

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

[State-maintained schools](#)

[Independent schools](#)

[Home schooling](#)

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.

Can summer-born children start the Reception Year later

Can my summer-born child start the Reception Year in a state primary school later than the September of the school year in which he is 5?

YES, VERY OCCASIONALLY SOMETIMES A LOCAL AUTHORITY MAY PERMIT THIS

You may have the option of keeping him for longer in his current pre-school as some authorities allow parents to apply for a place for the year in which their child is 5 and start in the spring or summer term after their fifth birthday. The school place then remains 'booked' for that child and is not available for another child. However, 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. This can mean that if your child was born in the spring or summer then he could start just after reaching the age of 4.

If your child is in this position and receiving therapy you may wish to discuss with the therapist whether the extra challenge of starting school, when he is so young, may cause pressures for him that affect his

response to therapy, or is just too great a demand on his development. After consultation with the therapist, if you feel that would be the case it is worth approaching your local authority to see whether there is any flexibility on starting dates.

However, it is likely that your local authority considers that the Reception class curriculum offers the best opportunity for your child and refuses to permit a later entry to primary school in the year that your child is 5. This would mean that your summer-born child starts in primary school Reception class just after he is four. In some schools, children attend part-time at first. This is to help young children get used to school life. Individual schools will give details of their specific arrangements. This is at the discretion of the Headteacher.

The BSA hears from parents whose child started at just four in the Reception class. This was to be certain of a place at the chosen primary school even though they preferred him to start there in the September after he was 5, as the law allows. They told the BSA that provided a child is supported by his parents, teachers and ideally his therapist during this settling-in year he should be able to cope with the new challenges. The Reception class curriculum is less formal and should meet the needs of the young child.

Parents can also be reassured that the government has provided more training opportunities for Reception Year staff in supporting children with speech, language and communication needs, such as stammering. Your child who stammers should be professionally supported through the curriculum and should not feel any sense of pressure, even when he is one of the youngest in the class.

Information or training for staff is often available from speech and language therapists and specific strategies of support for class teachers can be accessed at [BSA:Education](#).

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When can your child start at an independent school?

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If your child is already placed in an independent school with a nursery department then you are likely to have the choice of a pre-preparatory department with a curriculum to provide for the needs of this age group. Most schools will also accept applications for the 'pre-prep' for children not attending their nursery. The next stage is usually the preparatory school for children aged between 7 and 13, although some schools provide secondary provision for children from the age of 11 years.

Many independent schools have tests, interviews and assessments that can be very stressful for young children so when your child stammers it is important to try to reduce any worries he may have. Advice from a therapist could be very helpful and information and support is available from the [BSA:Helpline](#).

Your child's therapist should also be informed about your final choice of school and may be able to provide information and/or advice that you can pass on to staff there. [BSA:Education](#) provides training for teachers to support children who stammer and can be accessed by your child's teachers.

When can your child start home education?

Home education

The law states that your child must be in a legally recognised type of education in the term that begins after he has reached the age of 5. If you wish to educate him at home from that time you must contact your local authority one year beforehand to inform the education officer, with responsibility for home schooling, of your intentions. Then you will need to follow the advice supplied to ensure that you are complying with the law.

Your child's therapist should also be informed and may be able to provide you with information and/or advice. [BSA:Education](#) provides training for teachers to support children who stammer and you may find some of these simple strategies useful, when you are working with your child.

Step 1: How do I decide between schools?

Do staff need to know about stammering in my chosen school?

Is my choice of school limited when my child stammers?

NO

While it is helpful if your selected schools have some experience or knowledge of stammering, you do not need to restrict your choice of school in any way when your child stammers, as all teachers (and home educators) can learn the very simple strategies to support your child. Speech and language therapists often provide information or training for staff and specific strategies of support for class teachers are available at [BSA:Education](#).

Planning ahead for primary education

It is advisable to start thinking about your choice of primary school at least 18 months before your child would start. You should consider all the [options in primary education](#) available to you before making a list of possible schools for your child.

