

THE TRANSFER PROCESS TO POST-PRIMARY SCHOOL

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Advice for Parents of Children in Primary Six

PHOTO REDACTED DUE TO THIRD PARTY RIGHTS OR
OTHER LEGAL ISSUES



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**Please retain this leaflet for future reference.
You will need it when your child is in Primary Seven.**

I. INTRODUCTION

As your child is now in Primary Six you may be beginning to give some thought to the next stage of their education. When your child is in Primary Seven you will be required to apply for a place in a post-primary school. This leaflet provides parents with early advice about the sorts of things to think about in making a decision about which schools to apply to next year. It sets out the main steps in the post-primary transfer process. It then explains:

- The role of parents: what you can do to help your child transfer to post-primary school.
- How parents can prepare for this role: what things you can think about in choosing a school for your child.
- How parents complete their child's application (the Transfer Form) to post-primary school.

Pupils with a statement of special educational needs have a separate transfer process. The relevant Education and Library Board (ELB) will discuss with the parent a suitable post-primary school placement for their child as part of the review of the child's statement.

In addition to Irish and English, this leaflet is also available in Polish, Mandarin, Cantonese, Portuguese, Lithuanian, Latvian, Hungarian and Slovakian. Copies can be obtained from your ELB.

A summary of the information in this leaflet is available on NIDirect (www.nidirect.gov.uk). This leaflet is also published on the Department of Education's website (www.deni.gov.uk).

If you require this document in other formats (such as large print, Braille etc.) or in a language other than those listed above, please contact School Access Team using any of the following methods:

By email to: schoolaccessteam@deni.gov.uk

By writing to: School Access Team
Department of Education
Rathgael House
43 Balloo Road
Rathgill
BANGOR
Co Down
BT19 7PR

By telephone: 028 9127 9326

By text phone: 028 9127 9472

By fax: 028 9127 9417

2. MAIN STEPS IN THE TRANSFER PROCESS

The formal transfer process will begin when your child is in Primary Seven. Below are the key stages in the process and an indication of the timing of each stage. Precise dates will be set out in the Transfer Booklets that will be issued to you in early January of your child's Primary Seven year*.

* **Please note that, in line with the Government's policy of promoting digital online services, the ELBs are reviewing their practice of printing and distributing hard copies of Transfer Booklets. Currently, all parents receive a hard copy of the relevant ELB Transfer Booklet from their child's primary school. Electronic versions of the Transfer Booklets are also published on the ELB websites. By the time your child is in P7, it is possible that the ELBs will no longer be distributing hard copies of the Transfer Booklets to all parents. If this is the case, you will receive advice on how to access the information closer to the time. All references to Transfer Booklets in this leaflet should be read in this context.**

IN YOUR CHILD'S PRIMARY SEVEN YEAR:

January	<p>You will receive a Transfer Booklet from your child's primary school. This will contain information about each post-primary school in your area, in particular:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ How many places are available at each school. ■ The admissions criteria that will be used by each school to decide which children are admitted if the school receives more applications than it has places available.
January	<p>You can ask any post-primary school to supply you with a free copy of its prospectus. This will contain additional information.</p> <p>You will also be able to visit schools on their Open Days/Nights. Details of dates and times (which may be earlier than January) can be found in local newspapers or Transfer Booklets, or obtained directly from schools.</p>
January	<p>Your child's primary school will provide you with a Transfer Form and guidance notes to help you complete the form.</p> <p>On the Transfer Form you will be asked to list, in order of preference, the post-primary schools (at least four) that you would like your child to attend.</p>
February	<p>When you have completed and signed the Transfer Form it should be passed to the primary school in good time to allow the school to forward your form to the ELB by the February deadline (which will be published in the Transfer Booklet).</p>
From February until the issue of placement letters in May	<p>ELBs process Transfer Forms according to parental preference, initially passing the form to the school named as a first preference so that it can apply its admissions criteria based on the information provided. The form may need to be passed to other schools named as preferences before the process is complete.</p>

