

Dorset Council

Guidance on the placement of a pupil outside their normal age group: 2022 to 2023

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this guidance is to provide schools and Admission Authorities (see Section 9) in Dorset with a framework within which to make decisions about whether or not a pupil should be educated in a group outside his or her normal age group.
- 1.2 While the final decision rests with the Admission Authority. The head teacher of the school or prospective school will be best placed to advise the Admission Authority on the appropriateness of the proposed course of action.
- 1.3 Parents and carers wishing to request that their child be placed outside his or her normal age group must do so through the head teacher of the pupil's actual or proposed school.
- 1.4 Placing a pupil outside his or her normal age group can have significant implications for the pupil as he or she moves through schools. This guidance aims to ensure that full consideration is given of both short and long term impact.
- 1.5 There is no requirement for schools to move those pupils who are currently outside their normal age group. It is suggested that in these circumstances the school should ensure that parents and carers are aware of the possible implications of the pupil remaining outside his or her normal age group. This relates in particular to phase transfers. Some of the possible implications are outlined in section 3 of this guidance document.

2. Principles

- 2.1 The principles behind educational inclusion stress the importance of all pupils being educated alongside their peers in their local communities. This national perspective is reflected in Dorset's Inclusion Vision. The emphasis is on schools meeting individual needs, including those of pupils with special educational needs, through personalised learning.
- 2.2 Expectations of good practice are based upon a child's entitlement to be educated alongside their age equivalent peers. The responsibility for addressing individual needs lies with the school through an appropriately differentiated curriculum. Personalised learning is at the heart of ensuring that the provision that is made meets the individual pupil's needs.
- 2.3 The needs of the child or young person need to be viewed holistically. The individual's social, emotional and physical development and well-being need to be considered alongside educational needs.



- 2.4 Where a child has special, additional or individual educational needs, then their educational programme should be enhanced with appropriate support. For pupils with SEN, this support will be outlined in the Individual Education Plan (IEP) or, where appropriate, in a Statement of Special Educational Needs.
- 2.5 The placement of a child or young person outside his or her normal age group is not an appropriate strategy for meeting special educational needs. Special educational needs are not a justification for placing a pupil outside his or her normal age group. Special schools will always register pupils in their correct year group, as they will then be placed within the most appropriate teaching group (which are mixed age as they are based on pupils needs rather than solely chronological age).
- 2.6 There are significant and long term issues for the pupil, the school and the local authority or academy trust that arise from a decision to place a pupil outside his or her normal age group. These are set out in Section 3 of this policy.
- 2.7 If a head teacher decides to recommend that a pupil be placed outside his or her normal age group, this should only be in truly exceptional circumstances and in full light of the possible implications for the pupil. Recommendations should be made in accordance with procedures published in this guidance, and with the full involvement of parents/carers and all relevant professionals involved with the pupil's education. Guidance on the decision making framework is set out in Section 4 of this policy.

3. Implications for pupils who are placed outside their normal age group

- 3.1 All recommendations and decisions should be made with the following factors in mind. It is particularly important that parents/carers are aware of possible implications for the remainder of the pupil's progress through the school system:
- If a head teacher recommends that a pupil is placed in a group below his or her chronological year, then a reduced set of general expectations is in place, and areas of strength are at risk of not receiving appropriate stimulation. If a pupil is placed above his or her chronological year then the converse can happen, although most requests are for delayed rather than accelerated movement.
 - Parents/carers should be made aware that a decision which has been recommended by one Head teacher may be sought to be overturned in another setting.
 - The implications are long term as, once the year/group change has been made, it is difficult to reverse as:
 - a) the pupil may miss out on a national curriculum year programme of work
 - b) the pupil may need to join an unfamiliar class group and will need to form new friendships and support networks
 - c) the consequences of making up a year can be negative for the pupil



The above is likely to put additional pressure on an already vulnerable pupil.

