



Improving Lives Together
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Early Learning and Childcare

Policy and Guidelines

for Admission to

Nursery Classes and

Early Childhood Centres

2025-26

Education & Children's Services

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

Please note, this information is correct at time of going to print.

Updated information is available from the Schools' Support Team:

Tel **01738 476200**

Email ECSSchools@pkc.gov.uk

or on the Perth & Kinross Council website www.pkc.gov.uk 



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Introduction

Perth & Kinross Council (PKC) is committed to providing high-quality Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) in all nursery settings. These guidelines apply to all admissions for children in PKC nursery settings managed by Education & Children's Services and should be implemented accordingly.

All funded ELC is based on continuous or developmental learning experiences where qualified staff plan for effective learning and teaching. Settings will follow national guidelines for the education of children aged 2-5 years old that encourage learning through play. Parents are encouraged to make maximum use of this provision.

All providers of government funded ELC are currently inspected by Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (known as the Care Inspectorate), and Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI), part of Education Scotland and must meet the criteria set out in the National Standard.

All settings managed by Education & Children's Services are non-denominational.

A place in a nursery class does not give priority in gaining a place in the same school when enrolling for Primary 1.

The Council recognises that families have a variety of different needs and preferences with regard to ELC. Parents are entitled to apply to any Local Authority-managed nursery class and/or funded provider for their child's funded ELC place. Application takes place directly to the Local Authority via the PKC website and/or to the funded provider setting.

ELC Communities

Within PKC there are currently 48 Local Authority settings and 44 funded provider settings which offer funded ELC. Funded provider settings include private nurseries, playgroups, nursery classes and childminders within the private, voluntary and independent sectors.

Local Authority settings include Early Childhood Centres which will open 50 weeks per year and a mixture of nursery classes, some of which will open 38 weeks per year, term time and some 45 weeks per year.

Each setting has been placed into an ELC community. There are 11 ELC communities across PKC. ELC communities were created to increase the flexibility and choice for parents in line with the aspiration of the expansion of ELC. Although some Local Authority settings will provide ELC through extended opening hours, 8.00 am - 6.00 pm for 45 weeks or 50 weeks, it will not be possible or financially viable to have this option available in every Local Authority setting. PKC committed to ensuring that each ELC community would have at least one Local Authority provision which offered extended opening hours. There are also partner provider settings in each community which offer additional flexibility and choice through extended opening hours.



Local Authority Provision

The following attendance patterns will be available at Local Authority settings.

Options	Week per Year	Hours per Week	Sessions	School Holiday Entitlement			
				Spring	Summer	October	Christmas
Term Time	Term Time Only (38)	30	9.00 am - 3.00 pm (approx.)	None	None	None	None
Extended Year	45	26	2 x 8-hour sessions: 8.30 am - 4.30 pm and 2 x 5-hour sessions: 8.00 am - 1.00 pm or 1.00 pm - 6.00 pm	1 week	3 weeks	1 week	None
Full Year	50	23	3 x 5-hour sessions: 8.00 am - 1.00 pm and 2 x 4-hour sessions: 8.00 am - 12.00 noon	2 weeks	6 weeks	2 weeks	None

Partner Provider and Childminder Settings should be contacted directly to find information on availability of hours.

Information regarding school term and holiday dates is available on the Council's website [School term and holiday dates - Perth & Kinross Council \(pkc.gov.uk\)](http://pkc.gov.uk) or from all schools.

ELC for eligible 2 year olds (Strong Start 2s) are also available in several nurseries.

Nursery classes in Inch View, Letham, Pitlochry, Luncarty and St Dominic's Primary Schools offer additional childcare provision. Separate guidance on all aspects of childcare provision within Perth and Kinross is available from the Childcare Information Service:

Tel **0345 601 4477** Email Childcare@pkc.gov.uk

In settings where 1140 hours of funded ELC is already being offered parents of children who have an ante pre-school ELC place will be entitled to retain their current place and attendance pattern for their pre-school year. Parents should still complete the on-line Nursery application form to confirm they wish to remain on this pattern or to apply for a different attendance pattern/setting. Parents wishing a different attendance pattern for their child's pre-school year or wishing to access ELC in a different funded provider will be required to complete an application form.



Parents of children who have a Strong Start 2 place should apply for a funded ELC place in the 3-5 nursery provision which best suits their needs. A Support for Children and Families Referral Form should be completed if parents require their child to retain the same pattern of attendance as the Strong Start 2 placement (see page 10).

Should a parent wish to change their child's attendance pattern during the school year they must put through a change request or complete a new application. Where possible these requests will be accommodated by the setting and changes will be made with effect from the start of a new term.

