

4.1 THE ROLE OF THE KEY PERSON AND SETTLING-IN

Policy statement

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. Research shows that a key person approach benefits the child, the parents, the staff and the setting by providing secure relationships in which children thrive, parents have confidence, our staff are committed and the setting is a happy and dedicated place to attend or work in.

We want children to feel safe, stimulated and happy in the setting and to feel secure and comfortable with all staff. 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.

The key person role is set out in the Safeguarding and Welfare Requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Each child must have a key person. These procedures set out a model for developing a key person approach that promotes effective and positive relationships for children.

Procedures

We allocate a key person before the child starts.

The key person is responsible for:

- Providing an induction for the family and for settling the child into our setting.
- Completing relevant forms with parents, including consent forms.
- Explaining our policies and procedures to parents with particular focus on policies such as safeguarding and our responsibilities under the Prevent Duty.
- Offering unconditional regard for the child and being non-judgemental.
- Working with the parents to plan and deliver a personalised plan for the child's well-being, care and learning.
- Acting as the key contact for the parents.
- Developmental records and for sharing information on a regular basis with the child's parents to keep those records up-to-date, reflecting the full picture of the child in our setting and at home.
- Having links with other carers involved with the child and co-ordinating the sharing of appropriate information about the child's development with those carers.
- Encouraging positive relationships between children in her/his key group, spending time with them as a group each day.

We promote the role of the key person as the child's primary carer in our setting, and as the basis for establishing relationships with other adults and children.

Settling-in

- Before a child starts to attend our setting, we use a variety of ways to provide his/her parents with information. These include written information (including prospectus and policy summary), displays about activities available within the setting, information sessions and individual meetings with parents.
- We provide opportunities for the child and his/her parents to visit the setting anytime that is suitable for them.
- We endeavour to allow the key person to welcome and look after the child and his/her parents at the child's first session and during the settling-in process, however, this may not always be possible as not all staff work every day, and in this situation the welcome may be undertaken by a Manager.
- We may offer a home visit by the person who will be the child's key person to ensure all relevant information about the child can be made known (refer to 8.8 Staff Safety).
- We use pre-start visits and the first session at which a child attends to explain and complete, with his/her parents, the child's registration records.

- We offer an open afternoon in which all children due to start are invited to come along and play with a sample range of our toys, meet the key person if available, meet the Manager and other staff.
- When a child starts to attend, we explain the process of settling-in with his/her parents and jointly decide on the best way to help the child to settle into the setting.
- Younger children may take longer to settle in, as will children who have not previously spent time away from home.
- We judge a child to be settled when they have formed a relationship with their key person; 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.
- When parents leave, we ask them to say goodbye to their child and explain that they will be coming back, and when.
- We recognise that some children will settle more readily than others, but that some children who appear to settle rapidly are not ready to be left.
- We do not believe that leaving a child to cry will help them to settle any quicker. We believe that a child's distress will prevent them from learning and gaining the best from the setting.
- We reserve the right not to accept a child into the setting without a parent or carer if the child finds it distressing to be left. This is especially the case with very young children.
- Within the first four to six weeks of starting, we discuss and work with the child's parents to begin to create their child's record of achievement.
- We may phone a parent to come back to the setting if the child seems particularly distressed at being left.
- Within 2 to 3 weeks of a child starting we complete a brief "starter" assessment, in order to enable us to plan most effectively for each individual.

The progress check at age two-three

- The key person carries out the progress check at age two in accordance with any local procedures that are in place and referring to the guidance *A Know How Guide: The EYFS progress check at age two*.
- Children may already be around two and a half year's old when they start with us. We thus prefer to wait until the child is almost three before formulating the report, as we feel we need at least a term to get to know a child sufficiently.
- The progress check aims to review the child's development and ensures that parents have a clear picture of their child's development.
- Within the progress check, the key person will note areas where the child is progressing well and identify areas where progress is less than expected.
- The progress check will describe the actions that will be taken by us to address any developmental concerns (including working with other professionals where appropriate) as agreed with the parent(s).
- The key person will plan activities in conjunction with the Manager responsible for planning 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.

Other useful Pre-school Learning Alliance publications

Play is What I Do (2010)

Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage: With supporting documentation (2014)

This policy was adopted at a meeting of the pre-school held on (date).....

Signed on behalf of the pre-school..... (Chairperson)

Next Policy Review February 2018