

# Starting school – Deferring delaying & part time admission

Guidance and frequently asked questions for  
parents and carers, early years settings,  
schools, professionals, and admission  
authorities

April 2024

## Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>When do children have to start school?</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>What are the options?</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>What is the difference between deferred and delayed entry?</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>About part-time admission</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>About deferred entry (until the spring or summer term)</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>About deferred entry (until the following September)</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>About delayed entry (starting a year late in reception)</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Parents' right to appeal/make a complaint</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Frequently asked questions</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Additional resources</b>	<b>10</b>

## Introduction

The majority of children start school full-time in the September following their fourth birthday. However, in some cases parents believe that starting part-time, starting later in the school year, or delaying entry until the following September would be more appropriate for their child, particularly where their child was born prematurely or is delayed in their development.

Parents are advised to request a meeting with the headteacher of the school where they are hoping to gain a place and any other relevant professionals to help support them with this decision.

When making the decision it is important to remember that schools work within the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework and are therefore very aware of the needs of young children, especially those starting school very soon after their fourth birthday. They are committed to ensuring that the reception class meets every child's needs and the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum is a flexible and responsive play-based curriculum which supports this.

Individual children's needs will usually be met through the different approaches that teachers identify and use and with these appropriate levels of support, very few children need to be admitted late to a reception class. However, parents may choose part-time entry or defer the start date to the reception year for their child until they become compulsory school age. For summer born children parents may choose to defer entry to year one.

## When do children have to start school?

All children are entitled to start school full-time in the September following their fourth birthday.

By law, children have to be in full-time education by the start of the term following their fifth birthday when they reach 'compulsory school age'.

Child born between 1 September and 31 December	Compulsory school age is from the start of the spring term in January.
Child born between 1 January and 31 March	Compulsory school age is from the start of the summer term in April.
Child born between 1 April and 31 August ( <b>Summer Born</b> )	Compulsory school age is from the following September ( <b>year one, not reception</b> ).

The relevant section of the Admissions Code 2021, to which all admission authorities must adhere, is:

### Admission of children below compulsory school age and deferred entry to school

**2.17** Admission authorities **must** provide for the admission of all children in the September following their fourth birthday. The authority **must** make it clear in their arrangements that where they have offered a child a place at a school:

- a) that child is entitled to a full-time place in the September following their fourth birthday;
- b) the child's parents can defer the date their child is admitted to the 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 it was made; and
- c) where the parents wish, children may attend part-time until later in the school year but not beyond the point at which they reach compulsory school age.

## What are the options?

If parents don't want their child to start school full-time in the September following their fourth birthday, it is possible to:

**1. Opt for part-time admission** to the allocated school from the September but not beyond the point at which they reach compulsory school age.

**2. Opt to defer** their child's start date to the spring or summer term, but not beyond the point at which they become compulsory school age. They will start in January or April in the allocated reception class.

**3. Opt to defer** their child's entry until the following September (summer born only) **but they would need to reapply for a place and they would start in year one.**

**4. Request to delay** their child's entry, holding them back from joining the correct year group for their age and starting school in reception a year later.

## What is the difference between deferred and delayed entry?

**Deferred entry to school** is where a parent decides that their child will start school later in the school year or when the child reaches compulsory school age (the term after the child's fifth birthday). They will then join the correct year group for their age.

**Delayed entry to school** is where a parent holds their child back from joining the correct year group for their age so that they start school a year later in the reception class (**summer born only**).

## About part-time admission

Places in reception will be allocated as full-time from the September after a child's fourth birthday. However, parents may choose part-time admission. Parents will need to discuss this with the headteacher so that they can understand the child's experiences, readiness for school and individual needs and plan how they can fit part-time admission into the school timetable.

## What to do when parents have chosen part-time admission

Parents must make their choice of part-time admission clear to the school as soon as possible after receiving the notification of a place and **before** September by contacting the school.

