



Guidance for Educating Learners Outside of their Chronological Year

Rhondda Cynon Taf | April 2021

Mae'r ddogfen yma ar gael yn y Gymraeg
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1. Introduction

The purpose of this guidance is to provide parents, schools and Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council officers with information and advice in respect of requests for children to be educated in either a younger or older year group than that of their chronological age.

It includes information on:

- The reasons frequently cited for requests for education outside of year group
- Who is responsible for making the decision?
- Children starting school in reception and summer born children
- Factors for parents and carers to consider when making a request
- When to make a request for education outside of a year group
- Factors that will be taken into account when making a decision
- The outcome of the request
- Important factors to consider following a decision
- Duration of children remaining educated outside of their year group
- Appeals processes

The guidance reflects the requirements of the Schools Admissions Code 2013.

2. The reasons frequently cited for requests for education outside of their year group

There can be several reasons why a parent or carer might request for their child to be educated outside of their chronological year group. The following are some of the reasons most frequently cited when the requests are made:

- A child is born prematurely on or before 31 August and their expected date of delivery was after 31 August;
- A child is born in either August or September who may benefit from a move upwards;
- Parent/carers may wish to defer school placement until the child becomes statutory school age in Year 1;
- A child who has recently arrived in the UK and/or who has no or little experience of the English language;
- A gifted and talented child who may present difficulties for the teacher when providing an appropriate curriculum;
- When a child is delayed in their social and emotional development and cannot make positive relationships with their peers and is at risk of isolation;
- A child who has missed a substantial amount of education through ill health or family circumstances

3. Who is responsible for making the decision?

Whilst there is no statutory barrier to children being educated outside of their chronological year group, there is no duty to agree such a request and a parent/carer cannot insist on their child being educated outside of their usual age group.

With this in mind, every request must be considered according to the individual circumstances of each case and what is in the child's best interest. Consideration should also be given to the views of the parents/carers, headteacher and other professionals.

Responsibility for making the decision will depend on whether the application is in relation to a child starting a new school or whether a request is made to a school that a child is already attending.

- **Request for a child who is starting a new school.**

Where a parent/carer requests that their child is admitted to a new school (where they are not currently on roll) and educated outside of their chronological year group, the Admission Authority for the school must make the decision.

- **Request for a child who is already attending the school.**

Where a child is already on roll at the school, the headteacher of the school will decide whether or not a child should be placed in a year group that is different to their chronological age.

4. Children starting school in Reception and summer born children.

When is a child required to start school?

Section 8 of the Education Act 1996, states that a child begins compulsory school age in the term following their fifth birthday, as detailed in Section 2.2.1 of RCT's Starting Schools Book. However, local authorities and schools must provide all children with the opportunity to join a reception class in the September following their fourth birthday.

When can there be delayed or deferred entry to primary school?

In recognition that some parents/carers will feel that their child is not ready to start school in the September after their child turns four, parents/carers can request that their child attends Reception part time until they reach statutory school age. Alternatively, the date their child is admitted to Reception is delayed until later in the same academic year, but not beyond the start of the academic year for which a place has been offered. This is referred to as '**Delayed Entry**'.

A request for a child to start school a year later so that the child is educated in the chronological year group below where they should be is referred to as '**Deferred Entry**'.

Summer born children

Summer born children are defined as those born between 1 April and 31 August and reach statutory school age at the beginning of the September after they turn five years of age.

Whilst the majority of parents/carers of summer born children will be happy for their child to start school in Reception at the same time as other children their age, some may have concerns about whether their child is ready for school. In such circumstances, parents/carers can choose for their child to start school when they reach statutory school age, thereby reapplying for their child to start school in the September following their fifth birthday, in Year 1.

However, some parents/carers may wish to request that their child is admitted to Reception instead of Year 1, so they would be educated outside of their chronological year group. In such cases, the decision that must be made by the Admission Authority is whether it will be in the child's best interest to start Reception, or to miss Reception and start in Year 1.

This does not apply to children born in the autumn and spring as these children must legally be in school full time in the term after they turn five years of age.

5. Factors for parents/carers to consider before making a request for education outside of year group

Established good practice within the Authority and nationwide shows that, apart from in the most exceptional circumstances, school can meet all pupils' personal, social and educational needs within their appropriate year group and that this is a reasonable expectation.

In all cases, parents/carers who are considering making a request for their child to be educated outside of their chronological year group should talk to the school concerned to discuss the provision on offer and how the school might be able to provide a differentiated curriculum to meet the needs of their child and support to facilitate the child's readiness for school.

