students returning to the school. However, if there is a waiting list for the year-group concerned then the school must allocate the vacancy to the next person on the list in accordance with section 62(7)(i) of the Admissions Act.

If the student is returning to the country and applies for and is allocated a place in the school the following year, it is only then they can be re-enrolled in the school and on POD.

If parents, upon their return, are experiencing difficulty in securing a school place for their child they may seek assistance from the Educational Welfare Service of the Child and Family Agency (EWS). More information is available on their website on the following link: <https://www.tusla.ie/tess/tess-ews/>

10. Separated/Divorced parents/guardians in disagreement about enrolment of child at school

Q: What happens when one parent/guardian applies for school place, accepts subsequent offer, and other parent/guardian complains to school as don't want them to attend school.

A: Parents/guardians have right to apply for school place for child in keeping with school admission policy and may not necessarily need consent/permission of other parent/guardian to enrol child at the school. There is no requirement to have both parents/guardians signatures on admissions/applications forms for place to be offered.

Essential that school follows admission policy – if a place exists in school, then must be offered according to policy. In fact, if school did not offer place, then risk parent/guardian taking a section 29 appeal.

Our advice, in these instances, is to push back to parents/guardians to resolve – the school is only bound by the grounds of a court order.

11. Offering places in other class groups

Q: We opened admissions for other class groups for next September, and have offered place(s) to applicants, which have been accepted. Since then, we have received an application for entry to one of those classes now, this school year, but have offered this place to someone for September.

A: Ideally, decisions on admissions to other class groups for following school year, should not be made until closer to the end of current school year, because if a place currently exists in that class now, and someone applies to take that place up now, they should really be able to take up that position.

However, in this instance, the families who have been offered a place for September, now have an understanding that the children have been 'admitted' to the class, and as such, if the class is full with the inclusion of these pupils, there are no free spaces in the class.

Therefore, in line with the provisions of the Admissions Act, the school should place any further applicants on a waiting list.

12. Offering a school place to child who turns 4 after September

Q: We are undersubscribed and have places available in junior infants after school year has started. We have got an application from a child who just moved to the country and who turned 4 (after 1st Sept), are we obliged to accept the child ?

A: The Governance Section of the Department has confirmed that the Rules for National Schools remain in place, and that once a child turns four, they are eligible to start school (regardless of the time during the school year). You are encouraged to discuss with parents, outlining general age of peers, and outlining ECCE scheme as may not be aware of the scheme.

They also clarified that the [Statutory Instrument](#) referring to "not less than 4 years of age on the first day of September" applies only in cases of oversubscription, and only where age is used as a selection criterion.

13. Data that should be collected during Admissions process/Pre-Enrolment process

Q: What data should schools request from parents/guardians applying for a school place?

A: When it comes to personal data, children merit extra protection under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Schools, as data controllers, must comply with their obligations under the GDPR around how they collect and use personal data.

At the Admissions/Pre-enrolment process, schools should only collect the minimum amount of personal data needed to determine its specific purpose at that stage. At this point, no place has been offered to or accepted by the parent/legal guardian. Therefore, the amount and type of personal data requested at this initial stage should be limited to what is necessary to achieve the intended purpose at this stage. The school must also be clear and transparent with parents or legal guardians about why the information is being requested and how it will be used.

Data minimisation is one of the key data protection principles for schools to consider at the pre-enrolment stage. Schools should only process personal data that is adequate, relevant, and limited to what is necessary for the purposes of meeting their objective at this pre-enrolment stage. It should never collect personal data which is not required for the purposes of that objective.

Further information available from [Data Protection Commission here](#).

14. Department of Education Admissions Act FAQs

[DE Admission Info & FAQs](#)