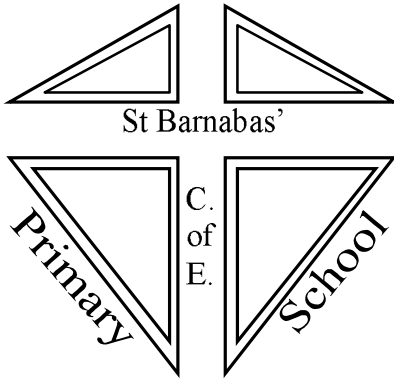


# Heaton St. Barnabas' C.E. Primary School

Rossefield Road, Heaton  
Bradford, BD9 4DA

Tel: 01274 545019 Fax: 01274 553910

Headteacher: Mrs Gillian Evans M.A.



Mrs V. Jordan  
School Admissions  
Education Bradford  
Future House  
Bolling Road  
Bradford BD4 7EB

14<sup>th</sup> Jan 2009

Dear Mrs Jordan,

## LA Admission consultation: Proposals regarding summer born children.

I am writing to raise an objection in the strongest terms, to the proposals to prevent deferred entry into reception classes for summer born children from 2011.

In this climate of 'Every Child Matters' and 'Personalising learning' it seems that these agendas and principles do not matter if the needs of a very small number of very young and vulnerable children might cause a little increase in administration. The only impact of deferring entry is the addition of a note on the pupil census to explain why there appear to be additional children in infant classes.

In my many years of experience as a teacher and a head, I have always tried to make decisions in the best interests of individual children. Summer born children, particularly those with mid to late August birthdays, are at a distinct disadvantage in our educational system, particularly as children in this country start formal school far too early at the age of 4+ in any case. As a reception class teacher, and for many years as a Head Teacher, I have encouraged parents to make their own decision based upon their superior knowledge of their children, and I have always undertaken to support them fully in that decision.

Young children who are forced into formal education too soon suffer from lack of confidence and self-esteem and these impact on their personal well-being as well as progress and attainment. For many children the impact stays with them until GCSE and later life. Conversely, those who defer entry come to school confident and mature. They do well both personally and academically. Surely this should be the priority!

We are not talking about huge numbers of children. I currently have 3 children in my 2-form entry school whose entry was deferred by agreement to meet their needs. All the children concerned at my school remain in good quality nursery settings, accessing appropriate provision and environment until the term after they are 5, which is, after all, their legal entitlement. They remain with their admission cohort throughout the school and leave with them in Y6.

Secondary schools seem very happy to allow children to sit GCSEs early to cater for able children, I see no reason why deferred children should not be allowed to sit them late in order t

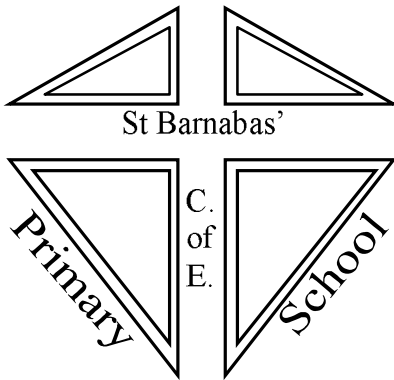


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success. Many secondary schools allow children to re-sit exams to improve grades or sit further exams in later years.

The proposals outlined clearly remove the option of deferred entry from parents, as you quite rightly point out that Year 1 classes will be full. To suggest or require that children should be placed directly into Y1 and miss the last year of the foundation stage is outrageous. Anyone with any understanding of the needs of young children should know this.

A study published in Feb 2008 highlighted the issue of the admission age in England, and found that English children do not benefit from starting school so young. Having recently visited schools in Europe and worked with children from schools in Spain, Turkey, Romania and Portugal and experienced the success and confidence of children who start school at 6 or 7 years old, following good Kindergarten provision, I would go further and say that our current system disadvantages even the 5 year old children. To impose formal schooling on children who have just had their 4<sup>th</sup> birthday is cruel and inappropriate.

I have now read the recommendations in the relevant section of the Interim Rose Report and would like to make the following comments;

2.63 There is a significant gap in the research evidence which gives no comparison with the attainment of summer born children who have entered reception classes in the term after their fifth birthday and continued through primary and Secondary school to sit GCSE / A level a year later than they would have otherwise been expected to.

2.64 I see no reason why children who are almost one year younger than their classmates should be expected to achieve the same results as those who have had 25% longer on earth – I refer you personalising learning and Every Child Matters agendas – why bother if we want to produce uniform children with identical outcomes.

2.65 If “The more high-quality pre-schooling (either in nursery or reception classes) they receive the better” surely allowing summer born children to stay longer in a nursery setting and then allowing them a full year in a reception class is to their advantage.

2.66 I would fully support a single entry point to reception class if parents with summer-born children are allowed to choose autumn term following their child’s fifth birthday.

2.68 Curriculum and pedagogy – If evidence suggests that the transition from R - Y1 is problematic for some children and those particularly at risk are summer born, not to mention SEN and Children with English as an Additional Language (EAL), why is Bradford proposing to force parents who choose to exercise their right for their child to start school to admit their child to Y1? I once again refer you to the Every Child Matters Agenda.

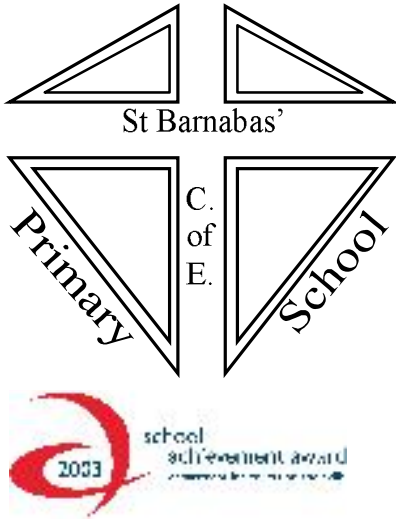


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There is no reference in the interim report, or from any council documentation that I have been able to access to suggest any reason, other than attainment, why a relative minority of children could not proceed through school and complete their studies one year later.

I feel that, in the absence of data which evaluates the attainment and prospects of summer-born children who have been allowed to proceed through school one year later than would be the norm, the report does nothing to support the proposal to prevent parents of summer-born children from making a decision in the best interests of their child.

Having spoken to colleagues in the secondary phase I understand 'out of year' children have to be included in statistics of the academic year that they should have been with, even though they have not completed the course of study or sat the exam. It seems clear to me that this issue is more about GCSE results and league tables and politics than the needs, aspirations and life-chances of summer born children. The council, EB and all those concerned with education in Bradford and nationally need to be challenging the ridiculous bureaucracy that gives rise to this situation rather than sacrificing the potential of children who, by an accident of birth, stand to be disadvantaged for the rest of their lives, and clearly do not 'matter' as much as league tables.

I would be grateful if you would acknowledge receipt of this letter and ensure that these comments are passed to the relevant committee and included in the consultation.

Yours sincerely

**Mrs G. Evans**  
Head Teacher

