

Guidance on Out-of-Year Schooling in North Somerset



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Section 1: Introduction

What is Out-of-Year Education?

In North Somerset, children usually start school in the September after their fourth birthday. However, parents/carers may consider whether their child might be better placed in another year group at the point of school entry, or potentially at other points in their child's education journey. This is called 'out-of-year education'.

There are two main types of out-of-year education:

- **Deferred Entry:** Parents/carers can request a deferred entry to school, which means their child starts school later in the academic year following their fourth birthday, or when the child reaches their compulsory school age (the term following their fifth birthday). The child will be educated in their chronological year group from, at the latest, the required start-date following their fifth birthday.
- **Delayed Entry:** Parents/carers can request a delayed entry to school. This is specifically for summer-born children, allowing them to start Reception class a year later. The child will be educated in the group that is one year below their chronological age.



Why Consider Out-of-Year Education?

Parents might consider out-of-year education for various reasons, such as:

- Concerns about their child's development or readiness for school
- A belief that their child would benefit from more time in an early years setting
- Specific circumstances like prematurity or summer birth dates
- A need for flexibility due to family circumstances or changing needs
- A desire to better align the child with a particular cohort or peer group

Government Guidance

This section aims to summarise Government guidance found [here](#) and [here](#)

Most children start school in September after turning 4, but you can request a delay if your child is summer-born (born between 1 April and 31 August).

For children with special educational needs (SEN) or an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP), decisions about deferred entry/ out of year education are made on a case-by-case basis by the local authority SEND Panel, considering the child's individual needs and the advice of professionals.

Prematurity can impact a child's development and may need to be considered when making decisions about a child's education, including retention. As with SEND, decisions about retention are made on an individual basis, with the child's best interests at heart.



Options for Summer-Born or Premature Children:

- Start Reception at 4
- Start Reception at 5 (needs school's approval)
- Start Year 1 at 5 (no approval needed, but may miss Reception's benefits)

To start Reception at age 5:

- Apply for a school place and explain you are requesting "admission out of normal age group".
- Write to your preferred school(s) to request "admission out of normal age group", giving reasons.
- The school decides based on your child's best interests.

Get advice from:

- The school
- Your child's nursery or childminder
- Any specialists involved with your child
- The Local Authority's Admissions Service and SEND Team (if your child has SEN or an EHCP)
- Parent/Carer Organisations



Special considerations:

- Children with special needs: Starting school earlier might be better.
- Premature babies: Their due date might be relevant.

If your request is refused:

- You can apply for a Reception place to start at aged 4.
- Or apply for a Year 1 place to start at aged 5.

Important:

There's no guarantee of getting a place at your preferred school, even if your request is approved. Where possible, it is important to ensure your application has been submitted before 15 January of the relevant school year. This will give you the best chance to be offered one of your preferred schools.



The implications for early years funding are that the child will only be able to access the universal 15 hours of early years funding, or up to 30 hours of the extended early years funding if eligible, during their delayed year or deferred time in the early years setting.

This is not payable if the pupil is registered at a school. Any additional hours will have to be funded privately by parents/carers.

The early years funding entitlement ceases when the child reaches compulsory school age.



A decision to agree to a delay or defer request is only applicable to the school the request was made to. If a child changes schools, either during the year or, for example, transfers to secondary school, a new delay request will need to be submitted to each school that is applied for. The School Admissions Code requires schools making decisions to take into account whether the child has previously been educated out of their normal age group, as well as individual circumstances. Depending on the decision of each school, in the very rare circumstance that a delay is not agreed, the child would have to return to their normal chronological age group at the school where a place is offered. This would mean they have to miss a school year and transfer from either Year 5 to 7 or Year 6 to 8.

If the child is educated in the year below their chronological age, they may become more physically and socially mature than their peers. If a child has a delayed entry to school, they may not always be eligible for Home to School Transport when they start in Year 11, as they will no longer be of statutory school age. If the child is educated in the year below their chronological age, they would legally be allowed to leave school the term after their sixteenth birthday, a year before other young people in their year group. This might be before completing any examination courses.

They must then do one of the following until they are 18, which may be more complex to arrange if they have not completed any courses of study:

- Stay in full-time education, for example, at a college
- Start an apprenticeship or traineeship
- Spend 20 hours or more a week working or volunteering, while in part-time education or training.



Section 2: Understanding the Research on Out-of-Year Education

Research consistently indicates that educating children outside their normal age group often does not lead to the positive outcomes many parents and professionals expect. While some short-term gains might be observed, evidence suggests that these benefits rarely persist as children grow older.

Key Research Findings

- *Limited Academic Benefit:* Studies show that any initial academic advantage gained from delaying school entry tends to diminish over time (Education Endowment Foundation [EEF], 2018). Children educated out of year often do not make the expected progress to “catch up” with their peers. Research by the EEF even suggests that, on average, children who repeat a year experience three months’ less progress than their same-age peers who did not repeat [EEF], 2018.
- *Negative Social and Emotional Impact:* The social and emotional well-being of children educated out of year can be negatively affected. Research indicates they may experience higher rates of anxiety, lower self-esteem, social isolation, and behavioural problems (Hughes et al., 2018; Clatworthy, 2005). This is often due to feeling different or out of sync with classmates who are developmentally ahead.
- *Long-Term Consequences:* Out-of-year education has been linked to several negative long-term outcomes, including an increased likelihood of dropping out of school early, poorer employment prospects, and challenges in further education (EEF, 2018; Jimerson, 1999). These consequences can have a significant impact on a child’s life trajectory.





