

TRANSFER 2010

LEAFLET NUMBER 2

CHOOSING A POST-PRIMARY SCHOOL

**A GUIDE FOR PARENTS
(DECEMBER 2009)**

FOREWORD

Every stage in a child's education is important. How children move from one phase of their education to another is equally important.

Transfer 2010 is my Department's policy for the transfer of children to second level education. The Transfer 2010 Guidance will deliver an effective and fair system of post-primary transfer. The Guidance strongly recommends that schools do not use academic criteria. I have urged grammar schools to follow this recommendation both on equality grounds and because of the risks of dysfunction. I am disappointed that most grammar schools have rejected this recommendation and have chosen to subject very young children to unnecessary testing. They have chosen to put their institutional self-interest before the interests of children.

Academic selection is educationally unsound. It does not meet the needs of a modern society. It sustains and generates inequality. It has no place in our education system. My Department is working, as part of a wider reform programme, to ensure that every school delivers the same high standard of education and that every child has equal access to the high quality education to which they are entitled, without having to sit a test.

What is important is that your child should be at the centre of the process for moving to post-primary school. This leaflet provides the information you will need to help your child through that process, which remains in many respects much the same as in previous years. I urge you to read it carefully.

I hope you find this leaflet helpful in guiding you through the process, and wherever your child begins their post-primary career in September 2010, I wish them every success.

Caitríona Ruane

Minister of Education

1. INTRODUCTION

This is the second of two leaflets for parents of P7 children about arrangements for the transfer of children from primary to post-primary school in September 2010 (a process called Transfer 2010). You will already have received a leaflet in September 2009 entitled “**Getting Ready to Move from Primary to Post-Primary School**”. It sets out the main steps in the Transfer 2010 process. You may find it helpful to read this again. It can also be accessed on the Department of Education website at www.deni.gov.uk.

This leaflet sets out the main steps in the Transfer 2010 process, which is largely the same as the transfer process in previous years. It then explains:

- The role of parents: what you can do to help your child transfer to post-primary school.
- How parents can prepare for this role: what things you can think about in choosing a school for your child.
- That parents will complete their child’s application (the **Transfer Form**) to post-primary school at a meeting with their child’s primary school principal or nominee, in February 2010.
- The **Transfer Form** in detail: what information you will need to provide when you complete your child’s Transfer Form.

This leaflet is also available in Polish, Chinese, Portuguese, Lithuanian, Turkish and Latvian. Copies can be obtained from your Education and Library Board (ELB)/ the Education and Skills Authority (ESA).

2. MAIN STEPS IN THE TRANSFER 2010 PROCESS

December 2009	This is the second of two leaflets from the Department of Education about the transfer process. This will provide you with advice on how to go about choosing a post-primary school and completing an application form (known as the Transfer Form).
January 2010	<p>You will receive, from your child's primary school, a Transfer Booklet. This will contain information about each post-primary school in your area, in particular:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How many places are available at each school; ▪ The admissions criteria that will be used by each school to decide which children are admitted if the school receives more applications than it has places available.
January 2010	<p>You can ask any post-primary school to supply you with a free copy of its prospectus. This will contain additional information.</p> <p>You will also be able to visit schools on their Open Days/Nights. Schools normally hold these before the end of the first week in February. Details of dates and times may be found in local newspapers, Transfer Booklets or directly from schools.</p>
February 2010	<p>You will be invited to a meeting with your child's primary school principal.</p> <p>At that meeting you will be asked to complete a post-primary Transfer Form. On this form you will be asked to list, in order of preference, the post-primary schools (at least three) which you would like your child to attend.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This is how and when all parents will apply to the post-primary schools of their choice . ▪ Primary principals will send completed Transfer Forms to the ELB/ESA. Between then and 28 May 2010 schools listed on Transfer Forms will consider applications and determine which pupils to admit. ▪ No pupil can be guaranteed a place at their first choice school, and no pupil can be guaranteed a place at any particular type of school, be that a secondary school, college, integrated school, grammar school, single sex school etc.

