

Network purpose and expectations



Why the Reception Network exists

- To support strong, inclusive reception practice across schools.
- To create a safe space for sharing challenges and successes.
- To focus on practical evidence-informed improvement.

What the network is (and isn't)

- ✓ Supportive, collaborative and school-led.
- ✓ Focused on improving outcomes for children.
- ✗ Not an accountability or inspection forum.

What the network will offer

The network will aim to:

- Explore key priorities for reception together
- Share practical approaches that can be adapted to different contexts
- Create space to reflect with peers and learn from one another
- Signpost useful resources and examples to support your work.

Expectations of schools in the network



Participation in the reception network is designed to support schools in strengthening the quality and consistency of their reception provision.

- Engage openly, positively and professionally in all network activity, contributing to a supportive and respectful environment
- Value and respect the diverse starting points, experiences and contexts across all participating schools
- Commit to attending and actively contributing to half-termly virtual network meetings
- Participate enthusiastically in discussions, reflection and collaborative problem-solving opportunities
- Engage meaningfully with shared practice, considering how it can inspire and strengthen your own setting's improvement journey
- Explore and trial new ideas and approaches within your own setting where appropriate, fostering a culture of innovation
- Share experiences openly with peers, celebrating successes and reflecting constructively on challenges
- Where possible, take part in visits or open days hosted by Lead Schools, using these opportunities to observe high-quality practice, reflect deeply and identify clear next steps
- Maintain a strong focus on impact by identifying a clear "so what?" from network participation, leading to thoughtful reflection, purposeful planning and meaningful action
- Align network engagement with your school or trust's wider Early Years strategy, promoting coherence, consistency and sustained impact for children and practitioners

Lead School introduction and context

Who are we as the Lead School?

Benedict Biscop CE Academy

Location: Sunderland (SR3 2RE)

RISE Local Authorities: South Tyneside and Sunderland

Number on roll: 334

School: Primary (3-11) mixed nursery and reception provision

Pupil Premium: 11%

SEND: 15%



As an outstanding school, we are committed to continuously developing our Reception practice through evidence-informed research and reflective approaches. We ensure our provision remains adaptive, meeting the diverse and evolving needs of our children while aligning with current educational guidance and statutory requirements. Our approach is responsive and forward-thinking, enabling us to maintain high standards of early years education.



We highly value collaboration as a key driver for improving practice. Through shared learning and joint practice development, staff are able to engage in meaningful CPD, reflect on their approaches, and implement effective strategies that benefit all learners. Working collaboratively strengthens consistency, builds professional confidence, and supports continuous improvement across the setting.



"Collaboration allows educators to learn from one another, creating a culture of shared expertise that empowers both teachers and learners to thrive."



Lead School introduction and context



Our role within the network

- To coordinate and host network sessions, ensuring meetings are purposeful, well structured and focused on shared priorities.
- To facilitate discussion rather than provide all the answers, creating space for schools to share experience, challenge thinking and learn from one another.
- To bring together ideas, themes and questions from across the network and help shape future sessions in response.
- To learn alongside your, recognising the expertise that exists across schools and shape the network together over time.

The DfE offer- support to strengthen reception practice



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>

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.

Targeted and specialist support – where needed

- **Nuffield Early Language Intervention (NELI)** – fully funded early language support for Reception children.
- **English Hubs Reception offer (from September 2026):**
 - 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

- Reception-focused training and resources
- Expanded early years content within NPQs
- A new national Reception teacher training course (from autumn 2026)

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