Claiming Special Circumstances

- A Guide for Parents & Guardians*

***Parents & Guardians of children who have taken the SEAG 2025 Entrance Assessment and received a score on the basis of having sat <u>both</u> assessment papers**

Please note that decisions regarding the admission of any child to any individual school are made by the Board of Governors of that school.

Parents and guardians are advised to carefully read the published Admissions Criteria of <u>each</u> school for which they intend to apply for a place for their child, particularly those sections which provide information on the school's procedures for application of Special Circumstances.

Individual schools can apply different methods of assessment. You may also contact the schools directly for information about Special Circumstances.

Claiming Special Circumstances

Your child experienced a medical or other problem which may have affected his/her score in the Entrance Assessment

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Gather documentary evidence of the medical or other problem

and the relevant educational evidence

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You receive your child's results from the Entrance Assessment, available from **Saturday 24th January 2026**

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In your opinion, did the medical or other problem affect the result your child achieved?

Yes ↓

Proceed with your Claim for Special Circumstances

No ↓

No further action required

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Complete the **SC Form**; upload it with the verified evidence to the Post-Primary Transfer Application**

** or *whatever documentation / method the Education Authority requires from parents/guardians*

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The post-primary school assesses your claim for Special Circumstances

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You await the decision of the post-primary schools and this will be communicated via the EA Portal

Special Circumstances

What are Special Circumstances?

An application for a School to apply Special Circumstances may be made if medical or other problems affected a pupil's performance in the Entrance Assessment.

Prior to 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 the SEAG Entrance Assessment, his/her parents/guardians can provide appropriate evidence to the Board of Governors to show that their child had experienced Special Circumstances and ask that the band/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.

The admissions sub-committee in the subject school will assess each claim for Special Circumstances and take a decision on whether Special Circumstance apply and then whether to adjust the band/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/guardian, you will know whether there have been medical or other problems affecting your child in the period before or during the Entrance Assessment. While you will not immediately know whether these circumstances have had a detrimental effect on your child's outcomes in the Entrance Assessment, you are best placed to decide if they should be brought to the attention of the schools to which you will be applying for a place for your child for September 2026.

Making a claim for Special Circumstances

What should I do?

If you have any concerns that medical or other problems may have affected your child's performance in the Entrance Assessment then you should begin to gather independent evidence to support a potential claim for Special Circumstances. This should include contemporaneous medical, professional or other assessments of your child and relevant 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 24th January 2026, you should 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 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 and you are making an application to one or more of the schools which use the Entrance Assessment outcomes, then you should complete an SC Form and upload details of your claim and the supporting evidence to the Education Authority (EA), through completion of the Post-Primary Transfer Application. The Education Authority will then forward your Application to the school you have chosen as first preference for your child***.

What does the Post Primary School do?

Boards of Governors or their delegated sub-committees have a duty to examine all of the claims for Special Circumstances and decide on their merit and the adjustment, if any, to be applied to the band/score/cohort percentile achieved in the Entrance Assessment. Each school which receives your claim for Special Circumstances will make its own independent adjudication on your claim.

The existence of Special Circumstances DOES NOT in itself lead to admission to the school. The School Sub-Committee must also determine whether the Special Circumstance did affect achievement in the Entrance Assessment and, if they determine that it did, adjust the band/score achieved in the Entrance Assessment. This process is carried out before any decisions are taken on the applicants to be selected for admission.

Examples of situations which could form the basis of 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 [1] 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 immediate family member [1];
- a recent traumatic experience such as death of a close friend or relative;
- a flare-up of severe congenital conditions such as epilepsy, diabetes, severe asthmatic attack;
- a recent serious physical assault.

[1] immediate family member refers to a parent/step-parent, sibling/step-sibling.

Gathering the evidence for a claim for Special Circumstances which, along with the completed SC Form, will form part of the Post-Primary Transfer Application***.

What evidence will I need to gather in support of my claim*?**
Claims for Special Circumstances must have supporting evidence which usually includes **both**:

a. details of the medical or other problems which occurred before or during the Entrance Assessment with verification by an appropriate professional;

b. verifiable educational evidence to show that the Total Standardised Age Score/Band achieved in the SEAG Entrance Assessment does not correspond to the academic ability of your child because he/she experienced medical or other problems before or during the time of the Entrance Assessment.

You should provide all results and other information in the detail and format requested within the admissions criteria of the particular schools which you have nominated in your Post-Primary Transfer Application.***

If you need further assistance on Claiming Special Circumstances, you may wish to contact the school(s) to which you intend to apply for a place for your child.

