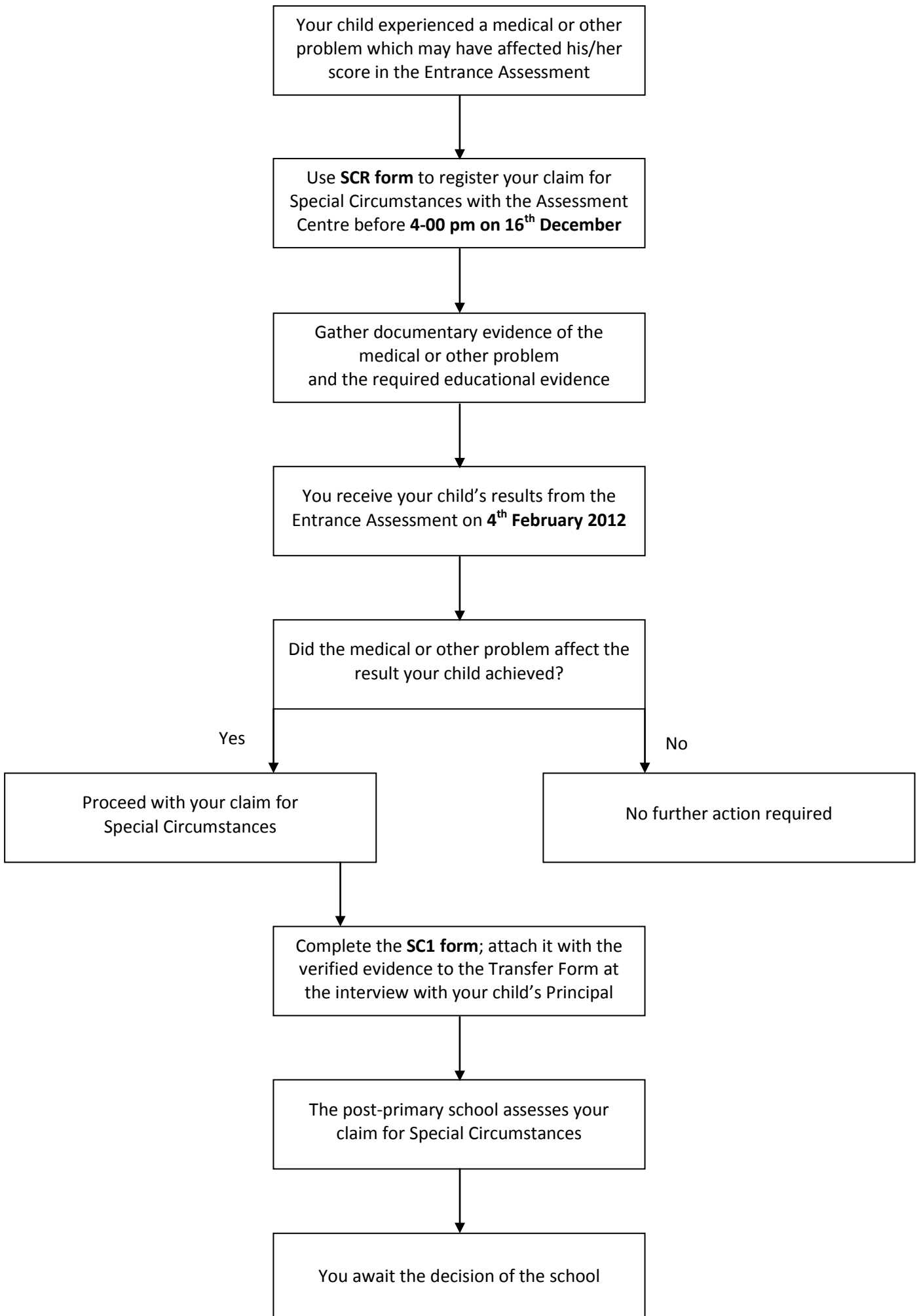


Claiming Special Circumstances

**A guide for parents & guardians of children who have
taken the GLA Entrance Assessment**

**All claims for Special Circumstances should be registered with the Assessment Centre
before 4-00 pm on 16th December 2011**

Claiming Special Circumstances



Special Circumstances

What are Special Circumstances?

