



Starting school:

- **part-time entry**
- **deferred entry**
- **delayed entry for summer-born children**

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

September 2020



Introduction

The vast majority of children start school full-time in the September following their fourth birthday. However, in a small number of cases parents¹ believe that starting part-time or starting later in the school year would be more appropriate for their child. In these circumstances there are a number of options to consider and sources of support and information.

Information about when children need to start school is set out on the next page. When making this 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.

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 a range of people who know the child and the arrangements that are made in schools:

- 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 Cornwall Council if necessary.

Telephone: 0800 587 8191

Email: fis@cornwall.gov.uk

- the **School Admissions Team**

Telephone: 0800 1234 101

Email: schooladmissions@cornwall.gov.uk

- the **Statutory SEN Service**, if the child has an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan

Telephone: 01872 324242

Email: statutorySEN@cornwall.gov.uk

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 September BUT the offer of a school place will be withdrawn and they will need to reapply for a place in year one.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

Children with an Education, Health and Care Plan

Where a child has an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan any decision relating to an education placement for children of Compulsory School Age rests with Cornwall Council and must be confirmed in the Plan. If the child has a Plan or is undergoing an EHC needs assessment, early contact must be made with the Statutory SEN Service (01872 324242) statutorySEN@cornwall.gov.uk.

What are the options?

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

1. **choose 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. **choose to defer** their child's entry for a term or two terms (i.e. until they are of compulsory school age) so that they do not 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. **choose 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 school 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 when there is an agreement with a child's parent/s to hold 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 do parents do when they 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 (unless your family is eligible for 30 hours entitlement).
- 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 this only applies to journeys at the beginning and end of the school day (visit www.cornwall.gov.uk/schooltransport or contact the Transport Coordination Service on 0300 1234 222 for information).
- Children attending part-time would not be entitled to Universal Infant Free School Meals.

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.

What should parents consider when thinking about deferred entry?

- If parents defer entry, they will still be entitled to take up the 15 hours free early learning entitlement with an early years provider (or 30 hours if your family is eligible for this entitlement). 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 and search for 'EYFS' for more information.
- 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 do parents 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. However, if your child has an EHC Plan you should contact the Statutory SEN Service (01872 324242), statutorySEN@cornwall.gov.uk.

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 or the Statutory SEN Service (for children with an EHC Plan) 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** and is covered next in this document.

About delayed entry for summer-born children (starting a year late in reception)

Department for Education guidance 'Advice on the admission of summer born children' 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.

However, parental requests for summer born children to be admitted to reception rather than year one at the age of five are different from any other parental request for admission out of the normal age group, as it is only in these circumstances that the child is being admitted to school for the first time.'

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.

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.

Important considerations

- If a child has an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan the possibility of delayed entry must be discussed with the Statutory SEN Service. If agreed, the arrangements will be confirmed in the wording of the child's EHC Plan.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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).
- One admission authority cannot be required to honour a decision made by another admission authority on admission outside the normal age group, therefore if a child changes school there is no guarantee that the receiving school will accept the placement outside the normal age group.
- Pupils who have been educated a year behind their normal age group may, when they are older, become eligible to **leave school** before completing examination courses and may choose to do so.
- 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. Therefore, it is a good idea for parents to speak to more than one school to see if they would accept delayed entry for their child, in case they are not eligible for a place at their preferred school.
- Once a child has been admitted to a school **it is for the headteacher to decide** how best to educate them. In some cases it may be appropriate for a child who has been admitted out of their normal age group to be moved to their normal age group, but in others it will

not. Any decision to move a child to a different age group should be based on sound educational reasons and made by the headteacher in consultation with the parents.

- Local authorities have a statutory duty to provide free home to school transport for **eligible** children of compulsory school age. If a child has been educated out of their normal age group and they are eligible for free home to school transport, they will stop being eligible before they leave secondary school. Local authorities can continue to provide free transport at this point but they have no duty to do so.

About repeating the reception year

If a child will complete their reception year and a request is made to repeat the year, consideration should be given to the fact that the Published Admission Number (the number that the school must admit up to for the new intake) must be honoured and does not include children already on roll. Therefore any person making the decision would need to ensure that the decision to agree for a child to repeat the year did not lead to breaching infant class size legislation. However, if the child has been withdrawn from the reception year, the parent would need to reapply for a place. If the child is summer-born, this document should be followed. If the child is not summer-born, the guidance 'Admission of pupils outside their normal age group' must be followed (available at www.cornwall.gov.uk/admissions).

Frequently asked questions

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.

Will my child still be entitled to Early Years funding if they do not leave their nursery/Early Years provider until a year later than normal?

All children are entitled to funded early years education from the term following their third birthday until they reach compulsory school age. If you have not taken up a school place, your child will still be entitled to the early years funding until they reach compulsory school age.

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.

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.

Making a request

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 Cornwall Council is the admission authority, is to contact the School Admissions Team in the first instance. The process for all other schools (academies, foundation, trust, voluntary-aided and free schools) must be set out in their admission arrangements but would usually involve contacting the school's headteacher in the first instance.

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

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 Cornwall 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, if a child has an **Education, Health and Care Plan** the decision rests with Cornwall Council and must be confirmed in the EHC Plan.

Admission authorities are required to make a decision based on the circumstances of each case. Recommended steps are provided later in this document.

