

General Welfare Requirement: Organisation

Providers must plan and organise their systems to ensure that every child receives an enjoyable and challenging learning and development experience that is tailored to meet their individual needs.

Child care practice

4.4 The role of the key person and settling-in

Policy Statement for St Joseph's Pre-school

St Joseph's Pre-school believes 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.

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 Stage¹. Each setting must offer a key person for each child. Key persons have a duty of care² to the children allocated to them.

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 during/after the child's initial visit to the setting where we can see if there are any initial bonds we can build on.
- The key person will work alongside the Lead Practitioner to induct the family and for settling the child into our setting.
- The key person offers unconditional regard for the child and is non-judgemental.
- The parents complete a My Profile and enrolment form which the key person uses to learn about the cultural capital of the child to support the development of 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 works with the Lead Practitioner to complete developmental records and for updating Tapestry 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. Circle time and stories are shared throughout the day with other groups and can be led by that group's key person.

¹ Section 3: The safeguarding and welfare requirements

² Everyone working with children has a "duty of care" to keep children safe and protect them from harm. Thus, all adults have a duty to report child protection or welfare concerns to Children's Services or the Police.

- In the absence of the child's key person, the Lead Practitioner will be available as the point of contact for the parents.
- 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.
- The key person role is held by the Lead Practitioner and both Deputy Practitioners. If one key person is off, the Lead or Deputy Practitioner will take on the role.

Settling-in

- 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 prospectus and policies/procedures). During a visit to the setting, the Lead Practitioner will run through a general day in Pre-school and provide information on the activities covered and procedures in place.
- Completion by the parents of the Enrolment Form and My Profile assist the Lead Practitioner and her team to learn about the child's interests, strengths and areas of development.
- If a child is on the graduated pathway, then, where possible, the SENCo will attend a Team Around the Child meeting prior to the child starting at St Joseph's Pre-school.
- During the half-term before a child is enrolled, we provide opportunities for the child and his/her parents to visit the setting.
- We allocate a key person to each child and their family during or after the child attends their taster session. During the settling in session, the Lead Practitioner will welcome the child and their parents into the setting and be supported by the Deputy Practitioners in ensure that the child's needs are met.
- Registration records are completed prior to the child starting at St Joseph's Pre-school. If, on reading, the Lead Practitioner is concerned with something the enrolment form contains, this will be discussed at the settling-in session.
- The settling-in process is adapted to each child, acknowledging that every child is different. We start with an hour and a half session before deciding how to proceed. This enables us to take into account the child's individuals needs and ensuring these are met.
- 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. This is especially the case with very young children.
- Within their first term, the Pre-school will complete a baseline assessment on the child. This will then be discussed at a "Get to know you" meeting.

Parent/carers meetings

- In Terms 1 (September/October) and 6 (June/July), meetings are held with parents/carers to discuss how their child is settling in/progressing.
- Parents/carers are encouraged to liaise with their child's key worker or the Lead Practitioner throughout the time their child attends the setting.

While positive and collaborative relationships between St Joseph’s Pre-school and parents/carers are highly valued, the wishes and feelings of the child remain at the heart of all decision-making, with their best interests guiding our approach. This includes children who are non- or pre-verbal, who may express their experiences through their appearance, behaviour, physical and emotional development, and interactions with trusted adults, such as their key person.

Further information

- Department for Education [“Working Together to Safeguard Children”](#) (latest version)
- Department for Education [“Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework”](#) (latest version)

Associated Policies and Procedures

- 4.6 Parental Involvement

Version Number	Author	Purpose of Change	Date
1.0	K Coupe	Reviewed and page numbered	September 2014
2.0	Committee	Reviewed and updated	October 2016
3.0	K Coupe and N Powers	Reviewed, updated and version controlled	16 January 2020 Committee Meeting
4.0	K Coupe, H Elliott and A Hitchings	Inclusion of reference to a Key Person’s duty of care to the children allocated to them. Changes to settling-in process during COVID-19.	14 September 2021 K Glassonbury (Treasurer)
5.0	K Coupe and N Finn-Powers	Reviewed and • updated to reflect current practice at the setting; and • inclusion of “Associated Policies and Procedures” section as per EY Safeguarding Audit 2023 s175/157	14 January 24 Committee Member (G Ind)
6.0	K Coupe	Updated with reference to the latest version of “Working Together to Safeguard Children”. Hyperlinks included.	20 April 2026 Committee Member (S Long)