

Admission of children outside their normal age group

Introduction

This document sets out the process and criteria for considering requests for Wimborne Academy Trust schools. It applies to all children with the exception of those holding or undergoing assessment for an Education, Health and Care Plan who should contact their local authority Special Educational Needs Team for advice.

It is Trust policy that children attending Wimborne Academy Trust schools will normally be placed with their own age group, and be educated for the majority of the time with their age peer group as evidence suggests that this is usually in the best interests of the child.

Parents do however from time to time seek places for children in a lower or higher age group. Such requests may be made for a variety of reasons, for example where a child has moved to the area from abroad, or has missed schooling due to illness, or has a marked talent or ability.

Also, parents of summer-born children (born 1 April – 31 August) may choose not to send their child to school until the September following their fifth birthday, when the child would normally join their own age group in year 1, but parents may request that the child is admitted outside their normal year group into reception.

The decision-making process

When requests for admission to a year group different to that determined by a child's date of birth are received, a panel will be convened at the school to consider the written application and supporting information provided by the parent/carer.

This panel will consist of:

- The head teacher of the preferred school
- A member of the Initio Learning Trust senior leadership team
- The Initio Learning Trust Inclusion lead and/or their delegate

Additional professional advisors may be included on the panel at the discretion of the head teacher.

On occasion there may be insufficient evidence for the panel to reach a decision. In this instance the panel may request additional information or a meeting with the parent/carer which may include requesting to meet/observe the child.

Process for consideration of requests

1. On initial contact from a parent/carer with either the local authority's admissions team or with the school directly, an appointment to meet with the school's head teacher will be arranged within 20 school days.
2. If, after discussion with the head teacher, the parent/carer still wishes to pursue an 'out of year' admission, they will be asked to complete an application form together with supporting evidence.
3. The application form will ask for basic information about the child as well as:
 - The nature of the request
 - Reasons for the request
 - The child's educational history
 - Indication of the child's wishes (with opportunity for the child to record their views directly where practical/age appropriate)
4. In addition they will be asked to provide supporting information/documentation which may include but is not limited to reports from health care professionals that are working with the child such as the child's paediatrician, health care visitor, Area SENCO, speech and language therapist, along with statements from the child's parent/carers school and/or preschool.
5. The parent/carer will be informed of the date that the Panel will meet within 20 school days of receipt of their written request (application form and supporting evidence).
6. The parent/carer will be informed of the decision of the panel in writing within 5 working days of the meeting.
7. In the meantime, if the child is already attending a school, they should continue to attend their current school.

Criteria for agreement to 'out of year' admissions

The panel will consider evidence relating to all aspects of the child's development and needs in coming to a decision. Issues to be considered will include:

For requests for change of year group where a child is already in school

- Whether there is evidence that the child has previously been educated in a year group above or below that determined by their date of birth and that this has had positive benefits.
- Whether there is documented evidence that to place the child in their normal age group would be detrimental to their educational progress or likely exam performance.
- Whether there is evidence that it is in the interests of the child's social and emotional development to be educated in a year group above or below that determined by their date of birth.

For requests for delayed admission for summer born children the Panel will consider the following:

- the needs of the child and the possible impact on them of entering year 1 without having first attended the reception class;
- in the case of children born prematurely, the fact that they may have naturally fallen into the lower age group if they had been born on their expected date of birth;
- whether delayed social, emotional or physical development is adversely affecting their readiness for school;
- relevant research into the outcomes of summer born and premature children; and
- relevant advice, guidance and legislation from the Department for Education.

Right of appeal following the decision

There is no right of appeal if a parent/carer is offered a place in their preferred school and it is not in the year group they would like. However, parents/carers can make a complaint through the Trust's complaints procedure.