28 May 2010	<p>Your ELB/the ESA will send you a letter informing you which post-primary school your child has been placed at.</p> <p>This is how and when placements in all post-primary schools will be communicated to all parents.</p> <p>If your child has not been accepted by any of the schools listed on the Transfer Form, you will be asked to nominate other schools drawn from a list of schools with places still available.</p>
28 May 2010 to 9 June 2010	<p>This is the period during which you can submit an appeal against an unsuccessful application.</p> <p>Appeals can only be upheld if it can be shown that a child has not been admitted because admissions criteria have been applied incorrectly.</p>
28 May 2010 onwards	<p>If you feel that there are compelling and exceptional circumstances why your child must attend a particular post-primary school but you have not been able to obtain a place at that school through the normal admissions process, you will have the opportunity, from this date, to apply to have your child's case considered as part of an Exceptional Circumstances process. Your child must have been refused admission to the post-primary school through the normal admissions process before a claim of exceptional circumstances can be considered. Claims for Exceptional Circumstances can be considered at the same time, though separately, from admissions appeals.</p>

3. THE ROLE OF PARENTS IN THE TRANSFER PROCESS

You have a very important role to play in the transfer process:

- You will help your child decide at which post-primary schools he/she will seek a place.
- You will then complete your child's application to these schools. You will be invited to meet your child's primary school principal between 8 and 19 February 2010. You will be asked to complete a post-primary **Transfer Form** at that meeting and your primary school principal will help you to do this.

This **Transfer Form** will be how you will apply for your child to be admitted to the post-primary schools of your choice. Parents have the right to express preferences for the schools they would like their child to attend, but **no child can be guaranteed a place in any school.**

4. HOW PARENTS CAN PREPARE FOR THIS ROLE

You will help your child decide at which post-primary schools he/she will seek a place. In making these decisions it may be helpful for you and your child to think about:

- Your child's views on where he/she would be happiest.
- Your child's strengths and which school will provide the education best suited to your child.
- Your own, and your child's, impressions of schools.
- Travel to school and the arrangements for the provision of home to school transport.

It may also be helpful for you to have important information about:

- The pattern of applications and admissions to a school in previous years – that is, the number of applications received in each of the previous few years, and the number of applicants actually admitted in those years. Remember that the pattern of applications may change from year to year. **A school that receives fewer applications than it has places available must admit all of those applicants.**
- How schools will select children for admission if they have too many applicants. In this situation schools have to use **admissions criteria** to choose which children to admit. In deciding whether or not to apply to a school, it may be very helpful to have a good understanding of that school's **admissions criteria**.
- The range of public examinations taken at schools (e.g. GCSEs) and their pupils' success in these exams.
- The arrangements schools make for pupils who may require special help.
- Schools' policies on homework, uniform, discipline, etc.
- The range of extra-curricular activities available in schools.
- School fees (if relevant).

There are a number of ways you can get this kind of information and these are set out below.

5. TRANSFER BOOKLETS

Education and Library Board/ESA Transfer Booklets on post-primary education will be published in January 2010. You should read the relevant booklet for your area very carefully because:

- This booklet contains information that will help you decide which post-primary schools to list on your child's **Transfer Form**.
- The booklet will tell you how many children a school can admit. It will also tell you how popular a school has been in recent years and whether it has had more applicants than places available. **A school that receives fewer applications than it has places available must admit all of those applicants.**
- The booklet will set out all schools' **admissions criteria** and how these will be applied. These admissions criteria will be how a post-primary school will select children for admission if it has more applicants than places.
- Understanding the admissions criteria of the post-primary schools in which you are interested can help you see how your child's application might fare. It can also help you understand what information it will be important for you to provide when completing your child's **Transfer Form**.

