

4.1 The role of the key person and settling-in process

Policy statement

When your child is starting at a new childcare setting it is important to understand this time can be challenging both for the parent and child. The first few weeks when a child is settling into an early years setting is a time of crucial importance to their later happiness in the setting. All children are individuals and while some children will adjust easily to the new environment and new routines, others will take longer to feel comfortable and secure. Each setting will have their own settling in policy which explains their approach to settling children in a new setting.

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 between the staff, parents and children which gives parents confidence and trust in the staff to help their children settle into a new environment which enables them to thrive and feel secure.

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

Key Person

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.

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 a focus on policies such as safeguarding and our responsibilities under the Prevent Duty.
- Offering unconditional regard for the child and being non-judgemental.
- Working in partnership with parents to plan and deliver a personalised plan for the child's well-being, care and learning.
- Acting as the key contact for parents.

- Working closely with parents to share information to create Early Learning Journey profiles demonstrating the key areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage to reflect the child's developmental stages on a regular basis 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 and professionals 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 process

We understand introducing a child to a new setting is a gradual process and recognise all children as individuals who will settle at a different pace. Therefore, we promote a flexible settling in procedure aimed at meeting the individual needs of the child. We aim to ensure a child's introduction to our setting is as stress free as possible by working closely with parents throughout the process to address any difficulties which may arise to ensure we respond sensitively to the child's needs.

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 our Prospectus, Parent Handbook and Policies), displays about activities available within the setting, information days and individual meetings with parents.

Once a place has been offered, parents/carers are invited with their child to visit the Kindergarten prior to their official start date. This is usually for two hours with the parent/carer staying for the duration. This helps to familiarise the child with the Kindergarten, the staff and the other children who attend the setting. Parents/carers will be treated as 'visitors' to the setting and will be required to follow appropriate instructions from staff. During the settling in sessions, the parent/carer is responsible for their own child but should try to step back from direct interaction with them to enable them to instigate strong relationships with staff, gain some level of independence and start to make friends.

- 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.
- 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.
- We have an expectation that the parent, carer or close relative, will stay for the first morning when starting at the Kindergarten, gradually taking time away from their child; increasing this time as and when the child is able to cope.

- Younger children will take longer to settle in, as will children who have not previously spent time away from home. Children who have had a period of absence may also need their parent to be on hand to re-settle them.
- 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 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 one or two morning sessions.
- 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 to not to accept a child into the setting without a parent or carer if the child finds it distressing to be left.
- Within the first four to six weeks of starting, we discuss and work with the child's parents to begin to create the child's Early Learning Journey profiles.

Settling in procedure

The settling in procedure will be a very gradual process which will begin with a short introduction followed by longer periods at the setting as the children become more familiar with their environment, key person and other children. The aim will be for staff to work closely with parents to increase their involvement with the child while the parent will gradually lessen theirs to promote children's independence.

How long is the settling in period?

We believe children can take between 2 to 4 weeks to feel settled and to adjust to their new surroundings. There will be a review meeting held for each child after 4 weeks attending the Kindergarten to determine how well your child is settling or has settled into the setting. This review meeting will be held between the parent and Kindergarten Manager and will be arranged during a time convenient to you.

How long is a settling in session?

Settling in sessions usually involve a 3 session process. We provide a flexible approach which considers both the needs of the child and parents' wishes to make the process a positive transition for their child. To achieve this flexibility parents are given the opportunity to decide whether to stay with or leave their child during the settling in sessions at the time until parents feel reassured their child can stay happily without them. This information will be gathered in consultation meetings between the parent and Kindergarten Manager during the settling in period. A suggested process is below:

Day 1 (9.00-11.00am)

Day 1 will involve a **morning** session at the Kindergarten. Parents will walk across to the woodland with the group. Parents are encouraged to **stay** with their child for the morning session to support them to settle in with their accompanied parent.

Day 2 (9.00-11.00am)

Day 2 will involve a **morning** session where parents are encouraged to **leave** their child to attend the full morning without parental presence to help the child move towards independence. Parents will walk across to the woodland to collect their child at the end of the session.

Day 3: (9.00-3.00pm)

Day 3 will involve children attending a **full day** at the Kindergarten where parents are encouraged to **leave** their child and collect them at the Kindergarten HQ at the end of the day to enable the child to reach independence and settle in at the Kindergarten.

What happens if my child appears to not settle at the Kindergarten?

The settling in sessions will be extended to a further 2 weeks following the 4-week review to allow more time to implement strategies to support the child. These strategies will be decided together between the parent and Kindergarten manager to help support the child and make the transition more successful. In the unlikely event, a child does not seem to settle following the review period then we will review the situation with the parent/ carer and discuss the options, including termination of the contract. Such termination is at the sole discretion of the Kindergarten Manager.

How long can parents stay with their child during the settling in sessions?

We would like to encourage parents to stay with their child for the whole morning session on their first day to encourage them to settle in with their parents' presence. However, the decision about the length of time parents can stay with their child on their first day is flexible and parents can decide to stay or leave their child based on what they believe is best for their child at the time.

Parents are encouraged to leave their child in the Kindergarten after 2 mornings to enable the child to attend a full day at the Kindergarten aiming to make progress towards independence for their child. Children who are booked for less than the full 3 days at the Kindergarten will follow the 3-day settling in process on the first day they attend. For example, if your child is booked in with us for one day a week, the third day is classed as the third week. The settling in procedure is a guideline and can be adapted to meet the individual needs of the child. For example, to ensure the child does not become too anxious or distressed during the settling in process, parents are given the choice to either leave their child if it is going well or stay for as long as needed.

Charges/fees

We are flexible about attendance patterns to accommodate the needs of individual children and families, but ask that attendance for the settling in sessions are paid for. Your registration fee covers the first 2 sessions however full payment for attendance on day 3 of the settling in period is required. This is because we still have to employ the same amount of staff to ensure we can provide a quality and safe learning environment

After Kindergarten, children usually progress to primary schools, independent schools, home education and other settings. We have built strong links and partnerships with our local Primary Schools and other organisations and (we will keep parents informed throughout and will gain consent) are happy to communicate with the new organisation to provide support with this transition.

This policy was adapted by Hidden Valley Bushcraft

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Signed on behalf of the provider L Goldsmith

Name of signatory Louise Goldsmith

Role of signatory (e.g. chair, director or owner) Owner

Other useful Pre-school Learning Alliance publications

- Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage: With non-statutory supporting documentation (2014 & 2017)
- Being a Key Person in an Early Years Setting (2015)
- Creating a Learning Environment in the Home (2015)