Follow steps 1 to 4 to make your final choice of school(s) to apply for. You may apply for more than one.

Step 1

Start with your child and start early. Remember that children who stammer generally have no other learning difficulties. They have the same range of academic abilities and personal qualities as children who do not stammer so that you should base your choice of school on your own child's academic, social and personal needs. You can then discuss the issue of your child's speech needs with the school that your child will attend. Every school should be able to adopt the simple strategies that support a child who stammers and there is considerable training available for staff on children's speech, language and communication needs now, so do not worry if your selected school does not appear to have experience of children who stammer.

It is important that your first thoughts are about your child

Talk to your child about what is important to him. If he is already at a pre-school find out what is most important to him about his routines there. Are there any special things that your child wants? Does he want a local school because his friends are going there? **Children who stammer have the same ability and personality profile as those who do not, but may be rather sensitive to changes of location, teachers and children. You need to work out whether your child would be most helped by a smaller school, with children he already knows, or in a larger one where he may know fewer children but the facilities seem better. Different types of organisation will appeal to different children, the BSA has been told by some primary school parents that their child enjoys a more**

structured environment rather than an open-plan one.

Now what is important to you?

All parents want their children to be happy at school. Try to look at all parts of school life. Are there any special things that your child needs? Make a list of the things that you and your child are looking for in a school. Put them in order of importance. Include opportunities to pursue interests like sport and music, the family need for out of hours care and holiday clubs for example. You may wish to include a faith school or an academy as well as other state schools in your list of possible choices. You can apply for more than one school.

Step 2: Judging for yourself

Below are some common reasons often given by parents for wanting a school and why it is important for your child that you get the whole picture:

'Everyone says it is a good school.' Schools can get good and bad reputations unfairly and can change very quickly with changes in head or staff. What suits one parent of the school may not suit another.

'It had an excellent OFSTED Report.' The reports are important as a guide but they can become very quickly out of date as changes of staff, particularly that of the Headteacher, can significantly alter the performance of a school. You may note particularly the inspectors' views on how well the school supports children with individual needs, what emphasis is laid on speech, language and communication needs, and how pupils behave towards each other, as bullying is inevitably a concern when your child stammers.

'It does well in the league tables.' There are different views on the usefulness of these and the Headteachers' associations are concerned that parents should not rely on them, as there have been mistakes in assessment of children in national tests (SATS) and in recording information.

League tables show the type - community, foundation etc. - of a school, its age range, pupil numbers, number and percentage of pupils with statements of special educational needs (SEN), supported at 'School Action' or 'School Action Plus'. As children who stammer may be placed on 'School Action' you should take note of that figure, as a positive use of 'School Action' could be beneficial for your child.

A quick calculation will tell you whether the Year 6 number of pupils is roughly equal to the total number of pupils divided by the number of years. If not, check out if it is either getting more or less popular over the years.

Next come a couple of columns that enable you to assess if any 'value' is added - there may be a listing for English as an additional language or for special needs pupils. These factors may help you to see what the school makes of the 'raw materials' it starts with.

The crucial columns show the results at Key Stages 1 and 2 for English, Maths and Science - particularly at Stage 2 - currently around 68% of all Year 6 pupils achieve Level 4 or above (the level expected of an average pupil), so use this figure as a rough benchmark.

'It has a uniform so the discipline must be good.' Uniforms and discipline don't always go together. Remember 'good discipline' means different things to different people.

'It is brand new and has lovely grounds.' Worn but well-loved older buildings can be just as welcoming. It's important to check if the building is well cared for, whatever its age.

Step 3: Collect information about possible school choices

State schools - Check the local authority guides first. Then ask all the schools you are interested in, for their information. If a school is in another education authority's area, your own local authority should be able to tell you how to contact them. It should also tell you if a school received more applications than it had places last year. Schools must have a guide too - often called the school prospectus - to give to interested parents. By law this must include information about admission of children with special educational needs and disabilities. Check [schools finder](#) for profiles on all state and independent schools in England. These include tables of pupils' achievement at each individual school. If you don't have Internet access or the profile is missing, ask the school for a hard copy of the information.

