Welcome to the Reception Network

Marnel Infant School

Todays Agenda

Agenda Item	Time
Welcome and reminders	
DfE reception offer: refresher	
Settling in: reflections on your new cohort	
Understanding your cohort through transition, observation, assessments and other information sources	
Responding to cohort needs through the environment	
Lead School spotlight	
Reflection, next steps and looking ahead as a network	

Welcome and reminders

- Welcome and thank you for joining.
- These virtual sessions are a regular space for colleagues across our region to come together, share practice, and strengthen reception provision.
- These sessions are designed to support connection, provide clarity, and build shared foundations to improve outcomes for our youngest learners.

Reminder on housekeeping:

Please keep microphones muted unless speaking.

Turn cameras on where possible.

Use the chat to contribute throughout or raise your virtual hand.

There will be time for questions at the end.

If you were unable to attend our previous virtual network meetings, please contact us and we will be happy to share the slides. The sessions included useful information about why the network exists and what to expect.

A reminder: The DfE offer

Reception is a national priority within RISE, with free DfE support to help schools improve provision and contribute to the ambition for 75% of children to reach a Good Level of Development (GLD) by 2028. The full DfE reception offer can be found here: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reception-improvement-offer/reception-improvement-offer

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What support is available from DfE?

Universal support- for all schools

- **Reception Networks**: opportunities to connect with other local schools, share practice, and learn together, led by accredited Lead Schools.
- **National webinars and training materials** focused on reception priorities.
- **'Compare your GLD data' reports** to help schools reflect on strengths and areas for development.
- **RISE Reception Conferences** in March 2026.

Targeted and specialist support – where needed

- **Nuffield Early Language Intervention (NELI)** – fully funded early language support for Reception children.
- **English Hubs Reception offer**:
  - Reception-focused audits of early language, reading and writing
  - CPD and intensive specialist support for schools with greatest need.
- **Maths Hubs Reception support**:
  - Mastering Number (Reception & KS1)
  - Specialist Knowledge for Teaching Mathematics (SKTM)
  - Intensive one-to-one support where required.

Professional development for leaders and teachers

- Early Years National professional qualification (NPQ) courses – free professional development course for those wishing to progress to leadership in EY.
- Early Years leadership national professional qualification (NPQEL)- for current and aspiring EY leaders who want to develop their leadership expertise.
- Excellence in reception teaching course - national professional development (NPD) course for both new and experienced reception teachers. Including practical strategies to improve children's outcomes

Supporting strong transitions

- National guidance, resources and examples to support transition into Reception
- Focuses on:
  - Early and purposeful planning
  - Strong partnerships with families and early years settings
  - Inclusive, strengths-based approaches for all children
- **Early Education Partnerships:** connect early year providers, schools and local services to improve transitions, school readiness and support for vulnerable children.

Opening Activity

How has your school engaged with the DfE reception year offer so far?

What has been most valuable, and what learning or experiences would you like to share with colleagues across the network?



Lead schools to choose how they would like to facilitate this based on meeting size e.g. a short discussion in breakout rooms or a combination of whole room reflections and use of the chat.

RISE Reception Quality Webinar Series- Autumn 2026 plans

Following success of our previous webinars, which attracted more than 10,500 live attendees, we have a new webinar offer for the autumn term based on attendee feedback:

Getting the reception environment right: preparing for a successful year

Wednesday 14 October 2026, 4-5:30pm

How reception learning environments can be designed to support children's engagement, learning and development from the start of the school year.

Using your GLD report to support reception improvement

Wednesday 4 November 2026, 4-5pm.

Introducing the new Good Level of Development (GLD) reports and explore how they can be used to support reception improvement.

What inclusive and adaptive practice means

Wednesday 2 December 2026, 4-5:30pm

What we mean by inclusive practice and how it is different from adaptive practice and how both can support all children, particularly for those with emerging or identified special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

Find out more and register here: RISE Reception webinars Autumn 2026

Settling in initial reflections: how are thing going so far?

Children have now had several weeks to settle into school routines.

This is often the point where first impressions begin to develop into a more secure understanding of the cohort.

Reflection and discussion:

Think about the children currently in your reception class.

What has gone particularly well?
What are you most pleased with so far?
What has surprised you?
What has been more challenging than expected?
What are you noticing about families and parental engagement?

Understanding your new cohort

As children spend time in reception, we begin to build a more complete picture of who they are as learners. No single source of information tells us everything and we must use various sources to build a complete picture.

Understanding develops through:

- Parent and carer conversations
- Pre-reception setting information
- Ongoing observations
- Transition information
- Professional judgement
- SEND and multi-agency information
- Learning journeys and examples of previous learning
- Assessment information

Why this matters?

Children do not always demonstrate what they know and can do in the same way or in every environment. A child's confidence, communication, engagement, and performance can be influenced by a range of factors, meaning a single observation or assessment may not provide a complete picture.

