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1 Background information

(a) Catchment areas

West Lothian is divided into catchment areas for primary and secondary schools.

Each school is either denominational (linked to a particular religion) or non-denominational (not linked to any particular religion). All the denominational schools in West Lothian are Roman Catholic.

Each home address has a catchment denominational school and a catchment non-denominational school, for both primary and secondary education. The catchment schools depend on home addresses. Although efforts are made to provide enough places for all children in the catchment area at the catchment school, living within a catchment area does not guarantee a child a place.

More information on catchment areas can be obtained from Pupil Placement.

(b) Reserved places

If a school is not already oversubscribed by children from the catchment area, the council has a policy of reserving places for pupils moving into the school's catchment area during the school year. Normally, primary schools with two classes of 33 pupils in each year group reserve three places for each year group. Schools with one class of 33 pupils in each year group reserve two places for each year group. The number of places reserved may vary depending on the information available on each school.

(c) Infant schools

Dechmont Infant School is the only infant primary school in West Lothian. Children in years P1, P2 and P3 attend and must move on to another primary school for P4. Further information is available from the school or online at www.westlothian.gov.uk

(d) Religious schools

The council tries to provide places, if possible, for baptised Roman Catholic children at a Roman Catholic school.

Parents should notify the council if their child is a baptised Roman Catholic, is being baptised or is being prepared for first communion. Evidence of this must be provided (for example a baptism certificate).

(e) Oversubscribed schools

A number of schools in West Lothian are often oversubscribed, especially for P1.

(f) Childcare

The council has set up childcare facilities in line with guidance from the Scottish Executive. Wraparound care provides childcare mainly for pre-school children and makes it easier for parents to return to work and training. Wraparound care is also available for children in P1 to P3, usually from 8am to 5.30pm, although places may be more limited. Wraparound care provides a wide range of activities to meet children's needs. It is not a free service although charges are kept as low as possible. Childcare is also available with private-sector partners, usually from

7.30am to 6pm. Some schools offer breakfast clubs and after school clubs for children in P1 to P7. More information is available from the Childcare Information Service or online at www.westlothian.gov.uk

Children at primary school have no automatic rights to receive wraparound care.

(g) Choosing a primary school (and wraparound care)

Most parents choose to send their children to their catchment school. Education law also allows parents to choose a school other than the catchment school. The council must grant placing requests if there are no legal reasons to refuse. Any child living outside a catchment area who has been allocated a place in a school will keep that place even if another child moves into the school's catchment area.

The application form allows parents to apply for a school place and wraparound care on one form. There is a separate wraparound care application pack available if parents decide to apply for wraparound care at a later date.

When a child has been offered a place, it will not be withdrawn unless false information has been given on the application form.

(h) If your child's circumstances change

If a child's circumstances change (for example, their address), parents should change the application form. If the application form has already been submitted, parents can write to the Pupil Placement Section. If information is deliberately withheld, the offer of a place can be withdrawn or the child's place cancelled. If information is provided late, it will be considered. However if all the places have been granted, it may not be possible to give a place, although it may affect the child's position on a 'waiting list' (see paragraph 2h).

(i) Opening times

In West Lothian primary and secondary schools, there are no afternoon classes on a Friday.

Wraparound care times overlap both pre-school (morning and afternoon sessions) and primary opening hours, in most cases starting at 8am and finishing at 5.30pm Monday to Friday. Wraparound care is also available outside school term-time apart from the Christmas holidays. There is a limited service on Good Friday, Easter Monday and May Day. More information can be obtained from the Childcare Information Service.

(j) Childcare costs

Wraparound care is a council childcare service and is not free of charge. There is a yearly administration fee (which cannot be refunded) and an hourly charge with a minimum weekly charge. The minimum period charged for is 30 minutes even if less than one hour is required. For example, if the application is for a morning place starting at 8.10am and finishing at 8.50am (40 minutes), this would be treated as two 30-minute blocks (8am to 8.30am and 8.30am to 9am). An afternoon place starting at 2.50pm and finishing at 3.25pm (35 minutes), would be treated as two 30-minute blocks (2.45pm to 3.15pm and 3.15pm to 3.45 pm). As a result, the daily charge would be for four 30-minute blocks (two hours in total). Wraparound childcare must be paid for in advance.