So, to make best use of the Transfer Booklet:

- Look at the sections dealing with the schools in which you are interested.
- Check how popular these schools have been in recent years: has it had more applicants than places available?
- Carefully read the admissions criteria for each school you are considering.
- Think about how these criteria might apply to your child.
- Think about what information you should provide when completing your child's **Transfer Form**.

6. SCHOOLS IN OTHER ELB/ESA AREAS

If you wish to consider applying to a school in another ELB/ESA area you should contact your primary school for details of how to access Transfer Booklets relating to other areas.

7. SCHOOL PROSPECTUSES

Every post-primary school is required to produce a prospectus. This is a booklet that:

- Provides details about the school and the educational opportunities it can provide for your child; and
- Contains information about subject choices available at the school, public examination results, the numbers of applications received and the number of places granted in past years.

Prospectuses are available from schools free on request. You should obtain prospectuses from all the schools you are considering by contacting those schools directly. Contact details for schools are found in the Transfer Booklets.

8. OPEN DAYS/NIGHTS

You should also take the opportunity to visit each of the post-primary schools you are considering by attending their open days/nights. These usually take place before 8 February 2010. During the open day/night the principal will normally explain how their school's admissions criteria operate. You will have the opportunity to see around the school, see examples of pupils' work and talk to teachers and some pupils.

9. TRANSPORT ARRANGEMENTS

The expense and practicality of transporting your child to the schools you are considering may be a major factor in deciding which schools to list on the Transfer Form. You should give this matter careful consideration and ensure that you understand the rules governing eligibility for transport assistance.

Your child will only be eligible for transport assistance in circumstances where he or she:

- Enrols at a school which is further than 3 miles from their home; **and**
- He or she has been unsuccessful in gaining a place at **all** schools of the same category within that 3 mile limit. This includes applying to, and being turned down by, schools within the 3 mile limit where your child clearly does not meet their admissions criteria (e.g. your child has not entered for or sat an entrance test where a school is using academic admissions criteria), before applying to schools of the same category beyond the 3 mile limit.

For the purposes of qualifying for transport assistance there are six categories of school:

- Controlled secondary schools;
- Maintained (i.e. Catholic) secondary schools;
- Integrated schools (including Controlled Integrated Schools);
- Irish-medium schools;
- Denominational (i.e. Catholic) grammar schools; and

- Non-denominational grammar schools.

Bi-lateral schools - i.e. schools with separate secondary and grammar intakes - may fall into any of these categories, but for the purposes of transport assistance:

- an application to the secondary stream will be treated as an application to a secondary school in one of the other categories; and
- an application to the grammar stream of a bi-lateral school will be treated as an application to one of the two grammar school categories.

EXAMPLE

- You want your child to attend a particular non-denominational secondary school (school A) that is more than 3 miles from your child's house.
- There is another non-denominational secondary school (school B) less than 3 miles from your child's house.
- If you apply to school A as your first preference your child will not be eligible for transport assistance as he/she did not seek admission to the school within the 3 mile limit.
- If you apply to school B as your first preference, do not obtain a place at that school and subsequently obtain a place at your second preference, school A, your child will be eligible for transport assistance to school A.

The entry for each school in the Transfer Booklets will state the category of school. You should study very carefully the detailed information about transport arrangements set out in the ELB/ESA Transfer Booklet.

10. COMPLETING YOUR CHILD'S APPLICATION TO POST-PRIMARY SCHOOL

- The application form for all post-primary schools is known as the **Transfer Form**;
- **Transfer Forms** are sent to and held by your child's primary school principal;
- You will complete the **Transfer Form** at a meeting with your child's primary school principal;
- All meetings with primary school principals will be held between 8 and 19 February 2010. The school arranges these meetings with parents.

11. YOUR MEETING WITH YOUR CHILD'S PRIMARY SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

You will be invited to meet your child's primary school principal between 8 and 19 February 2010. At this meeting:

- Your child's choices of post-primary schools will be confirmed by you;
- Your child's application to these schools – the **Transfer Form** – will be completed by you.

