

## When can your child start at a state-maintained primary school?

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When can your child start at a [state-maintained school](#)?

### Your choices:

- **to apply for a place for the Reception Year in a primary school to start in the school year when he is 5. In most local authorities children are encouraged to start primary school for the Reception Year in the September of the school year in which they will become 5.**
- **to keep your child for the Reception Year in his current pre-school and apply for him to start primary school in Year 1, as the law states that your child must start formal schooling by the beginning of the term after he reaches the age of 5. This is earlier than most European countries.**

**Reception Year:** in which a child follows the Early Years Foundation Curriculum, either in a pre-school setting or in the primary school. This is intended to offer the young child the opportunity to learn according to the needs of that age group, and will lay considerable emphasis on learning through play.

**Year 1:** in which a more formal curriculum is delivered and lessons are more structured

Remember that even if your child attends the nursery of your preferred primary school you still have to apply for a place in the Reception class in the usual way. A place is only offered according to the admissions criteria. Consequently you may be disappointed.

When your child does not get a place in the Reception Year of the primary school where he attends nursery it can be difficult for him to see his nursery class friends go up to the 'big school' class and he cannot. A lot of support is needed so that he does not see that as some kind of personal failure.

If you are still deciding between keeping your child longer in his present pre-school and applying for a primary school place in the Reception Year you can get support and advice on your choices from the [Advisory Centre for Education \(ACE\)](#) and the [BSA:Helpline](#).

**Start considering your choices for the Reception Year at least eighteen months before your child starts.**