

A PARENT'S GUIDE TO SETTLING IN

Starting nursery is a big step for children. It is also a big step for you! Leaving your child with someone that you do not know well is hard and it's normal to feel worried. Therefore, we have put together the following information to aid the transition from home to nursery.

Some children may cry when their parents drop them off at nursery. It doesn't mean they're unhappy, they simply find the moment of parting difficult but minutes later settle down and enjoy the day!

How do we help the process?

A good starting point is to understand that young children are actually primed to stay close to their parents. From the age of around eight months onwards until three years and older, children can react when their parents leave by crying and protesting. In evolutionary terms, it made perfect sense for youngsters to remain near their parents to avoid danger. However, research has shown that children can, and do, form secure attachments with more than the primary carer.

- **Settling In Sessions**

We believe strongly that a child is happiest at nursery when he or she has been settled correctly and have bonded with a key person.

Visiting a few times before actually leaving your child is essential. It allows your child to become familiar with the new surroundings and get to know the key carers.

You will need to stay with your child for the initial settling in, giving you an opportunity to discuss your child with the appropriate key carer. On the second visit, you are advised to stay for a short while and then leave for approximately half an hour. Thereafter your child should be dropped off and left with the key carer for 1 – 2 hours.

All children are individuals and therefore may take more or less time to become completely settled within the nursery environment and therefore we offer as many or few sessions as necessary.

- **Key Person**

Our key person system is delivered on a paired and shared basis. This means your child will have two key people with whom they will have more contact. These key carers will show a special interest in your child through personal, close interaction throughout the day. They are also responsible for the initial settling sessions and helping your child overcome any separation anxiety that they may have.

In the case of babies and toddlers the key carers will be solely responsible for personal care routines, such as feeding, nappy changing and settling for sleeps.

Helping your child

There are several ways in which you can help your child to settle in smoothly.

Being there, but in the background

It is important during your visits that you are ready to take a step backwards and allow the staff to build a relationship with your child. Constantly playing alongside your child may mislead them into believing that in this new place, you will always be there to play.

Instead, your child needs to learn that this new place is one where he/she enjoys playing with other children and being with staff.

Whilst it is important that you should stay during the first visits, aim bit by bit to physically distance yourself from your child but, for example, wandering to the edge of the room and picking up a book or talking to another parent. Don't sit in the corner where your child can continually come to play with you.

You might start by telling the children during an early visit that you want to go to another room for a couple of minutes and then return.

Taking the cue

Babies and young children are programmed to pick up on our reactions. If children notice that we smile and are relaxed in the company of the staff, they will take this as a cue that it is fine to stay. They will also notice and react if we appear anxious, and may respond by becoming fearful and clingy.

Whilst most parents are naturally a little anxious about how their children will get on, try hard to remain calm and positive, as this too will rub off on your child.

Going at different speeds

Most parents wonder how quickly they can leave their children. It depends on the individual child. Children who are used to being left with relatives and friends may be quicker to settle, as they are used to being in the company of other adults. In addition, children who attend more sessions generally settle more quickly.

The child who settles in gradually, but without tears, will have learned a valuable lesson that will stand him/her in good stead when he/she starts school.

What about your own attitude?

Don't prolong your leave-taking. It helps to have separation routines, like a little kiss and special way of saying goodbye or something that signals you're leaving and then GO! Don't linger.

Still concerned?

If you are anxious, a senior member of staff will telephone to reassure you that your child is settling. It is equally important that this is a time to build up trust and confidence with you.

Alternatively, find a place where you can watch for a few minutes where your child can't see you. Chances are you'll see a busy active child, and your mind will be at ease.

If things aren't better after 10 minutes, go to the Room Leader and discuss ways of helping your child settle down more quickly. Also, you may bring your child something from home as a comfort object, for cuddling during the day.

Sneaking off!

Finally, a word about sneaking off!! This might seem like a good idea, especially if your child is happily playing, but sometimes in the longer term it can cause problems. When children stop playing and notice that their parent is no longer there, they can react by becoming increasingly clingy. It also means that in any future situations, instead of settling down to play, children keep a watchful eye on their parents. Aim instead to build a 'goodbye routine' so that your child knows that you are going, but is confident that you will always come back.

Other tips

With pre-schoolers, it's important your child has friends at nursery. Usually the company of other children is consolation enough for the absence of a parent. Encourage friendships by inviting other children and their parents to visit.

And finally

We operate an open-door policy and you are welcome to come into nursery at any time during the working day.