



Guidance for Schools on the Admission of children outside their chronological age group

Introduction

This purpose of this policy is to provide best practice guidance for schools and parents in respect of children being educated in a year group different from that of their chronological age.

These guidelines reflect the requirement of section 2.18 of the School Admissions Code 2021.

Children born from 1 April to 31 August are 'summer born children' who do not need to start school until the September after their 5th birthday, a full year after they could first have started school.

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

While most parents/carers are happy for their child to start school in the September following their 4th birthday, some parents/carers 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. Compulsory school age is from the term after your child turns 5. While there are circumstances in which some summer born children will benefit from a delay, the majority will thrive in reception aged 4. The Department for Education (DFE) do not believe it should become the norm for summer born children to begin reception at the point at which they reach compulsory school age.

When receiving an enquiry about delayed entry to reception, admission authorities should ensure parents/carers have read the guidance on the education of children out of their chronological year group which is published on the DFE website [Admission of summer born children: advice for local authorities and school admission authorities - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/612222/Admission_of_summer_born_children_advice_for_local_authorities_and_school_admission_authorities_-_GOV.UK_(www.gov.uk).pdf) in the first instance.

Parents/carers should be encouraged to visit the schools to which they intend to apply. School staff will be able to explain the provision on offer to the children in the reception class, how it is tailored to meet the needs of the youngest children, and

any other support that is available. They may also be able to discuss any concerns the parent/carers may have about their child's readiness for school or help parent/carers consider whether a child needs more time to develop before starting school. Parents/carers can also talk to their child's early years provider. They will be able to support the child to get ready to start school and to let parents/carers know if there is anything they can do at home. The early year provider can also tell parents/carers if their child could stay at that early years setting until they are 5.

Parents/carers may want to talk to any specialist services their child is involved with, for example if they see a speech and language therapist or occupational therapist or are under specialist medical care.

If parents/carers decide their summer born child will start school aged 5, and they want their child to start school in reception (not year 1), parents/carers need to make a request to the school's admission authority. This is called requesting admission out of the normal age group.

If parents/carers do not make a request for admission out of the normal age group their child will start school in year 1. Parents/carers should consider the potential impact of missing the reception year.

Children with special educational needs or a disability

Having special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) does not necessarily mean a child should delay starting school. It may be better for them to start school before compulsory school age so they can access the support available there.

All teachers are trained to support all children to succeed, including those with SEND. Every mainstream school must have a special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) - a qualified teacher with an additional SEND qualification.

If parents/carers feel worried about their child starting school because of their SEND, parents/carers can speak to their health visitor or to staff at the school they would like their child to go to, for example the headteacher or SENCo. Parents/carers can also speak to their local Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information, Advice and Support service.

If their child is going through an EHC needs assessment and parents/carers intend to request admission to reception aged 5, they need to discuss this with the local authority.

What factors are admission authorities to take into account in making a decision?

When considering a request for a child to be educated out of their chronological age group, the following principles must be applied:

- **Best Interests of the Child:** The child's educational, social, and emotional needs must be the central consideration. The long-term impact on the child's educational progress and outcomes must be assessed.
- **Parental Views:** Parents' reasons for the request and their views about the child's best interests must be considered.
- **Child's Development:** Consideration should be given to the child's academic, social, and emotional development, including any relevant reports from educational psychologists, medical professionals, or other relevant professionals.
- **School's View:** The views of the headteacher and other relevant school staff regarding the impact of placement out of the normal age group should be taken into account.
- **Previous Educational Experience:** If the child has been previously educated out of their chronological age group, this should be taken into consideration.
- **Premature Birth:** If the child was born prematurely, consideration should be given to whether the child would have naturally fallen into a different age group if born at full term.

Hillingdon's Out of Cohort Process

Parents/carers are required to complete an application a year before their child starts school. Applications open in September and close on 15 January.

Parents/carers should apply for a school place through their local authority during the normal admissions round as if their child were starting school at age 4, even if they plan to delay their start until age 5. If parents/carers do not submit a request for admission outside the normal age group to the school's admission authority at the same time, their child would miss the reception year and would start in year 1.

If this was the case, parents/carers will need to make an in-year application for a school place for their child. The School Admissions team at your local authority can provide guidance on when it would be best to make the application.

Some schools are likely to be full at this point and unable to offer a place. Schools are unable to hold a place for a child from the previous year.

Making a decision

When the local authority receives requests for children to be educated out of their chronological year group, we consult with all schools listed on their application. In most cases, the local authority recommends that the school(s) (applied for) arrange a meeting with the parents/carers to discuss their specific reasons for requesting out-of-cohort education for their child. This meeting will enable both the school and the parents to make a decision that is in the child's best interest. Following this meeting the school will notify the local authority of the conclusion of the meeting.

The admission authority must determine whether the child should be admitted to reception or year 1 at the compulsory school age, making this decision based on what is in the child's best interests.

