



4. Settling In

Applies to: *All Staff*

Starting at Pre-School is an important step for a child. We recognise the importance of letting him settle at his own pace. We will work closely with Carers to ensure a positive settling experience for child and Carer. The primary objective of the settling in procedure is to make the child's transition into Pre-School as welcoming and comforting as possible, whilst minimising any natural concerns he or his Carers may experience.

Preparation: Prior to the child's start date, the child's Carer is introduced to his designated Key Person to begin familiarisation and to answer any questions/concerns relating to settling in. Settling in is expressed in 'stages' rather than time linked, since children pass through each stage at different rates and in some cases may even need to go back a stage or be confident to skip a stage.

Stage 1: The child's first settling visit will be shared with his Carer and will be called a 'stay and play' session. This lasts approximately 1 hour giving sufficient time for the child to meet the staff and other children and to experience some of the play opportunities that will be available to them. Carers will return their registration forms during this visit and these will be checked by a member of staff to ensure we have sufficient information and resources in place to fully meet your child's needs. During this visit you and your child will meet your child's Key Person more fully. It will also provide an opportunity for staff to assess your child's ongoing support needs for starting pre-school. A start date letter detailing how that first session will take place will also be handed to Carers at this stage.

Stage 2: The Carer should bring their child into Pre-School and settle him to an activity. Once the Carer and Key Person agree that it is time to leave it should be made clear to the child that they are leaving but will come back. The time agreed will vary depending on the confidence of the child to be left. For some this will be a short taster of being left, for others who show a high level of confidence it may be a return at the end of the session. If any child struggles with the realisation that their Carer has left them during the session a call will be made for the Carer to come back. In this way the child is supported to know that they are free to enjoy their time at Pre-School as their Carer always comes back. The time of being left will vary from child to child depending on the confidence of the child. During this settling in period the Carer should be contactable and able to return to the Pre-School should their child need them.

Stage 3: This stage is similar to stage 2, but with the expectation that the child will remain for the full session unless they become unsettled or tired. We recommend that Carers be clear, consistent and honest with the child about where they are going and when they will return.

Stage 4: When the Carer and Key Person are confident that the child has settled, he can then arrive and stay for the full session on his own.

After a few days or weeks, the child may get tired and not want to come to pre-school anymore. Explain to Carers that this is normal and encourage them to keep coming. It is important to establish a routine and expectation that the children come for all sessions. Strategies to ease this period include shortening the session time, working out the most appropriate method of dropping off and pick up for the child. For some children longer drop off times by Carers can in themselves create additional stress for a child whilst for others it can reduce stress. Staff will observe and discuss with Carers what approach they feel would

be most helpful. Each child will settle happily and confidently but they need to do it in their own time.