

## *Happy, Confident, Independent.*

### *Children develop a sense of belonging, respect and autonomy of voice through a varied and well-directed early education.*

09 Childcare practice procedures

#### **09.4 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 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 follow a three-stage model of settling in based on three key needs:

1. *Proximity* - Babies and 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, babies and young children gradually begin to feel secure with a key person in a new surrounding so that they are able to participate independently for small periods of time.
3. *Dependency* – Babies and young children are able to separate from parents' and main carers when they have formed a secure attachment to their key person who knows and understands them best and on whom they can depend for their needs to be met.

The setting manager and key person explain the need for settling in and agree a plan with the parents. Each day they review the plan and agree what will happen the next day.

#### **Settling-in for 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.

#### **Two-year-olds starting a setting for the first time**

- 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 and policies), displays about activities available within the setting, information days and evenings and individual meetings with parents.
- During the half-term before a child is enrolled, we provide opportunities for the child and his/her parents to visit the setting.
- 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 may offer a home visit by the person who will be the child's key person to ensure all relevant information about the child can be made known.
  - We use pre-start visits and the first session at which a child attends to explain and complete, with his/her parents, the child's registration records.
  - 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 most of the session during the first week, 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.
  - Parents are made aware of the need to 're-settle' their children and a plan is agreed.
  - 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 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 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.
  - Within the first four to six weeks of starting, we discuss and work with the child's parents to begin to create their child's record of achievement.
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- 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 as to younger children.
  - After the induction meeting with the setting manager or deputy and key person, a settling-in plan is drawn up. Where possible, a home visit is carried out for the same purpose.
  - To settle in a two-year-old, the setting will go through the process of gradually increasing the time a child attends with a parent/carers during the proximity stage.

- On the first day, the parent attends with the child, and stays for an hour (less if the child becomes tired). On day two, the parent stays longer.
- It is evident that the child is developing a sense of secure base when he or she shows interest in activities and begins to engage with the key person and other children. Then the parent/ carer may gradually start to spend short periods of time in another room to see how the child responds, this time increases until the child can manage a whole session without the parent.
- 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.
- After the parent attends for an induction meeting with the setting manager or deputy and key person, (or in some circumstances a home visit), a settling-in plan is drawn up.
- On the first day, the parent attends with the child, and stays for an hour (less if the child becomes tired). On day two, the parent stays longer.
- If the child shows interest in the activities and is beginning to engage with the key person and other children, the parent may gradually start to spend short periods of time in another room to see how the child responds, this time increases until the child can manage a whole session without the parent.
- Parents are encouraged to explain to their child where they are going, and that they will return.
- If by the fifth day, the child is able to spend more time without the parent, the child may be ready for a short day or session the following week, progressing to a full day or session very soon.

### **Moving up room to the main room**

- Children are given the opportunity to visit the main group as part of a normal day and participate in play and join in at activities, becoming familiar with adults, children and the environment.
- When a vacancy arises, a new key person is identified. 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.
- The child gradually spends more time with the new key person until they can cope in their new room.

## For children whose first language is not English

- 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; 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.
- When the child feels happy to spend time with the key person (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.

This policy was adopted by

Ringrose Kindergarten Chelsea

On

August 2021

Date to be reviewed

July 2022

Signed on behalf of the provider

Name of signatory

Lucy Hustler

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

Principal