(k) Help with wraparound and childcare costs

The Government has introduced Working Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit to help families with the cost of childcare. Local Jobcentres or HM Revenue and Customs will help parents work out if they are eligible for tax credits. Application forms can be obtained from Jobcentres and from schools that offer wraparound care.

A scheme of reduced charges for wraparound care is also offered. There are reductions for certain families whose childcare costs exceed a specified amount each week and for some students. More information and an application form can be obtained from the Childcare Information Service. Information and an application form for reduced charges will be sent to parents who indicate on their application form that they are applying for reduced charges (Appendix 1).

(l) Meals

There is a small charge for snacks and breakfast in wraparound care. A cooked school lunch is available at all schools at a daily charge from Monday to Thursday, and packed lunches are available on Fridays. Alternatively children can bring in a packed lunch.

Staff at each primary school will be happy to advise exactly what happens.

(m) Children who need extra support for learning

In line with legislation, the council has a policy of including children who need extra support for learning in mainstream schools. Children who need significant extra support for learning beyond that which can normally be delivered in school can be supported by the local cluster resource group (CRG). The group includes professionals from health, social policy, education and other relevant people from the local community. If the CRG cannot provide adequate support locally a senior officer review group (SORG) would recommend an appropriate level of support within mainstream schools or sometimes at specialist schools. If a child is being assessed by the CRG, he or she should have an individual educational programme (IEP). More information on this is available from the Principal Support Officer - Additional Learning Needs.

(n) Musically gifted children

The council supports children with outstanding talent. This normally takes the form of a grant towards the fees to go to the Junior Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama in Glasgow. More information can be obtained from the Arts Manager.

(o) Educating children at home

By law parents are responsible for their children's education. The council has a duty to provide education and most parents are happy to hand the responsibility for their children's education over to schools. However, some parents choose to educate their children at home. For further information please call Pupil Placement.

(p) School handbooks

Handbooks which give useful information about a school are available from the school. The head teacher will be pleased to supply a copy. Handbooks can also be downloaded from www.westlothian.gov.uk .

(q) Wraparound-care escort service

Arrangements have been made to escort pupils to a number of wraparound establishments between nearby primary schools, primary-school nursery classes, nursery schools and early years centres. Further information can be obtained from the Childcare Information Service or online at www.westlothian.gov.uk.

(r) School transport

Apart from the arrangements mentioned above for wraparound care, it is the responsibility of parents to get their children to and from school. The council will arrange suitable transport free of charge if:

- a pupil at their catchment primary school does not have a suitable walking route from home to school or lives more than 1.5 miles away from the school; or
- the council asks a pupil to go to a non-catchment-area primary school when the pupil lives outwith the distances described above. (This could happen if a place is not available for the pupil at their catchment primary school.)

The council will not make travel arrangements if parents choose to send their child to a non-catchment school.

More information, including a booklet called School Transport – A guide for Parents and Pupils is available from the Public Transport Team - telephone 01506 775291 or email iris.keith@westlothian.gov.uk.

2 Admission procedures

(a) Multiple applications

If more than one application is received, only the most recent will be considered.

(b) Age ranges for starting primary or infant school

The council must provide education for children of school age. A child is of school age if he or she will turn five before 1 March during their first school year. If a child is of school age but is not five years old by the start of the school year, parents may delay their child's admission until the start of the next school year.

The council does not have a duty to educate children who are not of school age. However, parents may apply for early admission (see appendix 2). Parents should contact the head teacher of their preferred school for advice about the starting date for their child.

(c) Applying for a place in a primary or infant school

(i) Primary 1 applications (for August each year)

Pupil Placement deals with all applications for year P1 for the next school year (the school years run from August to June). In November, information packs are sent to pre-school establishments and primary schools. Many pre-school establishments and primary schools will also help parents fill in the form and will return it to Pupil Placement. For information, contact the head teacher of the preferred school. If a child is not at a West Lothian nursery or playgroup or primary school, parents should receive their primary school admission information pack in the post. In this case, fill in the enclosed application form and return the form direct to Pupil Placement.

Application forms must be returned by 31 December. If application for a place is made after this date, the application will be considered, but places may be limited.