- If the pupil remains outside his or her normal age group, his or her physical, emotional and social needs may be unmet.
- At phase transfers, which could mean a change of school and new friendship groups, pupils will be older than the rest of their new peer group.
- National Curriculum Tests and GCSEs and other accredited courses are completed a year or more late, as assessment takes place at the same time as the rest of the year group in which the pupil has been placed and not in line with his or her chronological age.
- A pupil who is outside his or her normal age group, and reaches Year 10 may choose to leave school at the official school leaving date for their age group– which is always the last Friday in June at the end of the academic year in which he or she is 16, thereby not completing GCSEs or other accredited courses and thus damaging his or her prospects for future employment or further education placement.
- A pupil who does not remain in his or her cohort will experience fractured peer relationships; this is likely to be detrimental to well-being.
- A pupil who is moved to a lower age group may well receive negative messages which will impact adversely on his or her sense of acceptance, achievement and belonging.

4. The decision-making framework

4.1 The following general framework applies to all requests for placing a pupil outside his or her normal age group, regardless of specific circumstances.

- head teachers should set out why this course of action is being considered and his or her recommendation. This recommendation should be based on written advice from members of other professional groups who are involved in supporting the child.
- in no instance should movement be of more than a single National Curriculum year.
- schools should be able to evidence that **this is not a response to unmet need** and that
 - the pupil's educational, social and emotional well-being would be best met through placement outside his or her normal age group
 - there is full parental support and agreement
 - there is pupil support and agreement following explanation and counselling at a level the pupil is able to understand
 - there are clear objectives and time scales to the change, with plans in place to manage phase transfers and examinations if appropriate

- In all aspects schools are advised to ensure that parent/carers are fully involved in the decision to recommend this course of action, that they understand the long-term implications and that they have provided written agreement (See template agreement to place outside of the normal age group – BYIY 002 at the end of this document, please attach any other supporting documentation).
- The attached form should be completed and forwarded to the Dorset Admissions Team.
- Where the request has been made by a parent/carers but is not recommended by the head teacher, both parties may set out reasons to support their recommendation/ request and these will be considered by the In Year Fair Access Panel. (See Dorset School Admissions website for an application form).
- Completed recommendations/requests will be considered by the local authority's In Year Fair Access Panel which meets regularly during term time. It will make decisions on the basis of the circumstances of each case and will inform parents of their statutory right to appeal should they disagree with the panel's decision.
- Non-Dorset children / non-Dorset schools. Requests are dealt with and recommendations made by the admitting school, regardless of the child's home address. For a child with a statement of special educational needs, where another local authority is responsible for the statement, the school would need to consult with the SEN team of the local authority having responsibility for the statement.

5. Guidance on special circumstances

5.1 Medical needs

- 5.1.1 Some pupils may have significant absence from or intermittent attendance at school due to a medical condition or accident. During the absence from school pupils may have accessed differing amounts of education and as a result will be better or less well-prepared to re-engage with full-time education.
- 5.1.2 The age of the student is important. Absence from school which has affected preparation for GCSE courses of study may have greater significance on a student's future life chances than prolonged absence at other times.
- 5.1.3 Recommendations in respect of pupils who have missed extensive periods of time from education due to illness or accident should be made on an individual basis and in a multi professional forum.
- 5.1.4 Further information relating to pupils with medical needs may be found in Dorset's Access to Education for Children and Young people with Medical Needs.

5.2 Pupils learning English as an additional language, refugees and asylum seekers

- 5.2.1 If a pupil from overseas arrives with limited or no English into Year 11, it would be difficult for the school to make provision in respect of GCSE courses. Every chance to undertake those GCSEs

should be explored and consideration might be given to placing the pupil in Year 10 to maximise his or her opportunities (with agreement from the parents and the young person). Advice and support should be requested from specialist staff where appropriate.

5.2.2 A pupil arriving in any other year group from overseas with limited or no English would not normally be considered for placement outside his or her normal age group.

