

# Starting school – deferring or delaying admission

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

Version 2.3 – May 2015

'The preferred pattern of entry to reception classes should be the September immediately following a child's fourth birthday. However, this should be subject to well informed discussion with parents, taking into account their views of a child's maturity and readiness to enter reception class. Arrangements should be such as to make entry to reception class an exciting and enjoyable experience for all children, with opportunities for flexible arrangements such as a period of part-time attendance if judged appropriate.'

*Independent Review of Primary Curriculum – recommendation 14(1) - points of entry into reception class*

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## Introduction

The majority of children start school full-time in the September following their fourth birthday. However, in some cases parents<sup>1</sup> believe that starting part-time or starting later in the school year would be more appropriate for their child, particularly where their child was born prematurely and would otherwise have been due to start school a year later. There are a number of options to consider and sources of support and information.

Parents could speak to the Family Information Service for advice (contact details below) and request a meeting with the headteacher of the school where they have been allocated, or are hoping to gain, a place and any other relevant professionals to help support them with this important decision.

When making the decision it is important to remember that schools have to 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 – which is also a requirement of pre-school provision – is a flexible and responsive play-based curriculum which supports this. Some useful information can be found on the Foundation Years website: [www.foundationyears.org.uk](http://www.foundationyears.org.uk) and the 4Children website: [www.4children.org.uk](http://www.4children.org.uk).

Individual children's needs will usually be met through the different approaches that teachers should 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 deferred or part-time entry to the reception year for their child or request delayed entry to reception (i.e. holding their child back a year) and each case must be considered individually and with the best interests of the child in mind.

This guidance document may be used by parents alongside the support available from, for example:

- their child's **early years or childcare provider**;
- the **headteacher** at the school where their child has been allocated a place or where they are hoping to secure a place;
- the **Family Information Service** – who can put them in touch with a representative of the Local Authority if necessary.

Telephone: 0800 587 8191

Email: [fis@cornwall.gov.uk](mailto:fis@cornwall.gov.uk)

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<sup>1</sup> Any reference to 'parents' in this document includes carers and may also mean parent/carers in the singular. This refers to any person with Parental Responsibility.

## 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**'.

<p><b>Child with their fifth birthday between 1 September and 31 December</b></p>	<p>Compulsory school age from the following January.</p> <p>A school place will be available from the September of, or before, their fifth birthday but can be deferred until <b>January</b> – the school place that has been allocated will be held once the parent lets the school know.</p>
<p><b>Child with their fifth birthday between 1 January and 31 March</b></p>	<p>Compulsory school age from the following April.</p> <p>A school place will be available from the September before this but can be deferred until <b>January</b> or <b>April</b> – the school place that has been allocated will be held once the parent lets the school know.</p>
<p><b>Child with their fifth birthday between 1 April and 31 August</b></p>	<p>Compulsory school age from the following September (which is then <b>year one, not reception</b>).</p> <p>A school place will be available from the September before this but can be deferred until <b>January</b> or <b>April</b> – the school place that has been allocated will be held once the parent lets the school know.</p> <p>Parents can also legally defer the school place until <b>September BUT the offer of a school place will be withdrawn and they will need to reapply for a place in year one</b>. This will be treated as a new application and <b>there is no guarantee that a place will be available at their preferred school</b>.</p> <p>However, if a parent decides to request a place in a reception class rather than year one in September, having deferred the place for a year, this would be called <b>delayed admission</b>, as described later in this document. This can only be agreed by the admission authority<sup>2</sup> for the school.</p>

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<sup>2</sup> The admission authority in the case of community and voluntary-controlled schools is the Local Authority and in the case of academies, foundation, trust, voluntary-aided and free schools, it is the academy trust or governing body of the school.

## What does the School Admissions Code 2014 say?

The relevant sections of the Admissions Code 2014, to which all admission authorities must adhere, are:

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

**2.16** 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.

### **Admission of children outside their normal age group**

**2.17** Parents may seek a place for their child outside of their normal age group, for example, if the child is gifted and talented or has experienced problems such as ill health. In addition, the parents 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 normal age group – to reception rather than year one. Admission authorities **must** make clear in their admission arrangements the process for requesting admission out of the normal age group.

**2.17A** Admission authorities **must** make decisions on the basis of the circumstances of each case and in the best interests of the child concerned. This will include taking account of the parent's views; information about the child's academic, social and emotional development; where relevant, their medical history and the views of a medical professional; whether they have previously been educated out of their normal age group; and whether they may naturally have fallen into a lower age group if it were not for being born prematurely. They **must** also take into account the views of the head teacher of the school concerned. When informing a parent of their decision on the year group the child should be admitted to, the admission authority **must** set out clearly the reasons for their decision.

**2.17B** Where an admission authority agrees to a parent's request for their child to be admitted out of their normal age group and, as a consequence of that decision, the child will be admitted to a relevant age group (i.e. the age group to which pupils are normally admitted to the school) the local authority and admission authority **must** process the application as part of the main admissions round, unless the parental request is made too late for this to be possible, and on the basis of their determined admission arrangements only, including the application of oversubscription criteria where applicable. They **must not** give the application lower priority on the basis that the child is being admitted out of their normal age group. Parents have a statutory right to appeal against the refusal of a place at a school for which they have applied. This right does not apply if they are offered a place at the school but it is not in their preferred age group.

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## 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 following their child's fourth birthday (but not beyond the point at which they reach compulsory school age);
2. **opt to defer** their child's entry for a term or two terms (i.e. until they are of compulsory school age) so that they don't start straight away in the September following their fourth birthday – e.g. they might start in the January following their fourth birthday, in the allocated reception class;
3. **opt to defer** their child's entry until the September following their fifth birthday, if they were born in the summer – **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 to request that their child starts school later in the school year that follows their fourth birthday 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 back their child from joining the correct year group for their age so that they start school a year later than they are due to, in the reception class.

## 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. Starting school can be tiring for children and parents may feel that their child would benefit from a phased entry with a short or longer period of part-time attendance. This may be preferable to deferring the child's entry until later in the school year as this will give them the opportunity to settle in gradually and start to make friends at the same time as other children in the class. 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 organisation of the school.

