

Children Placed ‘out of year’

Good Practice Guidance

This document sets out good practice guidance for schools (including academies, trust and foundation schools) to support decision making in relation to children placed ‘out of year’ their chronological year group and explains the process schools are considering this step.

If there are any queries –either general or related to individual cases then please contact the School Admissions and Transport Service in the first instance who will be happy to assist admissions@staffordshire.gov.uk

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Further Information: [School Admissions - Staffordshire County Council](#)

[Education for all ages | Staffordshire Connects](#)

[Summer-born children: school admission - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

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Introduction

- 1 The relevant aspects of the law about education and pupils' age may be loosely summarised as follows:
 - Children must remain in education (or receive education otherwise than at school) from the start of the term following their fifth birthday until the last Friday in June in their sixteenth year.
 - Schools must assess the attainment of children at the end of delivering the full key stage requirements.
 - Local Authorities have to provide schools that are suitable for the age, ability and aptitude of children.
 - Children are entitled to a broad, balanced, relevant and differentiated curriculum.
- 2 Within this framework, there are no legal requirements about how schools should be organised. Nor is there a requirement that children should progress to a new age-related group each year: that this generally happens is custom and practice. There are alternative arrangements, and vertical grouping is one example of this.
- 3 This document appreciates that some primary schools in Staffordshire use mixed-age groupings. Such schools should take this guidance as applying to children in a mixed-age class other than the one that would be normal for their age group in their school.

Good practice guidelines

Expectation applying to all moves out of Year

4. Every child is entitled to be educated with his or her peers. Schools are responsible for addressing individual needs through a personalised curriculum, appropriately differentiated or enriched.
5. Only in **exceptional** circumstances should schools consider moving pupils out of their chronological year. Pupils should not be moved out of their correct year group solely because their current educational difficulties are due to having English as an additional language.
6. Where schools propose to move pupils out of their chronological year, they should be able to demonstrate that despite appropriate attempts to personalise the curriculum and arrangements to meet pupils' needs they cannot make provision in the correct year group and that the benefits of the

child moving out of their normal year group outweigh any social or emotional disadvantages

7. Schools, and where appropriate the relevant outside professionals, should be satisfied that:
- The pupil's physical maturity is not significantly different from that of pupils in the group they will join;
 - The pupil's current emotional development and social skills are appropriate to the group they will join;
 - The three key factors will determine whether this is positive or negative.
 - The resilience of the child
 - The arrangements that will be made to support the child socially
 - The extent to which the new arrangements are perceived by the child as improving their social and emotional wellbeing.
 - After full discussion of all the implications, the parents agree to and support the move;
 - After full discussion of all the implications at a level the pupil is able to understand the pupil agrees to and supports the move;
 - There are plans with clear objectives and time scales to manage phase transfers and examinations if appropriate.

Consideration of 'out of year' placement

8. The reasons often given for placing pupils in a year group other than their chronological age group is commonly one of the following:
- (i) the pupil has exceptional intellectual skills, is isolated as a learner in their present peer group, and this presents challenges for teachers in terms of providing appropriate curriculum extension;
 - (ii) the pupil has exceptionally delayed intellectual skills, cannot productively engage in group learning tasks, and this presents teachers with challenges in curriculum differentiation;
 - (iii) often in association with (ii), the pupil is very delayed emotionally, cannot make adequate relationships with their peer group, and is more challenging creating a greater risk of isolation and possible bullying;

- (iv) the pupil has missed a substantial part of a year through illness or for other reasons and that moving on without the foundations of learning and skills or being pressured to 'catch-up', a restart may be in the pupil's best interests
9. These reasons are frequently linked with strong parental preferences for their child to be placed in an alternative year group.
 10. Reasons (ii) and (iii) in paragraph 8 become particularly significant at the point of phase transfer (nursery to KS1, KS1 to KS2, KS2 to KS3). At these times, schools and parents can become concerned that the demands of the next phase may be too onerous for the pupil to cope with.
 11. But regardless of whether pupils stay in groups below the actual age cohort, or move ahead of their default National Curriculum Year, being 'out of year' has implications for the pupil, the school, the family and the LA. These are considered below:

Implications for the pupil

Placement in an older age group

12. Pupils placed in a year group ahead of their chronological age may well experience more stimulation and feel less frustrated in areas where they excel than they would have in their chronological group. On the other hand, they may also face challenges in areas where their strengths and personal and social resources may be less advanced. In particular, social life in school may be difficult for pupils whose physical, social and emotional maturity does not match their exceptional intellectual maturity, or indeed the maturity of their peers. The emotional consequences of this should be considered, particularly during adolescence.
13. However, where pupils' overall maturity is broadly in line with intellectual maturity, placement a year ahead of chronological age may benefit them. But it should be remembered that an enriched curriculum within the same chronological age group may have similar results and fewer risks.
14. Once pupils have transferred to a higher year group, reversing the change is difficult, as it will ordinarily involve 'repeating' a year. It is therefore important to consider the consequences of a move on important educational milestones that the pupil will now reach a year or more ahead of the usual age: transfer to the next phase. It is worth noting that pupils cannot finish their education at 15 years and may therefore have to transfer early to 'post 16' study programmes.
15. Teachers, parents and pupils should meet to discuss the implications of a move to an older age group fully.