Just before or during the Entrance Assessment, a child might experience medical or other problems which affect his/her performance in the Entrance Assessment and these difficulties are referred to as Special Circumstances. When this child applies for a place in a school which is using academic selection, his/her parents can provide appropriate evidence to the Board of Governors to show that their child had experienced Special Circumstances and ask that the grade/score achieved in the Entrance Assessment should be adjusted.

Recognition or acceptance of a claim for Special Circumstances can only go some way to assist the child affected by a potentially wide range of difficulties, emotional or physical, which may have influenced his/her performance in the Entrance Assessment. However, the admissions sub-committee in the admitting schools will assess each claim for Special Circumstances and take a decision on whether to adjust the grade/score achieved in the Entrance Assessment. This process is carried out before any decisions are taken on the children to be selected for admission.

Has my child experienced Special Circumstances?

As a parent, you will know whether there have been medical or other problems affecting your child in the period just before or during the Entrance Assessment. While you will not immediately know whether these circumstances have had a detrimental effect on your child's score in the Entrance Assessment, you are best placed to decide on whether they should be brought to the attention of the schools to which you will be applying for a place for your child in September 2012.

Where a medical or other problem was identified before the Entrance Assessment, then you will have had the opportunity to apply to the Assessment Centre for Access Arrangements to be put in place. These Access Arrangements will have been addressed during the Entrance Assessment for the difficulties he/she was experiencing. Therefore, you should not use any medical or other problems which were or could have been used to claim Access Arrangements for your child as part of your claim for Special Circumstances. An exception will be in the unlikely instance where an Assessment Centre did not meet its responsibilities with regard to providing agreed Access Arrangements in line with the school's Entrance Assessment: Access Arrangements & Special Circumstances Policy (available from any Assessment Centre or its website).

Making a claim for Special Circumstances

What should I do?

If you have any concerns that medical or other problems affected your child just before or during the Entrance Assessment then you should register your concerns with the Assessment Centre **before 4-00 pm on Friday 16th December 2011**. (Later in this guidance, you will be provided with advice on how to register your claim for Special Circumstances.)

What happens next?

Your registered claim will be held by the Assessment Centre where your child took the Entrance Assessment as evidence that you were concerned that your child experienced medical or other problems which affected his/her performance in the Entrance Assessment.

You should immediately begin to gather evidence to support your claim for Special Circumstances. This must include contemporaneous medical or other professional assessments of your child and supporting educational evidence. (Later in this guidance, you will be provided with advice on how to gather the required evidence and how to present it to the admitting schools)

On 4th February 2012, you will receive your child's results and you will be able to consider whether your child's performance in the assessment was adversely affected by the medical or other problems which he/she experienced just before or during the Entrance Assessment. You can then decide on whether to proceed with a claim for Special Circumstances. If you decide not to proceed with your claim then you need take no further action and you should proceed with your application for a place for your child to the schools of your choice.

If you decide to proceed with your claim for Special Circumstances then you must send details of your claim and the associated evidence to the admitting schools named on your child's Transfer Form. This is carried out when your child's primary school Principal invites you to a meeting in late January or early February 2012 to complete the Transfer Form. The Transfer Form and your claim are sent on to the local Transfer Department of your Education and Library Board before it is forwarded to the first school you have chosen for your child.

The Board of Governors or its delegated sub-committee will examine all of the claims for Special Circumstances and decide on their merit and the adjustment, if any, to be applied to the grade/score achieved in the Entrance Assessment. Consideration of each claim will be based on the evidence that you provide. When the outcomes of all claims for Special Circumstances have been determined, the admission criteria will be applied.

Registering a claim for Special Circumstances by 4-00 pm on 16th December 2011

How do I register my claim for Special Circumstances?

Firstly, you need to consider whether your child may be eligible for a claim for Special Circumstances. Usually a claim can be made when the child is affected by adverse circumstances beyond his/her control. To assist you, the list below, while not exhaustive, gives examples of situations which could form the basis of a claim for Special Circumstances:

- a temporary illness or accident or injury at the time of the Entrance Assessment;
- a bereavement of an immediate family member at the time of the Entrance Assessment;
- a serious and disruptive domestic crisis arising at the time of the Entrance Assessment;
- a serious disturbance during the Entrance Assessment;
- accidental events such as being given the wrong or a defective Entrance Assessment paper;
- a failure by the post-primary school to implement previously agreed Access Arrangements;
- a terminal illness of a parent/guardian;
- a life threatening illness of the child or member of immediate family;
- a recent traumatic experience such as death of a close friend or distant relative;
- a flare-up of severe congenital conditions such as epilepsy, diabetes, severe asthmatic attack;
- a recent serious physical assault.

