



# Settling In and Keyperson Policy October 2021

To be reviewed October 2024

## **Settling in and Key Person Policy**

At Abercromby Nursery School we want all children to feel safe and happy within our setting, as well as feel secure and comfortable with staff. We also want you as parents to have confidence in our ability to care for your child. We want to assure you of your role as an active partner within our setting. We aim to be flexible with our daily routine and as far as possible, cater to individual needs.

### **Our Aims:**

- To make our Nursery a welcoming place for your child
- To make our Nursery a place where your child can settle in quickly and comfortably.
- To facilitate a secure attachment and positive relationships for your child with the adults in our Nursery.
- To meet the differing needs of each child and their family, as we take this momentous step of starting Nursery together.
- To make sure each child is noticed, important, supported, cared for, assessed and planned for.

### **A Little Story...**

Imagine you've been invited by a close friend to a very exciting social gathering, to somewhere you have never been before. On arrival, it all looks very exciting and there are so many people you've never met, but you feel confident because your friend is with you. Suddenly they are called away to an emergency and you are left alone in a room full of strangers. Some of them are speaking languages you don't understand and everyone seems to know everyone else, and what to do. You don't even know where the toilets are, or where to get the food and drink everyone else is enjoying. You aren't even sure if your friend is coming back for you....

This is a situation even the most outgoing and confident of us would struggle with, even with many years of life experiences. Yet this is exactly what we can expect our children to do, when we drop them off at Nursery for the first time, expecting to leave them, and for them to be ok with this.

Some children will never have spent time apart from their parents and carers before. So if they are suddenly left, they don't know you are coming back, as they have never had this experience before. Can you imagine how terrifying that is for them?

Our philosophy is to give each child the support they need as they make that transition from home to Nursery, so they will settle in with the minimum of tears and anxiety. Some children may settle happily within a couple of days, but others may need a few weeks, just as adults we are all different. Each child will have their own "special grown up", their Keyperson, who will be there for them throughout their time with us.

### **Settling in Process**

Our aim is to build warm trusting relationships with our families which help us get to know all about the child, their interests, strengths and learning needs. We start this process with a Home Visit undertaken by a key person – see the [Home Visit Policy](#) for more details.

As your child's start date comes near, we invite you to visit the nursery with your child, greeted by your key person. The key person will welcome you and look after our child during their first sessions, developing secure attachments and continue providing them with support throughout the settling in process and their time with us.

### FIRST WEEK(S)

When your child attends their first session with us, your key person will explain the process of settling in with you as parents and jointly decide on the best way to help your child settle into the Nursery. We expect that you as the parent, carer or close relative, will stay for most of the settling in sessions during your child's first week, gradually decreasing your time at the Nursery until your child is comfortable and well settled with us. We will give you an "All about me" booklet to fill in with your child, to help us get to know all about them, their family, likes and dislikes, allergies, toilet or nappy preferences etc. The key person will use these first visits to play with your child, getting to know them, gaining their trust and building a warm relationship with them.

As your child gets used to the Nursery environment, and they are exploring confidently moving away from you, we may ask you to leave the classroom for 5 minutes and then come back. We ask you to be honest with your child and say e.g. "I'm going to the office to see about some uniform and I'll be back in 5 minutes". Please then leave the classroom quickly, without lingering, as the separation itself is the hardest point for children. The key person will support and comfort your child if they get upset.

If your child copes well with this, we may extend this the next day, and the day after until your child can stay for a morning or afternoon session happily. We consider a child to be settled when they have formed a relationship with their key person, be familiar with where things are in their classroom and be happy to play and join in with activities.

Younger children may take longer to settle, as will children who have not previously spent time away from home. Children who have had a period of absence for whatever reason may also need you to re-settle them. Children who are very anxious, may need to take it more slowly, getting used to you moving further away in the room, and then coming straight back. Your child's key person will support you, if your child needs this much slower approach.

We reserve the right not to accept a child into the setting without a parent or carer if the child finds it too distressing to be left with us. This is especially the case with our youngest children.

### STAYING FOR LUNCH

Once your child is staying for morning sessions confidently, we will build up to staying for lunch and then going home after lunch at 1 pm.

Once your child can cope well with staying for lunch, we will then move to staying all day until we finish at 2.45-3.00 pm.

Within the first weeks of starting, we will discuss with you our initial observations and impressions of your child. We assess our children using OPAL (Observation of Play and Learning) recorded online using the Learning Journals system which you will be invited to look at at home, adding your comments.

### **Key person System**

In Abercromby Nursery we operate a key person system; this is actually a statutory requirement we have to follow. The key person is responsible for nurturing a small group of children providing the reassurance needed for each child to feel safe and cared for, as well as building a relationship with their families. The key person will help your child to become familiar with the setting and feel safe within it. They will also talk to parents and carers to make sure the needs of the child are being met appropriately, and the records of development and progress are shared with parent and carers and other professionals as necessary.

## HOW THE KEY PERSON SYSTEM WORKS

Once your child begins nursery, a key person will be allocated to him/her; this person will be the named carer throughout the nursery day and the first point of contact for parents. The key person will record information regarding your child's home routine, as well as specific information such as medication instructions.

Changes in routine at home can affect your child's wellbeing so it is important that the key person forms not only a strong bond with the child, but also with the child's family so that the sharing of information between the two can be done successfully, leading to the best possible outcomes for your child.

Our key people:

- will be there to support the settling in process.
- aim to provide a secure attachment with your child, by getting to know them really well. They are that "special grown up" who is there for your child, supporting them in becoming familiar with the daily routine and the layout of the Nursery.
- will make sure they have daily time with your child, in small groups, or one to one e.g. with a book.
- will care for your child's personal needs i.e. nappy changing, toileting, whenever possible.
- will carry out observations on children in their groups using the Learning Journals system, (which families can access at home to see what their child gets up to).
- will devise plans for future learning experiences, together with the class teacher, taking into account children's needs and interests, to secure rounded progress.
- closely monitor your child's progress in all areas of development, together with the class teacher, and identify if further support may be needed.
- will facilitate strong partnership relationships with parents and families.
- will provide parents with information regarding the routines, daily timetables, and activities in the room.
- will be a listening ear so they can become aware of circumstances at home that may affect changes in a child's behaviour from time to time.

## APPENDIX 1

Here are some questions Practitioners will use as we decide the best way to settle your child in:

1. How do you feel about leaving your child? On a scale of 1-5, with 5 being most anxious.
2. If there are older children in the family, how well did they settle into Nursery?
3. Has your child ever been left with a close family member or friend? How did they cope?
4. Has your child ever been left at a Nursery or Crèche before? When was this and how did your child react?
5. How outgoing is your child and how do they respond to strangers?
6. How does your child show they are anxious e.g. twiddling hair, thumb sucking?
7. Does your child have a comfort object, such as a teddy, they would like to bring help them settle? Although we discourage dummies in children, due to the very adverse effects on speech, if children are used to them, they may be helpful for the first few weeks.