Independent schools - you can find out more about individual schools at the [Independent Schools Directory UK](#). Then you should contact the individual school.

General Policies

Each state school profile also contains the following and most independent schools do observe similar good practice - the school's successes, details of extra-curricular activities, health and safety information. You can also study other documents available from the school. There must be: Home-School Agreement, Inspectors' ([OFSTED](#)) Reports written on the school, Accessibility Plan, Sex Education Policy, Race Equality Policy, Performance (league) Tables, Work schemes and syllabuses, Religious Education Syllabus.

Specific policies that may affect your child who stammers

Special Educational Needs Policy

This explains how the school carries out the guidance of the [Special Educational Needs Code of Practice \(SEN Code\)](#), in which the Government states how resources can be allocated to meet a child's individual need. Occasionally the SEN policy may actually specify that support must be given for communication needs as the Government is committed to training school staff in these, including stammering. If you read that in an SEN policy it will be a good sign of the school's commitment to the speech needs of your child.

Enrichment policy

Schools are expected to meet the individual needs of all pupils, including those who are identified as gifted and/or talented. A separate policy explaining this provision shows that there is a real effort to meet all individual needs.

Behaviour Policy

The behaviour policy should mention bullying and include racial and sexual harassment. Most schools will have a separate anti-bullying policy and that is to be preferred as it indicates that bullying is considered specifically to be a serious issue.

Support for your child's stammer

While it is helpful if your selected schools have some experience or knowledge of stammering, you do not need to restrict your choice of school in any way when your child stammers. All teachers (and home educators) can learn the very simple strategies to support your child. Speech and language therapists often provide information or training for staff and specific strategies of support for class teachers are available at [BSA:Education](#).

Make a list of the schools that you are considering

List the good points for each school and list any not-so-good points. Are there any points you need to look out for when you visit the school? Are there any questions you would like to ask? **Write them down now.**

Step 4: Visit the schools you are considering and get the whole picture

Attend Open Evenings and arrange a visit to the schools you are considering: try to visit during a normal school day. These visits are usually held in the summer or autumn terms just before applications are completed. You can find out about them by contacting the school directly or you may see an insert in the local press.

You may wish to consider taking your child on a school visit or to an Open Evening, this is a decision that only you can make as children will vary in their reaction to this. A child who stammers who may worry about changes may benefit from being involved, particularly if he has never been in a primary school before.

Some ideas to explore with staff on your visit to the school

Many things go together to make a good school with happy pupils. High staff turnover may mean the school is unsettled. Very low turnover may mean the staff are happy but the school could be set in its ways. Small things such as friends being put in the same class can make a big difference to children. Good leadership generally means a good school.

Exercise is important for all children but are less 'sporty' children encouraged? Is there opportunity for children to take part in performances and would your child be encouraged to do this if he wished, even when stammering?

Schools can have healthy eating policies - has this school one? Does the food in the dining room look fresh and appetising?

Books and work sheets can be non-sexist and non-racist. Would the school be prepared to include a reading book for children that had a character who stammered if you recommended it? Is this important to you?

Is playtime/break seen positively? Is there a range of activities going on or does one activity dominate? Have playground supervisors had training, particularly in managing episodes of teasing and bullying? Does the school offer an extended day e.g. an after-school club? How are children's views taken into account? Is there a school council?

Some parents and education experts have different views about education. Teaching children in mixed ability classes is the norm in state primary schools but academic selection and the value of homework are all issues that people feel strongly about.

Selection is not allowed in state primary schools but in the private sector there may be an entrance test and some setting according to ability. Which would you prefer for your child? Does the school set homework? How much do children generally have to do each day? Does the school have a homework policy? Do parents have any say in how the school is run? What does the school do to involve and inform parents? How does the school report to parents?

