



# Queensland Early Entry to Prep Framework

– strengthening consistency and rigour



## Introduction

The Department of Education and Training is committed to ensuring that all Queensland children have the best possible start to school. We want all children in Prep to feel safe and supported, and have the confidence to adapt to the learning environment of their school.

One way that positive transitions to school can be supported is to ensure that children are enrolled in Prep when they are of the optimal age and have the attributes needed to be successful at school.

A quality kindergarten program in the year before Prep is the best education option for all children, with early entry to Prep for July-born children an exception, where it is in the best educational interests of the child.

All Queensland children are encouraged to take part in a government-approved kindergarten program delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher in the year before Prep.

The Early Entry to Prep Framework outlines the governing legislation, principles, and the process for determining whether a child who is younger than the Prep age may be enrolled.

Research shows that a child's development when entering school has a strong and lasting relationship to their progress throughout their primary school years<sup>1</sup>. This evidence-base demands a rigorous and consistent approach to early entry to Prep considerations to ensure that the best interests of the child drive decision-making.

<sup>1</sup> Commonwealth of Australia (2014). *The predictive validity of the AEDC: Predicting later cognitive and behavioural outcomes*, <https://www.aedc.gov.au/resources/detail/the-predictive-validity-of-the-aedc-predicting-later-cognitive-and-behavioural-outcomes>.

## Legislation

Under the *Education (General Provisions) Regulation 2006*, a child is eligible for enrolment in the Prep year if they will turn **5 years of age by 30 June** in the proposed year of attendance at school.

There has been no change to the age eligibility for Prep enrolment.

However, children who turn 5 years of age by 31 July in the year of proposed Prep attendance, or children who have already started a Prep-equivalent program in another state, territory or country, may apply for early entry to Prep at a Queensland school if it is considered in their best educational interests to do so.

Section 15 of the *Education (General Provisions) Regulation 2006* allows early entry to Prep for a child who:

EITHER

- will be at least 5 years and 5 months on 31 December in the proposed year of attendance at school (i.e. a child who turns 5 on or before 31 July); AND
- is considered ready for education in the year of schooling considering the child's attributes;

OR

- had started education in another country, Australian state or territory that is equivalent to Prep; AND
- is considered ready for education in the year of schooling considering the child's attributes.

**A July birthday or previous school enrolment in another state or country, does not guarantee early entry to Prep in Queensland.**



# Principles for early entry to Prep



## The best educational interests of the child

*The fundamental principle is that all considerations are made in the best interests of the child when considering early entry to Prep. Parents, school leaders and early childhood educators must focus on the attributes of the individual child and their educational development.*

Prep is the first year of schooling and is a full-time program, from Monday to Friday during normal school hours.

In the Prep year, students learn about, and are assessed in, all learning areas of the Australian Curriculum. Part of the day-to-day operations of a school and classroom involve responding to routines and procedures. A child who attends a quality early childhood program before Prep more readily adapts to the structure and learning environment of school.

For a child starting school at a younger age than usual, the longer term social and emotional consequences should be considered. While a child may have a diverse range of knowledge and understanding to support their learning of the Prep curriculum, it is also important that they develop the social or emotional capabilities essential for early entry to Prep and ongoing success at school.

To ensure that it is in the best educational interests for a child to be granted early entry to Prep, assessment across the range of the child's attributes is required.



## Partnerships

*Parents work in partnership with the school and early childhood educators to gather evidence of the child's attributes to demonstrate that the child is ready for early entry to Prep.*

Early childhood educators and school teams work in partnership with families to determine whether early entry to Prep is in the child's best educational interests. In conversations with parents/carers considering early entry to Prep for their child, the principal needs to provide advice regarding school expectations and skills which will support the child's learning in the Prep class.

The decision-making process for early entry to Prep involves the principal working with the parent/carer and relevant school staff (e.g. senior management team, Prep teacher, learning support teacher, guidance officer).

Through this process, the parent/carer can share information about their child's skills, talents and capabilities with the principal, who, in turn, can consult with qualified educators to assess all evidence gathered. Through these partnerships, the principal can assess the evidence to determine whether the child has the attributes required for a schooling environment.



## Consistency, equity and rigour

*Clear and consistent processes are required to ensure an appropriate level of rigour around assessment of applications for early entry to Prep. There will be equitable access to seek early entry and there is no requirement for external professional assessments.*

To ensure that there is consistency, rigour and equity in decision-making, the process for early entry to Prep requires parents and school leaders to assess the child's attributes in accordance with set criteria using a uniform decision-making tool for all applicants.

The uniform tool will support principal decision-making and will build enhanced understanding and rigorous application regarding the attributes considered in relation to early entry to Prep.

To ensure an equitable approach, parents/carers are not required to supply external professional assessments to support the application for early entry to Prep.

The conditions for early entry to Prep are based on legislation that aims to ensure that all children are given the best possible start to school and that decisions are made in the very best educational interests of the child.

