

A single offer point from September 2011

Guidance for schools and early years settings



Contents

Introduction

What can parents choose now for the next academic year 2010?

What will this mean for children?

Part time places in school

The admissions process

What parents need to know

Funding and organisation

What happens next?



Introduction

From the September 2011 intake, all primary and infant schools must offer full time admission to Reception from the beginning of the September term following a child's fourth birthday.

This guidance is intended to help schools and early years settings which admit 4 year old children to better understand the changes that will be coming into place from September 2011. The term early years setting includes preschools, nursery schools, specialist childminders, nursery classes, day nurseries, nurseries in independent schools and any other providers which are funded by Devon County Council to offer the free Early Years Entitlement.

Devon County Council, schools and early years settings will need to work together to make sure that parents understand these changes and can make informed decisions about what is best for their child. Schools and early years settings will need to plan to manage these changes.

For admission to Reception from the 2011-12 academic year, parents can choose one of the following options for their child in the September following their fourth birthday.

- 1. Attend an early years setting for up to 15 hours a week until the term after their fifth birthday.**
- 2. Attend school part time 15-21 hours a week including lunch and break times.**
- 3. Attend school full time - 25 hours a week.**

Why is this changing?

Sir Jim Rose completed his review of the primary curriculum in April 2009 and recommended that children should ideally start school in the September following their fourth birthday. The Secretary of State accepted that recommendation and announced that all parents should be able to choose this option if that is what is best for their child.

Parents will be able to choose for their child to start school on a part-time or full-time basis, or choose a 15 hour place at a nursery or other early learning setting if they would prefer this.

A revised School Admissions Code came into force on 10 February 2010 and requires all admission authorities to provide parents with this choice of a school place for entry from September 2011. The School Admission Code is available at www.dcsf.gov.uk/sacode

The final report of the Primary Curriculum Review, which was published on 30 April 2009, and a written Ministerial Statement in response are available at www.dcsf.gov.uk/primarycurriculumreview/

What can parents in Devon choose now for the next academic year 2010?

Devon currently offers admission to school at two points in the year, depending on the child's date of birth.

Current position

Child's fifth birthday	Can start school
1 September–28/29 February	September
1 March–31 August	January

Position from September 2011

Child's fifth birthday	Can start school
1 September–28/29 February	September
1 March–31 August	September

Devon is relatively unusual in having two points of entry to school. Devon's neighbouring authorities of Somerset, Dorset, Plymouth and Torbay all have a single offer point already in place.

'The majority of local authority areas already operate a single entry point in September following a child's fourth birthday, but presently summer born children do not have the same education opportunities across the country. Implementing this proposal will therefore provide a fair system for parents and also support the needs of summer-born children.'

Letter to local authorities from Dawn Primarolo MP, 31 March 2010

A DCSF briefing on the revised Admissions Code stated that, '70% of local authorities already admit children in September, the rest mainly offer places in January as well.'

What will this mean for children?

Transition points (when children move from an early years setting to start school) can be very stressful for children. To make this move smooth children need to have:

- an appropriate environment, staffing and curriculum, for all children as outlined in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) documents
- their individual needs met, particularly if they are in a class with older children
- access to a well equipped outside area, as learning outside is an important part of young children's development
- staff who understand how young children develop and who know the EYFS very well
- a setting that liaises closely with the child's receiving school so that his or her individual needs can be met
- important things like play times, lunch times and access to toilets explained to them
- a key-worker they know and who knows them
- a pace to the day that reflects their needs with access to quiet places and times if they need a rest from learning or activity
- access to teacher input in school
- a home and setting environment that is in tune with one another.

How can early years settings help to smooth the transition for children into school?

The school and the early years settings should be working together and talking on a regular basis. All settings should now be familiar with Devon's **Learning Journey** transition documents and attainment grids. These must be completed by settings to inform all points of transition for young children. Transition documents can be found on the Devon Learning and Development Partnership website at:

www.deseducation.org/v.asp?folderid=2050&schoolid=&sname=&all=&uid=&dosearch=&deptid=&level1=&level2=209&level2id=209&level3=2050&rootid=17&depth=3&nextlevel=2050&branch=6#6

Early years settings should tell parents when a school application must be made and settings will be sent information annually about this process. If a setting has any query they should contact the School Admissions Team on **0845 155 1019** or email **admissions@devon.gov.uk**

Consider the development of a Foundation Stage Unit (FSU) or a Partnership Foundation Stage Unit (PFSU) to support transition for the children and get the benefits of joint working, and mutual staffing support and ratios for both partners. For a pack on PFSU's or FSU's contact **julie.payne@devon.gov.uk**.

