

Excellence in Reception Teaching Programme

School personas



Department
for Education



**NATIONAL
INSTITUTE
of Teaching**

School A: Riverbank Primary Academy

School profile

Riverbank Primary Academy is a two-form entry primary school in a large urban area. It is part of a multi-academy trust and serves a diverse local community. Many children speak more than one language, and a significant proportion of families have moved into the area recently. Some families live in temporary or shared accommodation, which means the school works carefully to build relationships quickly and maintain communication when children join or leave during the year.

Riverbank does not have Nursery provision on site. Children join Reception from a range of private, voluntary and independent early years settings, childminders and home contexts. This means the Reception team places particular importance on transition conversations, family knowledge and early observations during the first weeks of school.

Community context

Riverbank is located in a densely populated urban area. Families include long-established local families, families who have recently arrived in the area, and families who may move during the year because of temporary accommodation, housing pressures or changes in family circumstances.

Some families have limited availability for school events because of work patterns, caring responsibilities or travel across the city. Other families are highly engaged but may be unfamiliar with the English school system. The school works hard to create accessible, respectful communication, including visual information, translated messages where possible, informal conversations at the gate and short practical suggestions for learning at home.

Because there is no school Nursery, the Reception team builds relationships with several private, voluntary and independent early years settings and childminders. Transition information varies in format, timing and detail. Some children arrive with rich transition information, while others arrive with less formal information, particularly if they have moved recently, attended more than one setting, or had limited prior early years' experience.

Class structure and cohort

Reception is organised as two classes with around 60 children across the year group.

The school has limited outdoor space, so the Reception team gives careful thought to how physical development, role play, construction, talk and exploration can be supported indoors and outdoors. There is a shared indoor provision and a small outdoor area. Phonics is part of daily classroom practice and is treated as an established routine.

The Reception team has developed a curriculum that combines adult-led teaching, adult-initiated learning and child-led exploration. Stories, songs, mathematical routines and carefully chosen knowledge-rich themes are used to build children's language, confidence and curiosity. Adults use multilingual knowledge of families and children to support communication and belonging.

Riverbank's strengths include warm relationships, inclusive routines, a language-rich environment and creative use of limited space. The team is currently reflecting on how to strengthen children's independence during transitions, increase purposeful physical development opportunities, use transition information effectively from different early years settings, and make sure adult interactions are consistently effective across both Reception classes.

When you meet Riverbank during the programme, you will be invited to consider how evidence-informed practice could help the team refine provision while building on what is already working well.

Cohort features

- Many children speak more than one language
- Several children are at an early stage of acquiring English
- A few children join after September
- Children have arrived from a wide range of private, voluntary and independent settings, childminders and home contexts
- Some children have experienced consistent early years provision, while others have had more disrupted or varied prior experiences
- Transition information is useful for some children, but incomplete or delayed for others
- Summer-born children include some who need additional support with attention, independence and fine motor control
- A small number of children have identified SEND or are being carefully monitored

Support and leadership

The school has access to:

- An early years phase leader
- A SENCO
- A trust early years network
- Occasional support from speech and language services
- Internal moderation and shared planning across the two Reception classes

This gives Riverbank more structural support than smaller settings, but consistency across adults and across both classes remains a realistic implementation issue.

Because Riverbank has no Nursery, there is less internal early years transition knowledge than in settings with Nursery provision. The team therefore needs effective systems for working with external early years providers and for using family knowledge during transition.

Staff

Teacher A: Mr Rahman

Mr Rahman teaches one of the two Reception classes at Riverbank Primary Academy. He is an experienced Key Stage 1 teacher who is new to teaching in Reception. He brings strong knowledge of early reading, mathematics and curriculum progression, and is developing his confidence in applying this through play, adult-guided learning and continuous provision.

Teacher B: Mrs Okafor

Mrs Okafor teaches the second Reception class at Riverbank Primary Academy. She is an experienced Reception teacher who informally supports planning across the two-class unit. She has strong knowledge of early years routines, provision, child development and how children learn through play and adult interaction.

Support staff

The year group has between 1.5 and 2 full time equivalent teaching assistants, although deployment varies during the week.

School B: Harbour View Infant School

School profile

Harbour View Infant School is a small, single-form entry infant school in a coastal town. It is local authority maintained and serves children from Nursery to Year 2. The school serves a community with significant economic disadvantage. Some families experience seasonal employment, shift work, transport barriers or limited availability for school events.

Harbour View's strengths include warm relationships, strong knowledge of children's interests, purposeful use of local context and a nurturing infant-school ethos. The teacher is currently reflecting on how to make targeted support manageable with limited adult capacity, how to support communication and language through everyday routines, and how to engage families in ways that fit their lives.

When you meet Harbour View during the programme, you will be invited to consider how evidence-informed practice can support realistic, manageable refinements in a smaller infant setting.

Community context

Harbour View serves a coastal community shaped by seasonal employment, lower-paid work, transport challenges and some family instability linked to housing or employment. Some parents and carers work shifts in hospitality, care, retail or local services. This can make attendance at workshops, stay-and-play sessions or school events difficult.

