



Early years practice procedures

Prime times – Settling in and transitions

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 the nursery community; they can contribute to that community and receive from it. Young children, approach separation from their parent with anxieties, older children have a more secure understanding of 'people permanence' and can approach new experiences with confidence; but also need time to adjust and feel secure. It is the entitlement of all children to be settled comfortably into a new environment.

To support every child to feel safe and secure within the nursery we agreed with parents a plan to support settling in as follows:

Home visit – We offer a home visit for all new families joining the nursery. This gives us opportunity to make early connections and start to build relationships with the child and the parents in their own environment and have opportunity to share information about the child

Session 1 – Parents are invited into the nursery to spend 1 hour with their child in their base room. We feel this supports the Proximity approach for the child to get familiar with the new surrounding but also making connections with the key person after the home visit.

Session 2 – This session is usually for 1hour 30minutes and you will have the opportunity to settle your child into the room and then if you are feeling comfortable in leaving your child then you are welcome to leave; at this stage parents will have the choice to remain within the nursery or can leave the nursery if they wish. If at any point a child becomes distressed, we contact the parent to return to reassure the child.

Session 3 – This session is usually for 2 hours and parents are encouraged to settle their child with the keyperson then when comfortable leave so the bonds can continue to develop with the key person and staff within the room

Session 4 – This session is usually for 3 hours so that a child can explore and familiarise themselves with more of the different activities and routine of nursery. Parents are encouraged to support a brief settle period then leave the nursery for this session.

Session 5 – Generally our final settle session and the child will enjoy staying with us for 3 hours that covers lunchtime so we can support the mealtime transition and introduce a different aspect of the nursery day.

Please note this is a suggested plan and where a child's is more unsettled with the separation from their parents' additional measures can be put in place to support all involved.

When settling in, we consider some of the following

- Start times for a settling child are staggered to allow sufficient one to one time with each child and parent/carer.
- Where appropriate the key person greets the parent/carer and child. (Shift patterns may need to be adjusted when settling in.)
- When the parent/carer leaves, they always say goodbye and say they are coming back. Parents/carers should never slip away without the baby noticing; this leads to greater distress.
- If a child has been identified as having SEND then the key person/SENCO and parents/carers will need to identify and address potential barriers to settling in e.g. timings of medication and invasive procedures, specific routines and levels of support.
- During settling in the child and parent/carer attend more regularly, even on the days when they will not usually, until the child is settled and comfortably attached to the key person. Then the normal pattern of attendance should commence.
- A settling in review takes place after 6 weeks by the key person and parent/carer get the review sent to them for their comments.
- It is not good for a child to be in a setting when they are distressed. A child who is not securely attached and settled is overwhelmed. They are unable to participate in any activity and do not learn. It is not in their immediate or long-term interest to attempt to prolong the experience for them and a plan to support the settling in process should be considered with the key person and the parents.
- Particular triggers of distress are discussed to see what can be done to alleviate it.
- If all attempts have been made and the child still cannot cope without the parent, then a meeting will be arranged with management to try and decide on a plan moving forward. In some cases it may be appropriate to withdraw the place and help the parent/carer consider alternatives. For a child 'in need' this may need to be discussed with the social care worker, where one is allocated to the child, health visitor or referring agency.
- Older children may find the settling in process easier and will move through the stages quicker but this is not always the case and separation anxiety can cause children to struggle with the settling in process; this can be more apparent for children around the age of 2 years old.
- In line with all these different factors each individual child is monitored and assessed to ensure the best outcome is achieved.

When a parent is unable or refuses to take part in settling in

- Information about the 'settling in' plan is given at the first visit and the reasons are explained.
- If the parent/carer feels that this will be difficult – perhaps another close relative can come in instead.
- Genuine difficulties need to be handled sensitively, but generally speaking this is not an issue where the parent/carer has a choice not to attend with their child. A parent/carer who refuses to take part in settling in may have the offer of the place withdrawn.

Prolonged absences

- If a child is absent from the setting for any periods of time beyond three weeks, their attachment to their key persons will have decreased and will need to be built up again. It may be agreed that the child's day will be made shorter to support their return.

Transition to the next room

- When it is time for a child to transition to the next base room, we will organise settles to support the process. Each settle will increase in time in line with how the child is coping and will also incorporate part of a day and participate in play and join in at mealtimes, becoming familiar with adults, children and the environment.
- The current key person will spend time with the child in the new group, liaising with the new key person and ensuring that the child is familiar with all the main times of the day.
- The child gradually spends more time with the new key person until they can cope in their new room.
- Parents are invited to attend a stay and play session within the new base room; this gives opportunity for parents to share information and get to know the new key person and staff within the new room.

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 parent/carers' input to make sense of what is going on.
- If the parent/carer does not speak English, efforts are made to interpret the information or it may be that a family member can act as an interpreter.
- The settling-in programme is explained to the parent/carer, and it is emphasised how important it is that they stay with the child and talk to him/her in the 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/carer to converse in the child's home language is important.
- The key person makes the parent/carer feel welcome using smiles and gestures.

- With the parent/carer, 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 and parents/carers will be addressed with 'hello' and 'goodbye' in their language.
- The key person prepares for the child's visits 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.
- When the child feels happy to spend time with the key person (secure base), the parent/carer should spend time outside of the room.
- Progress with settling in will be done as with any other child; it just takes a little longer to reach dependency/independence.