



Settling in:
sharing regular
observations
with parents

The way in which children and families are welcomed into Reception is crucial. It's a time in which positive relationships can be established between parents, teachers and children. Some schools have adopted a flexible induction process, giving more time for children and parents to feel secure.

At **Ryvers Primary School, Slough**, children enter Reception gradually in small numbers. This approach recognises the needs of each individual child and their family. During the first week of term in September, parents and children have a 'visit date and time'. On this day they come into the new classroom and meet the Reception teachers, nursery nurses and classroom assistants. Around five families visit at any one time over a period of three or four days. This allows for a calm, relaxed atmosphere and gives time for one-to-one talks with teachers. Children's needs and previous experiences are discussed in detail, along with any concerns a parent may have, and the Reception routines and physical space are made familiar to families. Children then begin in the Reception class over the next two to three weeks. The first day 10 children start, followed by groups of 5 more each day (or every other day), until all children are attending. They attend for mornings and lunch only at first, going home early in the afternoon. Teachers and Reception staff are on hand during lunch time to help support the children during this period.

Discussions are then held with parents about when to begin a full day so that this is matched to the individual child's confidence and capabilities. This gradual approach allows children to settle calmly and receive the close attention and security that they need. This has benefits for all children, but is particularly important for the youngest, and those with additional needs of any kind.

Parents also welcome the greater opportunity to have time to get to know staff and discuss their child at the beginning and end of sessions.

Working parents are still able to access the extended day provision, but do need to make other care arrangements before their entry date,

and for several afternoons, as their child settles in. The benefits of the arrangements for children have been explained very clearly and consistently to the whole school community, and this has become an established practice that is appreciated by all.

In addition, families also retain the option to start their child at a later date during the year nearer their 5th birthday – either in January or after the Easter break.

Other schools ease transition to Reception through visits to children's nursery settings and home visits to new entrants. For more ideas see:

Transition to primary school – PEAL practice example

www.peal.org.uk/

All about ... Transitions

www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/eyfs/resources/downloads/3_4_a.pdf

St John's Pre-School and Primary School, Devon, has a **Foundation Stage Unit** with its pre-school and Reception class provision combined. The children and staff all work together in the same indoor and outdoor space. As children move into Reception, the transition is seamless. The only change for children is that they wear a school uniform and spend a little more time each day with the Reception teacher in group activity.





Sharing regular observations with parents

The Foundation Stage Unit has a range of methods in place to help parents and staff keep in touch and share regular observations on learning.

The staff team aim to be approachable in any situation and work at developing good relationships with families. Keyworkers and the manager of the pre-school are available to talk to parents as they drop off or pick up children, or at a prearranged time that is convenient to parents. Talking face to face is the method of communication parents say they like best.

A board has been set up near the entrance describing current topics and special activities and events. Parents are encouraged to look at the information as they come in and out, and this is replicated in a half-termly newsletter.

On a number of occasions throughout the year, all parents and carers are invited to come a little earlier in the afternoon to look at things the children have been making and doing, before taking children home.

All children have a '**Celebration Book**' which parents are encouraged to come and share with their child's keyworker. Parents and children delight in these (as do staff). Children also have **book bag diaries** in which a note of which book has been sent home is made; parents and staff also use the books to communicate about children's progress more generally.

The Unit has started sending home '**WOW sheets**' – these are coloured papers asking parents if they would like to write down things their

child has said and done that make them say 'Wow!'. This information from parents helps in planning activities around individual children's interests and can be linked to future planning for all areas of learning. Some children who rarely volunteer information are very happy to respond and talk when the keyworker asks about things they have done at home.

David seemed settled and confident at pre-school. However, after the half-term break there were many tears on arrival and his keyworker couldn't understand why. After reading his WOW sheet it became clear that he'd had a fantastic, very busy week with his family – he'd even been to dad's work and sat on the tractor while dad was driving it. When staff started talking to him about his half-term adventures, he settled down and was very proud to share his stories.

Parents' observations can be used to enrich planning in this way, and can be included in assessments of progress.

Helpful guidance on including both parents and children in record keeping, planning and assessment for the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile can be found in:

National Assessment Agency (2008) Engaging parents and children in EYFS profile assessment
www.naa.org.uk/libraryAssets/media/Engaging_parents_and_children_in_EYFS_profile_assessment.pdf

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