

Turning down an application for a school place - Frequently asked questions

We have prepared this information sheet based on the most popular questions parents ask us when we turn down an application for a school place. This is not intended as a comprehensive guide to the Placing in Schools process or to the law relating to it. **Nothing in this document is binding on the Council.**

Why is there no place available for my child?

Most schools will be organised in the most efficient way in order to accommodate all of the children living in the catchment area. Non-catchment placing requests will be granted where possible but additional teachers or new classes are not created specifically for non-catchment children. We try to reserve places for incoming catchment children where possible, however some classes are already full.

What are the maximum class sizes?

Primary classes have different sizes depending on the year stage:

- P1: **25 pupils**
- P2/P3: **30 pupils**
- P4-P7: **33 pupils**
- Composite classes at any stage: **25 pupils**

In secondary school, practical classes (e.g. sciences, food technology) are restricted to **20 pupils**.

Can my Councillor/MP/MSP or senior manager influence or change the decision to turn down my child's place?

Whilst you are welcome to contact your Councillor/MP/MSP or a senior manager, all requests are decided in accordance with agreed Council policy therefore we will be unable to change our decision. Parents have the right to an appeal with an independent committee – please see below.

What do the grounds for turning down my request mean?

Not all refusals will use all of these grounds however some of these may be used. The grounds given are those we must tell you by law (given in the Education (Scotland) Act 1980). Below we give you a clearer explanation about what each ground means:

'be likely to be seriously detrimental to the educational well-being of pupils attending the school' – this is a legal term and is not a reflection on your child. It relates to the number of pupils/classes and school organisation. It might be used where admitting a further pupil would result in classes needing to be reorganised across several year stages, or the school resources would be overstretched, both of which would be detrimental to those currently attending the school.

'would prevent the education authority from retaining reserved places at the school or in relation to any particular stage of education at the school' – we try to reserve places for incoming catchment children, where possible. This ground is used where we would be unable to keep places reserved if we granted noncatchment requests.

‘make it necessary for the authority to take an additional teacher into employment’ – when the maximum number of pupils is reached for a class this ground is often used. For example the maximum number of pupils a Primary 1 teacher is allowed to teach is 25. Once a class reaches this maximum number, this ground is used to turn down further requests.

‘assuming that pupil numbers remain constant, make it necessary, at the commencement of a future stage of the child’s primary education, for the authority to elect either to create an additional class (or an additional composite class) in the specified school or to take an additional teacher into employment at that school’ – this ground is often used when the Council cannot accommodate catchment children in a traditional class structure in P1, P2 or P3. The Council can increase a class size by employing a second teacher in the same class. This is called “team teaching”. Where possible when team teaching is used the Council try and restrict the numbers in the class so the extra teacher only needs to be employed for a limited time. This is possible because the class size maximum increases from 25 in P1 to 30 in P2, and to 33 in P4. One of the most common examples of this is where in P1 there are 60 pupils in 2 classes, one class with 25 pupils and one with 35 (this class has 2 teachers). The school will therefore need a total of 3 P1 teachers. The following year the 60 pupils can be split into 2 classes of 30 and only 2 teachers will be necessary. If more than 60 pupils were admitted into P1 then 3 teachers would still be required in P2.

‘give rise to significant expenditure on extending or otherwise altering the accommodation at or facilities provided in connection with the school’ – this is used where the school has no appropriate classroom space available to allow us to take in any more children, and the only way to provide extra accommodation would be to build or create extra classroom space.

Can the waiting list change?

Your child’s position on the waiting list can improve, but it can also move further down, e.g. as a result of new children moving into the catchment area.

What happens if I move into the catchment area of my requested school?

You need to give us proof that you have moved address, but you will not be guaranteed to get a place if the year group is full. Although we try to reserve places for new catchment children it is not always possible to do this if there is already a high number of children living in the catchment area and the class is already full.

Should I appeal the decision?

This is your right as a parent and it is up to you. Whether you appeal or not your child will remain on the waiting list and will be offered a place if it becomes available. The Appeal Committee cannot change the order of the waiting list, it can only grant or refuse an appeal. For advice on appeals email schoolappeals@edinburgh.gov.uk.

What should I do next?

You can use the Council’s online school directory to search for alternative schools in the area. You must make enquiries directly to each Head Teacher.