(ii) Applications made during the school year

Primary schools deal with all applications for years P1 to P7 made during the school year. For information contact the head teacher of the preferred school. An application form must be completed and returned to the preferred primary school and **NOT** to Pupil Placement.

(iii) Applications made during the school holidays

Pupil Placement deals with all applications for admission to P1 to P7 made during the school holidays. An application form must be completed and returned to Pupil Placement who will then send the form to the preferred primary school for the start of the school term.

It is not possible to reserve places months or weeks before a child can start at the school applied for.

(d) Applying for wraparound care (P1 to P3 pupils)

If application is being made for a P1, P2 or P3 place, and a wraparound-care place, parents do not need to fill in a separate form for wraparound care. A separate wraparound-care information pack can be obtained should a parent decide to apply for wraparound care later on.

If wraparound care is required, application must be made every year even if the child is already receiving care.

In line with council policy, priority is given to pre-school children for wraparound-care places. It may be possible, if there are spaces, to offer wraparound-care places to children in P1 to P3.

All the information in the pack should be read carefully. Arrangements should be made to meet the person in charge of the preferred school (which has wraparound facilities). They can help with completion of the application form or answer other questions on the care they provide.

(e) Arrangements for starting primary or infant school

Primary and infant schools used to arrange for children to start gradually over the first few weeks part-time. This was to help them settle into their new school. However, because most children now have up to two years experience of pre-school education, these arrangements are now being reviewed. More information about exactly what will happen at a particular school can be obtained by speaking to the head teacher.

(f) Transferring from an infant school to a primary school

If a child is due to transfer from P3 at an infant school to P4 at a primary school, parents should get a letter from Pupil Placement telling them about the arrangements. An 'Application for admission' form must be completed at the preferred school, or filled in and returned to Pupil Placement at Lindsay House.

(g) Important dates

Updated primary-school admission information packs are given to all primary and infant schools at the end of November each year. Forms for August P1 admission must be returned by 31 December. If a child will be transferring from infant school to primary school, parents must return the application forms by 31 March so the child can get a place in year P4 in August.

If application for a place is made at a later date, the application will be considered but the places may be limited.

(h) Waiting lists

Pupil Placement keep waiting lists for schools that are oversubscribed. A child can only be on the waiting list of the first-choice school. Schools manage the waiting lists for admissions during the school year. Pupil Placement manage the waiting lists for new P1 admissions until the second week of the Autumn school term. All waiting lists are put in order in line with the council guidelines for placing children in schools and decisions made by the Director of Education & Cultural Services. A child's position on a waiting list can change, for example due to a change of address. It is not necessary to keep checking a child's position on a waiting list. Pupil Placement will contact parents if a place becomes available.

3 Decisions

- (a)** If there are enough places, all applications will be granted, except for early admission requests. The Director of Education & Cultural Services will decide on places when necessary, for example if a school gets more applications than they have places. Parents will not be interviewed. Parents will be advised if there is a need for the Director to decide on places.
- (b)** All applications that include wraparound care will be granted in line with council policy (and previous decisions of the Early Years Admission Panel) if there are enough places. If not, the Early Years Admission Panel will decide who receives wraparound care places.
- (c)** Account will be taken of all information provided in the application form. All the information that is considered important should be included in the application form.
- (d)** A letter with the decision about the application will be sent to parents. If application is being made for P1 or P4 places for August, the letter will be issued by the end of April. If application is being made for wraparound care, a letter will be issued as soon as possible after the decisions have been made, which will be no later than June of each year.
- (e)** P1 applications or any extra information received during the school holidays will be acknowledged. If a letter is not received within 10 working days, please phone 01506 776002.
- (f)** If the preferred school is not the catchment school, parents will get a Scottish Executive booklet called 'Choosing a school - a guide for parents', if this is available at that time. This booklet is also available from schools or on the Scottish Executive website.
- (g)** Although the application form has spaces for three choices of school, it is only the first choice (question 4 on the application form) that will be treated as the 'placing request'.

4 Priority

The guidelines used for wraparound care are set out in appendix 3. The guidelines for primary or infant school are set out in appendix 4. The items are not listed in order of priority so parents should not treat them as a points list. The application form allows parents to provide extra information to support the application. It is important to make sure this information provides a full explanation, as the council cannot take responsibility for information not provided. All the information given is treated very confidentially. Parents should not wait until they find out that they have been refused their first choice before providing this information.

