

Starting School in Hampshire

**A guide for parents/carers and practitioners
to help ensure the best possible start to school
for Hampshire's children**

Until recently most children in Hampshire experienced, in line with County Council policy, a phased entry to full-time schooling. Hampshire schools have developed tried and tested induction arrangements for children starting school. We hope this 'Starting School' guide will support conversations between parents, schools and early years settings as plans are made for children starting school, in keeping with new legislation, for the first time in September.



Hampshire
County Council

www.hants.gov.uk

The legal framework

All children are now entitled to start school in the September after their fourth birthday.

By law, children have to be in full-time education by the start of the term following their fifth birthday, when they reach compulsory school age.

Parents of non-statutory school age children (*four year olds*) may request a pattern of part-time attendance or deferment if that best suits the needs of their child. Parents will make decisions based upon the needs of their child, in consultation with the school and any pre-school settings involved.

'The preferred pattern of entry to reception classes should be the September immediately following a child's fourth birthday. However, this should be subject to well informed discussion with parents, taking into account their views of a child's maturity and readiness to enter reception class. Arrangements should be such as to make entry to reception class an exciting and enjoyable experience for all children, with opportunities for flexible arrangements such as a period of part-time attendance if judged appropriate.'

Independent Review of Primary Curriculum recommendation 14 (i) points of entry into reception class, DCSF 2009.

Recent changes in legislation require that:

1. Schools must provide for the admission of all children in the September following their fourth birthday. This should be on a full-time basis if the parent chooses but parents can request that their child attends on a part-time basis until reaching compulsory school age (*the start of the term following their fifth birthday*).
2. Admission authorities must allow parents of children who are offered a place at a school before they are of compulsory school age to defer their child's entry until later in the school year.

Overall parents will be offered :

- **at least 38 weeks of attendance in Year R (see page 4)**
- **the opportunity for their child to start Year R on a full-time basis from their first day of attendance (The Full-time Offer - see page 5)**
- **the opportunity to negotiate a part-time pattern of attendance if that best suits the needs of their child (Part-time Attendance - see page 6)**
- **the opportunity to defer their child's entry until later in the school year if that best suits the needs of their child (Deferment - see page 7)**

The offer of at least 38 weeks of attendance in Year R

Statutory requirements now ensure that all parents have the offer of at least 38 weeks of attendance for their child in Year R. This does not mean that schools have to offer a full-time place from the first day of the autumn term. For example, to allow children access to 38 weeks in Year R in September 2011 all children had to be able to start on 12 September (not 5 September, the first day of the autumn term).

Many schools use the first week of the autumn term before the Year R children start to support an effective transition into school. For example, teachers from the Reception class may offer home visits as a way to get to know their new Year R children and families, or they may provide induction sessions for small groups of children.

The Full-time Offer

Schools will advise the date on which children will begin attending. All children have the opportunity to start school on a full-time basis from their first day of attendance unless their parents request a part-time pattern of attendance. All schools will be striving to ensure that each child gets the best possible experience when starting in their Reception classes. Any decisions to deviate from the normal pattern of entry will need to focus on the interests of the child.

Some children may be starting school on a full-time basis very soon after their fourth birthday. Schools are very aware of the needs of these very young children and are committed to ensuring that their Year R provision meets these needs. In Year R classes, children continue to access the statutory *Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum* which is on offer in pre-school provision. This flexible and responsive play based provision ensures that children's individual needs can be met. Children have places to explore and be active as well as places to rest and be quiet. Whole school gatherings can be overwhelming for very young children, particularly in large schools, so schools often choose to keep their Year R children within the Year R area for lunchtimes, playtimes etc. whilst they settle.

'Children attending Year R classes are part of the Early Years Foundation Stage. ...children may be starting Year R shortly after their fourth birthday. Children attending at this age need special consideration to ensure that their particular needs are met and that they receive a high quality learning experience.'

**Practice Guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage
(3.24, May 2008)**

Part-time Attendance

Children do not legally have to attend school on a full-time basis until they reach compulsory school age, at the beginning of the term after their fifth birthday. Therefore parents may prefer their child to attend on a part-time basis until that point. Any part-time arrangement must fit reasonably with the organisation at the school.

Schools understand and are committed to meeting the needs of individual children and their families to ensure a smooth transition into school for all. Starting school can be tiring for children and many children benefit from a phased entry to school, with a period of part-time attendance rather than attending on a full-time basis straight away. For some children a short period of part-time attendance will suffice whilst others may benefit from a longer period of part-time attendance. Liaison between parents, schools and pre-school settings will ensure that individual needs and requirements are identified and met.

Parents must discuss with their school their preference that their child attend part-time sessions. After talking with parent/s about their child's age, experience in early years settings, how ready their child is for school and the arrangements put in place by the school for the new intake, the headteacher will negotiate with parent/s the timetable for their child's entry to school.

Deferment

Where entry into Year R is deferred, admission authorities must hold the place for that child and not offer it to another child. Parents are not able to defer beyond the beginning of the term after the child's fifth birthday, nor beyond the academic year for which the original application was accepted; in Hampshire places must be taken up by the start of the summer term.

In effect this means that deferred entry into Year R is allowed:-

- until after the Christmas break for all children starting in Year R
- until after the Easter break, for children born between 01 January - 31 August (spring/summer term birthday children).

Where entry into Year R is deferred the child may attend pre-school provision subject to availability.

Children born between 01 April - 31 August (summer term birthday children) are not of compulsory school age until the beginning of Year 1 but parents of summer birthday children wishing to defer their child's entry to school until the start of Year 1 cannot hold a place offered for Year R; a new application for a place in Year 1 would be required (which may or may not be successful).

Schools are well placed to accommodate children's individual needs from the beginning of their Reception year. Transition planning meetings and, where appropriate, transition plans for individual children effectively support this process and enable parents to meet with school and pre-school representatives to ensure their child's individual needs are met within their Year R class and beyond. Other agencies or professionals may also support this process where appropriate.

All discussions around deferment should include any early years setting/s that the child attends in order that the arrangements made are in the best interest of the child's needs.

It is important to note that deferred entry to Year R is likely to have some implications for a child. The child may miss out on a range of settling / transition opportunities and will probably experience a singleton or lone transfer into school, perhaps straight into a Year 1 class. A child's friendships may also be affected. This is significant as friends play an important role in transition, helping children to make sense of and feel that they belong in their new class.

For further information contact:

**Hampshire County Council's
Services for Young Children**

Email: childcare@hants.gov.uk

SfYC helpline: 01962 847070

Web: www.hants.gov.uk/childrens-services/childcare.htm

**Hampshire County Council's
School Admissions Team**

Email: admissions.team@hants.gov.uk

Tel: 0845 603 5623

Web: www.hants.gov.uk/ad-year-R

This information is available in alternative formats
and can also be translated. Please email requests to:
childrens.services.communications@hants.gov.uk