

### **g. Settling In & Key Worker Policy**

Nursery Village believe that a child settles best when they have a key person to relate to, who knows them and their parents well and can meet their individual needs.

Research shows that a key worker approach benefits the child, the parents, the staff and the setting by providing secure relationships in which children thrive, parents have confidence, staff are committed, and the setting is a happy and dedicated place to attend or work in.

Leaving a child for the first time is one of the hardest parts of joining a new Nursery, but it is one the Nursery Village team understand and plan for to ensure the best start for the child and their parents.

We recognise that the settling in period can be a very emotional time for all parents, particularly first-time parents. The settling in period is intended to bridge the gap for your child between home and Nursery.

#### **Our Aims:**

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

The key worker role is set out in the Welfare Requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. We will offer a key worker for each child.

The procedures set out a model for developing a key worker approach that promotes effective and positive relationships for children who are in the setting.

#### First Nursery Visit

We encourage you and your child to spend some time with your key worker during the settling in period. This will provide the opportunity for discussions about what activities your child likes to do best, and for them to look at and talk about pictures of your child's family. The key worker will introduce your child to the other children and adults.

These sessions could involve you sitting back from a session and eventually leaving for a short period. Once you and our staff feel your child is ready, the parting arrangements should be agreed so that you leave for a part, or full session. You should always let your child know you are going and will return later.

Arrangements should be flexible at the start, to allow for your child to stay for only part of a session if they are struggling with the separation from you.

As your child becomes accustomed to their key worker, they will usually find it easy to

settle, although there will be occasions when this does not happen - perhaps if a baby is teething, or a two year old is upset after a fall. These everyday occurrences, though unpleasant, tend to be short lived and babies and children quickly get over teething and tumbles.

### Separation Anxiety

This is very common and is an expected part of your child's development, that there may be some separation anxiety as your child settles into their new Nursery routine.

This often takes place at between 7-9 months of age, as this is when specific attachments begin to form, a wariness of strangers begins to develop, and a child begins to miss their parents or main carers. There is often a reoccurrence around the age of 2 years, when your child's brain undergoes a growth spurt in their cognitive development.

These are both normal developmental phases; they will pass, and we will work closely to support you through these incredibly important times.

Your child may not sleep at Nursery for several sessions, and may not eat either, which are all perfectly normal behaviours and although it is concerning for you, your patience and understanding will pay off. There is lots to take in and lots of new sights, sounds and activities going on.

Even though initially dropping off may be traumatic, there still needs to be a proper Goodbye from you, in order to re-enforce your attachment bond with your child, so please take the time to say Goodbye when dropping off.

The following factors may affect a child's start at nursery:

- Age and maturity: two children of the same age can be very different so, while age is important, so is maturity.
- Previous experience: if a child has had some previous separation, they may settle more easily than one being left for the first time.
- Attendance at other childcare: young children are adaptable, but it can be confusing for them to move between childcare settings. Although everything may appear much the same to an adult, to the child everything is different.
- Family circumstances: if the child's start at nursery coincides with a house move, or the birth of a sibling this may affect the way they settle.
- Temperament: some children are outgoing, sociable and independent. Others are more easily distressed, less adventurous and more introverted - these children may need more support before they settle into nursery.
- Health: if a child is getting over an illness, or maybe coming down with one during the settling in period, this can affect how well they adapt, particularly if its disruptive.

Please feel free to discuss any concerns you may have, with your Room Leader, Key Worker or Nursery Manager. They are there to help and ensure your child feels safe and secure in their new environment.

## Policy

- We allocate a key person before the child starts.
- If a home visit takes place before the child starts, this will be carried out by a Manager and the Key worker.
- The Key Worker is responsible for the settling in of the key child and acts as the point of contact for child's parents.
- The Key Worker is responsible for the child's learning journey, developmental records and for sharing information on a regular basis with the parent or carer and keeping those records up to date so it reflects a full picture of the child's progress.
- We have a Primary and Secondary Key Worker approach in place, so the child and parents have another contact if the main Key Worker is absent.
- We promote the role of the Key Worker as the child's primary carer in their setting, and as the basis for establishing relationships with other staff and children.

## Procedure

Before a child starts at their nursery, we provide information in a variety of ways to the parents or carers, including written information (prospectus, policies and parental agreement), displays and photographs about activities available within the setting.

- The parents or carers are asked to complete an Induction Form and All About Me form as well as all information sections on our Childcare system Family. This includes and allergies, doctors' details and emergency contacts so we are able to contact them, a relative or a friend at any time whilst their child is at the setting. This will be done on their first visit, so we have all details available to us.
- Parents are asked at drop off to state clearly the name of the person who will be collecting their child each day, which will be recorded on the Family sign in screen.
- If you ask a friend or another parent from the nursery to collect your child, we will require confirmation from you of who this person will be including a record on Family, along with a password agreed by yourself for the collector to use, otherwise we will not be able to release your child. **Photo ID must be brought in if the adult is unknown.**
- We provide opportunities for parents and their children to visit their setting on a number of occasions, including stay and play sessions and parent volunteering, to help you get used to the environment and be involved in your child's day. This is also an opportunity to meet staff and other children at setting, learn about the nursery, what we do and to get to know the whole staff team.
- We will also offer home visits where needed with the child's Key Worker and a Manager to ensure all relevant information about the child is known. There may be ideas we can share for an easier transition such as sending nursery blankets home with parents for a couple of days, so we may use them for sleep at setting, which can ease the child into new smells and surroundings. A book made by parents including any pictures of family and special achievements at home may also be useful.

