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1. Pre-School Provision In West Lothian

(a) Background

Pre-school education can improve children's educational attainment and provide an experience that eases the transition to primary school. For parents wishing to return to work and training, the Council has introduced a childcare service, known as wraparound care. All pre-school establishments (including partner providers such as playgroup nurseries and private nurseries) have suitably qualified staff, including care assistants, nursery nurses and teachers and meet the national standards for staffing and accommodation.

(b) Council Pre-School Establishments

The Council currently provides pre-school places to three and four year olds within nursery schools and nursery classes (pre-school establishments); all offering similar opportunities for a child's social and educational development. Details can be found on the Council's website at www.westlothian.gov.uk or by telephoning Pupil Placement.

(c) Partner Providers

West Lothian Council has partnership agreements for the provision of pre-school education with some playgroup nurseries and private nurseries. Details can be found on the Council's website at www.westlothian.gov.uk or by telephoning Pupil Placement..

(d) Over subscription

A number of establishments in West Lothian often receive more applications than there are places available. As a result, it is unlikely that oversubscribed establishments will be able to offer any places to eligible children in the following January and April terms.

(e) Childcare

Wraparound care facilities have been set up in line with guidance from the Scottish Executive. Wraparound care provides childcare for three and four year olds and makes it easier for parents to return to work and training. Wraparound care is also offered to children in year P1 to P3 although places may be limited. Wraparound care provides a wide range of activities to meet the needs of children. It is not a free service, although charges are kept as low as possible. The normal hours of opening are from 8am to 5.30pm. Childcare is also available with the council's private-sector partners (private nurseries), usually from 7am to 6pm. More information is available on www.westlothian.gov.uk or from the Childcare Information Service.

(f) Catchment Areas

West Lothian is divided into catchment areas for primary and secondary schools. Catchment schools are determined by home address. **There are no catchment areas for Council pre-school establishments.**

Attendance at a nursery class or nursery school within a primary school campus does not automatically give a right to transfer to the P1 class at the primary school.

More information can be obtained by telephoning the Pupil Placement Section.

(g) School Transport

Access to pre-school placements has been improved, particularly in rural areas. As a result an escorted transport service is being provided to certain nursery schools. All escorted services are free of charge and apply to afternoon placements only. Further information can be obtained from the Pupil Placement Section. A transport service to any other pre-school placements is not provided.

(h) Wraparound Care Escort Service

Arrangements have been set up to escort pupils to a number of wraparound establishments between nearby primary schools, primary-school nursery classes and nursery schools – Further information can be obtained from Pupil Placement Section

(i) Denominational and Non-Denominational Education

In West Lothian all pre-school establishments are non-denominational (not linked to a particular religion) - irrespective of the location of the facility, even if it is sited within a denominational (Roman Catholic) school campus.

(j) Choice of pre-school establishment (and wraparound care)

It is not always possible to make places at a specific pre-school establishment available. First, second and third choices can be entered on the application form. If only one choice is given, Pupil Placement or the Early Years Admission Panel may choose another if this is not available. A separate application form must be completed for each child.

Once a child has been offered a place, the offer will not be withdrawn (**unless the place was obtained on the basis of false information**).

(k) If a 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 2g).

(l) Opening Times

Like many education authorities, West Lothian has an 'asymmetric week'. This means that the pre-school establishments offer longer afternoon sessions Monday to Thursday as there is no afternoon session on a Friday. Some establishments also hold sessions every other Friday morning. Typical council and partner playgroup and nursery opening hours are between 8.45am and 11.30am and between 12.20pm and 3.30pm. Wraparound care times overlap both pre-school (morning and afternoon sessions) and primary school opening hours, starting at 8am and finishing at 5.30pm Monday to Friday. Wraparound care is available outwith school term-time, apart from during the Christmas holidays. Private nursery opening hours vary and range from 7am to 6pm Monday to Friday.

Always consider the opening hours of the preferred establishment before applying. Further information can be obtained from the Childcare Information Service.

(m) Childcare costs

Parents applying for childcare at a private nursery should contact the nursery direct.

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.

(n) Help with Wraparound care 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.

(o) Meals

There is a small charge for snacks during pre-school education (in council and partner playgroup nursery establishments). A school lunch may also be available at some establishments or your child can bring in a packed lunch. Information on charges for snacks and meals can be obtained from the relevant nursery.

