

EYFS · RECEPTION / K

Reception to Year 1

Making the transition gentler

Why this transition is hard

Reception to Year 1 is one of the bumpiest transitions in primary school. Children move from a play-based, observation-led, child-centred environment (EYFS) to a more structured, formal, adult-directed environment (KS1). For many children, this is fine. For some — especially summer-born children, boys, EAL learners, and children with SEND — it's a step that's developmentally too fast. The result: a child who was thriving in Reception suddenly looks 'behind' in Year 1, when actually it's the curriculum that's stepped change-d, not the child.

What schools should do

Start the transition in May, not July Half a term of gentle preparation beats one frantic week. Children visit the Year 1 classroom. Year 1 teacher comes to Reception. Stories about being in Year 1.	Reduce the curriculum jump Year 1 in autumn term should retain elements of EYFS: continuous provision available, less formal carpet time, plenty of movement. The shift to full formality should happen GRADUALLY, not in week one.
Pass on the right information Not just attainment data. Pass on what works — children's interests, their friendships, what soothes them, their characteristics of effective learning.	Keep tracking summer-born children A summer-born child in Year 1 is comparing themselves with peers up to a year older. The 'gap' often reflects age, not ability. Don't write off children based on autumn-term Year 1 data.

Summer term timeline



When	What
May	Tell children about Year 1 — make it positive but realistic
May	Year 1 teacher visits during Reception time
June	Children visit Year 1 classroom several times
June	Lunch in Year 1 area (if separate)
June/July	Buddy with a Year 1 child for a session
July	Whole class transition morning in Year 1 classroom
July	Send home 'Welcome to Year 1' info to parents
September	Year 1 retains some Reception features for first 6 weeks

What to talk about with parents

Parents are often anxious about Year 1. Common worries: • 'Will they sit at desks all day?' • 'Will they still get to play?' • 'What if they can't read yet?' • 'They've been so happy in Reception — will it change?' Reassure with specifics: • Year 1 retains some play, especially in autumn term • Children build up to longer formal sessions over weeks • Reading expectations build gradually — there's still phonics work • Their class teacher will know them as a person, not just a level Be honest about challenges too. Some children find it harder. The school is paying attention. There's no shame in needing extra time to adjust.

What information to pass on

WRITE A 1-PAGE HANDOVER FOR EACH CHILD covering: • Strengths (what lights them up) • Friends in class • Specific interests / hooks • What helps them when they're struggling • What sets them off • Sensory needs • Family situation worth knowing • Where they are in phonics, number, fine motor • Any SEND / EAL / disadvantage flags The Year 1 teacher will not read a 30-page EYFS profile in summer. They WILL read a 1-page handover.

What Year 1 teachers should do (autumn term)

1. KEEP CONTINUOUS PROVISION ACCESSIBLE. Don't strip the room of provision. Have writing tables, construction, mark-making available — at least for choosing time. 2. SHORT BLOCKS. Don't expect 60-minute carpet sessions. 15-20 mins, then a break, then more work, then a break. 3. MOVEMENT BUILT IN. Brain breaks. Standing options. Outdoor learning at least weekly. 4. SOFT START. Children come in to choosing time, not straight to phonics. 15



minutes. Let them ease in. 5. WATCH SUMMER-BORN CHILDREN. They will look 'behind.' They probably aren't. Track development, not attainment, in their first year of Y1. 6. DON'T STREAM TOO EARLY. Putting children into ability groups in October Y1 sets fixed mindsets early. Hold off as long as possible.

