



Matching Practices for Primary and Secondary Schools – Scotland

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Relevant country background

Attendance at primary and secondary school in Scotland is compulsory for all children aged between the ages of 4-16. To start primary school in the August intake a child must have reached 4 on or before the 28 (or 29) February of the same year. Parents can defer entry to primary school for a year for children who are 4 years old between 31 December and 28 (or 29) February, at the discretion of the local authority. To start secondary school in the August intake, a child must usually have reached 11 on or before the 28 (or 29) February of the same year. General education policy is determined at a national level by the Scottish Government and is implemented at a local level by the Scottish local authorities (there are currently 32 of these). Admission to schools is devolved to local authorities.

Lists of all state-funded and independent schools are available on the Scottish Government website. State-funded schools in Scotland are either “denominational” (for the vast majority, this means Roman Catholic) or “non-denominational”. The number of state-funded schools in an area is determined by the population. In addition, there are a very small number of specialized state-funded schools in specific subject areas (such as the Dance School of Scotland and the Glasgow School of Sport). Admission criteria are set by these individual schools. There are also specialized state-funded schools for pupils with additional learning support needs (such as Donaldson’s School). Admission is on the basis of meeting additional learning support needs criteria. Finally, there are independent schools that specialize in certain areas (such as St Mary’s Music School). Each such school sets its own admission criteria.

This profile applies to enrollment in primary and secondary schools in Scotland.

“Matching in Practice” is a research network that brings together the growing community of researchers in Europe working on the various aspects of assignment and matching in education and related labour markets.

These country profiles are part of a collective effort by network members to map matching practices across Europe

www.matching-in-practice.eu

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Summary box

Organization of education	Scottish Government Learning Directorate.
Stated objectives of enrolment policy	n/a.
Who's in charge?	Admission to schools is devolved to local authorities.
In place since	1994 (when local government was reorganized).
Available capacity	Up to individual schools to report this information to local authorities.
Timing of enrolment	Parents apply by 15 March for entry at the start of the School year (mid-August) and are informed of the outcome by 30 April.
Information available to parents prior to enrolment period	Parents are issued with guidance (currently a booklet entitled "Choosing a School – A Guide for Parents"). Lists of all state-funded and independent schools are available on the Scottish Government website.
Restrictions on preference expression	Parents either choose one school in the catchment area (with no opportunity to supply a preference) or make a "placing request" for a school outside the catchment area. Multiple placing requests can be made but a parent must indicate their first choice among these (and this is the only preference that can be expressed).
Matching procedure	If the parent is satisfied with the catchment area school, then the child will normally be placed there. Placing requests are not guaranteed to be met, though family circumstances such as siblings already at the school are considered. when local authorities make decisions.
Priorities and quotas	Individual local authorities may set their own priorities when it comes to granting placing requests. These are not published at national level.
Tie-breaking	n/a.
Other special feature	There is a system in place by which parents can appeal a local authority's decision to refuse a placing request.

Description of current practices

Admission to schools is devolved to local authorities (of which Scotland has 32). The local authority normally identifies the non-denominational school and the denominational school in the catchment area determined by the child's home address and proximity to state-funded school. If the parent is satisfied with the catchment area non-denominational or denominational school identified by the local authority,

then the child will normally be placed there. It is unusual for lack of space to cause an exception to this. If their parent wishes to choose another school, they can make a “placing request” to the relevant local authority. Multiple placing requests can be made but a parent must indicate their first choice among these (and this is the only preference that can be expressed). Placing requests are not guaranteed to be met, though family circumstances such as siblings already at the school are considered when local authorities make decisions. A failed placing request does not jeopardise a child’s ability to attend their catchment area non-denominational or denominational school.

Performance

Some secondary schools with excellent reputations are over-demanded – this has a knock-on effect on house prices in the catchment areas, as often not all placing requests for these schools can be granted. Between 1998 and 2009, on average around 85% of placing requests were granted (see <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2010/03/19130022/3>). This reveals a slow but steady decrease in the percentage of granted placing requests. There is anecdotal evidence that Councils have been tightening up their processes when it comes to granting placing requests in recent years.

Recent policy changes

None

Perceived issues

There is anecdotal evidence of parents renting flats in the catchment area of a given school (especially in the case of over-demanded secondary schools) if they do not already live in the school’s catchment area, solely for the purposes of supplying a catchment area address in order for their child to be eligible to attend their preferred school. Councils and schools have been vigilant.

Existing data

List of schools with some basic information on each of them:

<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/scottishschoolsonline/>

Aggregate education statistics: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/School-Education>

Other resources and references

Example of description of the process and catchment areas (city of Edinburgh):

http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/info/20071/nurseries_and_childcare

Link to description booklet for 2013 (in pdf):

http://www.sciennes.ik.org/attachments/2013_Placing_in_schools_booklet.pdf



MiP Country Profiles downloadable from matching-in-practice.eu

MiP Country Profile 1. Cantillon, Estelle (2011), [Matching practices for elementary schools – Belgium \(French-speaking region\)](#).

MiP Country Profile 2. Kübler, Dorothea (2011), [University admission practices – Germany](#).

MiP Country Profile 3. Irving, Rob (2011), [Matching practices for entry-labor markets – Scotland](#).

MiP Country Profile 4. Kiselgof, Sofya (2011), [Matching practices for universities – Ukraine](#).

MiP Country Profile 5. Biró, Péter (2011), [University admission practices – Hungary](#).

MiP Country Profile 6. Biró, Péter (2012), [Matching practices for secondary schools – Hungary](#).

MiP Country Profile 7. Chen, Li (2012), [University admission practices – UK](#).

MiP Country Profile 8. Chen, Li (2012), [University admission practices – Ireland](#).

MiP Country Profile 9 Cantillon, Estelle and Koen Declercq (2012), [University admission practices – Belgium](#).

MiP Country Profile 10. Chen, Li (2012), [Matching practices for elementary schools – Ireland](#).

MiP Country Profile 11. Chen, Li (2012), [Matching practices for secondary schools – Ireland](#).

MiP Country Profile 12. Manlove, David (2012), [Matching practices for primary and secondary schools – Scotland](#).

MiP Country Profile 13. Merlino, Luca Paolo and Antonio Nicoló (2012), [Matching practices for elementary schools – Italy](#).

MiP Country Profile 14. Merlino, Luca Paolo and Antonio Nicoló (2012), [Matching practices for secondary schools – Italy](#).

MiP Country Profile 15. Merlino, Luca Paolo and Antonio Nicoló (2012), [University admissions practices – Italy](#).

MiP Country Profile 16 Hiller, Victor and Olivier Tercieux (2013), [Matching practices in secondary schools – France](#).

MiP Country Profile 17 Calsamiglia, Caterina (2014), [Matching Practices for elementary and secondary Schools – Spain](#).

MiP Country Profile 18 Lauri, Triin, Kaire Põder, and André Veski (2014), [Matching practices for elementary schools – Estonia](#).

MiP Country Profile 19. Salonen, Mikko A.A. (2014), [Matching practices for secondary schools – Finland](#).

MiP Country Profile 20 Terrier, Camille (2014), [Matching practices for secondary public school teachers – France](#).

MiP Country Profile 21 Basteck, Christian, Katharina Huesmann, and Heinrich Nax (2015), [Matching practices for secondary schools – Germany](#)

MiP Country Profile 22 Cantillon, Estelle (2015), [Matching practices for secondary schools – Belgium \(French-speaking region\)](#).