



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

Introduction

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

These guidelines reflect the requirement of the School Admissions Code 2021 - Paragraph 2.18 states 'Parents/carers may seek a place for their child outside of their chronological age group, for example, if the child is gifted and talented or has experienced problems such as ill health. In addition, the parents/carers of a summer born child may choose not to send that child to school until the September following their fifth birthday and may request that they are admitted out of their chronological age group – to reception rather than year 1.'

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.

Alternatively, a parent/carers delaying their child's start until the September after their 5th birthday could make an in-year application for a year 1 place for their child that year. In that case the child would miss reception year and be taught in their chronological year group.

There is no statutory barrier to children being admitted outside their chronological age group, but parents/carers do not have the right to insist that their child is admitted to a particular age group. This decision is for you, as the admission authority.

Key points

Paragraph 2.16 of the School Admissions Code states that school admission authorities are required to provide for the admission of all children in the September following their 4th birthday, but children do not reach compulsory school age until the term after their 5th birthday. For children who are under compulsory school age, once a school place has been accepted, parents/carers may, if they wish, agree with the school a pattern of part

time attendance or a deferred start until later in that school year (but not later than the beginning of the summer term). These arrangements should be discussed with the school.

The School Admissions Code

The code includes the following requirements in relation to parental requests for children to be admitted out of their chronological age group:

1. Admission authorities must 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 also provides further information about the matters an admission authority should take into account when considering the circumstances of the case.
2. To improve clarity and transparency for parents/carers, admission authorities are required to make clear in their admission arrangements the process for requesting admission out of the chronological year group.
3. If refusing a request, they must also clearly set out the reasons for their decision. Parents/carers should easily be able to understand why their request has been refused.
4. Where a parents//carers request is agreed, the local authority and admission authority are required to process the application as part of the main admissions round. An application must not be given lower priority on the basis that the child is being admitted out of their chronological age group.

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. 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 our website www.hillingdon.gov.uk/Primary in the first instance.

Parents/carer 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 a parent/carers consider whether a child needs more time to develop before starting school.

It is then the parent's decision whether to delay their child starting school until the September after they turn 5. The parent/carers may also request that the child is then admitted outside their chronological age group – to reception rather than year 1. Parents/carers choosing to delay their child starting school until the September after they turn 5 have a choice about whether or not they request that their child is admitted outside of their chronological age group – and so request a reception start. Alternatively, a parent/carers could make an in-year application the following year for their child to start school in year 1.

The government agrees that, in general, children should be educated in their chronological age group, with the curriculum differentiated as appropriate, and that they should only be educated outside their chronological age group in very limited circumstances.

Parental requests for summer born children to be admitted to reception rather than year 1 at the age of 5 are different from any other parental request for admission out of the chronological age group. This is because parent/carers have the right to decide whether their child will start school before compulsory school age and these parents/carers must be able to make this decision confident that, if they decide not to send them to school until age 5, the decision about the year group they should be admitted to at that point will be made in the child's best interests.

If a parent/carers of a summer born child makes this request, the admission authority is responsible for making the decision about whether the child should be admitted out of their chronological age group.

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 1. In effect, this means that the admission authority is making a decision about whether it would be in the child's best interest to miss the reception year. 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 Headteacher will be an important part of this consideration.

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

While it is not possible to provide an exhaustive list, the School Admissions Code requires admission authorities to consider:

- parents/carers' views
- information about the child's academic, social and emotional development
- where relevant, the child's medical history and views of a medical professional
- if the child is moving, or going to move, from an infant to a junior school or a primary to secondary school or has just moved into your area, the year group they have been educated in up to that point
- if the child was born prematurely, what age group the child would have fallen into, if the child had been born on time

- the view of the Headteacher must be taken into consideration

This could include looking at evidence or issues such as:

- any evidence from a health or social care professional who is involved in the care or treatment of the child, for example speech and language therapist, occupational therapist, social worker, paediatrician
- the view of any nursery or other early years setting the child attends and any records of the child's development
- whether the child's premature birth has caused health problems or developmental delays that mean the child would benefit from a delayed school start
- the progress the child has made in an early years setting, including the rate of progress

What can the nursery setting provide the child that a reception class would not?