# Attributes

There are four attributes that are used to assess an application for early entry to Prep:



## Aptitude and ability

Aptitude and ability relates to the potential to learn new skills. Young children with aptitude and ability have a capacity to learn and thrive in a range of varied contexts. They are likely to demonstrate well-developed spoken language, be confident in speaking with familiar and unfamiliar children and adults, learn independently, and make several attempts at completing a difficult activity before seeking assistance.



## Social and emotional competence

Social and emotional competence is the ability to demonstrate confidence, perseverance and independence, which enables a child to focus on and enjoy their learning. Students with high levels of social and emotional competence feel safe in a learning environment, can ask for help if they need it, are organised, cooperative and can easily interact and work with others.

In a Prep classroom, social and emotional competence is vital for students to engage in learning. Prep students will be expected to work independently, or work with others to complete activities. They will not always have immediate help from an adult and will be expected to try to solve problems themselves before seeking help. Students will be expected to follow directions and understand rules. These skills are essential to ensure young children can cope in a formal learning environment.



## Physical development

A child's physical development can influence their ability to successfully engage in a range of learning activities at school. This development includes having the muscle strength to assist with gross and fine motor skills, hand-eye co-ordination, and managing their own physical needs such as going to the toilet and dressing themselves. Physical development also includes the ability to maintain attention and stay alert for the duration of the school day for five days every school week. Students who tire easily during the day may lose concentration affecting their learning success. Children continue to develop the ability to remain focused on learning tasks during the day as they grow older.



## Level of knowledge and understanding

When children have a diverse range of knowledge and understanding, they are more likely to engage in and experience success with the Prep curriculum expectations. 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. It is essential for children to have these foundational skills to support their learning.



# Process for applying for early entry to Prep

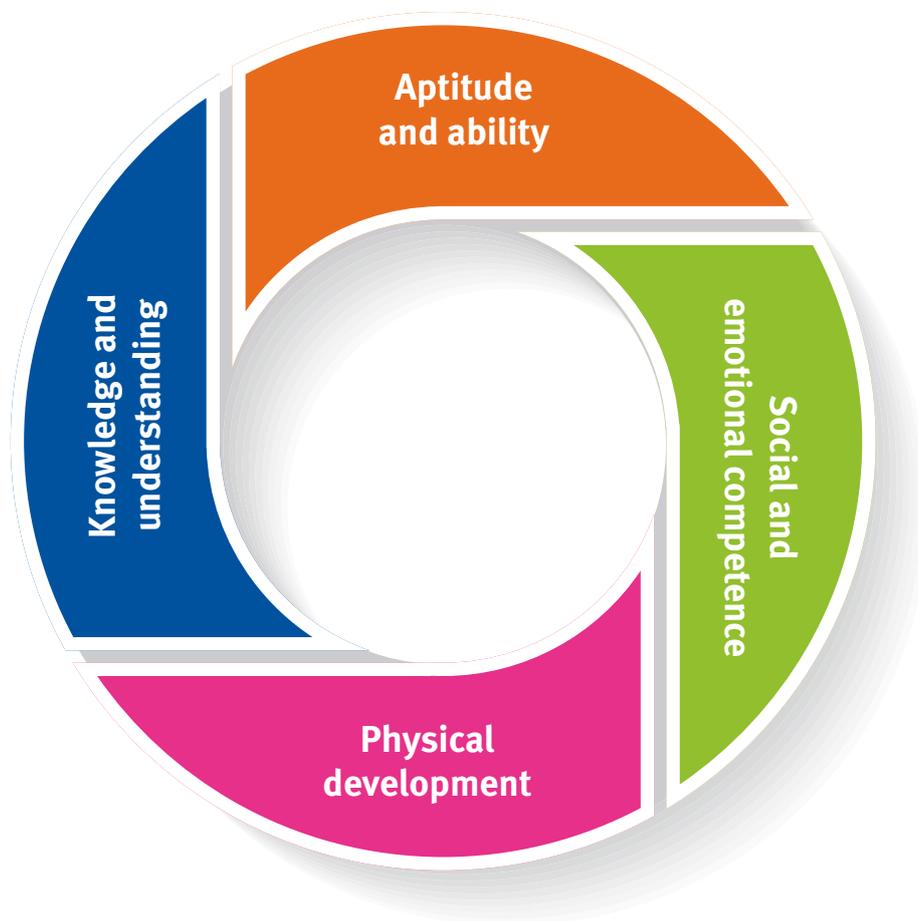
Once initial discussions about the child's attributes, expectations for early entry to Prep and the best interests of the child have been held between parents and the school, an application form may be requested by the parent.

On receiving a completed application form, the principal will determine whether the child has the attributes required for early entry to Prep based on the evidence provided by the parent/carer, consultation with relevant educational personnel and observation/assessment of the child.

## The process



A balance of the four key attributes is required for successful early entry to Prep.



The decision made by the principal is final and is not reviewable once made. A record of the principal's decision-making process and final determination will be retained as a formal record by the school and a copy provided to the parent.

See *Appendix 1: Early entry to Prep flowchart* which provides an outline of the early entry to Prep process.

# Appendix 1: Early entry to Prep flowchart

