

Deferred Admission to School Late entry to Reception

This information sheet offers advice and guidance to parents who are considering making a request to delay their child's entry to school so that they enter a year behind that indicated by the child's date of birth. It sets out Cambridgeshire's policy and procedure for responding to such a request.

In general the policy of Cambridgeshire County Council is not to delay the entry of pupils into Reception. 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 taking account of his/her educational and social development. Decisions will be based on a judgement of what is best for the child both now and in the long-term. Possible immediate gains need to be weighed against a range of difficulties including those related to school leaving age and loss of peer group.

If your child has a statement of special educational needs or Education, Health & Care Plan (EHCP) the appropriateness of whether or not to delay his/her entry to school will be considered through the formal Review process, in conjunction with the Statutory Assessment and Resources Team (START). You should contact your Special Needs Officer on 01480 372600 or e-mail Statutory.Assessment&ResourcesTeam@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Is my child ready for school?

All children find starting school demanding and very tiring, particularly those whose 5th birthday falls later in the school year. If you do not think your child is ready for full-time school attendance in September of the school year in which his/her 5th birthday falls, you may discuss with your child's school the possibility of an individually designed induction timetable, which might include an extension of part-time attendance or a delay in taking up the place until later in the same academic year. This is often a beneficial compromise and a much more practical alternative to deferring admission to Reception by a whole year. However, the Local Authority (LA) recognises that even with this level of flexibility some children are not ready to attend school.

Issues to consider

Even if their birth date falls within the last few months of the school year, pupils with significantly delayed attainment and development should not automatically be considered for deferred entry to school, as their needs can normally be met through differentiation and appropriate levels of support and/or through LA provision where appropriate. Please bear in mind that very few children are admitted late to Reception.

Deferred entry should only be considered when both the parents and the professionals involved are of the opinion that the needs of the child cannot be best

met within his or her age group even with appropriate levels of differentiation and support.

The key test questions are these:

Do all professionals involved and the child's parents think that in a lower year group the child:

- would be more closely matched in terms of physical and emotional maturity to the other children; and
- would make significant progress; and
- would be able to maintain a better position academically within the class and;
- would cope with curricular demands with no, or much less, differentiation and support?

If the answer to the above questions is clearly 'yes' then deferral could be valuable and would be considered.

However, if it appears that the answer is 'no' or there is doubt, or that the child may have longer term special educational needs, then it would normally be more appropriate for the child to enter a Reception class with his/her peer group with the appropriate levels of support.

Delaying entry into Reception will usually involve an extra year at nursery or other pre-school setting which may often not be full-time, whereas the child may need more co-ordinated educational input plus the opportunity to play. The Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum in a Reception class is able to provide this.

Making an application for deferred entry to Reception for children born between 1 September and 31 March

If you are thinking of making a request for deferred entry to Reception you should discuss this with your child's pre-school provider, future headteacher and any other professionals involved, as soon as possible and submit your formal request by January, at the latest, in the academic year when your child has his/her 4th birthday.

If you decide you wish formally to pursue a request for deferred entry you will need to provide as much information and detail as possible explaining why you think that deferred admission 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 7 areas of learning and development in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- if applicable, details of any interventions/additional support your child receives in the pre-school setting
- if applicable, a copy of your child's two most recent Individual Education Plans (IEPs)
- a covering letter explaining your reasons for your request

- if applicable, reports from other agencies e.g. medical professionals, the specialist teaching service, Educational Psychologist, who may be supporting or working with your child
- anything else which you feel is relevant

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

Requesting deferred entry for a summer born child

If your child's birthday falls between 1 April and 31 August the LA's approach to considering requests for deferred entry is slightly different.

All of the above still apply but the LA's operates a permissive approach when considering requests for summer born children to enter **Reception** in the September after their 5th birthday. There is a presumption to agree to such requests provided:

- there is evidence **specific to the child** (i.e. not just reference to academic research) to support the request
- the headteacher of the receiving school has no concerns
- the request is driven by the best interests of the child and not because, for example, the parents have failed to secure a place in their preferred primary school or because it would be more convenient for the parents if the child delays his/her entry into Reception

Where the above criteria are not met or the co-ordinating officer has concerns, the request will be referred to the panel in the usual way for more detailed consideration.

Your formal request for deferred entry should be sent to:
The Admissions Team, Box OCT1213, Shire Hall, Castle Hill, Cambridge CB3 0AP

Who will make the decision?

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 working month of submitting your request and supporting information. If your request is unsuccessful and you do not present your child in school in Reception during the school year after their 4th birthday, s/he will enter Year 1 in the September after his/her 5th birthday.

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

Applications for deferred entry 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.

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.

Further information and contacts

If you would like to discuss any of the issues surrounding deferred admission to Reception please contact the lead officer for deferrals (0-19 Places Planning & School Organisation Service) on 01223 699779.

If, during the school year in which your child's 4th birthday falls, you are considering requesting deferred entry, please note the LA's advice is that parents should still complete a primary application form before the January deadline. If your request for deferred entry is agreed you can always withdraw your application or decline a Reception place that has been offered.

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

Advisory Centre for Education (ACE)
1c Aberdeen Studios, 22 Highbury Grove, London N5 2DQ
020 7704 3370
www.ace-ed.org.uk

October 2017