

To whom it may concern,

Bliss is the leading UK charity for babies born premature or sick. We champion the right of premature or sick babies to receive the best care by [supporting families](#), [campaigning for change](#) and [supporting professionals](#), and [enabling life-changing research](#).

Bliss estimates that around 60,000 babies are born prematurely in the UK every year. This means that 1 in every 13 babies born in the UK will be born premature (before 37 weeks of pregnancy).

Starting primary school

On average, two children in every primary school class will have been born premature. All children are different, but studies have shown that premature children are more likely to have Special Educational Needs (SEN) than children born at full term. These include difficulties with learning and particularly with mathematics. There could be developmental delays, challenges with cognitive skills, issues with coordination and attention, as well as difficulties communicating.

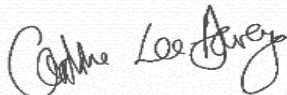
Premature summer-born babies

Depending on their due date, a premature baby born in the summer months may fall into a school year earlier than they would have if they had been born at full term. They could be experiencing the double disadvantage of having complications from their premature birth, as well as being the youngest in their school year. Put simply, their premature birth could mean that they end up starting school almost a year earlier than they should, in terms of educational, behavioural and social development.

The [Schools Admissions Code 2013](#) published by the Welsh Government says it is possible to defer or delay school start. In the case of children joining outside their normal age group the Admissions Code states that “admission authorities should consider these requests carefully and make decisions 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.”

I ask you to look favourably on this request for flexibility around a premature child’s start at primary school. Families do not make the decision to delay their child’s school start lightly. They have spoken with medical professionals and carers who work with their child, and have made this request because they feel it is in the best interest of the child for their physical and emotional wellbeing, as well as for their education.

Yours sincerely,



Caroline Lee-Davey
Chief Executive