

# Out of Cohort?

Guidance on educating children out of  
their chronological cohort

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## Educating children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

### Introduction:

- 1 The purpose of this policy paper is to provide best practice guidelines in respect of pupils being educated in a year group different to that of their chronological age. Expectations of good practice are based upon the belief that it is in the child's best interests to be educated alongside their age equivalent peers with an appropriate level of differentiation. The responsibility for addressing individual needs lies with the school through an appropriate differentiated/enriched curriculum with relevant support. Evidence from a number of studies where this practice has been common indicates consistently that pupils retained a year out of cohort tend to experience more negative effects than positive, particularly those associated with self-esteem. There is no evidence of improved achievement compared to pupils who stay within their age group.
- 2 It should only be necessary in very exceptional circumstances for a pupil to be moved from their chronological age group. In no instance should this be more than a single National Curriculum year.

## A Principles of Inclusive Practice:

- 1 Inclusion is about the quality of children's experiences; how they are helped to learn, achieve and participate fully in the life of the school. It requires positive attitudes towards children who have difficulties in school, responsiveness to individual needs and a willingness amongst all staff to play their part.
- 2 The placement of a child or young person out of his or her chronological year group should not be viewed as a routinely appropriate strategy for meeting a pupil's Special Educational Needs.
- 3 The principles behind educational inclusion stress the importance of all pupils being educated alongside their peers. The responsibility for addressing individual needs lies with the school through an appropriately differentiated curriculum. Personalised learning is at the heart of ensuring that the provision that is made meets the individual pupil's needs.
- 4 Children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) will require additional support arrangements, which should be described in a My Support Plan, Individual Education Plan or through provision mapping.
- 5 The needs of the child or young person should be viewed holistically. The individual's social and emotional development and well-being should be considered alongside their educational needs.

**B****For the Pupil:**

- 1 Pupils are seldom uniformly delayed in their intellectual development. If a pupil is put into a younger age group and a reduced set of general expectations are in place, then areas of strength are at risk of not receiving appropriate stimulation. Similarly, physical, emotional and social expectations are likely to be inappropriate.
- 2 Some summer born children present other challenges. This group may show lower levels of achievement and maturity, but normally this should be addressed within the class group through differentiation of the curriculum.
- 3 The consequences of 'making up' a year can be very negative for the pupil. The alternative – delayed phase transfers, SATs, GCSEs and school-leaving status can also be problematic.
- 4 A pupil's physical maturity may make them conspicuous within a younger peer group, particularly during adolescence.
- 5 Pupils should be active participants in any decision about their education and should receive explanation about the issue at a level that enables them express their own preferences.

## C For the School:

- 1 The decision to move a pupil out of year has implications for admissions when the next year is oversubscribed. This can make it difficult for a school to plan pupil numbers for the following year. They may also block places for pupils due to be admitted and for whom placement may be appropriate or necessary.
- 2 In schools where there is a regular practice of moving children out of age group, staff should be alert to the fact that this may reflect issues in the school relating to curriculum differentiation.
- 3 If a SEND pupil is retained a year behind their chronological age the LA's statutory duty does not necessarily end at 19 years of age. Appropriate arrangements would need to be put in place for the pupil in the context of College of Further Education.

## D Decisions

- 1 In the case of **children with Education, Health Care Plans or a Statement of Special Educational Needs**, the decision to retain a pupil in a year group below their chronological age is made by the school/LA after recommendations through the Annual Review meeting after discussion with appropriate outside agencies. The recommendation needs to be supported with clear evidence of resources used to support the pupil in their chronological year group. The final decision will be made by the LA.
- 2 For children who **do not have an Education Health Care Plan or a statement of Special Educational Needs**, responsibility for deciding whether to retain a child in a year group rests with the head teacher and governing body. However, Schools and Governors should be mindful of guidance and advice, and be fully aware of the implications as outlined above. The decision to take a pupil out of their peer group must never be taken lightly, and must be fully discussed with parents and other services, as appropriate.

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