

# Important Information for Parents Applying for a Pre-School Place

*2016/17 School Year*



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Department of  
**Education**

[www.deni.gov.uk](http://www.deni.gov.uk)

AN ROINN  
**Oideachais**

MÁNNYSTRE O  
**Lear**

**GET  
INVOLVED**  
BECAUSE EDUCATION  
WORKS

## Pre-school Education Works

- **Our children are learning all the time, the earlier parents become involved in their children's learning, the better the results and the longer lasting the effects. Providing a positive home learning environment is a vital part of improving outcomes for children.**
- **By reading books and singing songs and rhymes at home, all parents and carers can support their child's learning.**
- **Pre-school provides children with a rich variety of challenging play activities and other experiences in a stimulating environment and prepares them for primary school.**
- **Pre-school is not compulsory but it is often the first introduction to the education system for many families and it builds upon the learning that has taken place in the home and its immediate environment.**

## Points to Note

1. Admission booklets listing details of all pre-school providers and their admission criteria for your area are available from your local pre-school provider and from the Education Authority website.
2. Application forms are available from **27 November 2015** from any pre-school provider.
3. You can apply for a place in any setting in any Education Authority region. All pre-school providers are accessible to all children regardless of location or background.
4. You should complete only **ONE** application form even if you are applying to providers in different Education Authority regions.
5. You should consider all pre-school settings ie voluntary/private providers, nursery schools and primary schools with nursery units.
6. You should list preferences for at least 3 providers to maximise your chances of the offer of a place.
7. Apart from the social disadvantage criterion which is the top criterion for every provider, each provider sets their own admissions criteria. These are applied when too many children apply to their setting.
8. You should clearly demonstrate how you meet the admissions criteria for each preference listed on your application form.
9. You should only list preferences for those settings you would be happy to send your child to if offered a place.
10. Return your completed application form to your **FIRST** preference provider **by noon on 13 January 2016**.





## Frequently Asked Questions

### **What is the Pre-School Education Programme?**

This is a programme funded by the Department of Education to provide one year of non-compulsory pre-school education which builds upon the learning that children experience at home. It provides a rich variety of challenging play activities and other experiences in a stimulating environment and will help prepare your child for primary school.

### **What is a funded pre-school place and do I have to pay?**

All places provided under the Pre-School Education Programme are free to parents because they are funded by the Department of Education.

There is no charge for the session funded for the delivery of the Pre-school curriculum. Pre-school providers may charge for additional services eg snacks, lunch, extra-curricular activities, etc. However, these additional services and charges are entirely optional. You should clarify with your preferred provider if there will be any applicable charges prior to submitting an application form.



## Where are pre-school places available?

Pre-school places are available in nursery schools, primary schools with nursery units and voluntary/private settings that have funded places. All pre-schools providers follow the same Curricular Guidance for Pre-School Education and are inspected regularly by the Education and Training Inspectorate.

Please ensure you check who the voluntary/private providers are in your area and consider them when completing you application form.

## How long is the pre-school day?

Each pre-school day normally lasts a minimum of 2.5 hours. Nursery schools and primary schools with nursery units can offer either full-time (4.5 hours per day) or part-time (2.5 hours per day) sessions. All voluntary/private providers offer part-time sessions. Some providers offer morning or afternoon sessions.

## What age should my child be to access a pre-school place in September 2016?

The Pre-School Education Programme for the 2016/17 school year is targeted at children born between **2 July 2012 and 1 July 2013**.

## When do I need to apply?

Application forms are available from 27 November 2015 and completed forms must be submitted before noon on 13 January 2016.

## How do I apply?

- Application forms and a booklet listing all pre-school provision in your area are available from your local pre-school provider. Booklets can also be accessed from the Education Authority website.
- Carefully examine the admissions criteria which apply to pre-school providers in your area.
- When completing your application form, make sure to express preferences for a number of pre-school providers you would be happy to send your child to in order to maximise your chances of securing a funded pre-school place.
- Take the completed form and all required documents to your first preference provider before noon on **Wednesday 13 January 2016**.

## Where can I find out more?

Further information about the pre-school admissions process is available on the NI Direct website

**[www.nidirect.gov.uk/funded-pre-school-education](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/funded-pre-school-education)**

A paper copy of this booklet is available on request (Tel: 028 9127 9235) and can be provided in a number of languages.

