

THE TRANSFER PROCESS TO POST-PRIMARY SCHOOL



Advice for Parents of Children in Primary Six



Department of
Education

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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 Education Authority will discuss with the parent a suitable post-primary school placement for their child as part of the review of the child's statement.

A summary of the information in this leaflet is available on NI Direct (www.nidirect.gov.uk).

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

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 9966

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 information which will be published on the Education Authority website by Christmas of your child's Primary Seven year.

IN YOUR CHILD'S PRIMARY SEVEN YEAR:

Before Christmas	<p>Information about the transfer process, including key dates, will be published on the Education Authority website (www.eani.org.uk/admissions) alongside a searchable online directory – 'the Schools Directory'. You can use the Schools Directory to find out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ How many places are available at each school; and ■ 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 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 Education Authority by the February deadline which will be specified in the information about the transfer process published on the Education Authority website.</p>
From February until the issue of placement letters in May	<p>The Education Authority processes 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>
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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 courses offered should be economically relevant with clear progression pathways to enable pupils to continue in education or move into training or employment.
- 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).
- The opportunities available for pupils to access a broader range of courses through collaborative arrangements the school has with other schools and FE colleges in the area.
- The emphasis the school places on the important area of careers provision. What information do you and your child get at each stage to help support the decisions they will be making? How does the school provide preparation for the world of work, including the arrangements for work experience?
- 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.

Schools that are meeting the needs of young people are looking at local and global economic information when they plan the courses they will offer. Schools that are putting their pupils first are considering how to ensure that options are kept open for these young people and that courses have clear progression pathways for their future.

Before you decide on which post-primary schools to apply to, consider what range and type of courses your child will be able to choose from when they are going into Key Stage 4, and at post-16. Under the Entitlement Framework all pupils should be able to access a minimum number of courses, some general with more written assessment, and some applied with more practical assessment. Schools are now required to offer access to at least 24 courses at Key Stage 4 and at least 27 courses at post-16. You can ask how a post-primary school is meeting these requirements.

Making these course choices will be an exciting time for your child, and a school should support them by providing access to high-quality, timely careers advice. 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.

Schools should be able to tell you **now** how they ensure that the courses they offer take into account where the jobs of the future are likely to develop. Your child should be helped to consider where their individual strengths lie and how that can translate into course choices that keep their options open for continued education, training, and future employment. Schools should involve careers teachers when planning the curriculum and can work together in Area Learning Communities to allow young people to study a course in another school or FE College. You should feel free to ask any post-primary school about the courses it offers and how it ensures that it meets the needs and aspirations of young people.

6. COACHING FOR UNREGULATED ENTRANCE TESTS

The entrance exams that some post-primary 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 statutory 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 Complaints Tribunal by contacting the Education Authority.

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 schools 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. EDUCATION AUTHORITY WEBSITE

Up-to-date information on the post-primary transfer process will be published on the Education Authority website (www.eani.org.uk/admissions) by Christmas of your child's Primary Seven year. This will include:

- The main steps in the transfer process including key dates;
- A Schools Directory which you can search for schools in your area and view, print or save the admissions criteria for each school; and
- A link to information on how to apply for school transport and details of qualifying criteria for transport assistance.

So, to make best use of the Schools Directory:

- Look up the schools in which you are interested.
- Check how many children each school can admit.
- Check how popular these schools have been in recent years: have they had more applicants than places available? **A school that receives fewer applications than it has places available must admit all of those applicants.**
- Carefully read the admissions criteria for each school you are considering. These admissions criteria will be how a post-primary school will select children for admission if it has more applicants than places.
- 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. REFERENCE COPIES OF THE EDUCATION AUTHORITY BOOKLETS: 'ADMISSIONS TO POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS – A GUIDE FOR PARENTS'

Reference copies of these booklets will be available in primary schools, post-primary schools and public libraries by Christmas of your child's Primary Seven year. There will also be a link to the booklet on the Education Authority website (www.eani.org.uk/admissions) which will enable you to read the booklet online or download it in PDF format.

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. 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 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 before you are required to complete the Transfer Form.

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, 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 or Other Voluntary schools;
- Catholic Maintained schools;
- Integrated schools (including Grant Maintained and Controlled Integrated Schools);
- Irish-medium schools;
- Denominational (i.e. Catholic) grammar schools; and
- Non-denominational grammar schools.

Schools with separate secondary and grammar intakes recognised by the Department of Education (sometimes called bilateral schools) 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 Integrated school (school A) that is more than three miles from your child's house.
- There is another Integrated 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.
- If you apply to school B as your first preference and are offered a place there but decide to turn it down in favour of the offer of a place in school A, then your child will not be eligible for assistance to school A.

The entry for each school in the online Schools Directory will state the category of school. You should study very carefully the detailed information about transport arrangements on the Education Authority's website. It may be helpful for you to contact the Education Authority to discuss 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 the Education Authority 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 the Education Authority.
- **Completed forms must be returned to your primary school in good time for them to be forwarded to the Education Authority by the mid-February deadline which will be specified in the information about the transfer process published on the Education Authority website.**

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 schools 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 Education Authority as being entitled to Free School Meals.

It is therefore vital that you read very carefully the admissions criteria for each school you decide to list as a preference on your child's Transfer Form. This will 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 Education Authority 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 if it is relevant to a school's decision to admit your child.

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 your child's details up to and including the date in May which will be specified in the information about the transfer process published on the Education Authority website – 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 the Education Authority 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 Education Authority by the mid-February deadline specified in the information about the transfer process published on the Education Authority website.

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 Education Authority 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 specified in the information about the transfer process published on the Education Authority website.

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 regional Transfer Officers within the Education Authority and for the Department's School Access Team are provided below.

Patricia Hughes
Education Authority (Belfast Region)
40 Academy Street
BELFAST
BT1 2NQ

Tel: 028 9056 4080

Email: patricia.hughes@eani.org.uk

Website: www.eani.org.uk

Maxine Harris
Education Authority (North-Eastern Region)
County Hall
182 Galgorm Road
BALLYMENA
BT42 1HN

Tel: 028 2566 2306

Email: maxine.harris@eani.org.uk

Website: www.eani.org.uk

Florence McCaw
Education Authority (South-Eastern Region)
Grahamsbridge Road
Dundonald
BELFAST
BT16 2HS

Tel: 028 9056 6981

Email: florence.mccaw@eani.org.uk

Website: www.eani.org.uk

Mairead Maguire
Education Authority (Southern Region)
3 Charlemont Place
ARMAGH
BT61 9AZ

Tel: 028 3751 2411

Email: mairead.maguire@eani.org.uk

Website: www.eani.org.uk

Liane Armstrong
Education Authority (Western Region)
Campsie House
1 Hospital Road
OMAGH
BT79 0AW

Tel: 028 8241 1571

Email: liane.armstrong@eani.org.uk

Website: www.eani.org.uk

Department of Education
School Access Team
Rathgael House
43 Balloo Road
Rathgill
BANGOR
BT19 7PR
Tel: 028 9127 9966
Email: schoolaccessteam@deni.gov.uk
Website: www.deni.gov.uk

**Advice for Parents of Children
in Primary Six**