Education of gifted and talented children outside their chronological age group

Requests for education outside the normal age group can be made for various reasons, including exceptional talent or giftedness. However, guidance does not provide specific criteria or procedures for assessing giftedness or determining eligibility for acceleration. The decision-making process rests with the headteacher (for children already enrolled) or the admission authority (for new admissions), who must consider the child's best interests and available evidence.

Potential Benefits

While the research generally points to negative impacts, there might be some short-term benefits for specific children in exceptional circumstances. However, these benefits are rare and often do not last as the child progresses through school. Carefully consider the potential risks and benefits in your child's individual case.

- **Remember:** Every child is different, and what works for one child might not work for another. It is crucial to talk to your child's teachers, educational psychologists, and other professionals to get their insights and advice before making a decision.



Section 3: Making an Informed Decision

Considering whether to delay or defer your child's school entry is a personal choice that should be made with careful consideration of your child's individual needs and circumstances. Here are some key questions to guide your decision-making process:

- **What are your specific concerns about your child's development or readiness for school?** Are these concerns related to academic skills, social-emotional maturity, language development, or other factors? Understanding the root of your concerns can help you determine whether out-of-year education is the right solution.
- **What are your hopes and expectations for out-of-year education?** What specific outcomes do you hope to achieve by delaying or deferring your child's school entry? It is important to have realistic expectations based on the available research evidence.
- **Have you considered alternative options within your child's current year group?** Could your child's needs be met through additional support, interventions, or adjustments within their current educational setting? Explore all available options before considering out-of-year education.



- **What are the potential long-term implications for your child?** Consider the potential impact on your child's academic progress, social-emotional well-being, friendships, and future transitions. Think about how the decision might affect them not just in the short term but also as they progress through school and beyond.
- **Have you discussed your concerns with your child's teachers, educational psychologists, or other relevant professionals?** Seek advice from professionals who know your child and can provide insights into their development and needs. They can help you weigh the potential risks and benefits of out-of-year education and explore alternative strategies.
- **Have you considered your child's views and feelings about the decision?** If your child is old enough, involve them in the conversation and consider their perspective. Their feelings and preferences should be taken into account when making this important decision.

By carefully considering these questions and seeking guidance from professionals, you can make an informed decision that is in the best interests of your child's education and well-being.

Section 3.1 The process for Children with an EHCP

What is an EHCP?

An Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP) is a legal document that outlines the educational, health, and social care needs of a child or young person with special educational needs (SEN). It also specifies the support and provision required to meet those needs.



The Decision-Making Process for Out-of-Year Education with an EHCP

For children with an EHCP, decisions about out-of-year education are made depending on the child's/young person's needs by the Local Authority SEND Panel. The panel will carefully consider the child's individual needs, the advice of professionals involved in the child's care, and the views of the parents or guardians.

Types of evidence considered

The SEND Panel will review a range of evidence when making a decision about out-of-year education for a child with an EHCP, which may include the following:

- **The child's EHCP:** The panel will carefully examine the child's EHCP to understand their specific needs and the support required to meet those needs.
- **Reports from professionals:** The panel will consider reports from professionals involved in the child's care, such as educational psychologists, social care, and medical specialists. These reports can provide valuable insights into the child's development, progress, and readiness for school.
- **Views of parents/guardians:** The panel will take into account the views and concerns of the parents or guardians regarding their child's education and well-being.
- **Setting's perspective:** If the child is already attending a setting, the panel will consider the setting's views on the potential benefits and drawbacks of out-of-year education for the child.



Seeking Professional Advice

If your child has an EHCP and you are exploring out-of-year education (including delayed or deferred entry), consult with professionals who can provide specialist advice and support throughout the process, which may include the following:

- **The Local Authority's SEND Team:** The SEND Team can provide information about the process, eligibility criteria, and evidence required for out-of-year education requests.
- **Your child's SENCO:** The Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) at your child's school can offer insights into your child's needs and progress and advise on whether out-of-year education might be beneficial.
- **Send and You SENDIAS:** SEND and You delivers the 'SENDIAS' (Special Educational Needs & Disability Information Advice & Support) service for three local authorities; Bristol, North Somerset, and South Gloucestershire.
- **North Somerset Parent Carers Working Together:** Advocate organization for parents and carers

Other professionals involved in your child's care: Consult with any therapists, medical specialists, or other professionals who are familiar with your child's needs and can provide relevant information to support your request.

- **Remember:** The decision about out-of-year education for a child with an EHCP is made with the child's best interests at heart. By working closely with professionals and providing comprehensive evidence, you can ensure that the SEND Panel has all the information necessary to make an informed and appropriate decision for your child.



