

Guidance to Parents: Delayed Admission to Reception for Summer-born Children

Children born between 1 September and 31 March, have a legal right to **defer admission** to Reception to the start of the term after the 5th birthday (that's January or Easter).

Summer-born children (born from 1 April to 31 August) can also defer until January or Easter or to the next September with a fresh application for Year 1 or for **delayed admission** to Reception.

We have issued this **guidance to parents** following an open letter to parents, schools and local authorities from Nick Gibb, Schools' Minister on 8 September 2015, giving a commitment from the Government that the School Admissions Code will be amended:

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

Admissions authorities are encouraged to agree to requests with immediate effect, ahead of any amendment of the Code.

What is the legal position now?

All parents can defer admission until the start of term after the fifth birthday. Deferral during the Reception year is a parental right, arranged after a place is offered. The place must be held open if you inform the school. Places cannot be held open past Easter. You lose your place and must reapply - in-year for Year 1 which may already be full and have no capacity to admit your child. If your child is summer-born, you can ask for delayed admission to Reception in the next September. The decision rests with the admission authority for the school.

There are two stages to delayed admission: (1) request approval for delayed admission by writing to Admissions ideally by March, at least before the end of the June before your child could join Reception and (2) formally apply for admission in the next academic year.

Agreements and refusals for delayed admission are both lawful responses to parents. Refusals must be reasoned and on individual circumstances.

What's the position now?

Although the law hasn't changed, Devon has decided that it will agree all requests for delayed admission to community and voluntary controlled schools. We will agree to delayed admission but you will still need to apply in the next intake to Reception - applications will be considered as if your child were of the "correct" age for the next intake. You will be able to nominate schools in the same way as other parents.

Might it change?

If the Government amends the Code, we expect that admission arrangements will have to be amended to make the new position clear. We'll consult on this basis and encourage OAA to do the same for the 2017-18 academic year.

If the law does not change we will review the position and the latest Government advice.

What about other admission authorities (OAA)?

We are encouraging academies and free, voluntary aided and foundation schools to have the same approach. But decisions remain with OAA and they may still refuse to offer a place in that next year's Reception. You should discuss your wishes with any schools you are interested in for your child. An admission authority makes decisions about admissions for a school.

Why might delayed admission NOT be in your child's best interests?

You'll have your reasons why you are thinking about delayed admission. We assume children will be in the Year Group that is "correct" for their date of birth unless you say otherwise. There are reasons why schools might feel it's either not necessary or would have negative consequences: children mature at different rates at different times and it can be challenging for a child to move back up a Year Group; the curriculum for 4 year olds is the same in nursery as it is in Reception; schools are very experienced in meeting the needs of younger children; children can be upset if they feel they have been held back from moving up with their friends; funding arrangements will need to be changed at the end of Further Education; children can make their own decisions to leave school at 16 even if they are a Year behind and haven't done Year 11.

We would like your decision on whether to seek delayed admission to be an informed decision. Please talk to the School Admissions Service, to your child's pre-school, GP if you have any medical concerns and, most importantly, the schools you have an interest in. You may feel that your child isn't ready for school. Other options include deferring for part of the year or taking up a part time place. Children develop at different speeds at different times and some parents have found that delayed admission solves a short-term issue but causes long-term problems.