

Accelerated Admission Early Transfer to Secondary School

This information sheet offers advice and guidance to parents who are considering making a request for their child to transfer to secondary school a year ahead of that indicated by their child's date of birth and sets out the Cambridgeshire's policy and procedure for responding to such a request.

In general, the policy of Cambridgeshire County Council (the Local Authority) is not to accelerate pupils from primary to secondary phase. However, in accordance with the *Schools Admissions Code* all requests will be considered on the basis of the circumstances of each case and in the best interests of the child.

Who is acceleration for?

The Local Authority (LA) firmly believes that only exceptionally gifted children should be admitted to a higher year group. It is only such children who have the potential to thrive socially and educationally throughout the rest of their full-time education.

The majority of children, including those that are deemed gifted or talented and those born early in a school year (1st September to 31st August), are best placed within the year group indicated by their date of birth. Acceleration should only be considered when both parents and professionals agree that the needs of the child cannot be met within his or her year group.

Educational attainments alone would not be strong enough reason for transferring a child one year early. A child transferred early will remain an under age pupil throughout the whole of their secondary education and will need to demonstrate the qualities of character, stability, application and tenacity necessary to carry them through secondary school. Consideration must be given to the child's age, physical and emotional development, and social maturity as well as their academic ability.

Is my child exceptional?

The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) describes giftedness as 'a blend of intelligence, personal characteristics and interpersonal skills'. Identification of giftedness is not a simple matter, but the NAGC would ask you to consider whether your child:

- has a wide vocabulary and talked early;
- asks lots of questions and learns more quickly than others;
- has a very retentive memory;



- is extremely curious and can concentrate for long periods on subjects of interest;
- has a wide general knowledge and interest in the world;
- enjoys problem-solving, often missing out the intermediate stages in an argument and making original connections;
- has an unusual and vivid imagination;
- could read from an early age;
- shows strong feelings and opinions and has an odd sense of humour;
- sets high standards and is a perfectionist;
- loses interest when asked to do more of the same.

Would acceleration be right for my child?

Sometimes a child will be gifted in a particular area, but for acceleration to be the appropriate course of action, the child should be exceptional in most or all areas. The LA will require evidence of this to ensure that the right decision is made for the child.

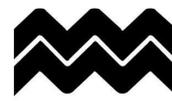
Both the parents and the LA must consider acceleration very carefully. The acceleration of pupils has always been contentious due to the fact that the potential advantages are very much balanced, and some would feel outweighed, by the disadvantages. Some of these advantages and disadvantages are given here.

The advantages of acceleration are that:

- exceptional pupils are given the opportunity to work with others of similar levels of attainment;
- pupils have access to more appropriate resources and materials to match their levels of attainment.

The disadvantages of acceleration are that:

- such a strategy is only appropriate for pupils who exhibit exceptional or very high ability in a wide range of academic subjects and are therefore able to cope with work in every subject given to an older year group;
- there may be problems over coverage of the National Curriculum if pupils, in effect, miss a year of primary schooling;
- the social development of such pupils often does not match their academic attainment or exceptional ability in other areas. Although able to cope with the challenges of the learning experiences they are given, many pupils find it difficult to interact socially with children a year, or more, older than themselves. Furthermore, on-going studies suggest that many accelerated pupils have found difficulty in dealing with what is such a public statement about their level of attainment. The decision to accelerate certain pupils



assumes a high expectation that they will continue to achieve at this rate and level in the higher year group;

- unless there is clear agreement about transfer from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3, pupils accelerated a year early into Y6 may have to wait a further year before being allowed to move to secondary school. Besides perhaps wasting a year academically, pupils in this situation will also lose contact with their peer groups and friends and are likely to have difficulty both in adapting to working with a new group of pupils in Year 6, and in transferring to the secondary school after a year's delay;
- at the end of secondary education the child will be too young to leave school along with his/her class group and there may be difficulties with entrance to, or funding for, a desired form of higher education.

Making an application for early transfer

Please bear in mind that very few children transfer early to secondary phase but, if you are thinking of making a request for accelerated transfer to secondary school, you should discuss this with your child's headteacher and any other professionals involved, as soon as possible. Then you will need to submit your formal request during the summer term when your child is chronologically Year 4 (and certainly no later than September of the academic year when your child is chronologically Year 5), in order that you are able to meet the end of October closing date for secondary applications, if accelerated transfer is agreed.

If you decide you wish formally to pursue a request for early transfer, you will need to provide as much information and detail as possible explaining why you think that accelerated transfer is the best course of action for your child. As a minimum you will need to provide:

- information regarding how your child is performing in the core subjects of the National Curriculum, English, Maths and Science (this will be available from your child's primary school);
- a covering letter explaining your reasons for your request ;
- your child's views on going to secondary school a year early;
- anything else which you feel is relevant.

The LA will, as required under the School Admissions Code, seek the views of the headteacher.

Your formal request for early transfer should be sent to:

The Admissions Team, Cambridgeshire County Council, Box OCT 1213, Shire Hall
Castle Hill, Cambridge CB3 0AP

Who will make the decision?

Applications for acceleration into a community or voluntary controlled school are considered by a LA officer panel, comprising at least three of the following: a senior educational psychologist, an adviser for the primary phase, an adviser for the secondary phase and a primary headteacher.

The LA, through its nominated officer panel, will look at all aspects of your child's case e.g. social/emotional maturity, as well as his/her educational progress. You can expect a decision, within a month (excluding school holidays) of submitting your request and supporting information.

In particular the panel will be looking for evidence that your child:

- is performing on a par with the highest attaining children in the older cohort, across the curriculum;
- is mature for his/her age, confident and well adjusted;
- will be able to maintain his/her social and academic position in the accelerated year group.

Applications for acceleration into a voluntary aided or foundation school or an Academy are usually considered by the school's governing body except where they have opted to use the LA's panel.

Further Information & Contacts

If you would like to discuss any of the issues surrounding accelerated transfer to secondary school, please contact the lead officer for accelerations (0-19 Places Planning & School Organisation Service) on 01223 699779.

A copy of the admissions booklet for parents, *Next Steps*, can be requested from the Admissions Team on 0345 045 1370 or is available on line at www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/admissions

National Association for Able Children in Education

NACE National Office, P.O. Box 242, Arnolds Way, Oxford, OX2 9F, Tel: 01865 861879, www.nace.co.uk

The National Association for Gifted Children.

Suite 14, Challenge House, Sherwood Drive, Bletchley, Milton Keynes, MK3 6DP, Tel: 0845 450 0221, www.nagc.org

Advisory Centre for Education (ACE)

1c Aberdeen Studios, 22 Highbury Grove, London N5 2DQ
020 7704 3370

www.ace-ed.org.uk

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