

The Role of the Key Person and Settling-In



We believe that children settle best when they have a key person to relate to, who knows them and their parents well, and who can meet their individual needs. Research shows that a key person 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.

It is important that the child see the key person as a form of security and comfort in the absence of their parent

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

The key person role is set out in the Welfare Requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Each setting must offer a key person for each child.

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

Procedures

- We allocate a key person before the child starts.
- The key person visits the family before the child starts nursery to introduce themselves to the family and to spend some time with the child.
- The key person is responsible for the induction of the family and for settling the child into our setting.
- The key person offers unconditional care regard for the child and is non-judgemental.
- The key person works with the parent to plan and deliver a personalised plan for the child's well-being, care and learning.
- The key person acts as the key contact for the parents and has links with other carers involved with the child, such as a childminder, and co-ordinates the sharing of appropriate information about the child's development with those carers.
- A key person is responsible for developmental records and for sharing information on a regular basis with the child's parents to keep those records up-to-date, reflecting the full picture of the child in our setting and at home.

- The key person encourages positive relationships between children in her/his key group, spending time with them as a group each day.
- We provide a back-up key person (buddy key person) so the child and the parents have a key contact in the absence of the child's key person.
- We promote the role of the key person as the child's primary carer in our setting, and as the basis for establishing relationships with other staff and children.
- We may from time to time change a child's key person, as when a staff member changes working hours/days or rooms.
- We will also change a child's key person if we feel the child has formed an attachment with another member of staff

Settling-in

Children cannot play or learn successfully if they are anxious and unhappy. Our policy aims to help parents and children to feel comfortable in the nursery. We want the parents to feel confident about leaving their child in our care and the child to feel confident that their parent will return at the end of the session. In order to achieve this, The Arc nursery aims to

- Before a child starts to attend the setting, we use a variety of ways to provide his/her parents with information. These include written information (including our welcome pack), news sheet, displays about activities available within the setting, photo displays, information days and evenings and individual meetings with parents.
- Inform parents/carers we require a minimum two week settling in period for their child
- We encourage the parent to visit the nursery prior to the child's admission
- Provide a home visit to discuss settling in with the allocated key person
- Provide plenty of opportunities for the parent to inform the nursery of anything they feel may be of benefit to their child.
- Introduce a flexible admissions procedure to meet the needs of individual families and children
- Welcome parents in the nursery for as long as it takes the child to settle
- Reassure parents whose children seem to take a long time to settle
- Introduce new families in to the nursery on a staggered basis
- Encourage parents to separate from their children for brief periods when the child is ready, gradually building up to longer absences
- Refrain from taking the children on an outing until they are fully settled
- The key person will welcome the child and commit their time to their new key child through the settling in period and for the first 6 weeks or until the child on feels confident to move away for themselves.
- The key person will provide all the child emotional and personal needs. It's impotent that the child sees the key person as a form of security and comfort in the absence of the parent during the settling-in process.

- 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 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.
- 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 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.

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