A full list of Local Authority-managed settings, which includes type of provision and locality, can be found in **Appendix 1**.

Funded provider settings establish their own priority categories and dates for registration. Details of their admission procedures can be obtained by contacting the individual setting.

Further information on ELC can be obtained from Education & Children's Services:

Tel **01738 476200** Email ELCApplications@pkc.gov.uk

In addition, our Childcare & Family Information Service can supply further details of services offered by partner provider settings together with a full range of other childcare services within Perth and Kinross including childminders and out of school care:

Tel **0345 601 4477** Email ELC@pkc.gov.uk

Eligibility for Early Learning and Childcare Places

Children are eligible for an ELC place in the term after their third birthday as indicated in the ante-pre school year table on page 7. Below are details of the groups of children eligible for an ELC place in school session 2025-2026.

Parents of children who will be 5 years old on or before the start of the school session in August have a duty to educate their child at primary school or make alternative suitable arrangements for his/her education. ELC does not constitute primary schooling.

Additional Year of funded ELC

Parents of children who will be 5 between the school commencement date in August and 28 February 2026 have the right to choose for their child to have an additional year of funded ELC. Children in this age group, are eligible for an ELC place at the beginning of the school session in August 2025 and will be considered to be in their pre-school year.

Pre-School Year

All children in their pre-school year (children born between 1 March 2022 and 28 February 2023) are eligible for an ELC place at the beginning of the school session in August 2025.



Ante Pre-School Year

The following table shows the date that children in their ante pre-school year (children born between 1 March 2022 and 28 February 2023) are eligible for an ELC Place in school session 2025-2026.

Children Born Between	Nursery Session Start Date
1 March 2022 and 31 August 2022	Start of school session in August 2025 or on 3 rd birthday if child's birthday is after the start of the school session
1 September 2022 and 31 December 2022	w/c 6 January 2026
1 January 2023 and 28 February 2023	From 23 April 2026

The cut-off date for all children accessing an ELC place in school session 2025 - 2026 is 28 February 2026. Children who will be 3 years old after this date will not be eligible for an ELC funded place until the start of the next school session (August 2026).

Making an Application for an Early Learning and Childcare Place

Parents wishing to make an application for funded hours in a Local Authority setting should complete the online application form: https://my.pkc.gov.uk/service/ELC_Apply (paper application forms, if required, are available at all schools which have a nursery provision and early childhood centres). Parents will be asked to indicate on the form their first, second and third choice of placement. When applying for a place parents should include information regarding any issues which may affect their child at nursery, e.g. toileting, special dietary requirements or medical issues.

Perth & Kinross Council recognises that families have a variety of needs and preferences for accessing ELC. Parents, therefore, can apply for a place in more than one setting. The allocation of split funded places will be dependent on both settings being able to offer the hours requested. Children are entitled to 1140 hours of ELC each year. Parents are asked to indicate on their application form whether they wish to take up their child's entitlement as a split placement, e.g. some sessions within Local Authority nurseries and some commissioned within partner provider settings and/or with childminders. This often helps to meet the needs of parents who work part-time as they may purchase additional hours of care within partner provider settings to support their working needs.

If a parent is seeking a split funded place, they will be required to complete an application form for each establishment they are seeking a place within. For split funded places between two or more Local Authority settings, funding must follow the same type of placement, e.g. term time, extended year or full year. Split funded places with Funded Providers do not have to match the funding of any additional places.

Parents should be aware that although every effort will be made to meet their needs, there is no guarantee that it will be possible to offer split funded places in every case. The allocation of a split funded place will be dependent upon establishments being able to offer the hours requested and availability.

A letter will be sent advising parents that a place has been allocated for their child. Parents are required to advise if they wish to take up the offer of a place within one week of receipt of the letter.



Timeline Summary

w/c 6 January 2025	Initial Registration commences for ELC places. <i>This will include new applications, applications for changes to pattern of attendance and declarations for retained places.</i>
28 February 2025	Initial Registration closes: any applications received after this date will not be included in the Initial Allocation of places.
w/c 17 March 2025	Initial Ballot if required for any category.
w/c 24 March 2025	Initial Allocation of places for all categories (not cross-boundary).
w/c 1 March 2025	Second Registration phase opens.
20 April 2025	Second registration phase closes: any applications received after this date will not be included in the Second Allocation of places.
5 May 2025	Second Allocation of places for all categories (not cross-boundary).
23 May 2025	Panel meeting for Support for Children and Families places.
w/c 2 June 2025	Allocation of late registration.
w/c 2 June 2025	Allocation of cross boundary places

Allocation Priorities

Priority admissions categories are detailed in **Appendix 2**.

