)Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust

Church House Oxford • Langford Locks• Kidlington • Oxford • OX5 1GF

5	**<u>Optional School Policy – No Central Guidance Provided</u>: You may wish to have optional policies which cover specific issues arising in your school, but which are unlikely to be policies which most other schools have.**

Guidance on the education of children out of their chronological year group

North Leigh CE Primary School

Valuing Everyone in our school, in our community, in our world

This Policy was updated in September 2026.

The Policy must be reviewed and updated at least every 36 months.

All children are provided with equal access to the curriculum. We aim to provide suitable learning opportunities regardless of gender, ethnicity or home background.

The impact of this policy on staff workload has been considered.

Signed *Ben McPherson* *Sophie Warner*

Headteacher Chair of Governors

Date *28 September 2026*

School Improvement

5	**<u>Optional School Policy – No Central Guidance Provided</u>: You may wish to have optional policies which cover specific issues arising in your school, but which are unlikely to be policies which most other schools have.**

Guidance on the education of children out of their chronological year group

1. **Introduction**

1.1. The purpose of this guidance is to provide schools, ODST officers and trustees with information and advice in respect of requests for children to be educated in either a younger or older year group than that of their chronological age.

1.2. This guidance covers out of year group requests for children of <u>all</u> ages, whether they are due to start school or are already on roll at a school, and includes those with an Education, Health and Care Plan.

1.3. This guidance reflects the requirement of the School Admissions Code 2014 and also the Department for Education's non-statutory advice on the admission of summer born children (December 2014).

1.4. Trustees are clear that all decisions on applications to be educated out of a chronological year group should be considered individually and measured against the test of what is in the best interest of that pupil and this should be the overriding aspect of any decision reached.

2. Reasons frequently cited for requesting a child is placed out of their chronological year group

2.1. ODST recognises that there could be a number of reasons why a parent may feel it is appropriate for their child to be educated out of their chronological year group:

- the child has exceptional intellectual skills and is isolated as a learner in their present peer group. Such children may present difficulties for teachers in terms of providing appropriate curriculum extension;
- the child has exceptionally delayed intellectual skills and cannot productively engage in group learning tasks, presenting teachers with difficulties in curriculum differentiation;
- the child is very delayed emotionally, cannot make positive productive relationships with their peer group and is at risk of isolation and possibly bullying;
- a child has missed a substantial part of a year through illness or other reasons;
- a child's physical or medical condition justifies a "less challenging" environment than that found in the same age group;
- the child was born prematurely on or before 31 August and their expected date of delivery was after 31 August;
- the child was born in the summer (1 April to 31 August) and the parent believes that they will struggle if placed in their correct chronological year group;
- to provide an additional year's experience of mainstream education prior to a special school placement;

- the child has recently arrived in the country and has limited English language competence and therefore could be isolated in their age appropriate group.

2.2. Some reasons may be particularly prevalent at a time of phase transfer (nursery to Reception, infant to junior, primary to secondary) where the demands of the next phase are perceived as too much for the child to cope with.

3. **Who is responsible for making the decision?**

3.1. 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 normal year group. It is the view of ODST 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 and exceptional circumstances.

3.2. With this in mind, trustees expect each request to be considered according to the circumstances of the case and what is in the child's best interests but must also take account of the views of the headteacher.

3.3. Where an application is made other than at admission to reception, Trustees would expect that there would be compelling educational reasons for either maintaining the arrangements for out-of-year group provision or for this to end and a pupil replaced in their correct year group. Such reasons would include

- clear SEND or Educational Psychologist involvement
- arrangements for an Educational Health Care Plan (EHCP).
- Previous evidence of school planning and provision for the pupil's change of year group.

4. Request for a child who is starting a new school

4.1. Where a parent requests that their child be admitted to a new school out of their chronological year group, i.e. where a child is not currently on roll at the school, the local governing body, acting under delegated authority from Trustees will make the decision.

