



Early Learning and Childcare

Additional Year of ELC Information

A Perth and Kinross where everyone can live
life well, free from poverty and inequality

**Enabling
children and
young people
achieve full
potential**

Choosing Your Child's Entry date for School: Information for Parents and Carers and FAQs

This leaflet is intended to help you make an informed choice about when your child should start primary school by answering some of the most frequently asked questions we receive.

Throughout this document, the word 'parent' should be interpreted as including the child's legal guardian.

The term 'setting' should be interpreted as any Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) provision which could include a local authority nursery, a partner provider nursery or a funded childminder.

Accessing an additional year of ELC is also sometimes referred to as a "deferral" or "deferring primary one".

All information in this document relates to the school year commencing August 2026. The school commencement date in 2026 is August 18th.

Frequently Asked Questions

Will my child start primary one before or after their 5th birthday?

Children who are five on or between 1 March and the school commencement date in August must legally start school in August or parents can make arrangements to home educate their child.

Parents of *any child with a 5th birthday on or between the day after the school commencement date in August and the last day in February of the following year* have the legal right to choose whether they will start school before or after their 5th birthday. This is sometimes called deferring. If parents, with a child in this age group, choose for their child to start school after their 5th birthday their child will be automatically entitled to an additional year of 1140 hours of funded ELC.

Alternatively, parents can decide to home-educate their child or make other suitable arrangements for their education, e.g. enrolling them at an independent school.

Please note: ELC does not constitute primary education. The funding criteria is set by the Scottish Government and all children who are five years old by the first day of school in August are unable to access further ELC provision.

Outline of school intake and eligibility for an additional year of ELC

Children who have their 5th birthday on or after the first day of term in August (18th) up until the last day of February 2027, are entitled to defer entry to school should their parents wish it and can access funding for a further year of 1140 hours of Early Learning & Childcare. This is guaranteed through funding from the Scottish Government for places for these children.

Children who have their 5th birthday between the first day of March 2026 and the start of term in August 2026 are NOT automatically entitled to have an additional year and must enter into primary one or be educated at home from 18th August 2026.

| Where a child's 5th birthday falls on or between the following dates: | The child will cease to be eligible for ELC from: | Starting school and stopping ELC |
|---|---|---|
| 1st March 2026 and the 17 th August 2026 | August occurring in the year of their 5 th birthday (2026) | Children must start school in August the same year they turn 5. Alternatively, suitable arrangements, e.g. home-schooling should be made for the child's education. |
| 18 th August 2026 and 28 th February 2027 | August 2027 | Children can start school in August 2026 or August 2027. Entitlement to an additional year of Early Learning and Childcare continues and is funded by the Scottish Government. |

If my child will have their birthday between August 2026 and February 2027. and is therefore eligible for an additional year of ELC but I am considering sending my child to school instead, what should I do?

You should discuss your thoughts with staff in your child's ELC setting. Staff will meet with you to discuss your child's learning and development. Advised by the information shared, you will be able to make your decision about if your child should start school or access an additional year of ELC.

If you choose for your child to have an additional year of funded ELC you should complete an online application form by February 28th 2026 to retain your child's current place and attendance pattern for their pre-school year, or to change to a different attendance pattern. To access ELC in a different funded provider you will be required to complete an application form.

If you decide that your child will start school, you should complete the school enrolment form. (Please note the school enrolment form will be available to complete from week commencing 5 January 2026).

For parents that are still undecided as to whether their child will remain in ELC or begin primary one in August, we advise you to apply for **both** an ELC and school place and inform us at a later date when you have made a final decision.

When do I need to finalise my decision whether my child will start school in August or access an additional year of ELC?

Ideally decisions should be finalised by 15 March 2026. You should either complete the school enrolment form if your child is starting primary one or notify the ELC setting that you wish your child to have an additional year of funded ELC. This will allow children to be appropriately involved in transition activities if they are moving on to school. It will also enable decisions to be made about staffing in primary one classes and capacities in ELC settings for the following academic year.

If you are unsure, you should notify the ELC setting and at the same time register your child for primary school to ensure a space is held for them should you change your mind. Every effort will be made to give your child a place in the ELC setting of your choice, but this cannot be guaranteed. Places will be allocated according to Perth and Kinross Council's Policy and Guidelines. These can be found at [Funded early learning and childcare for 3-5 year olds - Perth & Kinross Council](#).

Will my child cope with primary one?

Primary schools are very well equipped to meet a wide range of needs. Additional supports are put in place at transition from nursery to primary one to ensure individual children's needs are met in a supportive learning context. e.g. use of visual supports to aid communication; support for toileting and other self-care needs; playground supports; active learning opportunities; buddies etc. To enhance the transition from ELC to school, a learn-through-play approach is encouraged within primary one classrooms in PKC too. The staff at your child's ELC setting will be happy to discuss the process with you and you can also approach the headteacher of your catchment school for information.

If I choose to home educate my child for their first year of education can my child start primary one the following year?

Children home educated in the year that they are able to enter primary one would begin in primary two the following year should parents then opt to send their child to school. Further information is available on the Perth and Kinross website [Home Education - A Parent's Choice - Perth & Kinross Council](#)

Is there anything I need to consider or be aware of if I choose an additional year of ELC for my child rather than send them to school?

It is important to consider your child's school career from nursery to secondary school and beyond. For example, by sending your child to school a year later, your child will legally have the option to leave secondary school before sitting their National Examinations as they are likely to already have reached their 16th birthday.

Further information on deferral and accessing an additional year of ELC can be found at [Can my child defer starting school? | Parent Club.](#)

If you wish to discuss any information in this leaflet, please do not hesitate to contact a member of staff at your child's ELC setting.

| Timeline for Making Decisions | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| November | Discuss child's progress with ELC staff. Begin making decisions. |
| January- March | <p>Ideally make final decision to allow appropriate transitions arrangements to take place.</p> <p>Inform ELC setting if you wish your child to have an additional year of funded ELC, or complete enrolment for school.</p> <p>For children attending local authority nurseries, submit an application if decision made to access an additional year of ELC.</p> |
| March-June | Planned experiences to support children moving on to school with transition |

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You can also send us a text message on 07824 498145.

All Council Services can offer a telephone translation facility.

BSL users can contact us via Contact Scotland BSL, the online British Sign Language video relay interpreting service. Find out more on the Contact Scotland BSL website <https://contactscotland-bsl.org>