




## Placement of Children outside their Chronological Year Group

Policy Originator	Jonathan Smith with guidance from NAHT and Hertfordshire County Council materials.
Governor Responsible	Chair of Governors
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This policy contains guidance about children starting primary school before or after the year in which they would normally do so. It contains guidance about holding back children so that they start secondary school a year later than they would normally. It also relates to transferring children to secondary school earlier than they would normally.

### 1) Background

This General Advice and Statement of Specific Procedures was formulated in January 2017 using Guidance from Hertfordshire County Council and advice from the NAHT.

### 2) Scope

The General Advice relates to all children in mainstream school. This guidance relates to individual children's placement with a class of a different age group. It does not apply to mixed-age classes, where the child is part of an age-matched peer group within the class.

### 3) General Advice

*Schools are advised that children should be educated with their chronological year group as a general rule.*

The evidence shows that placing children with classes of younger children, at best makes no difference to their long-term outcomes and at worst can lead to poorer emotional health, leaving school early, lower attainments and poorer employment prospects.

This General Advice is offered against the background of potential difficulties, which are associated with placing a child out of year:

- The school may not have space in another year group without breaching infant class-size regulations.
- Placing the child in another year group may deny some other child a place at that school.
- As he or she matures the child may realise that the rest of the class are of a different age, causing adverse emotional impact.
- The child may begin puberty at a different time from their classmates, which could be confusing for him or her.
- The child is eligible to leave school at 16, and, therefore, if he or she has been held back a year, may leave without completing external examinations.
- The child must receive education until the age of 16 and if he or she has been accelerated a year, they may have completed the Key Stage 4 curriculum before then.
- Other interventions may be more appropriate in the long-term: placement outside the chronological year group could simply be delaying that provision.
- The evidence suggests that placing students in a different year group rarely makes a positive difference and can have negative long-term effects.
- As UNESCO notes, children have a right to be educated with their peers.

#### **4) Specific Procedure for starting school early**

The LA is the admissions authority for children entering Reception and is the decision making body in these circumstances.

#### **5) Specific Procedure for placement outside the child's chronological year group**

Placement outside the child's chronological year group should be highly exceptional. However exceptional circumstances may, very occasionally, occur in which the school decides to consider such a placement.

##### General Principles

- The decision to place a child outside their chronological year group lies with the Head Teacher.
- No such decision should be taken unless parents/carers give their informed consent to it.
- In all cases the decision must be in the long term interests of the child.
- Head Teachers should seek the views of any professionals involved (e.g. Educational Psychologist, Educational Welfare Officer, Social Worker) before coming to any decision.

##### Process

- The decision-making Ashton Checklist should be used. (Appendix A) If all criteria are not satisfied then out of year placement should not take place.
- If all the criteria on the Ashton Checklist are satisfied then this is NOT indicative that out of year placement is in the best interests of the child. The decision has to be made in relation to a wider range of factors.
- Any placement of a child outside their chronological year group should be discussed with relevant professionals at an early stage in the decision making process.
- It is in everyone's interest that the decision-making process is clearly recorded and appropriate records kept. It is important that there is clear recorded evidence that parents/carers have given informed consent to any placement of a child outside their chronological year group. It is also important to ensure that there is clear recorded evidence that parents/carers understand that the decision has been made by the school and not the Local Authority.
- Schools should be careful not to make or imply promises about future provision from either another school or from the Local Authority
- The placement should be considered annually, and a collective, recorded decision made about whether to keep the child out of their usual year group or to place them back with their age-matched peers.

#### **6) Specific Procedure for transfer to Secondary school**

Very rarely, a child may be placed in a year below their chronological year group in Upper Primary (KS2), and this arrangement should be reviewed on a yearly basis. The School's

expectation is that children will transfer to secondary school (KS3) alongside their chronological peers and it would be highly unusual for an exception to be made to this.

#### Delayed Transfer: General Principles

- Early and Delayed Transfer will only be supported if it is in the best interests of the child. Secondary transfer outside of the chronological year is an exceptional arrangement and will only be supported in very exceptional circumstances
- Placement in primary school outside of the chronological year group is not indicative that exceptional arrangements for transfer will be made. Indeed the expectation is that most children placed outside of the chronological primary year group will have rejoined their chronological peers by Year 6 (Y6) and will transfer to secondary school with these peers.
- If children are placed out of chronological year group, then this should be regularly reviewed frequently, and formally reviewed at least yearly. At this formal review parents/carers should be reminded of these general principles. Forward planning will need to occur so that children complete their primary schooling alongside their Year 6 chronological peers
- If it is possible that application for delayed transfer might be made, it would be good practice for the primary school to seek and collate professional advice in the term before the application might be made.

#### Process

- Parents should submit a formal application for delayed transfer to secondary school by the end of September, one year before the chronological transfer to secondary school would ordinarily take place.
- In support of the application the school will also require reports from educational professionals e.g. Educational Psychologist who may work with the child. The application should be accompanied by records of all past formal meetings to review the child's placement out of chronological year.

### **7) Appeals Process**

- Parents can appeal the decision of the head teacher by submitting a written appeal to the governing body. This should be done as soon after the parents are notified of the head teacher's decision.

## Ashton Checklist

All these criteria should be satisfied before placing a child outside their chronological year

Group: Child/ YP \_\_\_\_\_ Today's Date \_\_\_\_\_

Checklist filled in by \_\_\_\_\_

School, parents, child and involved professionals all feel that this placement would substantially increase the probability of the child's successful inclusion in mainstream school.	
This decision is not being made in order to delay other interventions, such as placement into a different school.	
This decision is not being made due to difficulties in making appropriately differentiated provision in the class to which the child should normally transfer.	
The placement would not breach infant class size regulations.	
Consideration has been given to the rights of other children who might otherwise take that place.	
Consideration has been given to the long-term emotional and social impact of this placement.	
Consideration has been given to the likely future placements for the child, e.g. returning to their own year group or remaining with the new year group.	
There has been a discussion with parents about likely future issues, e.g. leaving school without completing Key Stage 4.	
All involved feel that the child will be able to learn more from the children in the proposed year group than by being around children of their own age group.	
The child will have a peer group in their new class, which is likely to continue to be somewhere that the child can 'fit in' as the cohort matures.	
The plan for the child includes interventions to address their particular needs, in addition to placement with a different year group.	

**About this Checklist** Rebecca Ashton and Colleagues in Blackburn evolved this checklist. It is being increasingly used by other Local Authorities who report that it is extremely useful. 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**