A part time timetable must be arranged with the headteacher taking into account the child's needs and the organisation of the school.

## What do parents need to consider about part-time admission?

- If parents wish to combine a part-time school place with any other childcare provider, their child's free entitlement will be used to pay for the school provision. There may be an additional charge from the provider of any other care should the total equate to more than 15 hours per week.
- Parents who wish to combine a part-time place with any other childcare provider should consider very carefully the impact that this may have on children's personal, social and emotional development. This would be due to young children having to experience two forms of provision that may not have consistent systems, approaches to rules and methods of teaching.

### **About deferred entry (until the spring or summer term)**

If parents decide that they want their child to start later in the school year in the spring or summer term they still need to apply for a school place for the September following their child's fourth birthday – the place will then be held open until they start in the spring or summer. If parents defer entry, they keep their free early learning entitlement with the early years provider.

### **What to do when parents have chosen deferred entry (until the spring or summer term)**

Parents must make their choice of deferred entry clear to the school as soon as possible after receiving the notification of a place and **before** September by contacting the school. They must confirm which term their child will start. Failure to advise the school or start on the agreed date can result in the allocated place being withdrawn.

### **What if a parent changes their mind later in the year about deferred entry?**

If a parent decides later in the year that their child is ready for school then they should speak to the headteacher to discuss a start date and inform their early years provider (e.g., nursery, pre-school, child-minder) of their decision.

### **About deferred entry (until the following September)**

If a child was born between 1 April and 31 August (Summer born) and their parents decide they want to defer their entry to school until the September after their fifth birthday they need to be aware that **the school place would not be held open for them** for a whole year (i.e. until the September in which they reach compulsory school age). They would need to **reapply for a school place, and this would be for year one**, because their child would have missed the reception year. If parents defer entry, they keep their free early learning entitlement with the early years provider.

If parents believe that their child should start in reception a year later than they are due to start, this is called **delayed entry**.

### **What to do when parents have chosen deferred entry (until the following September)**

Parents must make their choice of deferred entry clear to the school admissions team at Ealing Council as soon as possible after receiving the notification of a place and before September. The allocated place will be withdrawn, and they must then **re-apply for a year one place** in the following July.

### **What should parents consider when thinking about deferred entry?**

- A child may miss out on a range of activities which are used to help those entering in September make the transition into reception and settle in effectively, alongside other children.
- The child will be joining an already established year group at a later time than most other children. Social groups and friendships may already be taking shape before the child joins the school.
- Learning in a reception class can be very important at this early stage as it has a more play-based curriculum.

## **About delayed entry (starting a year late in reception)**

It is usual practice in England for children to be educated in school year groups as determined by their date of birth; however, there is no statutory barrier to children being admitted outside their normal age group.

Whilst there is no statutory barrier to children being admitted outside their normal age group, parents do not have the right to insist that their child is admitted to a particular age group. This decision is for the admission authority of the school concerned.

## **Basis for delayed entry requests**

There are a number of reasons why parents might request for their child to be admitted to school a year late.

The Department for Education guidance states that there does not need to be exceptional circumstances, and a child does not need to have a medical need or SEND for it to be in their best interests to be admitted out of their normal age group.

## **Decision making**

School **admission authorities** are responsible for making the decision on whether or not a child will be admitted outside their normal age group.

The admission authority in the case of community schools is the council and in the case of academies, foundation, trust, voluntary-aided and free schools, it is the academy trust or governing body of the school.

**However, where a child has an education, health and care plan (EHC plan), the decision rests with the Local Authority and must be confirmed in the EHC plan.**

Admission authorities are required to make a decision based on the circumstances of each case but must consider the following:

- parents' views
- information about a child's academic, social, and emotional development if provided.
- where relevant, a child's medical history and the views of a medical professional
- whether a child would naturally have fallen into a lower age group if they had not been born prematurely
- the potential impact on a child of being admitted to their normal age group and missing a year of their education as a consequence
- 

Admissions authorities should also be aware of the following government advice when making a decision:

- An admission authority may not decide that a child should start school before compulsory school age - that is the parent's decision.
- It is rarely in a child's best interests to miss a year of their education by beginning primary school in year one rather than reception, and It should therefore be rare for an authority to refuse a parent's request.

