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Weston St Mary Deferred and Delayed Admissions Policy

Reviewed by:	Date:	Changes made:
AC	10.12.2024	Minor wording amendments – removed reference to statement of educational need
AC	25.11.2022	No amendments
Statutory & Oversight	07.07.2020	New Policy

Schools serving their communities through excellence, exploration and encouragement within the love of God

I can do all things through him who strengthens me ~ Philippians 4:13

The Weston St Mary Church of England Primary School Policy for responding to parental requests for admission to a year group different to that determined by their date of birth, including delayed admission to reception for summer born children

Introduction

This policy document sets out the process and criteria for considering requests for Weston St Mary CofE Primary School. This policy applies to all children with the exception of those holding an Education, Health and Care Plan in which case the decision rests with the Local Authority (LA) and must be confirmed in the EHCP.

It is Weston St Mary CofE Primary School's policy that children attending our school normally be placed with their own age group, and be educated for the majority of the time with their age peer group. 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. In these cases, differentiation of the curriculum and/or additional support within their age group should usually address the particular issue.

When do children have to start school?

All children are entitled to start school full-time in the September following 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'. *Child with their fifth birthday between* *1 September and* *31 December*	Compulsory school age from the following January. A school place will be available from the September of, or before, their fifth birthday but can be deferred until January – the school place that has been allocated will be held once the parent lets the school know.
Child with their fifth birthday between *1 January and* *31 March*	Compulsory school age from the following April. A school place will be available from the September before this but can be deferred until January or April – the school place that has been allocated will be held once the parent lets the school know.
Child with their fifth birthday between 1 April and 31 August	Compulsory school age from the following September (which is then year one, not reception). A school place will be available from the September before this but can be deferred until January or April – the school place that has been allocated will be held once the parent lets the school know. Parents can also legally defer the school place until September BUT the offer of a school place will be withdrawn and they will need to reapply for a place in year one. This will be treated as a new application and there is no guarantee that a place will be available at their preferred school. However, if a parent decides to request a place in a reception class rather than year one in September, having deferred the place for a year, this would be called delayed admission, as described later in this document. This can only be agreed by the admission authority for the school.

What does the School Admissions Code 2014 say?

The relevant sections of the Admissions Code 2014, to which all admission authorities must adhere, are:

Admission of children below compulsory school age and deferred entry to school – 2.16

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.

Admission of children outside their normal age group - 2.17

Parents may seek a place for their child outside of their normal age group, for example, if the child is gifted and talented or has experienced problems such as ill health. In addition, the parents of a summer born child may choose not to send that child to school until the September following their fifth birthday and may request that they are admitted out of their normal age group – to reception rather than year one. Admission authorities must make clear in their admission arrangements the process for requesting admission out of the normal age group.

2.17A

Admission authorities must make decisions on the basis of the circumstances of each case and in the best interests of the child concerned. This will include taking account of the parent's views; information about the child's academic, social and emotional development; where relevant, their medical history and the views of a medical professional; whether they have previously been educated out of their normal age group; and whether they may naturally have fallen into a lower age group if it were not for being born prematurely. They must also take into account the views of the head teacher of the school concerned. When informing a parent of their decision on the year group the child should be admitted to, the admission authority must set out clearly the reasons for their decision.

2.17B

Where an admission authority agrees to a parent's request for their child to be admitted out of their normal age group and, as a consequence of that decision, the child will be admitted to a relevant age group (i.e. the age group to which pupils are normally admitted to the school) the local authority and admission authority must process the application as part of the main admissions round, unless the parental request is made too late for this to be possible, and on the basis of their determined admission arrangements only, including the application of oversubscription criteria where applicable. They must not give the application lower priority on the basis that the child is being admitted out of their normal age group. Parents have a statutory right to appeal against the refusal of a place at a school for which they have applied. This right does not apply if they are offered a place at the school but it is not in their preferred age group.

What are the options?

If parents do not want their child to start school full-time in the September following their fourth birthday, it is possible to:

1. opt for part-time admission to the allocated school from the September following their child's fourth birthday (but not beyond the point at which they reach compulsory school age);
2. opt to defer their child's entry for a term or two terms (i.e. until they are of compulsory school age) so that they don't start straight away in the September following their fourth birthday – e.g. they might start in the January following their fourth birthday, in the allocated reception class;
3. opt to defer their child's entry until the September following their fifth birthday, if they were born in the summer – but they would need to reapply for a place and they would start in year

one;

4. request to delay their child's entry, holding them back from joining the correct year group for their age and starting school in reception a year later.

What is the difference between deferred and delayed entry?

Deferred entry to school is where a parent decides to request that their child starts school later in the school year that follows their fourth birthday or when the child reaches compulsory school age (the term after the child's fifth birthday). They will then join the correct year group for their age.

Delayed entry to school is where a parent holds back their child from joining the correct year group for their age so that they start school a year later than they are due to, in the reception class.

