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# 1 Background information

## (a) Catchment areas

West Lothian Council 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, the council has a policy of reserving places for children moving into the school's catchment area during the school year. The number of places reserved will depend on how many children there are at each stage at that school. As a general rule, the following number of places could be reserved at each stage.

Stage total	Places to reserve
220	5
200	4
180	3

The number of places reserved depends on the information available on each school.

## (c) 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 supplied.

## (d) Choice of school

Most parents choose to send their children to the school in their catchment area. Education law also allows parents to choose a school other than in the catchment area. The council must grant placing requests unless there is a legal reason not to. 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.

Parents can apply for their child to go to any secondary school in West Lothian regardless of their religion. When a child has been offered a place, this will not

be withdrawn unless false information was given on the application form. Details of secondary schools in West Lothian can be found on the Council's website at [www.westlothian.gov.uk](http://www.westlothian.gov.uk) or by telephoning Pupil Placement.

**(e) Oversubscribed schools**

A number of schools in West Lothian are often oversubscribed, in particular at the S1 stage. That means these schools receive more applications than there are places.

**(f) 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 council. If information is deliberately withheld, Pupil Placement could withdraw the offer of a place or cancel the child's place. If parents provide information late, the council will consider it. 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 section 2d).

**(g) Opening times – including asymmetric week**

Like many education authorities West Lothian has an asymmetric week. This means there are no afternoon classes on a Friday.

**(h) Meals**

A cooked school lunch is available at all schools at a charge, Monday to Thursday, with a reduced service on Fridays. Children can bring in a packed lunch.

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

**(i) 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 complete 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 extra support for learning can be obtained from the Principal Support Officer - Additional Learning Needs.

**(j) Musically gifted children**

The council supports children with outstanding musical 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.

**(k) 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](http://www.westlothian.gov.uk) .

### **(l) Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA)**

An EMA is a weekly payment that is made to eligible pupils in years 5 and 6. It is paid direct to young people from low-income families who stay at school or further education college past the legal school-leaving age. Young people may also get up to two bonuses if they stay on their course and make good progress with their learning. More information can be obtained from Support Services.

### **(m) School transport**

Parents are responsible for getting their children to and from school. The council will arrange suitable transport free of charge if:

- a pupil at their catchment secondary school does not have a suitable walking route from home to school or lives more than two miles away from the school; or
- the council asks a pupil to go to a non-catchment-area secondary 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 secondary school.)

The council will not make travel arrangements if parents choose to send their child to a school not in the catchment area.

More information, including a booklet called 'School Transport – A guide for Parents and Pupils' can be obtained from the Public Transport Team.

## **2 ADMISSION PROCEDURES**

### **(a) Transferring from primary school to secondary school**

Pupil Placement deals with all primary to secondary transfers, in other words, years P7 to S1 in West Lothian. If a child is at a West Lothian Council primary school and is due to transfer from P7 to S1, they should bring home a secondary school application pack from Pupil Placement in November or December telling parents about the arrangements. Primary schools will send out these application packs. Parents must fill in the application form which is in the application pack. This form should be returned direct to Pupil Placement. If a child is not at a West Lothian Council primary school, parents may receive a secondary school application pack in the post. In this case, fill in the application form and return it to Pupil Placement.

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

### **(b) Places in S1 to S6**

#### **Applications during the school year**

Secondary schools deal with all applications for places in S1 to S6 during the school year. For information, contact the head teacher of the preferred school. Parents will have to fill in an application form and will also need to provide details of the subjects that the child has studied, particularly at stages S3 and above. It

may not be possible to match all subjects previously studied and children may need to choose new subjects to make a full timetable. Parents should return the completed forms to the preferred secondary school and NOT to Pupil Placement.

### **Applications during school holidays**

Pupil Placement deals with all applications, from S1 to S6 during school holidays. Completed forms should be returned directly to Pupil Placement who will then forward the application form to the preferred secondary school for the start of the school term. Parents will also need to provide details of subjects that their child has previously studied, particularly at stages S3 and above. It may not be possible to match all previous subjects studied and children may need to choose new subjects to make a full timetable.

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

### **(c) Important dates**

Updated secondary school packs are given to all primary and secondary schools at the end of November or the beginning of December each year. The application form for August S1 must be returned by 31 December. Parents should ensure that they have the updated version of the application pack.

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

### **(d) Waiting lists**

There are waiting lists for schools which are oversubscribed. A child can only be on the waiting list of the first-choice school. Schools manage waiting lists for applications during the school year. Pupil Placement manages the waiting lists for new S1 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 in 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. Someone from the first choice school or from the Pupil Placement section will contact parents if a place becomes available.

## **3 DECISIONS**

- (a)** If there are enough places, all applications will be granted. The Director of Education & Cultural Services will decide on places when necessary, for example if a school gets more applications for S1 than they have places. Parents will not be interviewed. Pupil Placement will send parents a letter if there is a need for the Director to decide on places.
- (b)** Account will be taken of all the information provided in the 'Application for admission' form. Parents should include all the information that they think is important in the application form.
- (c)** Pupil Placement will send parents a letter with the decision about their application. If parents apply for a place in S1 for August, they will receive a letter by the end of April. If the application is for other year groups, or parents apply for

an S1 place after the school year has started, the first choice school will send parents a letter with the decision about the application.

