

Transition to Reception

Guidance for Early Years Settings, Schools and Childminders

2026 – 2027



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Welcome

How to use this guidance

This guidance supports a consistent, high-quality approach to transition into Reception across all early years settings, schools and childminders in Croydon.

It is designed to be used together, by the settings children are leaving and the schools they are joining. So that every child experiences a smooth, well-supported start to school life.

Who is this guidance for?

- Early years setting leaders, managers and practitioners
- Reception teachers, EYFS leads and school leaders
- Childminders caring for children starting Reception
- SENCOs, inclusion leads and other professionals supporting transition

How to use this document

Each section can be read independently; dip in and out depending on your role and current focus. The term-by-term timeline in Section 4 is a particularly useful planning tool to return to throughout the year. Read this guidance alongside the Croydon Transition to Reception Booklet, which is the form used to share information about individual children with receiving schools.

Settings & Childminders	Schools & Receiving Settings
• Prepare children for change through positive conversations and activities • Complete and share the Croydon Transition to Reception Booklet for all children • Work in partnership with families throughout the transition period • Identify children who may need targeted or personalised support early	• Plan for incoming children from offer day — not just in the summer term • Build relationships with local early years settings and childminders • Organise visits, welcome events and home visits before September • Ensure all support arrangements are confirmed and in place for day one

Section 1

Why Transition Matters

Starting school is one of the most significant milestones in a child's life. The quality of transition arrangements shapes children's early experiences of school for years to come. Getting it right matters for children, for families, and for settings and schools across Croydon.

What good transition does	What the evidence tells us
• Helps children feel safe, confident and ready to learn • Supports communication, language and social development • Strengthens parental engagement and confidence • Builds strong attendance habits from day one • Enables early identification of emerging needs • Reduces attainment gaps for disadvantaged children • Creates continuity between home, setting and school	• Children not school-ready have significantly higher odds of persistent absence later in their education (Connected Bradford dataset) • Less than half missing 15–20% of Reception sessions return to regular attendance next year • Only 51% of parents report their 4-year-old uses the toilet independently • 87% of schools use taster sessions; far fewer carry out home visits or share readiness resources • SEND is a growing part of Reception cohorts nationally

"Effective transition into reception is built on three essential foundations: working closely with families, deep partnerships across the early years system, and early identification of need and timely support." — DfE, April 2026

Section 2

Principles of Effective Transition

These six principles underpin all transition activity across Croydon. They apply whether a child needs universal support or a highly personalised plan. The principles remain constant, only the intensity changes.

1 Knowing the Child

Understand each child as an individual — their strengths, interests, preferred ways of learning and any areas needing support. This knowledge should flow from those who know the child best: their family and early years setting.

2 Building Relationships

Positive, trusting relationships between children, families, practitioners and school staff are at the heart of smooth transition. Children settle best when the adults around them know and trust each other.

3 Early Planning

Transition should begin long before the summer term. Early planning gives time to identify needs and put support in place. For children with SEND, early planning is essential.

4 Clear Information Sharing

Share the right information at the right time — clear, relevant and focused on what will genuinely help the child settle, engage and thrive. Use the Croydon Transition to Reception Booklet for all children.

5 Partnership with Families

Parents and carers know their children best. Working in true partnership, listening to concerns, valuing their knowledge and keeping them informed makes a real difference to children's confidence.

6 Inclusive Practice

Every child should be supported to access their new environment successfully. For some this means adapting approaches, providing additional visits or involving other professionals. Inclusion is built in from the start.

Section 3

The Croydon Graduated Approach

Not all children need the same level of transition support. The Croydon Graduated Approach ensures all children receive high-quality universal transition, some receive additional targeted support, and a smaller number receive a fully personalised plan.

UNIVERSAL — For ALL children

- Transition timeline followed for all children in line with this guidance
- Croydon Transition to Reception Booklet completed and shared with parental consent
- At least one school visit or stay-and-play session before September
- Families kept informed with clear, accessible communication throughout
- Positive conversations about school in the setting and at home
- All key information shared between the early years setting and receiving school

TARGETED — For SOME children who may benefit from extra support

- Earlier and more detailed conversations arranged between setting and school
- Additional visits to the school environment organised before September
- More frequent and closer contact with parents and carers
- SENCO or specialist involved in early transition conversations and planning
- Detailed information sharing — learning observations and effective strategies
- Monitoring arranged for the first half-term to check how the child is settling

PERSONALISED — For A FEW children with complex or significant needs

- Coordinated multi-agency transition planning meeting held with all key people
- EHCP annual review completed and receiving school named well in advance
- Multiple additional visits — smaller, quieter opportunities tailored to the child
- Detailed strategies documented and transferred from setting to school in writing
- Phased start or graduated transition where this is in the child's best interests
- Formal review of support arrangements within the first term at school

Section 4

Term-by-Term Timeline

Transition should be a planned, year-round process.

