



## Reception Start Dates Guidance

The School Admissions Code requires admission authorities to provide for the admission of all children in the September following their fourth birthday. They must make it clear in their admission arrangements that, where they have offered a child a place at a school:

- The child is entitled to a full-time place in the September following their fourth birthday.
- The child's parents can defer the date their child is admitted to school until later in the school year, but not beyond the point at which they reach compulsory school age and not beyond the beginning of the final term of the school year for which the offer was made.
- Where the parents wish, the child may attend part-time until later in the school year, but not beyond the point at which they reach compulsory school age.

### Transition Periods at the Start of an Academic Year

**Schools are expected to provide full-time provision from the start of term in September for children starting in Reception class.** Although some schools may offer an initial transition period, to enable children to settle in to school life, this should be no more than a few days, which allows schools some flexibility in starting the year with children having shorter days and working up to full days. Our advice is that schools should limit the transition period to week, as a maximum, from the start of term.

Schools who wish to have a transition period can be asked by parents to provide full-time provision from the first day of term, which is their legal right. Schools should work with parents requesting this to accommodate their wishes.

### Part-Time Attendance in Reception Year

Parents have a right to decide that their child will attend school part-time until they reach compulsory school age on one of the three prescribed dates: on 31 December, 31 March or 31 August following their fifth birthday. In the case of "summer born children", this right can be exercised during the final term of the school year. The right can also be exercised at the same time as deferred entry.

For example, a child born on 15 February will not reach compulsory school age until 31 March but is entitled to a full-time place in Reception Year from the preceding September. The child's parents can decide that their child will not start school until 1 January and will attend part-time until 1 April, when they will attend full-time.

### Compulsory School Age

Children must start full-time education once they reach compulsory school age. This is on 31 December, 31 March or 31 August following their fifth birthday - whichever comes first. If a child's fifth birthday is on one of those dates then they reach compulsory school age on that date.

For example, if a child reaches compulsory school age on 31 March, they must start full-time education at the beginning of the next term (summer term that year).

Children must stay in full-time education until they reach school leaving age.