

# Planning for starting school

This factsheet explains:

- what you should expect your local authority to do to plan for your child starting school
- how decisions will be made about which school your child will attend
- what you can do if you are worried that your child is not ready to start school.

## How should my child's move to primary school be planned?

Planning for a pupil's move to primary school is often called 'transition planning'.

## When should planning take place?

Transition planning should start early to make sure that:

- the support your child will need at primary school is identified and in place ready for when they start
- they have a place at a school where their support needs can be met
- they have time to prepare for the move.

Under the law<sup>1</sup>, local authorities must:

- gather information and advice about your child's needs from you and the professionals who work with them **no later than 12 months before your child is due to start primary school**
- provide information about your child's needs (with your consent) to the people who will be supporting your child at primary school **no later than six months before they are due to start school**
- send a copy of this information to you.

These duties do not apply to every child with additional support needs. For example, if your child has very short-term support needs, this amount of planning may not be necessary.

## How will I be involved?

You should be involved throughout the process of planning for your child starting school. You should have the opportunity to give your views about the support you feel your child will need to prepare for the transition and when they start at primary school.

## Who is responsible for planning my child's transition?

One person should co-ordinate the plan for your child's move to primary school. This could be someone at your child's nursery or another professional who works closely with them, such as a social worker.

## What is 'enhanced transition'?

Some children will have an 'enhanced transition' to primary school. This usually means extra visits to their new school before they start so they can meet some of the staff and become familiar with the environment. It usually also involves opportunities for you to have joint meetings with staff from your child's nursery, their new school, and any other professionals who work with them so that you can work out the support your child will need.

<sup>1</sup>The Additional Support for Learning (Changes in School Education) (Scotland) Regulations 2005

## Which school will my child go to?

Most children will go to their local catchment primary school or another local mainstream school. Others may need more specialist support and will go to a specialist unit attached to a mainstream school, or to a special school. Find out more about different types of schools in our factsheet on [School placements](#).

## Can the local catchment school meet my child's needs?

As part of the transition planning process, you and the people working with your child should consider whether the catchment school can meet your child's support needs. Together, you should identify what extra help your child would need to be able to attend the school and work with the local authority to make sure this will be in place.

## I am worried there will not be enough support for my child at their catchment school

You can ask for a transition planning meeting to discuss your concerns. If you are not satisfied with the plans in place after this, you can contact the local authority. Find out more in our factsheet on [Avoiding and solving problems](#).

## What if the catchment primary is not suitable for my child?

In most local authorities, there are panels of people that make decisions about school placements for children with additional support needs. Usually someone working with your child, like someone from their nursery or an educational psychologist, will refer your child to one of these panels. The local authority should then identify a suitable school placement for your child.

Speak to your child's health visitor and staff at the nursery if you think they need a place at a school other than their catchment school.

## I disagree with school that my child has been placed in

If you disagree with the school that the local authority has decided to place your child in, you should raise your concerns with your local authority. Sometimes your local authority will give you the opportunity to appeal their decision.

If you are not able to reach an agreement with the local authority, you have the right to make a 'placing request' to a school of your choice.

Find out more about school placements and placing requests in our factsheet on [School placements](#).

## What if I don't think my child is ready to start primary school?

If you do not think your child is ready to start primary school at the usual stage and should wait another year before starting school, you should discuss this with the nursery and the local authority. This is usually called a 'deferred year'.

### Children under five

Children are eligible to start school on the 'school commencement date' (usually a date in mid-August that is set by the local authority) if they will turn five before 1 March of that school year.

If your child is eligible to start school but aged four at the 'school commencement date', they do not have to start school that year and you can request a deferred year. Whether your local authority has to fund an extra year of early learning and childcare for your child depends on when they turn five:

- If your child's fifth birthday falls between 1 August and 31 December, the local authority does not have to provide additional early learning and childcare for your child during that school year (although they may do so, if they agree this is in your child's best interests).
- If your child's fifth birthday falls between 1 January and 28/29 February of that school year, the local authority must provide early learning and childcare for the year.

### Children aged five or over

If your child is aged five on the 'school commencement date' they would normally be expected to start school on the first day of the new school year. In exceptional circumstances a local authority may agree to a further year of early learning and childcare for a child aged five. You should discuss your reasons for believing that your child would benefit from an extra year of early learning and childcare with your local authority.

You must make sure your child is receiving a suitable education from age five onwards. This means that if you decide not to send them to school and the local authority does not agree to fund an extra year at nursery, you must find another way to educate them – for example, through home education.



# How Enquire can help

Enquire can help you understand your child's rights to additional support for learning and how to work in partnership with their school or nursery to make sure your child gets the support they need.

Enquire can:

- explain your child's rights to additional support for learning
- listen to any questions and concerns
- advise you on the way forward
- help you find local education and support services.

You can contact our helpline on **0345 123 2303** or **info@enquire.org.uk**  
Access to interpreters is available.

You can also find lots more information about additional support for learning, including our full range of publications, at **www.enquire.org.uk**

The information on our website is available in over 100 languages and with a range of accessibility tools, such as text-to-speech.

Reach, as part of Enquire, provides advice and information for children, parents, carers and professionals about children's rights to additional support for learning: **www.reach.scot**

Enquire is also a partner in the My Rights, My Say service. My Rights, My Say supports children aged 12-15 with additional support needs to exercise their rights to be involved in decisions about their support in school:  
**www.myrightsmysay.scot**

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