

Parkside Playgroup

20. 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, our staff are committed, and the setting is a happy and dedicated place to attend or work in.

We want children to feel safe, stimulated and happy in the setting and to feel secure and comfortable with our staff. We also want parents to have confidence in both their children's well-being and their role as active partners with our setting. We aim to make our 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 Safeguarding and Welfare Requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Each child must have a key person. Providers must inform parents and/or carers of the name of the key person, and explain their role, when a child starts attending a setting. The key person must help ensure that every child's learning and care is tailored to meet their individual needs. The key person must seek to engage and support parents and/or carers in guiding their child's development at home. They should also help families engage with more specialist support if appropriate. These procedures set out a model for developing a key person approach that promotes effective and positive relationships for children.

Procedures

- We allocate a key person upon the child's first day.
- The key person is responsible for:
 - Providing an induction for the family including building a relationship, finding out about the child and families journey and for organising an individualised settling for the child and their family.
 - Completing relevant forms with parents, including consent forms, and all about me and my family. Collecting and sharing photos, information booklets and any other relevant resources to support the settling process.
 - Explaining our policies and procedures to parents with particular focus on policies such as safeguarding and our responsibilities under the Prevent Duty.
 - Offering unconditional regard for the child and being non-judgemental.
 - Working with the parents to plan and deliver a personalised plan for the child's well-being, care and learning including how families can enhance their child's development and learning at home and how to use any online communication systems.
 - Acting as the key contact for the parents.
 - 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.
 - Having links with other carers involved with the child and co-ordinating the sharing of appropriate information about the child's development with those carers. This includes any other early years providers a child attends.

- Encouraging positive relationships between children in her/his key group, spending time with them as a group each day.
- 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 adults and children.

Settling-in

- Before a child starts to attend our setting, We use a variety of ways to provide his/her parents with information. These include written information (including our prospectus and policies), displays about activities available within the setting, routines, photos of key staff members, information days and evenings and individual meetings with parents.
- During the half-term before a child is enrolled, we provide opportunities for the child and his/her parents to visit the setting and join in with activities.
- The key person welcomes and looks after the child and his/her parents at the child's first session and during the settling-in process.
- We use pre-start visits and the first session at which a child attends to explain and complete, with his/her parents, the child's registration records.
- When a child starts to attend, we explain the process of settling-in with his/her parents and jointly decide on the best way to help the child to settle into the setting.
- 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 time 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 recognise that some children will settle more readily than others, but that some children who appear to settle rapidly are not ready to be left. We expect that the parent will honour the commitment to stay for at least the first week, or possibly longer, until their child can stay happily without them.
- 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. This is especially the case with very young children.
- Within the first four to six weeks of starting, we discuss and work with the child's parents to begin to create their child's record of achievement and plan for their next steps in their learning.

The progress check at age two

- The key person carries out the progress check at age two in accordance with any local procedures that are in place and referring to the guidance *The progress check at age two – non statutory guidance for the early years foundation stage 2022*.
- The progress check aims to review the child's development and ensures that parents have a clear picture of their child's development.
- Within the progress check, the key person will note areas where the child is progressing well and identify areas where progress is less than expected.
- The progress check will describe the actions that will be taken by us to address any developmental concerns (including working with other professionals where appropriate) as agreed with the parent(s).
- The key person will plan activities to meet the child's needs within the setting and will support parents to understand the child's needs in order to enhance their development at home.

Establishing children's starting points

When children start at Parkside Playgroup, they arrive at different levels of learning and development. To help them to settle and make progress it is important that they are provided with care and learning opportunities that are suited to their needs, interests and abilities. This means establishing and understanding their starting points and whether there are any obstacles to their learning, so that teaching can be tailored to the 'unique child'.

The aim of establishing a child's starting points is to ensure that the most appropriate care and learning is provided from the outset.

Starting points are established by gathering information from the first contact with the child's parents/carers at induction and during the 'settling in' period. Staff do not 'wait and see' how the child is settling before they begin to gather information.

The key person is responsible for establishing their key children's starting points by gathering information in the following ways:

- observation of the child during settling in visits
- discussion with the child's parents/carers
- building on information that has been gathered during registration by referring to the registration form
- The information gathered is recorded within two weeks of the child's official start date and sooner where possible.
- The key person must make a 'best fit' judgment about the age band the child is working in, referring to Development Matters or Birth to 5 Matters.
- The key person should complete details by indicating where they have gathered their evidence from, using more than one source where possible i.e. parent/carer comment and observation during settling in.
- If the initial assessment raises any concerns that extra support may be required procedure 09.13 Identification, assessment and support for children with SEND is followed.

This policy was adopted at a meeting of

Parkside Playgroup

Held on

Sept 2026

Date to be reviewed

Sept 2027

Signed on behalf of the provider

Name of signatory

Brenda Henrick

Role of signatory

Chairperson