### 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**.

## **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.
- If they are entitled to transport free of charge under Cornwall Council's Home to School Transport Policy (visit [www.cornwall.gov.uk/schooltransport](http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/schooltransport) or contact the School Admissions Team for information) this only applies to journeys at the beginning and end of the school day.

## **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 terms they still need to apply for a school place for the September following their child's fourth birthday – the place can then be held open until they start in the spring or summer.

If parents defer entry, they will still be entitled to take up the 15 hours free early learning entitlement with an early years provider. Their child will still follow the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework as this applies to early years providers as well as schools. Visit [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) and search for 'EYFS' for more information.

## **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.

### **How to request deferred entry until the spring or summer term**

Parents will still need to apply for a school place as if for September entry but this place will be held open for them until the January or April if they request it. Once they've been allocated a place they will need to speak to the headteacher to arrange the deferred admission.



## **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 and their parents decide they want to take up the opportunity to defer their entry to school until the September after their fifth birthday, they need to consider the points earlier in this document – but most importantly, they need to be aware that if they were allocated a school place for the September following their fourth birthday **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 believe that their child should start in reception instead, a year later than they are due to start, this is called **delayed entry**.

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

### **When first thinking about delayed entry:**

- Parents are still advised to **submit an application** for a school place for the September following their child's fourth birthday. They can always withdraw their application or decline the offer of a reception place if it is agreed that their child should be held back a year.
- Deferred or part-time entry offers **flexibility** for children who aren't quite ready to start school or need a phased entry to give them time to settle in – have all of the options been considered which might be good alternatives to delayed entry?
- Delaying entry into reception will usually involve an extra year with an early years provider which may not be full-time but a child may benefit from more focussed learning as well as the opportunity to play. The Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum in a reception class is able to provide this.

### **Education outside the normal age group - introduction**

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.

Department for Education guidance<sup>3</sup> states that: 'The government would agree that, in general, children should be educated in their normal age group, with the curriculum differentiated as appropriate and that they should only be educated out of their normal age group in very limited circumstances'.

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<sup>3</sup> 'Advice on the admission of summer born children' December 2014

Children born in the summer term are not required to start school until a full year after the point at which they could first have been admitted, after their fourth birthday. This would mean that they would be due to enter year one, not long after their fifth birthday. Should the parents wish their child to be admitted to reception, rather than year one, at this point, they may request that they are admitted outside their normal age group i.e. start in reception a year later than normal. **Parents do not have the right to insist** that their child is admitted to school a year late but may make a request for this to happen.

### **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. In particular, where an August born child was born prematurely, it may be that they would have been admitted into the year below if delivered on their due date. Because children born prematurely tend to develop according to their due date, rather than their actual birth date, their social, emotional, physical and intellectual development may be behind that of their peers. Some children may also have additional health problems associated with their prematurity.

### **Decision-makers**

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 and voluntary-controlled schools is the LA 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 a statement of special educational needs or education, health and care plan (EHC plan), the decision rests with the Local Authority (LA) and must be confirmed in the statement/EHC plan.**

Admission authorities are required to make a decision based on the circumstances of each case. The LA recommends that the decision is made in consultation with the headteacher of the school concerned, the parents, all professionals involved with the child and the LA.

### **Admission arrangements**

It is a requirement of the Admissions Code 2014 that admission authorities must make clear in their admission arrangements (which must be agreed and published annually) the process for requesting admission outside the normal age group. The process for community and voluntary-controlled schools, for which the LA is the admission authority, is set out in this document. The process for all other schools (academies, foundation, trust, voluntary-aided and free schools) must be set out in their admission arrangements but may be based on the recommended process in this document.

Admission authorities are not able to set a blanket policy which states that no admissions will be made outside normal age groups.

### **Making decisions on delayed entry to school**

The Admissions Code 2014 makes it clear that admission authorities must make decisions about on **the basis of the circumstances of each case** and in the best interests of the child concerned. This will include taking account of:

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- the parents' views;
- the views of the headteacher of the school concerned;
- information about the child's academic, social and emotional development;
- where relevant, their medical history and the views of a medical professional;
- whether they have been previously educated out of their normal age group; and
- whether they may naturally have fallen into a lower age group if it were not for being born prematurely.

Schools and admission authorities should also make early contact for advice from Cornwall School Improvement Team Senior School Improvement Officers.

### **Considerations – looking ahead**

Consideration should be given to the fact that:

- Receiving schools on transition (i.e. into junior school, secondary school, or special provision) 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, (although decision-makers must take the previous placement outside the normal age group into account).
- Pupils who have been educated a year behind their normal age group may 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 in that age group. 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. However, 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.

### **Principles for decision-makers**

Cornwall LA recognises that each case must be considered on an individual basis but believes in the following principles:

- Established good practice within the County and nationwide shows that, apart from in the most exceptional circumstances, schools are able to meet all pupils' personal, social and educational needs within their appropriate age group, and that this is a reasonable expectation.
- The needs of the child must always be considered as the key criteria, rather than, for example, school organisation, curriculum and assessment considerations or failing to secure a place at a school in the first time of applying.

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## Evidence-gathering

It is reasonable for admission authorities to expect parents to provide them with information to support their request but there should be no expectation that parents will obtain professional evidence that they do not already have. Admission authorities must still consider requests that are not accompanied by professional evidence. Supporting information might simply be the parents' statement as to why they have made their request.

Cornwall LA makes the following recommendations for those making decisions about placement outside the normal age group – decision-makers should satisfy themselves that they have gathered sufficient evidence to show that:

- the child shows a significant delay, and little progress, in their personal and emotional development, and social skills appropriate for a younger peer group;
- the child shows significant delay and little progress in intellectual development/educational skills, to an extent that it is not reasonable to expect differentiation within their normal age group to be successful;
- the child's physical maturity is not likely, in the future, to make them developmentally different from their proposed peer group in such a way as to impact negatively on their self-esteem/self-awareness (including consideration of puberty).

