

Starting School in Hampshire

A guide for parents/carers and practitioners

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Created by Services for Young Children in collaboration with Hampshire Admissions

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When will my child start school?

Full time attendance

Schools will have thought carefully about the ways that they can help all children to have a positive experience of starting school. They will share their bespoke transition arrangements, including key dates for visits, and starting school arrangements with parents/carers and pre-school settings. Hampshire has produced guidance for schools and childcare settings on how to support effective transitions for all children. The [Hampshire Expects](#) document describes [transition expectations](#) to ensure continuity in learning and development for all Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) children. This includes the essential information providers need to pass on during any transition to a new setting.

After a child has been offered a place at a school: that child is entitled to a full-time place in the September following their fourth birthday. Schools will advise the date on which children will begin attending the reception year (Year R) in September. Children are entitled to at least 38 weeks of attendance in Year R. This means that schools do not have to offer a full-time place from the first day of the autumn term. Often, schools use the first week of the autumn term to offer home visits to get to know their new Year R children and families, or they may provide induction sessions for small groups of children. Most children start school full-time from the second week of term (week beginning 8 September 2025). For more information and guidance, please see [Applying for a reception place \(Year R\) | Education and learning | Hampshire County Council](#)

Once children reach **compulsory school age** they must be in full-time education.

Children born between **1 September and 31 December** reach compulsory school age on 31 December and must be receiving full-time education at the start of the Spring term (i.e. after the Christmas holidays, in January).

Children born between **1 January and 31 March** reach compulsory school age on 31 March and must be receiving full-time education by the start of the summer term (i.e. after the Easter holidays, in March or April)

Children born **between 1 April and 31 August** reach compulsory school age on 31 August and must be receiving full-time education at the start of the new school year (i.e. after the summer holidays, in September).

Routines are an important part of life and help young children to feel safe and ready to learn. Regular attendance supports young children to settle in, build positive relationships and experience the full EYFS curriculum. Parents/carers should discuss any worries with the school at their earliest opportunity as they will want to help.

Part-time Attendance

Parents/carers may prefer their child to attend on a part-time basis until they reach compulsory school age. Any part-time arrangement must fit reasonably with the organisation at the school and so parents/carers must discuss this with the school as soon as possible before the start of the school year.

Schools 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/carers, 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 attends part-time sessions. After talking with parents/carers 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 parents/carers the timetable for their child's entry to school.

If parents/carers feel their child may have a learning difficulty or disability that they would like to discuss, they should arrange to meet the school's Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo). They will be able to explain the school's approach to supporting children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). This includes parent/carers of a child born prematurely who may be considering delaying their admission. If health professionals or specialists are supporting a child, they will also be able to discuss the options. Any part time arrangements must be agreed in partnership with parents/carers. A timetable must also include an agreed timeframe for the child to attend full time which is the child's entitlement.

Summer Born Children

Most summer born children will thrive if they are admitted to reception aged four and most parents/carers are happy for their child to start school in the September following their fourth birthday.

Some parents/carers will be concerned that their child is not ready for school at age four and may need support to decide what is right for their child. For example, a delayed school start may be considered if a child's school readiness has been delayed by a medical condition or developmental delays. It is important that parents/carers visit the schools they wish to apply for, so that they can see the provision on offer in the reception class and how children's individual needs are supported. Teachers understand that children develop at different rates and have different starting points when beginning school. They know some children need more support than others and are trained to adapt their teaching to suit individual children's needs.

Children born from 1 April to 31 August – known as summer born children do not need to start school until the September after their fifth birthday, a year after they could first have started school. This is when summer born children reach compulsory school age.

Parents/carers can decide whether their child will start school before compulsory school age, and they will be eligible for government-funded childcare until they start school or reach compulsory school age.

If parents/carers decide a summer born child will start school aged four they can, if they wish, agree with the school a pattern of part time attendance or a deferred start until later in that school year (but not later than the beginning of the summer term) for their child. It is important to work together, with the school, to decide a timetable which is in the best interest of the child.

Requesting admission outside of the normal age group

If parents/carers decide their summer born child will start school aged five and want their child to start school in reception (not Year 1), they need to make a request to the school's admission authority. This is called **requesting admission outside of the normal age group**, as children born in the same academic year are normally educated together in one year group. The academic year runs from 1 September to 31 August the following year.

Reception is the final year of the early years foundation stage (EYFS). The key stage one curriculum begins in year one. If parents/carers do not make a request for admission outside of the normal age group, but wish for their summer born child to start aged five, their child will start school in Year 1. Therefore, consideration must be given to the potential impact of missing the reception year.

