



Department
for Education

Delayed school admissions for summer-born pupils (2025)

Research report

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Executive Summary

This is the fifth data collection gathered from school admissions leads in upper-tier local authorities in England, and the fourth parent survey conducted by the Department for Education (DfE) since 2017. Its purpose is to monitor the demand from parents and carers to delay the admission of their summer-born child to reception class until the September following the child's fifth birthday, and local authority (LA) responses to requests for them to do so.

Aims

The main aims of the research are to continue to monitor:

- Trends in the number of requests for delayed admission into reception for summer-born children.
- How local authorities handle requests for delayed admission for summer-born children.
- Factors which may be affecting demand for requests to delay entry for summer-born children.
- Parent and carers' reasons for requesting delayed entry for their summer-born children, as well as their demographics and childcare arrangements.

Approach

Information in this report was gathered from 128 local authorities in Spring 2025, via an online survey of admissions leads in upper tier authorities in England; and from 604 parents and carers who had made a request to delay their summer-born child's admission to reception class. A link to the parent survey was sent by 29 local authorities on behalf of the Department for Education (DfE).

Survey of local authorities – key findings

- Most local authorities (93%) manage requests to delay admission for all community and voluntary controlled primary schools. Around two-thirds also handle requests for other types: 68% for all foundation schools (and a further 16% for some of them), 67% for all voluntary-aided schools (18% for some), and 63% for all academies and free schools (22% for some). These figures are slightly

lower than in 2023 when just over seven in ten local authorities handled requests for all such schools¹.

- More local authorities report not handling requests for certain school types compared to 2023. In 2025, 14% did not handle requests for academies and free schools, and 15% did not for foundation or voluntary-aided schools—up from 3–4% in 2023.
- Thirty-one percent of local authorities reported a policy of agreeing to all requests to delay admission for summer-born children. This continues a steady increase from 9% in 2018, 22% in 2020, and 28% in 2023.
- The number of requests made by parents to delay their summer-born child's admission appears to have fallen slightly since 2023, though this is in line with lower birth rates in recent years². Total numbers peaked in 2021 after sharp annual increases since 2016.
- School census data (2024/25) confirms that pupils being admitted out of year group continue to represent a very small proportion of the summer-born intake - 1.6%, which is a similar proportion to the last few years.
- The vast majority (95%) of requests made by parents to delay their summer-born child's admission were agreed by local authorities in 2025.

Survey of parents and carers – key findings

- Pupil and parent characteristics are similar to those presented in earlier waves
- Latest data on month of birth shows that just over half of summer-born pupils with requests to delay admission were born in August (52%). Almost a quarter (24%) were born in July, 12% in June, 7% in May and 5% in April.
- Overall, 19% of the children were born premature. Five percent were born at less than 30 weeks gestation and a further 14% were born between 30 and 36 weeks. These are over double the average for England and Wales.³
- Almost a third of parents (32%) indicated their child had been identified by an educational or health professional as having a special educational need and/or disability (SEND), and a further 12% said they suspected their child has SEND.

¹ While LAs may coordinate or support requests for OAA schools and offer guidance final decisions remain with these schools or their trust.

² [Schools, pupils and their characteristics, Academic year 2024/25 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK](#)

³ [Birth characteristics in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics](#) (2022) 7.9% of live births were born before 37 weeks, and between 1.4% - 1.6% were born before 32 weeks

This compares to 18.4% of pupils designated as having SEND in schools in England in 2024/25⁴.

- White pupils are over-represented amongst pupils with delayed entry: 86% are White (74% White British; 12% White non-British) compared to 68% White amongst all primary pupils (60% White British; 8% White non-British)⁵. A very small minority of summer-born delayed entry pupils are Asian (3%), Black (1%) or Other (1%). This compares nationally to 13%, 6% and 3% respectively for these groups in 2024/25.
- Twenty percent of respondents had an annual household income of £100,000 or more. For almost two-thirds (64%) this was over £50,000, and for almost three-quarters (74%) it was over £35,000. ONS data shows that median household income⁶ in England in 2024 was under £40,000.
- Almost half of respondents (47%) reported 'my child is not ready' was the main reason for requesting delayed entry for summer-born pupils, and most parents (82%) said it was either their main reason or a consideration. Twenty-six percent said their child's medical condition or developmental delay was the main reason (42% said it was the main reason or a consideration). Twenty percent said the main reason was evidence seen on school experiences of summer-born children (59% including whether it was a consideration).
- The child was three-years old when most parents decided they wanted to delay their admission to school (62%), and almost a third (29%) made the decision earlier than that.
- The vast majority of respondents reported that their child attended a nursery or pre-school (96%)⁷. Among those who did, 69% started before their third birthday, and 27% started aged three. There appears to have been a small increase in the proportion of children starting at a younger age since the previous survey (In 2023, these figures were 61% and 37% respectively)⁸.

⁴ [Special educational needs in England, Academic year 2024/25 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK.](#)

⁵ [Schools, pupils and their characteristics, Academic year 2024/25 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK](#)

⁶ Median household disposable income in the UK for financial year end 2024 was £36,700. [Average household income, UK - Office for National Statistics](#) Median equivalised household income in the UK before taxes and benefits was £37,300, increasing to £39,700 after taxes and benefits. [Effects of taxes and benefits on UK household income - Office for National Statistics](#)

⁷ Parents were asked to include nursery schools, nursery classes attached to a primary or infants' school, day nurseries, pre-schools, and special day nurseries or units for children with special educational needs.

⁸ Since September 2024, eligible working parents have been able to get 30 hours free childcare for 2-year-olds (15 hours from April 2024).

- For all those attending nursery or preschool aged four, 15% attended for more than 31 hours a week which is slightly more than 10% reported in 2023, 42% attended 21-30 hours and 39% attended 11-20 hours. There also appears to be a small increase in median hours attended: 24 hours a week, up from 22 hours in 2023, and 17 hours in 2020⁹.
- Seventy-two percent of children with delayed admission were in more than 20 hours of fully funded childcare per week in the period *after* they could have started school (40% for all 30 hours). This compares to 63% in the period just *before* they could have started school (37% for all 30 hours).

⁹ These figures cover three years' worth of data collected from parents in each survey wave rather than a specific academic or calendar year.

Introduction

This is the fifth report in a series of local authority (LA) surveys which began in 2017, designed to help monitor demand for summer-born children to be admitted to reception at age 5. Previous reports identified that there was a sharp increase in both requests and approvals in 2016 and 2017, with the rate of increase slowing up to 2020 and levelling off with a small dip thereafter. Additional questions were included in the survey this time to help understand how local authorities handle any requests they receive from parents to keep their child out-of-cohort as they transition to secondary school.

The report also presents results from the fourth survey of parents and carers who requested to delay admission to reception for their summer-born child to gather their perspectives and demographics.

Overview of admissions for summer-born children

The [School Admissions Code](#) requires admission authorities to provide for the admission of all children in the September following their fourth birthday. This is when most children start school, but a child does not reach [compulsory school age](#) until after their fifth birthday. Children born from 1 April to 31 August – known as summer-born children – do not need to start school until the September after their fifth birthday, a year after they could first have started school. A parent may request their summer-born child is admitted out of their normal age group at this point – to reception rather than year 1.

If a child is admitted to primary school out of their normal age group, the parent may make further requests, for example, when they transfer from primary to secondary school. The admission authority of each school must make a decision based on the circumstances of the case and in the child's best interests.

An admission authority may not decide that a child should start school before compulsory school age - that is the parent's decision. The government believes it is rarely in a child's best interests to miss a year of their education, for example, by beginning primary school in year 1 rather than reception, or secondary school in year 8 rather than year 7.

Research approach

Aims and objectives

The main aims of this research are to continue to monitor:

- Trends in the number of requests for delayed admission into reception for summer-born children.

- How local authorities handle requests for delayed admission for summer-born children.
- Factors which may be affecting demand for requests to delay entry for summer-born children.
- Parent and carers' reasons for requesting delayed entry for their summer-born children, as well as their demographics and childcare arrangements.

Method

Survey of local authorities

An online survey of admissions leads in upper tier local authorities in England, live between 20 March and 11 April 2025. Responses were collected from 128 of the 153 local authorities (an 84% response rate). Within this, there is a subsample of local authorities that also provided information in each of the earlier waves meaning that we were able to look at any changes in demand, and policies around delayed admission, among the same group of local authorities over time.

Survey of parents and carers

An online survey of parents and carers who had made a request to the local authority to delay their summer-born child's admission until they were aged 5 in either September 2024, 2025, or 2026. To reach the sample, a request was sent to local authorities to circulate the survey link via parents' email addresses they may hold. Links were circulated by 29 local authorities and valid responses were received from 614 parents and carers within these areas. The survey was live between the 13 May and 14 June 2025.

