

# Updated statement on admission of summer-born children 2021

In September 2015, we committed to amend the school admissions code ('the code') so that summer born children can automatically be admitted to a reception class at the age of five where that is what their parents want, and can remain with the cohort with which they are admitted throughout their education. We remain committed to making that change.

We have launched a consultation on some changes to the code which are focused on ensuring that the arrangements for in-year admissions support the most vulnerable children. These changes were planned before the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak but will now be needed more than ever.

We are unable to make the summer born change at the same time, because a provision to enable children to remain in a particular cohort goes beyond the remit of the code and therefore requires primary legislation. We remain committed to making these changes in due course.

In the meantime, it is reassuring that the system is now responding well to this issue. Before 2015, there were a number of concerning cases involving children who had been extremely unwell or were born very prematurely. It seemed clear that their interests would be best served by allowing them to start the reception year at age five, but too often their parents' requests were dismissed out of hand by admission authorities. Such troubling cases now seem to be few and far between, and our research indicates that admission authorities are increasingly flexible when responding to parents' requests, with almost 9 in 10 being agreed in 2018/19. Read more information on [Delayed school admissions for summer-born pupils \(2019\)](#).

Despite this positive trend, there are still some cases which seem to give rise to prolonged disputes between parents and the admission authority and some children are still being forced to miss their reception year. There is also some evidence that a minority of admission authorities do not fully understand the

requirements of the code. For this reason, we intend to publish updated guidance for local authorities this summer.

We do not intend it to become the norm for summer born children to start school at age 5. Whatever the school starting age, there will always be children who are the youngest in their age group, and most children thrive when admitted to school at age 4. Evidence shows that the youngest children make the fastest progress and that the majority meet the required standard.

A decision to delay a child's admission to school will affect them for the remainder of their education. Parents should think very carefully before deciding what would be best for their child, and be open-minded to the views of the school and head teacher.

We do not anticipate that, as a general rule, children will need to delay their admission to school purely as a consequence of the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. Schools will be planning carefully to take the impact of the outbreak into account in their teaching and their support for children.

Where parents genuinely believe that delaying admission is right for their child, we expect admission authorities to give careful consideration to the age group in which the child's needs can best be met, and to make sure they get the process right.

We will shortly be publishing some new advice intended to help parents who have concerns about their child's readiness for school to make an informed decision about what would be right for their child, alongside some updated guidance to support admission authorities in fulfilling the duties imposed on them by the code.