About part-time admission

Places in reception will be allocated as full-time from the September after a child's fourth birthday. However, parents may choose part-time admission. Parents may feel that their child would benefit from a phased entry with a short or longer period of part-time attendance. This may be preferable to deferring the child's entry until later in the school year as this will give them the opportunity to settle in gradually and start to make friends at the same time as other children in the class. Parents will need to discuss this with the Executive Head/Head of School so that they can understand the child's experiences, readiness for school and individual needs and plan how they can fit part-time admission into the organisation of the school.

What to do when parents have chosen part-time admission

Parents must make their choice of part-time admission clear to the school as soon as possible after receiving the notification of a place and before September by contacting the school.

What do parents need to consider about part-time admission?

- If parents wish to combine a part-time school place with any other childcare provider, their child's free entitlement will be used to pay for the school provision. There may be an additional charge from the provider of any other care should the total equate to more than the free entitlement.
- Parents who wish to combine a part-time place with any other childcare provider should consider very carefully the impact that this may have on children's personal, social and emotional development. This would be due to young children having to experience two forms of provision that may not have consistent systems, approaches to rules and methods of teaching.
- If they are entitled to transport free of charge under Lincolnshire County Council's Home to School Transport Policy (visit https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/downloads/file/1931/school-and-college-transport-policy or contact the School Admissions Team for information) this only applies to journeys at the beginning and end of the school day.

About deferred entry (until the spring or summer term)

If parents decide that they want their child to start later in the school year in the spring or summer terms they still need to apply for a school place for the September following their child's fourth birthday – the place can then be held open until they start in the spring or summer.

If parents defer entry, they will still be entitled to take up their free early learning entitlement with an early years provider. Their child will still follow the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework as this applies to early years providers as well as schools. Visit www.gov.uk and search for 'EYFS' for more information.

What should parents consider when thinking about deferred entry?

- A child may miss out on a range of transition activities which are used to help those starting school in September which enable them to settle more effectively, alongside other children.
- The child will be joining an already established year group at a later time than most other children. Social groups and friendships may already be taking shape before the child joins the school.

- Learning in a reception class can be very important at this early stage as it has a more play-based curriculum.

How to request deferred entry until the spring or summer term

Parents will still need to apply for a school place as if for September entry but this place will be held open for them until the January or April if they request it. Once they've been allocated a place they will need to speak to the Executive Head/Head of School to arrange the deferred admission.

What if a parent changes their mind later in the year about deferred entry?

If a parent decides later in the year that their child is ready for school then they should speak to the Executive Head/Head of School to discuss a start date and inform their early years provider (e.g. nursery, pre-school, child-minder) of their decision.

About deferred entry (until the following September)

If a child was born between 1 April and 31 August and their parents decide they want to take up the opportunity to defer their entry to school until the September after their fifth birthday, they need to consider the points earlier in this document – but most importantly, they need to be aware that if they were allocated a school place for the September following their fourth birthday the school place would not be held open for them for a whole year (i.e. until the September in which they reach compulsory school age). They would need to reapply for a school place and this would be for year one, because their child would have missed the reception year.

If parents believe that their child should start in reception instead, a year later than they are due to start, this is called delayed entry.

About delayed entry (starting a year late in reception)

When first thinking about delayed entry:

- Parents are still advised to submit an application for a school place for the September following their child's fourth birthday. They can always withdraw their application or decline the offer of a reception place if it is agreed that their child should be held back a year.
- Deferred or part-time entry offers flexibility for children who aren't quite ready to start school or need a phased entry to give them time to settle in – have all of the options been considered which might be good alternatives to delayed entry?
- Delaying entry into reception will usually involve an extra year with an early years provider which may not be full-time but a child may benefit from more focussed learning as well as the opportunity to play. The Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum in a reception class is able to provide this.

Education outside the normal age group - introduction

It is usual practice in England for children to be educated in school year groups as determined by their date of birth, however, there is no statutory barrier to children being admitted outside their normal age group.

Department for Education guidance states that*: 'The government would agree that, in general, children should be educated in their normal age group, with the curriculum differentiated as appropriate and that they should only be educated out of their normal age group in very limited circumstances'.*

Advice on the admission of summer born children' December 2014

Children born in the summer term are not required to start school until a full year after the point at which they could first have been admitted, after their fourth birthday. This would mean that they would be due to enter year one, not long after their fifth birthday. Should the parents wish their child to be admitted to reception, rather than year one, at this point, they may request that they are admitted outside their normal age group i.e. start in reception a year later than normal. Parents do not have the right to insist that their child is admitted to school a year late but may make a request for this to happen.

Basis for delayed entry requests

There are a number of reasons why parents might request for their child to be admitted to school a year late. In particular, where an August born child was born prematurely, it may be that they would have been admitted into the year below if delivered on their due date. Because children born prematurely tend to develop according to their due date, rather than their actual birth date, their social, emotional, physical and intellectual development may be behind that of their peers. Some children may also have additional health problems associated with their prematurity.

Decision-makers

As the admission authority, Lincoln Anglican Academy Trust are responsible for making the decision on whether or not a child will be admitted outside their normal age group.