## Making a request

Before deciding to make a request for delayed entry parents should 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.

If a parent makes the decision to request delayed entry they should make an application in the normal year (for a place in the September following the child's fourth birthday) by the closing date.

The request for delayed entry should be sent by email to: [mainroundadmissions@ealing.gov.uk](mailto:mainroundadmissions@ealing.gov.uk) and must include all the reasons why it is in the child's best interests to be placed outside of their normal age group. Parents can also send supporting evidence that they wish to be taken into consideration, for example school reports, medical reports, professional recommendations.

The school admissions team will process any requests for delayed entry to community schools and will pass on any requests for academies, foundation, trust, voluntary-aided, free schools or out of borough schools to the appropriate admissions authority.

## Making a decision

In the case of community schools, the council will request the views of the headteacher(s) of the preferred schools on the application. These will be considered along with the parent request, taking into account the potential impact of a child starting primary school in year one rather than reception. The Head of Admissions will inform parents and schools of the outcome by email.

In the case of academies, foundation, trust, voluntary-aided, free schools or out of borough schools the admissions team will request confirmation of the decision from the appropriate admissions authority.

Where a parent's request for delayed entry into reception is agreed the application for the normal age group will be withdrawn and parents must make a new application as part of the main admissions round the following year.

## What should parents consider when thinking about delayed entry?

- Receiving schools on transition (i.e., into secondary school, or in year transfers) are free to review and reconsider the placement outside the normal age group, and the continuing placement of the child outside their normal age group cannot be guaranteed on transition into a new school.
- Pupils who have been educated a year behind their normal age group become eligible to leave school before completing examination courses.
- The admission authority must first make a decision on the age group the child should be admitted to and then it must apply its oversubscription criteria to decide whether a place can be offered in that age group – a decision that a child should be accepted outside their normal age group **does not guarantee a place** at a preferred school. The normal application process will still need to be carried out.
- One admission authority cannot be required to honour a decision made by another admission authority on admission outside the normal age group.
- Failure to secure a place at the preferred school on first applying may be a factor when parents are deciding to delay admission to school. If failure to secure a place was due to the school being oversubscribed it must be remembered that the same admissions criteria will be applied on any subsequent application and therefore there is a very real possibility that an application to the same school will be unsuccessful again.

## **Parents' right to appeal/make a complaint**

Parents who are refused a place at a school for which they have applied have the right of appeal to an independent admission appeal panel. **However, they do not have a right of appeal if they have been offered a place and it is not in the year group they would like.** They may, however, make a complaint, as follows:

- For foundation, trust, voluntary-aided, academy and free schools, parents must follow the school's published complaints procedure, because the governing body or academy trust is the admission authority.
- In the case of community schools, parents must follow the council's complaints procedure, because the council is the admission authority.

## **Ealing council complaints procedure in relation to requests for a placement outside the normal age group**

- Parents should set out their complaint in writing to the Head of Admissions including all paperwork relating to the decision and the nature of the complaint.
- The Head of Admissions will review the case and the process that has been undertaken to reach the decision, assessing whether the processes and advice in this guidance have been followed appropriately. He/she will make a decision as to whether those involved in the case should reconsider their decision.
- The Head of Admissions will write to all parties to confirm his/her findings and recommendations.

## **If parents are not happy with how their complaint has been handled**

There are further routes of redress if parents are unhappy with the way their complaint has been handled – the Local Government Ombudsman in the case of complaints to the council and the Secretary of State in the case of complaints to schools.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Part time**

#### **Can a parent choose what hours a child attends school?**

No, a part time timetable must be arranged with the headteacher taking into account both the child's needs and the organisation of the school.