Towards the end of May	<p>A letter informing you which post-primary school your child has been placed at (the placement letter) will issue towards the end of May.</p> <p>If your child has not been accepted by any of the schools listed on the Transfer Form, you will be asked to nominate other schools drawn from a list of schools with places still available. This letter will also advise on how you can appeal against an admissions decision.</p>
Within two weeks of placement letters issuing	<p>For a two week period after placement letters issue parents can submit an appeal against an admissions decision.</p> <p>Appeals can only be upheld if it can be shown that a child has not been admitted because admissions criteria have been applied incorrectly.</p>

3. THE ROLE OF PARENTS IN THE TRANSFER PROCESS

You have a very important role to play in the transfer process:

- You will help your child decide at which post-primary schools he/she will seek a place.
- You will then complete your child's application to these schools on a Transfer Form.

Parents have the right to express preferences for the schools they would like their child to attend, but **no child can be guaranteed a place in any school** or any particular type of school.

4. WHAT TO CONSIDER WHEN CHOOSING A POST-PRIMARY SCHOOL

You will help your child decide at which post-primary schools he/she will seek a place. In making these decisions it may be helpful for you and your child to think about:

- Your child's views on where he/she would be happiest.
- Your own, and your child's, impressions of schools.
- Travel to school and the arrangements for the provision of home to school transport.

Other useful information that may help inform your decision about specific schools may include:

- Whether or not the school requires your child to sit an unregulated test to gain entry.
- Whether a school uses a system of streaming (placing children in classes based on their ability) and how this operates within the school.
- The range of public examinations taken at schools (e.g. GCSEs) and their pupils' success in these exams.

- The arrangements schools make for pupils who may require special help.
- The arrangements schools make to provide support to pupils who are not able to keep up with their class in specific subjects.
- Schools' policies on homework, uniform (the cost of school uniforms can vary greatly from school to school), discipline, etc.
- The range of extra-curricular activities available in schools and the cost of these activities.
- School fees (if relevant) and other additional costs (e.g. are pupils required to participate in certain activities such as particular sports, which also have costs associated with kit etc).
- Links the school may have with local businesses or community/voluntary organisations and how these links benefit the pupils.

5. THE ENTITLEMENT FRAMEWORK

Contrary to the perception of some, schools that admit pupils on the basis of academic selection (contrary to Department of Education policy) do not offer an “academic” education distinct from the type of education on offer at all other schools. Unlike some other countries, where pupils’ educational pathways are set at an early age as they go to different types of schools that deliver specific types of education and curricula, our system is designed to keep as many pathways as possible open until students reach the age of 16.

Since the introduction of the **Entitlement Framework** in September 2013, which is designed to provide greater breadth and balance in the range of courses offered, all young people at 14 and above are guaranteed access to a minimum number of both general (academic) and applied (vocational) courses, regardless of where they study. The Entitlement Framework ensures that all post-primary schools have the flexibility to offer a wide range of subject choices that both inspire and engage pupils; that have clear pathways to further and higher education, training and employment; and that are relevant to the needs of our 21st century economy. From September 2015 all post-primary schools must offer access to at least 24 courses at Key Stage 4 (age 14-16) and at least 27 courses at sixth form. Schools should readily advise parents about the number and range of courses they are providing access to for their pupils.

Making informed choices is vital for your child’s future. There are many routes to success and each is equally valid and valuable. Options now include: the traditional, academic route; the route of the entrepreneur; the route of apprenticeships and traineeships or the route directly into employment. No matter what type of school your child transfers to at the age of 11 they will have many choices available to them at age 14 and again at age 16. Consider how well those schools are delivering the full Entitlement Framework and offering high

quality careers education, information, advice and guidance at the right time. Consider how they are working alongside other schools and Further Education Colleges to deliver the best, most economically relevant range of courses for your child. Those are the schools that are meeting the needs of young people in the classroom.