### Admission authorities should satisfy themselves that:

- this is the wish of all those with Parental Responsibility for the child and that they have been adequately advised of the implications of placement outside the normal age group;
- there is a clear understanding about why and how the child's needs will be met more effectively out of their normal age group, than would be possible within;
- the child's parents, the school, and all involved professionals agree that this is the best provision for the child;
- any implications have been fully discussed with parents;
- full consideration has been given to the likely/possible impact of relevant regulations and local practice as the pupil progresses outside their normal age group.

### Recommended/required procedures for making a decision on placement outside the normal age group in Cornwall

For schools which are their own admission authority (academies, foundation, trust, voluntary-aided and free schools) the following procedures are **recommended good practice**. For community and voluntary-controlled schools (where the LA is the admission authority) the procedures are **required practice**. However, the LA expects all admission authorities and schools to alert the LA School Admissions Team if considering the admission or placement of a pupil out of their normal age group to enable the LA to discharge its statutory duties with regard to the provision and organisation of school places.

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## **Making a request**

When parents submit a request for late entry to reception or to repeat the reception year, the school should **alert the School Admissions Team** as soon as possible who will provide guidance and ask to be alerted to the final decision. When parents submit a request for a placement outside the normal age group to the School Admissions Team, they will alert and forward any information to the school, along with guidance and a request to be informed about the final decision. In the case of a community or voluntary-controlled school, the School Admissions Team will also alert Cornwall School Improvement Team as they must be involved in the decision, representing the LA as the admission authority.

## **When a school receives a request**

To support admission authorities and the LA in fulfilling their long term responsibilities for pupils and to ensure sound decision-making, a meeting should be convened by the school concerned.

## **Arranging a meeting**

The meeting should be arranged in good time, to allow for full consideration of the case and (if a placement outside the normal age group is agreed) to allow for supported admission/transition for the pupil, with adequate planning and preparation for their needs to be met in the allocated year group. Consideration must also be given to deadlines for applications, particularly if the request relates to transition where a 'normal admissions round' application would need to be submitted (see later in this document for details on applying for places). Attendees should include:

- the parents;
- the headteacher of the school concerned;
- all professionals involved with the child;
- a Cornwall School Improvement Team (CSIT) representative, usually the Senior Early Years Improvement Officer.

In addition, admission authorities should be mindful of the need to consider well ahead any proposal for deferred transition into a new junior or secondary school. This discussion should not be delayed until just before. In these cases a **representative of the proposed receiving school** should attend.

Where attendance by invited parties is not possible, all relevant views/advice should be sought in writing for consideration at the meeting.

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## **At the meeting**

Full notes of the meeting should be made and agreed. These should include a clear statement as to whether any agreement by the admission authority to place a child out of their normal age group is being made with or without the support of the LA, as expressed by CSIT representation at the meeting (if present).

## **After the meeting**

- Notes of the meeting, together with any written reports considered at the meeting, should be placed permanently on the pupil's file and transferred to any new school at each transition. A copy of these notes and any written reports should also be forwarded to CSIT via the officer who attended the meeting.
- A letter should be sent to the parents confirming the outcome of the meeting and where placement outside the normal age group is agreed, a request for acknowledgement of their agreement with the facts recorded and the outcome as agreed by returning a signed form (see suggested templates in Appendix 2). A copy should also be forwarded to the CSIT officer involved.
- The School Admissions Team should be notified so that the LA records can be updated and any related application handled appropriately.

## **Admissions processes**

In some cases, requests for placement outside the normal age group will be made for pupils that are already attending a school or have been offered a place in the normal age group. If this is not the case and if a decision to accept a child outside their normal age group is made but a place has not yet been allocated, the following should be taken into account:

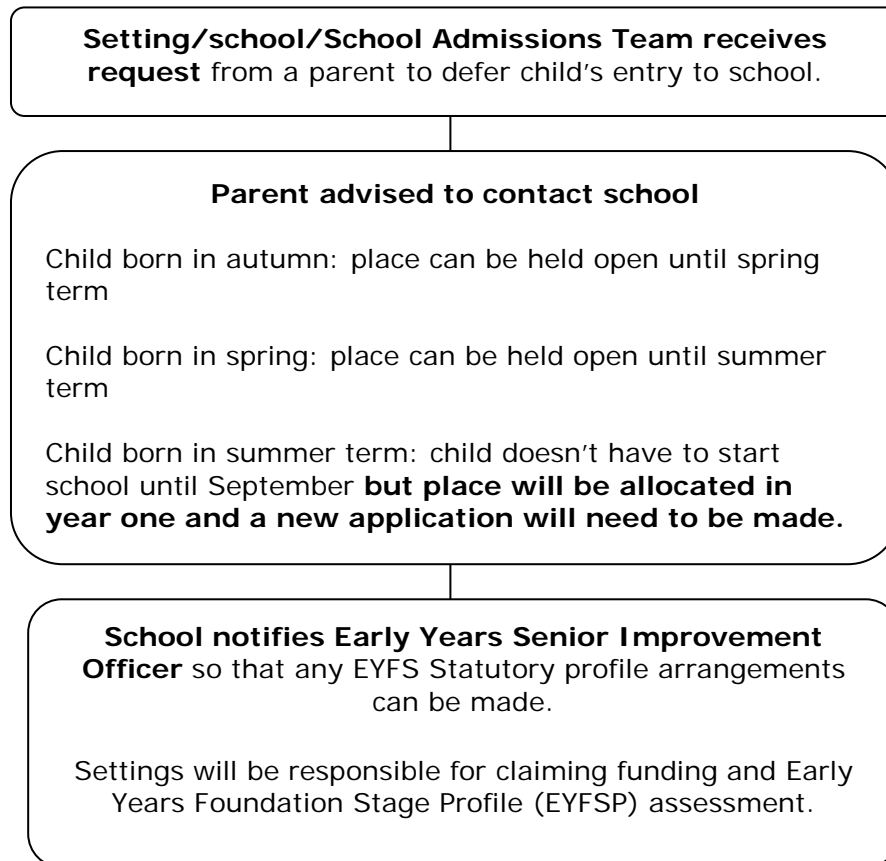
- Parents should be reminded that agreement to a placement outside the normal age group does not guarantee a place at the school if this has not already been secured – the normal processes relating to school place applications will need to go ahead. This means that an application will need to be submitted if it hasn't been already and if the school is full or there are more applications than places available, the school's oversubscription criteria will be applied to see if the child can be offered a place in the agreed year group.
- Where an application for a reception place is made through the normal admissions round, any agreement to placement outside the normal age group means that the LA must treat the application as it would for any child, regardless of the fact that the application is not for the normal age group. This includes the process for the handling of late applications, if this is the case.
- Where the school place is required other than in the normal admissions round, the in-year admissions process will take place.