5.3 Twins or other multiple births

5.3.1 Where twins or other multiple birth siblings have birthdays on either side of midnight on 31 August, the siblings will have been born in different academic years. In anticipation that parents will want the children to be admitted to school together, when applying for admission to reception, a parent may specify that both twins (or all triplets, for example) be admitted to the same academic year. This will mean that one or more of the children is admitted out of his or her chronological cohort. The expectation will then be that the children will continue to be taught within that cohort as their school career progresses.

6. Pupils already out of their normal age group

6.1 Where pupils have been placed outside their normal age group and that decision is now not considered to be appropriate, the school should meet with the parents/carers and other professionals involved and determine the future course of action.

6.2 The school and the parents or carers should have a clear plan as to the future educational arrangements for the pupil. This should take into account how any potentially negative implications will be managed.

6.3 A move of school may provide a suitable opportunity for the pupils to be returned to their normal age group. (This will always happen if the placement is at a special school.)

7. Deferred entry to reception class

7.1 Every child must legally start their full-time education the term after their fifth birthday. However a September admission date is expected to be maintained for the majority of four year old children in Dorset. A parent having applied for a place in September, may wish to defer the entry until later in that academic 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 application was made. This action will not result in the pupil being placed outside his or her normal age group and is therefore outside the remit of this policy. With deferred entry the pupil is placed in the appropriate age group. For more information contact the school admissions team: 01305 221060.

7.2 Where parents/carers consider a deferred entry will be of benefit to the child, the parents/carers must contact their preferred school for further information and agree a date for entry to school for the child. The date of entry must not be beyond the start of the final term of the academic year

(Foundation year). If the parents/carers do not take up the place at the agreed time, the place will be considered vacant and offered to another applicant. This applies to all schools.

- 7.3 Parents/carers opting for deferred entry need to be aware of the possible implications. The child will miss part of the Foundation Stage curriculum and also the period of induction that the pupils starting in September will receive.

8. Delayed entry to reception class – summer born children

- 8.1 A family may decide to delay entry into school until after a child's fifth birthday, with the intention that the child remain within their chronological year group and then applies to go straight into Year 1 once they do attain compulsory school age. This is a **decision** for the parent alone.
- 8.2 Where a child is summer born and parents wish to consider the delay of their child starting school in the reception class until after their fifth birthday they will have to discuss this directly with the head teacher and/or the admission authority of the proposed school. These **requests** will be considered on a case by case basis and with reference to this guidance.
- 8.3 If a parent applies for a reception place to be taken up after the child's fourth birthday and is allocated a place in the normal transfer round and then subsequently wishes for their child to enter the school in reception after their fifth birthday – they will have to make a new application in the next application year and surrender their current place/application. Their application will be considered afresh and no guarantee will be given that they will get a place at the same school in the subsequent allocation as it will be subject to the relevant admissions code and the overall number of available places.
- 8.4 If a parent has deferred entry into reception and subsequently decides to re-apply for a reception place for the next academic year after the normal 4+ closing date, then a new application will have to be made and will be considered as a late application and a place cannot be guaranteed at the preferred school. The application will be subject to the oversubscription criteria should applications be in excess of the places available.
- 8.5 A parent is required to make an application for a school place for entry in September after the child's fourth birthday. If the parent intends to apply for a delayed entry they must then get agreement from the school or schools that they intend to apply to and fill the form at the end of this guidance prior to withdrawing their original application. One form for each school applied for is required. They will then have to make a further new application for the new intended year of entry.
- 8.6 Once the parent and school agree to the delayed entry into reception, the form BYSB 001 at the back of this guidance should be completed by the parent and signed by them and the head teacher to confirm the delayed entry.
- 8.7 Once a summer born child has delayed entry in reception in September following their fifth birthday – the ability to engage in a part-time timetable or graduated start will not be available as it would be to a 4 year –old as once a child has reached 5, they are required to attend full time

9. Admissions authorities in Dorset

- 9.1 The decision-making body is dependent on the type of school.