In this pack you will find a **SCR form** which you should complete and lodge with the Assessment Centre before 4-00 pm on 16th December 2011. Below the section requiring details to identify your child is an area where you can give a brief outline of the medical or other problems that your child experienced just before or during the Entrance Assessment. Your description should be sufficient to identify the grounds for your claim but, at this stage, it is not necessary to provide any evidence to support your claim for Special Circumstances. You should send the completed SCR form to the Assessment Centre where your child took the Entrance Assessment and retain a copy for your own records. The Assessment Centre will register your claim, retain your SCR form and acknowledge your claim by receipt.

Gathering the evidence for a claim for Special Circumstances which will be attached to the Transfer Form

What evidence will I need to gather in support of my claim?

Every claim for Special Circumstances must have supporting evidence which includes **both**:

- a. details of the medical or other problems which occurred just before or during the Entrance Assessment with verification by an appropriate professional;
- b. verifiable educational evidence to show that the score/grade achieved in the Entrance Assessment does not correspond to the academic ability of your child because he/she experienced medical or other problems just before or around the time of the Entrance Assessment.

The Department of Education has placed the responsibility on schools for verifying all evidence used in the admissions process and each school must ensure that the parent has provided information which has been or can be verified by an

appropriate person or authority. Boards of Governors cannot give weight to unverifiable documentary evidence provided with the transfer application when considering applications for admission to their schools.

- **Details of Medical or Other Problems**

If you are claiming that your child's performance in the Entrance Assessment has been adversely affected by a medical or other problem, independent evidence of its existence must be provided to the Board of Governors of the post-primary school.

Where the problem is of a medical nature of short duration, you must provide evidence that the child was examined by a medical practitioner at or around the time of the Entrance Assessment and the results of that examination. These details should be provided on the headed notepaper of your child's doctor and signed by him/her. If the medical problem is other than of a short duration, you must ask your doctor to provide a letter on headed notepaper which explains the medical condition and how it could have affected your child in the Entrance Assessment.

Where the problem is of a non-medical nature, you must provide documentary evidence of its existence and its effect on your child authenticated by an independent person.

- **Educational Evidence**

All claims for Special Circumstances must include objective and relevant educational evidence to show that the medical or other problem experienced by your child at or around the time of the Entrance Assessment caused him/her to underachieve. You are responsible for providing this educational evidence which must be sufficient to enable the Board of Governors to reach a decision on any adjustment to the grade/score achieved by your child in the Entrance Assessment.

You should provide all of the results from your child's school administered standardised tests in English/Literacy and Mathematics/Numeracy which he/she has taken since the beginning of the Key Stage 2 period. You may include his/her school reports for P.5 and/or P.6 if they show the results of standardised tests.

You should record this information in the tables provided on the reverse side of the **SC1 form** (included in this pack). If possible, you should ask the Principal of your child's primary school to sign the form as verification of the accuracy of the results you have recorded. Some of these results may have been provided by your child's primary school on previous school reports. If you are using results from your child's school reports in support of your claim, the reports should be stapled to the Transfer Form.

If it is not possible to have your child's test results verified by his/her primary school Principal signing the SC1 form, then you should provide your child's primary school with a written request for the results you require to complete the SC1 form. You are entitled to receive all of the information that you need from the primary school. Your right to this information is legislated for by:

- The Education (Pupil Records and Reporting) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2009
- Data Protection Act, 1998

You should write to your child's primary school requesting the information needed to complete the SC1, quoting this legislation and ask that it is authenticated by the Principal's signature and/or the school stamp.

A sample letter is provided at the end of this guidance booklet.

When you obtain this information, you should transfer the results to the SC1 form and attach the original letter from the primary school to the SC1 form as documentary evidence of verification of these results by your child's school.

All of the documentary evidence you gather to support your claim for Special Circumstances should be the original documents and signed by the person who has verified the information. Photocopies cannot be accepted by the sub-committee of any Board of Governors as sufficient for verification.

You are free to provide any other appropriately verified educational evidence, e.g. results of standardised reading tests, spelling tests, verbal or non-verbal reasoning tests, etc., for the consideration of the Board of Governors by attaching other reports to the Transfer Form and space has been provided on the SC1 form to record such information. If you need further assistance, do not hesitate to contact the school to which you intend to apply for a place for your child.