Placement in a younger age group

16. Similar considerations apply to pupils placed in younger age cohorts by one or more years. The development of physical, emotional and social skills is a particular consideration over time.
17. Again, once pupils are out of the default National Curriculum Year, the change is hard to reverse, and 'leapfrogging' ahead to re-join the default Year may present them with a difficult experience. If they continue their education in a lower Year, they will reach the important educational milestones a year later; and in particular, they may well be eligible to leave school at a time that does not align to their programme of study and achievement. If they skip a Year, or stay in a lower NC Year and complete their education at the normal school leaving age, they risk entirely missing the programme of work for a full National Curriculum Year to which they have a statutory right.
18. Pupils placed in a year group behind their chronological age may well experience less frustration in areas where they have struggled than they would have in their chronological group. On the other hand, they may also face challenges in areas where their strengths and personal and social resources may be *more* advanced. In particular, social life in school may be isolating for pupils whose physical, social and emotional maturity does not match the maturity of their peers. The emotional consequences of this should be considered, particularly during adolescence.
19. Pupils who are placed in a lower year group may naturally feel that they have failed, or done something that they should not have. They may feel shame or feel self-conscious about the change. Direct support for them, and for their peers will be required to support them about what to say, or how to explain any intended change.

Implications for schools and the LA

Admissions

Deferred Entry to Reception Class

20. Parents have the right to request that their child be admitted to Reception Class on a part-time basis, or that their child be admitted to school later in the same academic year until the child reaches compulsory school age (i.e. beginning of the term after the child's fifth birthday). The effect is that the place must be held for the child in Reception and is not available to be offered to any other child within the same academic year in which it has been offered.
21. If a parent decides to exercise this right they are encouraged to visit their preferred school to clarify how they cater for the youngest children in

Reception and how the needs of these children are met as they move up through the school.

Admission Outside of the Normal Age Group “Including Summer Born Children”

22. Parents have the right to apply to the relevant admissions authority for their child’s admission to school outside of their normal age group, for example if the child is exceptionally gifted and talented or has experienced problems such as ill health. In addition, the parents of summer born children may choose not to send their child to school until the September following their fifth birthday and may request that they are admitted outside of their normal age group to Reception rather than Year 1.
23. Parents are asked to make an application alongside children applying at the normal age explaining why it is in the child’s best interest to be admitted outside of their normal age. This may include information such as professional evidence as to why this is the case and why an exception is requested in the case of the child. A decision as to whether this is an appropriate course of action will be made by the Local Authority in the case of community and voluntary controlled schools. The LA will take into account the circumstances of the case and views of the headteacher concerned. Parents do not currently have the right to insist that their child is admitted to a particular year group.
24. For academies, foundation/trust and voluntary aided schools the decision must be taken by the school trustees or governing body, as the responsible admitting authority for this type of school.
25. If it is agreed that a child should be admitted to school outside of the normal age of entry then the good practice and guidance outlined within this document applies particularly in terms of a regular review.

Education Health and Care Plans

26. Placing pupils with an EHCP out of their National Curriculum year may have additional implications, including extra associated costs. If, having ‘repeated’ a year earlier in school, pupils with EHCPs stay on an extra year to complete their education; they may need an additional year of funding.
27. There are also implications for pupils with EHCPs who move to a year ahead of their chronological age, and then transfer from school to college a year early.

Secondary Schools

28. When primary school children are placed down a year, there are particular implications for the subsequent move to a secondary school:
- a. On transition, some schools insist that the pupils enter in their correct chronological year group. In such circumstances, out-of- year pupils may not have had the appropriate experiences to enable them to engage in the curriculum on offer.
 - b. Pupils not transferring with their cohort may find that their preferred or local secondary is over-subscribed in the subsequent year group, which denies them choice, or may mean they must travel out of area, as a consequence of earlier decisions made.
29. More generally, the impact on management, organisation, and resources at all transfer times is significant, because receiving schools or Key Stages may wish to make their own assessment of how to accommodate the pupil within their arrangements and current provision.