6. COACHING FOR UNREGULATED ENTRANCE TESTS

The entrance exams that most grammar schools continue to use in contravention of Department of Education policy are not supported or regulated by the Department. Responsibility for these tests and all communication relating to them rests with those schools that choose to use them.

Parents should also note the Department's policy on the role of primary schools. The Department's guidance, which all schools are legally obliged to have regard to, states:

Primary schools play a distinct and crucial role in the educational development of all children. This role is to ensure that the primary stage of every child's educational development (fundamental to all subsequent stages of educational development) is completed.

The vital educational role of primary schools should not be reduced or distorted into a role where primary schools see themselves as serving the academic admissions processes of post-primary schools. All primary schools have statutory obligations to deliver the primary curriculum to all children. The school should not facilitate unregulated entrance test arrangements in any way by supplying support materials, carrying out any preparation for unregulated tests during core teaching hours, offering afternoon coaching in exam technique, or by providing familiarisation with a test environment. The Education and Training Inspectorate will continue to monitor the quality of teaching and learning in primary schools in the context of the revised curriculum.

Primary schools will be aware that any failure to deliver the revised curriculum can be formally reported as a complaint to a Curriculum Complaints Tribunal.

Any parent with a concern that the revised curriculum is not being delivered properly should lodge a complaint with the school's principal in the first instance. If there is no satisfactory outcome the complaint should be escalated to the Board of Governors, and if the Board of Governors fails to respond appropriately the parent can make a formal complaint to a Curriculum Complaint Tribunal by contacting their local ELB.

7. OVERSUBSCRIBED SCHOOLS

The information in this leaflet will help you decide which schools you would like your child to attend for a variety of reasons, but you also need to consider the likelihood of your child being able to secure a place at your preferred schools. To do this you need to consider the level of competition for places at the school and the extent to which your child might be

able to successfully compete for these places (i.e. the degree to which your child meets the school's admissions criteria). To assist you in making these judgements it may be helpful for you to have important information about:

- The pattern of applications and admissions to a school in previous years – that is, the number of applications received in each of the previous few years, and the number of applicants actually admitted in those years. Remember that the pattern of applications may change from year to year. **A school that receives fewer applications than it has places available must admit all of those applicants.**
- How schools will select children for admission if they have too many applicants. In this situation schools have to use admissions criteria to choose which children to admit. In deciding whether or not to apply to a school, it may be very helpful to have a good understanding of that school's admissions criteria.

There are a number of ways you can get the information you need to help you decide at which school(s) to seek a place for your child and these are set out below.

8. INFORMATION ABOUT SCHOOLS

The following sections provide advice on sources of information about schools that will help you decide which schools you want to apply to for a place for your child. You should be aware however that information about individual schools can change from year to year. This is particularly true of admissions criteria. Therefore, before reaching final decisions about preferred schools you should ensure that you obtain and check the most up-to-date information about your chosen schools in your child's Primary Seven year.

i. TRANSFER BOOKLETS

Please note that, as mentioned under Section 2, the ELBs are currently reviewing their arrangements for publishing Transfer Booklets. If there are any changes to the arrangements described in this leaflet, you will receive advice on how to access the relevant information closer to the time.

ELB Transfer Booklets on post-primary education will be published by early January of your child's Primary Seven year and sent to primary schools for distribution to the parents of Primary Seven children. They are also available on each ELB's website. You will not receive copies of these Transfer Booklets in your child's Primary Six year as important information about admissions criteria may change before you are required to apply to post-primary schools on behalf of your child. In your child's Primary Seven year you should read the relevant booklet for your area very carefully because:

- This booklet contains information that will help you decide which post-primary schools to list on your child's Transfer Form.