For Community Schools, the local authority is the admissions authority, therefore they will make the final decision.

For all other schools, they are their own admissions authority and make their own decisions.

The government believes it is usually not in a child's best interests to miss the reception year, and that it should be rare for a child to start school in year 1, missing the essential numeracy and early literacy that takes place in the reception year.

Notification of the decision

As set out in the Code, when communicating a decision to parents/carers, admission authorities must set out clearly the reasons for their decision.

Where a delayed start is **agreed**:

- parents/carers will need to withdraw the admissions application for their child's chronological year group and will need to apply for a place in the following admissions round
- this does not guarantee a place in a particular school in the next school year
- this decision does not bind any other admission authorities and so the parents/carers will need to apply separately for education out of year group to any other schools
- the parents/carers will need to re-apply for education out of year group ahead of moving to a new school, for example transition to separate junior/secondary schools or changing schools due to moving address

The parents/carers should be advised to begin conversations with these schools early and to apply for outside year group education when the child's original year group would be applying to transition to a new school.

Where the request has **not** been agreed:

- offers will be made in the usual way on National Offer Day for schooling in the child's chronological year group
- the parents/carers are not required to send their child to school until the child reaches compulsory school age, giving them the option of deferring entry to later in the school year or part time attendance
- parents/carers can refuse the offer and make an in-year application for admission to year 1 for the September following their child's 5th birthday.

Changing schools

If you want your child to remain out of their normal age group when they transfer to a new school, for example if you move house or when they transfer to secondary school, you will need to submit another request for admission out of the normal age group.

The admission authority of the new school will decide whether it is in the child's best interests to continue to be educated out of their normal age group. Unless there are

good educational reasons for a child to join their normal year group (meaning they would miss a year of school), they should remain with their adopted year group.

Tests and assessments

If parents/carers are applying to a selective school for their child, they may wish to submit their request before the other children of their age sit the entry test. Tests happen early in year 6, so parents/carers would need to submit their request before their child reaches the end of year 4 (other children their age will be in year 5 and registering for the selection test around this time).

The child will take assessments, such as national curriculum tests and GCSEs, at the same time as the children they are being taught with.

Children are usually assessed when they reach the appropriate point in their education, not when they reach a particular age. The exception is the phonics screening check, which should be taken in the year the child turns 6, but only if they have completed the year 1 programme of study.

Leaving school

Children reach school leaving age on the last Friday of June in the school year they turn 16.

The child will reach school leaving age at the end of year 10, rather than year 11. The school will not ask them to leave, but they will no longer be required by law to attend school, and the school may not be able to enforce their attendance. Children usually take their GCSEs in year 11.

Pupils attending mainstream provision can be funded to the end of the academic year in which they are 19 years old. A child who is behind his or her chronological age group and is starting their post-16 studies at the age of 17 would be funded for the entirety of their programme.

Moving children to their chronological 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 chronological age group to be moved to their chronological age group, but in others it will not. Any decision to move a child to a different age group should be based on sound educational reasons and made by the headteacher in consultation with the parents/carers. In some primary schools, of course, children are educated in mixed age classes.

Parental appeals and complaints

Parents/carers whose request for delayed entry is refused have no statutory right to appeal this decision. (The purpose of the appeals process is to consider whether a child should be admitted to a particular school, not the year group into which they

should be admitted.) Admission authorities should ensure parents/carers are directed to the relevant complaint's procedure.

All schools have a duty to consider complaints about the school and must have a published complaints procedure in place. In the case of foundation and voluntary aided schools, academies and free schools, parents/carers 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 the parents/carers are unhappy with the way a local authority or maintained school has handled their complaint, the parents/carers may then refer their complaint to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

If parents/carers are unhappy with the way an academy has handled their complaint, they may complain to the Education and Skills Funding Agency who will consider the complaint on behalf of the Secretary of State for Education.

Procedure following an out of cohort request

The Local Authority (LA) receives a request from parent to educate their child out of cohort (See Appendix A)



The LA sends an email to the school advising them that a request has been submitted. The following information is included within the email:

- Response deadline
- Response form for schools to return (See Appendix B)

The 'out of cohort' request form is sent to the school via doc exchange



Once the response form has been received back from the school, the LA will write to the parents to let them know the outcome.

Please note: The LA will include a copy of the school's response form within the outcome letter that's sent to the parent

How to submit a request for a child to be education out of their chronological year group

To submit a request for a child to be educated outside their usual age group, please fill out the Parental Request Form online at

<https://www.hillingdon.gov.uk/article/10355/School-admission-of-children-outside-their-chronological-age-group>.

Schools' response to a request for a child to be education out of their chronological year group

Schools need to provide a written response to the local authority which will be sent to parents/carers following an out-of-cohort request. The response should address the request thoroughly, outlining the school's decision, any factors considered, and the rationale behind it. The local authority will send a response form to each school listed as a preference on the child's out of cohort request form for them to complete.