The decision maker for placement outside normal year group for these schools is the head teacher or governing body who make a recommendation to the Dorset Council Admissions Authority. The Admissions Authority may accept the recommendation or refer the request to the In-Year Fair Access Panel:

- community schools: their admission authority is the local authority.
- voluntary-controlled schools: their admission authority is the local authority

These types of schools act as their 'own Admissions Authority with their governing body deciding the outcome:

- academies: their admission authority is the academy trust
- foundation schools: their admission authority is the governing body
- voluntary-aided schools: their admission authority is the governing body

10. **Request or recommendation for pupil to be placed outside his or her normal age group**

10.1 Parents are requested to discuss this option with the school prior to completing the attached form.



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BYSB 001 - Application for delayed entry to a reception class.

This form is to be filled and signed by the parent when they have decided to delay their child's entry into a reception class under the Admission of Summer Born Children Protocols. The head teacher's signature is confirmation that a discussion with the parent has taken place about the implications of the decision to delay entry though is not a statement that the school has made a professional decision on the educational or developmental needs of the child.

Parents are advised to refer to the following documents:

1. Department for Education – Advice on the admissions of summer born children - December 2014
2. Dorset Council - Guidance on the Placement of a Pupil Outside His or Her Normal Age Group – April 2014

Name of child _____ Date of birth _____

Name of school _____

Having read both the Department for Education and Dorset Council Guidance on summer born children I wish to delay entry into reception until September _____ (enter appropriate year).

I acknowledge I will have to make a new school application which will be subject to the Dorset Admissions Code and oversubscription criteria for that year and any offer of a school place I currently hold will be withdrawn.

I confirm that I understand the following:

- when my child moves to another school, that a new application for the continuation of the placement outside of their normal year group will have to be made to the new school
- another school or local authority is not required to continue the placement of a child outside their normal year group
- that there is no option of my child starting reception at age 5 on a part-time timetable
- once a child is admitted to a school it is for the head teacher to decide how best to educate them. In some cases it may be appropriate for a child who has been admitted out of their normal age group to be moved to their normal age group, but in others it will not
- any subsequent decision to move a child to a different age group or back into their chronological age group should be based on sound educational reasons and made by the head teacher in consultation with the parents



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Parent's name _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Head teachers name _____

Signature _____ Date _____

A copy of this to be retained by the school, a copy to be retained by the parent and a copy to be sent to Dorset Council School Admissions



BYIY 002 - Agreement for the placement of a child outside of their normal age group.

This form is to be filled and signed by the parent and the relevant school when agreement has been reached for an existing enrolled pupil to be placed outside of their normal year group.

Parents are advised to refer to the following Documents:

1. Department for Education – School Admissions Code - December 2014
2. Dorset Council - Guidance on the Placement of a Pupil Outside His or Her Normal Age Group

Name of child _____ Date of birth _____

Name of school _____

National Curriculum year group – current _____ Proposed _____

Having read both the Department for Education and Dorset Council Guidance on placement of children outside of their normal age group I wish to confirm that I have agreed for my child to be placed in the proposed National Curriculum Year Group.

I confirm that I understand the following:

- when my child moves to another school, that a new application for the continuation of the placement outside of their normal year group will have to be made to the new school
- another school or local authority is not required to continue the placement of a child outside their normal year group
- once a child is admitted to a school it is for the head teacher to decide how best to educate them. In some cases it may be appropriate for a child who has been admitted out of their normal age group to be moved to their normal age group, but in others it will not
- any subsequent decision to move a child to a different age group or back into their chronological age group should be based on sound educational reasons and made by the head teacher in consultation with the parents

Parent's name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Head teacher's name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

A copy of this to be retained by the school, a copy to be retained by the parent and a copy to be sent to Dorset Council School Admissions