

Bath & North East  
Somerset Council



# Starting school later or earlier

## Information for parents and carers

Bath and North East Somerset  
- *The place to live, work and visit*

The law in England and Wales says that children must be receiving a full-time education by the start of the school term after their fifth birthday. In this Local Authority there are 6 school terms and the school year runs from September 1st to August 31st with varying start and finish dates depending on the school.

A child is of “compulsory school age” on the 1st January, 1st April or 1st September following their 5th birthday. Children becoming 5 years old between 1st January and 31st March are of compulsory school age at the beginning of the term after 1st April. Children becoming 5 years old between 1st April and 31st August are of compulsory school age from the beginning of the term after 1st September. Children becoming 5 years old between 1st September and 31st December are of compulsory school age from the beginning of the term after 1st January.

For most families this means sending their child to school in the September of the academic year (or school year) in which they reach the age of five.

**Application for a school place is made to the Admissions and Transport Service in the Local Authority you live in, at specific times of the year. For more information about applying for a school place in Bath and North East Somerset see [www.bathnes.gov.uk/schooladmissions](http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/schooladmissions)**

For a number of reasons parents may feel that their child is not ready to go to school in the September of the school year in which they reach the age of five. For example, they may have been born in the summer months (between 1 April and 31 August) and only be four years and a few weeks old when due to start school.

If you think your child is not ready for school, you may have heard about the option to ‘**defer**’ or ‘**delay**’ your child taking up a school place. Alternatively, you might think your child should start school a year earlier and that is called ‘**accelerated**’ entry into school.

**We have written this leaflet to help explain what these terms mean and help you decide what is best for your child.**

Schools take children of four and five years old with a whole range of abilities at the beginning of the school year, starting in the Reception Class. Teachers are used to adapting the school day and all the activities and learning involved in the first year at school to meet a range of children's needs (up to 30 children), including those that are young in year. If you want to know more about a particular school then arrange to meet with the school and ask what they will do to ensure your child settles well.

By giving the school all the necessary information about your child in advance, sharing in your child's experience of school and keeping in close contact with your child's class teacher throughout the first couple of terms, your child should settle happily into school.

## **Deferred School Place**

This is when a child, usually whose birthday is in the summer, starts school in a Reception Class (with his/her age group) but in January, or April (usually after Easter) rather than at the start of the academic year in September.

For a **Deferred** school place, you need to apply for a school place for your child in the normal way. When you are informed by the Local Authority which school has a place for your child you need to tell us on the 'school place acceptance form' whether you wish your child to start in September, January or April. The place at the school will then be reserved for your child. In the meantime if you choose January or April you need to contact the Head Teacher of the school to inform him/her that you have reserved a deferred start for your child. To help come to a decision about deferring a child's start at school, information from the family will be gathered.

## Things to think about...

- If you are worried about your child not being ready for school it is useful to know that learning in a Reception Class has a more play-based curriculum and that as a matter of course teachers will be adapting the activities and routines in the classroom for a wide range of children with differing abilities and ages, including those who are young in year. Children in Reception classes follow the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) which is also followed in nurseries, pre-schools and by childminders.
- By starting a term or two later than most of the other children in the Reception Class your child may miss out on a range of activities designed to help the children settle and become familiar with the school's routines.
- By starting a term or two later than most of the other children in the Reception Class your child will be joining an already established year group of children. Social groups and friendships may already be taking shape before your child joins the class.

## Delayed School Place

This is when, for a particular reason, a child starts school in September but a year later than usual. The child could be admitted a year late into a class with children of the same chronological age, so would start in Year 1 and miss the Reception Year, or the child could be admitted into a class with children who are a year younger than his/her chronological age and start in a Reception Class.

If a child has additional needs and has an **Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan**, or is being assessed for an EHC plan, then a decision about delayed school entry will be made during the assessment process, or through a review of the plan. The decision will be made at the Statutory Special Educational Needs Team Panel.

So, if the above does not apply, but your child was born in the summer months (between 1st April and the 31st August) and you have reason to believe that your child should be considered for delayed entry into school, you should apply for a school place for your child in the normal way and tick the box requesting '**delayed entry**'. This request will be considered by Early Years SEND Team. **For more information about applying for a school place in Bath and North East Somerset see [www.bathnes.gov.uk/schooladmissions](http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/schooladmissions)**

Schools take children with a whole range of abilities at the beginning of the school year, starting in the Reception Class. Teachers are used to adapting the school day and all the activities and learning involved in the first year at school to meet a range of children's needs (up to 30 children), including those that are young in year or those who struggle with some day to day tasks.

