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Guidance for parents/carers requesting their child - below statutory school age - be educated outside chronological age group

This guidance is for children below statutory school age. If you have a child of statutory school age, please refer to the 'Guidance for Parents requesting a child is educated outside their chronological age group - In-Year'.

It is the general view of Reading Borough Council and Brighter Futures for Children that all children and young people will complete their primary and secondary education in school year groups appropriate to their chronological age. It is also their view that moving pupils into higher or lower year groups is not usually in the child's best educational, social or emotional interests. This includes early or late admission to primary or secondary school.

The National Curriculum sets out a clear, full and statutory entitlement to learning for all pupils. In addition, schools in Reading deliver an offer which supports access to high quality differentiated education. This should ensure a pupil's curricular needs are met without early or delayed transfer to the next phase of schooling being necessary other than in exceptional circumstances. In the Department of Education (DfE) research report on Delayed School Admissions for Summer Born Children (May 2018), evidence suggests that any educational advantage of delaying admission has limited impact on improving children's achievement, as seen in their first national assessments in phonics by the end of Year 1.

The Law

All admission authorities are legally required to follow the procedures as set out in the School Admissions Code 2021. This document, including any guidance, will be updated as and when such legislation is amended.

Summer Born Children - (children born between 1 April and 31 August)

Most parents/carers apply for, and take up, a Reception place in the school year during which their child reaches the age of five (rising fives). All children are entitled to a full-time Reception place in the September following their fourth birthday. However, the legal starting age for full-time education is the beginning of the term following a child's fifth birthday. Parents may request that their child's entry be deferred up to the point at which they reach compulsory school age.

Reading school admissions team receives a small number of enquiries, from the parents/carers of summer-born children, to "offset" their child's entry to school until the September following their fifth birthday. All such requests are considered in line with the 2014 DfE non-statutory guidance providing advice on the admissions of summer born children and the Guidance issued in December 2018 by the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGO) on Summer Born Admissions. These embody the principle that any decision is taken 'in the best interests of the child'.

Attending part-time or deferred entry to the same academic year

Parents/carers may request that their child starts primary school on a part-time basis until they reach compulsory school age. Alternatively, they might request that their child's start date is deferred up to the point where their child reaches compulsory school age. In such circumstances, an agreement can be made between the parents/carers and the head teacher of the allocated school without involvement of any relevant professional or the School Admissions Team.

Admissions Authority for each type of schools in England

11. The table below sets out the admission authority for each type of school in England. **Type of School**	**Who is the admission authority?**	**Who deals with complaints about arrangements?**	**Who is responsible for arranging/providing for an appeal against refusal of a place at a school?**
Academies	Academy Trust	Schools Adjudicator	Academy Trust
Community Schools	Local Authority	Schools Adjudicator	Local Authority
Foundation Schools	Governing body	Schools Adjudicator	Governing body
Voluntary aided schools	Governing body	Schools Adjudicator	Governing body
Voluntary controlled schools	Local Authority	Schools Adjudicator	Local Authority

How to make a request

Where parents/carers feel that their child's needs are such that they will benefit from starting school a year later or starting/transferring school a year earlier, they may request this by completing the "Reading Offset request form routine admissions".

The parent may wish to provide additional evidence to support the request.

If the parent/carer requests an offset for a school where the admissions authority is not the local authority, it will share the Reading Offset request form and any additional supporting evidence with the preferred school.

If the admissions authority is the Academy Trust or Governing Body, they will be responsible for sending the outcome of the decision to the parent/carer and Reading School Admissions.

Additional evidence that can be sent to support a request

- School reports/assessments
- Educational psychologist reports/assessments
- Comments from social worker/family worker
- Medical and/or Occupational Health assessment/letters
- Any other professional letter/assessment which support the request

There is no expectation that parents obtain professional evidence they do not already possess; Admissions authorities must still consider requests not accompanied by professional evidence.

Any evidence to be considered must be translated into English and it is the responsibility of the parent/carer to do this.

Children with Educational Health & Care plan (EHCP)

If the request to admit a child outside their chronological age group is for a child with an Education Health Care Plan, parents/carers should speak directly with the SEND team, as the SEND panel will make the decision in this case.

Children with additional needs and disabilities

Offset requests for children with additional needs and/or disabilities, but without an EHCP, should be supported by a relevant educational professional such as an Education Phycologist or Specialist Teacher. Where this is not possible, the parent/carer might obtain a written recommendation from another education or health professional involved with the child, such as a consultant paediatrician or speech and language therapist, etc.

Who will make the decision?

For Community schools, a Reading School Admissions panel will consider each request.

The panel is made up of members from;

- School Admissions team
- Educational Psychologists
- Special Education Needs and disabilities team
- Early Years

For Academies, Foundation schools and Voluntary Aided schools the request should be formally considered by either a full governing body or the admissions sub-committee.

The headteacher's opinion is considered within these decisions therefore the headteacher should not form part of this decision panel. Admissions decisions should never be made by an individual person.