(p) Children with Special Educational Needs

In line with legislation, West Lothian has a policy of integrating children who need extra support for learning into "mainstream" pre-school provision. Children who need significant extra support for learning can be identified at an early stage by the

local Pre-school Community Assessment Team (PreSCAT), which includes professionals from health, social policy and education. If PreSCAT cannot provide complete support in a mainstream establishment, they would refer the child to a Senior Officer Review Group (SORG) which would decide an appropriate level of support. If a child is being assessed by PreSCAT and SORG, he or she should have an individual educational programme (IEP). More information can be obtained from Additional Learning Needs.

(q) Musically Gifted Children

The council makes provision for children with outstanding musical talent. This normally takes the form of part time attendance at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama in Glasgow. Further information can be obtained from Arts Services.

(r) School Handbooks

Up-to-date leaflets or handbooks are available from each pre-school establishment giving information that may be useful for parents seeking admission for their children. Parents should contact the establishment for a copy. Further information can be obtained from the Childcare Information Service.

2. Admission Procedures

(a) Age ranges for starting and going to pre-school

Children become eligible for a pre-school place at the beginning of the school term following their third birthday. They continue to be eligible until the end of the school session before they are first eligible to start primary school.

If parents decide not to apply for, or to turn down, a pre-school placement when a child is eligible, perhaps because it is thought that the child is not ready, places at preferred establishments may be more limited later in the school session or at the start of the following school session.

Parents may decide to defer a child's entry into primary school (for children born between 1 September and the end of February) until the start of the school session following the child's fifth birthday. Children born between 1 September and 31 December have no automatic right to a deferred year pre-school place (extra year of funded pre-school education), even if parents did not apply for, or turned down, placements for all or part of a child's ante pre-school year.

(b) Applying for a place in a pre-school establishment

All documentation should be read carefully. Parents wishing to apply for a place should do one of the following:

- Arrange to meet the person in charge of the preferred establishment who will provide help to complete the application form. They should also be able to advise on the availability of places in their establishment and answer any other questions. The "Application for Admission to Pre-School Education" form should be completed as fully as possible. The child's birth certificate should also be taken to the preferred establishment. The establishment will forward the completed form to Pupil Placement.
- Return the completed application form to Pupil Placement enclosing a copy of the child's birth certificate. Pupil Placement can also provide help and

advice. The child's name will be added to the list of applicants for the preferred pre-school establishment, as long as the child is already two years old. If application has already been made for the next school session (which start in August of each year) this can be updated.

Forms must be returned by 15 March. Should application for a pre-school place be made at a later date, the application will be considered, but places may be limited.

(c) Applying for a Pre-School Education Grant with a partner provider

The 'Application for a place in pre-school education' form can be used to apply for a funded education place with one of the council's partner providers (playgroup, nursery or private nursery). The place will meet the same standards as other council pre-school establishments and will be for twelve and a half hours per week. The twelve and a half hours funded by the council must be broken up into sessions similar in length to those in council establishments. Any other childcare needed from the partner provider (where available) should be negotiated direct with the establishment.

All the documentation should be read carefully. Arrangements should be made to meet the person in charge of the preferred establishment who can help with the completion of the application form or answer other questions. The form should be completed as fully as possible. The child's birth certificate should be taken to the establishment. Alternatively, the completed application and a copy of the birth certificate can be returned to Pupil Placement who can also provide help and advice.

(d) Applying for Childcare

Parents should arrange to meet the person in charge of their preferred establishment (that has childcare or wraparound facilities), who can help fill in the application form or answer other questions. If childcare is needed for a full day, parents should apply for a morning session and explain their childcare needs on the application form (including the times when care is needed). Some primary schools and private nurseries offer childcare for the full day. Children will be given a morning or afternoon education session, depending on daily childcare needs.

(e) Arrangements for Starting Pre-School

Pre-School establishments often arrange for children who have not been to a nursery or playgroup before, to start gradually over four to six weeks on a part-time basis. This helps children to settle in to their new nursery or group. Even though some children will have a phased admission, they will still receive a full education session.

Staff at each establishment will be happy to explain exactly what happens.

(f) Delaying admissions to primary school

Children are of school age if they reach the age of five before 1 March during their first school session. If a child is of school age, but has not reached age five by the start of the new school session, their place can be delayed until the start of the school session after the child's fifth birthday. Children whose birthdays are in January and February are entitled to an extra year of pre-school education, including funded pre-school education at partner providers (playgroup nursery or private nursery).