Adapt this timeline for children needing more targeted or personalised support.

Early Years Settings and childminders	Schools/ Receiving settings
SPRING — January to March	
- Identify all children due to start Reception in September - Begin initial conversations with families about the transition - Start gathering information about each child's development and needs - Identify children who may need targeted or personalised support - Begin early discussions with schools for children with SEND	- Share general transition information and key dates with families - Begin building relationships with local early years settings - Review last year's transition — what worked well? - Ensure SENCO is aware of children with EHCPs joining in September - Begin planning the transition programme and timetable of activities

Early Years Settings and childminders	Schools/ Receiving settings
SPRING/EARLY SUMMER — April & May	
- Complete Croydon Transition Booklets for all children - Share booklets with receiving schools with parental consent - Arrange or accept visits from school staff to your setting - Ensure all SEND paperwork is up to date and ready to share - Make contact with schools for children coming from childminding	- Contact all settings and childminders to discuss incoming children - Visit settings to observe children in familiar environments - Review booklets and identify children needing extra support - Arrange stay-and-play sessions and schedule home visits - Ensure SENCO meets settings for children with SEND or EHCPs

Section 4

Term-by-Term Timeline

Transition should be a planned, year-round process.

Adapt this timeline for children needing more targeted or personalised support.

Early Years Settings and childminders	Schools/ Receiving settings
SUMMER — June & July	
• Accompany children to school stay-and-play sessions where possible • Share final information and any late concerns with receiving schools • Prepare transition activities — goodbye books, scrapbooks • Talk to children positively and frequently about starting school • Make subtle routine changes to prepare for the school day structure	• Hold stay-and-play sessions, taster mornings and welcome events • Carry out home visits before the summer break where possible • Send welcome materials to children — postcards, photos of the team • Hold a welcome meeting or information evening for all families • Confirm all support plans are in place for September

Early Years Settings and childminders	Schools/ Receiving settings
AUTUMN — September & October	
• Stay available to families in the first weeks • Reinforce consistent messages about routines and attendance • Share any new information that emerges after the child starts • Offer to speak to the school if a child is finding settling hard	• Prioritise relationships and routines in the first two weeks • Observe all children settling — adapt provision as needed • Maintain a visible presence for families at the school gate • Avoid a 'double transition' — aim for full-time by day 3 • Carry out Reception Baseline Assessment within six weeks

Section 5

School Readiness

School readiness does not mean children must arrive knowing letters and numbers. It means they have the foundational skills to engage with learning, build relationships and manage themselves in a school environment. Every child develops at their own pace, our role is to support them where they are.

National School Readiness Survey Findings

Kindred2 Survey key findings: fewer children arrive school-ready than in previous years · more children start without being toilet-trained · parental confidence is high but may not match reality · boys develop later, especially in communication and language · SEND is a growing part of Reception cohorts nationally

The six areas of school readiness

Personal, Social & Emotional

Separate from parent/carer, share and take turns, regulate emotions, follow simple rules

Communication & Language

Listen attentively, talk about feelings, hold a conversation, make needs known to adults

Physical Development

Hold a pencil, move around safely, turn pages in a book, use scissors with control

Self-Care

Use toilet independently, wash and dry hands, manage coat and shoes, use cutlery

Learning Dispositions

Show curiosity, concentrate on tasks, enjoy books and mark-making, engage in imaginative play

Home Readiness

Good sleep routine, regular mealtimes, experience of books, used to being with other adults

Talking to families about school readiness

When talking to families about school readiness: always start with what the child CAN do, avoid the phrase 'not school ready', say 'there are things we can work on together', refer families to the Croydon Family Hubs offer in Section 7

Section 6

Working with Families

Families are not just recipients of transition, they are active partners in it. When parents and carers feel informed, listened to and supported, children settle faster and attend more consistently.

