

Information Note on the age range for eligibility under the free Pre-School Year in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme

The free Pre-School Year in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme is implemented by the Childcare Directorate of the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (OMCYA). Under the scheme, parents can avail of a free pre-school year for their children when they are aged between 3 years 3 months and 4 years 6 months in September of the relevant year. At the start of the next pre-school year In September 2010, children will be eligible for the scheme if they were born on or between 2 February 2006 and 30 June 2007. Each child can avail of the free pre-school year within one academic year only.

Subject to the fact that children are normally required to attend primary school from the age of 6 years, exceptions to the upper age limit for eligibility under the scheme will be considered where it is proposed that a child will commence primary school at a later age than 5 years 6 months on the grounds that he or she is developmentally delayed or due to the enrolment policies of local schools. There are no grounds under the scheme for exceptions to the lower age limit.

The ECCE scheme is intended to provide children in their pre-school year with age appropriate activities. The age range for eligibility for the ECCE scheme spans a period of almost 17 months which is a significant period in the developmental stage of pre-school children. This age range has been selected to optimise the balance between parental choice, given that children can commence primary school between the age of 4 years and 6 years, and the effective delivery of the pre-school year.

Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs
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