

Admission of summer born children

In December 2014 the Department for Education (DfE) published new guidance regarding the admission of summer born children (those born between 1 April and 31 August). In response to this guidance and the new statutory requirements in the revised School Admissions Code, Wakefield Council updated its admissions policy to address the options available to parents who may wish for their child to be educated 'outside of their normal age group'. A copy of the Council's admissions policy for community and voluntary controlled schools can be found on the Council's website under School Admissions.

Whilst the Schools Minister announced government plans to amend the School Admissions Code so that summer-born children can begin school after their fifth birthday and be placed into a reception class a year later than their normal age group a full public consultation is still to be carried out and any reforms will have to be approved by Parliament.

Wakefield Council's school admissions policy already allows for parents to request a school place outside of their child's normal age group and will therefore not be making any change to our current guidance and procedures until the Admissions Code has been revised.

This information note is designed to explain the options available to parents for their child's starting school arrangements and to answer the frequently asked questions.

When will my child reach statutory school age?

Children must be receiving full-time education by the start of the term following their fifth birthday.

- For children born between 1 September and 31 December, they reach compulsory school age on 31 December and must be receiving full-time education at the start of the Spring term (i.e. after the Christmas holidays, in January).
- For children born between 1 January and 31 March, they reach compulsory school age on 31 March and must be receiving full-time education by the start of the Summer term (i.e. after the Easter holidays, in March or April)
- For children born between 1 April and 31 August, they reach compulsory school age on 31 August and must be receiving full-time education at the start of the new school year in Year 1 (i.e. after the summer holidays, in September).

What options do I have available?

Whilst the Admissions Code gives flexibility to parents of 'summer born' children to request that their child defers entry into the Reception Year group where they do not feel they are ready to start full time school, the Code does not give parents the right to insist that their child is admitted outside of their normal age group. Parents can decide to wait until their child reaches compulsory school age before they start school. That is their decision to make and not one the admission authority can overrule. Parents should be able to make this decision knowing which school year (Reception or Year One) the admission authority considers it would be in the child's best interest to start, should they decide not to send their child to school until the September following their fifth birthday.

In Wakefield we provide for the admission of all children in the September following their fourth birthday.

Parents of non-compulsory school age children (four year olds) may request a pattern of part-time attendance or deferment if that best suits the needs of their child. Parents will be offered the opportunity for their child to:

- start Year R in September on a full-time basis from their first day of attendance or on a part-time basis up to the point of reaching compulsory school age;
- 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 summer term of the school year for which the offer of the school place was made. Parents cannot defer entry to a school to the next academic year or beyond the beginning of the term following the child's fifth birthday.
- For summer born children (those born between 1 April and 31 August) parents can also request that their child's entry to school is delayed until they reach compulsory school age and be admitted to Year R rather than Year 1 with their chronological peers. This means that a summer born child would not start school at all during the academic year after their fourth birthday. Details on the process for seeking approval to delay entry to school for a summer born child are provide below.

How do I arrange my summer born child's delayed entry to school?

Before deciding to delay your child's entry to school, you should first contact the school(s) you are interested in applying for. They will be able to explain the provision on offer to children in Year R, how it is tailored to meet the needs of all children and how those needs will continue to be met as the children move up through the school. They may also be able to allay any concerns that you may have about your child's readiness for school.

If you still wish to delay your child's admission to school, you **must** seek approval from the Local Authority. Parents **must** make an application for their child's normal age group at the usual time however a separate request **must** also be made in writing at the same time for admission out of the normal age group.

Each child's circumstances will be considered on a case-by-case basis and a decision will be made by the Local Authority (who may also be acting on behalf of other admission authorities) based on the individual circumstances and in the best interest of the child. The Local Authority is required to seek the views of the Headteacher of the school concerned. You will receive a response in writing to your request before the primary national offer date setting out clearly the reasons for the decision.

If your request to delay entry is approved, you can simply withdraw your application for the normal age group. You will then need to make a new application as part of the main admission round for the following year.

If your request to delay entry is refused, there is no right of appeal as your child will be offered a place in their chronological year group.

What information will you use to consider my request?

It is reasonable for the Local Authority to expect parents to provide us with information in support of your request – since without it we are unlikely to be able to make a decision on the basis of the circumstances of the case. This should demonstrate why it would be in your child's best interest to

delay entry to school and then be admitted to Year R rather than Year 1. Admission authorities must make a decision on the basis of circumstances of each case and in the best interest 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 and whether they may naturally have fallen into a lower age group if it were not for being born prematurely. It is important for parents to remember – you know your child not us so providing as much information about your child will help the Local Authority consider your request.

The Local Authority must also take into account the views of the Headteacher of the school concerned. If you have not discussed your request with the Headteacher of your preferred school(s) it is difficult for them to consider your child's individual needs.

Do I need to provide medical evidence or reports from an educational psychologist?

If you have professional evidence that you feel would be appropriate to submit (for example if a child receives support from a speech and language therapist) then you could submit it however the Local Authority does not expect parents to obtain professional evidence that you do not already have. The Local Authority will still consider requests that are not accompanied by professional evidence.

Will all schools agree to my child delaying entry to school?

Not necessarily. One admission authority cannot be required to honour a decision made by another admission authority.

Am I guaranteed a place?

Any agreement to delay your child's admission to Year R does not guarantee a place at the preferred school, nor does it provide any additional priority for a place. Your application to the school will be considered alongside all other applications in accordance with the Local Authority's/school's admissions criteria.

We can however, guarantee that your child will be given a school place. If we cannot offer any of your preferred schools, you will be allocated a Year 1 place at the nearest school to your home address with a place available. You will have the right of appeal if we cannot offer your child a place in their normal age group at any of your preferred schools.

Can I appeal?

Parents who are refused a place at a school for which they have applied have the right of appeal to an independent 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 the 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 either using the Local Authority's complaints procedure (for community and voluntary controlled schools) or the school's complaints procedures (for academies, voluntary aided, foundation or trust schools).

What happens when my summer born child transfers to the next level of schooling (either to junior school or secondary school) if they have been educated outside of their normal age group?

Ideally, your child will remain with the cohort they have been taught with, but this is not guaranteed; at each point of transfer, your request for delayed entry will be reassessed. Therefore, when your child's natural cohort are applying to transfer to junior or secondary school, you will need to speak to the Local Authority who will in turn speak to the your preferred school(s) to obtain their agreement to continue to

educating your children outside of their normal age group. If agreed, you would then apply the following academic year (when the other children in your child's class are applying to transfer).

If my summer born child has been educated outside of their normal age group will it impact on when my child can leave school?

If your child has been educated outside of their normal age group, he/she will no longer be of compulsory school age during Year 11 of secondary school and will therefore be able to leave school before completing examinations.

I'm still not clear, who can I speak to?

Please contact the School Admissions Team on 01924 306052 or by email at admissions@wakefield.gov.uk