Gathering the documentary evidence, as described above, is vital to allow the Board of Governors to give full consideration to a claim for Special Circumstances. The onus to provide this documentary evidence is with the parent and the required information is clearly set out on the SC1 form.

The provision of false or incorrect information will result in either the withdrawal of a place or the inability of the school to offer a place to your child.

Sending your claim for Special Circumstances to the schools

What happens if I decide not to proceed with the claim?

On 4th February 2012, you will receive your child's Entrance Assessment results. At this time, if you have registered a claim for Special Circumstances, you should consider whether the medical or other problems that your child experienced around the time of the Entrance Assessment affected the score/grade that he/she has achieved.

If you believe that the score/grade is fairly consistent with your child's ability and the problem appears not to have adversely affected his/her performance in the Entrance Assessment then you need not take any further action. Your registered claim will remain with the Assessment Centre as a record of your initial decision but it will not be processed or sent on to any other school and will be securely destroyed after an appropriate period of time.

You should proceed to apply for a place in the school of your choice by attending the interview with the Principal of your child's primary school when you will complete the Transfer Form. At this stage, you should ensure that the score/grade achieved by your child has been recorded on the Transfer Form and ensure that **the results slip you received from the Assessment Centre is attached to the Transfer Form** before you sign it and it is sent to the Transfer Department of your local Education and Library Board.

How do I ensure that my claim is sent to the post-primary school?

In late January or early February, you will be invited to your child's primary school to meet with the Principal. At this meeting you will complete the Transfer Form. Before you sign the Transfer Form, you should ensure that:

- the score/grade achieved in the GLA Entrance Assessment by your child has been recorded on the Transfer Form
- the results slip you received from the GLA Assessment Centre is attached to the form
- the completed SC1 form and all of your documentary evidence is securely attached to the Transfer Form

You are advised to retain a copy of the SC1 form and the documentary evidence you attached to the Transfer Form. When you are satisfied that the Transfer Form is completed and all of your information is recorded and attached to it, you should sign the Transfer Form.

What will happen to my claim?

Your local ELB Transfer Department will process all of the Transfer Forms from the primary schools and send them on to the first choice post-primary schools. When a school receives your Transfer Form, the Assessment Centre will be contacted to verify that you registered your claim before 4-00 pm on 16th December 2011. When this has been checked then the school will examine all claims for Special Circumstances and make any necessary adjustments to the grades/scores before beginning to apply the admissions criteria for September 2012.

If your first choice school is unable to offer your child a place then the Transfer Form is returned to the Transfer Department who will send it on to the next school of your choice. If this school is including an academic criterion relating to the GLA Entrance Assessment in its admission procedures, it will contact the Assessment Centre to verify that your claim was registered before it examines your claim for Special Circumstances.

This process will continue until one of your chosen schools decides to offer your child a place and informs the Transfer Department. Each school will make its own independent adjudication on your claim for Special Circumstances and will not know about or consider the adjudication made on your claim by any other school. Later in the year, when every child has been placed in a school, the Transfer Department will inform you about the allocation of your child to his/her post primary school.

Sample letter to Primary School Principal

You may use the sample letter below to request the information you need to complete the SC1 form in support for your claim for Special Circumstances. Please ensure that you include your child's name* and date of birth#. Please ensure that the letter is addressed to the Principal of your child's Primary School and is signed by you.

Dear _____

Please send me a copy of the formative record of progress and achievement for my child, _____, _____#. In particular, I request my child's results for all standardised tests taken from the beginning of Key Stage 2.*

I make this request under the Education (Pupils Records and Reporting) Regulations (Northern Ireland) and the Data Protection Act (1998).

Please provide my child's formative record of progress and achievement including the results of all standardised tests taken in Key Stage 2 on school notepaper and authenticated by your signature and/or the school stamp.

Thank you for your help in this matter.

Yours sincerely

Further Guidance

Where can I receive further help or guidance on claiming Special Circumstances?

At any stage, you should contact the school which you intend to nominate as your first choice on the Transfer Form to ask for further information. You should also carefully read the published admission criteria for each school that you intend to nominate for your child and be fully aware of the school's Entrance Assessment: Access Arrangements & Special Circumstances Policy.