

Early Entry to School for Children who are Gifted Cross Sectoral Guidelines

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I. Background

These guidelines apply to all Government, Catholic and Independent schools in Tasmania.

These guidelines provide details and contact information for all schools relating to *Ministerial Instruction No 15 Early Entry to School*. They also provide details and contact information for Section 12 of the *School Enrolment Process* for Department of Education (DoE) schools in Tasmania.

Children in all Tasmanian schools may begin Kindergarten if they are four years old on, or before, 1 January in the year of enrolment. Children must begin Prep if they are five years old on, or before 1 January in the year of enrolment.

The Tasmanian Government recognises that there is a small group of children who are gifted and who may benefit from special consideration of the age at which they start school. Such children can benefit from starting Kindergarten or Prep up to six months earlier than usual and this is known as 'early entry'.

Parents of a gifted child can apply to an expert committee, known as the *Early Entry to School Cross Sectoral Placement Committee*, to consider their child for early entry to Kindergarten or Prep. The Committee includes a representative from all school sectors (Government, Catholic and Independent), parents, principals, teachers and a psychologist.

Detailed information about early entry and giftedness in young children is provided in the document called "*Early Entry to School Frequently Asked Questions*" available on the Department of Education web site. It should be read by parents before applying for early entry for their child.

Early entry to Kindergarten or Prep is one strategy for meeting the intellectual, social and emotional needs of pre-school children who have been identified as gifted. Other strategies may be more appropriate for individual children.

2. Criteria for early entry

To be considered for early to Kindergarten or Prep in the gifted category a child must:

- (i) be aged at least 3 years and 6 months of age as at 1 January of the year of commencing kindergarten;
or
 - (ii) be aged at least 4 years and 6 months of age as at 1 January of the year of commencing Prep;
- and
- (i) be assessed in the top two percent of the population for cognitive function, through an assessment by a registered psychologist. The recommended testing instrument is the *Wechsler Preschool & Primary Scale of Intelligence – Fourth Edition Australian Standardised Edition* (WPPSI-IV Australian); or
 - (ii) be close to the top two percent and be considered by the *Early Entry to School Cross Sectoral Placement Committee* to have special circumstances that justify the early entry. Where Early Entry for kindergarten is approved in this circumstance, the approval may be granted as provisional, subject to the condition of a review by the Committee before commencing Prep.

3. Process to apply for early entry to Kindergarten or Prep

Parents of prospective early entry students are advised to read the document called “*Early Entry to School Frequently Asked Questions*” available on the Department of Education web site as their first step.

Parents may also make contact with the Tasmanian Association for the Gifted – TAG (see details at the end of this document) who can provide advice and support for early entry applications.

If parents are thinking of applying for early entry to Kindergarten or Prep for their child, they should contact the principal of the school of enrolment early in the year before enrolment is desired. It will help to secure a place for their child, if their application is approved.

The principal will:

- Ask for evidence of birth date (a birth certificate or passport) to check the age requirement
- Provide parents with a copy of the document called “*Early Entry to School Frequently Asked Questions*” available on the Department of Education web site.

If parents decide to apply for early entry, the principal will provide them with a copy of the application form available on the Department of Education web site and tell them how to get an assessment for the child with a registered psychologist:

- Government schools provide psychological assessments at no cost to parents. These are done by school psychologists during September each year.
- Costs for psychologist assessments for Catholic and Independent schools will be borne by parents.

Parents **MUST** complete the *Early Entry to School for Gifted Students Application Form* available on the Department of Education web site and return it to the school by August 31.

Where possible, this information should be provided to the psychologist before the psychologist does the assessment, as it provides useful background information.

The following documents need to be forwarded to the relevant sector contact person by the end of September: (Late applications may not be considered)

- A copy of the *Psychologist’s Assessment Summary*
- The completed *Early Entry to School for Gifted Students Application Form*

These documents will be considered by the *Early Entry to School Cross Sectoral Placement Committee*, which meets early in October each year.

The Committee is chaired by a nominated senior officer of the Department of Education. The Committee includes a representative from all school sectors – Government, Catholic and Independent and a parent representative nominated by the Tasmanian Association for the Gifted (TAG). The Committee also includes a registered psychologist, a principal representative and an early childhood teacher.

The Committee makes the final decision about whether a child fulfils the requirements and is likely to benefit from early entry to Kindergarten or Prep.

Parents and the school principal are advised of the Committee’s decision in writing, as soon as possible after the October meeting. The letter to the parents of successful applicants advises them to complete the normal enrolment process with their school as soon as possible.

The Kindergarten or Prep teachers who will be receiving children through early entry should be provided with professional learning support as appropriate.

Should a parent wish to discuss the outcome of the early entry process, they should contact the Chair of the Committee.

4. Further information

Further information about the process of early entry to school is available from the relevant contact below:

<p>Department of Education Schools:</p> <p>Ms Ros Cocker Phone: (03) 616 55775 email: ros.cocker@education.tas.gov.au Post: Curriculum Services GPO Box 169 Hobart TAS 7001</p>	<p>Independent Schools:</p> <p>Ms Terese Phillips Phone: (03) 6224 0125 email: tphillips@independentschools.tas.edu.au Post: Independent Schools Tasmania PO Box 616 Sandy Bay TAS 7005</p>
<p>Tasmanian Catholic Education Office:</p> <p>Ms Jenny Noble Phone: 6210 8888 email: Jenny.Noble@catholic.tas.edu.au Post: Tasmanian Catholic Education Office PO Box 102 North Hobart TAS 7002</p>	<p>Parent support group:</p> <p>Tasmanian Association for the Gifted Inc. (TAG) Phone: 0467 528 048 email: tasgifted@gmail.com Post: GPO Box 1942 Hobart TAS 7001 web site: http://www.tasgifted.com</p>

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Associated Documents and Materials

The following documents are available from www.education.tas.gov.au (Search for the Doc ID)

- School Enrolment Process (Doc ID: TASED-4-1797567314-8501)
- Early Entry to School Cross Sectoral Placement Committee - Terms of Reference (Doc ID: TASEDXX)
- Early Entry to School Frequently Asked Questions (Doc ID: TASED-4-1792)
- Early Entry to School for Gifted Students Application Form (Doc ID: TASED-4-3559)
- Psychologist's Assessment Summary (Doc ID: TASED-4-4942)
- Supporting Gifted Pre-school Children (Doc ID: TASED-4-7401)