

Early Start Enrolment Policy

The Early Start Programme is a Department of Education and Skills pre-school project established in 1994 in 40 primary schools in designated areas of urban disadvantage. The Early Start in Le Chéile NS. has capacity to cater for a maximum of thirty children in two sessions; morning session 9.00am. to 11.30 am catering for fifteen children and an afternoon session 12.00 to 2.30pm for an additional fifteen children. Each session is staffed by a fully qualified teacher and child work carer.

Should there be demand only for one morning session, this session will run from 9am to 12.30pm.

The Early Start programme is a one-year intervention scheme to meet the needs of children, aged between 3 years 2 months and 4 years 7 months in September of the relevant year. The project involves an educational programme to enhance the child's development, and prepare for the transition to school. Parental involvement is one of the core elements of the programme in recognition of the parent/guardian as the prime educator of the child.

1. Criteria for the enrolment of pupils in Early Start

1.1 Age Requirement

Children must be aged more than 3 years 2 months and less than 4 years 7 months on the 1st day of September of the year in which they are enrolled. This age requirement is in line with the age requirement for children participating in the Free Pre-School (ECCE) Scheme, which is administered by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. The school will require proof of age. This must be determined by providing a birth certificate before children commence in the Early Start programme.

1.2 Personal Public Service Number

Children may either be enrolled in Early Start or in the ECCE – Free Pre-school Year Scheme. Children will not be eligible to be enrolled in both schemes at the same time. In order to ensure compliance with this, parents of children enrolling in Early Start must supply their children's PPS numbers. The PPS numbers will be cross-referenced with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs.

1.3 Catchment area.

All the children in Early Start must be from the catchment area of Le Chéile N.S
Cf. Le Chéile NS Enrolment/Admissions Policy.

1.4 Capacity.

In the event of the number of applications exceeding the number of places available, the principal, in consultation with the Home/School/Community Liaison co-ordinator/Early Start staff /agencies and other relevant authorities will draw up a waiting list, taking into consideration the criteria 1.1 to 1.3 above and the recommendations of any professionals working with the families in question.

2. Children with special needs.

2.1 Children with special needs may be enrolled in Early Start providing they meet the criteria outlined in above. The school follows the policy operated by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) that seeks to facilitate, in so far as possible, the integration of children with special needs into the mainstream system.

2.2 If the opinion of a professional working in the special needs sector or the principal that a particular child would, on an exceptional basis, benefit from either;

- i. A waiver of the upper age limit
- ii. A second year of Early Start prior to starting Junior Infants

A letter of request will be sought by the school prior to the child's enrolment. The application must be made to the DES, Early Years Education Policy Unit. They will examine each application on a case-by-case basis. This child should not be enrolled in the school until formal Department approval is obtained.

3. Additional Requirements

The additional requirements are applicable when all the children who meet the above criteria are catered for and places are undersubscribed on the 29th September, the school will then consider the following to increase numbers to reach full enrolment capacity.

3.1 Children on the waiting list: - who are not from the catchment area but whose parents/guardians give written commitment of enrolment to Juniors Infants in the school for the following school year.

3.2 Children on the waiting list who are not from the area and whose parents intend to enrol them in another school for Junior Infants.

Places on the waiting list are determined by school stamp date of application received.

Exceptions

In the case of parents/guardians making an application for their child to join Early Start after October 1st, the following exceptions will apply, if places are available;

- i. Relocating to the area and have made an application for enrolment to Junior Infants in the following school year
- ii. Special needs identified

Communication.

Parents should be made aware of the school's or pre-school's policy and should be clearly informed that having a child's name on a waiting list does not guarantee a place in Early Start.

Ratification & Review.

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on

It will be reviewed in two years.

Signed:

Chairperson.