What families tell us they need:

- Earlier information about what to expect and when
- Practical guidance on supporting school readiness at home
- Clear communication without jargon
- To feel their child will be known and cared for
- Help understanding what SEND support looks like in school
- Reassurance that their concerns will be taken seriously

Managing parental anxiety

Transition is a dual process; children adapt to new environments, and parents manage changes in identity and responsibility. Some parents may have negative memories of school, or face language barriers, cultural differences or personal pressures. Respond with empathy, flexibility and practical support.

Be present and visible: Be at the gate, available for informal chats: regular warm unscheduled contact builds trust faster than any letter or information pack.

Listen before you advise: Ask about worries before offering solutions. Active listening signals respect and builds the relationship that makes everything else possible.

Speak their language: Avoid jargon. If a family speaks another language, offer translated materials or interpretation. The DfE April 2026 guidance specifically recommends this.

Small acts of care matter: A personalised postcard to the child, a warm first-day welcome, a brief check-in, these signal that you see the child as an individual.

Home visits — DfE April 2026 best practice

Over half of primary schools (57%) use home visits. The DfE recommends carrying out visits before the summer break so information gathered can inform planning from day one. Consider: universal visits for all; targeted visits for SEND/high anxiety/limited prior setting experience; enhanced school-based alternatives where home visits are not feasible.

Section 7

Croydon Family Hubs

The Croydon Family Hubs offer a range of FREE support for families. Share these resources with every family whose child is starting Reception.

Easy Peasy App

A free app packed with short, fun activity ideas to support children's early learning at home. Activities take just a few minutes, are play-based and designed for busy families. Available in multiple languages.

pages.easypeasyapp.com/croydon-council-partnership

Barnardo's Virtual Family Space

Online workshops for parents and carers: Ready to Learn (school readiness), Potty Training, and Toddler Talk. Free, friendly, run as video calls. Available until September 2026.

virtualfamilyspace@barnardos.org.uk

Home Learning Environment — Making it Real & PEEP

Programmes supporting parents to create a rich home learning environment. Facilitated by Marie Day and Serena Pascall from the Croydon Family Hubs team.

family.hubs@croydon.gov.uk

Now I'm Two — Early Years Sessions

Early years group sessions for children and families through the Family Hubs. A warm environment for children to socialise, explore and build confidence before starting school.

family.hubs@croydon.gov.uk

Family Hubs Central Contact: family.hubs@croydon.gov.uk
For all programmes, dates, referrals and more information

Section 8

Settings and Schools Working Together

The DfE (April 2026) is clear: the strongest transition practice is built on deep, sustained partnerships between settings and schools. When settings and schools know and trust each other, children experience continuity and families feel supported throughout.

What meaningful partnership looks like in practice	
• School staff visit settings to observe children in their familiar environment • Setting staff are invited to accompany children to stay-and-play sessions • Joint CPD offered to align expectations across settings and schools • Schools share practical resources — menus, staff photos, classroom pictures • Childminders are actively included — not treated as an afterthought	• Regular phone calls to discuss all children, not only those with concerns • Settings feel able to raise concerns honestly without fear of judgement • Peer grouping of friends is considered when planning class arrangements • Schools contact every feeder setting after offer day, including small ones • Transition extends into Year 1; Reception teachers share with Year 1 staff

Case Study — Tunstall Nursery School, Croydon -Praised by Ofsted for outstanding transition practice.

What Tunstall shares	What Purley Oaks Primary asks nurseries
• Brief summary of each child's level, EAL status and friendships shared with schools • Phone calls with every receiving school — highlighting children needing extra support • Invitation for teachers and SENCOs to visit the setting and observe children • All SEND paperwork transferred: ISPs, SENIFs, EHCPs, external agency reports • A school flyer with photos shared with children before September • Pictures of the school team so children can learn teachers' names	• Child's interests, strengths and any barriers to learning • Family context and anything the school should be mindful of • Whether children are arriving with friends — should we keep them together? • Any safeguarding information — passed DSL to DSL directly • School uniforms and bags to dress up in during the summer term • Stories about starting school woven into everyday activities

Section 9

Supporting Children with SEND

Children with SEND deserve a transition that is carefully planned, clearly communicated and supported by everyone involved. Early planning is essential. Both the EYFS Statutory Framework and the Equality Act 2010 require providers to anticipate and remove barriers from the outset.

