

ENROLMENTS AND ENROLMENT SCHEMES

INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

Here are answers to questions which parents sometimes ask when they need to enrol their child at a school. If you want more detailed information, contact staff at one of the Ministry of Education offices listed at the end of this document. Staff there will be able to help you.

What rights does my child have regarding enrolment at school?

All children have the right to be enrolled at a State school between their fifth birthday and the first of January following their nineteenth birthday.

Why then do some schools have enrolment schemes?

An enrolment scheme is a means of limiting the roll to prevent overcrowding at the school, and enabling the Ministry of Education to make best use of the current accommodation at schools in the surrounding area.

What does the law have to say about enrolment schemes?

Schemes should:

- as far as possible exclude no more students than necessary to avoid overcrowding;
- enable the Ministry to make best use of the existing networks of State schools;
- ensure that the selection of applicants for enrolment at the school is carried out in a fair and transparent manner;
- enable students to attend a reasonably convenient school;
- as far as possible, not exclude local students.

What is this that I hear about zoning?

Each enrolment scheme must contain a home zone with clearly defined boundaries. Students who live in the home zone have an absolute right to enrol at the school.

What if I live outside the home zone?

Out of zone students who apply for enrolment at the school must be accepted in the following order of priority:

- (a) students accepted for enrolment in a special programme run by the school;
- (b) brothers and sisters of current students
- (c) brothers and sisters of former students
- (d) children of board employees
- (e) all other students.

If there are more applicants in priority groups (b)-(e) than there are places available, selection within the priority group must be by ballot.

How do enrolment schemes work?

The Ministry has to agree that a scheme is necessary and has to approve the content of the scheme.

Each year the board must place a notice in a newspaper circulating in the area, stating:

- how many out of zone places are likely to be available;
- the date by which applications for out of zone places must be received;
- the date(s) of any ballot(s) for out of zone places.

If the board receives fewer out of zone applications than there are places available, no ballot will be necessary and all applicants will be enrolled.

Some primary schools with enrolment schemes will advertise more than one ballot each year (perhaps one each term) for five year olds who are starting school.

How do you define “living in the home zone”?

This means that the address you give when you apply for enrolment must be your usual place of residence. If the school finds that you have given false information, the school may cancel your child’s enrolment.

What rights do I have if I am new to the area?

If you live in the home zone of a school with an enrolment scheme and you want to enrol your child at the school, the school must enrol your child. If you want to enrol your child at a school with an enrolment scheme but live outside the home zone, you will have to wait until the school next organises a ballot before your application for enrolment can be considered.

What can I do if a school tells me that it is full and cannot enrol my child?

First of all ask whether the school has an enrolment scheme. If it does not, the school should not be excluding your child. Contact your nearest Ministry of Education office if this happens.

If the school does have an enrolment scheme, check to see whether you live in the home zone. You will be able to see a copy of the scheme at the school. If you do not live in the school’s home zone, then there will be another school that is reasonably convenient to your home that your child could attend.

If you live out of zone and your child is unsuccessful in the ballot, you may still feel there are good reasons why a school with an enrolment scheme should enrol your child. In this case you can contact your nearest Ministry office to discuss the possibility of the Ministry directing the school to enrol your child. The Ministry can do this if there are special circumstances relating to your child which might make it appropriate for the Ministry to override the scheme.