



Deferred Entry and Retained Year to Primary School 2024 Guidance

From August 2023, a change in the legislation meant that all children who are eligible to defer will automatically be able to access an additional year of funded early learning and childcare (ELC).

Parents/carers of four year old children that do not turn five until after the first day of the school term in August (i.e. those with birthdays after the start of the school session and before the end of February the following year) 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. Most parents/carers choose to send their child to school as soon as they are eligible to start. This guidance explains what a parent or carer should do if they do NOT wish to send their child to school as soon as they are eligible.

Deferral applications must be submitted by 15th March 2024.

Retained Year applications must be submitted by 2nd February 2024.

PLEASE NOTE: PARENTS/CARERS MUST REGISTER THEIR CHILD(REN) FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL BEFORE APPLYING FOR A DEFERRED/RETAINED ENTRY

If you change your mind and wish to withdraw the deferral to Primary 1, contact Pupil Placement immediately at pupil.placement@midlothian.gov.uk.

1. Who can defer entry to primary school?

Children who turn 5 after the first day of term in August and before the end of February

These children are entitled to defer entry to school should their parents wish it. They will receive a funded ELC place in either a Midlothian Council, Funded Provider setting or childminder during that deferred year.

2. Deferred entry process for children who turn 5 after the first day of term in August up to the end of February

Parents/carers thinking about deferring their child's Primary 1 entry may want to consider:

- A lot of emotional and social development can and will happen between the time parents/carers apply for a deferral and the start of primary school.
- Schools and teachers focus on the needs of the child, not their age, whether they are in ELC or at school. Children are supported to progress through the Curriculum for Excellence at an appropriate rate. Children aged 3-5 in ELC settings and children in Primary one classrooms, usually work within the Early Level of the Curriculum for Excellence.
- There has been a change in culture in schools over recent years, with a real focus on play and outdoor learning in many schools.

Parents/carers should meet with ELC staff or their childminder to discuss any deferral. Following this discussion, if parents/carers wish to defer their child, they must register for their catchment school before completing an online deferral application form. The online form will be available from the 20th November via the following link [Deferred entry to primary school | Midlothian Council](#). A paper version of the deferral form is available from the ELC setting or childminder if required.

The deferral application should be submitted to Pupil Placement by the **15th March 2024**.

The online application will receive an automatic grant email. For paper versions a grant letter will be issued by the end of March 2024.

ELC settings or childminders will be advised of deferrals received.



3. Who cannot defer entry to primary school?

Children who are 5 on or before the first day of the school term in August

Children who are 5 at the start of the school term in August must register with their catchment school. In exceptional circumstances it may be possible to apply for an additional year of ELC. This year is referred to as a “retained year”.

4. Retained Year

Children who have reached the age of five years old on the start of the school term in August are unable to request a deferred year, however in exceptional circumstances a retained year at an ELC setting or childminder may be considered.

By the time they reach the age of 4 or 5 years old, there are already differences in each child's development, learning and levels of independence. If a parent/carer is concerned about whether or not their child is ready for school or how their additional support needs will be met, they should speak to the ELC setting or childminder the child attends. Schools have an obligation to support the needs of all children and the needs of each child will be planned for through the transition process to school.

Decisions about a retained year are best made as part of the ongoing profiling of a child's development and learning which is done by the ELC provider. In considering the best decision for each child, we will take account of the views of parents/carers and the child's:

- Approach and attitude to learning
- Ability to communicate his/her own needs, feelings and ideas
- Levels of independence and self-help
- Emotional and personal development, including self-confidence and esteem
- His/her relationships and friendships with other children and adults
- Additional support needs

For children with significant additional support needs, an additional year of ELC may be considered as an intervention if it is agreed by the parent/carer and the core team around the child that this would be in their best interests. However it should be noted that in most situations the child will continue to have significant needs. In all cases where the child is to be granted a retained year due to their additional support needs, this should be noted as an intervention on the child's plan, with clear targets to be worked on within this additional year.

Only in exceptional situations will a retained year of early learning and childcare be considered an intervention. For example:

- The child may have additional support needs affecting their development (educational, social and emotional)
- The family has only recently arrived into the UK and the child has not experienced early learning and childcare and needs time to adjust to school life
- The child may have missed a lot of early learning and childcare through illness
- The child has a summer birthday and was born very prematurely

The staff at the child's ELC setting or their childminder will complete the application with the parent/carer. Applications should be submitted by **2nd February 2024**.

The applications should be securely scanned/photographed and emailed to Pupil Placement: Pupil.Placement@midlothian.gov.uk

Alternatively post to: Pupil Placement, Midlothian Council, Children, Young People and Partnerships, Fairfield House, 8 Lothian Road, Dalkeith EH22 3ZG



5. Who will make the decision?

All applications for a retained year are considered by a panel of early years professionals. The Head Teacher or Manager of the ELC setting or childminder the child attends will submit information with regard to the child as part of the application process.

Consideration of applications for a retained year may include requests for additional information from the team around the child. It may be appropriate for a member of the panel to visit the setting that the child is attending to further assess their needs.

Decisions regarding the outcome of applications will be communicated by letter to the parents/carers and the ELC setting by **end of March 2024**

Where the council has agreed to an additional publicly-funded ELC year and parents wish this to be in the private or voluntary sector, the Council can only make appropriate arrangements for payment to a setting in Partnership for ELC. Should parents/carers request a place in a neighbouring authority, Midlothian Council will commission a place. Where the Council has refused an additional publicly-funded ELC year, the parent/carer may appeal through normal Council procedures but there is no legal right to an appeal.