Use your eyes and ears. Is the school inclusive, welcoming and well cared for? Do staff and pupils seem happy? Evidence of an exciting approach to language should be clear as you go into classrooms, look for effective displays of books, a quiet area where children can read and work and that indefinable sense of quiet purpose and co-operation that will provide an environment which is encouraging and yet offers challenge. Notice how staff speak to children during lessons, do the children seem attentive and responsive; do staff listen with interest to the children's answers?

Are you encouraged to see the whole school? Check the library. Is it well used and have a wide range of books? Are the cloakrooms and toilets clean and well maintained? Check the walls and notice boards. Is pupils' work on display? Are there notices for parents? Check the school gate and the playground. Don't

be put off by large groups of older pupils - remember your child will be one soon!

Note how secure the building is as you arrive and leave, you should be reassured by the entry procedures.

Support for your child's stammer

You need to discover when visiting the school exactly how staff will offer support for your child's speech. The best teacher to meet with about this is the teacher responsible for special educational needs (SENCO). Discuss the support for your child's speech. Ask about the staff's experience/knowledge/training in stammering, links with therapists and whether there will be a key staff member, such as the class teacher, to whom you can communicate your worries and who will contact you. If the school has a child who stammers on the roll you could ask if that parent could be contacted to give permission for you to talk with them about the support their child has received. Check if your child will be able to go to a particular adult if there is a problem: in primary schools this is likely to be the class teacher or the classroom assistant. Many schools have home-partnership agreements and you should enquire about this.

Children who stammer need to feel safe from bullying, and to be supported by staff and pupils so that their achievements are appreciated. Enquire about the policy on bullying and how it is dealt with. Make sure you are happy with the approach adopted. Look for evidence of the recognition of achievement in wall displays and for a sense of inclusion.

If staff have no knowledge of stammering there is no need to be alarmed. You should discuss with them how they could access this information from the therapist, and the [BSA](#). Simple strategies to meet your child's needs in the classroom are available at [BSA:Education](#)

Add any points you think important to your list. Then draw up your final list of schools for your application form.

Step 5: Application

Step 5: Application: State-schools - contact the local authority

You would be advised to keep file copies of all the documents connected with your application. You will need them if you wish to appeal against the decision of the local authority.

[Directgov](#) provides comprehensive information on the whole process of applying to state schools.

The local authority manages admissions and sets the dates for the process: usually from September the year before admission. The admissions authority for a school may be the local authority or the Governing Body of the school. However the admissions arrangements are set by law to ensure fairness. Parents usually choose three preferred schools on the application form. An additional form is often required by church schools about religious observance. When there is a place available in a chosen school it must be offered to parents but it is important to express a preference on the form because if there are more applications than places available, preferences will be taken into account.

Admissions criteria

When your child stammers It's very important to find out what admissions criteria schools use before you choose which schools to apply to, so that you can see if they match your child's situation. Details of admissions criteria, along with figures showing the number of applications schools received the previous year, are listed in school prospectuses. This information is also available in the 'Information for Parents' booklet produced by your local authority.

Some common admissions criteria

- Social and medical need

This criteria may be helpful for a child who stammers and provides an opportunity for you to provide information about the effects of stammering on your child and your reasons for choosing a particular school. **If your child has been placed on 'Early Years Action' or 'Early Years Action Plus' at pre-school there is clear evidence that the stammer has been acknowledged as causing difficulties.**

- your child has a brother or sister who will be at the school when they start there
- for religious or faith schools, your child or family is of the particular religion or faith served by the school
- for secondary schools if your child attends a linked primary school

If your child is in line for more than one of your chosen schools, you will be offered a place at the school you ranked highest on the application. If none of your chosen schools can offer your child a place because other applicants met the criteria more closely, your local authority will offer you a place at another school.

What if my child has complex needs?

