

Guidance on Out of Chronological Age (OOCA) Compulsory School Age (CSA) applications for starts in Reception or Year One

It is the view of the Greensand Multi Academy Trust (the Trust) that children should be educated in their chronological year group, with the curriculum differentiated as appropriate, and that they should only be educated out of their chronological year group in very limited circumstances.

Whilst there is no statutory barrier to children being educated out of their chronological year group, there is no duty to agree such a request and a parent cannot insist their child is educated out of their chronological year group. While it is the parent(s)/carer(s) legal right to request a Reception CSA, it is the Admissions Authority's decision as to which year group is in the best interests of the child.

The Trust is the Admissions Authority for all Greensand Schools. The Trust follows the Surrey County Council guidance on the education of children out of their chronological year group.

Pursuant to the Trust's Scheme of Delegation, the Trust Board has delegated responsibility for initial consideration of OOCA applications made to member schools to the individual Headteachers. The School Admission Code and Surrey CC Guidance is followed in all decision making.

The Early Years Foundation Stage

Parent(s)/carer(s) of summer born children are sometimes concerned that their child is not ready for school, but the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is specifically designed to meet the developmental needs of children as they enter school aged between 48 and 60 months.

Greensand schools support children with different levels of need in a variety of ways:

We believe and promote a staggered start in Reception, irrespective of age; this is about the child's development. Each school has a carefully planned induction process which involves home visits and a staggered start for the first week or two. At the end of this induction process, Reception children are expected to attend full time; however, parent(s)/carer(s) may wish to discuss the possibility of part time attendance, for a period of time, with the school.

The EYFS curriculum is tailored to meet the needs of all children in the year group; this is part of a continuum that is maintained from their previous Early Years setting. The curriculum is based around child-initiated learning and continuous provision. This allows the children to follow their own direction of learning, and staff provide focused opportunities in order to facilitate that for them, for example, by giving them more access to the outside curriculum, role play or construction.

Requesting an out of chronological age/compulsory school age start in Reception or Year One

Parental requests for deferred entry will be handled on a case-by-case basis at the time of application for the child's chronological age cohort. Parent(s)/carer(s) should follow the application process for their child's chronological school year i.e. through the admissions page on the appropriate local authority's website.

At the same time, parent(s)/carer(s) should submit their request for their child to be educated out of their chronological year group directly to the school, not the local authority, as Greensand MAT is the Admissions Authority.

The Headteacher will consider the request and thereafter expect to meet with parent(s)/carer(s) and, with permission, seek the views of other professionals as appropriate e.g. pre-schools and medical professionals. After consideration of the individual merits of the case, it will be a matter for the Headteacher's professional judgement to make a decision to either approve or reject the application.

Parent(s)/carer(s) should note that, even if the request is accepted, they have to apply to the school according to the admissions criteria for the school, alongside other applicants in the admissions round for the year group they wish their child to be placed in. An offer, if already made, for the chronological age group has to be withdrawn as offers cannot be carried forward from one academic year to the next.

The child's individual needs and abilities will be taken into account, and it is the Admissions Authority's role to consider whether these can best be met in Reception or Year One. While it is difficult for Admission Authorities to make this decision so far in advance of the child's admission to school, this is the decision it is required to make.

When looking at these two options, the Admissions Authority, via the Headteacher, will take into account the potential impact on a child joining Year One in September at CSA without first having completed the Reception year.

If the parent(s)/carer(s) choose not to start school in the September of the school year in which their child becomes four, as is their legal right, it may be in the best interests of the child to miss Reception so that they are in the right place for their development. Starting school straight into Year One is not something that we would recommend without first having completed the Reception year however, this may be the right decision for that child.

From Paragraph 2.19 of the School Admissions Code (statutory duties)

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;
- the views of the headteacher of the school concerned.

When informing parent(s)/carer(s) 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 using the above points.

The Headteacher represents the interests of all children in the school. They will need to consider how it will work with a possible 16-month age spread in the class, possibly making another child the youngest by 16 months and the impact on teachers' time to differentiate for a wider age group.

What happens after the Headteacher has made the decision?

The Headteacher will write to inform parent(s)/carer(s) setting out the reasons for their decision and inform the admissions team for the appropriate local authority.