Ballot or In-house Draw for the Initial Allocation of ELC Places

Wherever possible the needs and preferences of parents will be met, but if not, alternatives will be offered.

If it is not possible to allocate the requested pattern of attendance for all children within any of the priority categories, then an in-house draw will take place for all the children in that priority category. If this becomes necessary all parents will be advised in writing, and wherever possible invited to attend the in-house draw which will be held by the setting.

Similarly, if a ballot is required because it is not possible to offer places to all the children who registered for a place at a setting, then a ballot will take place for all the children in that priority category. If this becomes necessary all parents will be advised in writing, and wherever possible invited to attend the ballot which will be held by the setting.

A summary of ballot and in-house draw guidelines is contained in **Appendix 3**.



Allocation of Places

Standard communication to parents allocating ELC places will be sent out by all schools during the same week as outlined in the Summary Timeline on page 7. In addition to information about the type of place offered, this communication notifies parents that the child will not be finally enrolled into the place until the online reply form, accepting the place and conditions, has been completed by the parent. Parents are required to advise the school of their decision within one week from receipt of the communication. Once the reply slip has been returned the place is assigned to the child and parents should enroll the child at the setting.

Withdrawal of Early Learning and Childcare Places

Nursery places may be withdrawn in exceptional circumstances (where the parent has not complied with the conditions they agreed when accepting the place). For example:

- *a parent has accepted a term time place of 5 days per week and the child has been absent every Friday for no valid reason - the Friday may be withdrawn.*
- *a child has not attended nursery at all for a period of 3 weeks without a valid reason - the child's nursery place may be withdrawn.*

Places will only be withdrawn with the approval of the Service Manager of Early Learning and Childcare. If there are other children awaiting a place then children who are not attending on a regular basis without good reason may have their place withdrawn.

In such circumstances every effort should be made to discuss the situation with parents before formally terminating the placement and procedures within the nursery absence policy should have been followed. As the wellbeing and safety of all children is of paramount importance, the school will implement Child Protection procedures if that is thought to be appropriate.

Support for Children and Families Places

Support for Children and Families places will be given priority in accordance with the priority admission categories. This will enable children who have been granted a Support for Children and Families place to attend the Local Authority nursery of their choice and access their 1140 hours in an attendance pattern that best meets their needs or the needs of their family. Some children may also be able to access additional hours of ELC over and above that of 1140 to support needs identified by the Priority Admissions Panel.

All Support for Children and Families places are available for children on a Council-wide basis.

Referrals for Support for Children and Families places should be made based on educational or social need in consultation with relevant agencies. Such agencies wishing to submit a referral should note that this should be agreed and discussed with the senior management. The parent's permission must be obtained in writing, prior to a referral being submitted.

In order to ensure consistency with the policy and guidelines, all referrals should be made on the Support for Children and Families Referral Forms for session 2024-25.



Guidance on Making a Referral for a Support for Children and Families Place

On making referrals agencies should take cognisance of the following statement in Section 93(4) of the Children Act (Scotland) 1995. The Act refers to a child in need as being in need of care and attention because:

- *the child is unlikely to achieve or maintain, or to have the opportunity of achieving or maintaining, a reasonable standard of health or development unless these services are provided by the Local Authority;*
- *the child's health or development is likely significantly to be impaired or further impaired unless such services are so provided;*
- *the child is disabled;*
- *the child is affected adversely by the disability of any other person in his/her family;*
- *the child is looked after by a Local Authority as per Section 17(6).*

In addition, priority places for children should take into account factors in the Code of Practice for the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Acts 2004 and 2009:

- *family and individual circumstances, e.g. disrupted home life, parental health problems;*
- *disability or health, e.g. motor or sensory impairment, learning difficulties;*
- *social and emotional, e.g. behavioural difficulties;*
- *families for whom English is an additional language and where this is causing significant communications difficulties for the child.*

Referral forms, signed by parents, should be submitted to the ELC setting parents wish their child to attend, who will then forward them to the Schools' Support Team within Education & Children's Services. Senior management are requested to countersign the referral form to indicate their support of the application. Referral forms must be returned, prior to the dates set for the initial allocation decisions, as detailed in the Summary Timeline on page 7.

Support for Children and Families places will be allocated by the Priority Admissions Panel based on the referral form and after discussion with the appropriate senior management and other relevant agencies.

It should be noted that once initial allocations have been made subsequent referrals and allocations will be dealt with timeously using the same procedures.

Early Learning and Childcare Provision at Fairview School

Fairview School is a school for children with long-term complex and multiple support needs. It can make provision for children from the age of three years. Admission is based on a multi-disciplinary assessment. The entitlement of 1140 hours will be delivered in a term time model (30 hours each week).

