



## **Settling in policy**

### **Prior to starting Preschool:**

We strongly recommend that parents bring children with them when they come for an initial visit so they can have their first chance to meet the staff team and explore the environment.

Every child is assigned to their group and Key Person before they start at preschool. Their Key Person will help the child to become familiar with the setting and develop a close relationship with them and the parents.

We provide parents with a welcome pack before a child starts which includes all the relevant information they need for starting at preschool. This includes information about the key person role and a photo of the child's Key Person so that they can become familiar with them.

Parents are asked to fill in an 'About Me' page on their child's Tapestry account which will be given to the child's Key Person. This allows the Key Person to get to know the child and help them settle more easily.

We are flexible to meet the parent's and child's needs and recognise that different children have different ways to be settled/ the length of the process may be different, but we work with the parents to devise a strategy together.

### **Stay and Plays and Settling in sessions:**

Before starting we invite parents and children to join us for a 'Stay and Play session' where the child will be encouraged to spend time with their new Key Person and familiarise themselves with the setting. We run these at the start of every term, or offer individual sessions for children starting part way through a term. This is an ideal opportunity for parents to begin to get to know the Key Person, share any additional information about their child and ask any questions that they may have before their child starts. We can offer additional Stay and Play sessions if required.

We then offer a 2 hour settling in session prior to the child starting their normal hours. Parents are welcome to stay to help settle but we do recommend that parents leave the child at some point, even if it is just for a short amount of time. During the 2 hour settling in session, we ensure that the Key Person is available to offer one-to-one support to their new Key Child. We can offer additional 2 hour sessions if staff and parents feel that this may benefit the child.

### Supporting Children and Parents during this Transition

The settling in process at Preschool is gradual and flexible. Parents are welcome into the setting during this time, but should aim to gradually move away when their child is ready which allows the Key Person to support the child in their play. After the initial Stay and Play sessions (with parents attending) we strongly recommend that over the next few sessions parents build up to longer absences to prepare children for the hours that they will be usually attending. During these early times, some sessions may be shorter if needed.

The Key Person will be there on hand to support the child, especially during the first few weeks, and will spend time with them and getting to know them.

We understand that many young children find transitions difficult and will support them to separate from parents in ways that are easiest for them. When parents leave, we ask them to say goodbye to their child and explain that they will be coming back and when. The Key Person will always stay with the child to support and reassure them.

Some children find it more difficult to settle, and may take longer to relax and enjoy their new environment. We recognise that 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 extra support to settle back in.

It is a very normal part of a child's development to be anxious, nervous or upset about starting a new setting. If a child is struggling to settle in, the Key Person may suggest ideas such as:

- Bringing in a comfort object / photos of family members
- Engaging the child in their favourite activities
- Putting a time limit on the handover if this time is stressful for the child
- Coming into preschool at a slightly later time to avoid the busy drop off times and so that the Key Person can make sure they are available

We will telephone parents/guardians if after twenty minutes of adult support their child is still not settled and happy.

Although parents are welcome to come in and help get their child settled, unfortunately it is not practical for parents to continue staying for the entirety of the preschool session after those first few weeks. Parents need to be supervised at all times by staff, which takes our time away from being with the other children and it can be confusing for the child. If parents feel that they are not ready to leave their child after 45 minutes, we feel that it is unlikely that the child will successfully separate from them that day, and we suggest to parents that it might be best to try again the next session.

It is not uncommon for a child to settle very easily at preschool, and then unexpectedly a few weeks later find it difficult to come in. The Key Person and other staff can provide support if this happens, as it is very normal for children to experience anxieties at some point.

Effective communication with parents is vital as they are children's first educators and we are now working in partnership with parents. We aim to have regular communication with parents through:

- Daily feedback when possible at the end of the session
- Updates via text message / phone call during the session if the child has been struggling to settle
- Additional Tapestry observations during those first few weeks especially
- Focus week - Parent questionnaires and the opportunity to discuss their child's progress with staff.