- (d) Pupil Placement will send parents an acknowledgement letter once they receive the S1 application, or any extra information. If a letter is not received within 10 working days, parents should phone Pupil Placement.
- (e) If the preferred school is not the catchment school, parents will receive a Scottish Executive booklet called 'Choosing a School'. This booklet is also available from schools or on the Scottish Executive website.
- (f) Although the 'Application for a place at a secondary school' form has spaces for three choices of school, it is only the first choice (question 5 on the application form) that will be treated as the 'placing request'.

#### **4 PRIORITY**

The guidelines used for deciding on places at secondary school are set out in appendix 2. The items are not listed in order of priority so should not be treated as a points list. The application form allows parents to provide other information to support the application. It is important to make sure that this information actually provides a full explanation, as the council cannot take responsibility for mistakes made or information not given by applicants. The council treats all the information provided 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 the council refuses an application to secondary school, it must give the reasons why. Education law sets out the reasons why a council may refuse an application. The main reasons are if:

- the child's education would be affected because the education was unsuitable;
- an extra teacher would have to be employed (the recommended maximum class size is set in law, teachers' contracts of employment, and national or local agreements);
- an extra class would have to be formed or an extra teacher employed at a future stage of the child's education;
- there would have to be significant spending on building work to alter the accommodation at, or facilities provided in connection with, the school;
- the number of pupils at the school would be more than allowed;
- order and discipline in the school would be seriously affected;
- the educational wellbeing of pupils at the school would be seriously affected;  
or
- a place is needed for a pupil who is expected to move into the catchment area.

#### **6 APPEALS PROCEDURE**

In West Lothian, appeals are heard by the West Lothian (Placing in Schools) Appeals Committee. This committee is independent of West Lothian Council.

Pupil Placement will send parents a letter if the Director of Education & Cultural Services has refused the application. The letter will tell parents which other placement has been granted and will advise that an appeal can be made to the West Lothian (Placing in Schools) Appeals Committee against the refusal. It will tell parents who the letter of appeal should be sent to. The West Lothian (Placing in Schools) Appeals Committee hears cases, considers written and oral 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 and Cultural Services at the appeal hearing to put forward the council's case. The Committee takes the decision independently. Parents then have the right to appeal to a 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, Pupil Placement may also ask a few parents to fill in a short questionnaire on their service.

### **Useful Contacts**

#### **Useful Contacts**

- (a) Pupil Placement Section**  
Education and Cultural Services  
West Lothian Civic Centre  
Howden South Road  
Livingston  
West Lothian  
EH54 6FF  
  
**Telephone: 01506 776002**
- (b) Principal Support Officer - Additional Learning Needs**  
Education and Cultural Services  
Ogilvie House  
Ogilvie Way  
Knightsridge  
EH54 8HL  
**Telephone: 01506 777444**
- (c) Arts Manager**  
Arts Services  
Howden Park Centre  
Howden  
Livingston  
EH54 6AE **Telephone: 01506 773876**
- (d) Support Services**  
Education and Cultural Services

West Lothian Civic Centre  
Howden South Road  
Livingston  
West Lothian  
EH54 6FF

**Telephone: 01506 281952**  
email [ema@westlothian.gov.uk](mailto:ema@westlothian.gov.uk)

- (e) **School Transport**  
Public Transport Team  
**Telephone 01506 775291**  
email - [iris.keith@westlothian.gov.uk](mailto:iris.keith@westlothian.gov.uk)
- (f) **West Lothian Online**  
[www.westlothian.gov.uk](http://www.westlothian.gov.uk)
- (g) **National and Local Childcare Information Internet Site**  
[www.childcarelink.gov.uk](http://www.childcarelink.gov.uk)
- (h) **Parentzone**  
**Telephone: 0131 244 4485**  
[www.parentzonescotland.gov.uk](http://www.parentzonescotland.gov.uk)
- (i) **The Scottish Executive Education Department**  
Victoria Quay  
Edinburgh  
EH6 6QQ  
**Telephone: 0131 244 4436**  
[www.scotland.gov.uk](http://www.scotland.gov.uk)

## Placing in schools - guidelines

**In considering placing requests the Council takes into account the following:**

- the design capacity of the school and the accommodation resources 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 an individual teacher.
- the need to maintain quality education provision within existing resources

**If the preferred school has more applications than places, the following will be considered:**

- those pupils living within the catchment area of the requested school will have priority over those pupils living outwith that catchment area
- in the case of pupils living outwith the catchment area of the requested school, pupils resident within West Lothian will have priority over those pupils living outwith West Lothian
- in the case of a Roman Catholic school where applications from those living within the catchment area exceed the number of places available, priority will be given to those pupils who have been baptised into the Roman Catholic Church.
- special medical and/or physical needs
- special educational needs
- brother or sister continuing to attend the school requested
- education course available only at the school requested
- nearness of home to school by non-hazardous walking route
- length of attendance at an associated primary school (Infant to Primary School Transfer and S1 requests)
- information provided by parent or guardian

**The above are not in any priority order.** It should be noted that 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.