Avoiding a move out of Year

30. Moving pupils out of their Year has consequences for pupils and schools. It must therefore be a fully considered action and decisive choice. Schools should always try to address the pupil's needs through a more personalised curriculum or provide suitable accommodation into whatever class, subject or year group that presents the pupil with most opportunities to succeed in their learning.
31. If the pupil has additional needs that the school is trying to meet through an IEP, PEP, or PSP, the school, parents and pupil should review the plans, with the help of relevant outside agencies, to seek solutions not necessitating a change of Year. Schools should also consider what additional resources would help maintain pupils in their Year group.
32. Schools and parents may find it helpful to remember that pupils may take SATS when they have completed the programme of study, not necessarily when the rest of the group or cohort takes them.
33. In general, any proposal to move the pupil to a different Year must detail the specific additional arrangements the school will make and that it could not put in place in the pupil's age related Year group.

Additional expectations for moving up a Year

34. In addition, for a pupil to move up a year, schools should satisfy that the pupil demonstrates exceptional intellectual skills and achievement in all subject areas. For accelerated admission a child must demonstrate:-
- Very exceptional intellectual ability, an unusually mature use of language, physical and emotional maturity and well-developed social relationships.
 - There must be evidence of very exceptional ability in all areas of the child's development.
 - There will be evidence of this degree of advancement throughout the child's development/education. It should not be based on early onset of puberty

To be considered very exceptional a child's development and abilities must be significantly above the recognised expected levels for their age range.

Additional expectations for moving down a Year

35. For a pupil to stay down a year, the pupil's educational skills across most subject areas should be demonstrably far below the level usual in their correct Year, and there is evidence that the school's reasonable accommodations and appropriate attempts to personalise the curriculum have proved unsuccessful.
36. Consequently, the pupil should be referred for an EHCNA, and have an Individual Educational Plan (IEP) that specifically includes work on what is needed for them to return to their Year. The most recent review meeting, attended by parents and pupil, should have endorsed any proposal to move the pupil out of chronological age group.
- 37. Pupils should not remain below their correct Year indefinitely. They should be supported to meet age-related expectations as quickly as possible, and normally by the end of the Key Stage. Only in exceptional circumstances should pupils remain below their correct Year for longer.**
38. While the pupil is out of year, the curriculum should be radically different in targets, delivery, and support to enable more rapid progress in those areas critical to their successful, meeting age-related expectations. The purpose should be to ensure that the child makes rapid progress, and that that progress can be maintained even after the period of placement out of year.
39. Before the move, the school, in consultation with parents and outside professionals should formulate a clear curriculum plan. This should include plans for the following:

- What will happen if the child makes exceptional progress (i.e. they decrease the “gap” between them and their age peers)?
- What will happen if they make average progress (i.e. the gap between them and their age peers remains the same)?
- What happens if they continue to make slow or slower progress (i.e. they fall behind their classmates in the lower Year)?
- What needs to happen when the child transfers to another school at phase transfer? (the plan should take account of the policy of the receiving school)
- What will happen at school-leaving age (if appropriate)?
- How, and by whom, will provision and progress be monitored and reviewed?

