

Exhibit 2: National Policies on School Entry and Promotion

Reported by National Research Coordinators

Country	Official Policy on Age of Entry to Primary School	Based on Parental Discretion, Usual Practice on Age of Entry to Primary School	Age of Entry Policy Has Changed Within Past 10 Years	Description of Policy Change	Policy on Promotion and Retention in Grades 1–4
Australia	Varies by state, but generally children must begin school by age 6.	Most children begin school when they are 4.5-5 years old, but some wait until the compulsory age, either on advice from preschool staff or on the judgment of parents, usually because of maturity. It is not usual for children to skip the Foundation year and go straight to Year 1, although this is legally possible.	Yes	All states now include a full year of Foundation in their primary education.	Varies by state, but generally automatic promotion for grades 1-8.
Austria	Children must begin school in the September following their 6th birthday.	Parents can request earlier admission to school for mature children who will turn 6 by March 1 of the following calendar year.	Yes	The cutoff date for early admission was moved from December 31 to March 1 of the following year.	Automatic promotion into grade 2. For grades 3-4, promotion is dependent upon academic progress.
Azerbaijan	Children must be 6 years old by September 15 to begin school the following September. Students with birthdays between September 16 and December 31 can qualify to begin school the following September by taking an examination.	Children typically begin primary school at age 7 because their parents feel they will benefit from being more mature.	Yes	Children were previously allowed to begin primary school at age 5.	In grades 5-8 and 10-11, students who receive 4 or more unsatisfactory marks are retained.
Bahrain	Children begin school in the calendar year of their 6th birthday.	Follows policy	No	n/a	-
Belgium (Flemish)	Children begin school in September of the calendar year of their 6th birthday.	Parents can decide to enroll children at the age of 5, with approval of the class council, or at age 7.	No	In general, participation in a Dutch-speaking preschool for approximately one year is required.	Promotion is dependent upon school policy and parental input.
Belgium (French)	Children begin school during the calendar year of their 6th birthday.	Parents can extend preschool by one year or enroll students in primary school one year early after consulting with the Centre for Psychological, Medical, and Social Services and the head of the school.	No	n/a	No policy, but automatic promotion is advised in vocational track between grades 7 and 9.
Bulgaria	Children begin school during the calendar year of their 7th birthday.	Children may begin school at the age of 6 at the discretion of parents or guardians.	Yes	Education policy was changed in 2015, introducing many reforms in general and vocational education.	Automatic promotion for grades 1-4. Retention is dependent on academic progress for grades 5-8.
Canada	Varies by province, but most children begin school between ages 5 and 7.	Varies by province, but some parental discretion is typically allowed. Some parents opt to enroll children one year later or earlier and others choose to homeschool their children.	No	While the policies of most provinces have not changed, they have been changed in a few provinces.	Varies by province, but most provinces do not have a policy on the promotion and retention of students across Grades 1-4.
Chile	Children must be 6 years old by March 31 of the year they begin school.	Principals are allowed some discretion in admitting children who turn 6 after March 31 but before June 30.	No	n/a	Promotion is dependent on academic progress.
Chinese Taipei	Children must be 6 years old in order to begin school in September.	Parents can apply for early enrollment to elementary schools. Legal representatives can apply to delay enrollment to elementary schools for children with disabilities.	No	n/a	For intellectually gifted students, parents can apply for promotion to accelerate children through the grades. However, a child must spend at least 5 years in elementary school.

SOURCE: IEA's Progress in International Reading Literacy Study—PIRLS 2016

A dash (-) indicates data not provided.