Children may demonstrate skills differently depending on:

Familiarity with adults	Language and communication	Confidence and emotional security	Individual interests and motivation	Previous educational and life experiences	The learning environment
• Children often show greater confidence and capability with people they know and trust.	• Children learning English as an additional language may understand far more than they are able to express in English.	• Some children need time to settle before they feel comfortable sharing their knowledge and abilities.	• Children are often more likely to demonstrate skills when activities connect to their interests and strengths.	• Opportunities and experiences prior to school can significantly influence how children engage with learning.	• Children may respond differently across settings, routines, and levels of structure.

Discussion

How does your school bring together all available information to create a holistic understanding of children as they enter reception?

Consider:

- What information do you currently gather before children start school?
- What processes help you identify children's strengths, interests, needs and any potential barriers to learning?
- How do you use this information to inform provision, curriculum planning and early intervention?
- Are they any children for whom it is more difficult to build a complete picture before entry?

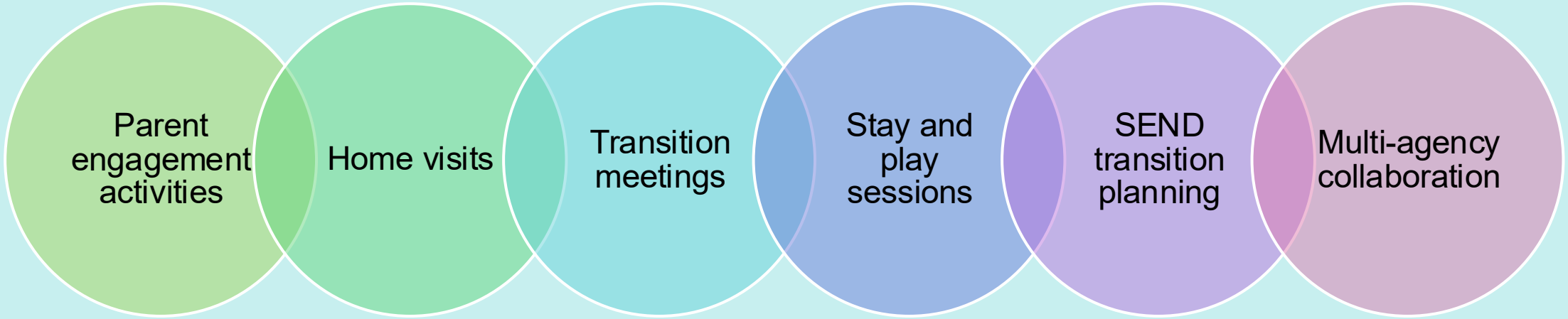
This discussion is an opportunity to hear how colleagues approach this, share effective practice, and take away ideas that could be adapted and used within your own school.

How did transition help build an understanding of your cohort?

Before children arrive in September, schools invest significant time in transition arrangements.

This year's transition approaches

What strategies were used across your setting?



Reflecting on transition this year

Discussion:

- Which parts of your transition process provided the most useful information?
- Which strategies had the greatest impact on children and families?
- What helped children settle successfully?
- Were there any challenges or barriers?
- What feedback did you receive from parents, nurseries or school staff?
- How effective were your arrangements for children with SEND?
- What do you wish you had known before September?

Looking ahead:

Now that this year's transition has taken place, what is the key learning from your setting that will shape your transition offer for next year?

Use this discussion opportunity to reflect on transition outcomes, learn from colleagues' experiences, and gather ideas to strengthen practice in your own setting.

Identifying cohort trends

Schools can use their growing understanding of the cohort to identify common strengths, needs and priorities. Looking across the cohort helps practitioners move beyond individual children and consider how curriculum, provision and the environment can best support the group as a whole.

Cohort trends may emerge in areas such as:

Communication & language	**Attention and listening**	**Independence and self-regulation**	**Early literacy experiences**	**Confidence and wellbeing**

The aim is not to focus on scores or individual assessment outcomes, but to identify cohort-level patterns that can inform curriculum decisions, teaching approaches and provision.

The table below provides examples of how identified cohort trends might shape practice.

Cohort Pattern	Possible Response
Emerging communication skills	Increase language-rich interactions and opportunities for talk
Reduced independence	Explicitly teach routines and self-help skills
Limited literacy experience	Prioritise stories, rhymes and reading
Lower confidence	Focus on belonging, relationships and wellbeing

What is your cohort telling you?

Discussion:

What strengths are emerging across your cohort?
e.g. communication, independence, physical confidence, creativity and problem-solving.

What priorities are emerging across your cohort?
e.g. vocabulary development, attention and listening, fine motor development or self-regulation.