Evidence-base for changing year groups

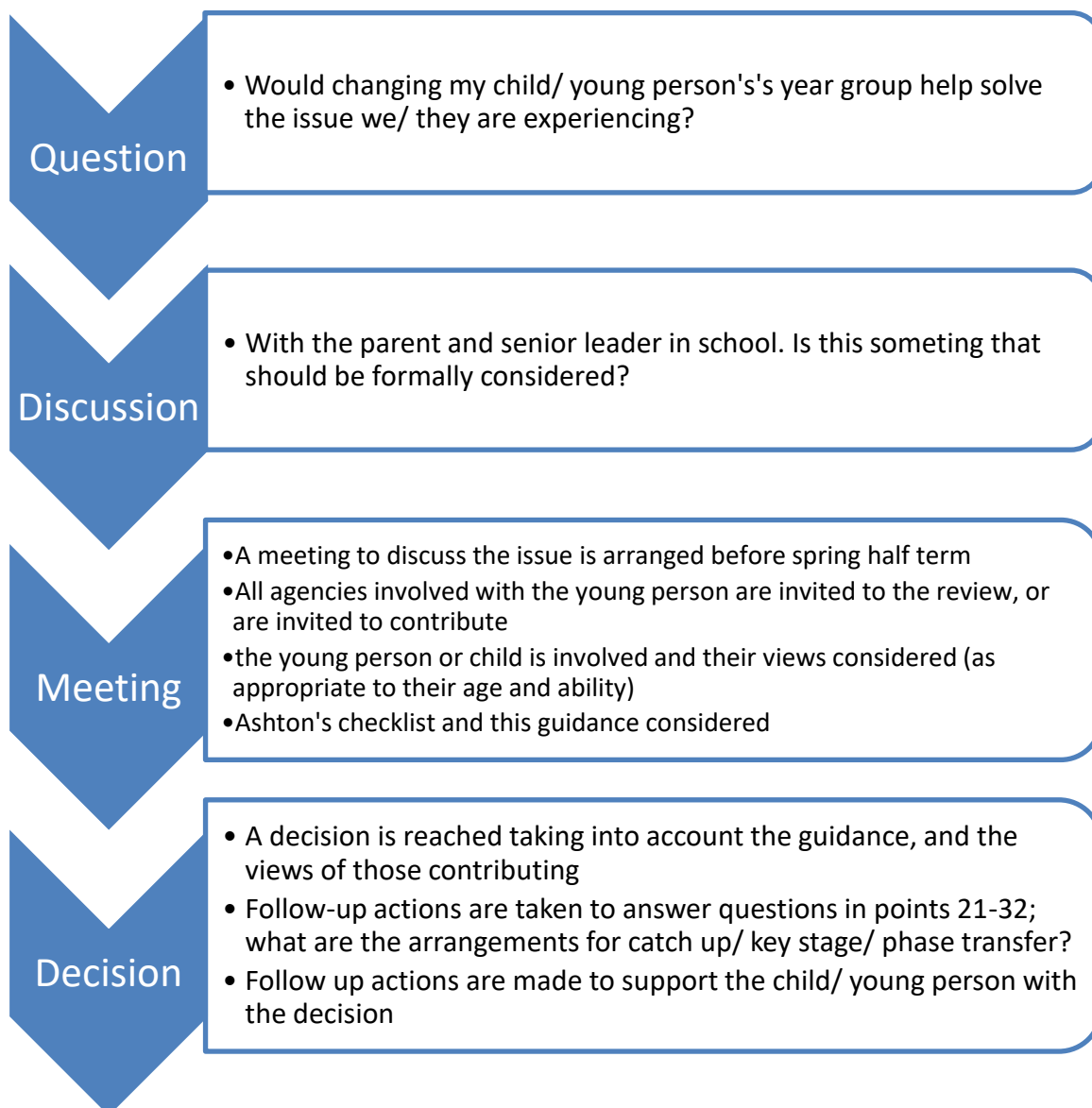
- 38 The evidence base for children joining a lower year group indicates a negative impact, with high costs in the case of children kept in a lower year because they are failing to make progress. Please see the Education Endowment Fund’s summary of the evidence base:
[Repeating a year | EEF \(educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk\)](https://www.educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/Repeating-a-year/)

Monitoring and Recording

- 39 The School Admissions and Transport Service will record all applications and decisions made for entry to school outside of the normal age group.

Good practice 4 step flow chart

Please see also the Ashton Checklist provided below for use with this flow chart to support decision making



Children out of year group checklist

All the criteria below should be satisfied before considering the placement of a child/young person outside their chronological year group:

<p>School, parent/carers, child/young person and involved professionals all feel that this placement would substantially increase the possibility of the child/young person's successful inclusion in mainstream school</p> <p>Consideration has been given to the long-term emotional and social impact of this placement</p> <p>There has been a discussion with parents/carers about likely future issues, e.g. leaving school without completing Key Stage 4</p> <p>This decision is not being made in order to delay other interventions, such as a placement into a different school</p> <p>All involved feel that the child/young person will be able to learn more from the children in the proposed year group than by being around children of their own age group</p> <p>The child/young person will have a peer group in their new class, which is likely to continue to be somewhere that they can 'fit in' as the cohort matures</p> <p>The plan for the child/young person includes interventions to address their particular needs, in addition to placement with a different year group</p> <p>Consideration has been given to the likely future placements for the child/young person, e.g. returning to their own year group, or remaining with the new year group</p> <p>This decision is not being made due to difficulties in making appropriately differentiated provision in the class to which the child/young person should normally transfer</p> <p>The placement would not breach infant class size legislation</p> <p>Consideration has been given to the rights of other children who might otherwise take that place</p>	
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About this Checklist Rebecca Ashton and Colleagues in Blackburn evolved this checklist. It comes with a warning. Ticking all the boxes is NOT an indication that a child should be placed out of year. It is merely an indication that such a course should be considered. Placement outside the child's chronological year group should be highly exceptional. With acknowledgements to Herefordshire LA and Peterborough LA