For deadlines and guidance related to normal admissions round and in-year applications, see [www.cornwall.gov.uk/admissions](http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/admissions) or contact the School Admissions Team.

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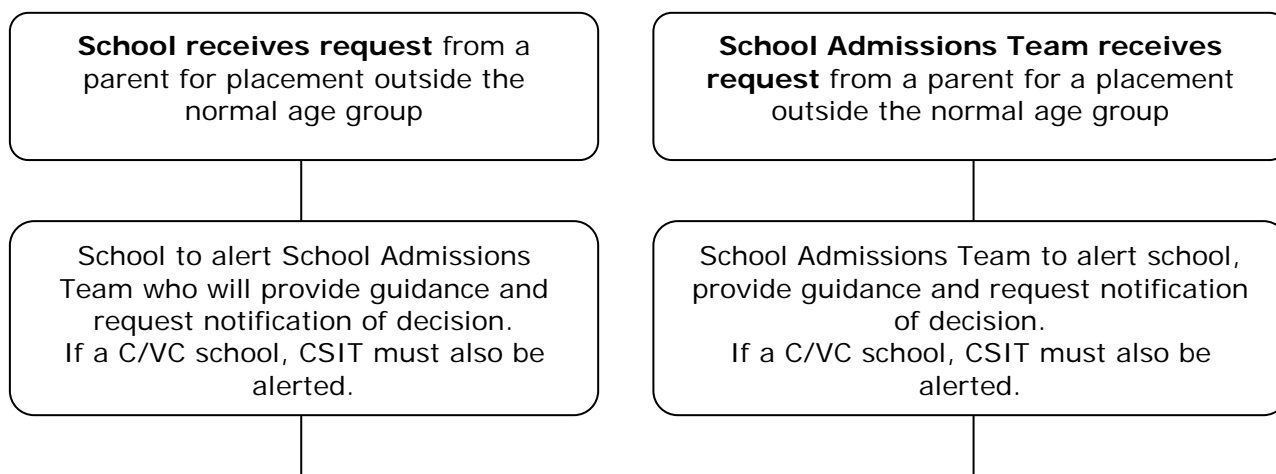
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## Summary of process when a parent chooses to defer entry to school

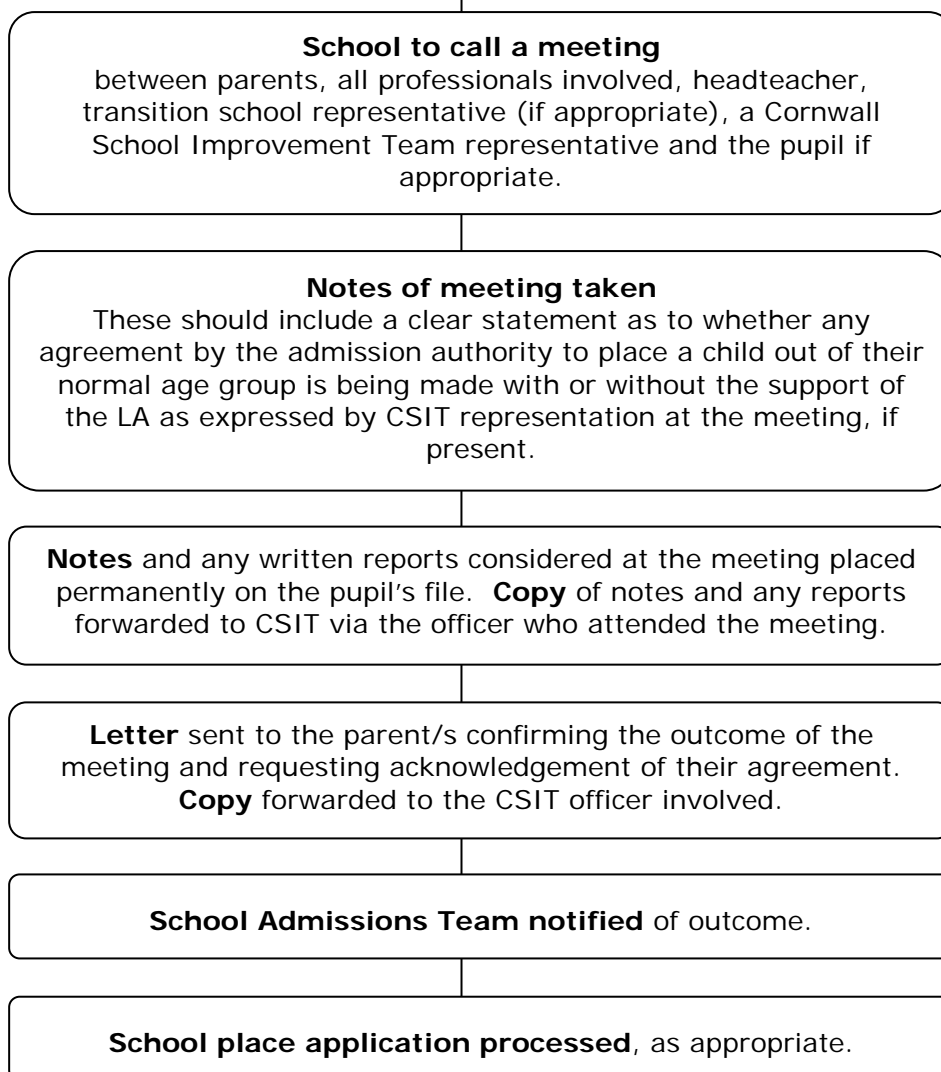


## Summary of the required/recommended process for requests to delay entry to reception

NB: The process for a request in relation to a child with a statement of SEN or EHC plan is different – see page 10).