- The booklet will tell you how many children a school can admit. It will also tell you how popular a school has been in recent years and whether it has had more applicants than places available. **A school that receives fewer applications than it has places available must admit all of those applicants.**
- The booklet will set out all schools' admissions criteria and how these will be applied. These admissions criteria will be how a post-primary school will select children for admission if it has more applicants than places.
- Understanding the admissions criteria of the post-primary schools in which you are interested can help you see how your child's application might fare. It can also help you understand what information it will be important for you to provide when completing your child's Transfer Form.

So, to make best use of the Transfer Booklet:

- Look at the sections dealing with the schools in which you are interested.
- Check how popular these schools have been in recent years: have they had more applicants than places available?
- Carefully read the admissions criteria for each school you are considering.
- Think about how these criteria might apply to your child.
- Think about what information you should provide when completing your child's Transfer Form.

ii. **SCHOOLS IN OTHER ELB AREAS**

If you wish to consider applying to a school in another ELB area you should contact the Transfer Officer in the relevant ELB area using the contact details at the end of this leaflet. All ELBs publish their Transfer Booklets online and these can be accessed through each ELB's website.

iii. **SCHOOL PROSPECTUSES**

Every post-primary school is required to produce a prospectus. This is a booklet that:

- provides details about the school and the educational opportunities it can provide for your child; and
- contains information about subject choices available at the school, public examination results, the number of applications received and the number of places granted in past years.

Prospectuses are available from schools free on request. You should obtain prospectuses from all the schools you are considering by contacting those schools directly. Most schools provide similar information on their websites.

iv. **ELB AREA PROFILES**

It may be useful to consult the area profiles that the five ELBs are now required to publish annually on their websites. These profiles provide a 'health check' of every school, setting out pupil numbers, the school's finances and its academic achievement.

v. **OPEN DAYS/NIGHTS**

You should also take the opportunity to visit each of the post-primary schools you are considering by attending their open days/nights. Details of dates and times may be found in local newspapers or Transfer Booklets, or obtained directly from schools. During the open day/night the principal will normally explain how their school's admissions criteria operate. You will have the opportunity to see around the school, see examples of pupils' work and talk to teachers and some pupils. You will have the opportunity to do this in your child's Primary Seven year, before you are required to complete the Transfer Form. However, you may find it helpful to visit some schools in your child's Primary Six year if you have the opportunity to do so.

9. **TRANSPORT ARRANGEMENTS**

The expense and practicality of transporting your child to the schools you are considering may be a major factor in deciding which schools to list on the Transfer Form. You should give this matter careful consideration and ensure that you understand the rules governing eligibility for transport assistance.

Please note that the rules governing eligibility for transport assistance may alter during your child's time at any particular school and this should be taken into consideration when choosing schools to list as preferences on the Transfer Form.

Your child will only be eligible for transport assistance in circumstances where he or she:

- enrolls at a school which is further than three miles from their home; **and**
- has been unsuccessful in gaining a place at **all** schools of the same category within that three mile limit. This includes applying to, and being turned down by, schools within the three mile limit where your child clearly does not meet their admissions criteria (e.g. your child has not entered for or sat an unregulated entrance test where a school is using academic admissions criteria), before applying to schools of the same category beyond the three mile limit.

For the purposes of qualifying for transport assistance there are six categories of school:

- Controlled secondary schools;
- Maintained (i.e. Catholic) secondary schools;
- Integrated schools (including Controlled Integrated Schools);
- Irish-medium schools;
- Denominational (i.e. Catholic) grammar schools; and
- Non-denominational grammar schools.

Schools with separate secondary and grammar intakes may fall into any of these categories, but for the purposes of transport assistance:

- an application to the secondary stream will be treated as an application to a secondary school in one of the other categories; and
- an application to the grammar stream will be treated as an application to one of the two grammar school categories.

EXAMPLE

- You want your child to attend a particular non-denominational secondary school (school A) that is more than three miles from your child's house.
- There is another non-denominational secondary school (school B) less than three miles from your child's house.
- If you apply to school A as your first preference and apply to school B as a lower preference (or do not apply to school B at all), your child will not be eligible for transport assistance to school A.
- If you apply to school B as your first preference, do not obtain a place at that school and subsequently obtain a place at your second preference, school A, your child will be eligible for transport assistance to school A.