Section 4: Legal and Procedural Information in North Somerset

Compulsory school age

By law, children must be in full-time education starting the term after their fifth birthday. In North Somerset, children typically start school in September after they turn four. However, the compulsory school age varies depending on your child's birthdate:

Child's Date of Birth	Compulsory School Age Starts On or Before
1 September - 31 December	31 December following their fifth birthday
1 January - 31 March	31 March following their fifth birthday
1 April - 31 August (summer-born)	31 August following their fifth birthday



North Somerset policies

Parents can request a delayed or deferred entry to school for their child:

- **Deferred entry:** This means your child starts school later in the academic year than they are eligible to.
- **Delayed entry:** This is specifically for summer-born children, allowing them to start Reception class a year later.

Financial implications

The implications for the early years funding entitlement are as follows:

- The child will only be able to access the universal 15 hours of early years funding, or up to 30 hours of the extended early years funding if eligible, during their delayed year or deferred time in the early years setting. This is not payable if the pupil is registered at a school. Any additional hours will have to be funded privately by parents/carers.
- The early years funding entitlement ceases when the child reaches compulsory school age.
- If a child starts attending school part-time, the child is on the school roll, and parents/carers can no longer claim any early years funded hours.
- Early years providers cannot claim for any child on a school waiting list. Early years providers can offer privately funded sessions.
- If a child has a deferred entry to school, for example, they start attending school in January following their fifth birthday, the child is on the school roll from the point when they start attending school, i.e., January.



Early years SEND top-up funding

- Early years providers can apply for top-up funding (TUF) only for those children who are in receipt of the early years funded entitlement.
- Top-up funding is paid on top of the funded hours.
- When the child is no longer entitled to the early years funding (i.e., reached compulsory school age or started attending school or is on a school waiting list), top-up funding will cease.

Children with an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan

- Parents/carers of children with an EHC plan need to discuss their children's education provision with the local authority's SEND Team regarding the impact of a delayed or deferred entry to school on the early years funding.



The impact of a delayed or deferred entry to school on the early years funding:

Type of Funding	Child's date of birth		
	1 September - 31 December	1 January - 31 March	1 April - 31 August
Early years funded entitlement	A child is eligible up to 31 December following their fifth birthday	A child is eligible up to 31 March following their fifth birthday	A child is eligible up to 31 August following their fifth birthday
	The early years funding entitlement ceases when the child reaches compulsory school age		
Early Years SEND Top-up Funding	A child is eligible up to 31 December following their fifth birthday while in receipt of the funded hours	A child is eligible up to 31 March following their fifth birthday while in receipt of the funded hours	A child is eligible up to 31 August following their fifth birthday while in receipt of the funded hours

Early years providers and schools should notify the Early Years and Childcare Team at early.years@n-somerset.gov.uk of the children where parents/carers are considering a delayed or deferred entry to school. If a child does not have an EHC plan, advice should be sought, and the parents'/carers' request to delay or defer a child's entry to school should be made known to the School Admissions Team and supported by the Early Years and Childcare Team or by Multi-agency information and support in the early years (MAISEY) professionals if the child is known to MAISEY. If a child has an EHC plan, advice should be sought, and the parents'/carers' request to delay or defer a child's entry to school should be supported by the SEND Team.



Section 5: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1. What if my child has special educational needs (SEN)?

- If your child has SEN, discuss their needs with either the **INCCO** (early years) or school Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO), and possibly the Local Authority's SEND Team. They can help you determine whether out-of-year education is appropriate and explore alternative support options within your child's current year group.

2. What about summer-born children?

- Summer-born children (born between 1 April and 31 August) are not required to start school until September after their fifth birthday. You can request a delayed entry for your summer-born child to start Reception a year later. However, consider the potential long-term implications of this decision, as outlined in this guide. Research suggests that delaying school entry for summer-born children does not necessarily lead to better outcomes (Sharp et al., 2009; Lincove and Painter, 2006). Studies have found that adjusting tests for the child's birth month is more effective than delaying their start date (Crawford et al., 2013). Carefully weigh the potential benefits and drawbacks, and discuss your concerns with your child's teachers and other professionals before making a decision.





3. What happens if we move to a different school?

- If you move to a different school, including when changing between primary and secondary, the new school is not obligated to continue educating your child out of their year group. They will consider your child's individual circumstances and decide what is in their best interests. Your child may need to return to their chronological year group at the new school.

4. Can I appeal the school's decision about out-of-year education?

- Parents do not have a statutory right to appeal a school's decision regarding out-of-year education. However, you can make a complaint if you are unhappy with the decision or the process followed. The complaints procedure will depend on the type of school and the specific circumstances of your case. You can usually find information about the school's complaints procedure on their website or by contacting the school directly.



5. Where can I find more information and support?

For further information and support, please contact:

- **Early Years and Childcare Team:** earlyyears@n-somerset.gov.uk
- **SEND Team:** 01275 888 297 or sen.team@n-somerset.gov.uk
- **School Admissions Team:** 01275 884 078 or admissions@n-somerset.gov.uk

You can also find additional information and resources on the North Somerset Council website.

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