STARTING SCHOOL IN DERBYSHIRE

A parent and carer guide to a positive move into Reception | September 2027

Starting school is a big change. Some children feel excited, while others need more time, reassurance or individual support. Families, early years settings, schools and professionals can work together so your child feels known, safe and welcome.

Key dates for Reception admissions

9 November 2026	15 January 2027	16 April 2027	September 2027
Applications open	Deadline: midnight	National Offer Day	Children start school

These dates apply to children born between 1 September 2022 and 31 August 2023. Applications received after 15 January 2027 will be treated as late. Your child's school will tell you their exact September start date.

If your child has an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP): their school place is arranged by Derbyshire's SEND Assessment Service (SENDAS). Do not complete the standard online admissions form. If an EHC needs assessment is still in progress, apply through the usual admissions process unless your child already has a final EHCP.

What happens next?

1. Before you know the school

Visit schools and look at their websites. Share what matters to your child, including their interests, communication, routines, sensory needs, health needs and what helps them feel safe.

2. After Offer Day

Once the place is known, your child's nursery or preschool can contact the school with your knowledge and agreement. Ask who your main school contact will be.

3. During the summer term

Your child may have visits, a transition meeting, photographs, a transition story or extra opportunities to meet staff. Plans should be flexible and suited to your child.

4. When school begins

The school should use the shared information and agreed strategies from the start. Keep talking to the named adult and ask for plans to be reviewed if something is not working.

If your child has SEND or may need extra help

- Tell the school and current setting about your child's strengths, needs and successful strategies as early as possible.
- Ask for a transition meeting involving you, the current setting, the school SENCO or Reception lead and relevant professionals.
- Extra support might include quieter or shorter visits, a familiar adult, visual information, a calm space, communication aids, a familiar object, staff training or specialist equipment.
- Ask what information will be shared and how it will be kept up to date. This may include your child's transition summary, Inclusion Support Plan (ISP), healthcare plan, EHCP or other relevant assessments.
- If your child is already supported by Derbyshire Portage or EYSENS, the service may help with transition planning, visits, advice, meetings, training and links with school-age services.

Simple ways to help your child prepare

- Look at photographs of the school, classroom, toilets, entrance, playground and key adults.
- Practise the journey and talk about where you will say goodbye and where you will meet afterwards.
- Use simple play, books or a personalised story to explore school routines without putting pressure on your child.
- Let your child become familiar with their uniform, bag, water bottle and lunch arrangements.
- Keep preparation positive and honest. It is fine for your child to have mixed feelings or to need more time.
- Over the summer, revisit photographs or other transition information so that school stays familiar.

Useful questions to ask the school

- Who will be my child's key adult?
- What will the first days look like?
- How will you communicate with us?
- Can my child have additional or quieter visits?
- What adjustments will be available?
- How will current successful strategies continue?

Derbyshire websites and contacts

- Apply for a primary, infant or junior school place
- Dates to remember for primary admissions
- Parents' guide to primary admissions
- Derbyshire Early Years SEN Local Offer
- Early Years SEN useful resources
- EYSEN Specialist Teacher Service
- School admissions for children with SEND

Early Years SEN Helpline: EarlyYears.SENHelpline@derbyshire.gov.uk

Important: This information is for families living in the Derbyshire County Council area, not Derby City. Admissions dates and service arrangements can change, so check the Derbyshire webpages before applying.