Data considerations and caveats

Data from local authorities

The data in this report should be viewed as indicative considering that:

- **The quality and consistency of data held by local authorities on requests for delayed admission varies.**

Whilst around six in ten local authorities reported they held accurate data on requests made (60%) and requests agreed (63%), the rest reported that their data was estimated, partial or in a few cases (n=5) not collected.

In open responses, local authorities explained that their data may be over-represented because they counted requests to second or third preference schools separately,

whereas others counted each child for whom a request was made a single request, regardless of the number of schools the request was made to.

- **The volume of requests varies widely between local authorities**

From just a few per year in some areas to over 200 in others. As a result, small changes in low-volume areas or large shifts in high-volume areas could disproportionately affect overall trends.

- **Trend analysis is based on a subsample of local authorities that also submitted data in previous surveys.**

To help test whether the inclusion or exclusion of particular authorities from the survey had disproportionately inflated or deflated results, trend analysis was undertaken only with the 71 local authorities that provided data on delayed admissions for each year since 2020. The overall pattern of demand amongst this group was very similar to that of all respondents, which helps increase confidence in the results.

- **Data presented for 2025 is provisional**

Requests to delay admission continue to be submitted after the main admissions round.

Data from Parents and Carers

- **Respondents to the parent survey were not evenly distributed across local authorities**

A link to the parent survey was circulated by 29 local authorities, and over one-third of responses came from just two local authorities (see figure 6).

Previous reports in the series

Reports on the findings of previous surveys in this series are available at:

- [Delayed school admissions for summer-born pupils \(2023\) - GOV.UK](#)
- [Delayed school admissions for summer-born pupils \(2020\) - GOV.UK](#)
- [Delayed school admissions for summer-born pupils \(2019\) - GOV.UK](#)
- [Delayed school admissions for summer-born pupils \(2018\) - GOV.UK](#)

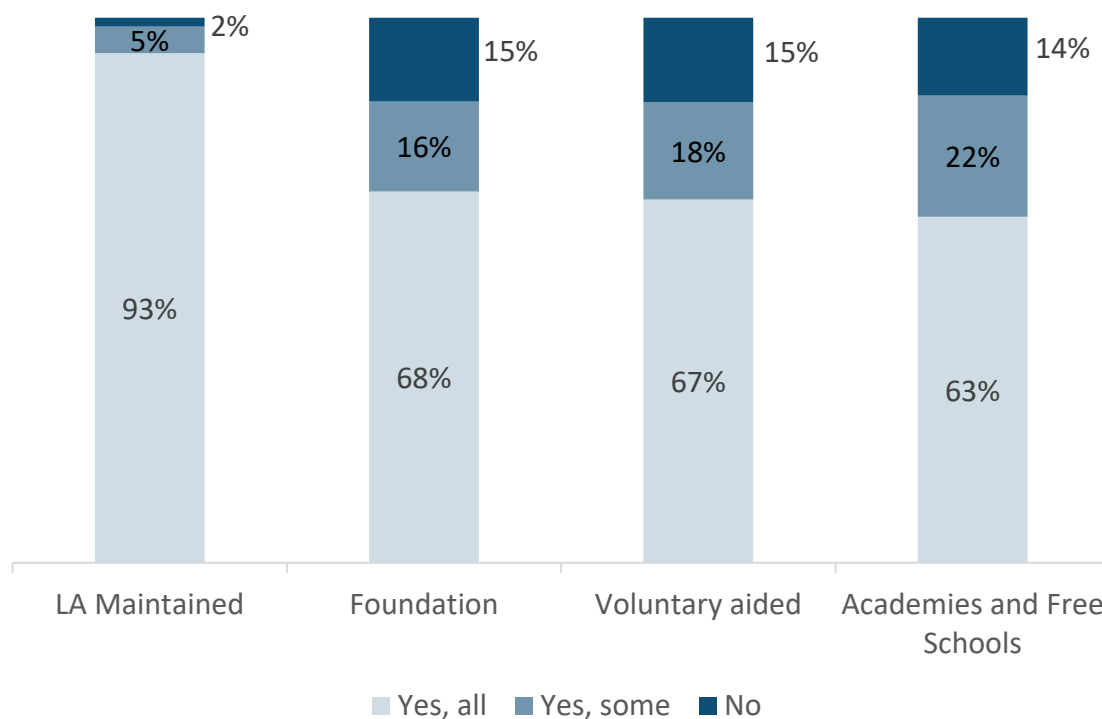
Survey of local authorities

Local authority coordination and policy on handling requests

As shown in Figure 1, the large majority of authorities (93%) handle requests from parents to delay admission for all community and voluntary controlled primary schools (local authority maintained) primary schools in their area. Around two-thirds also handle all requests for delayed admission to own-admission authority (OAA) schools such as foundation schools (68%), voluntary-aided schools (67%) and academies and free-schools (63%) – this is down slightly from just over 7 in 10 local authorities in each case in 2023.

Compared to 2023, a higher proportion of local authorities report that they do not handle requests for each type of schools presented. In 2025, 14% of local authorities did not handle requests for academies and free-schools, and 15% did not do so for foundation schools or voluntary-aided schools. These figures are higher than those reported in 2023 (3%, 3% and 4% respectively). Two local authorities responding to the latest survey (2%) also report that they do not coordinate requests for any type, including local authority-maintained schools.

Figure 1: Types of primary schools for which local authorities coordinate requests to delay admission



Base: 128 local authorities. Bars exclude 'not applicable' where none of a school type is located within the local authority area.

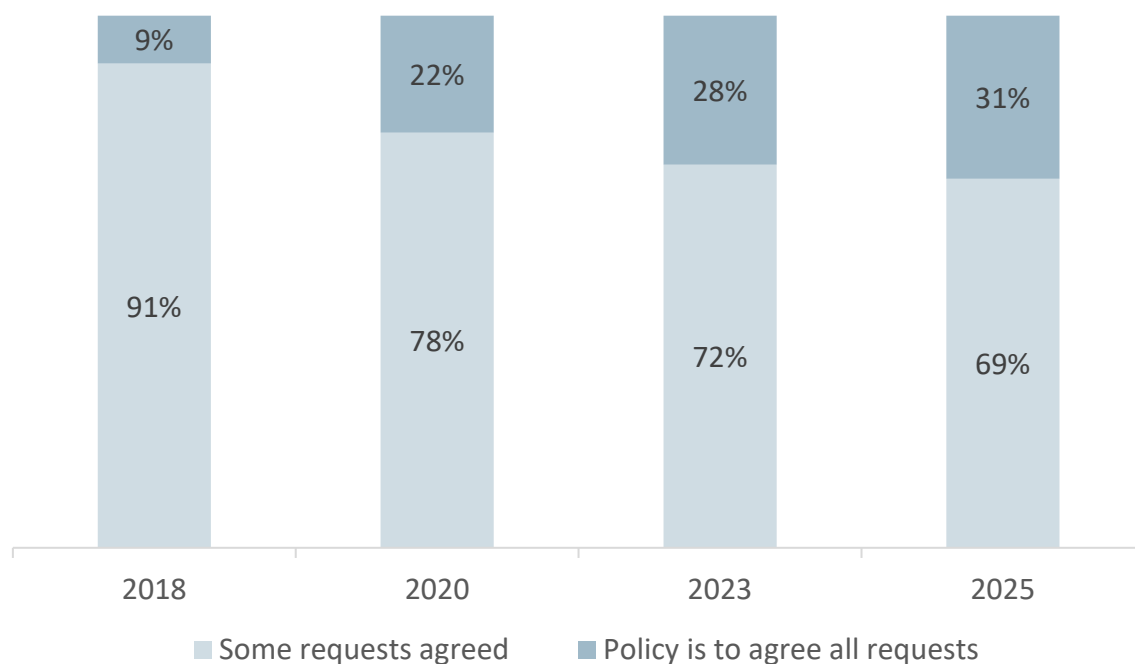
Open feedback highlights that in many local areas, schools are usually involved in the decision around delayed admission. Some authorities ask the parent to put a request in writing to the school, particularly for OAA schools. Even though the local authority handles or helps coordinates requests for OAA schools, and provides advice and guidance, the school will make the final decision to agree a request. One authority said they provided training to primary schools to encourage them to agree requests.

“Our Admissions and Place Planning Forum have agreed we introduce a working group over the summer term with a view to introducing a new approach to ensure continuity and fairness of decision making across the local area” – *London Borough, coordinates admissions for all school types and agrees some requests.*

Local authority policy on handling requests

Overall, 31% of all authorities responding said their policy was to agree all requests to delay admission for summer-born children. Figure 2 shows this is a steady rise on previous surveys (from 9% in 2018, to 22% in 2020 and 28% in 2023).