Next steps **required** for a community or voluntary-controlled school and **recommended** for a foundation, trust, voluntary-aided, academy or free school



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## 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:

- Where the decision of the LA, in the case of a child with a **statement of SEN or EHC plan**, is not to uphold the request for placement out of chronological year group then providing this request was made as part of the issuing or Annual Review of the statement then parents will have a right of appeal to the SEN Tribunal. Details of 'How to Appeal' are set out in correspondence sent to parents by the SEN Assessment and Provision Team.
- 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 and voluntary-controlled schools**, parents must follow the LA's complaints procedure, because the LA is the admission authority.

### LA 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 Service, Learning and Achievement, including all paperwork relating to the decision and the nature of the complaint.
- The Head of Service, Learning and Achievement, 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 Service, Learning and Achievement, 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 LA and the Secretary of State in the case of complaints to schools.

## Advice and information

### Choice Advice Service

The Family Information Service's 'Choice Advice Service' can help with information and support when choosing a school for the first time or moving from a primary school to a secondary school. Choice advisors can help with, among other things:

- The admissions system
- Appeals
- Travel details
- Completing the application form
- School policies
- Information about individual schools e.g. performance tables / Ofsted reports
- Access to websites and prospectuses

Telephone: 0800 587 8191

Email: [fis@cornwall.gov.uk](mailto:fis@cornwall.gov.uk)

Website: [www.cornwallfisdirectory.org.uk](http://www.cornwallfisdirectory.org.uk)

### School Admissions Team

Telephone: 0300 1234 101

Email: [schooladmissions@cornwall.gov.uk](mailto:schooladmissions@cornwall.gov.uk)

Website: [www.cornwall.gov.uk/admissions](http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/admissions)

### Cornwall School Improvement Team

Telephone: 0300 1234 100

Email: [schoolimprovement@cornwall.gov.uk](mailto:schoolimprovement@cornwall.gov.uk)

Website: [www.cornwall.gov.uk/schoolimprovement](http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/schoolimprovement) (via School Messenger)

## Further information

**Advice on the admission of summer born children** (DfE December 2014) available at [www.gov.uk/dfes](http://www.gov.uk/dfes)

### Foundation Years website:

[www.foundationyears.org.uk](http://www.foundationyears.org.uk)

**What to expect, when?** A simple guide which takes parents through the expectations of each age band in the EYFS and how they can support their children's learning and development. Available at [www.4children.org.uk](http://www.4children.org.uk)

### 4Children: The national charity all about children and families:

[www.4children.org.uk](http://www.4children.org.uk)

### Starting school – deferring or delaying admission

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# Appendix 1: Frequently Asked Questions

## My child will be five between 1 September and 31 December

### **When *could* they start school?**

From the September of, or before, their fifth birthday.

### **When *must* they start school?**

From the January following their fifth birthday (when they reach compulsory school age).

### **Do they need to start school full-time?**

Not for the autumn term – they could attend part-time for the autumn term and would need to start full-time in the January following their fifth birthday, when they are of compulsory school age.

### **When do I apply for a place?**

You need to apply for a place by 15 January in the year that they could start in the September.

### **Do I apply for a place even if I don't want my child to start until January?**

Yes – the place will be held open for you if you let the school you are allocated know. If you don't apply for a place until the Autumn term before your child is due to start in the January, you would need to submit an in-year application and there may be no places available in the reception class at your preferred school/s.

### **How do I apply for a place?**

You can do this online or using a paper form. Visit [www.cornwall.gov.uk/admissions](http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/admissions) for more information, or contact the School Admissions Team or Family Information Service.

## My child will be five between 1 January and 31 March

### **When *could* they start school?**

From the September before that.

### **When *must* they start school?**

From the April (summer term) after their fifth birthday (when they reach compulsory school age).

### **Do they need to start school full time?**

Not for the autumn or spring term – they could attend part-time for one or two terms and would need to start full-time in the April (summer term) following their fifth birthday, when they are of compulsory school age.

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### **When do I apply for a place?**

You need to apply for a place by 15 January in the year that they could start in the September.

### **Do I apply for a place even if I don't want my child to start until January or April?**

Yes – the place will be held open for you if you let the school you are allocated know. If you don't apply for a place until the autumn or spring term before your child is due to start in the April, you would need to submit an in-year application and there may be no places available in the reception class at your preferred school/s.

### **How do I apply for a place?**

You can do this online or using a paper form. Visit [www.cornwall.gov.uk/admissions](http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/admissions) for more information, or contact the School Admissions Team or Family Information Service.

## **My child will be five between 1 April and 31 August**

### **When *could* they start school?**

From the September before that.

### **When *must* they start school?**

From the September following their fifth birthday (when they reach compulsory school age).

### **Do they need to start school full time?**

No, they could attend part time for the whole, or part of, the reception year, until they reach compulsory school age in the September after their fifth birthday.

### **Do I apply for a place even if I don't want my child to start until January or April?**

Yes – the place will be held open for you if you let the school you are allocated know. If you don't apply for a place until the autumn or spring term before your child is due to start in the April, you would need to submit an in-year application and there may be no places available at your preferred school/s.

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

You need to apply for a place by the 15 January in the year that they *could* start in the September.

### **How do I apply for a place?**

You can do this online or using a paper form. Visit [www.cornwall.gov.uk/admissions](http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/admissions) for more information, or contact the School Admissions Team or Family Information Service.

### **What if I don't want my summer-born child to start school until the September following their fifth birthday?**

If you have been offered a school place this will be withdrawn and you will need to reapply for a place in year one, using the 'in-year' application form. This will be treated

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as a new application and there is no guarantee that a place will be available at your preferred school. If this is the first time you have applied for a school place, you would need to submit an 'in-year' application for a place in year one.