5. Request for a child who is already attending the school

5.1. Where a child is already on roll at the school, the headteacher of the school will decide whether or not a child should be placed in a year group different to that of their chronological age.

6. Starting school in Reception and summer born children

7. When is a child required to start school?

7.1. Local authorities and schools must provide all children with the opportunity to join a Reception class in the September following their fourth birthday. However, a child does not reach statutory school age until the beginning of the term after they turn five years old. In recognition that some parents will feel that their child is not ready to start school in the September after their child turns four, parents can request that their child attends Reception part time until they reach statutory school age; or that the date their child is admitted to Reception is deferred until later in the same academic year, but not beyond the start of the summer term of the academic year for which a place has been offered.
Summer born children [1]

7.2. The majority of parents of summer born children will be happy for their child to start in Reception at the same time as other children their age, but some may have concerns about whether their child is

[1] Summer born children are defined as those born between 1 April and 31 August and they reach statutory school age at the beginning of the September after they turn five years old.

ready for school and will consider delaying entry until statutory school age. In such circumstances, parents can choose to reapply for their child to start school in the September following their fifth birthday, thereby starting school in Year 1.

7.3. However, some parents may wish to request their child is admitted to Reception instead of Year 1, so they would be educated out of their chronological year group.

7.4. This does not apply to children born in the autumn and spring as these children must legally be in school full time in the term after they turn five years old.

7. **Factors for parents to consider before making an out of year group request**

7.1. In all cases, parents who are considering making a request for their child to be educated out of their chronological year group should talk to the school concerned to discuss the provision on offer, how they might be able to provide a differentiated curriculum to provide for the needs of their child and, where applicable, the child's readiness for school. If the child has an Education, Health and Care Plan, the parent should also discuss any request with the child's SEND case officer.

7.2. They should also consider the following:

Placement in a younger year group

- Children are seldom uniformly delayed in their intellectual development. Areas of cognitive or physical ability are at risk of not receiving appropriate stimulation if a child is placed in a younger year group and a reduced set of general expectations applies.
- Physical, emotional and social expectations may be inappropriate where a child is taught in a younger year group.
- Some summer born children may exhibit lower levels of achievement and maturity, however schools are experienced in addressing this with children within their chronological year group through normal differentiation of the curriculum.
- Whether a summer born child attends a primary school or an early years setting during the academic year following their fourth birthday, they will receive the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum in which learning is developed largely through play.
- At each transition (ie between Key Stages or schools) a new request for out of chronological year group admission must be made, and the decision whether to maintain a child's placement in a younger year group must be made by the admission authority for the school, based on the circumstances of the case and what is in the best interests of the child at that time. Decision makers should satisfy themselves that they have gathered sufficient evidence to show that:
- the pupil shows a significant delay, and little progress, in their personal and emotional development, and social skills appropriate for a younger peer group;
- the pupil shows significant delay and little progress, in intellectual development/educational skills across the subject areas, to an extent that it is not reasonable to expect curriculum differentiation within their chronological year group to be successful;
- the pupil's physical maturity does not and is unlikely (in the future) to make them developmentally different from their proposed peer group in such a way as to impact negatively on their self-esteem/self-awareness (including consideration of puberty).
- As such there is no guarantee that a child will continue to be educated out of their chronological year group throughout their education. However, the consequences of attempting to "make up" a year are often very negative for the child. Furthermore, they are at risk of missing a statutory entitlement to a national curriculum year programme of study, or being denied the ability to enter public examinations.
- Where placement in a younger year group is maintained, phase transfers, SATs, GCSEs and school leaving are reached a year or more late. Young people cease to be classed as being 'of

statutory school age' the last Friday of June in the school year in which they turn 16 years of age. Therefore, if they are being educated in a younger year group the school must make provision for them until the date they are due to leave school, even if the young person has been excluded. Alternatively, if a young person was to require a new school place at this time, they would have to negotiate admission and there is no guarantee that a school would admit a student above statutory school age.