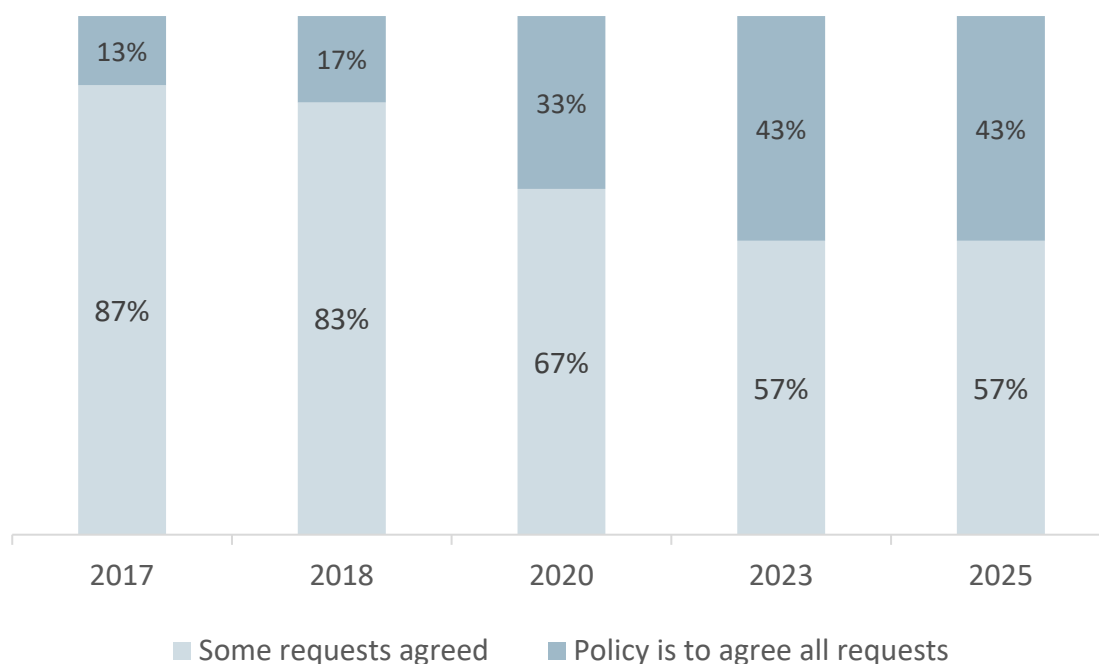
Figure 2: Policy on how requests are handled (whether agree all or some) - amongst local authorities responding to each survey wave since 2018



Base sizes: 92 local authorities in 2018, 108 in 2020, 100 in 2023, and 124 in 2025.

Figure 3 presents data among 30 authorities answering this question in each survey since 2017 to assess trends amongst a consistent sample. This again shows a growing tendency to agree all requests between 2017 and 2023 (17% of this sub-sample had an ‘agree all’ policy in 2018, rising to 43% in 2023). This stabilised in 2025.

Figure 3: Policy on how requests are handled (whether agree all or some) – trend data among local authorities responding to every survey wave



Base: 30 local authorities responding to the question since 2017.

Local authorities provided additional context in open feedback:

“Admission authorities make the decisions on these requests but the LA co-ordinates requests to ensure consistency and tracking” – *a local authority which coordinates requests for all school types and has a policy to agree some requests.*

Some local authorities explained how they encouraged parents to speak to schools first to discuss all possible solutions for the child before making an application to delay admission:

“All requests are made through the LA via the main tranche application process for reception. However, we always advise parents to speak with their preferred schools prior to making their application.” – *a local authority which coordinates requests for all school types and has a policy to agree all requests.*

“For those starting primary school, we ask all parents to discuss the issues and concerns they may have about their child starting school with the headteachers at their preferred schools before making an application [request] (as well as pointing them to the DfE guidance for summer-born applicants). We think this may reduce the numbers of actual applications to defer as headteachers are able to discuss options for part time attendance, differentiated learning, and the ranges of support in place for entry in their standard cohort.” *A local authority which coordinates requests for all school types in their area and has a policy to agree some requests.*

Demand for delayed admission

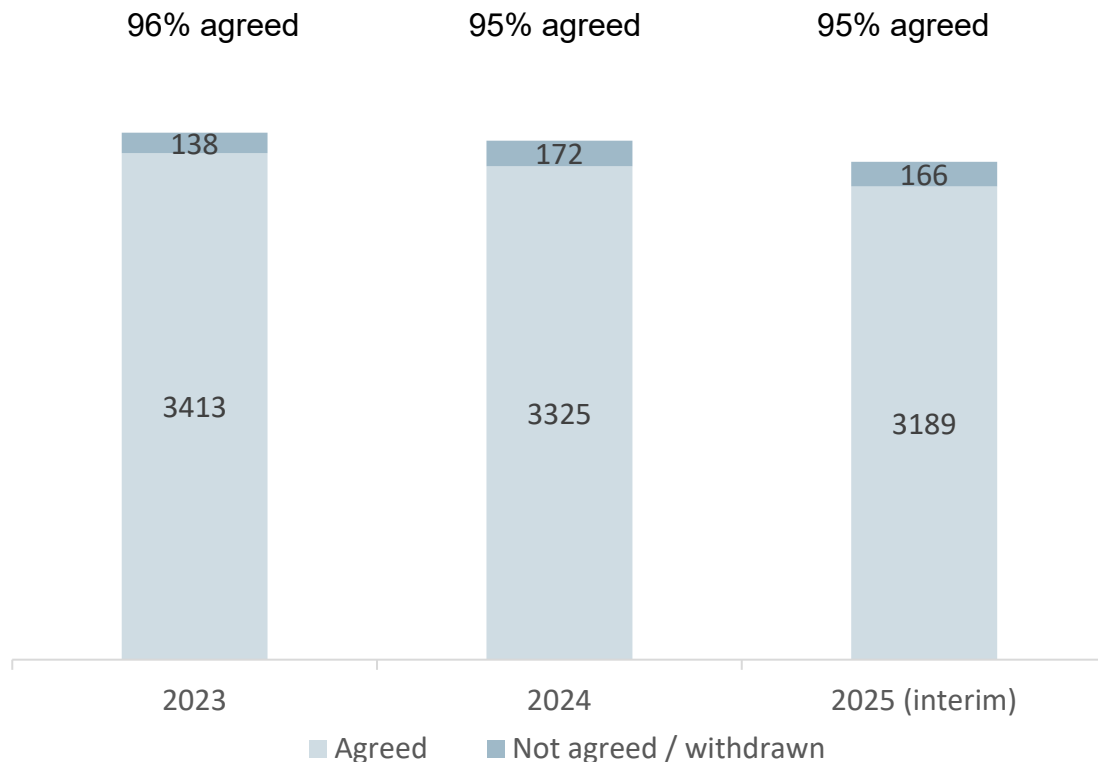
As shown in Figure 4, since 2023, the number of requests made by parents to delay their summer-born child’s admission appears to have fallen slightly, although this is as may be expected given lower birth rates and falling primary school entry in recent years¹⁰. The chart also shows the vast majority of requests made were agreed by local authorities – 96% in 2023 and 95% in both 2024 and 2025.

School census data (2024/25) confirms that pupils being admitted out of year group continue to represent a very small minority - 1.6% of the summer-born intake which is a similar proportion to the last few years¹¹.

¹⁰ [Schools, pupils and their characteristics, Academic year 2024/25 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK](#)

¹¹ The equivalent figure was in 1.3% in 2020/21, 1.6% in 2021/22 and 1.5% in 2022/23.¹¹

Figure 4: Number of requests made, by agreed and not agreed/withdrawn (all local authorities responding in 2025)

