

Starting primary school

Guidance for parents on deferred, delayed and part-time attendance at school.

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Starting school

For children due to start school in September 2027, you should apply by the closing date, **15 January 2027**.

Most children start school full-time in the September following their fourth birthday.

However, children do not have to attend school until they reach compulsory school age, which is the start of the school term following their fifth birthday. This means some parents choose for their child to start school later or attend part-time.

This guidance explains the options available and what you should think about before making a decision.

Compulsory school age

Children become compulsory school age at the start of the term following their fifth birthday.

Child's date of birth	Compulsory school age begins
1 September to 31 December	at the start of the spring term
1 January to 31 March	at the start of the summer term
1 April to 31 August (summer-born)	the following September

Children born between 1 April and 31 August are known as summer-born.

Summer-born children become compulsory school age at the start of September when they would normally attend Year 1.

What are my options?

If you do not want your child to start school full-time in September, you can:

- choose part-time attendance;
- defer your child's start date until later in the Reception year;
- for summer-born children, delay starting school until the September following their fifth birthday and start in Year 1; or
- for summer-born children, request that your child starts Reception a year later than usual.

Your child must start attending school full-time as soon as they become compulsory school age.

Part-time attendance

What does this mean?

Your child starts Reception in September but attends school on a part-time timetable. The timetable will be agreed between you and the school.

What should I think about?

Children attending part-time spend less time at school than their classmates.

This means they may:

- miss some classroom activities and learning experiences;
- have less time to build friendships;
- take longer to become familiar with school routines; and
- have fewer opportunities to take part in activities that support their learning and development.

If your child also attends a nursery or childminder, you should be aware that this may not be funded and you may have to pay for some or all of the childcare costs.

What do I need to do?

You must apply for a school place in the normal admissions round. After accepting an offer, contact the school as soon as possible to agree a part-time attendance schedule.

Deferred admission to Reception

What does this mean?

You accept the Reception place offered to your child but choose for them to start later in the same school year.

Children usually start at the beginning of either the spring or summer term. The school will keep the place open until the agreed start date.

What should I think about?

Children who start Reception later in the year may:

- miss part of the Reception curriculum;
- miss activities designed to help children settle into school;
- join a class where friendships and routines have already been established; and
- have less time to benefit from Reception before moving into Year 1.

The later a child starts school, the more Reception experiences they will miss.

What do I need to do?

You must apply for a school place in the normal admissions round. After accepting the offer, contact the school to agree a start date.

Deferred admission to Year 1

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

What does this mean?

You choose not to take up your child's Reception place, and your child starts school in Year 1 in the September following their fifth birthday.

What should I think about?

If you choose this option:

- the Reception place will not be held open;
- you will need to apply again for a Year 1 place;
- there is no guarantee that a place will be available at your preferred school;
- your child will miss the whole Reception year; and
- your child will join an established Year 1 class.

What do I need to do?

You must tell the council's school admissions service. Your application and offer will be withdrawn and you will need to make an in-year application for a place in Year 1 for the following September.

Delayed admission to Reception

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

What does this mean?

Some parents feel their child would benefit from starting Reception in the September following their fifth birthday rather than starting Year 1.

This is known as admission outside the normal age group.

Each school's admission authority must consider your request separately and decide whether to agree that your child should be admitted outside their normal age group.

Before making a request

You should speak to your preferred school or schools before making a request.

Schools can explain:

- the Reception provision they offer;
- how they support younger children;
- how children are helped to settle into school; and
- how your child's needs could be met if they started school at the usual time.

What should I think about?

If your child is educated outside their normal age group:

Changing schools

If your child moves to another school, the new school does not have to continue educating them outside their normal age group. This includes when they transfer from primary to high school.

A new request is required and the admission authority of the school(s) you apply for will make the decision.

Leaving school

Children educated outside their normal age group will reach school leaving age before the other children in their year.

This means they will be entitled to leave school at the end of Year 10, before completing Year 11 and before taking GCSE examinations. You should consider this carefully, as once a young person reaches school leaving age they may choose not to remain in school.

What do I need to do?

Step 1

Apply for a school place in the normal admissions round, by the closing date for the September following your child's fourth birthday.

Step 2

Submit a request with the application, explaining why you believe it would be in your child's best interests to start Reception a year later. You can include supporting information if you wish, but you do not have to provide evidence.

Step 3

The admission authority will consider your request and let you know its decision.

Step 4

If your request is agreed:

- your original application will be withdrawn; and
- you must apply again the following year for a Reception place.

Important

Agreement to delayed admission:

- does not guarantee a place at your preferred school(s); and
- only applies to the school or schools that agreed to your request.

If you later apply for a different school, move house, apply for a school transfer, or apply for a secondary school place, you will need to make a new request and a different decision may be made.

Complaints

You do not have a right of appeal against a decision to refuse admission outside the normal age group.

You may, however, make a complaint if you are unhappy with a decision to refuse a request for admission out of the normal age group.

Complaints should be considered through:

- the council's complaints process in the case of community schools; or
- the school's published complaints procedure if the school is an academy, foundation or voluntary aided (faith) school.

Need more information?

If you are considering part-time attendance, deferred admission or delayed admission, speak to your preferred school as early as possible.

You can also contact the school admissions service if you need further advice:

Email: mainroundadmissions@ealing.gov.uk

Telephone: 020 8825 5511

Monday to Friday, 9am to midday