**What if I don't want my summer-born child to start school until the September following their fifth birthday and want them to start in the reception year then, rather than year one?**

See delayed entry FAQs below.

**I have been told that if my child doesn't start school in the summer term when they are five that they have to start in year one instead. Is that true?**

That will be the expectation as year one would be their normal year group based on their age if starting in the September following their fifth birthday. Entry to the reception year instead needs to be requested and the admission authority will decide if it can happen. See delayed entry FAQs below.

## **Part-time/deferred entry**

**If my child attends part-time, will they be entitled to transport?**

Transport free of charge is offered to eligible children based on the LA's Home to School Transport Policy, however this transport is only provided at the beginning and end of the normal school day.

**Will we still be eligible for Universal Infant Free School Meals if my child is attending part-time?**

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

**If I choose to defer or delay my child's entry to school, will I still be entitled to free early education?**

You will still be entitled to a funded early education place of 15 hours a week for 38 weeks of the year until your child starts school. However, if you wish to combine a part-time school place with any other childcare provider, your 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.

## **Being refused a place at your preferred school**

**I applied for a place for my child to start in reception in the September following their fourth birthday but I didn't get a place at my preferred school**

**Should I keep them at their pre-school until they are of compulsory school age and hope that a place becomes available?**

You would need to consider that:

- There is no guarantee that a place will become available and even if you are on a waiting list, the priority order of a waiting list changes as names are added to it – no priority is given based on how long someone has been on the list.

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- Your 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.
- Your 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 your child joins the school.

### **Should I request to keep them back a year and apply for a reception place in the following year in order to try and get a place in the school I want?**

Being refused a place at your preferred school is not a good reason in itself for requesting that your child starts late in the reception year, in the following September. The right to request admission outside the normal age group is not there as a 'second-chance' opportunity to apply for a place at your preferred school but to allow for exceptional circumstances. Admission authorities will be aware of this and must make a decision on the basis of the evidence you provide that delayed entry is in the best interests of your child.

Even if a delayed entry request is accepted, there is no guarantee that you will be eligible for a place at your preferred school as it will depend on your priority in relation to the school's oversubscription criteria.

### **Requests to start a year late in reception**

**My child has special circumstances and I'm wondering if he/she should start a year later in reception**

#### **How do I request that my child starts in a reception class instead of year one?**

You can request delayed entry by contacting the school/s you are interested in. You need to be aware that even if a school agrees to accept an application for your child outside their normal age group i.e. late in the reception year, that does not mean you are guaranteed a place there. Your application would then be considered in the normal admissions process to see if you are eligible for a place in accordance with the school's oversubscription criteria. Therefore it is a good idea to speak to at least three schools to see if they would all accept your child late into reception and name these schools as preferences on your form. Otherwise, in the event that you cannot get a place at your preferred school, the school you are allocated may not accept the arrangement, even if your preferred school would have done.

#### **Who makes decisions about whether my child can start a year late in reception?**

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 and voluntary-controlled schools is the LA and in the case of academies, foundation, trust, voluntary-aided and free schools, it is the academy trust or governing body of the school.

## **Who might be involved in an admission authority's decision on delayed entry to reception for my child?**

It is likely that any professional working with your child, the headteacher of the school concerned and a LA representative will be involved in the decision, usually by way of a meeting between you and these parties.

## **What will an admission authority consider in relation to a request to delay my child's entry to reception?**

Admission authorities should consider your views; the views of the headteacher of the school concerned; information about your child's academic, social and emotional development; where relevant, their medical history and the views of a medical professional; and whether they may naturally have fallen into a lower age group if it were not for being born prematurely. They will look for evidence to show that:

- your child shows a significant delay, and little progress, in their personal and emotional development, and social skills appropriate for a younger peer group;
- your child shows significant delay and little progress, in intellectual development/educational skills, to an extent that it is not reasonable to expect differentiation within their normal age group to be successful;
- your child's physical maturity does not and is unlikely, in the future, to make them developmentally different from their proposed peer group in such a way as to impact negatively on their self-esteem/self-awareness (including consideration of puberty).

## **Is it common for a child to be placed outside their normal age group?**

No. As Department for Education guidance<sup>4</sup> states: 'The government would agree that, in general, children should be educated in their normal age group, with the curriculum differentiated as appropriate and that they should only be educated out of their normal age group in very limited circumstances'.

## **What if an admission authority agrees to accept my child outside their normal age group – are we guaranteed a place at the school?**

Requests for placement outside the normal age group may, in some cases, be made for pupils that are already attending a school or have been offered a place in the normal age group. If this is not the case and if a decision to accept a child outside their normal age group is made but a place has not yet been allocated, agreement to a placement outside the normal age group does not guarantee a place at the school – the normal processes relating to school place applications will need to go ahead. This means that an application will need to be submitted if it hasn't been already and if the school is full or there are more applications than places available, the school's oversubscription criteria will be applied to see if the child can be offered a place in the agreed year group.

## **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.

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<sup>4</sup> 'Advice on the admission of summer born children' December 2014

**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. However, there is no guarantee that a space will be available in the normal year group.

**My child was born prematurely and had they been born on time, would be starting school a year later – can they start in the year group they would have been in?**

You can request delayed entry by contacting the school/s you are interested in. You need to be aware that even if a school agrees to accept an application for your child outside their normal age group i.e. late in the reception year, that does not mean you are guaranteed a place there. Your application would then be considered in the normal admissions processes to see if you are eligible for a place in accordance with the school's oversubscription criteria. Therefore it is a good idea to speak to at least three schools to see if they would all accept your child late into reception and name these schools as preferences on your form. Otherwise, in the event that you cannot get a place at your preferred school, the school you are allocated may not accept the arrangement, even if your preferred school would have done.