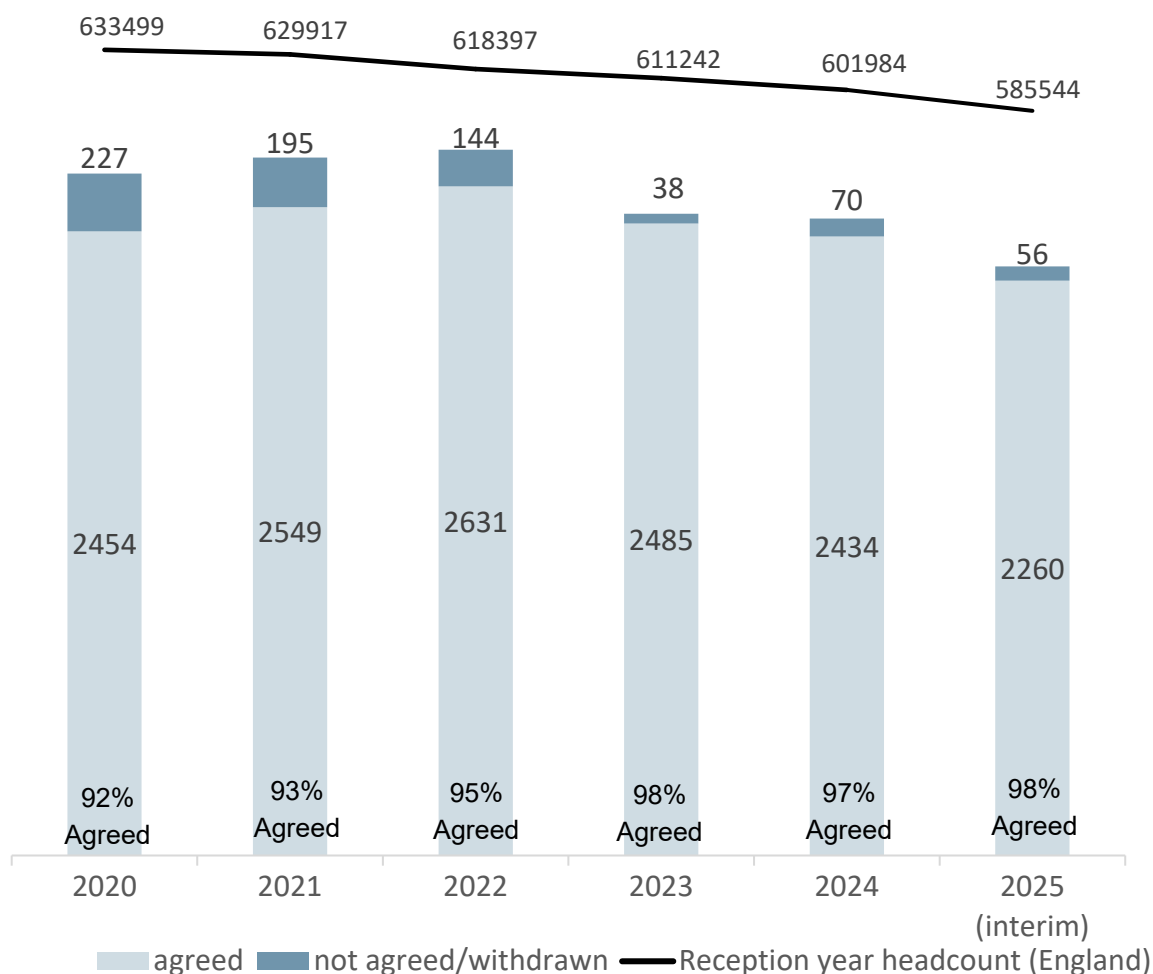


Base: 128 local authorities responding in 2025

As shown in the previous report (2023¹²), the number of requests for delayed admission had more than doubled between 2016 and 2020 and then began to level off. To continue to assess trends, we looked at the 70 local authorities who responded to the past two surveys and have provided annual data since 2020. This analysis shows that numbers remain fairly stable but have dropped slightly in line with the birth rate (Figure 5). Figure 5 also shows that the vast majority of requests are agreed amongst these local authorities (98% in 2025).

¹² [Delayed school admissions for summer-born pupils \(2023\) - GOV.UK](#)

Figure 5: Number of requests made, by agreed and not agreed/withdrawn – (local authorities responding in 2023 and 2025)



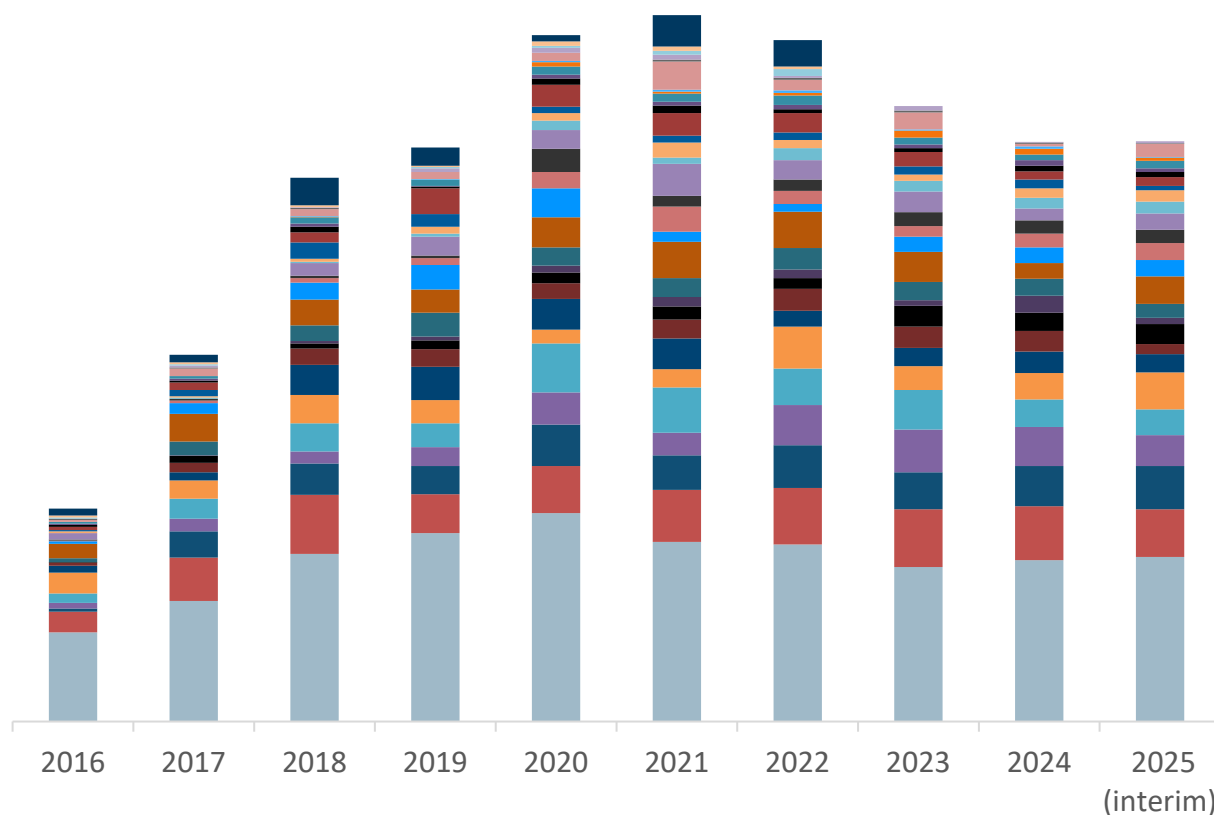
Base: 70 local authorities providing data on requests made annually since 2020

Source for headcount: Reception year headcount [Schools, pupils and their characteristics, Academic year 2024/25 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/schools-pupils-and-their-characteristics-academic-year-2024-25)

Figure 6 shows that demand varies across local authorities. Each year, a small number of authorities receive a high number of requests¹³. One local authority has received the highest number of requests every year since the data was collected – regularly over 200 per year. In comparison more than half of local authorities receive less than 20 per year.

¹³ Each colour represents the same LA each year.

Figure 6: Number of requests made for delayed admission, by local authority – (local authorities providing data for 2016 to 2025)



Base: 31 local authorities providing data on requests made since 2016 (responding to surveys in 2017, 2018, 2020, 2023 and 2025)

Open feedback from local authorities

As described in earlier reports, local authorities consider there are various factors in play which affect demand, such as the increasing parental awareness of the policy and continuing effects of Covid affecting children's social and emotional maturity. They also report that some of the demand is driven by parents awaiting EHCP outcomes or school placement decisions, which can also lead to late applications as parents delay admission in hope of securing their desired outcome before the child starts school.

Additional feedback this wave also highlights an increasing burden upon local authorities in handling the demand for admission out of the normal age group, not only for summer-born children entering reception but other groups also. One authority gave examples of applicants that wanted to apply a year early and start their child in reception at age three, and other cases of families arriving from abroad who had sought to place their child in Year 10 rather than Year 12 with their age cohort.

“This is becoming an increasing burden on the LA, as although the number of cases involved is relatively low, the administrative burden is high. The DfE's stated support for summer-born applicants has also increased the number of out of cohort applications we receive for non-summer-born applicants” - *London Borough*

There was a call for more guidance by some authorities to help them address inconsistent practices between schools and other authorities. For example:

“The summer-born guidance could be more detailed - we were recently dealing with a parent who wanted to defer even though they had been on roll at a school from September to March - the guidance doesn't offer any deadlines or expectations on this matter”

“We have noticed a year-on-year increase in requests. We attribute some of this to the impact of Covid. This area of admissions continues to be very time consuming for officers, and also a continued source of confusion for parent/carers, some who find the process very stressful.” – *an LA which coordinates requests for all school types and has a policy to agree some requests.*

This local authority also pointed to inconsistencies between authorities which causes issues when children move from one area to another.

Transitions to secondary school

Pupils with delayed admission to reception class are now moving into secondary school in greater numbers. Those that delayed entry to September 2016 when numbers of summer-born delayed admissions to reception began to rise significantly will have transitioned to secondary school in September 2023. We asked local authorities to indicate how they handle requests that they receive to remain out of year as the children transition to secondary school.

Table 1 and open feedback indicates that although it is fairly common for an authority to have a policy to agree all requests they receive for a child to remain out-of-cohort (33%), decisions are often considered individually by schools, particularly OAA schools, and may require parents to submit a new request or provide supporting evidence. A number of authorities tell us they act as facilitators, informing and guiding schools and parents through the process.

Table 1: How transitions to secondary school are handled by the local authority

Response	% of responses	number of responses
Our policy is to agree all requests to remain with adopted cohort	33%	41
We consider requests on a case-by-case basis	53%	67
Not applicable - we have not received any such requests	10%	12
Don't know	5%	6

Base: 126 local authorities responding to the question

Possibly reflecting the fact that local authorities don't always see any request from a parent for their child to remain out of cohort when transitioning to secondary school, a third of authorities (33%) said they could not provide data on this (Table 2).

Table 2: Whether local authority holds accurate or estimated data on transitions to secondary school

Response	% of responses	number of responses
Can provide accurate data on secondary transitions	45%	57
Can provide estimated data on secondary transitions	19%	24
Cannot provide data on this	33%	42
Don't know	3%	4

Base: 127 local authorities responding to the question

Some local authorities called for more definitive national guidance or changes to the Admissions Code to improve consistency and reduce uncertainty for families.

“Some academies will not agree to a child being out of their chronological age group even though the child has always been [delayed] an academic year... There needs to be more clarity provided regarding this transition.” – *Local authority*

Year 7 transitions - data challenges

Several challenges were reported by local authorities in tracking pupils and collecting data on transitions. In many areas, children automatically continue in their adopted cohort through to secondary school. Academisation means decisions are often made by individual schools with limited involvement or awareness from the authority. While this

removes the need for a formal reapplication process, it means that no data is captured by the authority at the point of transition.

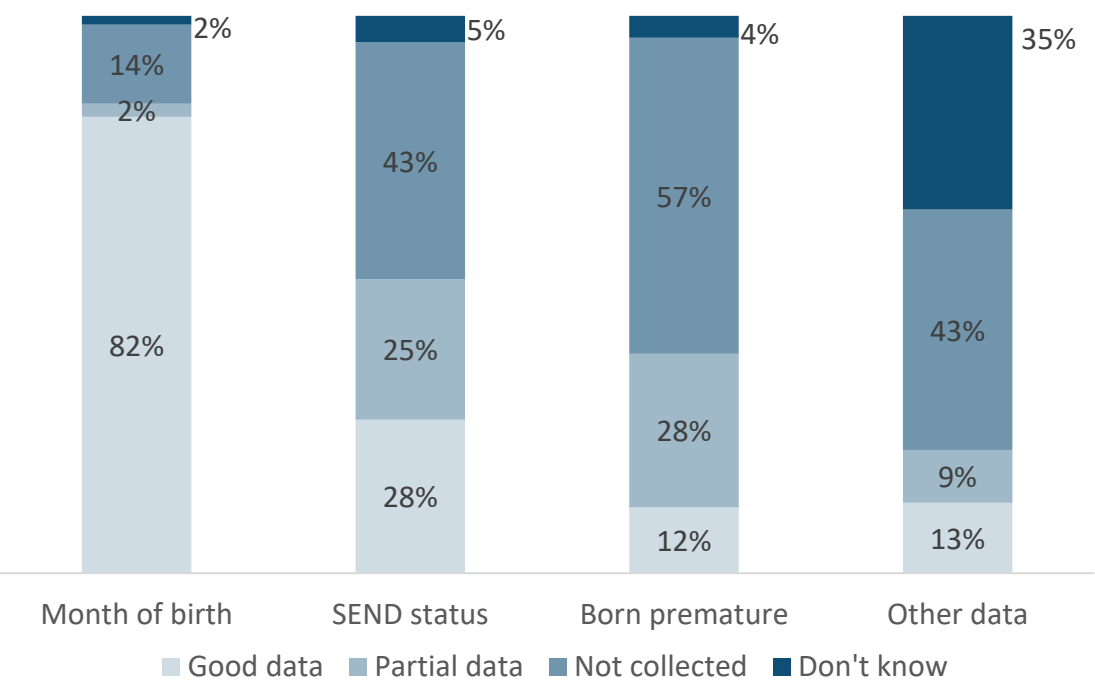
Several local authorities also noted limitations in their IT systems which lack the functionality to record cohort-related information. There is no consistent marker to identify pupils educated outside their chronological year group. Tracking becomes particularly difficult when pupils move schools, receive Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), or realign with their chronological cohort. Parents may assume their child will remain in the adopted cohort and therefore do not submit formal requests to either the school or the local authority, further contributing to gaps in data.

Historically, local authorities have not been required to record or report such data and changes to data systems have disrupted continuity and hindered tracking. Some have only recently begun doing so, while others intend to implement data collection processes in the future.

Data collected on pupils with requests to delay admission to reception

As well as the data challenges involved in year 7 transitions, the survey asked about the type and quality of data collected on pupil characteristics among those that request a delay to primary school. As shown in Figure 7, local authorities hold *good data* on the child's month of birth (82%). Around half of authorities have either good (28%) or partial data (25%) on SEND status and four in ten have good (12%) or partial data (28%) on whether the child was born premature. Just over a fifth (22%) said they collected other information on pupil characteristics. Open responses indicated that for some this included things like medical issues, and social and emotional development.

Figure 7: Quality of data collected on pupil characteristics



Base: 127 local authorities responding to the question

Survey of parents and carers

Characteristics of children and parents who requested delayed admission

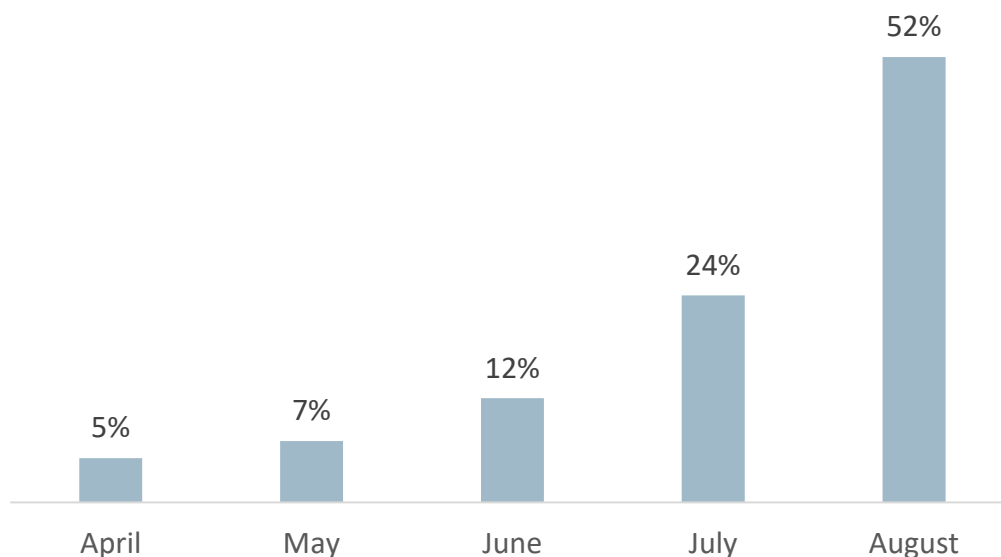
Given the variation in quality of data held by local authorities, we used the parent survey to collect information on pupil and child demographics.

Month of birth

Consistent with data collected in earlier waves, just over half of summer-born pupils with requests to delay admission were born in August (52%). Almost a quarter were born in July (24%) and a small minority (5%) were born in April (Figure 8).