In advance of this, your child's primary school may send you a copy of the **Transfer Form**, and the basic personal information in the first section may have been completed. Schools are not required to do this. The copy of the Transfer Form is only for information to allow you to check the basic details (such as full name and address) held by the school. You are not required to complete any information on this copy of the form. At the meeting with your child's primary school principal you may wish to discuss:

- Your child's strengths;
- The schools and provision to which your child would be best suited; and
- The schools where you would like your child to be considered for admission.

You should come to the meeting prepared to complete the **Transfer Form**.

12. THE TRANSFER FORM

This is a very important document. The **Transfer Form** will be how you will apply for your child to be admitted to the post-primary schools of your choice. It will contain all the information which your chosen post-primary schools will use to consider your child's application.

EXPRESSING YOUR PREFERENCE FOR POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS

You will be asked to list in order of preference the schools which you would like your child to attend:

- **You should list at least 3 schools on the Transfer Form.** In some circumstances it would be wise to list more than 3 - for example, where schools tend to get more applications than they have places available and in areas where there are many schools.
- If you do not list at least 3 schools, this could reduce the possibility of your child being admitted to a school of your preference.
- You should not enter one school more than once.
- Even if you want a place in a grammar school **it is very important** to include at least one other category of school in your list. If you do not do this it could reduce the possibility of your child being admitted to a school of your preference.

You may ask the principal for advice on these matters **but the decisions will be yours alone.**

THE IMPORTANCE OF PROVIDING RELEVANT INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR CHILD'S APPLICATION

You will also be asked to provide information about your child when completing the **Transfer Form**. This is very important because:

- If one of your chosen schools has more applicants than places available it will have to choose which children to admit.
- A school will do this by applying its admissions criteria to its applicants.
- **The information about your child that you provide when completing the Transfer Form will be what a school will use to see how your child meets its admissions criteria.**

The sort of information that it will be important for you to provide will vary from school to school. It will often be information like:

- Whether your child has any brothers or sisters already attending the school to which you are applying. The **Transfer Form** contains a specific place for this information. You should also provide the names of any such siblings.
- Whether the child is the eldest child, only child or the eldest boy/girl in the family.
- Whether your child is registered, with the ELB/ESA, as being entitled to Free School Meals.

It is therefore vital that you read very carefully the Transfer Booklet provided by the ELB/ESA to ensure that you understand what information is needed by all the schools you list and are in a position to provide this information when completing the **Transfer Form**.

FREE SCHOOL MEAL ENTITLEMENT

The Department has recommended that schools use their admissions criteria to make sure that they admit a fair number of children registered as entitled to Free School Meals.

- To make this possible, the **Transfer Form** will ask you if your child is currently listed on the ELB/ESA register of children entitled to Free School Meals.
- If this applies to your child you should record this in Section C on the **Transfer Form**.
- Your claim of Free School Meal Entitlement registration will be checked.

What happens if:

- **My child only becomes registered as entitled to Free School Meals after I have completed their Transfer Form?** In this case, you will have the opportunity to update this information up to and including 12 May 2010 – see the “Change of Circumstances” section below.

CHECKING AND SIGNING THE TRANSFER FORM

The **Transfer Form** will be finalised at the meeting with your child’s primary school principal. At the end of the meeting you will be asked to sign the **Transfer Form**. Before signing the **Transfer Form**, please note:

- That you should check all the information carefully before signing the form. You should ensure that all relevant information is provided when completing the **Transfer Form** to enable schools to consider your child’s application. **You and you alone are responsible for ensuring that all relevant information is provided.**

- **That if you do not provide relevant information you may reduce the chance of your child being admitted to a school of your preference.**
- **That it is also your responsibility to ensure that the information you provide is correct.** Post-primary schools may be required to verify information provided as part of your child's application and information found to be false can lead to non-admission. The **Transfer Form** will contain the warning that **"WHERE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM LEADS TO THE OFFER OF A PLACE, THE OFFER WILL BE WITHDRAWN IF SUCH INFORMATION IS SUBSEQUENTLY FOUND TO BE FALSE."**

The completed **Transfer Form** will be sent by your child's primary school principal to the ELB/ESA. You will be given a copy.

