

A Parent's Guide to Settling In

Starting nursery is a big step for a child. 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 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 has 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 their key carers.

You will need to stay with your child for the initial settling in period, giving you an opportunity to discuss your child with their Key Person. On the second visit, you are advised to stay for a short while and then leave for an amount of time agreed between you and your child's Key Person.

All children are individuals and therefore may take more or less time to become completely settled within the nursery environment, so each child's settling in visits will be planned with parents and the Nursery Manager.

Key Person

At Nursery we operate a Key Person system. Your child's allocated Key Person will spend time with you and your child, getting to know you both during your settling in sessions. For more information on our Key Person system, please see our Parents' Guide on 'The Key Person System'.

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 they enjoy playing with other children and being with staff.

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



Taking the cue

Babies and young children are programmed to pick up on our reactions. If children notice that you 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 you 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, and they will feel reassured.

Going at different speeds

Most parents wonder how quickly they can leave their children. This 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. We also find that children who attend more sessions, generally settle more quickly.

If you have any concerns about your child settling, always speak to their Key Person or the Nursery Manager.

What should you do?

Try not to 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! Try not to linger as this can make it harder for your child and you.

Still concerned?

If you are anxious, a senior member of staff will telephone to reassure you that your child is settling or you are welcome to phone the Nursery to check on how your child is doing.

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 your child has a special toy or comforter it may help to bring this along 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 future situations, instead of settling down to play, children may 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 that 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 outside of Nursery.

And finally

We operate an open-door policy and you are welcome to come into nursery at any time during the working day if you wish to discuss anything about your child.