Exhibit 2: National Policies on School Entry and Promotion (Continued)

Country	Official Policy on Age of Entry to Primary School	Based on Parental Discretion, Usual Practice on Age of Entry to Primary School	Age of Entry Policy Has Changed Within Past 10 Years	Description of Policy Change	Policy on Promotion and Retention in Grades 1–4
Czech Republic	Children must be 6 years old to begin school in September.	On one hand, parents may request that children born after September 1 may be allowed to enroll at age 5 with pedagogical and psychological certification. On the other hand, about 22% of students every year receive permission to postpone enrollment for one year.	No	n/a	Promotion is dependent on academic progress and minimum attendance requirements. Students may repeat only one grade on the primary level.
Denmark	Children begin preprimary education in August during the calendar year of their 6th birthday.	Parents may request early enrollment for children whose 5th birthdays are before October 1. Parents may also request a one-year postponement of enrollment. Early enrollment decisions are typically made based on recommendations from the kindergarten or a qualification test.	Yes	One year of preprimary school is now compulsory.	Automatic promotion after Grade 0.
Egypt	Children must be 6 years old by the end of September in order to begin school in October.	Children typically begin primary school at age 7 because their parents feel they will benefit from being more mature.	No	n/a	Automatic promotion for grades 1-3. Promotion in grade 4 is dependent on academic progress.
England	Local authorities must provide a place from September for all children turning 5 in that year. Children are required to start primary school (reception class) in the September following their 4th birthday.	Subject to parental discretion, a child can start school later in the school year or in September after the child's 5th birthday if the child was born in the summer (April 1 to August 31) and if parents think their child is not ready yet to start in the September after the child's 4th birthday.	Yes	Previously, most local authorities had a policy of accepting children into school at the beginning of the term during which the child turned 5.	No policy
Finland	Children begin school in August during the calendar year of their 7th birthday.	It is possible for parents to enroll children one year earlier or one year later than the official policy due to psychological or medical reasons.	No	n/a	Automatic promotion for grades 1-9 and retention only in extreme situations (usually dependent on academic progress).
France	Children must begin school in the calendar year of their 6th birthday.	In rare cases, parents can request early or delayed enrollment.	No	n/a	A board of teachers, including the principal, recommend retention or promotion for each student based on academic performance. Parental input is considered. During elementary school, a student may repeat or skip only one class.
Georgia	Children must be 6 years old by the beginning of the academic year in order to begin school.	Official policy does not allow for early admission. However, there are no regulations on late admission.	Yes	Entry age was not regulated for several years, resulting in many children beginning school at age 5. As of 2015, children must be 6 years old in order to begin school.	Automatic promotion for grades 1-4.
Germany	Varies by state, but generally children must have reached their 6th birthday before a statutory qualifying date (between June 30 and September 30) in order to begin school on August 1.	Varies by state, but generally, parents may apply to the local primary school for deferred enrollment for children with demonstrated physical or mental disabilities.	Yes	Some states have implemented different policy changes in the last 10 years regarding the start of compulsory education, namely flexible school entry, school deferment, and school choice.	Promotion policies vary by state and are generally dependent on academic progress.

SOURCE: IEA's Progress in International Reading Literacy Study—PIRLS 2016

Exhibit 2: National Policies on School Entry and Promotion (Continued)