When your child has complex needs you must talk to your local authority and your child's doctor about what sort of school would be best. In some cases the local authority will need to assess your child's educational needs. If they decide your child needs specialist help, they will make an assessment and may write a Statement of Special Educational Needs, naming a school. This means that a state school that is named must give your child a place.

Completing your application form

Once you have decided which schools are right for your child, you need to get an application pack from the local authority. Complete the application form in the pack or submit your application online. There is always a section for reasons for your choice of school, and for stating whether the child is on the SEN register. If your child stammers and you believe that the stammer does affect learning then he should be on this register at 'Early Years Action' or 'Early Years Action Plus' if he is receiving therapy.

If you wish to say on the application that the school you prefer is particularly appropriate for the support it can give your child who stammers, then it is helpful to have already established that your child's speech needs have been supported by the SEN Code of Practice through 'Early Years Action' or 'Early Years Action Plus' . Also, the BSA can provide information about the effects of stammering on children to support your application. Your child's speech and language therapist may be prepared to supply personal details of your child's needs as well. However, this is not permitted by all therapy services, as the service may not wish to appear to be supporting one local school over another.

Important dates

Most local authorities set a deadline for applications in the November or December before your child starts primary school in the following September.

The results of your application

The local authority will post you a letter with details of the school place offered to your child on 1 March (or the next working day), or let you know by email if you have applied online and have asked them to do so.

Appeals: If you are not satisfied with the outcome of your application, you have the right to appeal to an independent appeal panel. The information on this process will be provided to you when the local authority advises you that your child has not been offered a place in your preferred school(s).

Application - Independent schools

These require an individual application to the school. Each school will follow its own procedures for application, deadlines and Appeal. Sometimes parents apply for both state and independent schools at the same time.

Remember that when your child stammers he may be more likely to find all the processes connected with school transfer very stressful, particularly if he is having to visit a number of schools and perhaps also take tests for entry to independent schools. It is important that he feels supported by the family and advice from a speech and language therapist could be very helpful.

When your child starts at the new school

There will be an opportunity for your child to visit the school before starting and you will be invited in as well to meet teachers. Ask particularly to meet your child's class teacher in the primary school, and the teacher responsible for special educational needs to discuss the support for your child's speech. You may also find that your child's speech and language therapist is prepared to visit a state school to discuss your child's speech needs. In the case of an independent school, this is a matter for the local service to decide upon according to their protocols.

Parents tell the BSA that they have to frequently remind staff if there is a change of teacher that their child stammers. Do be prepared to keep close contact with the school and to pass on any concerns to the class teacher other appropriate colleague, such as the classroom assistant, sooner rather than later, so problems may be nipped in the bud. Give the teacher the [information about stammering](#) from this resource and details of the online training for staff at [BSA:Education](#).

Summary

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

Reception Year: the school year in which your child reaches the age of five.

Your choices:

- to place your child for the Reception Year in a primary school
- to keep your child for the Reception Year in his current pre-school

The law states that your child must start formal schooling at the beginning of the term after he reaches the age of 5. This is earlier than most European countries.

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 are 5.

Start considering your choices for the Reception Year at least eighteen months before he starts

How do I decide between schools?

Start with your child and start early. Remember that children who stammer generally have no other learning difficulties. They have the same range of academic abilities and personal qualities as children who do not stammer so that you should base your choice of school on your own child's academic, social and personal needs. You can then discuss the issue of your child's speech needs with the school that your child will attend.

Do not worry if your selected school does not appear to have experience of children who stammer. Every school, both state and independent, should be able to adopt the simple strategies that support a

child who stammers. There is considerable training available for staff on children's speech, language and communication needs. Information will be available from the speech and language therapist, the [BSA](#) and [BSA:Education](#).

Collect information about all the schools in which you are interested and try to visit them during a working day.

Application

Contact the local authority for state schools

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Application: Contact the individual school

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Application: Contact the local authority

If you wish to educate him at home from that time you must contact your local authority one year beforehand. Then you must follow the advice supplied to ensure that you are complying with the law.