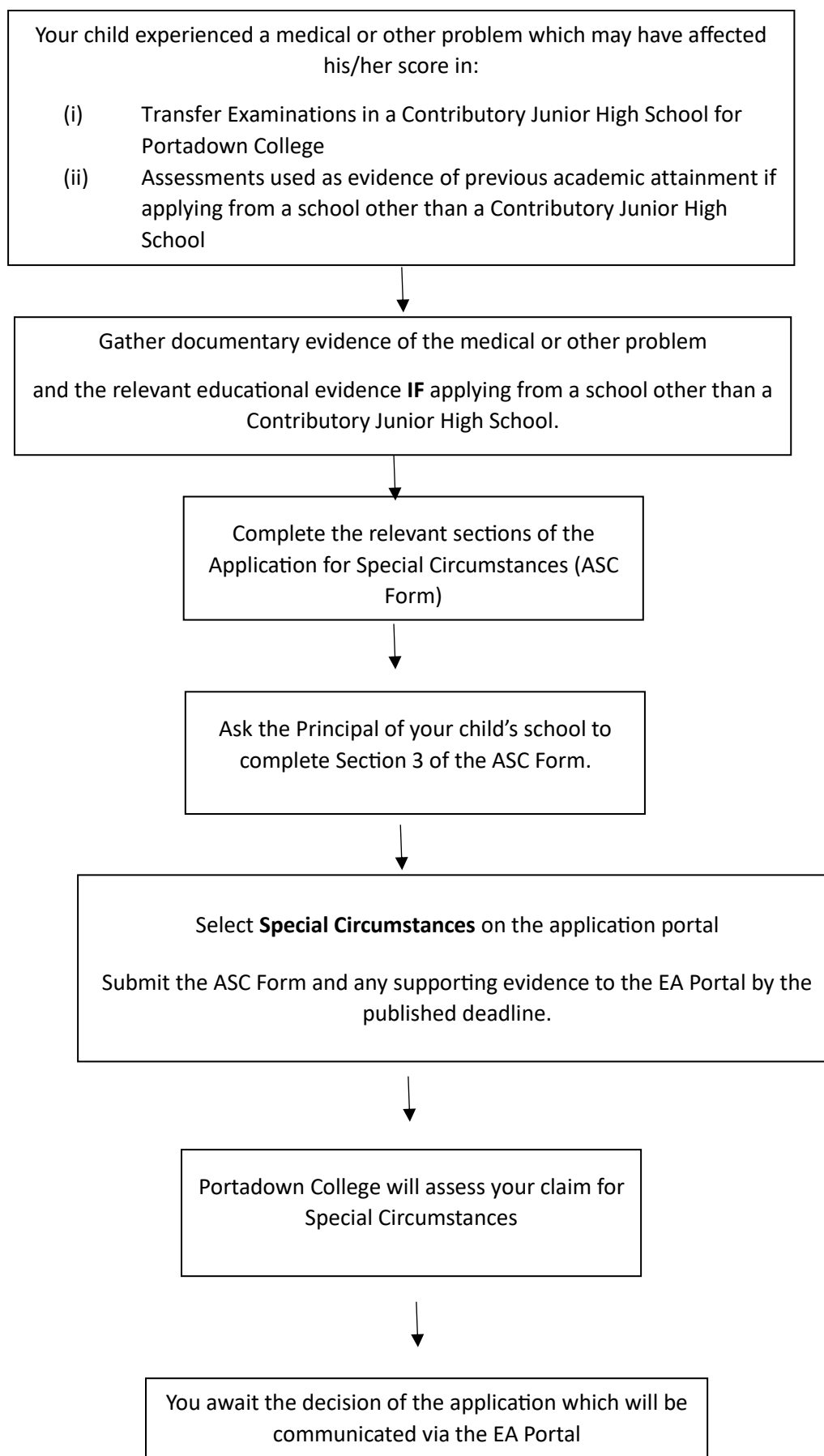


Special Circumstances

A Guide for Parents & Guardians

Claiming Special Circumstances



Special Circumstances

What are Special Circumstances?