Step-by-step guide from the Croydon Early Years SEND Team

Step 1 — Spring Term Start planning early — involve parents and carers from the very start	• Begin transition planning as early as possible — small steps over time reduce anxiety • Have open, honest conversations with families about their hopes, worries and expectations • Keep communication regular and reassuring — let families know how you will support them
Step 2 — April / May Prepare clear, useful information to share with the receiving school	• SEND Support File: current observations, assessments, support plans and targets • EHCP information — share the draft or final plan, or notify if at assessment stage • Details of all professional involvement: SALT, OT, Physio, Educational Psychology
Step 3 — May / June Contact the school and arrange transition activities	• Contact the receiving school's SENCO — arrange a meeting and invite them to visit • Organise additional school visits — smaller, quieter opportunities if needed • Discuss strategies that work well and ask the school to mirror these from day one
Step 4 — July Complete the final handover — ensure nothing is missed	• Transfer all SEND documentation securely before the summer break • Brief the receiving teacher — face-to-face or by phone — about the child's needs • Confirm all support is agreed and the school is fully prepared for day one
Step 5 — September onwards Stay connected — transition continues after the first day	• Check in with families in the early weeks — offer to speak to the school if needed • Share any further information or context that emerges after the child has started • Be available to help the school understand the child's needs and what has worked

Section 10

Safeguarding and Information Sharing

Sharing information during transition is not just good practice for children with safeguarding concerns, it is a statutory duty. Settings and schools must ensure safeguarding information follows the child securely and promptly and nothing is lost in the handover.

Core principle

Parental consent should always be sought where possible. However, information CAN and MUST be shared without consent where there are safeguarding concerns and doing so is necessary to protect the child. This is not optional, it is a statutory duty under Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023.

The Seven Golden Rules of Information Sharing

- 1. Necessary:** Only share what is necessary for the purpose. Consider whether sharing is proportionate to the need.
- 2. Relevant:** Share information relevant to the safeguarding concern or transition — not everything you know.
- 3. Adequate:** Share enough for the receiving school to understand the situation and put appropriate support in place.
- 4. Accurate:** Ensure all shared information is factually correct. Do not share unverified concerns as facts.
- 5. Timely:** Share information promptly — delay in sharing safeguarding information can put children at risk.
- 6. Secure:** Use secure methods to transfer files. Do not send sensitive documents via unencrypted email.
- 7. Record it:** Keep a record of what was shared, with whom, when and why — including decisions not to share.

Transfer of safeguarding files — KCSIE 2024

KCSIE 2024 (p.35): The DSL must ensure the child protection file is transferred to the new school as soon as possible — within 5 days for in-year transfer, or within the first 5 days of the new term. The file must be sent separately from the main pupil file, transferred securely, and written confirmation of receipt must be obtained. Use the Croydon Transfer of Safeguarding Files Receipt template — available from the Early Learning Team.

Further guidance:

Croydon Safeguarding Children Partnership

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023

NSPCC

gov.uk/data-protection-in-schools

Section 11

Key Contacts and Resources

Croydon Council — Key Contacts

Early Learning Team

General transition queries, settings email lists, school contact details for childminders

early.learning@croydon.gov.uk

Early Years SEND Team

Support PVI and Childminders with transition planning for children with SEND or additional needs — advice, planning, contacts

EarlyYearsSENDETeam@croydon.gov.uk

Family Hubs Team

Family Hubs programmes supporting parents and children — Barnardo's, Easy Peasy, PEEP, Making it Real, Now I'm Two

family.hubs@croydon.gov.uk

Croydon Safeguarding Children Partnership

Safeguarding queries, transfer of files, contextual safeguarding advice and guidance

www.croydonlcsb.org.uk

Early Intervention SEND Team

Support school settings with transition planning for children with SEND or additional needs — advice, planning, contacts

EISEND@croydon.gov.uk

MASH — Education Monitoring

Safeguarding concerns requiring urgent escalation

Via Croydon Safeguarding Children Partnership

National Resources and Links

DfE: Getting Children Ready for Reception (April 2026): www.gov.uk/government/publications

EYFS Statutory Framework 2025: www.gov.uk — search 'EYFS statutory framework 2025'

Birth to 5 Matters (non-statutory guidance): www.birthto5matters.org.uk

KCSIE 2024: www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2

Barnardo's Virtual Family Space: virtualfamilyspace@barnardos.org.uk

ERIC — Potty Training Advice: www.eric.org.uk

The Croydon Transition to Reception Booklet

Use the Croydon Transition to Reception Booklet to share individual child information with receiving schools. Available from the Early Learning Team — early.learning@croydon.gov.uk

Section 12

Useful Flyers and Resources

The following resources are designed to be shared directly with families. They are available to display in your setting, hand out at events and send home with children.

