

Every student succeeding

State Schools Strategy 2016–2020

Considerations and application process for early entry to Prep

Fact Sheet

When do children start Prep in Queensland?

Queensland children are eligible to attend the Preparatory Year (Prep) if they are 5 years old by 30 June in the year they plan to attend Prep. This means that children born in July to December would attend Prep in the year after they turn 5 years old.

For children who are younger than 5 by 30 June in the year they plan to attend Prep, there are legislative provisions for principals to approve early enrolment in only very specific circumstances.

Who is eligible for early entry to Prep?

Age eligibility

- Based on age criteria, early entry to Prep is only a potential option if the child turns 5 years by 31 July in the year they plan to attend Prep.
- early entry to Prep is an exception, not the rule. A July birthday does not guarantee early entry to Prep in Queensland.

Students from interstate and overseas

- Children who have started schooling that is equivalent to the Prep Year in another country or Australian state or territory may be eligible for Prep, on the condition that the principal is satisfied that the child has the attributes required by legislation.
- Previous school enrolment in another country, state or territory does not guarantee early entry to Prep.

These are the only circumstances in which early entry to Prep is permitted under Queensland legislation and they apply to all schools in Queensland.

What are the expectations about Prep entry?

A positive transition to schooling is essential for a child's future success.

Students approved for early entry to Prep will be expected to attend school on every school day and will be taught and learn about all areas of the Australian Curriculum at a younger age than usual.

A child will only be enrolled early in Prep if the principal is satisfied that the child has the required attributes, and early enrolment will be in the child's best interest. For example, while a child may be highly capable in reading or counting, they might not have developed the social or emotional maturity required for success at school.

What are the attributes and why are they important for early entry to Prep?

It is a legislative requirement for principals to assess children for early entry to Prep according to four attributes:

- aptitude and ability;
- social and emotional competence;
- physical development; and
- level of knowledge and understanding.

Aptitude and ability

Aptitude and ability are demonstrated in a number of ways, for example, demonstrating persistence when completing difficult tasks, confidently communicating with other children and adults, and accurately recalling events.

Social and emotional competence

Young children with social and emotional competence feel safe in a learning environment, can ask for help if they need it, are organised and cooperative, and can easily interact and work with others. Social and emotional competence is vital for Prep students to engage in learning.

Physical development

A student's physical development can influence their ability to successfully engage in a range of learning



activities. Students need to be able to stay alert for the duration of the school day every day of the week. Being coordinated and having good muscle control will assist a child to engage in writing and other classroom activities. While it is expected that toileting accidents may happen occasionally with younger students, a child who frequently requires assistance to toilet will not be gaining the full benefits of education and these incidents may affect the child in other ways.

Level of knowledge and understanding

When children have a diverse range of knowledge and understanding, they are more likely to engage and experience success with the curriculum expectations in Prep. This includes the ability to recount events, express ideas, hypothesise and propose solutions, demonstrate reading and writing awareness and conventions, and understand mathematical language and early/foundation concepts.

How might a child be affected if they enrol in Prep too early?

If a child is enrolled in Prep before they are ready for school, there may be unintended consequences, such as the following:

- The child may experience undue pressure because he or she is not yet socially and emotionally mature enough to cope with the demands of full-time schooling.
- Self-confidence and attitudes to school could be adversely affected, in the short and/or long term, if the child struggles to cope with the educational expectations in their Prep Year.
- The child may not be able to sustain relationships with classroom peers who will be older than them.

How does the principal determine a child's eligibility for early entry to Prep?

The principal, in consultation with other relevant personnel, e.g. Prep teachers, head of curriculum, deputy principal, guidance officer, will assess the child's attributes based on the following:

- information provided in the application form;
- discussion with the child's parent/carer about the child's attributes;
- observations of the child made by school staff; and
- school readiness screening/assessment (if required).

If the principal determines that the child has the required attributes to enter Prep early, the school will provide the parent with the school's enrolment application package.

If the child has not yet developed all of the attributes required for early entry to Prep, they are not eligible for enrolment.

What is the process for a parent to apply for early entry to Prep?

If a parent believes early entry to Prep would be in their child's best interests and that their child has the necessary attributes, the parent should do the following:

1. Contact the school

Contact the principal (or senior management team member) of the school. For state schools, it is recommended that you contact the school in early September or October prior to the new school year. You will be provided with information about early entry requirements and the application process.

2. Request an Application form

Request an Application form for Early Entry to Prep from the principal (or senior management team member) of the school.

3. Provide documents to the school

If you believe your child has the necessary attributes for early entry to Prep, provide the school with a completed application form and supporting evidence, for example, samples of your child's work.

4. Meet with the principal

The principal (or senior management team member) of the school will meet with you to discuss the application.

5. Be aware that school staff will observe your child

School staff will observe your child while he/she engages in educational activities. Your child may also possibly undertake a standardised screening or assessment with your permission if the principal considers this is necessary.

6. Receive the principal's decision

The principal will provide written advice to you as to whether your child is eligible for early entry to Prep at that school based on the assessment of your child's attributes.