An application pack 'An extra year of pre-school education' can be obtained from Pupil Placement or from the preferred establishment. The pack includes an application form and helpful information. It also explains what is required to apply for an extra year of pre-school education. The application for deferred entry should be discussed with the head of the preferred school.

The Early Years Admission Panel will decide all applications for an extra year of pre-school education, apart from children with birthdays in January or February. A 'Deferred Entry to Primary School Information Pack' should be received by you in February as decisions are normally made by March.

(g) Waiting Lists

Waiting lists for morning and afternoon sessions are kept when applications received for a particular establishment exceed the number of places available. Waiting lists are ordered in line with the council's admission guidance and decisions made by the Early Years Admission Panel. A child's position on a waiting list may change for various reasons, for example, if relevant information is received after the original application form. Parents will be contacted if a place becomes available.

3. Procedure For Dealing With Applications

(a) New Session Places

When there are vacancies in a nursery or group, all applications where parents have stated their preference for a morning or afternoon place will be granted. The head of these schools, after talking to parents, will decide applications where parents have indicated that they will accept either a morning or afternoon place.

When an establishment is oversubscribed for the total places for the school session (August to June), the Early Years Admission Panel will decide on all applications for that establishment.

Account is taken of all the information provided in the application form. It is important that any relevant information is included on the form.

(b) Mid-session admissions

Decisions on all applications will be made in line with council policy and the previous decisions of the Early Years Admission Panel.

Account is taken of all the information provided in the application form. It is important that any relevant information is included on the form.

(c) Pre-School Grant

Pupil Placement or the Early Years Admission Panel will grant applications for a grant-funded place with a partner provider (playgroup nursery or private nursery) that is offering appropriate 'education sessions'. They may provide a set number of places. Pre-school education grants are paid directly to partner providers. Parents will be advised on progress of their application.

(d) Wraparound Care

Pupil Placement will grant all applications that include wraparound care in line with council policy (and previous decisions of the Early Years Admission Panel), unless they need to refer applications to the Early Years Admission Panel (for example when a wraparound care establishment is full). The guidance that applies to wraparound care admissions is shown in Appendix 1.

Account will be taken of all the information provided in the application for admission form. It is important that any relevant information is included in this form.

4. Early Years Admission Panel

The Early Years Admission Panel makes decisions on placements to establishments which are full and assesses the circumstances of requests to defer entry to primary school. This panel asks for specialist advice when appropriate (for example, from Education Psychological Services) and includes representatives from the private and voluntary sector.

The panel will give their decision by letter, not over the telephone. Parents do not have the right to ask for a review of the decision so it is particularly important that the application is completed as fully as possible.

August placements:	decision letters will be issued by the end of May.
January placements:	decision letters will be issued by the end of November
April placements:	decision letters will be issued by the end of February

The panel will make decisions on wraparound care places for August and parents will be advised, by letter, as soon as possible after it has made decisions on placements (and no later than the end of June).

The panel will make decisions on an extra year of pre-school education in March. It will not refuse applications from parents or guardians with children whose birthdays are in January or February. Parents who are considering delaying their child's place at primary school should ask for advice from staff in their child's establishment before making a decision on whether to apply.

In June, the Early Years Admission Panel will consider new written applications for an extra year of pre-school education - some for children whose applications may previously have been refused in March. The decision of the Early Years Admissions Panel at this time will be final.

5. Admission Priority

The Council and its partner providers (playgroups, nurseries and private nurseries) have enough places for all eligible pre-school children. However, sometimes too many applications are received for morning places. If this happens, priority may be given to:

- children who live in West Lothian
- children who need extra support for learning
- children with an application for wraparound care
- children who have been assessed as needing delayed entry to primary school
- children who have, or whose family has, special circumstances.

These circumstances have not been ranked in order of priority and should not be treated as a points list. The application form allows parents to provide extra information to support their application. It is important to make sure that this information actually provides a full explanation as the council cannot take responsibility for mistakes made by parents or information not provided

(a) Eligible children

When pre-school establishments are full, Pupil Placement decides which eligible children should be offered places based on their circumstances and in line with council guidance.

(b) Ineligible children

Places may be given to children who are not eligible for a pre-school place, depending on their circumstances. Examples could include providing all-day pre-school education and providing pre-school education for a child before he or she becomes eligible.