We are aware that, in making a decision, many admission authorities focus on whether the child has any particular medical or special educational need which mean their development is significantly below the expected levels for a child of their age. However, it is not necessary for a child to have medical or special educational needs in order for it to be in their interests to start reception age 5. Equally, there will be circumstances in which it is better for a child with developmental delay to start school before compulsory school age so that they are in a school where they can fully access the support available.

School staff and teachers are trained to teach children with special educational needs and schools must use their best efforts to make suitable provision available for all pupils who have special educational needs (SEN), or a disability as set out in the [Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0 to 25 Years](#). Where a parent/carer is seeking to delay admission because they are worried that their child may have a learning difficulty or a disability that will make school more challenging for them, it is important to encourage them to meet with the school's Special Educational Needs Case Officer (SENCO) who will be able to discuss the school's approach to helping children with SEN.

The submission of evidence by parents/carers

It is reasonable for admission authorities to expect parents/carers 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 1.

In some cases, parents/carers may have professional evidence that it would be appropriate for them to submit this, for example, when a child receives support from a speech and language therapist. However, there should be no expectation that parents/carers 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 parents/carer's statement as to why they have made their request. A lack of professional evidence, or limited evidence, does not mean that requests should be refused outright.

In some cases, parents/carers may make a request for delayed entry as their child is undergoing assessment for an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP). Evidence that this is ongoing, along with the professional evidence in support of an EHCP, should be sufficient to make a decision. There is no requirement for an EHCP to be finalised before you make your decision.

A process for handling parental requests

The School Admissions Code requires admission authorities to make clear in their admission arrangements the process for requesting admission out of the chronological year group. It does not, however, prescribe a particular process that must be used. This is for local authority and admission authorities to determine. It is important to note, however, that where a parent/carer wants their child to be admitted out of their chronological age group, the admission authority's decision on what age group the child should be admitted to is separate to any decision on whether a place can be offered in that age group.

This process should be set out clearly for parents/carers including what information and evidence the parents/carers should provide and when.

Decision-making panels

Although not a requirement of the Code, some admission authorities have found it useful to convene decision-making panels to make these decisions. A mix of individuals with differing roles and responsibilities may help when considering the case and evidence presented.

Suggested panel members may include:

- Headteacher(s) of the parents/carer's preferred school(s)
- an early year's professional
- a health care professional
- an educational psychologist
- an educational professional (in addition to the Headteacher of the parents/carer's preferred school)
- an admissions officer
- the parent(s)/carer(s) of the child

Panel members would examine and discuss the evidence presented and reach an informed and balanced decision. In some areas, parents/carers are also invited to attend panel meetings.

When should parents/carers make a request for admittance outside chronological age group?

We acknowledge that it will not always be easy for admission authorities to make a decision about a child more than a year before the point at which they may be admitted, particularly as it is difficult to know what progress they may make in the intervening period. Nonetheless, parents/carers should know the outcome of their request for admission out of the chronological age group in time to make an informed decision about whether their child will start school before compulsory school age.

It is recommended by the DfE (Department for Education) that the process local authorities and admission authorities put in place:

- requires the parent/carer to make an application for their child's chronological age group at the usual time, but enables them to submit a request for admission outside the chronological age group at the same time
- ensures that the parent/carer receives the response to their request before primary national offer day

If their request is agreed, their application for the chronological age group may be withdrawn before a place is offered. If their request is refused, the parent/carer must decide whether to accept the offer of a place for the chronological age group (with the option of deferring entry to later in the school year or part time attendance initially), or to refuse it and make an in-year application for admission to year one for the September following the child's 5th birthday.

Where a parents/carer's request is agreed, they must make a new application for a school place during the main admissions round the following year.

Although it is best for parents or carers to make a request for delayed entry alongside an application for a school place in the normal admissions round, this is not always possible. Parents/carers may not be aware of the possibility of delaying entry until the usual application deadline has passed or it may not become clear their child would benefit from a delay until later. The Code requires admission authorities to make decisions in the best interests of the child in any circumstances where the parent/carer requests admissions outside the child's chronological age group – this includes instances where the application is made outside of the authority's published deadlines.

Notification of the decision

As set out in the Code, when communicating a decision to parents/carer, admission authorities must set out clearly the reasons for their decision. Admission authorities may also wish to provide advice to parents/carers on next steps.