The entry for each school in the Transfer Booklets will state the category of school. You should study very carefully the detailed information about transport arrangements set out in the ELB Transfer Booklet. It may be helpful for you to discuss with your ELB how the possible outcomes of your application to post-primary schools may determine your eligibility for transport assistance. Contact details are provided at the end of this leaflet.

10. COMPLETING YOUR CHILD'S APPLICATION TO POST-PRIMARY SCHOOL

- The application form for all post-primary schools is known as the Transfer Form.
- Transfer Forms are sent by ELBs to primary schools to pass on to parents of Primary Seven children for completion in January/February of the Primary Seven year. The completed forms are then returned to primary schools who in turn forward them to ELBs.
- **Completed forms must be returned to your primary school in good time for them to be forwarded to the ELB by the mid-February deadline which will be published in the Transfer Booklet.**

The Transfer Form is a very important document. It will contain all the information that your chosen post-primary schools will use to consider your child's application. When the time comes to complete the form, your child's primary school will provide you with a set of guidance notes to help you.

Expressing Your Preference for Post-Primary Schools

The form asks you to list in order of preference the schools that you would like your child to attend:

- **You should list at least four schools on the Transfer Form.** In some circumstances it would be wise to list more than four – for example, where schools tend to get more applications than they have places available and in areas where there are many schools.
- If you do not list at least four schools, this could reduce the possibility of your child being admitted to a school of your preference. **You can list as many schools as you wish.** This may be significant. As preferences are processed your child, having met the criteria of one of the schools listed as a high preference school on your Transfer Form, may be displaced by another child later in the process who better meets that school's criteria despite listing the school as a lower preference.
- You should not enter the same school more than once.
- If you seek a place for your child in a grammar school it is very important to include at least one other category of school in your list. If you do not do this it may reduce the possibility of your child being admitted to a school of your preference.

The importance of providing relevant information about your child's application

You will also be asked to provide information about your child when completing the Transfer Form. This is very important because:

- If one of your chosen schools has more applicants than places available it will have to choose which children to admit.
- A school will do this by applying its admissions criteria to all applicants.
- **The information about your child that you provide when completing the Transfer Form will be what a school will use to see how your child meets its admissions criteria.**

The sort of information that it will be important for you to provide will vary from school to school. It will often be information like:

- Whether your child has any brothers or sisters already attending the school(s) to which you are applying. The Transfer Form contains a specific place for this information.
- Whether the child is the eldest child, only child or the eldest boy/girl in the family.
- Whether your child is registered with the ELB as being entitled to Free School Meals.

It is therefore vital that you read very carefully the ELB Transfer Booklet to ensure that you understand what information is needed by all the schools you list, and that you provide this information when completing the Transfer Form.

Free School Meal Entitlement

The Department has recommended that schools use their admissions criteria to make sure that they admit a fair number of children registered as entitled to Free School Meals.

- To make this possible, the Transfer Form will ask you if your child is currently listed on the ELB register of children entitled to Free School Meals.
- If this applies to your child you should record this in the appropriate part of the Transfer Form.
- Your claim of Free School Meal Entitlement registration will be checked.

What happens if my child only becomes registered as entitled to Free School Meals after I have completed their Transfer Form?

In this case, you will have the opportunity to update this information up to and including the date in May which will be published in the Transfer Booklet – see the “Change of Circumstances” section below.

