



Children starting in reception year

What does the School Admissions Code require?

The School Admissions Code 2014 (2.16) states:

“Admission authorities **must** provide for the admission of all children in the September following their fourth birthday. The authority must make it clear in their arrangements that, where they have offered a child a place at a school:

- a) that child is entitled to a full-time school place in the September following their fourth birthday;
- b) the child’s parents can defer the date their child is admitted to the school until later in the school year but not beyond the point at which they reach compulsory school age and not beyond the beginning of the final term of the school year; and
- c) where the parents wish, children may attend part-time until later in the school year but not beyond the point at which they reach compulsory school age.

The School Admissions Code does not specifically mention the word “full-time” nor does it make any explicit reference to short periods of induction, but the implication of paragraph 2.16b is that the place is full-time and it is at parental request that the child may take up a part-time place.

This was confirmed in a determination by the Office of the Schools Adjudicator (OSA) in 2013, the determination document for which is available on the OSA website (case reference ADA/2479). The School Admissions Code imposes mandatory requirements that apply to admissions to all maintained schools. Determinations by the OSA apply to specific objections and the adjudicator’s decision is binding on the particular admission authority against which the objection has been raised. The determination documents, however, contain useful commentary and clarification about admissions-related issues which are relevant for a wider audience.

What does this mean in practice?

Starting in year R in September

- All children can start school full time in reception in the September following their fourth birthday.

- Children should be able to attend full time from the first day of term and parents have the right to insist on this.
- If schools wish to offer a short period of induction (for example, part time attendance for a week) this is an **option** that they can offer parents, but not something that the school can impose.

Deferring and part-time attendance for children who are not of compulsory school age

- If parents do not wish their child to start school full time in reception, but want to wait until their child reaches compulsory school age, they can request to defer taking up the place until later in the year.

Born between	Latest starting date in reception
1 September – 31 December	spring term
1 January – 31 March	summer term
1 April – 31 August	beginning of summer term

- As shown above, admission to reception cannot be deferred beyond the point at which the child reaches compulsory school age or beyond the start of the final term of that school year.
- Parents may also wish their child to attend school part-time until they reach compulsory school age
- **All requests to defer admission in the reception year should be discussed directly with the school.**

Summer born children

- Parents of children born between 1 April and 31 August, may choose not to send their child to school until the September following the child’s fifth birthday (the point at which other children in their age range are beginning year 1).
- Parents can decide if they want their child to miss reception completely and start in year 1, or whether they would prefer to start in reception the following year.
- If parents want to defer their child’s admission to the reception year group they should contact the home local authority to request this.

- **Nottinghamshire residents should submit a request in writing to Nottinghamshire County Council’s school admissions team stating whether they wish their child to be admitted into the reception year or year 1 the following academic year.**

Transition support

Starting at school is a big step in a child’s life, and parents will have taken into account many factors when deciding which schools to list on their application for a school place. Many parents plan to return to work or increase their hours of work, knowing that their child will be accessing full-time education.

Parents and schools want children to be happy and settle in quickly when they start school full time. Transition sessions and home visits are an ideal opportunity to discuss the needs of the child and the parents. Many children will already have attended early years and childcare provision on a full-time basis, including through the school summer holiday period. These children generally transit with ease into a full-time school place but remember there is no guarantee that a preference will be met and all parents requiring a school place must make an application.

Schools are able to explain to parents how the needs of their child can be met in the reception year. However, schools must also understand the needs of parents who may have work or other commitments, meaning that they need their child to start school full time from the first day of the September term.

As outlined above, a short period of induction - sometimes referred to as a “staggered start” – can be offered by the school as an option, but it is not something that the school can impose. This should be made clear to parents in good time, so that schools and parents can plan for a smooth start for children in September.

Financial implications of a staggered start

Schools need to be aware of the impact of having a staggered start for reception children. There have been instances where parents have continued to use their former private, voluntary and independent (PVI) early years provider to top-up the initial part-time hours offered at school for a few weeks. These children may even have been included in the PVI provider’s autumn term nursery grant funding estimate or headcount.

When the child is identified as attending school full time, the PVI provider funding claim is rejected as double-funding, leaving that provider with no funding for hours taken up by that child. PVI providers are often unable to get parents to pay retrospectively for these hours, once the child has left their setting. As schools are paid for a full-time place, then they should offer that full-time place for any child who needs it from the first day of term.

Extended free childcare entitlement

Schools should also note that on the introduction of the extended free childcare entitlement (also known as 30 hours free childcare) from September 2017, three and four year old children with parents working more than 16 hours per week will be entitled to 30 hours of free childcare a week if term time only or 22 hours over 51 weeks. This equates to 1140 hours over a year. The additional hours can be taken across more than one provider, but some settings and schools will offer the full 30 hours to eligible children.

Guidance has been developed by the Early Childhood Services team on different models of delivery which can be used by schools to deliver part or all of the extended free childcare offer. The guidance has been circulated to schools through the schools portal in autumn term 2016.

For further information about Early Years, please contact earlychildhoodservices@nottscc.gov.uk.

General contact information:

Phone: 0300 500 80 80

Monday to Friday: 8am to 8pm

Saturday: 8am to 12 noon

(Calls cost no more than calls to standard geographic numbers (01 or 02) and will also be included in inclusive minutes and discount schemes.)

Email: enquiries@nottscc.gov.uk

Website: nottinghamshire.gov.uk

Minicom: 01623 434993

Phone: 0300 500 80 80 if you need the information in a different language or format.