

Starting School Questions

Below are answers to questions raised around Delaying and Deferring School Entry. It should be pointed out that once a child reaches compulsory school age, they must be in full time education.

Home Schooling:

Parents must make sure their child receives a full-time education from the age of 5, but they do not have to follow the national curriculum.

The council can make an 'informal enquiry' to check their child is getting a suitable education at home. They can serve a school attendance order if they think your child needs to be taught at school.

Parents of a child with special educational needs (SEN)

If their child has SEN and attends a special school, they'll need to get the council's permission to educate them at home. Parents do not need the council's permission if their child attends a mainstream school, even if they have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.

Will those children that defer start in reception the following school year or go directly into year 1?

That depends on the school's policy and will be something that parents need to check with the school before deferring school entry.

If the child starts the term after 5th birthday can they still attend part time?

'Your child 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 your child's fifth birthday is on one of those dates then they reach compulsory school age on that date.

For example, if your 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).'

Taken from <https://www.gov.uk/schools-admissions/school-starting-age>

What happens to funding if a child delays or defers their school start?

Providing the child is not of compulsory school age they can still claim free entitlement funding. Once a child turns 5 they are no longer able to claim funding.

If a child has a delayed start do the parents need to fill in another admissions form the following year?

Yes they will need to complete another admission form

We have a child who has deferred a year as summer born but with no additional needs or delays in development who has been accepted for a deferred year - is this normal now?

Please see the information below.

Nick Gibb MP - Minister of State for Schools

8 September 2015 To: parents, local authorities, schools and admission authorities

The admission to school of summer born children

Having spoken to a number of parents in recent months, I know that ensuring their children start school at the right age, when they are ready and not before, is of the utmost importance. I wanted, therefore, to set out the government's position on the admission of summer born children, and our intention to amend the School Admissions Code to ensure that summer born children do not miss out on an important year of schooling.

The School Admissions Code (the Code) requires school admission authorities to provide for the admission of all children in the September following their fourth birthday. We know most parents are happy for their child to go to school at this point, confident that they are ready for the classroom.

A child does not reach compulsory school age until the "prescribed day" following their fifth birthday (or on their fifth birthday if it falls on a prescribed day). The prescribed days are 31 December, 31 March and 31 August. There are some flexibilities for parents who do not feel their child is ready to go to school before compulsory school age. The Code enables parents to defer the date their child is admitted to school until later in the reception year, or to arrange for them to attend on a part-time basis.

Children born between 1 April and 31 August are not required to start school until the September following their fifth birthday - the point at which other children in their age group are moving up from reception to year 1. If parents wish their child to start school at this point, and to be admitted to the reception class rather than year one, they must currently request they are admitted 1 outside their normal age group. The Code requires the admission authority to make a decision on the basis of the circumstances of the case and in the best interests of the child. It is clear, however, that this system is flawed, with parents and admission authorities often failing to agree on what is in the child's best interests.

The number of parents who request their child is admitted out of their normal age group is small, but for these parents the issue will have serious implications. It also takes up a disproportionate amount of time for the local authorities and schools concerned. We have already taken some steps to improve the position. We published advice in July 2013 to dispel some of the myths that appeared to hinder admission authorities agreeing to parents' requests. We made it clear, for example, that there are no barriers to prevent these children starting school out of their normal age group, that schools will not miss out on funding, and that children are only assessed when they reach the end of a key stage rather than when they reach a particular age.

In December 2014, we amended the Code so that all decisions must be made in the child's best interests and that, in doing so, admission authorities should take account of the parents' views and information about the child's development. The Code now also requires them to take account of the views of the head teacher of the school concerned, to explain clearly the reasons for their decision, and to set out the process for requesting admission a child is admitted out of their normal age group. At the same time, we revised our published advice to simplify the decision making process.

It is disappointing that some parents continue to report that the changes are not working. They either feel forced to send their child to school before they are ready and before they are required to do so, or else miss out on their reception year at school where the essential teaching of early reading and arithmetic takes place. I have also heard that some children who are admitted out of their normal age group are later required to miss a year and move up against their wishes to join the other children of the same age range.

We have, therefore, decided that it is necessary to amend the School Admissions Code further to ensure that summer born children can be admitted to the reception class at the age of five if it is in line with their parents' wishes, and to ensure that those children are able to remain with that cohort as they progress through school, including through to secondary school. We will conduct a full public consultation in due course; and subject to Parliamentary approval will introduce these further changes to ensure that no child is forced to start school before they are ready.

If deferring a child in hopes of a placement in a SEN school and this fails, will a placement still be open in a mainstream?

Parents cannot defer entry if they haven't already got a school place. Therefore they would need to apply for a mainstream school, get a place, then defer this place should the child be offered Specialist Provision.

If the child is not of compulsory school age and parents choose to delay school entry and not apply in the initial admissions and change their mind, the child will still find a school place, however it may not be in the parents preference school or in catchment.

Up until the term after they turn 5, can they still claim 30 FE hrs or just 15?

A child can continue to access 30 hours providing they have not started school in any capacity, including independent schools, the family remain eligible for the 30 hours (they will need to continue reconfirming their code every three months as all parents do), and the child is not statutory school age.