Checking and Signing the Transfer Form

Before signing the Transfer Form and returning it to your child’s primary school, please note:

- You should check all the information carefully before signing the form. You should ensure that all relevant information is provided when completing the Transfer Form to enable all the schools you have listed as preferences to consider your child’s application. **You and you alone are responsible for ensuring that all relevant information is provided.**
- **If you do not provide relevant information you may reduce the chance of your child being admitted to a school of your preference.**
- **It is also your responsibility to ensure that the information you provide is correct.** Post-primary schools may be required to verify information provided as part of your child’s application and information found to be false can lead to non-admission.
- The information that you provide on the form is covered by the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998. Your signature on the form is deemed to be an authorisation by you to allow an ELB to use the information on the form for the purpose of processing your application.

When you have completed and signed the Transfer Form it should be passed to your child’s primary school in good time to allow the school to forward your form to the ELB by the mid-February deadline published in the Transfer Booklet.

Change of Circumstances after Completion of the Transfer Form

Your personal circumstances may change after you have completed and signed the Transfer Form. For example:

- Your address may change; or
- Your child may become registered as entitled to Free School Meals.

If your circumstances do change in a way that may be important for the transfer process, you should contact the ELB Transfer Officer to provide this new information. Contact details are at the end of this leaflet. Additional information can only be accepted up to and including the date in May that will be published in the Transfer Booklet.

11. PLACEMENT LETTERS AND THE INDEPENDENT ADMISSIONS APPEAL TRIBUNALS

Towards the end of May in your child's Primary Seven year a Placement Letter will be sent to you to tell you the post-primary school in which your child has been placed.

If your child does not get a place in a school of your choice and you feel that this is because the school(s) did not apply their admissions criteria correctly, you can appeal to an Independent Admissions Appeal Tribunal. The Placement Letter will contain information about your right to appeal and who you should contact if you wish to make an appeal.

12. EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

You may believe your child needs to attend a particular post-primary school for reasons other than simply because you prefer that post-primary school. There may be compelling and exceptional reasons why your child should attend a specific post-primary school.

If you feel that this applies in your child's case, you should note that:

- The Placement Letter issued to you towards the end of May will tell you in which post-primary school your child has been placed.
- If this is **not** the post-primary school that your child needs to attend for compelling and exceptional reasons, you will have the opportunity to apply to have your child's case considered as part of an Exceptional Circumstances process.
- **A claim of Exceptional Circumstances can only be considered after you have applied to the post-primary school through the normal admissions process and have been refused a place.**
- Claims for Exceptional Circumstances can be considered at the same time as, though separately from, admissions appeals.
- The Placement Letter will advise you how to obtain more detailed information on the Exceptional Circumstances process, including how to apply to have your case considered.

Further information is available at <http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/index/parents/schools-learning-and-development/choosing-a-school/appealing-a-school-place-decision.htm>

13. USEFUL ADDRESSES AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Contact details for the Transfer Officers within each ELB and for the Department's School Access Team are provided below.

Belfast Education and Library Board
40 Academy Street
BELFAST
BT1 2NQ

Tel: 028 9056 4080

Email: patricia.hughes@belb.co.uk

Website: www.belb.org.uk

North-Eastern Education and Library Board
County Hall
182 Galgorm Road
BALLYMENA
BT42 1HN

Tel: 028 2566 2306

Email: maxine.harris@neelb.org.uk

Website: www.neelb.org.uk

South-Eastern Education and Library Board
Grahamsbridge Road
Dundonald
BELFAST
BT16 2HS

Tel: 028 9056 6981

Email: florence.mccaw@seelb.org.uk

Website: www.seelb.org.uk

Southern Education and Library Board
3 Charlemont Place
ARMAGH
BT61 9AZ

Tel: 028 3751 2411

Email: mairead.maguire@selb.org

Website: www.selb.org

Western Education and Library Board
Campsie House
I Hospital Road
OMAGH
BT79 0AW

Tel: 028 8241 1571

Email: liane.armstrong@welbni.org

Website: www.welbni.org

Department of Education
School Access Team
Rathgael House
43 Balloo Road
Rathgill
BANGOR
BT19 7PR

Tel: 028 9127 9326

Email: schoolaccessteam@deni.gov.uk

Website: www.deni.gov.uk

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