Where a delayed start is agreed it would be helpful if the letter explains to the parent/carer:

- that the parent/carer will need to withdraw the admissions application for the 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 parent/carer will need to apply separately for education out of year group to any other schools
- the parent/carer will need to re-apply for education out of year group ahead of moving to a new school, for example transition to separate junior, middle or secondary schools

The parent/carer 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, it would be helpful if the letter explains that:

- offers will be made in the usual way on National Offer Day for schooling in the child's chronological year group
- the parent/carer is not required to send their child to school until the child reaches compulsory school age
- it is then for the parent/carer to confirm or decline this offer and if accepting the offer, to discuss any further arrangements with the school concerned (such as part time attendance) if the parent/carer decides to send their child to school and not delay

Transition to junior, middle or secondary school

As children whose school start has been delayed move through the system, they will reach transition points. For children who have attended an infant school, this will be when they move up to junior school. In some areas of the country, this could be when the child moves to middle school. For other children, this will be when they reach secondary age.

Parents/carers will need to apply once again for an outside chronological year group place alongside an application for a school place and should do so when their child's 'correct' cohort are making applications for a school place. This means that for a summer born child who started in reception a year later than is usual, parents/carers would apply for a secondary school place and for an out of year group place when the child is in year 5 rather than year 6.

Admission authorities must consider these requests in the same way as the original request but must also take into account the fact the child has been educated in a different year group up until this point.

For many children, it will be right for them to remain with their adopted year group, but it is possible that others may be better off joining their chronological year group. All decisions should be made taking the circumstances of the case into account and considering all of the child's needs, including their social and emotional needs.

Unless there are sound educational reasons to do otherwise, the assumption should be that children remain outside their chronological year group (that is, in the year which they have been educated so far).

If it is decided that a child would be better off being with their chronological year group, you should ensure you have fully considered the impact of this on their wellbeing.

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

If they 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

Appendix A – Parental request form for a child to be educated out of cohort



HILLINGDON
LONDON

Child's Details	
First Name:	Surname:
Date of Birth:	Gender:
Address:	Postcode:
Parent/Carer Details	
First Name:	Surname:
Relationship to child:	
Telephone Number:	Email Address:
Request for out of cohort education	
School(s) (to consider request):	Year group requesting to start: Month/Year:

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Where requests are received the decision will be made according to the circumstances of the case and what is in the best interest of the child. In each case, the decision will be made by the admission authority for the school, taking into consideration the following;

- Parents/carer's views
- Head teacher's views
- Information about child's academic, social and emotional development
- Relevant medical history and views of a medical professional (if appropriate)
- Previous experience of education outside of the child's chronological age group
- Premature children who would be in a lower age group if not born prematurely

Reasons for request:

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Have you attached supporting evidence or information to your request? (Yes/No)
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Have you completed an application? (Yes/No) Application reference number (if applied online):
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We would recommend having a discussion with the preference school(s) as it may be useful to demonstrate why it would be in the child's best interests to be admitted out of their chronological year group. In addition, it may help the school to get a better understanding of your reasons, and how they can support your child, should they attend that preference school, within or outside their chronological year group.
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Signature:	Date:
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<p>Declaration: Hillingdon Council will use the information you have provided to determine eligibility for a school placement for your child. Any information shared with, or by, the Council will be done so as the law permits, to check accuracy of information, prevent/detect crime or protect public funds. We may check information we receive about you with information in our records; this can include information provided by you as well as by others, such as government departments and agencies.</p> <p>I give Hillingdon Council permission to make any enquiries needed to confirm the information given on this form.</p> <p>I confirm that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, the information provided on this form is correct and complete. I understand that if I give false or misleading information or omit information for the purpose of gaining a school placement, it may be regarded</p>
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as a criminal offence, and action could be taken against me, including court action and withdrawal of the placement offer.

For Office Use Only:

Pupil ID:

Date request considered:

Decision to accept application out of cohort:

Notes:

Appendix B – Response From – Request for a child to be educated out of cohort



HILLINGDON
LONDON

School Name:	
Child's first name:	
Child's surname:	
Date of birth:	
Did you meet with the parent/carer to discuss request? <u>Circle appropriate</u>	Did you discuss other options i.e., deferring/part time/delayed start? <u>Circle appropriate</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Yes• No• Phone call	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Yes• No
Headteachers Decision <u>Circle appropriate</u>	
Accepting / Declining request	

Please advise the reasons for your decision:

Signed:

Print name:

Job title:

Date: