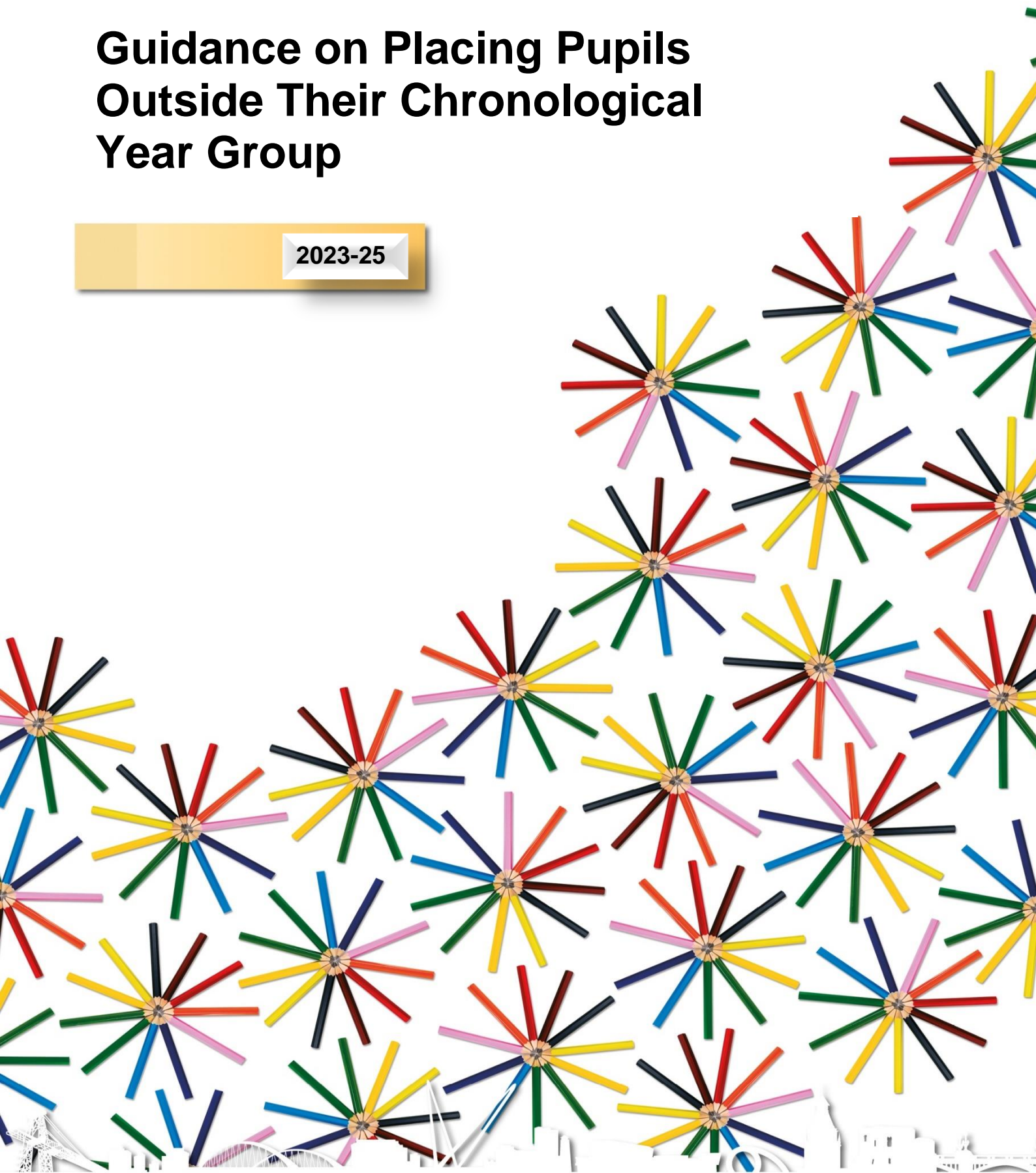


Guidance on Placing Pupils Outside Their Chronological Year Group

2023-25



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Guidance on Placing Pupils Outside Their Chronological Year Group

1. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to schools and parents who are considering placing a pupil in a year group chronologically above or below that of their same age peers. For instance, this might involve placing a Year 3 pupil in a Year 2 class. This guidance document will provide an overview of the position Newport City Council takes in respect of out of chronological year group (OCYG) placements, how this position is informed and the process in place to consider requests.

2. Newport City Council's position statement

The view of Newport City Council is that this should be a very rare occurrence. The expectation of Newport City Council is that all pupils should have their individual needs met and provided through appropriate support and differentiation within their age-appropriate year group. This is in line with Welsh Government Policy. This expectation extends to cases where a pupil has additional learning needs (ALN), has a summer birthday, is considered more able and talented (MAT), is learning English as an additional language, or has recently moved into Newport from abroad. For the comprehensive research basis informing the Council's position on OCYG placements, please see Appendix 1.

In Newport, a decision to place a pupil outside of their chronological year group will only be made in terms of the principles and guidance set out in this document. The decision will be made by Newport City Council's Education Senior Management Team (ESMT). Where the decision relates to a recent move into the UK, or there are parental concerns relating to the pupil having English as an additional language (EAL), ESMT will consult with the Gwent Education Minority-ethnic Service (GEMS) in their decision making. Where the request relates to a pupil having Additional Learning Needs (ALN), ESMT will consult with the Educational Psychology Service (EPS) in their decision making.

The rare decision to educate pupils outside of their chronological year group should be taken only after school, parents and LA officers have carefully considered the individual pupil's circumstances and agreed what such an arrangement should achieve. The decision should also give appropriate weighting to the pupil's views. All other possible avenues will need to have been explored. The case will be considered in terms of the best interests of the pupil both at the time of the request and in the future.

Please note that this guidance is related to individual pupils who are permanently placed with a class of a different age group (i.e., younger or older) rather than a situation where

pupils are placed, alongside their peers, in mixed-age classes and/or where there are arrangements for an individual pupil or group of pupils to join a younger or older class for specific activities or subject areas, where that is deemed suitable on educational grounds. Such arrangements are matters for the school to decide, following consultation with the parents, but it must be ensured that the pupil continues to spend the majority of their time learning and playing alongside their same-age peers.

The section within the Welsh Government's statutory School Admissions Code, (July 2013) which relates to an admission outside the normal age group is reproduced in Appendix 1 of this guidance. This is pertinent when pupils start or moves schools. Out of chronological year group placements are also covered within Newport City Council's Admission Policy which can be found [here](#).

3. Inclusive and evidence informed practice

Newport City Council is committed to ensure all practice relating to the education of pupils is evidence based, research informed and inclusive (Appendix 1).

Inclusive practices ensure a child has experiences where they are able to learn, achieve and participate fully in school life. This approach requires a whole school ethos where all members of the school community have a positive and inclusive attitude towards **all pupils**, combined with a willingness to adapt approaches to ensure all children are included. As such, an essential feature of our current education system should be to ensure that pupils experience an appropriate, challenging, stimulating, and varied curriculum that accommodates their individual needs.

Nevertheless, there are occasions where parents and/or schools think that educating children outside of their chronological year group is helpful. However, this approach is not supported by the research evidence available, as many studies have shown that despite some short-term positive outcomes, OCYG placement has many long-term negative outcomes with little or no benefits for academic or social progress, or development.

3. Further considerations when placing pupils in a younger year group

This section sets out some of the possible implications associated with placing a pupil in a year-group below their chronological age, that should be carefully considered.

- Pupils are not usually delayed in all aspects of their development, as such areas of strength may be at risk of not receiving appropriate stimulation.
- The pupil is likely to realise that the rest of the class are of a different age, which could be confusing or upsetting. This can impact social and emotional development, for



instance their self-esteem. This may become more apparent at key transition points (e.g., the rest of their same aged peers moving to secondary school).

- The pupil may begin puberty at an earlier time to their classmates. This could be very difficult for young people when the majority of their classmates are not going through the same changes.
- The pupil may leave school at 16 without completing the Key Stage 4 curriculum. Pupils in Wales can leave school on the last Friday of June in the year in which they will have reached their 16th birthday by August 31st.
- Future employers may regard this in a negative light.
- Other interventions may be more appropriate in the long term. Placement outside the chronological year group could simply be delaying a decision to consider alternative strategies or provision.
- Future attempts to re-join an age-appropriate year group would involve the pupil missing a year of study. This would present a particular challenge to a pupil who has developed more slowly than pupils of the same age and could result in damage to self-esteem and confidence.
- Each local authority (LA) will have its own policy relating to placement out of chronological year group and as such if an out of chronological placement is agreed in one LA, this will not be guaranteed within another LA.

4. Newport City Council's decision making regarding OCYG placement

This section sets out the principles and possible exceptions that inform Newport City Council's decision making in relation to OCYG placements.

4.1 *General principles*

- Newport City Council is committed to inclusive education and evidence-based practice, as detailed within this guidance document. As such, educating pupils outside of their chronological year group will be a **very exceptional** occurrence.
- Newport provides a spectrum of support and provision in line with the ALN Code for Wales (2021), and a graduated response should be followed in the first instance.
- Newport Schools follow the Curriculum for Wales which is developmentally informed (i.e., progression steps) and acknowledges that "learning isn't always linked to age. It won't happen in the same way, or at the same time for everyone".
- Pupils who are learning English as an additional language have access within their chronological year groups to support from both their destination school and/or Gwent Education Minority Ethnic Service (GEMS).
- Pupils will not be educated OCYG on the basis of a move between education systems, such as a move from abroad. Specific, local advice regarding this particular situation is available upon request via School.admissions@newport.gov.uk
- A pupil should **not** be retained/advanced by **more than one** school year.



- In no case should pupils be retained in a year group solely to avoid/defer other decisions e.g., about transition to a further key stage, or a special schools or special provision
- The LA has no obligation to provide school placements for children beyond statutory school age (i.e., Chronologically Year 12).

4.2 Possible exceptions that may be warrant an OCYG placement

Detailed below are specific circumstances which Newport City Council may consider as exceptional and requiring OCYG placement. It must be emphasised that any application made on these grounds must be evidence in a formal manner, for instance, the provision of relevant health, medical or social care reports. It is the responsibility of the person requesting the OCYG placement to provide this evidence.

- Where a child/young person has been absent from school for a significant amount of time due to **physical health needs** resulting in missing key educational opportunities.
- Where a child/young person has experienced significant **psychological trauma and/or mental illness** that has significantly prevented them accessing learning for a significant period of time.

4.3 Mandatory considerations

In each case, Newport City Council will consider how alternative options have been considered/explored and the reasons as to why they are not available and/or viable. The Council will also need to be satisfied that the decision to educate a pupil out of OCYG is evidently:

- in their best interests on balance;
- in keeping with their views, aspirations and preferences;
- of no detriment to their emotional or academic wellbeing; and/or
- of no detriment to the emotional or academic wellbeing of other pupils.

4.4 Pupil views

Any request for OCYG placement must consider the pupil's views, aspirations, and preferences. Where Newport City Council believes a request may meet the exceptions set out in Section 4.2 of this document, they may seek to independently ascertain the views of the pupil, where this is appropriate. Newport City Council will very carefully consider cases, in terms of potential detriment, where a pupil with relevant capacity has expressed a view that is opposed to the notion of an OCYG placement



5. Processes for OCYG Requests

In Newport, all decisions to place a pupil outside of their chronological year group will be made by Newport City Council's Education Senior Management Team (ESMT) with specific reference to Section 4 of this document (this does not apply for pupils currently in attendance at voluntary aided (faith) schools, where local processes are in place, see 5.3 below). **The decision will be made on the basis of documented evidence provided by parents/caregivers as part of the request. It is the responsibility of the person making the request to provide this evidence.**

- Where the decision relates to a recent move into the UK, or there are parental concerns relating to the pupil having English as an additional language (EAL), ESMT will consult with the Gwent Education Minority-Ethnic Service (GEMS) as appropriate to inform their decision making.
- Where the request relates to a pupil having Additional Learning Needs (ALN), including physical and mental health needs, ESMT will consult with the Educational Psychology Service (EPS) as appropriate to inform their decision making.

It is anticipated that once an **appropriately detailed and evidenced** request is made to Newport City Council, a decision will be issued within 14 working days. Responses will be issued via letter.

There are three different processes for OCYG group requests:

- A child who is moving into a Newport School from a different admission authority or country or is starting school for the first time (i.e., nursery or reception).
- A child who currently attends a Newport community or voluntary controlled school.
- A request for a child who attends or who is anticipated to attend a voluntary aided (faith) school in Newport.

Details regarding each process are detailed in 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3, below.

5.1 Parental request for OCYG when child is moving into a Newport School from a different admission authority or country

Where a child is moving into a Newport school from a different admission authority¹ or country, and the parents are seeking a placement OCYG, the **duty is on parents/caregivers to formally request this in terms of this guidance document (i.e., the exceptions that may warrant an OCYG placement) and provide relevant supporting evidence.** A request should include:

- The rationale for the request;
- Perceived benefits for the child/ young person;

¹ This would include a move from a voluntary aided (faith) school.



- Information from previous educational establishments attended and evidence of support and strategies used;
- Evidence of alternative options considered/explored and how these are not available and/or viable;
- All national curriculum assessment results and standardised test results;
- Evidence of physical or mental health need;
- Reports from any professionals involved providing formal evidence of need,
- The pupil's views;
- A written declaration that parents/caregivers have read and considered the considerations set out in this document, specifically in Section 3.

Requests made without this evidence, or without a clear reference, will not be considered by Newport City Council.

Requests for children who have moved into Newport should be made via school.admissions@newport.gov.uk

5.2 Parental request for an OCYG placement when a child attends a Newport School

For the reasons detailed in this guidance document, where a child is in a Newport school and parents/caregivers are considering requesting that their child be educated OCYG, it is expected that parents/caregivers will have worked closely with the child/ young person's current school to discuss their concerns and thoroughly explore all other avenues to support. This should take place over a period of time.

If, after working closely with school over a period of time, it is decided by parents/caregivers that they wish to request an OCYG placement, **the duty is on parents/caregivers to formally request this in writing via email in terms of this guidance document (i.e., the exceptions that may warrant an OCYG placement) and provide relevant supporting evidence.** A request should include:

- The rationale for the request;
- The perceived benefits for the child/ young person;
- A statement from the school expressing their views in respect of the request;
- Documentation from the school evidencing a graduated response, support arrangements, interventions and/or adaptations that have been implemented and embedded over time to overcome the difficulties or challenges that are being experienced;
- Evidence of alternative options considered/explored and how these are not available and/or viable;
- All national curriculum assessment results and standardised test results,
- Evidence of physical or mental health need;



- Reports from any professionals involved providing formal evidence of need;
- The pupil's views;
- A written declaration that parents/caregivers have read and considered the considerations set out in this document, specifically in Section 3.

Requests for pupils who currently attend a Newport School should be made via Ceri.Gibbons@newport.gov.uk

5.3 Parental request for an OCYG placement when a child attends or is anticipated to attend a voluntary aided (faith) school within Newport.

Where a child is currently educated or is anticipated to be educated in a voluntary aided (faith) school within Newport, the decision whether to place OCYG is made by the individual school, with reference to Newport City Council's guidance.

Requests for children who currently attend or who are due to be admitted to voluntary aided (faith) school within Newport within Newport should be made to the Headteacher of the school.

5.4 Parents/Caregivers right to appeal/complain

Parents who are refused an application for a place at a school have a statutory right of appeal to the School Admission Appeals Panel. However, there is no right of appeal if a place has been offered but not in the desired year group. They may, however, make a complaint, following the Local Authority's published complaints procedure.



6. Appendix 1 – Research Evidence

6.1 General evidence

The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) is a UK based charity who research effective education interventions with the aim of improving educational attainment from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. The EEF (2021) reviewed 71 studies on educating pupils OCYG, and found that for most children and young people, this had a negative impact on their progress. Children and young people that had repeated a year were on average academically three months behind those who remained in their chronological year group. This negative effect on progress is greater for children and young people who are younger in their year group, who have an ethnic minority background or who experience socioeconomic disadvantage. This demonstrates that the intervention of repeating a year in education can increase an attainment gap. Research suggests that when children are able to continue within their chronological year group, then they have the opportunity to catch up academically and are likely to receive more support and intervention than if they repeated a year (Allen et al., 2016). The majority of studies are from the United States of America where repeating a year is common practice, unlike the UK.

6.1.1 *Academic impact*

Research has generally shown that for pupils educated OCYG, there is no positive impact on academic achievement, and in some cases even a negative impact.

- Hattie (2009) reviewed 800 meta-analysis studies relating to achievement and found that overall there was a negative effect on children and young people's academic achievement when educated out of their chronological year. There was a particular negative effect on the following subjects; language, arts, reading and maths.
- Hughes et al. (2018) studied children over 14 year period to understand the effects of repeating a year early in education. They found that one long term effect was children who repeated a year were more likely to leave education before gaining end of school qualifications, than those who did not repeat.
- Research has also shown that after repeating a year, children can continue to show an achievement gap demonstrating it is not an effective way of support academic development (Ikeda and Garcia, 2014)
- Some studies that found initial increases in attainment in the short term (i.e., the early months of being educated OCYG) did not persist as the pupil progressed into different year groups (Klapproth et al., 2016)

6.1.2 *Social and emotional impact*



Research generally suggests that there can be negative effects on a pupil's social and emotional wellbeing when educated OCYG.

- Martin (2011) found that repeating a year was associated with lower self-esteem, increased absence and lower motivation for learning. They also highlighted the increased anxiety from the awareness of being different age to peers.
- Clatworthy, (2005) and Klapproth et al. (2016) found that being educated out of year group has been associated with poorer emotional health and social adjustment as well as increased level of anxiety.
- Kretschmann et al. (2019) found that children and young people's academic self-concept (view of themselves as a learner) was much lower for learners educated OGYG, rather than those who remained in their chronological year group.
- Van Canegem et al. (2022) found that the placement of pupils OCYG was associated with them having a lower sense of belonging within education. This association increased when there were a low number of pupils who were placed OCYG.

6.2 Late summer birthdays

Newport City Council adopts a position that all children should be taught within their chronological year group, even if they have a late summer birthday. The new curriculum in Wales (2022) is designed to be suitable for "learners of differing ages, abilities and aptitudes". The pedagogical principles underlying the curriculum are informed by child development stages and will be inclusive of a pupil's holistic development (Early Years Wales, 2023). This means that the curriculum will be supportive and inclusive of children with a late summer birthday.

Whilst there is some evidence that pupils with a late summer can be at a disadvantage, being placed OCYG is not an effective intervention to support their progress (Major & Higgins, 2019). Being educated within their chronological year group with teachers recognising their age difference and using age adjusted expectations or assessments can support children and young people to progress and close any potential attainment gap.

6.3 Additional learning needs

Newport City Council adopts a position that all children and young people should have their additional learning needs (ALN) met within their chronological year group through appropriate differentiation, support and intervention where this is required within the day-to-day context of their classrooms. This is in line with the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 and Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Act 2021. As highlighted above, the research literature does not support educating out of year group as a strategy for addressing learning or emotional needs and can even lead to detrimental impacts. Keller-Margulis & Gishlar (2014) also found that children with ALN who were educated out of their chronological year



performed worse on reading comprehension and maths tasks than those with ALN who were not.

6.4 Acquisition of English

Newport City Council understands some learners who use English as an additional language may require some support and/or intervention. However, this does not necessarily mean being placed OCYG. This position is supported by the following research.

EEF (2021) found that pupils placed OCYG were on average three months academically behind those who remained in their chronological year group. This negative effect on progress is greater for children and young people who have an ethnic minority background.

Research has indicated that the length of time required to achieve academic competence in a language has been assessed as being anything between 5 and 10 years (Collier, 1989; Demie, 2010). Factors that influence the speed of language acquisition include pre-existing competence in the home language, including reading levels and previous education, socioeconomic factors, and age when first starting to acquire a new language. As such, placement one year behind chronological age is highly unlikely to be a helpful intervention when considering the length of time required to acquire language competence in conjunction with the negative academic and social-emotional OCYG placement is associated with.

6.5 More able and talented

Newport City Council adopts a position that all pupils should be taught within their chronological year group, even if they are considered to be more able and talented. This is in line with the ALN Code for Wales (2021), which puts forward that the needs of pupils who are more able and talented can be met within their chronological year group, through differentiated teaching and opportunities for stretch and challenge.

“Those children and young people who are considered ‘more able and talented’ do not have a difficulty in learning on the basis of their enhanced ability or talent. These children and young people may require enhanced opportunities and challenge in order to reach their full potential, but this ought to be provided as part of differentiated teaching” (Welsh Government, 2021)

There are some academic studies which support accelerated learning for pupils considered more able and talented (Wardman, 2017). However, any potential benefits need to be carefully considered in tandem with the potential negative social and emotional impacts associated with OCYG placement, as detailed previously. Attfield (2009) highlights that there could be significant emotional costs of whole year group acceleration, in respect to the loss of friends and differences in emotional development to new year group.



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7. Appendix 2: Welsh Government Schools Admissions Code Statutory Code

Statutory code document no 005/2013

Admission outside the normal age group

*3.30 Although most children will be admitted to a school with their own chronological age group, from time to time parents seek places outside their normal age group for gifted and talented children, or those who have experienced problems or missed part of a year, often due to ill health. While it would not normally be appropriate for a child to be placed in a year group that is not concurrent with their chronological age, admissions authorities **should** consider these requests carefully and make decisions on the basis on the circumstances of each case and in consultation with the parents and the school, and specifically in relation to what is most beneficial to the child. Due regard **should** also be given to the Educational Psychologist's report where available, and clear reasons ascertainable for such a decision to be made.*

3.31 If it is decided that there are grounds to consider an 'out of year' application, parents refused an application for a place at a school have a statutory right of appeal. However, there is no right of appeal if a place has been offered but not in the desired year group.

NB Voluntary aided (faith) schools should also follow the Welsh Government guidance stated above.

Date of issue: May 2023

To be reviewed in: September 2023

To be reviewed by: Principal Educational Psychologist