A small proportion of the children were born premature (19%) and may otherwise have been born in the following academic year if the pregnancy was full term (37 weeks or more). Overall, 5% of requests related to children born less 30 weeks gestation and a further 14% related to those born between 30 and 36 weeks. These are over double the average for England and Wales; in 2022, 7.9% of live births were born before 37 weeks, and 1.4% to 1.6% were born before 32 weeks.¹⁴

Figure 8: Requests to delay admission by child's month of birth



Base: 604 parents responding to the question

¹⁴ [Birth characteristics in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics](#) (2022)

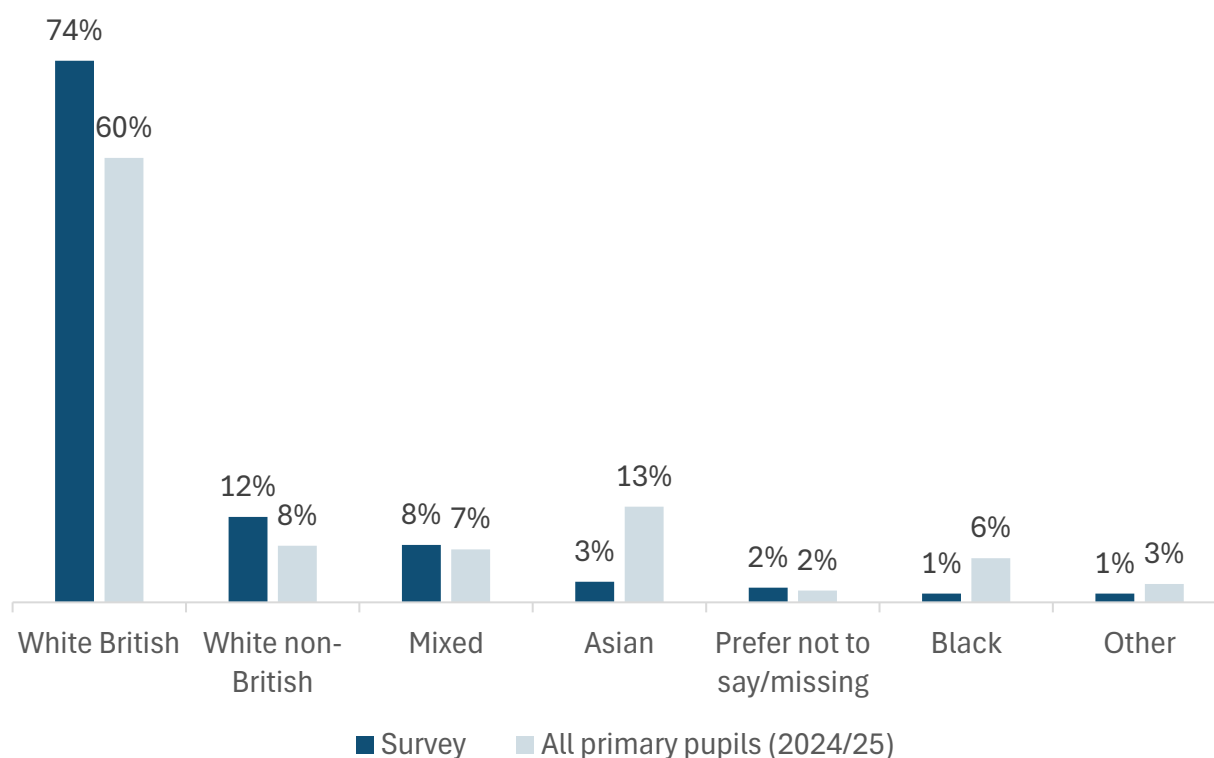
SEND status

Almost a third of parents (32%) indicated their child had been identified by an educational or health professional as having a special educational need or disability, and a further 12% said they suspected their child has SEND. This compares to 18.4% of pupils designated as having SEND in schools in England in 2024/25¹⁵.

Ethnicity

White pupils are over-represented amongst pupils with delayed entry: 86% are White (74% White British; 12% White non-British) compared to 68% White amongst all primary pupils (60% White British; 8% White non-British)¹⁶ (Figure 9). A very small minority of summer-born delayed entry pupils are Asian (3%), Black (1%) or Other (1%). This compares nationally to 13%, 6% and 3% respectively for these groups in 2024/25. These results are similar to earlier survey waves.

Figure 9: Requests to delay admission by child's ethnicity, compared to all primary school pupils 2024/25



Base: 594 parents responding to the question

¹⁵ [Special educational needs in England, Academic year 2024/25 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK.](#)

¹⁶ [Schools, pupils and their characteristics, Academic year 2024/25 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK](#)

Household income

Twenty percent of respondents had an annual household income of £100,000 or more (figure 10). For almost two-thirds (64%) this was over £50,000, and for almost three-quarters (74%) it was over £35,000. ONS data shows that median household income¹⁷ in England in 2024 was under £40,000.

Figure 10: Requests to delay admission by household income



Base: 542 parents responding to the question (excludes 'prefer not to say')

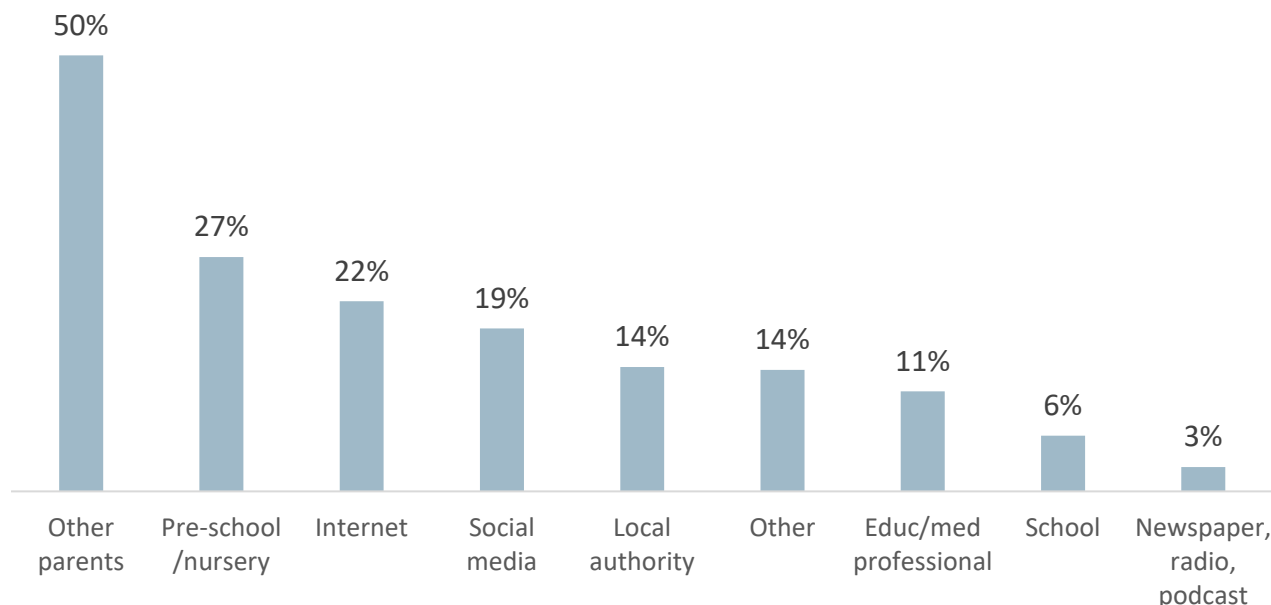
Awareness

Among the ways parents became aware of the possibility to delay their child's admission, half (50%) said by speaking to other parents, friends and acquaintances, 27% said advice from pre-school or nursery, 22% selected 'the internet', and 19% 'social media'. (Figure 11). Lower proportions selected advice from the local authority (14%), an educational or medical professional (11%) or school (6%). Other ways mentioned by

¹⁷ Median household disposable income in the UK for financial year end 2024 was £36,700. [Average household income, UK - Office for National Statistics](#) Median equivalised household income in the UK before taxes and benefits was £37,300, increasing to £39,700 after taxes and benefits. [Effects of taxes and benefits on UK household income - Office for National Statistics](#)

parents included their independent research or observations from other countries where children start school later. This pattern is broadly similar to earlier survey waves.

Figure 11: Channels by which parents became aware of the option to delay their child's admission



Base: 614 parents responding to the question (multichoice)

Factors relevant for requests to delay admission

Figure 12 shows the main factor reported to be relevant to the parent's decision to delay admission, as well as other factors that contributed to the decision. Almost half said 'my child is not ready' was the main reason (47%) and most parents (82%) said it was their main reason or a consideration. Around a quarter (26%) said the main reason was their child's medical condition or developmental delay (42% including whether it was a consideration). One in five (20%) said the main reason was evidence seen on school experiences of summer-born children (59% including whether it was a consideration).

This was also supported by feedback given in open questions. Many responses referred to developmental delays, autism, speech and language issues, premature birth and other health-related factors. Some felt delaying admission was a necessary step as the school system was not currently able to meet their child's needs for specialist support:

Many wouldn't delay entry if it was easier to get into a specialist setting with more places available and also the ability to get things like EHCP set up straight away my son was diagnosed at age 2 but still at age 4 we had to defer – *Parent/carer*

Comments about giving their child more time to play and develop outside of formal education were also common, with many also referencing the later school starting age in other countries.

To give my child more time to develop emotionally. He was academically ready but I wanted him to enjoy being 4 and learning through play without any pressure. - *Parent/carer*

[F]ormal education/learning in the UK starts much too early. In many European/nordic countries, children do not start formal learning until aged 6-7 years and leading up to that have a played based learning approach - *Parent/carer*

Some parents are thinking ahead to when they child is older rather than their readiness for school at this point.