Placement in an older year group

- Whilst a child placed a year ahead of their chronological age may, as a consequence, receive a higher level of intellectual stimulation, this will apply across all subject areas and the child's intellectual strengths and achievement may not be universally ahead of age expectation.
- In some cases physical, social and emotional maturity may fail to match exceptional intellectual maturity; in which case a child may present with physical, emotional or social demands which are less effectively catered for in an older year group. The self-esteem and other negative emotional consequences of this may be considerable, particularly during adolescence.
- Assuming overall maturity is broadly in line with intellectual maturity, placement a year ahead of chronological age can lead to successful outcomes for the child. However, these outcomes could equally be addressed through an enriched and differentiated curriculum within the same chronological year group.
- Once the age shift is made, it is difficult to reverse, necessarily involving the repeat of a National Curriculum Year.
- At each transition, the decision whether to maintain the placement in an older year group must be made by the admission authority for the school based on the circumstances of the case and what is in the best interests of the child. As such there is no guarantee that it will continue throughout the child's education and a new request must be made at each transition.
- Where placement in an older year group is maintained, the consequence is that the child will reach the next phase transfer, SATs or GCSEs, and school leaving point a year or more earlier. Young people do not cease to be of statutory school age until the last Friday of June in the school year they turn 16 years of age and as such would have to negotiate transfer early to a school sixth form or Further Education college, which would not be guaranteed.

8. **When should an out of year group request be made?**

8.1. If, after considering the factors above, a parent believes it would be in their child's best interests to be educated out of their chronological year group then they will need to submit a request along with any relevant information and evidence they may have.

8.2. There is no expectation for a parent to obtain professional evidence they do not already have, however submitting all available evidence and information will assist the admission authority/headteacher in determining whether it would be in the child's best interests to be admitted out of their chronological year group.

8.3. In all cases parents should contact their preferred schools to discuss their intentions **prior to making a formal request** as this will aid the decision-making process.

9. Factors that will be taken into account when making a decision

9.1. When an out of year group request is received, a decision must be made based on the circumstances of the case and what is in the best interests of the child. The decision must also take account of the views of the headteacher of the school concerned. In each case it is beneficial for the school to have had detailed discussions with the parent and any relevant professionals involved with the child.

9.2. The responsibility for addressing individual needs lies with the school through an appropriately differentiated/enriched curriculum.

10. Placement in a younger year group

10.1. For a child to be placed in a younger year group, the Trust/headteacher should consider the following in order to assess what is in the best interests of the child:

- Whether the child is currently being educated out of their chronological year group;
- Whether the child shows significant delay in intellectual development/educational skills, across all subject areas, to an extent that curriculum differentiation (with appropriate SEND resources) is not reasonable;
- Whether the child's physical maturity places them in a position of being developmentally different from their peer group;
- Whether the child shows an equivalent delay in emotional development and social skills, appropriate for a younger peer group;
- Whether the child was born prematurely on or before 31 August and the expected due date was after 31 August;
- Whether there is parental support and agreement;
- Where relevant, the child's medical history and any views of a medical professional;
- Whether the child has an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and the most recent Annual Review endorses the decision to move the child out of their chronological year group. A child with an EHCP should not be moved unless an Annual Review has taken place. In all cases schools must liaise with the child's SEND case officer and their ODST Linked Adviser before considering a request;
- The impact on the child of being admitted to year 1 without first having completed Reception (for summer born children being admitted to school for the first time where the parent has decided to delay entry until the September following their child's fifth birthday).