Country	Official Policy on Age of Entry to Primary School	Based on Parental Discretion, Usual Practice on Age of Entry to Primary School	Age of Entry Policy Has Changed Within Past 10 Years	Description of Policy Change	Policy on Promotion and Retention in Grades 1–4
Hong Kong SAR	Children must reach the age of 5.75 years before September 1 in order to begin school that year.	For parents who have a particular school in mind, they can apply for a discretionary place.	No	n/a	In general, students should be promoted at the end of each academic year; exceptions to the general rule of promotions may be allowed at the discretion of school heads.
Hungary	Children must be 6 years old by August 31 in order to begin school that year.	Children may remain in preschool for an additional year. Parents may request early entry for mature students. These decisions are made on the basis of a recommendation from a committee of experts.	Yes	Until January 2013, children were required to turn 6 before May 31 in order to begin school that year. Parents could request delayed enrollment until the child was 7 or 8 years old.	Promotion is dependent on academic progress in all grades.
Iran, Islamic Rep. of	Children must be 6 years old by September 21 (the beginning of the school year) in order to begin school.	Some private schools require children to be 7 years old before beginning primary school.	Yes	The structure of the school system changed into 6 years of primary school, 3 years of lower secondary school, and 3 years of upper primary school in 2011.	Students in grades 1-6 who receive at least 3 "unsatisfactory" grades at the end of the school year must complete several assigned tasks by September to determine promotion or retention.
Ireland	Children must begin school between the ages of 4 and 6.	Although not obliged to attend school until the age of 6, most children begin preprimary school in the September following their 4th birthday.	No	Policy on age of entry is unchanged. However, increased availability and duration of preschool has led to increasingly later entry age.	Students may only repeat a year for educational reasons and in exceptional circumstances.
Israel	Children begin school in the calendar year of their 6th birthday.	Parents may apply for delayed enrollment. The request is discussed by the kindergarten teacher, an educational psychologist, and the parents, and the parents have the final say in enrollment decisions.	No	n/a	Students are retained only in outstanding circumstances.
Italy	Children begin primary school during the calendar year of their 6th birthday.	Children begin primary school during the calendar year of their 6th birthday. Parents have discretion over early enrollment.	No	n/a	Retention in grades 1-5 is possible only for very serious reasons.
Kazakhstan	Children begin school when they are 6 or 7 years old.	Most children begin school at age 7.	No	n/a	Students are not retained between grades 1 and 4.
Kuwait	Children must be 6 years old by March 31 in order to begin school that year.	Follows policy	No	n/a	Promotion is dependent on academic progress.
Latvia	Children begin school during the calendar year of their 7th birthday.	Parents can request early or delayed enrollment depending on the state of health and psychological preparedness of the child.	No	n/a	Regulations are set by the Cabinet of Ministers.
Lithuania	Children begin school during the calendar year of their 7th birthday.	Parents can request enrollment for children at the age of 6. Children's mental and physical maturity is determined by the municipal pedagogical psychological services. Parents may also request delayed enrollment.	Yes	Policy was changed in 2010 to raise suggested age for school entry to 7.	In grades 1-3, all students with all satisfactory annual evaluations are promoted. In grade 4, students with at least 1 unsatisfactory evaluation are retained. Decisions regarding promotion and retention are made at the school level.

SOURCE: IEA's Progress in International Reading Literacy Study—PIRLS 2016

Exhibit 2: National Policies on School Entry and Promotion (Continued)

Country	Official Policy on Age of Entry to Primary School	Based on Parental Discretion, Usual Practice on Age of Entry to Primary School	Age of Entry Policy Has Changed Within Past 10 Years	Description of Policy Change	Policy on Promotion and Retention in Grades 1–4
Macao SAR	Children begin school during the calendar year of their 6th birthday.	Follows policy	No	n/a	Decisions regarding promotion and retention are made at the school level and are dependent on academic progress.
Malta	Children begin primary school during the calendar year of their 5th birthday.	Follows policy	No	n/a	Automatic promotion except in exceptional cases and with parental or guardian consent.
Morocco	Children begin primary school at age 6. In remote areas, the age of entry may be 5.5 years.	Follows policy	No	n/a	Promotion is generally automatic, although very few students may be held back on the basis of final scores.
Netherlands	Children must begin kindergarten on the first school day of the month after their 5th birthday.	Most children begin kindergarten when they turn 4. Most children are 6 years old when they enter primary education (ISCED 1).	No	n/a	Promotion for grades 1-8 is based on academic progress in consultation with the parents.
New Zealand	Children must attend primary school from their 6th birthday, but they have the right to be enrolled in school from age 5.	In general, children begin school on soon after their 5th birthday.	Yes	The Education Act Update 2017 enables schools to allow children to start school at the beginning of the term closest to their 5th birthday (which may begin before or after the child turns 5).	Promotion is generally automatic, but can be subject to parental and principal decisions.
Northern Ireland	Children who reach the age of 4 between September 1 and July 1 must begin compulsory education the following September.	Follows policy	No	n/a	Automatic promotion for all grades.
Norway (5)	Children begin school during the calendar year of their 6th birthday.	In rare cases, parents can request earlier (if born before April 1) or delayed enrollment. The decisions are made on the basis of recommendations from kindergarten and the municipal pedagogical psychological services.	No	n/a	Automatic promotion for all grades.
Oman	Children must be at least 5.75 at the beginning of September to join Grade 1 in public schools, or 5.25 years to join Grade 1 in private schools.	To enroll in grade 1, students must be between 5.75 and 6.75 years old. Otherwise, students are registered in above grades according to age with a special treatment plan by the school.	Yes	The age of entry was changed from between 6 and 8 years old to between 5.75 and 6.75 years old.	Automatic promotion with individual program plans for low-achieving students.
Poland	-	-	-	-	-
Portugal	Children must be 6 years old by the beginning of the school year (mid-September) to begin school that calendar year.	Parents and guardians can request conditional enrollment for children who will turn 6 between mid-September and the end of the calendar year.	No	n/a	Automatic promotion for grade 1; retention possible after grade 2.
Qatar	Children must be 6 years old by the end of June in order to begin school the following September.	Although the official policy states that all students can enroll in school when they are 6 years old, some students enroll at age 7 because their parents believe they will benefit from being more mature.	Yes	Policy had changed regarding enrollment categories. Children with parents working in the private sector and paying fees or for the semi-government are not allowed to enroll in public schools.	Promotion and retention are based on academic progress for grades 1-4.