5 If a place is refused

In line with the law, if an application to primary school is refused, the council must give the reasons why. Education law sets out the reasons why an application may be refused.

The main reasons are if:

- to do so the council would have to employ an additional teacher or spend a lot of money, for example, where an additional classroom would have to be provided.
- a child's education would suffer from a change of school.
- education in the school parents want would not be suitable to the age, ability or aptitude of the child. This might apply if parents want their child to be admitted to a stage of education for which the child is not yet ready, or to a school which cannot meet the child's needs.
- the council thinks that a child can only be provided for in the school requested at the expense of the other pupils' education.
- the school requested has been provided for children with additional support needs and the council thinks that the child does not need the special equipment or specially trained staff provided in that school.
- a child has been very troublesome at school. If a child is excluded from a school, the council is not bound to re-admit him or her. If a child has been in constant trouble, and his or her parents ask for them to be moved to another school, the council can refuse to provide a place if it thinks that the child would be likely to disturb the order and discipline in that school, or the educational well-being of pupils attending the school. The council may indeed suggest another school better able to cope with the child.
- accepting the request for a non-catchment child would prevent the council from reserving a place at the school for a child likely to move into the catchment area.
- accepting the request would make it necessary for the council to create an additional class or employ an additional teacher at a future stage of the child's primary education.
- accepting the request would mean that the capacity of the school would be exceeded in terms of pupil numbers.

6 Appeals procedure

In West Lothian, all appeals are heard by the West Lothian (Placing in Schools) Appeals Committee. This committee is independent of Education and Cultural Services.

Parents will be sent a letter if the Director of Education & Cultural Services has refused the application. The letter will say that parents can appeal to the council's West Lothian (Placing in Schools) Appeals Committee against the application being refused. It will say to whom a letter of appeal should be sent. The Committee hears cases and considers written evidence and makes decisions. This is a formal legal process. If parents want to appeal, they can appeal in writing, in person, by themselves or with the help of a friend or representative. If parents cannot attend, they can have someone else speak on their behalf. There will also be representatives of the Director of Education & Cultural Services at the appeal hearing to put the council's case forward. The Committee takes the decision independently. Parents then have the right to appeal to the Sheriff if the Committee does not decide in their favour.

7 More information

The council welcomes and values the views of parents on the service received. If parents have any views on the service they should write to Pupil Placement at the address below. Each school year, a few parents may be asked to fill in a short questionnaire on the service.

Useful Contacts

- (a) **Pupil Placement Section**
Education and Cultural Services
Lindsay House
South Bridge Street
Bathgate
EH48 1TS
Telephone: 01506 776002

- (b) **Principal Support Officer - Additional Learning Needs**
Education and Cultural Services
Lindsay House
South Bridge Street
Bathgate
EH48 1TS
Telephone: 01506 776091

- (c) **Arts Manager**
Education and Cultural Services
Lindsay House
South Bridge Street
Bathgate
EH48 1TS
Telephone: 01506 776176

- (d) Support Services**
Education and Cultural Services
Lindsay House
South Bridge Street
Bathgate
EH48 1TS
Telephone: 01506 776003
email ema@westlothian.gov.uk
- (e) School Transport**
Public Transport Team
Telephone 01506 775291
email - iris.keith@westlothian.gov.uk
- (f) West Lothian Online**
www.westlothian.gov.uk
- (g) National and Local Childcare Information Internet Site**
www.childcarelink.gov.uk
- (h) Parentzone**
Telephone: 0131 244 4485
www.parentzonescotland.gov.uk
- (i) The Scottish Executive Education Department**
Victoria Quay
Edinburgh
EH6 6QQ
Telephone: 0131 244 4436
www.scotland.gov.uk

Conditions to be eligible for reduced charges

The council considers the following when checking eligibility for reduced charges:

- Families who receive Working Tax Credit where one parent is in full-time education or training. This means the family does not receive the childcare part of Working Tax Credit.
- Families who receive Working Tax Credit including the childcare part, where the actual costs of childcare are more than £150 a week for three or more children. (The reduction would apply to the third child or any further children.)
- Families where both parents are, or a single parent is, in full-time education or training and the family income is a student grant or Income Support.

