

Part Time Attendance, Deferring and Delaying School Start

Multiple birth children tend to be born early and consequently have a low birth weight. Shared resources and difficulties at the time of birth can also affect them adversely. Language delay and delays in walking, development of gross and fine motor skills and toilet training are all features regularly encountered in multiple birth children. They can also suffer Attention Deficit Disorder and Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder. Over time they are likely to overcome many of these difficulties, but their early years are vitally important in this process.

Where children have had to deal with a combination of difficulties in their first three years it is important that full time education is considered carefully. It may well be appropriate to **defer** or **delay** starting school so that children have the extra time they need to master the full range of preschool skills and experiences.

Nothing can replace the vital years of preschool life, where foundations for learning are put in place. To start school too soon would be to burden the child with a range of expectations beyond their ability to achieve. By deferring or delaying school start the children have the opportunity to 'catch up' and can then progress confidently into their next stage of life.

NB Education is a devolved responsibility and the following applies to England only

Deferring School Start and Attending Part time

Multiple birth children are often behind other children terms of development and readiness for full time school. It can be enormously helpful if they are considered for a deferred place: starting school in January or even in the summer term, thus giving them the time they need to catch up with their peers in terms of foundation development. It is important that any deferment is underpinned by appropriate preschool provision. If this is impossible, then part time school attendance may be appropriate, until such time as the children can cope with and benefit from a full day in school.

Section 2.16 of the 2014 School Admissions Code allows for this:

b) 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 it was made; and

c) where the parents wish, children may attend part-time until later in the school year but not beyond the point at which they reach compulsory school age.

A child reaches compulsory school age on the prescribed day following his or her fifth birthday (or on his or her fifth birthday if it falls on a prescribed day). The prescribed days are 31 December, 31 March and 31 August.

A disadvantage of deferring and attending part time is that the child misses part of their Reception year.

Delaying rather than Deferring School Entry

Delaying school start would mean children commencing school in the year following their 'normal chronological age group' - for example a child born in the summer **could** start school in the year following their 4th birthday, but parents may choose to delay their start until the following September, when they reach CSA, at the start of the term following their 5th birthday. Parents may request they start in Reception rather than year 1 at this stage. Children born prematurely may well fall into a different school year from that into which they would have been in had they gone to term. This is particularly difficult for multiple birth children who, by reason of

their being part of a multiple birth, would in any case be likely to fall behind their peers in their early years.

Children who are summer born may well benefit from a delayed start, or '**admission out of normal age group**', where parents feel this would be in their best interests. This would give them the time they need to grow, develop and mature to the point of readiness for full time education. 'Summer born' is defined as born between 01 April to 31 August.

Section 2.17 of the 2014 School Admissions Code provides for delayed entry:

*2.17 Parents may seek a place for their child outside of their normal age group, for example, if the child is gifted and talented or has experienced problems such as ill health. In addition, the parents of a summer born child⁵⁰ may choose not to send that 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. Admission authorities **must** make clear in their admission arrangements the process for requesting admission out of the normal age group.*

*2.17A Admission authorities **must** make decisions on the basis of the circumstances of each case and in the best interests 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; whether they have previously been educated out of their normal age group; 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. When informing a parent of their decision on the year group the child should be admitted to, the admission authority **must** set out clearly the reasons for their decision.*

2.17B Where an admission authority agrees to a parent's request for their child to be admitted out of their normal age group and, as a consequence of that decision, the child will be admitted to a relevant age group (i.e. the age group to which pupils are normally admitted to the school) the local authority and admission authority must process the application as part of the main admissions round, unless the parental request is made too late for this to be possible, and on the basis of their determined admission arrangements only, including the application of oversubscription criteria where applicable. They must not give the application lower priority on the basis that the child is being admitted out of their normal age group. 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.

Where school start is delayed, it is not yet possible to insist that this delay is guaranteed throughout the children's education. Education out of normal age group must be requested each time a child moves from one school to another. However, admission authorities '*must make a decision on the basis of the circumstances of each case and in the child's best interests, and will need to bear in mind the age group the child has been educated in up to that point.*' (DfE Advice on the admission of summer born children, page 9)

Where a parent chooses to defer or delay their child's entry to school, the child remains entitled to a funded early education place of 15 or 30 hours a week for 38 weeks of the year until they are admitted to school. The funding is guaranteed, but places may not always be available within the same preschool the children currently attend.

Schools Minister Nick Gibb has announced the DfE's intention to amend the 2014 School Admissions Code to give parents the automatic right to start their summer born children in Reception at CSA, and to guarantee that they will stay in their 'adopted cohort' throughout their education. However, currently parents must request a delay.