Points considered in decision making process

Each Admission authority will make decisions based on the circumstances of each case and all requests are considered individually.

When reaching a decision, the panel will address the following (even if it is not relevant or no evidence has been provided):

- The circumstances of each case
- The best interests of the child
- The parent/carer views
- The child's academic, social and emotional development
- Any delayed communication/ language, personal/social/emotional or physical development which may adversely affect the child's readiness for school (supported by a relevant professional);
- Any significant special educational needs (supported by a relevant professional);
- Where relevant, the child's medical history and the views of medical professionals
- Whether a prematurely-born child would have fallen into the lower age group had they been born on the expected date
- The views of the headteacher
- The views of the child's early years setting (if attending one)
- DfE document 'Advice on the admission of summer born children';
- DfE document 'School Admissions Code'
- LGO document 'Summer born admissions';

Outcome of request

The applicant will be notified in writing of the outcome of the request by the relevant admission authority.

It is important for parents/carers to be aware that approval of a request does not guarantee a place will/can be offered at the preferred school. School places must always be allocated according to a school's published admission arrangements and oversubscription criteria and not based on the approval of a request for a child to be educated outside of their chronological age group.

Timescales

Timescales and deadlines should be followed in accordance with the published admission arrangements. These are set out in full in the Reading admission team's guide for parents on admissions to schools (which is available on the Brighter Futures for Children website).

Requests for primary school admissions should still be made in the year for which the child is (by birth date) eligible for a school place or to transfer schools.

If the request to offset is approved, and the parent/carer wishes to proceed, they will need to re-apply for a school place in the following year using a paper application form. The application will be treated alongside all other applications in the round. There is no guarantee that a place will be or can be offered at the parent's preferred school.

Where a primary school offset request is not approved, and the parent/carer opts to defer entry for the entire Reception year, they must decline their child's allocated Reception place and apply for a Year 1 place for the start of the next school year. Parents/carers may apply for a school place one term in advance by completing an in-year application form. However, for a September in-year admission, an application must be submitted no sooner than 1 June.

Early Year Entitlement

Where a parent/carer chooses to offset or delay their child's entry to school, the child remains entitled to their same Early Year Entitlement they receives now, until they are statutory school age. More information about free early education is available on GOV.uk or you can contact the Family Information Service on 01189 373777.

Points to consider

- Under current legislation, one admissions authority is not obliged to honour a decision made by another admissions authority. As a result, when a child reaches the point at which they move to another school (for example, secondary transfer or if an in-year transfer were required), this could potentially result in the child missing a year of school. **This is because there is no guarantee that the new admission authority will approve the offset and they may require the child be admitted in their "normal" age group.**
- Once a child is admitted to a school, it is for the Headteacher to decide how best to educate them. In some cases, it may become appropriate for the child to revert to their "normal" age group at some future point in their education. Such a move should be based on sound educational reasoning and the decision made by the Headteacher in consultation with the parents.
- The social or emotional benefits and/or drawbacks of being educated outside of their chronological age (related to the individual child).
- An offset decision applies only to children without an Educational, Health & Care Plan (EHCP). If your child has an EHCP (or is under assessment), any offset will be decided separately as part of this process. Should your child go under assessment for an EHCP, please consider that any prior offset agreement may not stand if an EHCP is approved.
- Local authorities have a statutory duty to provide free home-to-school transport to eligible children. To be eligible, a child must be of compulsory school age. If a child is eligible for free home-to-school transport, they will

cease to be eligible for it when they cease being of compulsory school age (even if they have not yet finished their GCSEs). Local authorities can choose to continue to provide free transport at this point, but they are under no duty to do so.

- Children are assessed when they reach the end of each Key Stage, not when they reach a particular age.
- The legal school-leaving age is not affected by early transfer. However, a child ceases to be compulsory school age on the last Friday of June in the school year they reach 16 years of age. As such, where a child is educated in the year below their "normal" age group throughout their school life, they will not be of compulsory school age in the school year during which most children take their GCSE examinations (and cannot be obliged to attend). Therefore, if a child is offset, they can choose not attend year 11 at all should they wish. Should they elect to leave or move to a new house there is no requirement for schools to offer a place to children above statutory school age. The potential impact of leaving education without having sat GCSE's may be a consideration when dealing with these requests. The focus is on the best interest of the child concerned. https://www.gov.uk/know-when-you-can-leave-school

NOTE: There is no blanket policy of approving applications for summer born children to be educated outside their age-appropriate group. It is recommended that parents/carers make an "on time" application with their child's chronological cohort. Parents/carers may then discuss options with their allocated school throughout the school year.

Appeals and complaints

Parents/carers have the right of appeal if their child has been refused a place at preferred school.

Parents whose request for an offset is refused have no statutory right to appeal this decision. The purpose of the school 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.

Parents/carers may go through the relevant complaint procedure in response to an admission authority's decision not to admit their child outside the chronological year group. Please contact the relevant admission authority for their procedure.

Links to additional information.

School Admissions code - https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-admissions-code--2

DFE summer born guidance https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/summer-born-children-school-admission

Contacts

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