“To give my daughter the maturity she will need when she reaches GCSE age. Sitting her exams almost a year younger than her peers or as the oldest peer. – *Parent/carer*

Summer-born boys do the worst at school so future prospects when getting to secondary school – *Parent/carer*

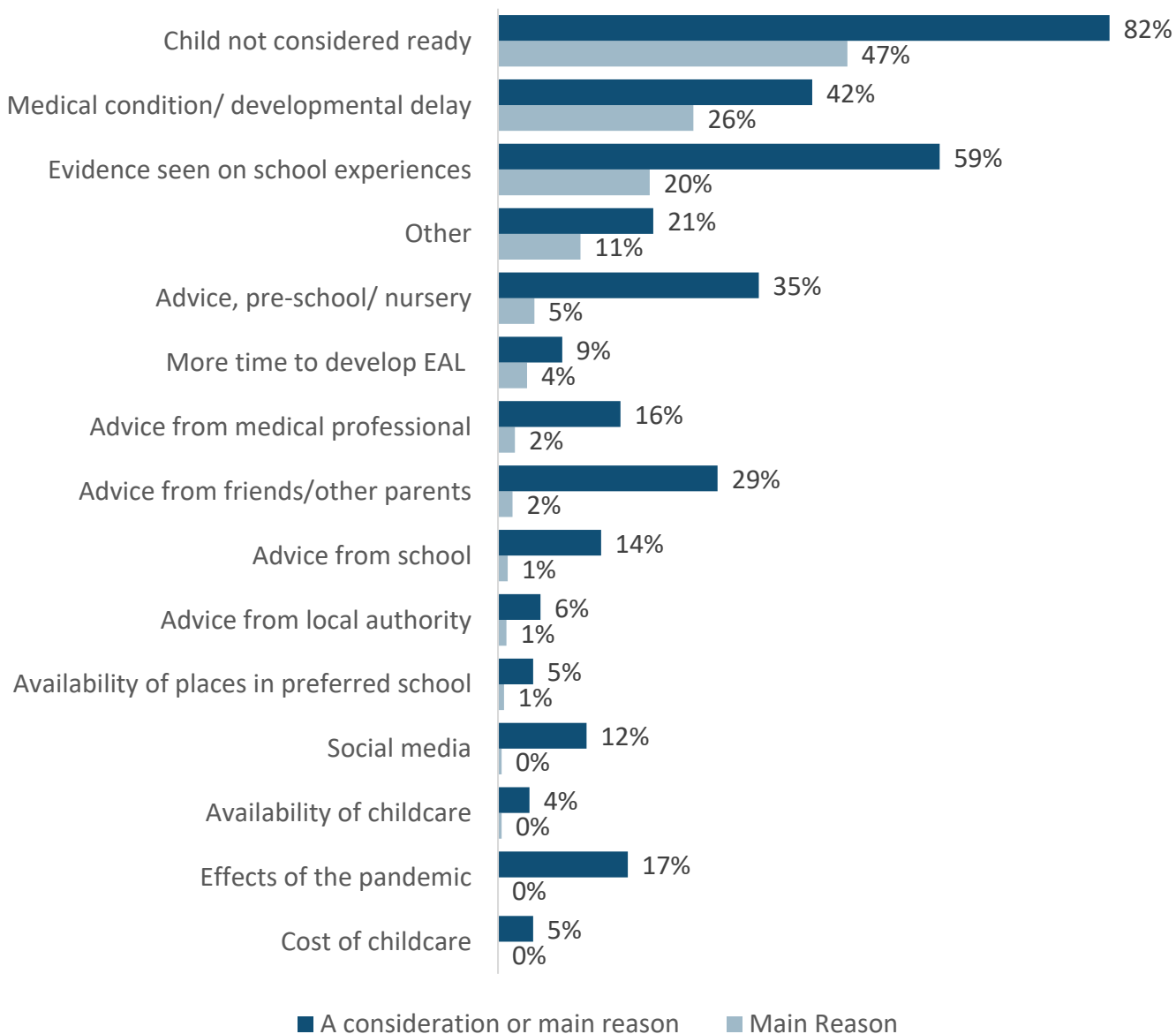
Other personal factors and situations were also considered when deciding to request delayed admission:

We are a military family that experiences regular periods of parental (father) deployments, these have a significant impact on our child and felt that starting school so early at just turned 4yrs would be too emotionally challenging for him to cope with, whilst navigating his introduction into education. – *Parent/carer*

Our child is adopted and we felt that another year with us to form our bond was essential and as he was August [born] being old in his year would have advantages with his school work. – *Parent/carer*

(Their) siblings are 11 months older who would have been in the same year but physically, cognitively and emotionally a year ahead - *Parent / carer*

Figure 12: Factors relevant in parents' decision to delay admission to reception

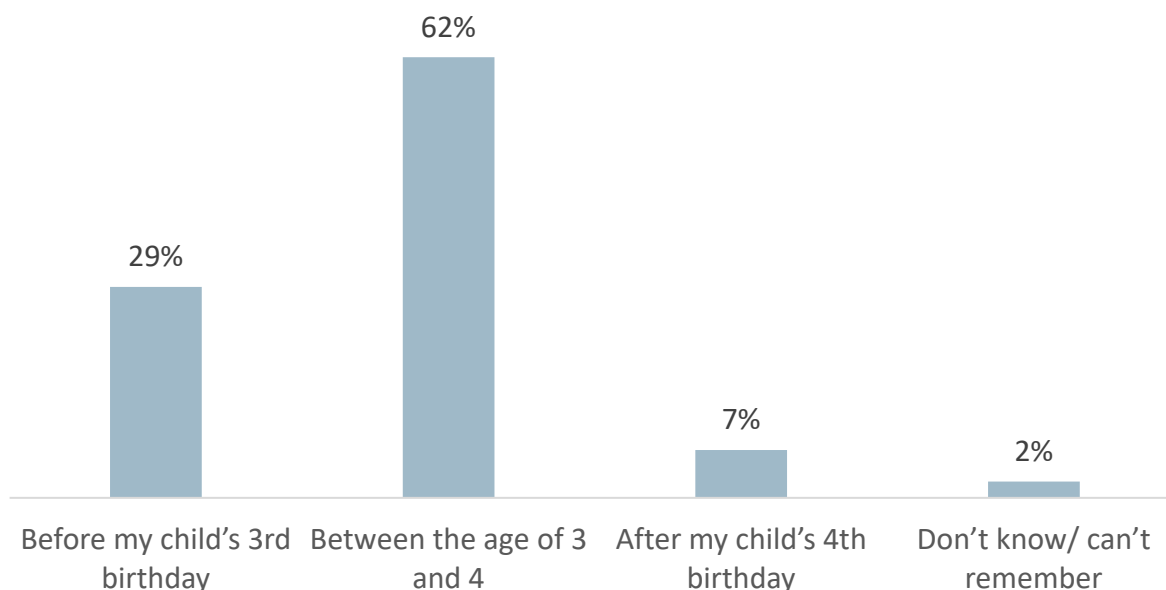


Base: 614 parents responding to the question

Timing of decision

The child was three-years old when most parents decided they wanted to delay their admission to school (62%), and almost a third (29%) made the decision earlier than that. (Figure 13). One in three (34%) parents said they applied for a place in their child's normal year group but subsequently decided to delay. Among these, almost half (49%) made the final decision to delay their child's entry before they received their first offer of a school place and 44% after the offer. All findings on timing are very similar to the last wave.

Figure 13: Age of child when the parents/carers decided to delay admission



Base: 614 parents responding to the question

Childcare provision

Hours attended nursery/preschool provision

The vast majority of respondents reported that their child attended a nursery or pre-school (96%)¹⁸. Among those who did, 69% started before their third birthday, and 27% started aged three. Compared to the 2023 survey, there appears to have been a small increase in the proportion of children starting at a younger age (61% started before their third birthday in 2023, and 37% aged three)¹⁹.

