

Early years practice procedures

**Settling in**

To feel securely settled and ready to learn, children need to form attachments with the adults who care for them, primarily a key person, but others too. In this way they feel part of a community; they are able to contribute to that community and receive from it. Very young children, especially two- to three-year-olds, approach separation from their parent with anxieties, older children have a more secure understanding of ‘people permanence’ and are able to approach new experiences with confidence; but also need time to adjust and feel secure. Our aim is for all children to be settled comfortably into a new environment.

Young children require three key needs:

1. *Proximity* - young children feel safest when a familiar adult is present when they are getting used to a new carer and new surroundings. In this way they can become confident in engaging with those experiences independently later on.
2. *Secure base*– Because the initial need for proximity of the parent has been met young children gradually begin to feel secure with a key person in a new surrounding so that they are able to participate independently for small periods of time.
3. *Dependency* – young children are able to separate from parents’ and main carers when they have formed a secure attachment to their key person who knows and understands them best and on whom they can depend for their needs to be met.

Settling in

* We invite families to look around the pre-school with their child prior to applying for a space at the setting.
* We seek information regarding the child’s circumstances on a ‘One-Page profile’ form which is completed by the parent/carer prior to the child starting at pre-school. This includes information that the parent feels is important and includes development, medical needs, allergies, festivals celebrated, likes and dislikes.
* We need to know about any other professionals involved with the child including speech therapy, paediatrician involvement, Social Workers, CHES team, SEES team. This is to help support the child to adapt to their new environment.
* If a child has been identified as having a special educational need (SEN) then the key person /SENCO and parents will need to address potential barriers to settling in.
* We encourage parents to attend a pre-start visit to the setting in the weeks prior to the child’s start date. This enables the parent to gain insight into the routines and the child to familiarise themselves with the staff and other children.
* We will contact any previous setting or shared setting for information regarding the child’s interests and next steps.
* In some circumstances we may offer new starters a home visit prior to commencing at pre-school. This will be if the child will struggle to separate from parent/carer, have a specific special educational need (SEN) or where parents have requested a visit. Home visits are dependent upon the funding and staffing available.
* We will introduce flexible admission procedures, if appropriate, to meet the needs of individual families and children.
* We will make clear to families from the outset that they will be supported in the setting for as long it takes to settle their child.
* We will reassure parents whose children are struggling to settle and discuss ways to help.
* Young children may find attending the whole session too long and initially may benefit from early collection.
* We will introduce new families into the group on a staggered basis to allow the children to have the time and attention that they need.
* We invite all parents/carers to have a meeting with their child’s key person within a few weeks of their child starting so they can ask any questions and seek reassurance.
* It is important that parents say ‘Goodbye’ and reassure that they will return. It is also important that parents/carers are waiting on time to collect their child at the end of the session so that their child does not feel upset.

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**Prolonged absences**

* If children are absent from the setting for any periods of time beyond one or two weeks, their attachment to their key person will have decreased and will need to be built up again. This can happen after half/end of term breaks.

**Two-year-olds starting a setting for the first time.**

* A two-year-old may have little or no experience of group care. As part of gathering information from parents, it is important to find out about the child’s experience of non-parental care, for example grandparents, or childminder; this informs staff as to how a child may respond to a new situation.
* Separation causes anxiety in two-year-olds, as they have no concept of where their parents have gone. Parents should always say goodbye and tell them when they will return. Patience with the process will ensure children are happy and eager to come to play and be cared for in the setting.

**Three- and four-year-olds**

* Most children of this age can move through the stages more quickly and confidently.
* Some children take longer, and their needs for proximity and secure base stages should be accommodated as much as possible.
* Some children appear to leap to dependency/independence within a couple of days. In most cases, they will revert to the need for proximity and secure base. It can be difficult to progress to true dependency/independenceand this can be frustrating.
* Parents are encouraged to explain to their child where they are going, and that they will return.

**For children whose first language is not English**

* For many children learning English as an additional language, the stage of proximity takes longer as the child is dependent upon the parents’ input to make sense of what is going on.
* If the parent does not speak English, efforts are made to interpret. It will be helpful for parents to see around the setting.
* The settling-in is explained to the parent, and it is emphasised how important it is that they talk to their child in their home language to be able to explain things.
* The key person will try to gauge the child’s level of skills in their home language; this will give the key person an idea of the child’s interests and levels of understanding.
* The need for the parent to converse in the child’s home language is important.
* The key person makes the parent feel welcome using smiles and gestures.
* With the parent, make a list of key words in the child’s home language; sometimes it is useful to write the word as you would pronounce it. These words will be used with the child.
* The key person prepares for the child’s visit by having a favourite toy or activity ready for the child to provide a means to interact with the child.
* Children will be spoken to as per any other child, using gestures and facial expressions to help.
* Progress with settling in will be done as with any other child; it just takes a little longer to reach dependency/independence.