SOURCE: IEA's Progress in International Reading Literacy Study—PIRLS 2016

Exhibit 2: National Policies on School Entry and Promotion (Continued)

Country	Official Policy on Age of Entry to Primary School	Based on Parental Discretion, Usual Practice on Age of Entry to Primary School	Age of Entry Policy Has Changed Within Past 10 Years	Description of Policy Change	Policy on Promotion and Retention in Grades 1–4
Russian Federation	Children must be between the ages of 6.5 and 8 by the end of August to begin school.	Parents may request early enrollment with the consent of the school principal for children under 6.5 years of age. Parents have the right to send their children to school at age 7 or older if they want the child to be more mature or for health reasons.	No	n/a	Automatic promotion for grade 1; promotion based on academic progress for grades 2-4.
Saudi Arabia	Children must be 6 years old by the end of August to begin school the following September.	Often, children begin school when they are 5.75 years old.	No	n/a	Promotion is dependent upon assessment in grades 1-6.
Singapore	According to the Compulsory Education Act, children must begin school in the calendar year of their 7th birthday.	Parents may seek a deferral of registration for medical reasons or if the child is homeschooled.	No	n/a	Promotion is generally automatic between grades 1-4.
Slovak Republic	Children must be 6 years old by August 31 in order to begin school in September, unless granted a postponement.	Enrollment may be delayed or advanced based on psychological tests and professional recommendations.	No	n/a	Promotion is dependent on academic progress.
Slovenia	Children begin school during the calendar year of their 6th birthday.	Enrollment may be delayed by no more than one year upon parents' or doctors' recommendations. The final decision is made by the head teacher at the recommendation of a committee (including counselors, school physicians, and teachers).	No	n/a	Promotion is generally automatic between grades 1-6, but retention may occur due to poor school results, illness, moving, or other reasons. Retentions are proposed by parents and confirmed by school agreement. When parents do not agree, the teachers' assembly can make a decision to retain due to poor school results.
South Africa	Children must be 6 years old by June 30 to begin school that calendar year. Compulsory schooling begins at age 7.	Children are encouraged to begin at age 7 because schools and parents feel that they will benefit from being more mature.	Yes	As of 2011, children can enter Grade 1 at a younger age. Previously, children were only allowed to enter Grade 1 in the year that they turned 7.	Automatic promotion in all grades; for retention, an application has to be made to the provincial authorities for permission. Students may only be retained once within a phase of about 3 years.
Spain	Children begin school during the calendar year of their 6th birthday.	Follows policy	No	n/a	Students may only repeat one year between grades 1-6.
Sweden	Children begin school in August in the calendar year of their 7th birthday. Most students begin the voluntary preschool class during the calendar year of their 6th birthday.	Under special circumstances, the municipality may allow a child to delay enrollment for one year. Parents can also request enrollment during the year of a child's 6th birthday.	No	n/a	Automatic promotion for grades 1-9, but children may be allowed to stay in a grade for an extra year if needed.
Trinidad and Tobago	Children begin school during the calendar year of their 5th birthday.	Children may begin school at age 4 if they are to turn 5 within the first term (September to December) of that year.	No	n/a	Promotion is dependent on academic progress for grade 4.
United Arab Emirates	Children begin school during the calendar year of their 6th birthday.	Follows policy	Yes	Age of entry was increased from 5 years old to 6 years old in 2014.	Automatic promotion for grades 1-5.
United States	Each state requires parents to send their children to a school between 5 and 8 years old, but the ages vary by state.	Children typically begin kindergarten at age 5.	No	n/a	Varies by state. Some states require test-based retention in grade 3 for students who do not meet grade-level requirements in reading.

