



Spinney Pre-School

The Role of the Key Person and Settling in Policy

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. It is the entitlement of all children to be settled comfortably into a new environment.

We want children to feel safe, stimulated and happy in the setting and to feel secure and comfortable with staff. We also want parents to have confidence in both their children's well-being and their role as active partners with the setting.

We aim to make the 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 aim to make the 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 Persons role is set out in the Safeguarding and Welfare Requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Each setting must assign a Key Person for each child.

The procedures set out a model for developing a Key Person approach that promotes effective and positive relationships for children who are in settings.

The Key Person role

- We allocate a Key Person before the child starts.
- The Key Person is responsible for the induction of the family and for settling the child into our setting.
- A Key Person builds an on-going relationship with the child and his/her parents and is committed to that child's well-being while in the setting.
- The role of a Key Person is fully explained to parents on induction and the name of the child's key person and 'back up' key person is recorded on the child's registration form and sent home to the Parents/Carers.
- A 'back up' Key Person is also identified for each child so that they can fulfil the role in the absence of the main key person for example, sickness.
- The Key Person conducts the progress check at age two for their key children.
- The Key Person is central to settling a child into the setting. All staff explain the need for a settling in process and agree a plan with the parents.
- Photographs of Key Persons and their key groups are displayed clearly
- All staff offer unconditional regard for the child and are non-judgemental.

Parents

- Staff support parents in their role as the child's first and most enduring educators.
- The Key Person is responsible for the child's developmental records, completing the progress check at age two, and for sharing information about progress with the child's parents.
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We follow a three-stage model of settling in based on three key needs:

1. **Proximity** -Young children feel safest when a familiar adult, such as a parent, 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 an adult 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 an adult within the setting who knows and understands them best and on whom they can depend for their needs to be met.

Settling-in for children who are two and those with SEND

- If a child has been identified as having SEND then the key person/SENCO and parents 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.

Settling-in

- Before a child starts to attend the setting, we use a variety of ways to provide his/her parents with information. These include written information (including our prospectus), our website which has all our policies and other very useful information and displays about activities available within the setting.
- We allocate a Key Person to each child and his/her family before she/he starts to attend; the Key Person welcomes and looks after the child and his/her parents at the child's first session and during the settling-in process. We explain how the setting is run, the activities that are on offer and explain about the seven areas of learning. We show the Parents/Carers the Parental information boards and ask if they have any concerns and they leave the setting with their Information Pack containing for example ; - Registration form, Health and Development form, What to expect when (Parental starting points), Parental code of conduct etc.
- This may be for part of the session during the first three days, gradually taking time away from their child, increasing this as and when the child is able to cope.
- We judge a child to be settled when they have formed a relationship with an adult; for example, the child looks for an adult 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.
- We may introduce new families into the setting on a staggered basis, for example five new children a week rather than ten new children all at once.
- 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 expect that the parent will honour the commitment to stay for at least the first week, or possibly longer, until their child can stay happily without them.
- We encourage Parent/Carers to complete an “All about me” booklet with their child prior to starting the Pre School. This is so all adults within the setting have some background to the child’s family, likes and dislikes
- 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.

Promoting proximity

- If the child is having difficulty settling, a parent/carer may be asked to attend with the child.
- One hour is sufficient for a child and parent to attend on any one day initially.
- The parent is invited to play with their child and the Key Person spends time with them. As much time as possible is allowed for the Key Person to do this.

Promoting secure base

- When the parent leaves, they always say goodbye to their child and say they are coming back. Parents should never slip away without the child noticing; this leads to greater distress.
- Parents can be asked to bring in a recently worn tee shirt, scarf that smells of them, a blanket or teddy bear etc. Children will often settle if they can smell the familiar smell of the parent.

Promoting dependency

- Attachment can be seen when the child shows signs that they are happy to transfer their need to be dependent onto an adult. Staff look for signs such as the child being pleased to see them, looking for them when distressed, holding out their arms to be held, establishing eye contact, responding to play.

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 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 has a choice not to attend with their child.

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.
- The three-stage approach involving *Proximity*, *Secure Base* and *Dependency/Independence* is applied to two-year-olds.
- To settle in a two-year-old, the setting will go through the same process of gradually increasing the time a child attends with a parent/carer during the proximity stage.
- 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/independence and 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-dependent upon child/family

- 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 source an interpreter for induction (if possible); it will be helpful for them to see around the setting.
- The settling-in programme is explained to the parent, 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.
- Through the interpreter, the Key Person/other adults will try to gauge the child's level of skills in their home language; this will give the adult 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/other adults make 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. This can be done in the form of a Pre School passport. These words will be used with the child and parents will be addressed with 'hello' and 'goodbye' in their language.
- 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 any one of the adults (secure base), the parent 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.

Learning and development

- The Key Person helps to ensure that every child's learning and care is tailored to meet their individual needs. This is achieved through regular observation and assessment of children, using information gathered about their achievements, interests and learning styles to plan for each individual child's learning and development.
- If a child's progress in any of the prime areas gives cause for concern, the Key Person must discuss this with the Supervisor or SENCO and the child's parents.

Safeguarding children

- The Key Person has a responsibility towards their key children to report any concern about their development, welfare or child protection matter to the Supervisor and to follow the procedures in this respect.
- Regular supervision with the Supervisor provides further opportunities to discuss the progress and welfare of key children.
- The back-up key person has a duty likewise.

This Policy was adopted at a meeting of the Pre-School held on (date) _____

Signed on behalf of the Pre-School _____