The Admissions Code 2014 makes it clear that 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 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 the School Admissions Team.

The DfE guidance states:

'The parents of summer born children must be able to make a decision about whether their child is ready to go to school before compulsory school age confident that, if they decide not to send them to school until age five, the decision about the year group they should be admitted to at that point will be made in the child's best interests.'

This will require the admission authority to take account of the child's individual needs and abilities and to consider whether these can best be met in reception or year one. It will also involve taking account of the potential impact on the child of being admitted to year one without first having completed the reception year. The views of the headteacher will be an important part of this consideration.'

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.

Recommended steps for admission authorities

Please note:

- The admission authority for community and voluntary-controlled schools is Cornwall Council and whilst the final decision will rest with Cornwall Council, the following steps must still be followed by the school as the school's view will be crucial in making the final decision.
- Any request for a child with an Education, Health and Care Plan must be referred to the Statutory SEN Service.

When a request for delayed entry has been received (for a child without an Education, Health and Care Plan):

1. If the parent has not been in touch with the School Admissions Team, alert them to the request and seek advice if necessary.
2. Refer to the following guidance:

Department for Education guidance: Advice on the admission of summer born children available at <https://www.gov.uk/>

LGSCO guidance: <https://www.lgo.org.uk/information-centre/news/2018/dec/guidance-for-councils-on-admitting-summer-born-children-to-school>

School Admissions Code 2014: <https://www.gov.uk/>
3. Review the request and if you feel it is necessary arrange a meeting between the school, parent/s, relevant professionals and Cornwall Council's Early Years adviser as appropriate.
4. Satisfy yourselves that any implications have been fully discussed with or communicated to the parent/s and understood.
5. Keep a written record of any meetings or communications and decision-making processes.
6. When reviewing the request, consider the potential impact on the child of being admitted to year one without first having completed the reception year.
7. Notify the parent of your decision in writing.
8. Notify the School Admissions Team of the decision.

Steps for parents

1. Apply for a place in the normal age group anyway (by 15 January) – 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.
2. Refer to the following guidance:

Department for Education guidance: Advice on the admission of summer born children available at <https://www.gov.uk/>

Foundation Years website:
<https://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 <https://foundationyears.org.uk/what-to-expect-when/>

3. Contact the School Admissions Team to let them know that you are considering delayed entry (schooladmissions@cornwall.gov.uk) and to ask any questions you may have.
4. Speak to your preferred school/s about the possibility of delayed entry. It is 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:

5. Send the written confirmation from the school that delayed entry is accepted to the School Admissions Team (schooladmissions@cornwall.gov.uk).
6. 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 agreed to delayed entry and provide written evidence of this.
7. 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 (www.cornwall.gov.uk/admissions). 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:

8. 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' (www.cornwall.gov.uk/changingschools).

Appeals/complaints

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. 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.

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 Cornwall Council's complaints procedure, because Cornwall Council is the admission authority. Parents should set out their complaint in writing to the Service Director, Education, including all paperwork relating to the decision and the nature of the complaint.

Where the decision of Cornwall Council, in the case of a child with an **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 Plan 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 Statutory SEN Service.

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 and Social Care Ombudsman in the case of complaints to Cornwall Council and the Education and Skills Funding Agency in the case of complaints to schools.

About not taking up a school place when a child reaches compulsory school age

Reference to delayed entry to school for summer-born children in this document means the parents decision to delay their summer-born child's entry into a reception class until they reach compulsory school age i.e. when they must legally be receiving a 'suitable education'.

In some cases parents decide not to send their child to school when they are legally entitled to a place (the term after their fourth birthday) or when they reach compulsory school age.

Considerations:

- If a parent chooses not to send their child to school when they reach compulsory school age they are taking responsibility for providing education otherwise than at school.

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that parents have a duty to secure education of children of compulsory school age.

"The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable:

(a) to his age, ability and aptitude, and

(b) to any special educational needs he may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise."

- All children are entitled to funded early years education from the term following their third birthday until they reach compulsory school age. Parents cannot claim the universal 15 hours free childcare or the 30 hours free childcare once their child has reached compulsory school age (the term following their fifth birthday).
- If a child has an Education, Health and Care Plan Cornwall Council must be satisfied that the provision is suitable and any changes to provision must be agreed through the Review process and recorded in the EHC Plan.
- If a parent keeps their child out of school beyond Compulsory School Age and then wishes them to start school at a later date, outside the normal age group, consideration would only be given to admission no more than one year outside the normal age group.

Contacts

School Admissions Team

Telephone: 0300 1234 101
Email: schooladmissions@cornwall.gov.uk
Website: www.cornwall.gov.uk/admissions

School Effectiveness Cornwall (SEC)

Telephone: 0300 1234 100
Email: schooleffectiveness@cornwall.gov.uk

Statutory SEN Service

Tel: 01872 324242
Email: statutorySEN@cornwall.gov.uk

Family Information Service

Telephone: 0800 587 8191
Email: fis@cornwall.gov.uk
Website: www.cornwallfisdirectory.org.uk

Prepared by:

Pupil Placement Manager

Together for Families

September 2020

Starting school – deferring or delaying admission – guidance
September 2020

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

**Cornwall Council, County Hall
Treyew Road, Truro TR1 3AY**

Email: equality@cornwall.gov.uk

Telephone: **0300 1234 100**

www.cornwall.gov.uk