



Key person & Settling In Pre-school – Policy and Practice

We want children to feel safe, stimulated and happy in our setting and to feel secure and comfortable with our staff so they will be confident to explore, learn & play. We also want parents to have confidence in both their children's well-being and their role as active partners with our setting. We aim to make our setting a welcoming place where children settle quickly and easily because consideration has been given to the individual needs and circumstances of children and their families.

We believe that children settle best when they have a key person to relate to, who knows them and their parents well, and who can meet their individual needs.

We are committed to the key person approach which benefits the child, the parents, the staff and the setting. It encourages secure relationships which support children to thrive, provides comfort, reassurance and support to the child, responding sensitively to their feelings, ideas and behaviour. It gives parents confidence and make the setting a happy place to attend or work in.

Children cannot play or learn successfully if they are anxious or unhappy. We will make every effort to make sure that our settling in procedures successfully include each child attending the setting.

Preparing to start at pre-school

- Before a child starts to attend our setting, we use a variety of ways to provide parents with information. These include written information e.g.

starter pack of essential information, access to policies, displays about activities within the setting, and individual conversations with parents.

- Parents complete a detailed registration & consent form which is checked and clarified by discussion with the leader

- Parents and children will be invited into the setting for a taster session / registration visit prior to starting to familiarise them with the setting and structure of the morning.
- A home visit is offered to provide opportunities to discuss the child's individual needs, preferences, interests, routines, and other useful background information e.g. things of cultural relevance, key words, favourites, etc. and to answer parents' questions.
- While one staff member talks to the parent(s) another will play with the child to begin to build their confidence with a new person and also to provide opportunities to observe their skills, communication and play preferences.
- The process of settling-in is explained to the parents and we jointly agree on the best way to help the child to settle into the setting.

- A starter pack is given which includes photographs of staff and the setting, essential information procedures , settling in, term dates etc. and a demonstration of the settings "Schools app" which family members and contacts are invited to download.

- Where appropriate, additional visits to pre-school may be offered or arrangements made to visit a shared setting e.g. Portage Early Learning Group, day nursery etc

Starting Pre-school

- We offer flexible settling in procedures, as appropriate, tailored to individual children's needs and experience.

- We introduce new children to the group on a staggered basis.

- If necessary, we encourage parents to separate from their children for brief periods at first, gradually building up to longer absences.

In exceptional circumstances, if a child is upset for a long period of time, it may be considered necessary to contact the parents and ask them to return to the group to be with their child. Strategies will be devised in consultation with the parents to ease the settling in process

Strategies to aid settling in

- The key person takes a lead to welcome and look after the child and his/her parents at the child's first session and during the settling-in process
- When parents leave, we ask them to say goodbye to their child and explain that they will be coming back, and when.
- Information gained from the home visit will be used to help children feel included and at home. We provide, toys, activities, resources & books that will interest and motivate the child, which they recognise from their own experiences / culture, and enable them to engage in meaningful play.
- Staff will be aware of and sensitive to children's different responses and emotions when experiencing separation from their parents and coping with a new environment and will provide support at appropriate levels e.g.
 - Withdraw and give them space
 - Allow them to keep a comforter or special toy with them
 - Provide a lap to sit on / allow them to "snuggle in"
 - Involve an older child in befriending
 - Use persona dolls / soft toys as points of contact / comfort
- Visual timetables and other cues will be used to help children understand the structure of the morning, cope with transition times and be reassured that they will be going home or see their parent / carer at the end of the session.

- The room will be arranged so that there are quieter areas where children may watch or feel safe from the main group until they feel more confident to participate.
- Staff will also be aware that children can feel shy or anxious about things that may seem routine to older children e.g. going to the toilet, having a snack, asking for help. Adults will be sensitive in their supervision and observation of new children to respond to their body language and other signs that they may need support.

We judge a child to be settled when they have formed a relationship with their key person (or another staff member of their choice); for example, the child looks for the key person when he/she arrives, goes to them for comfort, and seems pleased to be with them. The child is also familiar with where things are and is pleased to see other children and participate in activities

Key person

- The key person will be allocated in advance of the child starting, whenever possible.
- The key person acts as the main contact for the parents and
- will have opportunities to build up a relationship with them, give positive feedback about what the child has been doing & learning and give reassurance where necessary.
- They will also get to know other carers (e.g. grandparents, childminder etc) involved with the child and share appropriate information about the child with them, as necessary & with parental permission.
- The key person has responsibility for observing and recording the child's play and development.
- They will provide feedback and discuss the child's progress & next steps with parents both formally and informally - on a daily basis as required, at parent meetings, through written reports etc.
- They will plan activities to meet the child's needs within the setting and will support parents to understand the child's needs in order to enhance their development at home.

- Parent meetings are offered routinely immediately following the initial 6 week settling in period, and at least, annually thereafter. Parents may request meetings more frequently if necessary.
- Parents of Children with additional needs are offered regular SEND Reviews (e.g. termly) with the keyperson / inclusion worker & SENCO.
- Parents of children in receipt of Early Years Pupil Premium or Two Year Old Funding are also offered more frequent meetings.
- We offer flexible arrangements for meetings with parents who are working or unable to come to the pre-school e.g. by telephone or home visit.

Related policies

Admissions Policy

Equal Opportunities Policy

Partnership with Parents Policy

Special Educational Needs & Disability Policy

Safeguarding and Welfare Requirement: Key Person

Each child must be assigned a key person. Their role is to help ensure that every child's care is tailored to meet their individual needs, to help the child become familiar with the setting, offer a settled relationship for the child and build a relationship with their parents

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