

Starting Reception

Case Study: Ark Start

Background

Ark Start is a group of five nurseries in London, supporting families from diverse backgrounds, 80% of whom only access funded hours. Many of these families are unfamiliar with school expectations, which can make transition to reception challenging.

Why the Starting Reception Definition has been helpful

We were looking for a way to help staff have honest, clear conversations with parents about key developmental milestones needed for a smooth transition to school. The Starting Reception definition offers a shared, non-judgemental framework to guide those discussions.

How we are using it

We introduced the Starting Reception Definition to families in April, when school places were announced. Every parent was invited to a transition meeting where we:

- Reviewed their child's progress
- Talked through what families could do at home over the summer to support school readiness

We also shared the leaflet with schools to align messaging and strengthen partnerships.

Benefits and challenges

Overall parents have responded positively, welcoming the clarity of the guidance, and the definition has given staff confidence when talking to parents. Some conversations with families were sensitive, but the leaflet helped staff clearly communicate that these expectations are evidence-based and widely recognised, rather than personal opinions.

Key takeaway

The Starting Reception Definition helped us bridge the gap between parents, nursery and school expectations, supporting families and staff through a more consistent, informed transition to Reception.