

Guidance for parents, carers and schools requesting offsetting of a Reception place

Background

All parents are expected to apply for and take up a reception place in the school year in which their child will reach the age of five (rising fives). All children are entitled to a full time place in the September following their fourth birthday. However, the compulsory school age (CSA) for full time education is the start of the term following the child's fifth birthday and parents may request that their child's entry is delayed (deferred) until later in the same school year or until the term in which the child reaches compulsory school age.

Whilst parents have the legal right to keep their child out of formal education until the term following their 5th birthday, the Local Authority or an individual school admitting authority has the right and responsibility for deciding which year group a child should be admitted to.

The premise is that, except in limited circumstances, if parents are determined to defer entry to full time education until the following academic year when the child reaches compulsory school age, as is their legal right, a place would be offered in Year 1, enabling their child to remain within their chronological age group and not being 'offset' unless it is deemed in the child's best interest to start in Reception.

Attending part time or deferred entry to the same academic year

Parents can request that their child attends part-time until they reach compulsory school age, or that the date their child is admitted is deferred until later in the same academic year. In such circumstances, an agreement can be made between parents and the headteacher of the allocated school without involvement of any other relevant professional.

Applications for admission outside the normal age group

Where parents feel that their summer born child's needs are such that they would benefit from starting school a year later, they may request this using the Local Authority's '*Request to Offset form* (see below). Admission authorities must make decisions on the basis of the circumstances of each case. The local authority is the admission authority for community and voluntary controlled schools. The governing body is the admission authority for voluntary aided, foundation and trust schools, and the academy trust is the admission authority for academies.

Considering a request to offset

All requests will be considered, however, it is the Local Authority's view that wherever possible, children should be educated with their chronological peers. When considering a request for offsetting, relevant factors will include:

- parents' individual case and the needs of the individual child;
- DfE document '*Advice on the admission of summer born children*';
- any delayed, social emotional or physical development which may be adversely affecting the child's readiness for school (supported by a relevant professional);
- any significant learning or special educational needs (supported by a relevant professional);
- optimising children's learning
- pupil forecasting and sufficiency of early years places
- effective use of resources and public funds
- an educational professionals view on the best interests of the child
- premature birth which affects the academic year required to start school

Requests for an 'offset' admission into reception for a child with significant special educational needs must be supported by a relevant educational professional such as an Educational Psychologist or pre-5 Specialist Teacher. Where this is not possible, the parent/carer will need to obtain a written recommendation from other education or health professionals involved with the child, such as a consultant paediatrician, speech and language therapist, etc.

Summer Born

Requests for offsetting due to a child born prematurely, summer born or based on other personal circumstances will be considered by an Early Years Educational Psychologist, Early Years Achievement Officer, a Primary school headteacher and the Strategic Lead for Admissions. It is important that the view of the Headteacher of the school that the child may be attending is also taken into consideration where available; therefore, it is important that families also meet with all the preferred schools to discuss their request to offset and provide letters of support where available.

As the guidance asks parents to apply for an offset, simultaneously with their primary school application, it is not usually known which school the child will be allocated; therefore, all prospective schools should be approached by the parent. As Government guidance asks Local Authorities to determine offset requests by 16th April, parents should apply by 15th January allowing time for consultation and consideration as well as the opportunity to request additional information/evidence or clarification.

Premature Births (less than 37 weeks gestation)

Bradford Local Authority, having considered the research of Bradford Institute for Health Research, Born in Bradford and, University of Leeds, will agree the offsetting of children born prematurely, which has impacted on which academic year they are now due to enter, provided corroborating medical evidence is provided e.g. a child due to be born in October who has been born in August. It is clear from the research undertaken by these institutes and organisations that babies who are born moderate to late preterm, around the summer months that define which academic year a child may fall into, may face the increased risk of developmental delay.

Procedures

- Applications for all reception places should be completed and submitted online for the year in which the child is eligible for a school place i.e. those children born between 1 September 2021 and 31 August 2022 should apply for a reception place for the 2026/2027 school year.
- Timescales and deadlines should be followed in accordance with the published admission arrangements which are set out in full in the "*Guide for parents about admissions to Primary Schools*", which is available on the Council website. Each year, applications should be made between mid November and 15th January and parents are informed of their allocated school on 16 April or next working day.
- **If parents and/or other relevant professionals involved with the child are of the opinion that the child's admission should be offset until the following school year, the 'Request to offset' form should be completed at the same time as the school application, to enable the Local Authority to make a decision before National Offer Day on 16th April. Late applications will be accepted but may not have a decision before the start of term in September, depending on when they are received and the availability to consider the request.**

- The form must be accompanied by information, supporting letters and evidence from parents/carers and professionals involved explaining why the child is not ready for full time education and why it would be of benefit for the child to start reception a year later.
- The Strategic Lead for Admissions will write to parents/carers with the Local Authority's decision as to whether the child can be offset.
- **If the allocated school is a voluntary-aided, foundation, trust school or academy where the governing body is the admission authority, the final decision will be made by the governors, taking into consideration the decision of the Local Authority.**
- If the decision is that the child may be offset, the parent will need to apply for a Reception place the following year, on a paper form, however, there is no guarantee that a place will be offered at the preferred school or that the allocated school will offer a Reception place. The school may wish to reconsider any information or evidence regarding the original request and the original decision to ensure that the child's educational needs are appropriately met 12 months on.
- Please do not provide copies of the Government guidance or research as these are not required as part of the process.

Parents should be aware that:

- The child may only be offset with the agreement of the Local Authority and/or admission authority of the preferred school(s).
- Once agreed, the child should remain offset throughout their educational career and the transfer to secondary school will take place a year later. However, a different Local Authority or admitting authority in a different school may not abide by the decision and could revert to the chronological year group.
- Should agreement by the LA not be given and the parent still chooses to not send their child to school in Reception, the parent will need to apply for a place in Year 1. Allocation will be dependent upon a place being available at the time of application. If the parent applies for Reception, a letter from an educational professional outlining their support and why it is in the child's best interests to start in Reception, will be required.
- Any child not being educated in the year group in which their chronological age falls is regarded as "offset". This may raise complications if the child transfers to another local authority or own admitting authority school mid year and when they transfer to secondary school.
- Parents should not keep their child out of school during Reception and then apply for an offset the following year, in accordance with Government guidance the application must be made when the child is legally due in Reception.

For further information or clarification, please contact the Admissions Team on 01274 439200 or email primaryadmissions@bradford.gov.uk

Please return the following completed form and additional information/evidence that you wish to have considered to:

Mrs Rachel Phillips
Strategic Manager Admissions
Admissions Team
3rd Floor
Britannia House
Hall Ings
BD1 1HX
Email: primaryadmissions@bradford.gov.uk

**Request to offset a reception place for child in a
Bradford District Primary School**

Child's name DOB

Parent's/carer's name

Parent's/carer's address

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Tel no: Email:

Name of person completing the application (if different from above)

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Reason for requesting an offset place for your child (please attach additional sheets)

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Which category are you applying under:

Development Delay

Premature Birth

Summer Born

Looked After/Formerly Looked After

Who is supporting the request?

Paediatrician

Educational Psychologist

Specialist Teacher

Speech therapist

Other (please specify)

Headteacher

Please attach copies of medical information, developmental information and letters of support from professionals and a Headteacher who knows your child and their needs

Consideration of the request may be delayed unless supporting information/documents (eg letters or reports from professionals) are attached and the request is received at the time of application by 15th January.