We explain the process of settling their child into our setting with the parents; this is generally four two hour sessions incorporating a lunch. We then jointly decide the best way to help the child settle in, ensuring the individual needs of the child and family are being met at all times.

We encourage parents to stay with their child on the first couple of settling in sessions, gradually taking time away from their child until they feel confident their child has settled and no longer needs them to stay.

If a child will be attending full day sessions with us over two days or more, we may start with reduced sessions which will support an easier transition into nursery.

We will work to reassure parents who are anxious about their child, giving them information about their child's activities and welfare while attending the nursery, through Key Worker handovers, observations, photographs, Family messages from their Room Leader and support from the child's designated Key Worker.

We do not encourage children to bring toys into the Nursery, however a special comfort toy or blanket which would help them settle better and feel more secure, are welcome.

- Once the child has started, we still have a planned period of time, generally six weeks, to allow each child the time and support they need to settle and get to know their Key Worker. The amount of time this needs can vary for each child.
- The Key Worker role within the setting is to support the child and family throughout their time in the nursery. However, parents can also contact the Room Leader or a Manager for more information, although we remind parents that staff may not answer messages immediately as the children in their care are the main priority.

### Recognising Interests and Planning the Environment

Nursery Village aim to provide an environment which encourages independence and individuality, which is safe and secure enabling children to thrive, taking risks and overcoming difficulties with supportive adults whilst demonstrating the importance of having boundaries and understanding rules.

We will:

- Provide an environment where children can self-select resources.
- Be supportive towards every child's learning and development and never be judgmental or demoralising.
- Welcome parents and family's contributions throughout their child's learning journey at the setting.
- Recognise any areas of development which can be further supported from outside agencies.
- Adapt activities for every child's own developmental stage, promoting inclusive practice within the setting.
- Provide ongoing training for staff which supports the development and learning of the children.

This policy clearly explains the emphasis on learning and development within the setting, making it explicit for all to understand. It applies to all staff, students, children, parents and volunteers.

During the first visits, the child's Key Worker will capture photos and observations of the child playing in order to gain some insight into the child's interests.

Over the course of the first 4-6 weeks, the Key Worker will continue to record observations on the child's interests and development, consisting of a long observation known as their Baseline Assessment.

The longer observation provides a more detailed record of your child's interests and abilities which will then include their next steps; these are a series of small goals which are achievable for your child over a period of time, decided by your child's Key Worker.

### The Learning Journey

Each child will have a detailed learning journey record on their Family profile, detailing their time at setting, from when they join the nursery. This is a collaboration of each child's achievements and progress whilst at the setting and at home.

It will include:

- Their complete All About Me form.
- Snap Shot written observations, a brief record on small milestones.
- Monthly record of their interests and next steps.
- Information provided from parents on events at home including pictures, where the parent partnership helps inform the Key Workers understanding.
- Photographs of children engaged in activities.
- Child's individual interests.

After approximately six weeks of the child starting at the nursery, staff will have gained a wealth of information and have some insight into the child's interests.

At the beginning of each month the Key Worker will:

- Consider what the child's interests are and how the child learns best, for example being active or perhaps calmer activities.
- Record the child's interests in the child's learning journey on Family using small but frequent snap shot observations.
- Where the observations show a developed skill, these are recorded along with their achievable next steps. These 'next steps' are goals to work towards which are achievable for the child, with some guidance and support linked closely to the child's development.
- No child will be given targets which are unrealistic. The next steps are used by the Key Worker to plan for progress and the child will be learning through a good balance of adult led and child initiated play activities and through having fun.

We encourage parents and carers to share with us on Family, using posts and photos of interests their child has at home, including events at home so that the Key Worker can plan activities accordingly and continue to develop an ever growing relationship with the child.

Nursery Village staff use this parent partnership as part of their planning process, evaluating every resource which they have planned, reflecting on whether it was beneficial for the child and/or, how it can be altered and adapted to aid progression.

Each staff member will receive specific training and guidance on best practice, with regular supervision meetings and peer observations.

### Two Year Checks

When a child turns two, they are required to have a two year development record written to support health visitors.

The two year check is a summary discussing the child's progress of the three prime areas, identifying the child's strengths and any areas where progress is not as expected. In such case, plans will be put in place with the Nursery SENCo and the child's parents or carers to support future learning and development.

The two year check will only be done when the child is fully settled and comfortable at the setting.

- If the child has recently transitioned from the baby room into the transition room, the new Key Worker will wait at least 6 weeks to allow the child to settle, before compiling their report. They will work with the child's previous Key Worker collating evidence to gain an accurate account of the child.
- If the child is new to the setting, the Key Worker will wait until the child has been at the setting for at least 6 weeks and is comfortable in the environment.

A child who is unsettled, will not be learning or developing at their full potential, therefore providing an inaccurate development check.

- The completed progress check will be discussed with the parents or carers. We welcome contributions from the parents or carers in completing the report and will request comments in partnership to be completed, giving any further insights that they may have witnessed in the home environment.
- Wherever possible we will endeavour to have the check done to coincide with the health visitors' check.
- If at any point it is felt that outside professionals or agencies need to be contacted, then consent will be gained from parents or carers.

We will start by writing out an overview of how the child has settled and their development within the nursery, before going onto the 7 key areas and Early Learning Goals of the EYFS. This stage identifies whether the child is Emerging, Developing or Secure in the appropriate areas and age bracket, with a brief description and outline of their

achievements in that area.

Every time a child gets to the end of a development bracket, a new assessment will take place based on those areas and next steps.

To enable us to further their learning and move them up to the next development bracket, they need to be secure in the previous areas of development for their age.

Once each development area has been checked three times, we can ascertain that the child is secure in that area.