



Settling In Policy

Aim

At Clare House Nursery, we recognise that starting nursery is a significant milestone for both children and their families. We believe that a positive, well-planned settling-in process helps children to feel safe, secure and valued, enabling them to develop trusting relationships with their key person and other practitioners.

Our settling-in procedures are child-centred and flexible, recognising that every child and family is unique. We work closely in partnership with parents and carers to ensure each child settles at a pace that meets their individual emotional, developmental and care needs.

Parent Induction

Families will be warmly welcomed into the nursery and introduced to the staff team. They will be given a tour of the setting, allowing both the child and their family to become familiar with the environment and daily routines.

During the induction meeting, the settling-in process will be discussed and dates arranged in partnership with the family. Our usual settling programme includes one registration visit followed by up to four one-hour settling sessions. However, we recognise that every child settles differently and these sessions can be increased, reduced or adapted to meet the individual needs of the child and family. There is no expectation that every child will follow the same timetable.

Families will be directed to our website, where they can access important information about the nursery, including our policies, procedures, curriculum, Local Offer and other useful resources. Our website is accessible on mobile devices and can be translated into a wide range of languages to support families for whom English is an additional language.

Every family will meet with their child's key person, supported by the Nursery Manager where appropriate. During this meeting:

- All registration and consent forms will be completed.
- Parents and carers will be encouraged to share information about their child's interests, routines, care needs, medical information, likes, dislikes and any previous childcare experiences.
- Practitioners will gather information about the child's development to help provide individualised care and learning opportunities from the outset.
- Where parents, carers or practitioners identify that a child may require additional support with their learning, development or wellbeing, the SENCo will work alongside the family to discuss available support and next steps. This may include the Graduated Approach, referrals to other professionals or consideration of an Early Help Assessment (EHA), where appropriate.
- Families will be introduced to the nursery's SEND support and Local Offer.
- The key person will explain the nursery routine, introduce other members of staff and ensure both the child and their family feel welcomed, valued and reassured.

- Where possible, the key person will greet the child during settling-in sessions. Staffing arrangements may be adjusted to support relationship building.
- The key person will closely monitor the child's emotional wellbeing throughout the settling-in period and provide regular updates to families through face-to-face discussions, Tapestry observations, photographs and the nursery portal.
- Families will be supported to access both Tapestry and the nursery portal before their child starts.

Promoting a Secure Base

Building secure attachments is central to children's emotional wellbeing and future learning. Practitioners understand that developing trusting relationships takes time and that every child will settle differently.

When a parent or carer leaves the nursery, we encourage them to say a positive, reassuring goodbye and explain when they will return using language that is meaningful to the child, such as "I'll be back after lunch" or "I'll see you after story time." We discourage families from leaving without saying goodbye, as this can increase children's anxiety and make future separations more difficult.

Families may be encouraged to bring familiar comfort items from home, such as a favourite teddy, blanket or comforter. In some circumstances, a recently worn item of clothing carrying a familiar scent may also help reassure the child.

As part of the settling-in process, every family completes an "All About Me" booklet. This provides valuable information about the child's routines, interests, comfort strategies, family life and individual preferences, enabling practitioners to provide personalised care from the very beginning.

The key person continually reviews each child's progress throughout the settling-in period, discussing how the child is coping with parents and carers. Any concerns or adjustments required will be agreed together to ensure the child feels safe, secure and supported.

Throughout the settling period, practitioners will maintain regular communication with families through daily conversations, Tapestry observations and the nursery portal to ensure parents remain informed and reassured.

Practitioners recognise that some children may have experienced significant life events, trauma or adverse childhood experiences. Settling strategies will always be adapted sensitively to meet each child's emotional needs, working closely with families and, where appropriate, other professionals.

The Back-up Key Person

Each child is allocated a back-up key person when they join the nursery. The back-up key person provides consistency of care whenever the child's key person is absent.

The back-up key person will gradually build a relationship with the child through everyday interactions, ensuring the child feels comfortable and secure with more than one familiar adult.

During the key person's absence, the back-up key person will:

- Provide consistent, responsive care.

- Share information with parents and carers.
- Complete observations and records where appropriate.
- Ensure continuity of routines and individual care.

If a Child Does Not Settle

Every effort will be made to reduce a child's anxiety through a carefully planned and flexible approach agreed with the family.

The key person will work closely with parents and carers to identify possible triggers for distress and agree strategies to support the child's emotional wellbeing. This may include adapting the length of sessions, reviewing routines or introducing additional comfort strategies.

Where appropriate, advice and support may also be sought from the SENCo or other professionals.

If a Parent or Carer Is Unable to Participate

Information about the settling-in process will be shared during the initial visit, and the reasons for the settling programme will be fully explained.

If a parent or carer is unable to attend, we will discuss alternative arrangements, such as another trusted family member supporting the child during settling-in sessions.

We recognise that some families may experience genuine difficulties, and we will always work sensitively and flexibly to find the most appropriate solution while ensuring the child's emotional wellbeing remains our priority.

Safeguarding During Settling In

Practitioners remain vigilant to any safeguarding concerns that may arise during the settling-in period.

Any concerns relating to a child's welfare, behaviour, presentation or family circumstances will be recorded and managed in accordance with the nursery's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Where appropriate, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will work alongside the family to access additional support through Early Help or other agencies where this is in the child's best interests.

Reviewing the Settling-In Process

The settling-in programme will be regularly reviewed with parents and carers to ensure it continues to meet the child's individual needs.

Some children may require additional visits or a more gradual transition, while others may settle more quickly. Decisions will always be made in partnership with families, placing the child's emotional wellbeing, security and sense of belonging at the centre of the settling-in process.

