

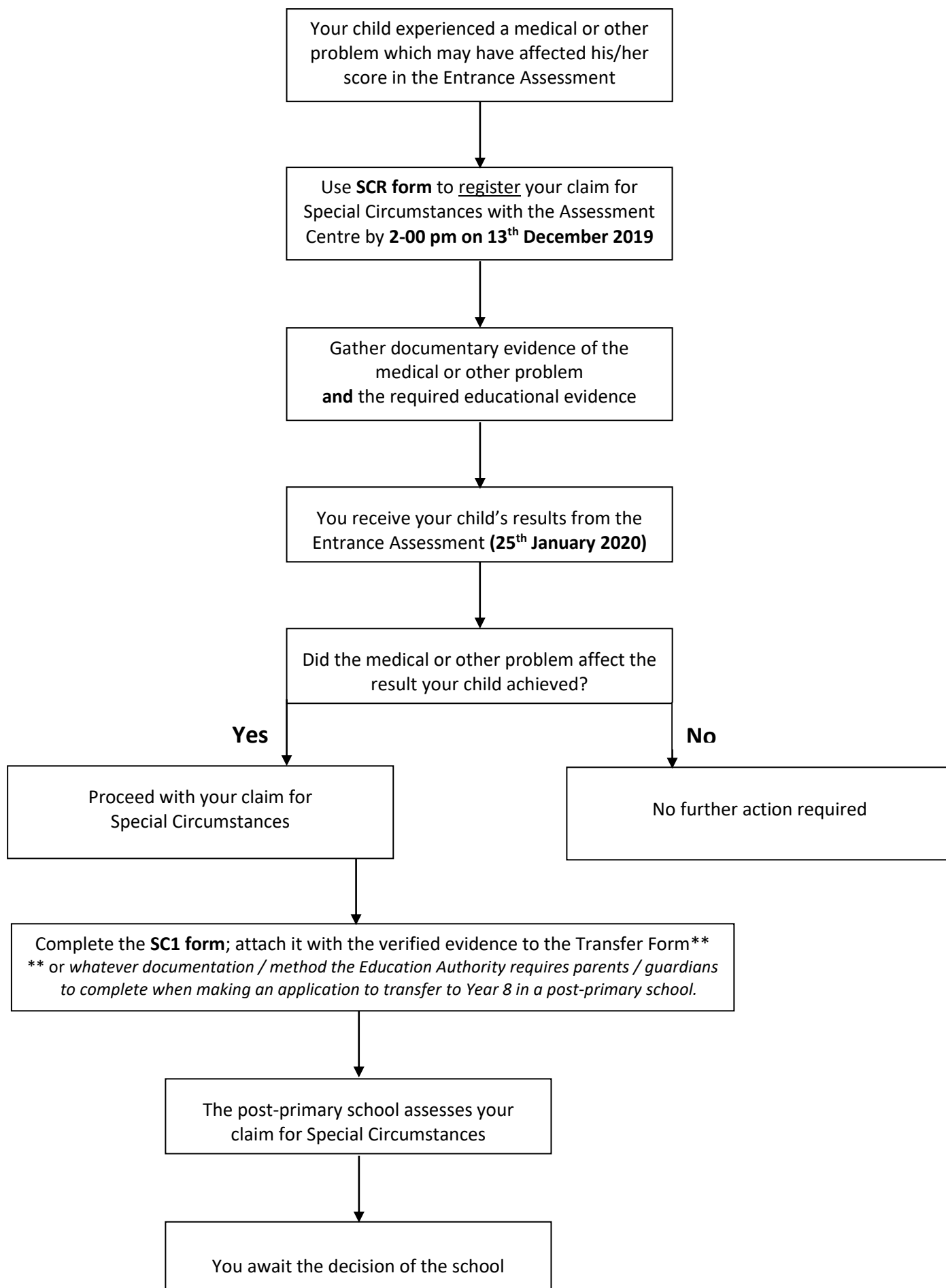
Claiming Special Circumstances

- A Guide for parents & guardians *

*parents & guardians of children who have taken the Entrance Assessment

Please note that decisions regarding the admission of any child to any individual school are made by the Board of Governors of that school. The Post Primary Transfer Consortium plays no part in this. Parents and guardians should read carefully the published admissions criteria of each 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. You may also contact the schools directly for information about Special Circumstances.

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 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 2020.

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** by completing an **SCR form** (Special Circumstances Registration) which you should return to **the Assessment Centre by 2-00 pm on Friday 13th December 2019**. (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 25th January 2020, 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 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 and you are making application to one or more of the 34 schools which use the Entrance Assessment outcomes, then you must complete an SC1 form and attach details of your claim and the supporting evidence to the Transfer Form**. This is normally carried out when your child's primary school Principal invites you to a meeting in late January or early February 2020 to complete the Transfer Form**. The Transfer Form** and your claim are sent on to the appropriate Transfer Department of the Education Authority before being forwarded to the first school you have chosen for your child.

The Board of Governors or its delegated sub-committee has 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 grade/score/cohort percentile achieved in the Entrance Assessment.

Registering a claim for Special Circumstances by 2-00 pm on Friday 13th December 2019

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 the “Claiming Special Circumstances” pack you will find a **SCR form** (Special Circumstances Registration) which you should complete. On the form, below the section requiring details to identify your child, is an area where you should 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, **to arrive by 2.00pm Friday 13th December 2019** 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, along with the completed SC1 form, to the Transfer Form**

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 just before or during the Entrance Assessment with verification by an appropriate professional;
- b. verifiable educational evidence to show that the score/grade/cohort percentile 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.

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 Transfer Form**.

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.

Sending your claim for Special Circumstances to the post-primary school(s)

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

On 25th January 2020, you should 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/cohort percentile that he/she has achieved.

If you believe that the score/grade/cohort percentile is consistent with your child's ability and the problem appears not to have adversely affected his/her performance in the Entrance Assessment then you may decide not to 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.

If I do proceed with a claim for Special Circumstances, how do I ensure that my claim is sent to the post-primary school(s)?

Before you sign the Transfer Form, you should ensure that:**

- The outcomes achieved in the GLA Entrance Assessment by your child have 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 Education Authority 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 post-primary school, which uses academic criteria related to the GLA Entrance Assessment, receives your Transfer Form**, the Assessment Centre may be contacted to verify that you registered your claim by 2-00 pm on 13th December 2019.

Each school which receives your claim for Special Circumstances will make its own independent adjudication on your claim.

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