The school likes to augment its specialist provision with a link to a mainstream nursery for each child in their pre-school year. This is normally during the child's pre-school year, but may extend until the age of six, depending on the child's learning needs.

Strong Start 2 Places

A number of Local Authority and partner provider settings offer ELC places to children who are 2 years old. These Strong Start 2 places will be offered to eligible children in line with criteria set down by the Scottish



Government. In Local Authority Nurseries these places are ring-fenced and therefore not included within the Priority Admission categories for 3-5 year olds. Further information is available [Funded early learning and childcare for 2 year olds \(Strong Starts\) - Perth & Kinross Council \(pkc.gov.uk\)](#)

Appendix 1 - Early Learning and Childcare Settings per Locality

Childminders

PKC work with a number of childminders to deliver funded ELC. Should you wish to take your funded entitlement with a childminder, please contact them directly to find out what attendance patterns they can offer.

To find out which childminders operate in your area please check www.families.scot or <https://www.pkc.gov.uk/article/22938/Nursery-locality-and-attendance-patterns>.

Please use [Find my nearest childcare providers - Perth & Kinross Council \(pkc.gov.uk\)](#) to find your nearest Childcare provider

Appendix 2 - Priority Admissions Categories

1 Retained Places

Parents wishing to retain their child's current placement and pattern of attendance will not have to reapply and these children will automatically keep the place they had as an ante pre-school child. Parents will however be asked to complete a declaration of attendance form. This will provide continuity of arrangements for families.

If parents choose to change their child's previous attendance pattern then it will be considered within the categories below for all pre-school age children

2 Support for Children and Families Places

Support for Children and Families places that have been granted by the admission panel will be allocated to children ahead of other categories below. This will allow vulnerable children to access places that best suits their or their families' needs.

3 Priority Categories for PKC Children Residing Within the ELC

Community 3.1 *Pre-school children*

3.2 *Ante pre-school children eligible to start in August*

3.3 *Ante pre-school children eligible to start in January*

3.4 *Ante pre-school children eligible to start in April*

4 Priority Categories for PKC Children Residing Outwith the ELC

Community 4.1 *Pre-school children*

4.2 *Ante pre-school children eligible to start in August*

4.3 *Ante pre-school children eligible to start in January*

4.4 *Ante pre-school children eligible to start in April*

If a ballot or in-house draw is required for one of the above categories, then priority would be given in the first instance to the categories below.

5 Children Outwith PKC

Once the above has been allocated, unfilled places would be available for children outwith PKC under the following priorities:

5.1 *Pre-school children*

5.2 *Ante pre-school children*

It is essential that all schools maintain accurate information for parents on availability of places and inform parents of any anticipated pressure on places throughout the session. Headteachers should liaise regularly with the ECS ELC Applications Team.



Only in exceptional circumstances would it be considered necessary to close a nursery school or class and then only with the approval of the Executive Director of Education & Children's Services. At all times a full service should be provided, as is the case with primary and secondary school education.

The staff-pupil ratio in Perth and Kinross nursery schools and classes will be a minimum of 1 member of staff to 8 children. Nursery schools and classes where children attend for full-time places or have Strong Start 2 places will have appropriate staffing ratios.



Appendix 3 - Summary of Ballot and In-House Draw Guidelines for the Allocation of Early Learning and Childcare Places

The following outlines key points in the ballot procedures. Further information can be found in the '**Guidance on Ballot Procedures 2025-2026**' available from schools.

- *If demand exceeds the available number of places for attendance pattern or place in any of the priority categories an in-house draw or ballot should be conducted according to the guidelines. The same process applies to ballot within any priority category.*
- *Ballots are held on the same week across the Council.*
- *Parents should be notified in writing in advance of ballot/in-house draw procedures and the date of the ballot/in-house draw and should be invited to attend (by the school).*
- *Headteachers should ensure that members of the ballot panel are familiar with all procedures.*
- *The school should be clear as to how many available spaces they have before any ballot takes place.*
- *All eligible children should be placed in the ballot/in-house draw.*
- *Once slips have been drawn, they should be retained for future reference.*

There are special circumstances and procedures for balloting twins, triplets etc. Parents should be made aware of these prior to the ballot taking place.

Note: 'Guidance on Ballot Procedures' is used by schools in conjunction with this guidance, 'Policy and Guidelines for Admission to Nursery Schools and Classes for School Session 2025-2026'.

If you or someone you know would like a copy of this document in another language or format, (on occasion, only a summary of the document will be provided in translation), this can be arranged by contacting the Customer Service Centre on 01738 475000.

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

All Council Services can offer a telephone translation facility.

www.pkc.gov.uk