6. When should a request for education outside of a child's chronological year group be made?

If after considering all relevant factors and following discussion with the headteacher and relevant school based staff, the parent/carer believes that it would be in their child's best interest to be educated outside of their chronological year group then they will need to complete the Rhondda Cynon Taf School Admission Education Outside of Chronological Age Application Form (Appendix 1).

There is no expectation for a parent/carer to obtain professional evidence if they do not already have this, however submitting all available evidence and information will assist the Admission Authority and headteacher in determining whether it would be in

the child's best interests to be admitted to school outside of their chronological year group.

7. Factors that will be taken into account when making a decision.

When a request to educate outside of year group is received, a decision must be made based on the unique circumstances of the case and what is in the best interests of the child.

- **Children with Additional Learning Needs.**

When a child has a Statement of Special Educational Needs or statutory plan, the Annual Review meeting should serve as the consultation meeting and a representative of the Access and Inclusion Service should be invited to attend. The notes of the Annual Review meeting should show all relevant factors that have been considered and should clearly record the views of all participants in the meeting as to whether they support any request for placement outside of the chronological year.

SEN Panel will consider the information arising from the Annual Review in the usual way and communicate the decision of the Local Authority to the school.

Where allocation outside of chronological year group is agreed by the Local Authority, an amendment to the child's statement will be made.

- **Children recently moved into the UK**

Children who are new to the UK should be placed with their peer group. However, if the child has little or no experience of the English language it is advisable for the parent/guardian and pupil to meet with the headteacher to discuss the appropriate support that may be required. Children with English as an additional language should not, as a rule, be treated differently. Placing them with their peer group affords them all the same advantages and benefits it offers other children.

However, exceptions may apply if the circumstances of the case would indicate that it would be in the child's best interests to be educated outside of their chronological year group, such as when :

- Prior educational experiences have been limited or fragmented with the result that formal learning skills in both the home language and medium of instruction are significantly behind those of chronological peers. The Ethnic Minority Achievement Service (EMAS) can assist schools in investigating the extent of the child's prior educational experiences and first language skills;
- GCSE examinations are imminent and an additional year's preparation would enable the learners to acquire additional English and Welsh language skills (depending on the medium of instruction) to access education and examination papers and experiences. Any proposal to move a learner outside of their chronological year should be discussed with the EMAS who will assess the learner and provide advice based on that stage of language acquisition.

8. The outcome of the request

- Where a request for education outside of a year group is received for one of Rhondda Cynon Taf's schools, the decision will be made by the LA Admissions Team, in liaison with the headteacher of the school and if necessary, other associated professionals.
- Where an outside of chronological year group request is received for a voluntary aided school, the request will be forwarded to the appropriate school to make the decision to respond to the parent/carer regarding the outcome of the decision.
- Where an outside of chronological year group request is made for a child who is already on roll at the school, the headteacher will make the decision and will inform the parents/carers of the outcome.

9. Important factors to consider following a decision

- Agreement to consider a child for admission for education outside of their chronological year group does not guarantee an offer of a place at a particular school. This will be because an offer will be dependent on whether a vacancy exists and whether or not other children have a higher priority for a place when ranked against a school's oversubscription criteria.
- Decisions are made individually for each school. There is no guarantee that different Admission Authority will come to the same decision regarding a request and one Admission Authority cannot be required to honour a decision made by another.
- **Where it is agreed to place a child outside of his/her chronological year group, this will not normally be for more than a single National Curriculum year.**

10. Will a child be expected to remain outside of their chronological year group once a decision has been made

Where it is deemed in the best interest of a child, a school may seek to move a child back to their chronological year group. In exceptional cases, it may be deemed appropriate to further accelerate a child's year group. Where it is planned for a child to return to their correct chronological year group, this should be managed within a phase or key stage.

However, in some cases it will be appropriate for a child to remain educated outside of chronological year group. In these instances, it may not be possible to plan comprehensively for transition as in each case transition will be subject to:

- A separate outside of year group decision being made by the Admission Authority for the new school and an application being submitted by the parent/carer and a place being offered in accordance with the school's admission criteria

11. Appeal

Parents/carers who are refused a place for their child at a school for which they have applied have the right of appeal to an independent Admissions Appeal Panel. As the purpose of the appeals process is to consider whether a child should be admitted to a particular school, parents/carers do not have a right of appeal if they have been offered a place and it is not in the desired year group.

Appendix 1

Rhondda Cynon Taf School Admissions
Application Form for Requesting Education Outside of
Chronological Age

Name	
Age	
D.O.B	
Address	
Postcode	
Current School	
Current Year Group	
Parent(s)/Guardian(s) Name	
Request/Reason for application with supporting information	
Dated: _____	
Signed: _____ (Parent/Guardian)	