Part time places in school

At what times will the 15-21 hour choice in schools be made?

Parents can choose to send their child to school for between 15 and 21 hours a week. Each school will decide how to offer the part time hours in the Reception class and patterns of provision will vary across the county. Schools are encouraged to consult with parents on the hours they will be offered.

Parents who have used an early years provider will have had a degree of flexibility on the times when their child can attend for the 15 hour entitlement. Schools should bear in mind how local early years providers are operating when deciding how they will offer part time provision in school. The school should prepare some information and update their website to explain to parents when the part time hours are available and what they can expect their child to be doing while they attend school at those times.

Children cannot attend school part time and be funded to attend an early years provision part time.

Will parents be able to demand any kind of part time provision and how will part time provision be funded?

Parents will not be able to demand any kind of part time provision.

‘Part-time provision, as far as defined for the January Census (and therefore funding), is less than 21 hours in school. It is for admissions authorities, in conjunction with schools and parents, to decide what part time options will be available to parents who want to take this approach. Part time attendance in nurseries and private, voluntary independent sector (PVI) providers is covered in the Code of Practice for 3 and 4 year olds.’

www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/resources-and-practice/IG00689

DCSF Briefing April 2010

Will schools lose funding by having to offer part time opportunities?

Possibly. Under current funding arrangements, where a parent defers admission up to the beginning of the summer term, the child will not be on roll at the January Census. The school will not receive funding for that child. Where admission is deferred until January, the child will be on roll at the census and the school will receive funding – full time or part time.

‘Schools may lose part of their funding if parents choose part time, but local authorities can determine their own arrangements to prioritise distribution of funding to such schools. The only local authorities that will be affected by this proposal are around 30 that do not currently provide for the admission of all 4 year olds in September. Those local authorities may have to provide for the admission of around 100 children each if all parents in the area decide to take up the early offer.’

Evidence shows that although local authorities offer part-time provision, the percentage of part time children currently in primary schools is extremely small, which indicates that parents do not prefer part time options. It is expected that an average primary school with 240 children on roll will be able to cope with the small number of children that may attend part time.’

DCSF Briefing April 2010

The admissions process

There will be no change to the process of applying for a place in a Reception class at school. Devon County Council's School Admissions Team makes offers on behalf of schools for full time admission in the academic year. Whether a parent chooses to defer admission or take up a part time place rather than a full time place in September is a matter between the parent and the school.

Will schools be admitting children each term?

Although schools will organise for all children to be admitted in September, it is possible that children will be admitted at the beginning of September, January and even April according to the child's date of birth and parental choice. Schools cannot oblige a child to start in January rather than September, but a parent can choose to admit at the beginning of the term following the fifth birthday. It is anticipated that the majority of children will be admitted in September.

Can entry to school be deferred?

Yes, admission to school can be deferred until the child reaches statutory school age - at the beginning of the term following the child's fifth birthday. If a parent wishes to defer admission, they must inform the head teacher of the school which has been allocated. That place will be held open until the start of the term after the child's fifth birthday during that academic year and will not be offered to another child. If the parent does not let the head teacher know and the child does not start on the date offered, the place will be withdrawn and may be offered to another child.

Child's fifth birthday	Can defer admission until
1 September–31 December	January
1 January–31 March	April
1 April–31 August	September with a new application for a Year 1 place

Important Summer-born children cannot automatically defer admission and enter school in a Reception class in the following September. Children born between 1 March and 31 August cannot defer entry into the Reception intake.

Parents must make an application for a Year 1 place after the summer half-term in 2010. It is possible that this class may have been filled during the Reception year. A place will not have been reserved.

