

Starting Reception



Case study: Embedding 'Starting Reception' across Bexley

Overview

Bexley's Early Years Service supports a diverse and busy sector, including 92 PVI group settings, 1 school-based preschool, 273 active Ofsted-registered childminders, 23 agency childminders, 40 school-based nurseries, and 37 Ofsted-registered out-of-school provisions.

Local data shows that over a quarter of children — particularly boys and those eligible for FSM — require additional support to be fully prepared for the start of Reception. In response, the early years team has prioritised improving speech and language outcomes and helping families better understand how to prepare their children for Reception.

Why Bexley chose Starting Reception

Bexley was keen to support families with the home learning environment, particularly in response to feedback from schools that some children were starting Reception without the life skills they needed. Practitioners also felt there was a gap in how settings and families worked together to promote school readiness. Starting Reception offered a clear, accessible way to help families understand what “being ready” really means.

How Starting Reception Is Being Used

The Starting Reception definition and resources have been embedded across Bexley's early years communications and platforms. This includes:

- Featuring the resources on the Bexley Early Years website
- Sharing information in monthly newsletters
- Posting weekly Starting Reception focus areas on NetMums/Bexley Mums Facebook pages over the summer
- Incorporating the language of “Starting Reception” into local guidance for consistency
- Signposting through Bexley's online resources for families
- Featuring the resource on social media, in EY school forums, and in the Professional Resource Round-Up for social care teams
- A local radio interview promoting the resource and how it complements Bexley's existing “Born Ready, School Ready, Bexley Ready” guidance

The resource has also been shared across the wider early years team and with local partners including health visitors, social workers, schools, and nurseries.

Challenges

Rather than replacing existing local guidance, Bexley chose to align the two, using both resources and adopting Starting Reception language for consistency. This required some coordination but has allowed the local authority to build on established materials while strengthening the overall message.

Early Benefits and Expected Impact

Although it is early days, there is already increased awareness among families about what school readiness really involves, particularly around independence and practical life skills.

The team hopes to see improved engagement with the resource over time and plans to monitor views and reach in the coming months.

Standout Story

One early years setting runs coffee sessions for families with children starting school. After signposting parents to Bexley's school readiness resources, one family shared this feedback:

"We found the school readiness workshop really helpful. I thought the focus would be on getting [child] to write his name and literacy, but found the focus on independence really surprising as we had not thought of that. We took a lot from the workshop and used the tools to implement things at home. For example, we bought a coat hook and installed it at [child's] height so he could practise hanging his coat and putting it on by himself. We also bought him his own child-size dinner tray so he can practise carrying his meals from the kitchen to the table by himself. Without the workshop we would not have known that these are the types of things to prepare him for."

This example highlights the power of Starting Reception to challenge myths, reset expectations, and give families clear, practical steps to support their children's development.