Parents or guardians making the application must be living in West Lothian and using one of our wraparound care facilities.

Children starting primary school early

1 Policy on children starting early

The council's policy allows children to start primary school early. However, a place will only be granted if it is considered that refusal of the application could harm a child's education in the long-term. Even then, a place would be granted only after all other ways of providing suitable education have been considered.

2 Possible effects of children starting early

Refusal to grant a place early is not likely to harm a child's education in the long-term. In fact, early admission may itself harm a child's educational development. The child may be too young to cope socially and become frustrated or lose confidence. Indeed, teachers often find that older children are generally more successful in P1. Progress in the first year at school gives children a solid base for the future.

3 Nursery school or class

All pre-school education is a valuable experience for children who are not of school age. Pre-school education is widely available throughout West Lothian, and the curriculum is designed to develop a child's confidence, maturity and sense of responsibility to others.

If parents have not already done so, they may want to apply for a pre-school place. This will not affect any request which might be made for an early place. A pre-school place not being available is not normally accepted as an argument for your child starting early.

4 Information about your child - exceptional qualities

When applying for a place early, reasons must be given. Exceptional circumstances or qualities should be mentioned because early admission is made only in exceptional cases. For example, intellectual ability or social or emotional maturity might be mentioned. It is not enough simply to show that a child might cope with early admission, is ready for primary school, or just misses the entry date. Wherever possible, parents should provide expert written evidence to support their case. The Council does not provide assessments of children for this purpose.

5 Who takes the decision to grant or refuse an application for admission?

The Early Years Admissions Panel considers all requests for an early place for children. It takes into account all information supplied to support the application for admission before making a recommendation to the Director of Education & Cultural Services who takes the decision.

6 Reasons for refusing applications for admission

The reasons for refusing applications for early admission under the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 are the same as for children of school age. However, the main reason normally given is that the education is not suited to the age, ability or skills of the child.

7 Points parents may want to consider before going ahead with an application

- Whether the child has exceptional qualities which makes him or her different from other children of the same age.
- Whether the child is greatly advanced compared with other children of the same age – for example social interaction and intellectual abilities.
- Whether a year, or a further year, at a pre-school establishment would not be more appropriate for the child.

Places in primary school with wraparound-care facilities

In considering wraparound care the council takes account of the following.

- The placing in schools guidelines shown in appendix 4.
- The need to provide uninterrupted education and care for pre-school children.
- The need to meet the childcare needs of parents at work, education or training.
- The need for wraparound care to pay for itself.
- Access and collection arrangements – including matters such as:
 - a** a brother or sister continuing to go the primary school applied for, or close primary school, secondary school, and so on;
 - b** how near home is to school by a suitable walking route; or
 - c** pre-school education has been made via assisted transport managed by us.

The above are not in any priority order. The Council has discretion to admit a child to any pre-school establishment in special circumstances as determined by the Council.

Guidelines for placing children in schools

In considering placing requests account is taken of the following.

- The design of the school and the accommodation at the school.
- The appropriate normal maximum class size as defined in the Conditions of Service for Teaching Staff, which form part of the council's contract of employment with each teacher.
- The need to maintain quality education without having to use extra resources.

If a parent's preferred school has more applications than places, the following will be considered:

- Priority will be given to pupils living within the catchment area of the school over those pupils outwith that catchment area.
- In the case of pupils living outwith the catchment area of the school, priority will be given to pupils who live in West Lothian over those pupils living outwith West Lothian.
- In the case of a Roman Catholic school where there are more applications from those living within the catchment area than places available, priority will be given to those pupils who have been baptised into the Roman Catholic Church.
- Special medical or physical needs.
- Special educational needs.
- A brother or sister continuing to go to the school applied for.
- An education course available only at the school applied for.
- The distance between home and the school by a non-hazardous walking route.
- How long the child has been at an associated primary school (infant to primary school transfer and requests for a place in year S1).
- Information provided.

The above are not in any priority order. The Council has discretion to admit a pupil to any school in special circumstances as determined by the Council.

Customers with Special Requirements

Information is available in Braille, on tape, in large print and community languages.
Please contact the Interpretation and Translation Service on 0131 242 8181.

هذه المعلومات متوفرة بلغة بريل وعلى شريط وبخط كبير وبلغات الجالية.
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