The School Admissions Code is clear that it is for admission authorities to decide whether to agree an admission outside of the normal age group, in this case whether the child can be admitted to reception or will need to start in Year 1. The decision must be made in the best interests of the child concerned. The government believes it is usually not in a child's best interests to miss the teaching that takes place during the reception year, and that it should be rare for a child to start school in Year 1.

Parents/carers might find it helpful to speak to the staff at the schools they are considering for their child, for example the reception teacher or the headteacher. Any concerns about a child's readiness for school, can be discussed as well as how a child will be supported to settle in. It is useful to visit the school to find out more about how children learn and play in the reception year.

Parents/carers can also talk to their child's early years provider. They will be able to support a child to get ready to start school and anything parents/carers can do at home. They can let parents/carers know if a child can stay at that early years setting until they are five.

It is also helpful to talk to any specialist services a child is involved with, for example if they see a Speech and Language Therapist or Occupational Therapist or are under specialist medical care. The [NHS Start for Life](#) website has ideas about how to help children to learn and develop at home.

Making a decision for summer born children

Parents/carers need to apply for a primary school place just under a year before their child starts school. Applications open on 1 November and close on 15 January.

Even if a parent/carer thinks they want to delay their child's start until age five, they should apply to the local authority for a school place as normal – as if their child were going to start school at age four. A request for admission outside of the normal age group should also be submitted to the school's admission authority at the same time. This means parents/carers will need to decide whether to request admission outside of the normal age group in the autumn following their child's third birthday.

Remember that children are continuing to grow and develop before they reach the point at which they could start school.

If a parent/carer does decide to delay their child starting school until the September following their fifth birthday but does not request admission out of their normal age group at this time, their child will start school in Year 1. This means that parents/carers will need to make an in-year application for a school place for their child and the school admissions team at the local authority can advise on when it would be best to make such an application. Some schools are likely to be full at this point and unable to offer a place. Schools are unable to hold a place for your child from the previous year. More information is available at [Admission of children outside their normal age group | Education and learning | Hampshire County Council](#)

Children with special educational needs or a disability

Having special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) does not necessarily mean a child should delay starting school. It may be better for them to start school before compulsory school age so they can access the support available there.

All teachers are trained to support all children to succeed, including those with SEND. Every mainstream school must have a Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo) - a qualified teacher with an additional SEND qualification.

If parents/carers feel worried about their child starting school because of SEND, they can speak to their health visitor or to staff at the school they would like their child to go to, for example the headteacher or SENCo. They can also speak to their local Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information, Advice and Support service.

If a child is going through an EHC needs assessment and parents/carers intend to request admission to reception aged 5, they need to discuss this with the local authority. Summer born children starting school: advice for parents - GOV.UK

Useful Documents and Resources

This guidance is drawn from the following documents

- [Applying for a school place, Year 2025-26](#)
- [Transition | Children and Families | Hampshire County Council](#)
- [Summer born children starting school: advice for parents - GOV.UK](#)
- [Advice for parents of summer born children](#)
- [Admission of children outside their normal age group | Education and learning | Hampshire County Council](#)

These resources provide further information for parents/carers and childcare providers to support school readiness.

- [Applying for a reception place \(Year R\) | Education and learning | Hampshire County Council](#) – section 5 contains useful links
- [School Readiness - Information for parents and carers File](#)
- [HampshireExpects.pdf](#)
- [Successful Starts](#) – helpful information for early years settings, schools, parents and others who are involved in supporting children with SEND
- [Helping your child be school ready information video](#)
- [Ready, Steady, School Leaflet. Are they ready? Are you ready?](#)
- [Hampshire Healthy Families School Readiness information and workshops for parents](#)
- [What-to-expect-in-the-EYFS-complete-FINAL-16.09-compressed.pdf](#)
Guidance on how children develop and learn, and how they can be supported.
- [Hungry Little Minds](#) is a resource full of ideas and activities for 5-year-olds to help them learn and discover the world
- [Tiny Happy People](#) is a resource for by BBC to help develop a child's communication
- BookTrust [Bookstart for families](#) and their [Best Books for 0-5 years](#)
- [Hampshire Libraries](#) story time sessions and other events for children 0-4
- Article [Being school-ready](#)
- [School Ready poster](#)
- CBeebies for grown-ups: [Let's talk about starting school](#)
- [How to potty train - NHS](#)
- [Resources for early years settings to support toilet training](#)
- [Family Information and Services Hub | Hampshire Happy Talkers - Speech, Language and Communication Pathway](#)
- [Help for early years providers: Toilet training](#) – guidance for settings
- [Help for early years providers: Nutrition](#) – guidance for settings
- [Activities and ideas - CFEC](#) – from the Royal Foundation Centre for Early Childhood some ideas and website for parents to help children play and learn at home