Some support and funding is available from the Local Authority through your Nursery, Pre-School or Childminder or Health Visitor to help your child settle into school, especially if you all decide they are struggling. Ask to speak to the Special Educational Needs Coordinator in your Nursery or Pre-School, or talk to your childminder or Health Visitor about this.

### **Things to think about....**

#### **Delaying starting school for a year and going into a Year 1 class with the same chronological age children**

- If your child is starting school a year late and going straight into Year 1, your child might need to stay for another year with a Nursery, Pre-School or Childminder for what would have been the Reception Year and will only be entitled to 15 hours free education for 38 weeks.
- If your child is starting a year later than normal and going straight into Year 1 you will need to apply again for a school

place for the following year. There is no guarantee that a school place will be available for your child to start the next school year even if a place was offered the first time round.

- By starting a year later than the other children who have been together for a year in the Reception Class your child will be joining an already established year group of children. Social groups and friendships will already be established when your child joins the class.

### **Delaying starting school for a year and going into a Reception Class with younger children**

- If your child is starting school a year late and going into a Reception Class, your child might need to stay for another year with a Nursery, Pre-School or Childminder and will only be entitled to 15 hours free education for 38 weeks, not full time as at school.
- Your child will be at school in the year below their chronological age (with children younger than them) throughout their school career. If your child changes schools, for example transfers to Secondary School or Junior School then they may (at the discretion of the school) have to return to their normal chronological age group and this could mean they have to miss a year of the National Curriculum.
- A **delayed** transfer into a school is agreed with the existing Head Teacher; so if there is a change of Head Teacher in the existing school the replacing Head Teacher may not agree to continue the **delayed** arrangement.
- If your child is at school in the year below their chronological age (with children younger than them) throughout their school career, your child may become more physically and socially mature than his/her peers as he/she progresses.

- If your child is at school in the year below their chronological age they would legally be allowed to leave school the term after their sixteenth birthday, a full year before other young people in their year group. This might well be before completing any examination courses

## Accelerated School Place

This is when a child starts school in September but a year earlier than usual. The child would be admitted a year early into a class with children who are a year older than his/her chronological age and start in a Reception Class.

For an accelerated school place, you will need to apply for a school place for your child in the normal way. **For more information about applying for a school place in Bath and North East Somerset see [www.bathnes.gov.uk/schooladmissions](http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/schooladmissions)**

Schools take children with a whole range of abilities at the beginning of the school year, starting in the Reception Class. Teachers are used to adapting the school day and all the activities and learning involved in the first year at school to meet a range of children's needs (up to 30 children), including those that are confident and particularly capable.

## Things to think about....

- Your child will be at school in the year above their chronological age (with children older than them) throughout their school career. If your child changes schools, for example transfers to Secondary School or Junior School then they may (at the discretion of the school) have to return to their normal chronological age group and this could mean they have to repeat a year of the National Curriculum.

- An **accelerated** transfer into a school is agreed with the existing Head Teacher; so if there is a change of Head Teacher in the existing school the replacing Head Teacher may not agree to continue the accelerated arrangement.
- If your child is at school in the year above their chronological age (with children older than them) throughout their school career, your child may not be as physically and socially mature as his/her peers as he/she progresses. This may cause concerns for your child as they get older.
- If your child is at school in the year above their chronological age they would not legally be allowed to leave school until the term after their sixteenth birthday, a full year after other young people in their year group. Discussion about individual cases would need to be arranged with colleges and School 6th Forms.

## How to find out more:

**For general enquiries about the Schools Admissions process and what to do next contact:** Admissions and Transport – telephone 01225 394312 or email [admissions\\_transport@bathnes.gov.uk](mailto:admissions_transport@bathnes.gov.uk)

**For impartial information and advice if your child has any additional needs contact:** SEND Partnership Service – telephone 01225 394382 or email [send\\_partnershipservice@bathnes.gov.uk](mailto:send_partnershipservice@bathnes.gov.uk)

**For general enquiries about family issues, including childcare, contact:** Family information Service – telephone 01225 395343 or email [fis@bathnes.gov.uk](mailto:fis@bathnes.gov.uk)