An application for Portadown College to apply Special Circumstances may be made if medical or other problems affected a pupil's performance in the Transfer Examinations (Contributory Junior High Schools) **or** Assessments used as evidence of previous academic attainment if applying from a school other than a Contributory Junior High School.

Prior to or during the relevant assessments referenced above, a child might experience medical or other problems which affect his/her performance in the and these difficulties are referred to as Special Circumstances. When this child applies for a place in Portadown College, 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 score achieved in the relevant assessments 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 and Development Sub-committee of the Portadown College Board of Governors will assess each claim for Special Circumstances and take a decision on whether Special Circumstance apply and then whether to adjust the score/ranking achieved, based on the evidence supplied. 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 relevant assessment(s), 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 relevant assessment(s) 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.)

If you decide to proceed with your claim for Special Circumstances and you are making an application to Portadown College, then you should complete an **ASC Form** and upload details of your claim and the supporting evidence to the Education Authority (EA), through completion of the **Senior High Schools (Dickson Plan 14+)** Application. The Education Authority will then forward your Application to the school you have chosen as first preference for your child***.

What does Portadown College do?

The Admissions and Development Sub-Committee of the Portadown College Boards of Governors 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 score/ranking.

The existence of Special Circumstances DOES NOT in itself lead to admission to Portadown College. The Portadown College Admissions and Development Sub-Committee must also determine whether the Special Circumstance did affect achievement in the Transfer Assessment(s) **OR** other assessments if applying from a School other than one of the Contributory Junior High Schools and, if they determine that it did, adjust the score/rank achieved in the relevant assessment(s). 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:

Categories for Special Circumstances

SC3	<p>This is for most exceptional cases and very serious problems, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • terminal illness of a parent/carer. • death of a member of the immediate family within one year of a transfer examination. • very serious and disruptive crisis/incident at or near the time of a transfer examination. • life-threatening illness of pupil or member of immediate family. • major surgery at or near the time of the examination/severe disease. • very recent death of a close friend or member of the extended family. • severe or permanent bodily injury occurring at the time of a transfer examination. • being involved in a serious crisis/incident at the time of a transfer examination. • recent breakdown of the family unit.
SC2	<p>This category covers serious problems, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recent traumatic experience such as death of a close friend or distant relative. • recent illness of a more serious nature. • flare-up of a severe congenital/medical condition or a psychological condition. • broken limbs; organ disease; physical assault trauma before a transfer examination. • recent crisis/incident. • witnessing a distressing event on the day of a transfer examination.
SC1	<p>This category covers problems, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • illness at the time of the examination which has been verified by a medical practitioner (evidence from a medical practitioner to be attached). • broken limb on the mend. • concussion.

Please note:

1. 'Recent' is defined as up to four months prior to the examination(s) taking place.
2. Immediate family member refers to a parent/step-parent, sibling/step-sibling.
3. If Special Circumstances is verified, approved and applied by the Board of Governors, the approved allowance will be applied to the overall transfer mark.
4. If the Board of Governors determine that the evidence provided meets the criteria for more than one category of Special Circumstances, the category with the highest allowance will be applied.

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 Transfer Assessment(s) with verification by an appropriate professional;
- b. **For applicants from a Contributory Junior High School:** the Principal must complete Section 3A of the ASC Form to provide details of the Special Circumstances already applied or to verify the information on subject examinations, including dates is factually correct.
For applicants from a school other than a Contributory Junior High School: the Principal must complete Section 3B of the ASC Form to verify that the Year 10 Assessment data provided with the application 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 relevant assessment(s).

If you need further assistance on Claiming Special Circumstances, you may wish to contact Portadown College. 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 Senior High Schools (Dickson Plan 14+) Transfer Application, you should ensure that:

- the Special Circumstances box has been selected.
- the completed ASC Form and all of your documentary evidence is securely uploaded with the Application.

You are advised to retain a copy of the ASC Form and the documentary evidence you uploaded with the **Senior High Schools (Dickson Plan 14+)** . 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 ASC 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 Senior High Schools Admissions Team will process all of the **Senior High Schools (Dickson Plan 14+)** Applications to be accessed by the first-choice Senior High School.

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