

## 1.6 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 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 parents 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 know that this can be an emotional time for both the child and parents. We aim to ensure your child's introduction to our setting is as stress-free as possible. Once a place has been offered, we aim to achieve this by inviting you and your child to visit the nursery prior to your child's official start date. These visits are called "settling in days" and they help to familiarise your child with the nursery, the nursery staff and the other children. A child who is tense or unhappy will not be able to play or learn properly, so it is important for parents/carers and staff to work together to help the child feel confident and secure in the group.

This process may take longer for some children and parents/carers should not feel worried if their child takes a while to settle. You must be prepared to accept that it may take some time for your child to adjust to the nursery environment but very few children fail to settle eventually. We find that staying with your child and then leaving him/her for short periods eases the separation process. The nursery offers 2 settling sessions over two days, prior to the child's actual start date. It is not unusual for a child to appear unhappy when initially being left, though once the parent leaves, the distress rarely lasts for more than a few minutes.

The excitement of their new surroundings and the other children quickly attracts their attention. Parents can feel reassured that if their child shows any undue distress, they will be advised, and several alternative settling approaches will be suggested. On enrolment, the Manager will discuss with parents various options for the settling-in period. We are also happy for parents to telephone at any time for an update on their child. Please remember, the more your child comes and experiences the activities on offer and sees you interacting with the staff, the more settled she/he will feel. Below is our recommended program to introduce your child to life at the nursery.

<p><b>Day 1:</b></p> <p>An hour settling session with a parent or carer at 10.00-11.00am or 2.30pm-3.30pm</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arrive at 10.00 am / 2.30 pm to stay and play with your child until 11.00 am / 3.30 pm.</li> <li>• You will meet your child's Keyworker, the Nursery Manager and the rest of the team.</li> <li>• Your child will be encouraged to observe the other children and join in with activities, as long as he/she feels comfortable in doing so.</li> <li>• Parents will be required to complete several forms and documents detailing all the individual needs of the child. This visit will last 1 hours.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Day 2:</b></p> <p>Two hours settling session without a parent or carer at 10.00-12.00pm or 2.00pm-4.00pm</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arrive at 10.00 am / 2.00 pm to drop your child for their second settling-in day.</li> <li>• You will then be encouraged to say goodbye to your child and not just "slip away". Children need to know that their parents have left and are not hiding. This will also help them to learn that having left, parents will also return.</li> <li>• Collect your child at 12pm / 4pm and discuss with their key worker or with the manager how did the 2h settling-in session went and if it will be necessary to come up with a</li> </ul>

## **Settling-in for babies, children under two, and those with SEND**

- Start times for babies are staggered to allow sufficient one-to-one time with each child and parent.
- We can only have maximum of 2 children under two settling in any one week, settling in during different times or days. There will be a week gap, before another child under 2 is booked to settle.
- Where a number of babies need to start – key persons can start settling one child in the morning and another in the afternoon.
- 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.

## **Part-time babies and toddlers**

- Part-time babies have the same needs when settling in as full-time babies. However, part-time attendance means that there may be gaps between time the baby is in one week to the next. This can often be a reason for the settling in process to take longer than usual.
- A settling in review takes place after 2 weeks for the key person and parent to discuss how well the baby has settled, formed an attachment, and adapted to the setting. Any adverse changes of behavior at home (or in the setting) are addressed as a sign of separation difficulty.

## **When babies do not seem to settle**

- It is not good for babies to be in a setting when they are acutely distressed and anxious. A baby who is not securely attached and settled is overwhelmed with fear. 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 what is an agonising experience for them.
- A highly distressed baby will need 1:1 attention consistently; their distress will upset other babies and put stress on staff. If this is the case, the key person discusses with the manager or deputy.
- Attempts are made to reduce anxiety and distress through a planned approach with the parent.
- Particular triggers of distress are discussed to see what can be done to alleviate it.
- If all attempts have been made and the baby or toddler still cannot cope without the parent, then the manager will further discuss the child's place with the parent. In some cases it may be appropriate to withdraw the place and help the parent 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.

## **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 a parent who refuses to take part in settling in may have the offer of the place withdrawn.

## **Prolonged absences**

- If babies or toddlers are absent from the setting for any for periods of time beyond one or two weeks, their attachment to their key persons will have decreased and will need to be built up again.
- On some occasions, we might ask parents to 're-settle' their children, and a plan will be agreed.

## **Moving up from one room to another room**

- Two-year olds are not moved to the main room before their second birthday unless agreed with the parent. They are given the opportunity to visit the toddler room as part of a normal day and participate in play and join in at mealtimes, becoming familiar with adults, children and the environment.

- When approaching their second birthday, the baby room key person and/or the manager approaches the parents to agree on how the child will be settled.
- Typically for full-day session children, we split the full day sessions to AM in their current room and PM in their new room for at least a week. The new key person joins the handovers at the end of each day, introduces themselves and gives feedback to parents on how the child is getting on in their new room. If we see that the child is fully settled at the end of their settle week, we will inform their parents, and the child will be officially moved from the following week.
- For half-day session children, we approach the settling in the same way, but here the child will be in their current room for the first two hours after dropped off and will continue in their new room for the remaining 3 hours of the session for a period of 1 week. If we see that the child is fully settled at the end of their settle week, we will inform their parents, and the child will be officially moved from the following week.
- If a child needs more than 1 week to settle in their new room, we will communicate this with the child's parents and also agree on a plan to help ease the transition.
- Where possible 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.

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

- For many children learning English as an additional language, the settling-in period 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; it will be helpful for them to see around the setting and be clear about their role in interpreting in the play area.
- 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 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 and parents 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.
- Progress with settling in will be done as with any other child; it just takes a little longer to reach dependency/independence.