**If a child has been educated outside their normal age group in infant/primary school will they automatically be educated outside their age group when they transfer to junior/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 bear in mind the age group that the child has been educated in up to that point. This is why it is prudent for parents and decision-makers to 'rehearse' requests for placement outside the normal age group with any potential school to which the child might transfer.

**My child has been educated outside their normal age group in a school outside Cornwall, can they continue outside the normal age group when we move to Cornwall?**

Only if the admission authority of the new school agrees to this. They would need to consider the circumstances of your case, taking into account the year group that your child has been educated in up until now.

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

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 their GCSEs or other assessments. Reports on performance occur when pupils reach the end of a key stage, regardless of age.



### **What bearing does being educated outside the normal age group have on school leaving age?**

A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday of June in the school year they become 16. If a child is educated outside their normal age group (i.e. is in year 10 when this date is reached) the school will continue to receive funding for that child but the child will no longer be of compulsory school age during the school year in which most children take their GCSE examinations and cannot, therefore, be obliged to attend.

The government has changed the law so that all young people will be required to continue in education or training until the end of the academic year in which they turn 18. Young people will have a choice about how they do this. It could be through full-time education in school or college, an apprenticeship or full time employment combined with part time education. However, the date on which they cease to be of compulsory school age will remain unchanged.

### **What sort of evidence might I need to provide when requesting placement outside the normal age group?**

You should provide as much evidence as possible to help the admission authority reach their decision. This might include statements from professionals involved and medical evidence, in addition to your own views.

### **Will I still be eligible for Free School Meals if my child is not in their normal year group?**

Yes, Free School Meals eligibility is based on year group, not age.

### **What if the junior school or secondary school that my child is due to transfer to won't allow my child to continue outside their normal age group?**

The admission authority making the decision will have to consider the circumstances and take into account the year group that your child has been educated in. If they decide not to allow your child to continue outside their normal age group but offer you a place in their correct age group, you would not have the right of appeal. You could, however, follow the admission authority's complaints procedure if you are unhappy with the decision.

### **If I decide I want my child to start in reception a year late are there any implications for the future that I should consider?**

- Receiving schools on transition (i.e. into junior school, secondary school, or special provision) are free to review and reconsider the placement outside the normal age group, and the continuing placement of the pupil outside their normal age group cannot be guaranteed on transition into a new school, (although decision-makers must take the previous placement outside the normal age group into account).
- Pupils who have been educated a year behind their normal age group will become eligible to leave school before completing examination courses.
- One admission authority cannot be required to honour a decision made by another admission authority on admission outside the normal age group.

### **What happens if I miss the deadline for applying for a place?**

The normal process for handling late applications will apply – this may mean that there are no places left at your preferred school and you would need to be offered a place at

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another school. It would be for that school's admission authority to decide whether to accept your child outside the normal age group unless you had previously had this agreed by them. For information on the handling of late applications visit [www.cornwall.gov.uk/admissions](http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/admissions) or contact the School Admissions Team.

## **Applying for place outside the normal age group**

### **How/when do I request an and apply for a school place?**

**My child's normal age group means that I should be applying for a reception place in the coming January for a place in September – but I think it might be better for my child to start in reception in the following year when he/she should technically be in year one – what should I do?**

- Firstly, it's a good idea to apply anyway – you can always withdraw your application at a later date or refuse the offer of a place if it is agreed that your child can start a year later.
- Then you should speak to your preferred school/s about the possibility of accepting your child outside their normal age group.

But, remember that:

- Even if your preferred school agrees to a placement outside the normal age group, it doesn't guarantee that you will get a place there – the admission authority has two decisions to make:
  - firstly, which year group the child should be admitted to and then...
  - whether it is able to offer a place in that year group when applying its oversubscription criteria, as part of the standard admissions processes.

Therefore, it's a good idea to **speak to more than one school** to see if they would accept your child outside their normal age group, in case you're not eligible for a place at your preferred school.

### **If your preferred school/s has/have agreed that your child could start in reception a year later:**

- You should apply by 15 January in the year that he/she would be due to start in the September and indicate on your application that the school/s have agreed to placement outside the normal age group and provide evidence of this.
- If you have missed the 15 January deadline, your application would be treated as a late application, the process for which can be found in the Council's admissions information. There may be no places left at your preferred school/s.

### **If your preferred school/s has/have NOT agreed that your child can start in reception a year later:**

- You will need to apply for a place in the current reception year or in year one for September, using the 'In-year Application Form'.

**My child could have started in the reception class in September but as he/she isn't of compulsory school age until next September, I didn't apply/refused the school place offered. How do I apply for them to start in the reception class next September, a year behind his/her normal age group?**

- You should speak to your preferred school/s about the possibility of accepting your child outside their normal age group.

But, remember that:

- Even if your preferred school agrees to a placement outside the normal age group, it doesn't guarantee that you will get a place there – the admission authority has two decisions to make:
  - firstly, which year group the child should be admitted to and then...
  - whether it is able to offer a place in that year group when applying its oversubscription criteria, as part of the standard admissions processes.

Therefore, it's a good idea to **speak to more than one school** to see if they would accept your child outside their normal age group, in case you're not eligible for a place at your preferred school.

**If the school/s agree to accept your child outside their normal age group:**

- You should apply by 15 January in the year that he/she would be due to start in the September and indicate on your application that the school/s has/have agreed to placement outside the normal age group.
- If you have missed the 15 January deadline, your application would be treated as a late application, the process for which can be found in the Council's admissions information. There may be no places left at your preferred school/s.

**If the school/s do not agree to accept your child outside their normal age group:**

- You will need to submit an in-year application form for a place in the current reception year or for year one in September.

**My child could have started in the reception class in September but as he/she isn't of compulsory school age until next September, I didn't apply/refused the school place offered. How do I apply for them to start in year one, their correct year group, in September?**

- You will need to submit an in-year application for a place in year one.

## **Complaints**

**How can parents appeal against a decision on placement outside the normal age group?**

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. As the purpose of the appeals process is to consider whether a child should be admitted to a particular school, parents do not have a right of appeal if they have been offered a place and it is not in the year

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group they would like. However, they may make a complaint about an admission authority's decision not to admit their child outside their normal age group.