(c) Morning and afternoon places

Pupil Placement will decide which children should be offered morning or afternoon places based on their individual circumstances (as set out on the application for admission form). Children in their pre-school year do not have an automatic priority for morning places. Both morning and afternoon sessions have a mix of ages. This will benefit children's social and educational development.

(d) Attendance

Most parents will choose to have either a morning or afternoon placement for five sessions a week. Other patterns, including five sessions over two and a half days, depending on circumstances, will be considered, depending on the circumstances set out in the application form. Decisions will be made in line with the council's guidance. In making such decisions, the council will need to ensure that:

- the proposed pattern gives a child enough rest as well as stimulation
- the child's early learning is spread reasonably over the term or year
- the council meets its duty to provide part-time pre-school education for all eligible children in the area.

6. Further Information

The views of parents on the service received, are welcomed and valued. If parents would like to share their views they should write to the address below. Each school session a limited number of parents may be asked to complete a short questionnaire.

Useful Contacts

- **Pupil Placement Section**
Education Services
Lindsay House
South Bridge Street
BATHGATE
EH48 1TS
Telephone: 01506 776002

- **Childcare Information Service**
Telephone: 01506 776660.
- West Lothian Council Internet site -
www.westlothian.gov.uk
- Scottish Childcare website
www.scottishchildcare.gov.uk
- **The Scottish Executive Education Department**
Victoria Quay
EDINBURGH
EH6 6QQ
Tel: 0131 244 4436
www.scotland.gov.uk/

**Pre-School Establishments
(West Lothian Council or West Lothian Council Partner Providers)**

Admission Guidance

When considering pre-school admissions, account is taken of the following:

- The design capacity of the pre-school establishment and its accommodation resources
- The appropriate normal maximum class size (as set out in the conditions of service for teaching staff which form part of the council's contract of employment with an individual teacher)
- The need to maintain quality education using existing resources
- The particular circumstances of the child (as set out on the application form)

If the preferred pre-school establishment has more applications than places, the following will be considered:

- Continuity of establishment
- Children who:
 - Need deferred entry into primary school, or
 - have an application for wraparound care accepted
- Access and collection arrangement, including things such as:
 - a brother or sister who already goes to that establishment, or to a primary or secondary school nearby
 - how close the school is from the child's home by a suitable walking route, and
 - whether or not the council has managed arrangements to provide transport
- Pupils living in West Lothian will have priority over pupils living outwith West Lothian
- Additional support for learning needs
- any other particular information provided by parent(s)
- Within child groupings and taking account of morning and afternoon applications, oldest children should have priority

These points are not in any priority order. The council can decide to admit a child to any pre-school establishment in special circumstances.

**PRE-SCHOOL ESTABLISHMENTS
(West Lothian Council or West Lothian Council Partner Provider)**

Conditions for reduced charges

When considering who is eligible for reduced charges, account is taken of the following:

- Families receiving Working Tax Credit where one parent is in full-time education or training. This means the family is not receiving the childcare component of Working Tax Credit.
- Families receiving Working Tax Credit including the childcare component, where the actual costs of childcare are more than £150 per week for three or more children (the reduction would apply to the third child or subsequent 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 a West Lothian Council wraparound care facility.

Glossary

Accommodation

Staff including teachers, nursery nurses and support staff, plus equipment provided for pre-school education, for example tables, chairs, sandpit area, water area, toys and games.

Child groupings

Pre-school establishments will normally have children of different ages in morning and afternoon sessions.

Design of the school

The total pupil roll for the physical school building, taking account of health and safety, staff-to-child ratios, the number of toilets and space for pupils and staff to move around.

Education session

Defined by the Scottish Executive Education Department as 25 hours over a two week period.

Full education session

Scottish Executive guidance advises councils the minimum number of hours of funded pre-school education a child is entitled to each school year. Although some children do not begin at the start of the school term, the daily morning and afternoon sessions mean the council meets this guidance and does better in many cases.

Mainstream

Schools for pupils of varying abilities as opposed to schools catering only for pupils with a range of special learning needs. The council must place children in mainstream schools whenever possible.

Mid-session applications

Children who are already eligible for funded pre-school education and who have moved to the area with their family after the start of the school session.

Phased places

The settling-in period for children who are new to pre-school education.

Pre-school year

A child is in his or her pre-school year in the year before they first become eligible to go to primary school.

Seamless

Children should not be able to tell the difference between pre-school education and childcare.

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.

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