#### **Is a child eligible for Universal Infant Free School Meals if attending part-time?**

No, children attending part-time would not be entitled to Universal Infant Free School Meals.

#### **Is a child eligible for Universal 15hrs a week childcare funding if attending part time?**

A child's free entitlement is used to pay for school provision so there may be an additional charge to parents from a provider of any other care should the total equate to more than 15 hours per week.

### **Deferred entry**

#### **When do parents apply for a place to start reception in the spring or summer term?**

The application needs to be made by the 15 January in the year that they are due to start in the September.

#### **When do parents apply for a place to start school in year one in the September following their fifth birthday (summer born only)?**

An in year application should be made in the July immediately prior to the September they are due to start year one.

#### **Will the school be funded from September for a child that defers to the spring or summer term?**

No, the place must be held open until the agreed start date in January or April.

#### **Will a school place be held open if the parent of a summer born child chooses to defer entry to the following September?**

No, if a reception place has been offered, this will be withdrawn and the parent must reapply for a place in year one, using the 'in-year' application form.

#### **When do parents apply for a place to start year one in September?**

An in year application should be made in the July immediately prior to the September they are due to start year one.

#### **If a child's entry to school is deferred are they still entitled to free early education?**

Yes, children are entitled to a funded early education place until they start school or become compulsory school age.



## **Delayed entry (summer born only)**

### **When do parents apply for a place to start reception in September following their fifth birthday?**

The application should be made by the 15 January in the year that they are due to start in the September. If the request is agreed, the application is withdrawn and they can then re-apply the following year by 15 January.

### **How does a parent request that a child starts in a reception class instead of year one?**

The request for delayed entry should include all relevant information and evidence and be sent by email to: [mainroundadmissions@ealing.gov.uk](mailto:mainroundadmissions@ealing.gov.uk) by the 15 January.

Parents need to be aware that even if the request to accept an application outside the child's normal age group is agreed, that does not mean the child is guaranteed a place at the school. The application is considered in the normal admissions process in accordance with the school's oversubscription criteria.

### **What happens if a parent misses the deadline for applying for a place?**

The normal process for handling late applications will apply. For information on the handling of late applications visit [www.ealing.gov.uk/admissions](http://www.ealing.gov.uk/admissions) or contact the School Admissions Team.

### **What sort of evidence do parents need to provide when requesting delayed entry?**

Parents are not required to provide any evidence, but it would be helpful to provide as much evidence as possible to help the admission authority reach their decision. This might include nursery reports, statements from professionals involved and medical evidence.

### **Will placement of a child outside their normal age group affect funding for them?**

No, schools are funded for the number of pupils on roll, regardless of their age.

### **If a child's entry to school is delayed are they still entitled to free early education?**

Yes, children are entitled to a funded early education place until they start school or become compulsory school age.

### **If a child is placed outside their normal age group, can they move back to their normal age group at any time?**

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 outside their normal age group to be moved to their normal age group. 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.

**If a child has been educated outside their normal age group in primary school, will they automatically be educated outside their age group when they transfer to secondary school?**

No, parents will need to request again for admission outside the normal age group and it will be for the admission authority to decide whether or not to allow the child to continue outside their normal age group. They must make the decision based on the circumstances of the case and will need to consider the age group that the child has been educated in up to that point.

**Might there be a problem with the timing of tests and the reporting of performance tables if a child is accepted outside the normal age group?**

No, children are assessed when they reach the end of each key stage, not when they reach a particular age. There are no age requirements as to when children must take assessments. Reports on performance occur when pupils reach the end of a key stage, regardless of age.

### **Additional Resources**

[Summer born children: advice for parents](#) - Department for Education guidance April 2023.

[Summer born children: advice for admission authorities](#) - Department for Education guidance April 2023.

[Summer-born children: starting school](#) - House of Commons Library briefing paper February 2024