However, where a child has an Education, Health and Care Plan, the decision rests with the Local Authority (LA) and must be confirmed in the Plan.

Lincoln Anglican Academy Trust or its representatives are required to make a decision based on the circumstances of each case.

Before Lincoln Anglican Academy Trust or its representatives will consider a request for admission outside a child's normal age group, parents should have applied for a school place and have alerted the Local Authority School Admission team of their intention to request for admission outside a child's normal age group.

- On receipt of such a request, by telephone or in writing, The Local Authority School Admissions team will confirm to the parent(s)/carer(s) that their request is to a year group different to that determined by a child's date of birth.
- The school will share the procedure and guidance for delayed /deferred entry.
- If, after receipt of procedures for delayed/deferred entry, the parents/carers still wish to pursue an 'out of year' admission, they will be asked to complete and submit a letter of application together with supporting evidence. The application form should be submitted to the local school who will advise the clerk to the Local Board of the need for a panel to discuss delayed/deferred request.
- The letter of application should include basic information about the child as well as:
    - The nature of the request
    - Clear reasons for the request
    - The child's educational history
- In addition, parent(s)/carer(s) may provide specific information/documentation however this is not a requirement. This could include:
    - School or other educational reports (from the previous school or Early Years Setting where this is available)
    - Existing professional reports and assessments e.g. educational psychology reports from LA Health information
    - Indication of the child/young person's wishes (opportunity for them to record their view directly where practical/age appropriate)

- The panel will meet to consider applications for delayed entry within 14 days of its receipt. Parents/carers will be informed of the date of the Panel and must submit any written information to the panel 7 days prior to the meeting.
- The panel will consist of:

    - Chair or Vice Chair of the Local Board
    - A Member of Senior Leadership Team
    - A member of the Local Board

- The Clerk to the Local Board will minute the meeting
- The Panel will inform the Local Authority Admission Team of the decision in writing within 10 working days of the meeting.

The decision making process

Consideration will be given to:

- The parents' views
- The view of the Executive Head/Head of School
- Information about the child's academic, social and emotional development
- Where relevant, their medical history and the views of a medical professional
- Whether they have been previously educated out of their normal age group
- Whether they may naturally have fallen into a lower age group if it were not for being born prematurely
- The impact of starting year one without having first completed reception.

Considerations looking ahead will be given to the fact that:

- Receiving schools on transition (i.e. into junior school, secondary school, or special provision) are free to review and reconsider the placement outside the normal age group, and the continuing placement of the child outside their normal age group cannot be guaranteed on transition into a new school, (although decision-makers must take the previous placement outside the normal age group into account).
- Pupils who have been educated a year behind their normal age group may become eligible to leave school before completing examination courses.
- The admission authority must first make a decision on the age group the child should be admitted to and then it must apply its oversubscription criteria to decide whether a place can be offered in that age group – a decision that a child should be accepted outside their normal age group does not guarantee a place at a preferred school in that age group. The normal application process will still need to be carried out.
- One admission authority cannot be required to honour a decision made by another admission authority on admission outside the normal age group.

Principles for decision makers:

Weston St Mary Church of England Primary School recognises that each case must be considered on an individual basis but believes in the following principles:

- Established good practice within the County and nationwide shows that, apart from in the most exceptional circumstances, schools are able to meet all pupils' personal, social and educational needs within their appropriate age group, and that this is a reasonable expectation.
- The needs of the child must always be considered as the key criteria, rather than, for example, school organisation, curriculum and assessment considerations or failing to secure a place at a school in the first time of applying.

Evidence-gathering:

Weston St Mary Church of England Primary School will expect parents to provide them with information to support their request but there should be no expectation that parents will obtain professional evidence that they do not already have. Admission authorities must still consider requests that are not accompanied by professional evidence. Supporting information might simply be the parents' statement as to why they have made their request.

Admission authorities should satisfy themselves that:

- this is the wish of all those with Parental Responsibility for the child and that they have been adequately advised of the implications of placement outside the normal age group;
- any implications have been fully discussed with parents;

- it is in the child's best interest to be educated outside of their year group than start directly in year one at statutory school age;
- full consideration has been given to the likely/possible impact of relevant regulations and local practice as the pupil progresses outside their normal age group.

Right of appeal following the decision

Parents who are refused a place at a school for which they have applied have the right of appeal. However, they do not have a right of appeal if they have been offered a place and it is not in the year group they would like. They may, however, make a complaint, as follows:

- Where the decision of the LA, in the case of a child with an EHC Plan, is not to uphold the request for placement out of chronological year group then providing this request was made as part of the issuing or Annual Review of the Plan or Statement then parents will have a right of appeal to the SEN Tribunal. Details of 'How to Appeal' are set out in correspondence sent to parents by the SEN Assessment and Provision Team.
- Where it is felt that the correct procedure has not been followed, a complaint can be made to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). ESFA cannot overturn a school's decision but can ask that it be reconsidered.

Review Date: November 2026