Some adults may have had mixed experiences of education themselves. A small number may have lower adult literacy confidence. This should be handled respectfully. The focus should be on how school communication can be practical, specific, relational and non-stigmatising.

Because Harbour View is an infant school, relationships with families often begin early, sometimes through Nursery or informal community links before Reception. This gives the school a useful foundation for transition into Reception, although not all children attend the school Nursery before joining the Reception class.

Class structure and cohort

The Reception class usually has between 24 and 28 children. The class has access to a modest but useful outdoor area and makes good use of local experiences, stories, natural materials and practical routines to support children's language, physical development and understanding of the world.

The curriculum combines adult-led teaching, adult-guided exploration and child-led play. The teacher uses stories, songs, counting routines, practical mathematics and

carefully planned continuous provision to help children build secure foundations. Daily phonics is established as part of classroom practice.

Cohort features:

- A higher proportion of children eligible for free school meals
- Several children with speech, language and communication needs
- A group of children who benefit from support with self-regulation and peer play
- A few children with lower prior experience of structured early years provision
- Some children who attended the school Nursery and already know routines
- Some children who joined Reception from other early years settings or from home
- Some summer-born children who need support with independence, attention and fine motor control
- A few children with strong outdoor, practical and imaginative play strengths

Support and leadership

The school has:

- A headteacher who values early years but has many competing priorities, including a 0.2 full-time equivalent teaching commitment
- A SENCO who works across Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 2, and has limited time
- Access to local authority early years advice, but not frequently
- Fewer opportunities for same-year group planning because there is only one Reception class
- Some useful internal transition knowledge because Nursery, Reception and Key Stage 1 are on the same site

Staff

Teacher: Mrs Lane

Mrs Lane teaches Reception at Harbour View Infant School. She is an experienced early years practitioner who knows the local community well. She has strong relationships with children and families and is skilled at using stories, routines, outdoor learning and practical experiences to support children's development.

She has taught Reception for many years and has a secure understanding of child development, relationships, routines, play and family partnership.

Support staff

The class has one teaching assistant for part of the day, but support is sometimes reduced because of cover needs elsewhere in the infant school.

School C: St Cuthbert's Church of England Primary School

School profile

St Cuthbert's Church of England Primary School is a small, rural, faith school.

St Cuthbert's strengths include strong relationships, outdoor learning, peer modelling, familiarity with families and a calm ethos. The teacher is currently reflecting on how to protect the distinctiveness of Reception practice in a mixed-age class, support independence for children with additional needs, and maintain curriculum progression across Nursery, Reception and Year 1.

When you meet St Cuthbert's during the programme, you will be invited to consider how evidence-informed practice can be adapted carefully in a small mixed-age setting.

School and community context

St Cuthbert's serves a rural community with a mix of farming families, professional families, families who travel some distance to school, and families with long-standing links to the school. The school has a faith character and a close community identity.

Family engagement is generally positive, but not simple. Some families are highly available and active in school life. Others face transport issues, work patterns, caring responsibilities or limited access to services. External specialist support may involve longer waits or travel.

Class structure and cohort

The early years and Key Stage 1 class includes Nursery, Reception and Year 1 children learning together. There are around 30 children in the class, with approximately 10 Reception-aged children in a typical year.

Because the Reception cohort is small, individual children's needs can represent a significant proportion of the group. For example, two children with significant additional needs could represent 20 percent of the Reception cohort.

The class includes children with a wide range of developmental stages, including some children with identified SEND. At least one child has an Education, Health and Care Plan. The teacher works carefully with families, the SENCO and other professionals to support inclusion within everyday classroom life.

The class benefits from a close community, older and younger children learning alongside one another, and good access to outdoor space. The curriculum blends adult-led teaching, adult-guided learning and child-led play. The teacher plans carefully so that Reception children experience appropriate early years provision while also learning in a mixed-age environment. Phonics is part of established daily practice.

Cohort features:

- Mixed developmental stages across three age groups
- Two Reception children with significant identified needs
- One child with an Education, Health and Care Plan
- A small number of children with speech, language and communication needs
- Children who benefit from older peer modelling
- Some children who are very independent because of mixed-age routines
- Some children who need support to access provision without being overshadowed by older pupils

Support and leadership

The school has:

- A headteacher with teaching commitments
- A SENCO who may also hold other roles
- Access to external professionals, but less frequently than larger urban schools
- Limited same-phase peer planning
- Close relationships with families and the local community

Staff

Teacher: Ms Patel

Ms Patel teaches the mixed Nursery, Reception and Year 1 class at St Cuthbert's Church of England Primary School. She is in her second year as an early career teacher. She is reflective, enthusiastic and committed to inclusive practice. She is developing her confidence in balancing the needs of different age groups while protecting high-quality Reception provision.

Support staff

The class has one teaching assistant for most mornings and some afternoons. The teaching assistant is experienced and caring, but may sometimes over-support children with SEND because they want them to succeed. This gives writers a useful opportunity to explore independence, scaffolding and adult deployment respectfully.