SOURCE: IEA's Progress in International Reading Literacy Study—PIRLS 2016

Exhibit 2: National Policies on School Entry and Promotion (Continued)

Country	Official Policy on Age of Entry to Primary School	Based on Parental Discretion, Usual Practice on Age of Entry to Primary School	Age of Entry Policy Has Changed Within Past 10 Years	Description of Policy Change	Policy on Promotion and Retention in Grades 1–4
Benchmarking Participants—Responses Pertain to Benchmarking Provinces/Emirates/States					
Buenos Aires, Argentina	Children must be 6 years old before June 30 in order to begin school that calendar year.	Follows policy	No	n/a	Automatic promotion for grades 1-2.
Ontario, Canada	Students must begin school in September if they will turn 6 on or before September 1. However, children have the right to attend school in September if they will turn 6 any time up until December 31 of that year.	Parents may enroll their children prior to age 6, but this is not mandatory. Two years of kindergarten (ages 4 and 5) are not mandatory. In addition, some parents homeschool their children.	No	n/a	No policy
Quebec, Canada	Children must reach the age of 6 before October 1 of the current school year.	Follows policy	No	n/a	School boards determine promotion.
Denmark (3)	Children begin preprimary education in August during the calendar year of their 6th birthday.	Parents may request early enrollment for children whose 5th birthdays are before October 1. Parents may also request a one-year postponement of enrollment. Early enrollment decisions are typically made based on recommendations from the kindergarten or a qualification test.	Yes	Kindergarten is now compulsory.	Automatic promotion after Grade 0.
Norway (4)	Children begin school during the calendar year of their 6th birthday.	In rare cases, parents can request earlier (if born before April 1) or delayed enrollment. The decisions are made on the basis of recommendations from kindergarten and the municipal pedagogical psychological services.	No	n/a	Automatic promotion for all grades.
Moscow City, Russian Fed.	Children must be at least 6.5 years old but no older than 8 years old by September 1 in order to begin school that September if they have no medical contraindications.	Children typically begin primary school at age 7. Parents and principals have the right to advance or delay enrollment.	No	n/a	Automatic promotion for grades 1-4.
Eng/Afr/Zulu - RSA (5)	Children must be 6 years old by June 30 to begin school that calendar year. Compulsory schooling begins at age 7.	Children are encouraged to begin at age 7 because schools and parents feel that they will benefit from being more mature.	Yes	As of 2011, children can enter Grade 1 at a younger age. Previously, children were only allowed to enter Grade 1 in the year that they turned 7.	Automatic promotion in all grades; for retention, an application has to be made to the provincial authorities for permission. Students may only be retained once within a phase of about 3 years.
Andalusia, Spain	Children begin school during the calendar year of their 6th birthday.	Follows policy	No	n/a	Retention of students is possible at any grade, but only once.
Madrid, Spain	Children begin school during the calendar year of their 6th birthday.	Follows policy	No	n/a	Students may only repeat one year between grades 1-8.
Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates	Children begin school during the calendar year of their 6th birthday.	Most parents prefer children start school as early as allowed.	Yes	Ministry of Education policy was updated in 2012.	Automatic promotion for grades 1-5, except in rare circumstances.
Dubai, United Arab Emirates	Children begin school during the calendar year of their 6th birthday.	Follows policy	Yes	Beginning in 2014, children are allowed to start grade 1 at age 6.	Varies by school type.

SOURCE: IEA's Progress in International Reading Literacy Study—PIRLS 2016