Parents still need to apply as normal by the deadline in January and, after a place is offered, they must inform the head teacher that they wish to defer. The child's place at the school will be kept open for them to join at the later date. **www.devon.gov.uk/admissions**

'Parents with children in nurseries in school must still apply for a school place in Reception or Year 1, even if they want their children to continue their education at the same school. The School Admissions Code allows parents to apply for a school place outside a child's normal age group, and requires admissions authorities to make a decision on such applications on the basis of the circumstances of each case.'

DCSF Briefing April 2010

What parents need to know

If a parent chooses for their 4 year old to stay in an early years setting, the child is entitled to up to 15 funded hours which will continue until they reach statutory school age – the term after their fifth birthday. If a parent chooses this option, it would mean that the child could miss Reception class and go straight to Year 1.

Can parents choose to send their child for fewer/more than 15 hours a week?

Schools will offer a set routine for part time attendance of between 15 and 21 hours a week. A parent should raise particular concerns regarding a child's readiness for school with the head teacher. Schools will not make individual arrangements solely to offer hours which are more convenient.

A parent wants to choose the part time in school option but the times that the local school offers do not fit with the parents requirements. Can they ask for the child to attend at different times?

Schools are not obliged to offer a personalised timetable for children. They may feel it is appropriate to offer a set routine for part time attendance; this may, for example, be all mornings or all afternoons. As above, schools may feel some flexibility can be offered to meet a child's needs but not to suit parents' convenience.

When are free school meals available?

Free school meals are available if low-income criteria have been met and if:

- the child attends school full time
- the child attends school part time (15+ hours) both before and after the lunchtime period on the same day
- the child attends a maintained nursery both before and after the lunchtime period.

Free school meals are not funded in private, voluntary and independent early years settings. Find more information at www.devon.gov.uk/free_school_meals

Is school transport available?

School transport is available at the beginning and end of a school day (not at lunch time) for children who meet education transport criteria. Find more information at www.devon.gov.uk/school_transport

Will parents be able to access full time provision in non-school settings if they don't want their child to start school?

89% of children currently start Reception in the September after their fourth birthday and we expect this to rise as a result of the changes to the Admissions Code. However, there will continue to be a minority of parents who feel that their child has not developed the maturity to be ready for school at this point. All 4 year olds have a legal entitlement to 15 hours of provision in non-school settings until the term after their fifth birthday. Full time places will not be funded in early years settings.

What do working parents need to consider?

Parents can buy more than the 15 funded hours in most early years settings if they wish. Some parents may choose to defer entry to school, take up the 15 hour free entitlement and buy more hours to enable them to go to work. Parents that just want part time provision may choose either school or an early years setting. This may be a difficult choice for parents to make where schools have a nursery class and is further complicated if the school operates as a Foundation Stage Unit.

The table below shows the maximum number of hours that may be available with each option. This will vary from school to school and setting to setting and will depend on a parent's ability to pay.

Options	Additional services that may be available	Comment	Possible total hours a child could attend
15 funded hours in an early years setting	Parent could buy extra hours	Depends on service offered. Some open 8am -6pm	Up to 50 hours a week
Part time in school (between 15 + 21 hours)	Before and after school provision	Depends when the school offer the 15 hours as to whether those services can be accessed	Up to 20 hours - if attending a before school club Up to 27.5 hours - if attending an after school club
Full time in school	Before and after school provision	If 8am-6pm provision is available	Up to 50 hours if attending both before and after school provision

Where can parents get help to understand the options?

Choice Advisers can work with parents of nursery-aged children to support them to make a decision about the best provision for their child. Telephone **01392 381296** Email **cypchoiceadvisers@devon.gov.uk** or visit **www.devon.gov.uk/choiceadviser**

Funding and organisation

How is the funding affected by these changes?

Schools will continue to be funded in the same way for children attending school full time. Part time children in the Reception class will be funded for up to 21 hours at 0.5 Full Time equivalent based on the January enumeration date.

Children attending an early years setting, including a maintained nursery, will be funded for the 15 hours through the Single Funding Formula that was introduced in April 2010.

Do you have any idea of the number of parents who will take this option?