The Department of Education has placed the responsibility on post-primary schools for verifying all evidence used in the admissions process.

Before you submit the Post-Primary Transfer Application, you should ensure that:

- the outcomes achieved in the SEAG Entrance Assessment by your child have been recorded in the Application**.
- the results information for your child which you downloaded from your dashboard from the SEAG website (seagni.co.uk) is uploaded with the Application**.
- **the completed SC Form and all of your documentary evidence is securely uploaded with the Application***.

You are advised to retain a copy of the SC Form and the documentary evidence you uploaded with the **Post-Primary Transfer Application*****. When you are satisfied that the Application is completed and all of your information is recorded and uploaded, you should submit it to the Education Authority**.

How do I upload documentary evidence to support the claim for Special Circumstances?

- The SC Form from the school website should be completed, clearly labelled, and uploaded as a single document;
- Supporting documents should be scanned and, where possible, uploaded as a single file;
- Documents should be clearly labelled. Document names should include the type of document, relevant dates (where applicable), and applicant's initials (e.g., medical_ evidence_15.11.25_AR).

What will happen to my claim?

The Education Authority Post-Primary Admissions Team will process all of the **Post-Primary Transfer Applications**** to be accessed by the first choice post-primary schools.
Each school which receives your claim for Special Circumstances will make its own independent adjudication on your claim.

******Please note that the Post-Primary Transfer Application process is carried out by the Education Authority and the process for 2026 has not been finalised by the Education Authority (EA) at the time of publication of this "Claiming Special Circumstances – A Guide for Parents & Guardians" Guide. Parents/guardians must rely on documentation provided by the EA and not the outline guidance provided in this document, when making their Post-Primary Transfer Applications in 2026.***

Appendix A Post-Primary Schools Using Common Documentation for Special Cases

N.B. If an academically selective post- primary school does not appear on the list below, it means that they will be using their own documentation which will be accessible from the individual school's website.

Abbey Christian Brothers Grammar School (Newry)
Antrim Grammar School
Aquinas Diocesan Grammar School (Belfast)
Assumption Grammar School (Ballynahinch)
Ballyclare High School
Ballymena Academy
Banbridge Academy
Bangor Grammar School
Belfast High School
Belfast Royal Academy
Bloomfield Collegiate (Belfast)
Cambridge House Grammar School (Ballymena)
Campbell College (Belfast)
Carrickfergus Grammar School
Christian Brothers' Grammar School, Omagh*
Coleraine Grammar School
Dalriada School (Ballymoney)
Dominican College, Fortwilliam (Belfast)
Down High School (Downpatrick)
Enniskillen Royal Grammar School
Foyle College (Londonderry)
Friends' School Lisburn
Glenlola Collegiate (Bangor)
Grosvenor Grammar School (Belfast)
Hunterhouse College (Belfast)
Lagan College* (Belfast)
Larne Grammar School
Lecale Trinity Grammar School* (Downpatrick)
Limavady Grammar School
Loreto Grammar School, Omagh*
Lumen Christi College (Derry)
Methodist College Belfast
Mount Lourdes Grammar School (Enniskillen)
Omagh Academy Grammar School
Our Lady and St Patrick's College, Knock (Belfast)
Our Lady's Grammar School (Newry)
Rainey Endowed School (Magherafelt)
Rathmore Grammar School (Belfast)
Regent House School (Newtownards)
Royal School Armagh
Royal School Dungannon
Sacred Heart Grammar School (Newry)
Slemish College* (Ballymena)
St Colman's College (Newry)
St Columb's College (Derry)
St Dominic's High School (Belfast)
St Joseph's Grammar School, Donaghmore^
St Louis Grammar School, Ballymena
St Louis Grammar School, Kilkeel*
St Malachy's College Belfast
St Mary's Christian Brothers' Grammar School (Belfast)
St Mary's Grammar School, Magherafelt
St Michael's College (Enniskillen)
St Patrick's Academy, Dungannon
Strabane Academy*
Strangford Integrated College* (Carrowdore)
Strathearn School (Belfast)
Sullivan Upper School (Holywood)
Thornhill College (Derry)
Victoria College (Belfast)
Wallace High School (Lisburn)
Wellington College (Belfast)

**= schools which use academic selection for only part of their total intake*
^= a school with a Main School which is academically selective and an Irish Medium Stream which is not