

## Settling in and transitions

To feel securely settled and ready to learn, children need to form attachments with the adults who care for them, primarily a key person, but others too. In this way they feel part of a community; they can contribute to that community and receive from it. Very young children, especially two- to three-year-olds, approach separation from their parent with anxieties, older children have a more secure understanding of 'people permanence' and can approach new experiences with confidence; but also need time to adjust and feel secure. It is the entitlement of all children to be settled comfortably into a new environment.

Notting Hill Nursery School follow a three-stage model of settling in based on three key needs:

1. *Proximity* - Babies and young children feel safest when a familiar adult, such as a parent, is present when they are getting used to a new career and new surroundings. In this way they can become confident in engaging with those experiences independently later on.
2. *Secure base* – Because the initial need for proximity of the parent has been met, babies and young children gradually begin to feel secure with a key person in a new surrounding so that they are able to participate independently for small periods of time.
3. *Dependency* – Babies and young children are able to separate from parents' and main carers when they have formed a secure attachment to their key person who knows and understands them best and on whom they can depend for their needs to be met.

The setting manager and key person explain the need for settling in and agree a plan with the parents/carers. Each day they review the plan and agree what will happen the next day.

### Settling-in for children under two and those with SEND

- Start times for children under two are staggered to allow sufficient one to one time with each child and parent/carer.
- If a child has been identified as having SEND then the key person/SENCO and parents/carers will need to identify and address potential barriers to settling in e.g. timings of medication and invasive procedures, specific routines and levels of support.

### Promoting proximity

- On the first day, the key person shows the parent/carer around, introduces members of staff, and explains how the day is organised, making the parent/carer and child feel welcome and comfortable.
- The key person always greets the parent/carer and child.
- On the first day, the parent/carer is invited to play with their child, and the key person spends time with them. As much time as possible is allowed for the key person to do this.

- Over subsequent days, depending how the child is responding, the parent/carer is invited to stay if that is required.
- The key person observes to see if the child is recognising them, beginning to explore the environment noting what they seem to like and making sure it is available the next day.

### **Promoting secure base**

- When the young child has experienced different times of the day, these are then fitted together to establish continuity of the day.
- When the parent/carer leaves, they always say goodbye and say they are coming back. Parents/carers should never slip away without their child noticing; this leads to greater distress.
- Gradually, time out of the room is extended from 10 to 20 minutes, and then 30 minutes.

### **Part-time toddlers**

- Part-time toddlers have the same needs when settling in as full-time toddlers. However, part-time attendance means that there may be gaps between times the toddlers is in one week to the next.
- During settling in the toddler and parent/carer attend every day, even on the days when they will not usually, until the toddler is settled and comfortably attached to the key person. Then the normal pattern of attendance should commence.
- A settling in review takes place after 6 weeks for the key person and parent/carer to discuss how well the toddler has settled, formed an attachment and adapted to the setting. Any adverse changes of behaviour at home (or in the setting) are addressed as a sign of separation difficulty.

### **Moving up from baby room to the main room**

- One-year olds are not moved to the main room before their second birthday or before they can cope; they are given the opportunity to visit the main group as part of a normal day and participate in play and join in at mealtimes, becoming familiar with adults, children and the environment.
- When approaching their second birthday, and when a vacancy arises, a new key person is identified. The key person discusses the plan for the child moving up with the parents.
- The baby room key person and the parents agree how the child will be settled; ideally parents/carers spend time with their child and new key person before the move takes place.
- The current key person will spend time with the child in the new group, liaising with the new key person and ensuring that the child is familiar with all the main times of the day.
- The child gradually spends more time with the new key person until they can cope in their new room.

### **Two-year-olds starting a setting for the first time**

**NOTTING HILL NURSERY SCHOOL  
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- A two-year-old may have little or no experience of group care. As part of gathering information from parents, it is important to find out about the child's experience of non-parental care, for example grandparents, or childminder; this informs staff as to how a child may respond to a new situation.
- The three-stage approach involving *Proximity*, *Secure Base* and *Dependency/Independence* is applied to two-year-olds as to younger children.
- After the induction meeting with the setting manager or deputy and key person, a settling-in plan is drawn up.
- To settle in a two-year-old, the setting will go through the same process of gradually increasing the time a child attends with a parent/carer during the proximity stage.
- On the first day, the parent/carer is invited to play with their child, and the key person spends time with them. As much time as possible is allowed for the key person to do this.
- It is evident that the child is developing a sense of secure base when he or she shows interest in activities and begins to engage with the key person and other children. Then the parent/ carer may gradually start to spend short periods of time in the room to see how the child responds, this time increases until the child can manage a whole session without the parent.
- Separation causes anxiety in two-year-olds, as they have no concept of where their parents/carers have gone. Parents/carers should always say goodbye and tell them when they will return. Patience with the process will ensure children are happy and eager to come to play and be cared for in the setting.

### **Three- and four-year-olds**

- Most children of this age can move through the stages more quickly and confidently.
- Some children take longer, and their needs for proximity and secure base stages should be accommodated as much as possible.
- Some children appear to leap to dependency/independence within a couple of days. In most cases, they will revert to the need for proximity and secure base. It can be difficult to progress to true dependency/independence, and this can be frustrating.
- After the parent/carer attends for an induction meeting with the setting manager or deputy and key person, a settling-in plan is discussed.
- On the first day, the parent attends with the child and stays for half hour or longer if needed. Then we take day by day depending how the child responds.
- If the child shows interest in the activities and is beginning to engage with the key person and other children, the parent/carer leaves and is available in case their child becomes distressed.
- Parents/carers are encouraged to explain to their child where they are going, and that they will return.

### **For children whose first language is not English**

- For many children learning English as an additional language, the stage of proximity takes longer as the child is dependent upon the parent/carers' input to make sense of what is going on.
- If the parent/carer does not speak English, efforts are made to source an interpreter for induction; it will be helpful for them to see around the setting and be clear about their role in interpreting in the play area.
- The settling-in programme is explained to the parent/carer, and it is emphasised how important it is that they stay with the child and talk to him/her in the home language to be able to explain things.
- Through the interpreter, the key person will try to gauge the child's level of skills in their home language; this will give the key person an idea of the child's interests and levels of understanding.
- The need for the parent/carer to converse in the child's home language is important.
- The key person makes the parent/carer feel welcome using smiles and gestures.
- With the parent/carer, make a list of key words in the child's home language; sometimes it is useful to write the word as you would pronounce it. These words will be used with the child and parents/carers will be addressed with 'hello' and 'goodbye' in their language.
- The key person prepares for the child's visits by having a favourite toy or activity ready for the child to provide a means to interact with the child.
- Children will be spoken to as per any other child, using gestures and facial expressions to help.
- When the child feels happy to spend time with the key person (secure base), the parent/carer should leave and be available if their child becomes distressed.
- Progress with settling in will be done as with any other child; it just takes a little longer to reach dependency/independence.

**This policy will be reviewed annually**

**This policy was adopted by Soraia Almeida in August 2025**

**Next review in August 2026**