'The Rose Review found that 61% of parents of children aged 4-10 felt that children should start school in the September after their fourth birthday (63% of parents of summer born children). However, 89% of children currently start school in the September after their fourth birthday and we expect this percentage will rise slightly as a result of the policy change, rather than go down, because of the effects of peer pressure etc. on parents' choice for their child.'

DCSF Briefing April 2010

How can early years settings make sure they remain sustainable?

Early years settings may lose 4 year olds who transfer to Reception classes. This could affect their income and sustainability. Some settings have started to admit younger children or extend their hours so that they can offer more hours and take in more children for longer periods of time.

Parents should be encouraged to take up the full 15 hour entitlement when the child becomes eligible for the funding.

Advice and support is available for private, voluntary and independent sector settings from the district co-ordinators. Contact details for district co-ordinators are at www.devon.gov.uk/childrenscentres Schools with nursery classes and nursery schools should email fran.butler@devon.gov.uk

Analysis we have conducted to compare authorities which already offer single September entry to all 4 year olds with other authorities, indicates that there will not be any significant market implications of this type [i.e. loss of customer base]. Only 10% of providers nationally provide for four year olds (from September after their fourth birthday), but these only account for 11% or less of the children at the settings, in the vast majority of cases. This was also the case for maintained nursery schools. While 29% of maintained nursery schools were providing for four year olds for the September after their fourth birthday, in more than 96% of cases, four year olds made up less than 10% of their pupils. We therefore don't expect any reduction in the number of four year olds taking up Early Years provision in the PVI/maintained sectors to have a significant impact on the sustainability of settings.'

DCSF Briefing April 2010

Can a school close its nursery class if numbers fall?

Schools cannot propose to change the age range of the school unless they are a voluntary aided or voluntary controlled school. If any schools with nurseries are experiencing sustainability issues due to a fall in numbers they should speak with their finance officer or early years development officer (schools).

Can school nurseries admit more children than the number they were funded to offer before the introduction of the single funding formula?

Schools can vary the number of children that are admitted as long as they have sufficient space and qualified staff to meet the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

DCC has a duty to make sure that there are enough early years and childcare places and this must be taken into consideration alongside all other factors.

What will Devon County Council do to support the implementation of these changes?

We will:

- provide guidance for parents and carers
- provide information and support for settings and schools
- support all early years providers to positively manage fluctuations in numbers

What happens next?

What do early years settings need to do now?

The most important thing is to make sure that parents are fully informed about the available options. Identify a named person in the setting who can tell parents about the Single Offer Point. You will need to talk with parents about the needs of individual children when supporting them to make the best choice for their child. You may also need to signpost parents to relevant support and guidance.

Who is responsible for completing the Foundation Stage Profile?

If a child is in an early years setting at the end of the EYFS the setting must complete the Foundation Stage Profile.

What should schools do now?

Be prepared to answer questions from parents about these changes. Support parents to make the right choices for their child and signpost to other support.

Schools must decide how the 15-21 hour part time choice will be offered. It is important to know how parents have access to the 15 hour entitlement in feeder early years settings and to consider this when making decisions about part time places. Once a decision has been made you will need to update your website and prospectus as this information will be used by Choice Advisers to support parents in applying for a place.

What else must schools consider?

Make sure that provision is appropriate for children who have just turned 4 years old. Begin by auditing your provision; consider accessibility to resources, toilets, coat hooks, staff ratios and qualifications.

Consider classroom organisation and outdoor play facilities. Will the way that you currently organise the school, mixing age ranges and grouping children still work when you have children that are just 4 years old in the school? Have you got space where children can rest if they become tired? Do you need to change lunchtime arrangements to make the experience appropriate for young children?

Work closely with, and respect, partner organisations. You should consider that when very young children would be in a mixed stage class it might be better for them to be in a local early years setting. What would this mean for the child, the parents, the preschool and the school?

Consider the development of a Partnership Foundation Stage Unit to support transition for the children and get the benefits of joint working, mutual staffing support and ratios for both partners. For further information contact **fran.butler@devon.gov.uk**

Our school has a transition period where children attend part time before attending full time; can we continue to do this?

All children will have the option to start school full time in the September following their fourth birthday. Part time attendance in the summer of a child's rising 4 year may be when a child is no more than 3 years old. There would be no funding for three year olds at school.