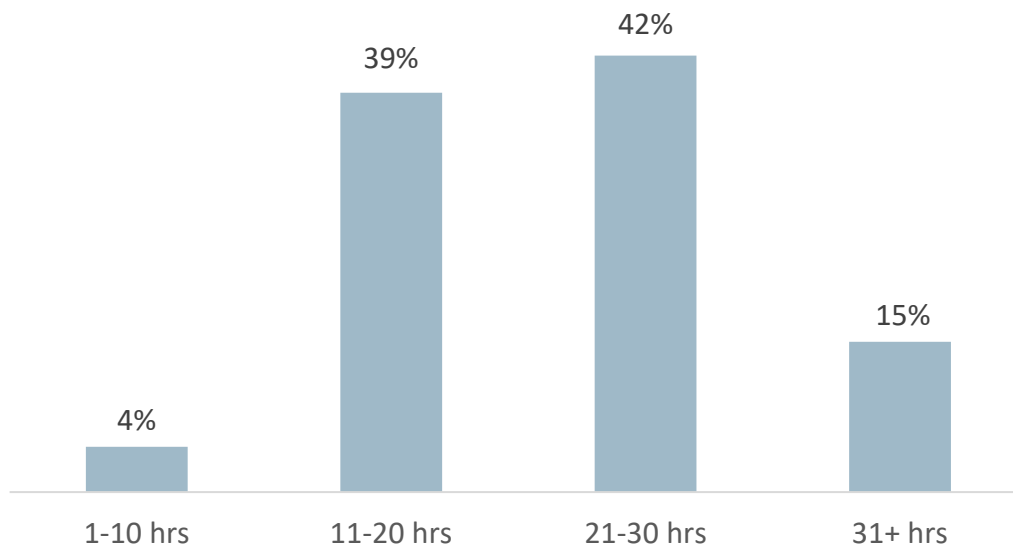
For all those attending nursery or preschool aged four, Figure 14 presents the banded number of hours attended each week. Forty-two percent attended 21-30 hours and 39% attended 11-20 hours. Fifteen per cent attended for more than 31 hours a week which is slightly more than 10% reported in 2023.

¹⁸ Parents were asked to include nursery schools, nursery classes attached to a primary or infants' school, day nurseries, pre-schools, and special day nurseries or units for children with special educational needs

¹⁹ This may be linked to wider eligibility to free childcare, but we are unable to provide this within this survey. From September 2024, eligible parents could claim 15 hours free childcare for children aged nine months to two years. They could already claim 30 hours of free childcare for three- to four-year-olds if they met the working criteria.

Further analysis also shows a small increase in median hours attended: 24 hours a week, up from 22 hours in 2023, and 17 hours in 2020²⁰. The mean was 23.31 hours (up from 22.08 hours in 2023) and the mode remained at 30 hours.

Figure 14: Number of hours of childcare used in a typical week at age four - banded



Base: 504 parents responding to the question

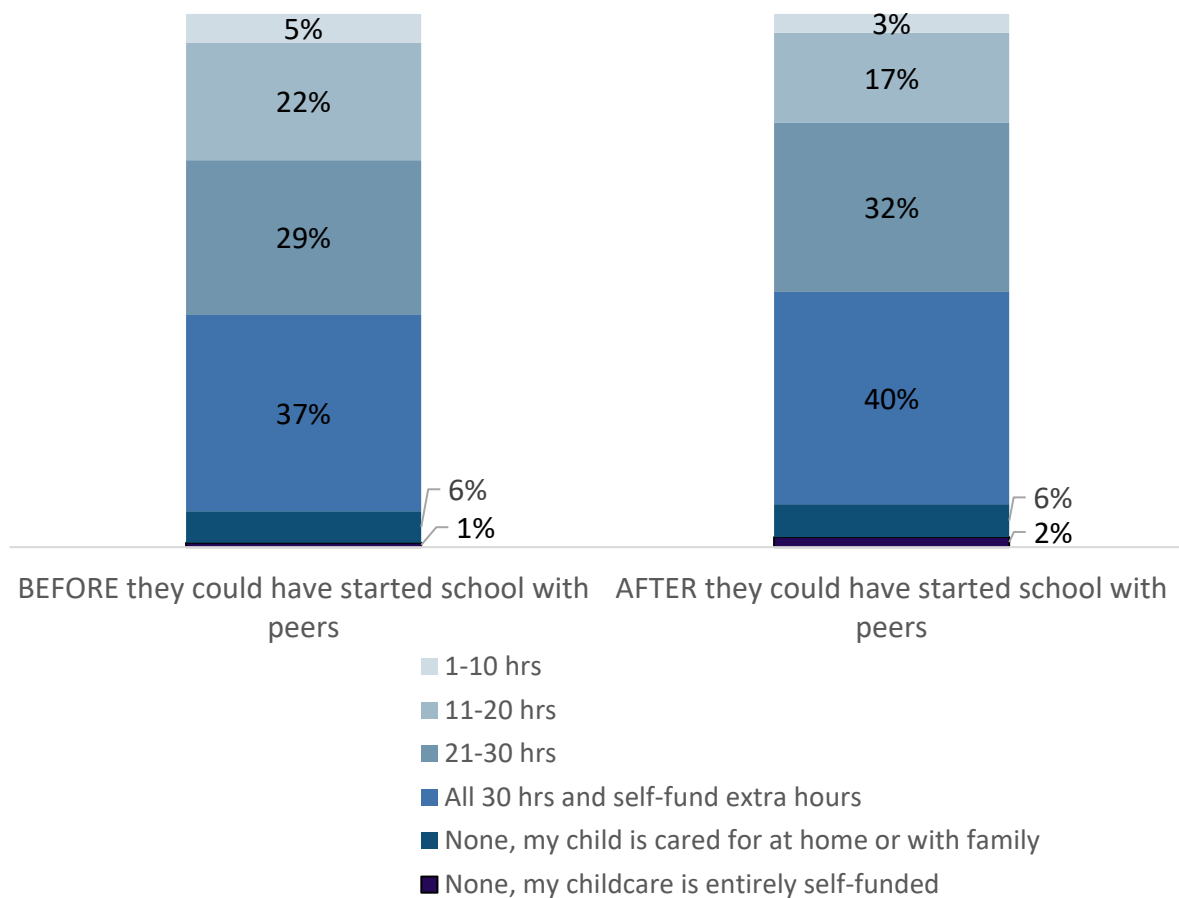
Hours attended nursery/preschool provision before and after the child could have started school with usual age cohort

A very similar proportion of parents reported they met the criteria for 30 hours of fully funded childcare per week for three- and four-year-olds, as the last survey wave (62% compared to 61% in 2023). This group of parents were asked how much of this entitlement they used during term-time in the periods before and after their child could have started school with their usual age group.

Figure 15 shows that 63% reported more than 20 hours of fully funded childcare per week in the period *before* they could have started school (37% for 30 hours or more), rising to 72% (40% for all 30 hours) in the period afterwards. These figures are very similar to 2023 but higher than 2020 when 54% reporting attending 20 hours beforehand and 62% after they could have started school.

²⁰ These figures cover three years' worth of data collected from parents in each survey wave rather than a specific academic or calendar year.

Figure 15: Fully-funded hours of childcare used before and after child could have started school



Base: 372 parents responding to the question

Feedback from parents on the process

Feedback from previous surveys indicated that the process could be stressful for parents and that they found inconsistencies in how local authorities and, particularly, schools understood and adhered to the guidance. This remained a key challenge.

Although the process could be very straightforward in some areas, parents were concerned about the impact of moving home or to secondary school where they might be treated differently. Parents suggested improvements to increase awareness and transparency, provide better training for educators and set out a guarantee for a continued placement in their adopted cohort through all school transitions.

Conclusion

The survey of local authorities indicates that the number of requests submitted to authorities in the past two years continues on a fairly stable path, which is a pattern seen since around 2020. Numbers overall appear to have dropped slightly although this is in line with what we might expect to see as birth rates in these age cohorts have also fallen. The overall proportion of delayed admissions also remains very low – 2024/2025 school census data shows that just 1.6% of summer-born pupils entered reception aged five, a similar proportion to the last few years.

There remains significant variance in the number of requests each local authority receives. This may be because increased demand has a knock-on effect in raising local awareness of the possibility for parents to delay admission for their summer-born child.

There has also been a small increase in the proportion of authorities that report they do not handle requests for non-local authority-maintained schools. Even though the local authority may handle requests and have a policy to agree requests received, in many cases the school, especially where they are the own admission authority, will make the final decision. There are instances where local authorities are proactively working with schools and raising awareness to standardise their approach across the local area.

Some local authorities requested more definitive national guidance or changes to the Admissions Code in relation to delayed summer-born admissions in order to improve consistency and reduce uncertainty for families. Similarly, extra clarity was also requested regarding processes in relation to secondary school transitions. Many local authorities indicated that these are usually dealt with at the school-level and they don't necessarily see any requests, or that parents aren't aware they need to make any further requests or submissions at that point.

Results from the parent/carer survey showed similar patterns to previous waves regarding demographics. White pupils and males are over-represented amongst summer-born pupils with delayed entry, as are pupils with SEND or born premature. Parents in higher-than-average household incomes are also over-represented.

Overall, this group of children appeared to be starting nursery or preschool a bit younger and using more hours of childcare than was the case when parents were asked in 2023. Some of this might be accounted for by wider eligibility for free childcare to include two-year-olds since 2024. There was little change in the proportion of parents that indicated they met the eligibility criteria for free childcare for three- and four-year-olds. Again, as seen in previous waves, more children were in fully funded childcare in the period after they could have started school than they were immediately before it.



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