11. Placement in an older year group

11.1. For a child to be placed in an older year group, the admission authority/headteacher should consider the following in order to assess what is in the best interests of the child:

- Whether the child is currently being educated out of their chronological year group;
- Whether the child demonstrates exceptional intellectual skills and achievement in all subject areas;
- Whether there has been a full exploration of curriculum extension/enrichment possibilities being delivered in the child's correct chronological year group;
- Whether the child has physical maturity sufficient to meet the curriculum and play demands of a higher National Curriculum year;
- Whether the child's emotional and social maturity is sufficient to establish positive peer relationships with an older age group;
- Whether there is parental support and agreement;
- Whether there is child support and agreement following extensive explanation and counselling as to the implications;
- Whether plans to manage phase transfers and examinations have been anticipated or are in place, including the need for an early transfer to a school sixth form or Further Education college where the child is secondary school age.

11.2. Even when an admission authority/headteacher agrees it is in a child's best interests to be educated out of their chronological year group, they may not be able to facilitate a request if it is for a Key Stage 1 class.

11.3. Other than a few permitted exceptions, under Infant Class Size legislation a Key Stage 1 class (Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 which contain 5, 6 and 7 year olds) must not contain more than 30 pupils with one teacher. The permitted exceptions are set out in paragraph 2.15 (a)-(h) of the School Admissions Code 2014. Any other child placed out of their chronological year group is not regarded as an exception to Infant Class Size legislation. As such, a school would be unable to admit or move a child out of their chronological year group to a Key Stage 1 year group if it was full, as this would breach the infant class size limit and may result in additional costs for the school by way of the requirement to provide an additional teacher.

12. Impact on National curriculum tests

12.1. Schools must consider the impact of decisions to educate out of year groups on the end of Key Stage tests because their chronological age will not be the same as the rest of their class at the time for the child to undergo the statutory end of Key Stage assessment process.

12.2. The guidance from QCDA[2] states clearly that pupils should ONLY take the tests if they have completed the relevant KS programme of study.

- Pupils educated with an older year group should only be entered for the tests before the school year in which they are 11 if they have completed the relevant KS2 programme of study and the headteacher considers they are working at the overall standard of the test(s).
- Pupils older than 11 who have not yet taken the tests must be entered to take them at the end of the year in which they complete the relevant KS2 programmes of study, if the headteacher considers the pupil to be working at the overall standard of the tests.

12.3. This means that pupils must undergo statutory assessment with the year group in which they are currently working. All children in their final year of a Key Stage ie when they are moving on to the next Key Stage programmes of study, are regarded as being in the final year of a Key Stage.

12.4. The implications of the above are that pupils will appear in the test results for the school in a year other than their chronological year group. lt is important that the local governing body is in agreement with the decision to advance or hold back a pupil from a year group as this will change the outcomes for that school over a period of two years. The pupil must appear in the school's results in the year in which they undertake the SATs, whatever their age. QCDA make it clear that a pupil may only take the tests once.

13. Children recently arrived in the United Kingdom

13.1. It is generally recognised within the English school system that children should be placed with their chronological peers. Children with English as an additional language should not, as a rule, be treated any differently. Placing them with their peer group affords them all the same advantages and benefits it offers other children.

13.2. However, exceptions may apply if the circumstances of the case would indicate that it would be in the child's best interests to be educated out of their chronological year group, such as when prior educational experience has been limited or fragmented with the result that formal learning skills (in home language as well as in English) are significantly behind those of chronological peers.

14. Appeals and complaints

14.1. Parents who are refused a place at a school for which they have applied have the right of appeal to an independent admission appeal panel. As the purpose of the appeals process is to consider whether a child should be admitted to a particular school, parents 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.

14.2. However, a parent may make a complaint about:

An admission authority's decision not to admit their child out of their chronological year group:

[2] 2018 Assessment and Reporting Arrangements (ARA)

- in the case of academies, free schools and foundation, trust and voluntary aided schools parents may make a complaint using the school's complaints procedure.

A local governing body's decision on whether or not to place a child, who is already on roll at a school, in a year group different to that of their chronological age. In all such cases parents may make a complaint using the school's complaints procedure.

- If a parent is unhappy with the way ODST has handled their complaint they may complain to the Education Funding Agency who will consider the complaint on behalf of the Secretary of State for Education.