



## Starting Primary One

### Primary One Eligibility

In Orkney, as well as Scotland, there is one intake to **Primary School** that takes place in the August of each year. Policy states that children born between March and the following February become eligible to start primary school in the August when they will be between 4.5 and 5.5. Children born between the start of the school term in August and February have the option of starting school either in the August preceding their fifth birthday or of deferring to the next August. Children born between March and August must start school in the year that they become five.

Some parents therefore, have a choice as to when their child starts primary school. This has implications for those children who are eligible to start school before their fifth birthday, but whose parents wish to defer entry until the following year when they will be five. Taking the choice to delay school enrolment for a year is known as **deferred entry**.

## Deferred entry to Primary School

### Practical steps

#### Discussion

Parents who have any concerns about whether or not they wish their child to take up a place in Primary 1 the following August should in the first instance discuss the matter with the head teacher/manager or other designated member of staff of the pre-school centre attended by their child. This initial discussion might take place in January of the pre-school year. At that and/or subsequent meetings, discussion should focus on the child's progress in his/her pre-school education, with a particular emphasis 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

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### Request for Deferral

Parents will be kept fully informed of progress. If after these deliberations it is the parents' wish to proceed with a request for deferral they should complete and return the form "Deferred Entry to Primary School" to the Education Department by the **end of March**.

All deferral request forms should be countersigned by the head teacher or manager of the pre-school education centre, indicating whether the request for deferral has his/her support. The local authority will acknowledge receipt of the request.

### Automatic Deferral

Children with birthdays in **January or February** will continue to have the right to start school. They will also have the right to defer entry and the local authority will provide a free pre-school place for an additional year if this is requested by the parents.

### Discretionary Deferral

Children with birthdays from **September to December** will also have the right to start school. They can also defer entry and the local authority will provide a free pre-school place in all cases where there is agreement between parents and the staff of the pre-school centre attended by the child that this is in the best interests of the child. However the allocation of a free pre-school education place is not automatic and is at the discretion of the local authority.

### Appeals and Decisions

In those cases where staff disagree with the parents as to whether a deferral would be in the best interests of the child, the authority will make arrangements for an appeal to be presented to an Admissions Panel. The decision of the Admissions Panel will be based on clear criteria, e.g.

- the level of dependency would prevent the child from benefiting from maximising learning opportunities in P1
- progression to P1 would be detrimental to the child's educational progress
- there are special circumstances which support the parents'/carers' wish for an additional year of pre-school education

In most cases, the application form, the written statements of the parents/carers and the pre-school education staff will form the basis for the decision of the panel. In some cases, further information may be sought by the Panel.

In those cases where the request for an additional year of pre-school education has been refused, the child still has the right to defer entry to primary school and every effort will be made to accommodate a request in another pre-school centre.

Particularly in those cases where there may be doubts as to the final decision on deferral, parents are strongly advised to make an application for a primary school place. Advice on procedures for this is available from all primary schools and from the authority. This will ensure that each child's application for a primary school place can be considered by the due date (**Early May**)