



Bold Beginnings

At Colchester High School



Introduction to Bold Beginnings

In January 2017, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) commissioned an Ofsted-wide review of the curriculum. The review looked at the curriculum in a sample of good and outstanding primary schools and produced findings on how Schools can best prepare four and five year olds for their years of schooling and life ahead.

Bold Beginnings at Colchester High School

At Colchester High School, we pride ourselves on giving our Reception pupils the best start to their educational journey. By providing a structured formal education supplemented with a wide range of extra-curricular activities, the vast majority of our pupils exceed their Early Learning Goals, placing them one year ahead academically and giving them the confidence and motivation to excel throughout their School life. We clearly adhere to the belief that the quality of a child's learning in Reception can play a major role in their GCSE results, and in life beyond.

We were therefore delighted to read the key findings from the Government's report "Bold Beginnings" that identified so closely what we do every day as best practice! The key findings of the report and how we mirror these are detailed below.

Key Findings of Bold Beginnings

"Reading was at the heart of the curriculum in the most successful classes"

Reading is a real strength of Reception, and the foundation of this begins in Nursery with the introduction to the Read Write Inc Phonics Programme. In Reception,

- pupils read daily to a teacher and once a week to a Year 5 reading buddy.
- books are sent home daily for pupils to read with their parents.
- pupils have access to a wide range of books that encourage a love of reading, fiction and non-fiction stories
- pupils are encouraged to use the well-resourced reading corner during free time.



Our success can be measured by the excellent results of the Hertfordshire Reading Tests which were sat last May where:

- 100% of pupils achieved a reading age of over 1 year above their chronological reading age
- 70% achieved over 1 and a half years above their chronological age and
- 5 pupils achieved a reading age 2 years above with the highest score being 4 years above their chronological age.

“Language and Literacy should be prioritised with sufficient time given to developing children’s spoken language and teaching them to read and write.”

- Red words are sent home from the beginning of School and five new letter sounds every week to practice.
- Letter handwriting practice sheets are sent home daily until all the letters have been covered.
- Formal handwriting in Reception begins after October half term with spellings and handwriting practice. Spellings are also sent home on a weekly basis to learn. From the onset, pupils are encouraged to try writing sentences.
- From the Summer Term we begin to teach joined up handwriting.
- Attention is given to children’s posture and pencil grip when writing and they use pencils and exercise books at the table.

This year, our pupils had already completed all their RWI Speed Sounds Set 1 in the first half term and all are creating independent sentences.



“Mathematics should be taught from Reception “using practical equipment to support children’s grasp of numbers” and to allow them to link their learning with life experience.”

- Reception have 4 sessions of Mathematics per week with increased access for higher ability children. They have an additional Mathematics lesson during the week focusing on weighing and measuring. Every week the children cook to use their mathematical skills in a real life context to consolidate their understanding.
- Mathematics is taught using a wide range of practical activities and formal recorded work.



“Play should be used for developing children’s personal, social and emotional skills.”

Although we are academically focused, we truly believe that a child’s education should also be fun and help develop their character and their understanding of the world around them.

- Our Reception teachers regularly use role play and the home corner to support their learning and to entice the pupils to use their imagination. These tools will either support a book they are reading, a topic (e.g. space) or perhaps a cultural or religious event (Chinese Restaurant for Chinese New Year / Santa’s Workshop for Christmas)
- Arts and crafts are completed daily and are also used to explore concepts in a fun and creative way
- The Early Years Garden is also used as an extended classroom to provide a different dimension to the pupil’s learning.
- Cooking is included in the curriculum weekly and includes delicious recipes of bean soup, flapjacks, Chinese stir-fry, all linked to the weekly topic.



“Reception Curriculum should prepare the pupils for the Year 1 Curriculum”

- The Reception curriculum is carefully crafted to ensure that it builds upon the learnings of Nursery yet considers the requirements of the Year 1 Curriculum. Reception pupils are therefore:
 - introduced to Read Write Inc Speed Set 2 and 3 from an early stage
 - practise handwriting and spelling weekly
 - have daily homework
 - start joined up writing in the Summer Term,
 - learn to work independently – writing, dressing etc
 - learn to operate in a formal learning structure
- Class assessments together with scrutinies of children’s work, are provided to and discussed with, the Year 1 teachers to provide them with a thorough understanding of your child’s learning journey.
- Reception pupils are involved in Prep extra-curricular activities that prepares them for the increased demands for Year 1
- Moderation occurs between the Reception teachers, Year 1 teacher and the Key Stage 1 Phase Leader

“Teaching should be a balance between whole-class teaching, small group teaching, partner work and play.”

- Learning concepts are taught to the whole class, but then smaller groups are utilised to cement their learning based on a child’s understanding of the concept.
- Each of our pupils are assigned a talk partner that they work with to discuss learning concepts. They are encouraged to listen to each other, as well as to talk themselves!
- They are also given many opportunities to partner with pupils from other year groups in the school as part of our cross key stage whole school approach. This provides the pupils with additional peers to relate to, and the inclusion of positive role models.



“Newly qualified teachers (NQTs) were not well prepared to teach mathematics, reading and writing in Reception.”

Our teachers, Mrs Roberts and Mrs Young have been teaching for 18 and 20 years respectively so have plenty of experience in teaching these subjects. They take the time to truly understand each child’s ability and will implement intervention or extension exercises, as required, to ensure that all pupils are exceeding expectation by the end of the Reception year.



“Ensure that parents are included in their child’s education and progress”

- Parents are invited into the School prior to the start of the School year to meet the Reception teachers. They are given a copy of “All About Me” to complete and additional class information
- Prior to the children starting school in September parents have the opportunity to meet the Reception teachers and discuss the expectations and ask any questions.
- Within the first week of Reception, our teachers telephone all parents to re-introduce themselves and discuss the pupils first week in School
- Termly parent meetings and our open door access ensure that parents feel free to discuss their child’s progress.
- The use of Term Ahead Sheets, our interactive learning diary and virtual learning environment allows parents to have a greater understanding of the subjects taught each term.
- Parents are invited to attend seminars on techniques used to teach reading and writing, to learn how the Early Years Framework operates and how they might help their children.
- There is also a final meeting at the end of the year to report to the parents the data relating to the Early Learning Goals.

Our Success

Our success at providing our pupils with the best start to their education is clearly evidenced by our EYFS results. Last year, by the end of Reception 94% of our boys and girls achieved a “Good Level of Development” compared to a national average of 70.7%

Contact Us

If you have any questions about our Reception provision or the Bold Beginnings report, please contact Mrs Roberts or Mrs Young who will be happy to discuss it with you.



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