Alternatively, you may contact the Education Authority.

Website: **[www.eani.org.uk/i-want-to/apply-for-a-school-place-or-transfer-between-schools/](http://www.eani.org.uk/i-want-to/apply-for-a-school-place-or-transfer-between-schools/)**

### **Belfast Region**

Education Authority  
40 Academy Street  
Belfast BT1 2NQ  
Tel: 028 9056 4080  
Email: [patricia.hughes@eani.org.uk](mailto:patricia.hughes@eani.org.uk)

### **North Eastern Region**

Education Authority  
County Hall  
182 Galgorm Road  
Ballymena BT42 1HN  
Tel: 028 2566 2199  
Email: [admissions-ner@eani.org.uk](mailto:admissions-ner@eani.org.uk)

### **Western Region**

Education Authority  
1 Hospital Road  
Omagh BT79 0AW  
Tel: 028 8241 1458  
Email: [admissions-wr@eani.org.uk](mailto:admissions-wr@eani.org.uk)

### **South Eastern Region**

Education Authority  
Grahamsbridge Road  
Dundonald BT16 2HS  
Tel: 028 9056 6200  
Email: [admissions-ser@eani.org.uk](mailto:admissions-ser@eani.org.uk)

### **Southern Region**

Education Authority  
3 Charlemont Place  
Armagh BT61 9AX  
Tel: 028 3741 0088/0085  
028 3751 2309  
Email: [admissions-sr@eani.org.uk](mailto:admissions-sr@eani.org.uk)

- The Department of Education's 'Valuing Education' campaign encourages families to play, talk, read and count with their child and to 'Get Involved Because Education Works'. It highlights the vital role families can play in helping children do well at school and improve their life chances. Pre-school education is an important stepping stone in a child's overall development.
- Pre-school provision is not defined according to sectors (eg integrated, Catholic maintained etc), so all pre-school settings, regardless of location, are considered accessible to children from all backgrounds.
- High quality pre-school education is available at all types of pre-school setting, both statutory (nursery schools or nursery

units attached to primary schools) and non-statutory (voluntary or private providers).

- The only difference between full-time and part-time sessions is the length of the each session; all pre-school settings deliver the same curriculum. Research has shown that there are no notable gains for children attending a full-time session.
- Research has shown that children from socially disadvantaged circumstances tend to experience more difficulty at school than other children, so they are given priority within the pre-school admissions process as part of wider efforts to tackle educational underachievement.
- The programme provides funded pre-school education; it is **not** free day care.
- You are asked to express preferences for pre-school providers, not choices. It may not be possible to secure a place at your first preference provider if too many children apply, so it is important to list more than one provider as a preference on your application form when invited to do so during Stage 1 of the admissions process.
- You should list at least 3 preferences taking account of settings across the sectors (ie you should consider voluntary/private providers as well as nursery schools and primary schools with nursery units) in order to maximise your chances of obtaining the offer of a place.
- You should supply as much detail as possible and clearly demonstrate how you meet the admission criteria for each provider you have listed on the application form.



- If your child is not offered a place at the end of Stage 1 of the process it is important that you take advantage of the process at Stage 2 where the Education Authority will ask you to list further preferences for remaining places. If none of the listed places is a viable option please contact the Education Authority for further guidance. This will maximise your chances of securing a funded pre-school place.
- While a funded pre-school place cannot be guaranteed, DE aims to provide one for every child whose parents want it and 99.8% of target age children whose parents fully engaged with last year's admissions process were offered a funded place in a pre-school setting of their choice.
- Please only express preferences for providers that you would be happy to send your child to if offered a place.
- You can express separate preferences for a full time and part time place, however, you cannot apply specifically for a part time morning or afternoon place. The allocation of part time morning and afternoon sessions is determined by the provider.
- If your child is awaiting a statutory assessment for a statement of special educational needs, you should still apply for a pre-school place in the normal way rather than wait for the outcome of the assessment.
- Parents/Guardians should be aware that very occasionally providers can be required to withdraw or may withdraw voluntarily from the scheme at any time. In the unlikely event that this happens, the Education Authority will uplift the next preference listed on the application form and process it accordingly.

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