Starting Reception

Starting Reception

Your child's journey to school starts at home

We understand that all children develop at their own pace, and that we're all learning from birth. When it's time to start school, some children will need more help than others.

There are key skills* that schools expect children to be learning before their first day. Practising these will make your child's journey to Reception positive as possible.

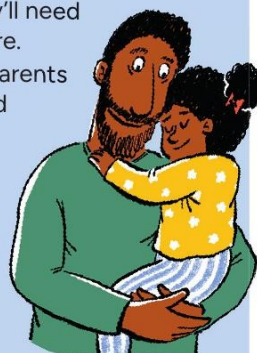
There's lots you can do at home to build your child's confidence and independence, helping them feel emotionally and practically prepared to start school.

*We are calling this document the 'Starting Reception' definition. Some people/organisations refer to this as 'school readiness'.



How can I help my child get ready?

- Your child will have lots of new activities and routines to get used to when they start school. There are some things they'll need to do more independently than they might have before.
- Research shows that a child's relationship with their parents is the most important factor in their development, and there's a lot you can do at home.
- When your child is at home with you or another caregiver, you can practise as a family with fun activities (we've included links at the end of this resource).
- Some of these skills take time to master, so it's good to introduce them gradually as part of your daily routine.



Find out more

For more information on how to help your child get ready for reception, and for information on supporting children with additional needs, scan the QR code or visit <https://startingreception.co.uk>.

Steps to Starting School

Steps to starting school

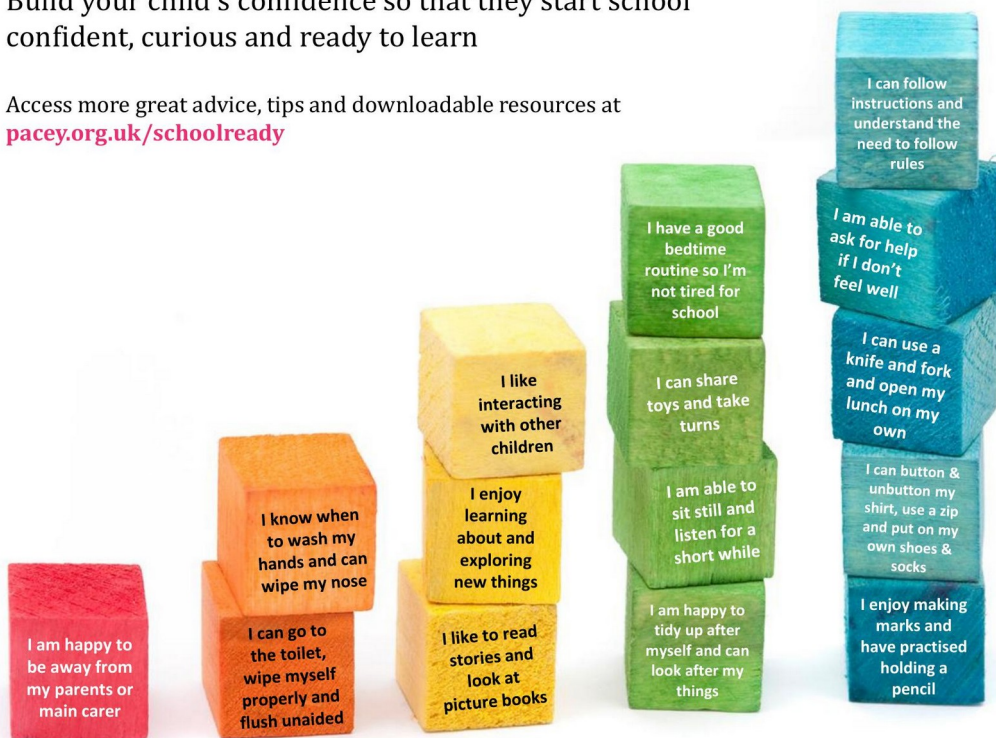
Build your child's confidence so that they start school confident, curious and ready to learn

Access more great advice, tips and downloadable resources at pacey.org.uk/schoolready



More top tips:

- ★ Get your child ready for their new routine by switching their meal times to match those of the school day
- ★ Encourage your child to explore new environments and interact with new people
- ★ Talk to your child about what they are most looking forward to at school
- ★ Let your child practise putting their new school uniform on and taking it off
- ★ **And remember**, every child is different and starts school with different abilities



For more information visit: www.startingreception.co.uk