

# Deferring entry to primary school

September 2026 intake

This guidance sets out the arrangements for the admission of children below compulsory school age and deferred entry to school. Please read this guidance in conjunction with the [School Admissions Code 2021](#)

Paragraph 2.17 of the School Admissions Code 2021 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 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 for which it was made; 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 table below illustrates when a child reaches compulsory school age and the date by which they must enter school, according to their date of birth:

Child’s date of birth	Date child reaches compulsory school age (prescribed date)	Latest point of entry into primary school
1 September 2021 – 31 December 2021	31 December 2026	January 2027 (start of spring term)
1 January 2022 – 31 March 2022	31 March 2027	April 2027 (start of summer term)
1 April 2022 – 31 August 2022 ("summer born children"*)	31 August 2027	The start of the academic year commencing September 2027

### **What happens when a parent/carers wants to defer their child’s entry to school?**

Families who are thinking of deferring their child’s entry to primary school as they are below compulsory school age may wish to consider the three options set out below to help them decide what is suitable.

#### **Option 1 – Defer entry into Reception until later in the academic year 2026/27**

- Parent/carers can defer their child's entry into Reception until later in the academic year 2026/27 (but not beyond the point at which the child reaches compulsory school age\*, or beyond the start of the final term of the school year for which the offer of a place was made).

- The parent/carer must submit a primary application for the child's school place within the child's actual age group by 15 January 2026. The application for a school place will be processed by the school admissions team.
- Once the child has been offered a Reception place at a school for September 2026, the parent/carer must confirm in writing the start date with the headteacher and the governing body if they wish to defer the place until later in the academic year. The start date will be no later than the **spring term** for children born between 1 September – 31 December or the **summer term** for children born between 1 January – 31 August.

### **Option 2 – Part time attendance until later in the academic year 2026/27**

- Parent/carers can notify the school that they wish for their child to attend part time until later in the academic year 2026/27, but not beyond the point at which they reach compulsory school age\*.
- The parent/carer must submit a primary application for the child's school place within the child's actual age group by 15 January 2026. The application for a school place will be processed by the school admissions team.
- Once the child has been offered a Reception place at a school for September 2026, the parent/carer must write to the headteacher and governing body of that school confirming that the child will be attending part time until later in the academic year. They must also state the point at which the child will be attending full time i.e. no later than the **spring term** for children born between 1 September – 31 December or the **summer term** for children born between 1 January – 31 August.
- The child will then attend Reception part time until the date agreed by both the family and the school.

### **Option 3 – Defer the entry of summer born children\*\* until the start of Year 1 (September 2027)**

- Parent/carers of “summer born children”\*\* can defer their child's entry to school until the following academic year (September 2027) so that their child starts in Year 1. This is when the child will have reached compulsory school age\*.
- The parent/carer must submit an in year form prior to the September in which their child is due to start in Year 1.
- However, we also strongly advise parents/carers to submit an application for the child's reception place within the child's normal age group by 15 January 2026. This is because we cannot guarantee that a Year 1 school place will be available in September 2027 due to children having automatically moved on from the Reception year.

- The parent/carer must notify the Southwark school admissions team of the child's deferred entry if they have applied for a reception place in their child's normal age group.

\*A child reaches compulsory school age on the prescribed day following his or her fifth birthday (or on his or her fifth birthday if it falls on a prescribed day). The prescribed days are currently 31st August, 31st December and 31st March.

\*\* The term "summer born children" relates to all children born from 1 April to 31 August. These children reach compulsory school age on 31 August following their fifth birthday (or on their fifth birthday if it falls on 31 August – see table at page one).

### **How can a parent/carer of a child with an Education, Health and Care Plan ["EHC"] defer their child's entry to school?**

Families of children with an EHC Plan who wish to defer their child's entry to school must contact the Southwark [Special Educational Needs and Disabilities team](#) by email or by telephone on 020 7525 4278 for further advice as this is a separate school admissions process.

**For advice and support relating to the admission of children outside of their normal age group please contact Southwark Council's [school admissions team](#) by email or by telephone on 020 7525 0245.**