



Advice on the admission of summer born children

**For local authorities, school admission
authorities and parents**

December 2014

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Parental decisions to delay their summer born child's admission to school until compulsory school age

While most parents are happy for their child to start school in the September following their fourth birthday, some parents will have concerns about whether their child will be ready for school at this point, and will consider delaying their entry until compulsory school age. It is important that they know all the options available to them and are able to make an informed decision.

They should note that, whilst evidence shows that, statistically speaking, summer born children tend to perform less well in school tests, this does not mean that all children born in the summer term will struggle at school. Teachers are skilled at differentiating the curriculum to meet a diverse range of needs. Before deciding to delay their child's entry to school, we would recommend that parents visit the schools they are thinking of applying for. The teachers will be able to explain the provision on offer to children in the reception class, how it is tailored to meet the needs of the youngest pupils and how the needs of these pupils will continue to be met as they move up through the school. They may also be able to allay any concerns the parent may have about their child's readiness for school.

It is also important to note that, whether they attend a primary school or an early years setting during the academic year following their fourth birthday, children will receive the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum which is largely based around learning through play. Further information for parents about the early years foundation stage is available on the [Foundation Years website](#).

The revised School Admissions Code

A revised School Admissions Code came into force on 19 December 2014. The relevant paragraphs for the purpose of this advice are paragraphs 2.17, 2.17A and 2.17B. These paragraphs relate to any circumstance in which a parent requests their child is admitted out of their normal age group. This advice, however, relates specifically to parental requests for summer born children to be admitted to reception rather than year one at the age of five.

The revised code includes the following new requirements in relation to parental requests for children to be admitted out of their normal age group.

To improve the quality of decision making in individual cases, as well as making their decision on the basis of the circumstances of the case, admission authorities must now make their decision in the child's best interests, and must take account of the views of the head teacher of the school concerned. The code now also provides further information about the matters an admission authority should take into account when considering the circumstances of the case.

To improve clarity and transparency for parents, admission authorities are now required to make clear in their admission arrangements the process for requesting admission out of the normal year group. They must also set out clearly for the parents concerned the reasons for their decision in each case.

To improve fairness, where a parent's request is agreed, the local authority and admission authority are now required to process the application as part of the main admissions round. They may not give the application lower priority on the basis that the child is being admitted out of their normal age group.

Making a decision in the child's best interests

We are aware that, in making their decision, many admission authorities have focussed on whether the child has any particular medical or special educational needs which mean their development is significantly below the expected levels for a child of their age.

The government would agree that, in general, children should be educated in their normal age group, with the curriculum differentiated as appropriate, and that they should only be educated out of their normal age group in very limited circumstances.

However, parental requests for summer born children to be admitted to reception rather than year one at the age of five are different from any other parental request for admission out of the normal age group, as it is only in these circumstances that the child is being admitted to school for the first time.

The parents of summer born children must be able to make a decision about whether their child is ready to go to school before compulsory school age confident that, if they decide not to send them to school until age five, the decision about the year group they should be admitted to at that point will be made in the child's best interests.

This will require the admission authority to take account of the child's individual needs and abilities and to consider whether these can best be met in reception or year one. It will also involve taking account of the potential impact on the child of being admitted to year one without first having completed the reception year. The views of the head teacher will be an important part of this consideration.

Children born prematurely

In addition, as a consequence of being born before their due date, a child may fall into a different age group than if they had been born at full term. When considering the circumstances of the case, admission authorities should take account of the age group the child would have fallen in to if born on time.

The submission of evidence by parents

It is reasonable for admission authorities to expect parents to provide them with information in support of their request – since without it they are unlikely to be able to make a decision on the basis of the circumstances of the case. This should demonstrate why it would be in the child’s interests to be admitted to reception rather than year one.

In some cases parents may have professional evidence that it would be appropriate for them to submit, for example, when a child receives support from a speech and language therapist. However, there should be no expectation that parents will obtain professional evidence that they do not already have. Admission authorities must still consider requests that are not accompanied by professional evidence. In such cases the supporting information might simply be the parent’s statement as to why they have made their request.

A process for handling parental requests

The revised School Admissions Code requires admission authorities to make clear in their admission arrangements the process for requesting admission out of the normal year group. It does not, however, prescribe a particular process that must be used. This is for local authorities and admission authorities to determine. However, it is important to note that, where a parent wants their child to be admitted out of their normal age group, the admission authority has two separate decisions to make:

it must first decide on the age group the child should be admitted to

ensures that the parent receives the response to their request before primary national offer day.

If their request is agreed, their application for the normal age group may be withdrawn before a place is offered. If their request is refused, the parent must decide whether to accept the offer of a place for the normal age group, or to refuse it and make an in year application for admission to year one for the September following the child's fifth birthday.

Where a parent's request is agreed, they must make a new application as part of the main admissions round the following year.

One admission authority cannot be required to honour a decision made by another admission authority on admission out of the normal age group. Parents, therefore, should consider whether to request admission out of the normal year group at all their preference schools, rather than just their first preference schools.

The revised Code came into force on 19 December 2014. At this point admission authorities will have already determined their admission arrangements for the 2015/16 school year. Some may have already begun drawing up and consulting on their admission arrangements for the 2016/17 school year. Wherever possible, admission authorities should include the process for requesting admission out of the normal age group in their admission arrangements for the 2016/17 school year. Where this is not possible, they must include it in their arrangements for the 2017/18 school year.

Answers to some common questions

Free early education

Where a parent chooses to defer or delay their child's entry to school, the child remains entitled to a funded early education place of 15 hours a week for 38 weeks of the year until they are admitted to school. More information about free early education is available on GOV.UK.

Funding for children educated out of their normal age group

Primary schools are funded for the number of pupils they have on roll, regardless of their age, though local authorities may choose to weight that funding according to age. Similarly, secondary schools are funded on the basis of the number of pupils they have in years 7-11, regardless of their age, which again may be weighted according to age by local authorities.

Moving children to their normal age group

Once a child has been admitted to a school it is for the headteacher to decide how best to educate them. In some cases it may be appropriate for a child who has been admitted out of their normal age group to be moved to their normal age group, but in others it will

They may also make such a complaint if they have not made, or do not yet know the outcome of, their formal application for a school place. All schools have a duty to consider complaints about the school and must have a published complaints procedure in place. Local authorities will also have a complaints procedure.

In the case of foundation and voluntary aided schools, academies and free schools, parents may make a complaint using the school's complaints procedure – because the governing body or academy trust is the admission authority. In the case of community and voluntary controlled schools, they may complain to the local authority – because they are the admission authority.

If a parent is unhappy with the way a local authority or maintained school has handled their complaint, the parent may then refer their complaint to the [Local Government Ombudsman](#).

If they are unhappy with the way an academy has handled their complaint they may complain to the Education Funding Agency who will consider the complaint on behalf of the Secretary of State for Education. More information is available on www.gov.uk.



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