If you had to describe your cohort in one sentence, what would that sentence be?
e.g. “A highly curious cohort who will benefit from support to develop independence”

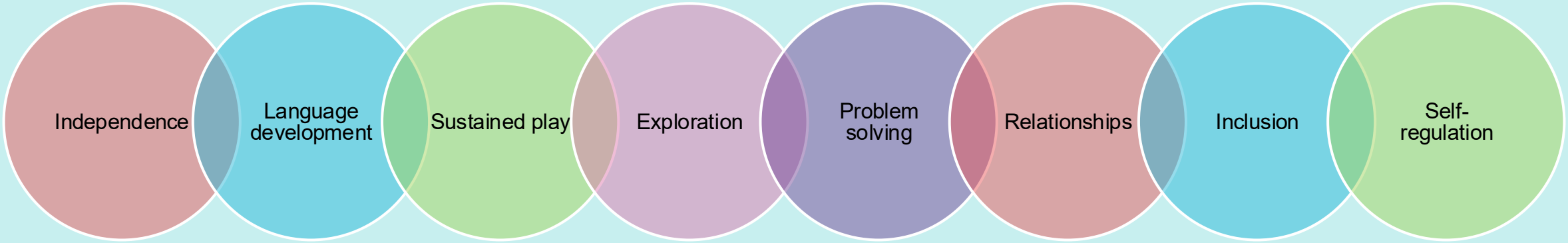
Use this discussion as an opportunity to learn from one another’s perspectives and identify the key messages you want to take forward into practice.

How should your environment respond to what your cohort is telling you?

A high-quality reception environment is more than a physical space. It actively supports learning and development.
Children learn from:

- **Adults:** what adults teach and model
- **Peers**: interactions with other children
- **The environment:** what the environment enables, encourages and communicates.

For this reason, the environment is often described as the third teacher. A strong environment supports:



What makes a high-quality reception environment?

A high-quality reception environment is safe, supportive and enabling. Through predictable routines, purposeful spaces and thoughtful design, the environment supports children's learning, wellbeing, independence and development from the moment they walk through the door.

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Strong safeguarding culture and practice

- Children feel safe, secure and valued.
- Safeguarding is embedded in daily practice.

Predictable routines and consistency

- Consistent routines, expectations and organisation help children know what to expect and support successful transitions throughout the day.

Enabling, purposeful environments

- Every area, resource and display has a clear purpose and supports learning, development and independence.

Low-distraction learning spaces with minimised noise

- The environment reduces unnecessary noise, visual clutter and competing stimuli, helping children focus and engage.

Thoughtful environment designs including zoning, calm spaces, visual cues and space for outdoor learning

- Spaces are deliberately designed to support different types of learning, including active, quiet and collaborative play.
- Visual clues, defined areas and access to outdoor learning help children navigate and engage with the environment successfully.

Lead School Spotlight

Lead school to use this slide to share their own example, covering:

What we noticed
Lead school to add own examples. E.g:
- Communication and language emerged as a key area for development
- Many children needed support to sustain conversations with peers
- Independence skills were less secure than in previous cohorts
- Fewer children demonstrated familiarity with stories and books on entry.

How we responded
Lead school to add examples of changes. This could cover:
- Environment: what changed?
- Provision: what changed?
- Curriculum: what changed?
- Family engagement: what changed?
- Adult interactions: what changed?
- Support and intervention: what changed?

Why we prioritised these changes?
- Explicitly connect changes back to what the cohort was telling you.

Early impact
Lead school to add examples. Possible reflections:
- Improved confidence in speaking
- Increased engagement during story sessions
- Greater independence in routines
- More purposeful peer interactions

Reflection and action planning

What are you going to change?

Today has focused on:
- Understanding your cohort
- Reflecting on provision
- Reflecting on environment

Think about the following:

One thing I have learned about my cohort is…
One aspect of the cohort I would like to understand more deeply is…
One strength we should build upon is…
One aspect of my provision I may need to review is…
One aspect of the environment I may need to adapt is…
One action I will take before half term is…
One impact I hope to see is…

Use this opportunity to discuss your reflections with colleagues, challenge your thinking, and identify meaningful changes that will make the greatest difference for your cohort.

Looking ahead as a network

As we begin a new academic year, this is an opportunity to identify shared priorities, build on the expertise within the network, and shape future collaboration to meet the needs of reception children and families.

What should be our network priorities this year?

Think about:

- Current reception challenges
- Professional development needs
- Areas of expertise within our schools
- Opportunities for collaboration

This network is shaped by its members. We want it to be a supportive, collaborative space that meets the needs of everyone involved. All ideas, experiences and perspectives are welcome, and your contributions will help shape the focus of our work together this year.

Closing and next steps

Thank you for your engagement and openness today. We really appreciate the time, contributions and reflections you have all brought— this is what makes the network meaningful and helps it work well for everyone.

We hope you have found the session useful. As this is a learning process, we would really welcome your feedback on what worked well today, as well as any ideas for things we might change or try in future sessions. Please feel free to get in touch with our Best Start Team and beststart@marnel-inf.hants.sch.uk**. Please also follow us on Instagram – risereceptionnetworkmarnelinf**

Our next virtual meeting will take place on **23rd November (in school) or 3rd December (after school)**
https://www.marnel-inf.hants.sch.uk/rise

Following today's session, we will share the slides via our website (above) click on the Best Start logo.

Thank you again, and we look forward to continuing the conversation at our next meeting.

Thank you