



Starting School in Hampshire

**A guide for parents/carers and practitioners
to help ensure the best possible start to school
for Hampshire's children**

Hampshire schools have developed tried and tested induction arrangements for children starting school. We hope this 'Starting School' guide will support conversations between parents, schools and early years settings as plans are made for children starting school for the first time in September, in keeping with new legislation



Hampshire
County Council

www.hants.gov.uk

The legal framework

All children are entitled to start school in the September after their fourth birthday.

By law, children have to be receiving full-time education by the start of the term following their fifth birthday, when they reach compulsory school age.

- Children born between 1 September and 31 December 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).
- Children born between 1 January and 31 March 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)
- Children born between 1 April and 31 August reach compulsory school age on 31 August and must be receiving full-time education at the start of the new school year (i.e. after the summer holidays, in September).

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 make decisions based upon the needs of their child, in consultation with the school and any pre-school settings involved.

Parents of 'summer born' children (those born between 1 April and 31 August) only, who do not feel they are ready to begin school before they reach compulsory school age may request approval for their child to start school in Year R a year after the point at which they could first have been admitted.

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 (01 April to 31 August) 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.

**Advice on the admission of summer born children
(Department for Education, December 2014)**

Overall parents will be offered:

- **at least 38 weeks of attendance in Year R** (see page 4)
- **the opportunity for their child to start Year R on a full-time basis from their first day of attendance (The Full-time Offer - see page 5)**
- **the opportunity to negotiate a part-time pattern of attendance if that best suits the needs of their child (Part-time Attendance - see page 6)**
- **the opportunity to defer their child's entry until later in the school year if that best suits the needs of their child (Deferment - see page 7)**
- **the opportunity (for parents of summer born children) to delay their child's entry to school until they reach compulsory school age and be admitted to Year R, where they have demonstrated to the Admission Authority that it would be in the best interests of their child (Decelerated Admission – see page 8)**

'The preferred pattern of entry to reception classes should be the September immediately following a child's fourth birthday. However, this should be subject to well informed discussion with parents, taking into account their views of a child's maturity and readiness to enter reception class. Arrangements should be such as to make entry to reception class an exciting and enjoyable experience for all children, with opportunities for flexible arrangements such as a period of part-time attendance if judged appropriate.'

Independent Review of Primary Curriculum recommendation 14 (i) points of entry into reception class, DfE 2009.

The offer of at least 38 weeks of attendance in Year R

Statutory requirements now ensure that all parents have the offer of at least 38 weeks of attendance for their child in Year R. This does not mean that schools have to offer a full-time place from the first day of the autumn term. For example, to allow children access to 38 weeks in Year R in September 2015 all children have to be able to start on 7 September (not 1 September, the first day of the autumn term).

Many schools use the first week of the autumn term before the Year R children start to support an effective transition into school. For example, teachers from the Reception class may offer home visits as a way to get to know their new Year R children and families, or they may provide induction sessions for small groups of children.

The Full-time Offer

Schools will advise the date on which children will begin attending. All children have the opportunity to start school on a full-time basis from their first day of attendance unless their parents request a part-time pattern of attendance. All schools will be striving to ensure that each child gets the best possible experience when starting in their Reception classes. Any decisions to deviate from the normal pattern of entry will need to focus on the interests of the child.

Some children may be starting school on a full-time basis very soon after their fourth birthday. Schools are very aware of the needs of these very young children and are committed to ensuring that their Year R provision meets these needs. In Year R classes, children continue to access the statutory *Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum* which is on offer in pre-school provision. This flexible and responsive play based provision ensures that children's individual needs can be met. Children have places to explore and be active as well as places to rest and be quiet. Whole school gatherings can be overwhelming for very young children, particularly in large schools, so schools often choose to keep their Year R children within the Year R area for lunchtimes, playtimes etc. whilst they settle.

Part-time Attendance

Parents may prefer their child to attend on a part-time basis until they reach compulsory school age. Any part-time arrangement must fit reasonably with the organisation at the school and so parents must discuss this with the school as soon as possible before the start of the school year, as described below.