CHANGE OF CIRCUMSTANCES AFTER COMPLETION OF THE TRANSFER FORM

Your personal circumstances may change after you have completed and signed the **Transfer Form**. For example:

- Your address may change; or
- Your child may become registered as entitled to Free School Meals.

If your circumstances do change in a way that may be important for the transfer process, you should contact the ELB/ESA Transfer Officer to provide this new information. Contact details are at the end of this leaflet. Additional information can only be accepted up to and including **12 May 2010**.

13. PLACEMENT LETTERS AND THE INDEPENDENT ADMISSIONS APPEAL TRIBUNALS

On 28 May 2010 your ELB/the ESA will write to you to tell you the outcome of your post-primary application. This **Placement Letter** will tell you the post-primary school in which your child has been placed.

If your child does not get a place in a school of your choice and you feel that this is because the school(s) did not apply their admissions criteria correctly, you can appeal to an Independent Admissions Appeal Tribunal. The **Placement Letter** you will receive in May 2010 will contain information about your right to appeal and who you should contact if you wish to make an appeal.

14. EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

It may be that you believe your child needs to attend a particular post-primary school for reasons other than simply because you prefer that post-primary school. There may be compelling and exceptional reasons why your child should attend a specific post-primary school. On 18 September 2009 the Department published proposals for an Exceptional Circumstances process. These are available on the Department's website at www.deni.gov.uk. This process is still in development, but it will be in place to accept applications from 28 May 2010 onwards. In order to determine whether or not

the circumstances presented in an application are exceptional the following definition will be used: **“circumstances which are both exceptional and personal to the child in question and relate to admissions to a specified school only”**.

If you feel that this applies in your child’s case, you should note that:

- The **Placement Letter** issued to you by the ELB/ESA on 28 May 2010 will tell you in which post-primary school your child has been placed.
- If this post-primary school is **not** the post-primary school that your child needs to attend for compelling and exceptional reasons; then,
- You will have the opportunity to apply to have your child’s case considered as part of an Exceptional Circumstances process.
- **A claim of Exceptional Circumstances can only be considered after you have applied to the post-primary school through the normal admissions process and been refused a place.**
- Advice about how to obtain detailed information about the Exceptional Circumstances process, including how to apply to have your case considered, will be included in the **Placement Letter** issued to you on 28 May 2010. Prior to this date, information on the process will be regularly updated on the Department’s website www.deni.gov.uk.

15. USEFUL ADDRESSES AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Although the Education and Library Boards are due to be dissolved and replaced with the Education and Skills Authority, the Transfer Officers will continue to operate within the former Board areas for this transfer process, and will continue to be contactable at the numbers below.

Belfast Education and Library Board
40 Academy Street
BELFAST
BT1 2NQ
Tel: 028 9056 4000

North-Eastern Education and Library Board
County Hall
182 Galgorm Road
BALLYMENA
Co Antrim
BT42 1HN
Tel: 028 2565 3333

South-Eastern Education and Library Board
Grahamsbridge Road
Dundonald
BELFAST
BT16 2HS
Tel: 028 9056 6200

Southern Education and Library Board
3 Charlemont Place
ARMAGH
BT61 9AZ
Tel: 028 3751 2200

Western Education and Library Board
Campsie House
1 Hospital Road
OMAGH
Co Tyrone
BT79 0AW
Tel: 028 8241 1411

Department of Education
Rathgael House
Balloo Road
BANGOR
Co Down
BT19 7PR
Tel: 028 9127 9279
Department of Education Website: www.deni.gov.uk