They may also make such a complaint if they have not made, or do not yet know the outcome of, their formal application for a school place. All schools have a duty to consider complaints about the school and must have a published complaints procedure in place. Local authorities will also have a complaints procedure.

In the case of foundation and voluntary aided schools, academies and free schools, parents 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 LA – because they are the admission authority.

If parents are unhappy with the way a LA or maintained school has handled their complaint, the parents may then refer their complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman. If they are unhappy with the way an academy has handled their complaint they may complain to the Education Funding Agency who will consider the complaint on behalf of the Secretary of State for Education.

## Appendix 2: Letter templates

Template letters to parents following meeting to discuss entry to reception a year later than normal (to be completed by person representing the relevant admission authority).

### a) Agreement to late entry

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Dear [REDACTED]

**Request for [REDACTED], D.O.B [REDACTED] to be admitted a year late into the reception year, in [REDACTED]**

Thank you very much for meeting with us on [REDACTED]. It was very helpful to meet with you and also with [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] who were representing [REDACTED]. I really appreciate all of the information that you gave to us and I understand that you have a very strong view that [REDACTED] should start in the reception class a year later than normal in [REDACTED], outside **his/her** normal age group. Essentially this is because you feel that [REDACTED].

You clearly stated that it was your wish that [REDACTED] should start in the reception class a year later than normal. [REDACTED] confirmed that, based on their professional opinion, they also fully supported this arrangement because [REDACTED].

It was stated that the LA view is that schools should be able to ensure that provision meets the needs of all children and that where a school wishes to take a child outside their normal age group this would be due to evidence that:

- *the child shows a significant delay, and little progress, in their personal and emotional development, and social skills appropriate for a younger peer group;*
- *the child shows significant delay and little progress, in intellectual development/educational skills, to an extent that it is not reasonable to expect differentiation within their normal age group to be successful;*
- *the child's physical maturity is not likely, in the future, to make them developmentally different from their proposed peer group in such a way as to impact negatively on their self-esteem/self-awareness (including consideration of puberty).*

(See page [REDACTED] of 'Starting School: deferring or delaying admission' enclosed.)

As the **headteacher of [REDACTED]/representative of the admission authority of [REDACTED] school/an officer representing the Local Authority** I was able to talk to you about the implications of your child being educated outside their normal age group. This was essential so that you understood that there may be issues that arise at a later date related to the provision of education for your child. This included the following information:

- *Receiving schools on transition (i.e. into junior school, secondary school, or special provision) are free to review and reconsider the placement outside the normal age group, and the continuing placement of the pupil outside their normal age group cannot be guaranteed on transition into a new school,*

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*(although decision-makers must take the previous placement outside the normal age group into account).*

- *Pupils who have been educated a year behind their normal age group will 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** in that age group. 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.*
- *[Other information as relevant]*

In the case of [REDACTED] it was agreed that there is a need for **him/her** to start in the reception class a year later than normal for the following reasons:

- 
- 

Therefore **I/we am/are** happy to support that decision. All parties agreed that [REDACTED] progress would however be very carefully monitored so that if, in future, there was a significant change this arrangement may be reconsidered.

Full details about pupils being educated outside their normal age group are contained in the enclosed guidance document 'Starting school –deferring or delaying admission'.

I would be grateful if you could complete and return the attached form to indicate that you agree with and understand the content of this letter.

If you need advice on what to do next in terms of your school place application, please contact the School Admissions Team on 0300 1234 101.

I do wish [REDACTED] the best as **she/he** continues **his/her** education.

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]

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## Reply form

I agree with and understand the content of the letter from [REDACTED] dated [REDACTED] describing the outcomes of our meeting on [REDACTED]. I am happy with the decision that was reached by all parties that my **son/daughter** [REDACTED] should be educated out of **his/her** normal age group for the time being and understand that this will be subject to review.

**Signed:** [REDACTED]

**Name:** [REDACTED]

**Date:** [REDACTED]

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## b) Refusal of a placement a year behind

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Dear [REDACTED]

**Request for [REDACTED], D.O.B [REDACTED] to be admitted a year late into the reception year, in [REDACTED]**

Thank you very much for meeting with us on [REDACTED]. It was very helpful to meet with you and also with [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] who were representing [REDACTED]. I really appreciate all of the information that you gave to us and I understand that you are still of the view that [REDACTED] should start in the reception class a year later than normal in [REDACTED], outside **his/her** normal age group. Essentially this is because you feel that [REDACTED].

It was stated that the LA view is that schools should be able to ensure that provision meets the needs of all children and that where a school wishes to take a child outside their normal age group this would be due to evidence that:

- *the child shows a significant delay, and little progress, in their personal and emotional development, and social skills appropriate for a younger peer group;*
- *the child shows significant delay and little progress, in intellectual development/educational skills, to an extent that it is not reasonable to expect differentiation within their normal age group to be successful;*
- *the child's physical maturity does not and is unlikely, in the future, to make them developmentally different from their proposed peer group in such a way as to impact negatively on their self-esteem/self-awareness (including consideration of puberty).*

As the **headteacher of [REDACTED]/representative of the admission authority of [REDACTED] school/an officer representing the Local Authority** I was able to talk to you about the implications of children being educated outside their normal age group.

In the case of [REDACTED] it was agreed that there is not enough evidence to support the need for **him/her** to be admitted a year late into the reception year for the following reasons:

- 
- 
- 

If you need advice on what to do next in terms of your school place application, please contact the School Admissions Team on 0300 1234 101.

I do wish [REDACTED] the best as **she/he** continues **his/her** education.

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]

Prepared by:

**Sarah Lewis**

School Organisation Manager

Access and Infrastructure Team

May 2015

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If you would like this information  
in another format please contact:

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County Hall  
Treyew Road  
Truro TR1 3AY**

Telephone: **0300 1234 100**

Email: **[enquiries@cornwall.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@cornwall.gov.uk)**

**[www.cornwall.gov.uk](http://www.cornwall.gov.uk)**