Schools are committed to meeting the needs of individual children and their families to ensure a smooth transition into school for all. Starting school can be tiring for children and many children benefit from a phased entry to school, with a period of part-time attendance rather than attending on a full-time basis straight away. For some children a short period of part-time attendance will suffice whilst others may benefit from a longer period of part-time attendance. Liaison between parents, schools and pre-school settings will ensure that individual needs and requirements are identified and met.

Parents must discuss with their school their preference that their child attends part-time sessions. After talking with parent/s about their child's age, experience in early years settings, how ready their child is for school and the arrangements put in place by the school for the new intake, the headteacher will negotiate with parent/s the timetable for their child's entry to school.

Deferment

Where the admission authority has offered a child a place at a school, the child's parents can 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 final term of the school year for which the offer of the school place was made. The school must hold the place for that child and not offer it to another child.

In effect this means that deferred entry into Year R is allowed:-

- until after the Christmas break for all children starting in Year R;
- until after the Easter break, for children born between 01 January - 31 August.

Where entry into Year R is deferred, the child may attend pre-school provision subject to availability. The child remains entitled to a funded early education place of 15 hours a week for 38 weeks of the year until the term they are admitted to school.

Children born between 01 April - 31 August are not of compulsory school age until the beginning of Year 1 but parents wishing to defer their child's entry to school until the following September **cannot** hold a place offered for Year R; a new application for a place in Year 1 would be required (which may or may not be successful) or the parent may request a **decelerated admission** to Year R (see page 8).

Schools are well placed to accommodate children's individual needs from the beginning of their Reception year. Transition planning meetings and, where appropriate, transition plans for individual children effectively support this process and enable parents to meet with school and pre-school representatives to ensure their child's individual needs are met within their Year R class and beyond. Other agencies or professionals may also support this process where appropriate.

All discussions around deferment should include any early years setting/s that the child attends in order that the arrangements made are in the best interest of the child's needs.

It is important to note that deferred entry to Year R is likely to have some implications for a child and these should be discussed fully with the school.

Decelerated Admission

Parents of a summer born child only, may choose not to send their child to school until the September following their fifth birthday and may request that they are admitted out of their normal age group – to reception rather than Year 1.

There is no statutory barrier to children being admitted outside their normal age group, but parents do not have the right to insist that their child is admitted to a particular age group.

Parents should note that, whilst evidence shows that, statistically speaking, summer born children tend to perform less well in school tests, this does not mean that all children born in the summer term will struggle at school. Teachers are skilled at differentiating the curriculum to meet a diverse range of needs. Before deciding to delay their child's entry to school, we would recommend that parents visit the schools they are thinking of applying for. The teachers will be able to explain the provision on offer to children in the reception class, how it is tailored to meet the needs of the youngest pupils and how the needs of these pupils will continue to be met as they move up through the school. They may also be able to allay any concerns the parent may have about their child's readiness for school.

It is also important to note that, whether they attend a primary school or an early years setting during the academic year following their fourth birthday, children will receive the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum which is largely based around learning through play.

Where a parent requests their child is admitted out of their normal age group, the school's admission authority is responsible for making the decision on which year group a child should be admitted to. They are required to make a decision on the basis of the circumstances of the case and **in the best interests of the child** concerned.

In considering the request, the Admission authority of the school must take 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. They must also take into account the views of the head teacher of the school concerned.

Where a parent's request for decelerated admission is agreed, the local authority and admission authority are required to process the application as part of the main admissions round along with all other applications for the Year R intake. **Parents have no guarantee of securing a place at their preferred school.**

Parents considering this as an approach to their summer born child's starting school arrangements should speak to the County Admissions Team for advice. Information about making a request for decelerated admission is published on the School Admissions webpages: www.hants.gov.uk/ad-summerborn.

For further information contact:

**Hampshire County Council's
Services for Young Children**

Email: childcare@hants.gov.uk

SfYC helpline: 0300 555 5621

Web: www.hants.gov.uk/childrens-services/childcare

**Hampshire County Council's
School Admissions Team**

Email: admissions.team@hants.gov.uk

Tel: 0300 555 1377

Web: www.hants.gov.uk/ad-year-R

This information is available in alternative formats and can also be translated.

Please email requests to: childrens.services.communications@hants.gov.uk