



Settling-In Policy

Statement of intent

We want children to feel safe, stimulated and happy at Playhouse Pre-School and to feel secure and comfortable with the adults caring for them. We also want parents and carers to have confidence in their child's wellbeing and to feel supported as active partners in their child's transition into the setting.

We recognise that starting pre-school is a significant change for children and their families. Each child will respond differently to separation and settling into a new environment. Our settling-in arrangements are therefore designed to provide a gradual and positive introduction while allowing flexibility to meet individual children's needs.

Aim

We aim to make Playhouse Pre-School a welcoming and secure place where children can develop trusting relationships with their key person and other staff, become familiar with their environment and gradually gain confidence in being away from their parent or carer.

We recognise that children under two may require a more gradual settling-in process and have different emotional and developmental needs from older children.

Methods

Before a child starts to attend the setting, we provide parents and carers with information about Playhouse Pre-School. This includes written information, our prospectus and policies, and information about the activities and experiences available within the setting.

Before a child starts, we provide opportunities for the child and their parent or carer to visit the setting where possible.

A key person is allocated to each child and their family before the child starts. The key person will welcome and support the child and their parent or carer during the settling-in process and will help the child to develop a secure relationship with them.

We use pre-start visits, home visits, and planned settling-in sessions to help children become familiar with the setting, staff, routines and other children.

Settling-in sessions for children aged two and over

Children aged two and over will normally have two settling-in sessions before they start their usual sessions:

- **First settling session - one hour with their parent or carer:**
The child attends Playhouse with their parent or carer for one hour. This gives the child an opportunity to explore the environment, meet staff and begin to develop a relationship with their key person while having their parent or carer nearby for reassurance. This session also provides an opportunity to ensure that any outstanding information or paperwork is completed.
- **Second settling session - one hour without their parent or carer:**
The child attends for one hour without their parent or carer. The parent or carer should say goodbye to their child, explain that they will be coming back, and leave the setting.

The child's key person and other staff will support the child during this session and provide reassurance and comfort as required.

Settling-in sessions for children under two

We recognise that younger children may need a more gradual introduction to separation from their parent or carer. Children under two will normally have three settling-in sessions before they start their usual sessions:

- **First settling session - one hour with their parent or carer:**
The child attends Playhouse with their parent or carer for one hour. This allows the child to explore the environment and begin to develop relationships with their key person and other staff while their parent or carer remains with them.
- **Second settling session - one hour with a gradual separation:**
The parent or carer remains with the child for the first 20 minutes and then leaves the room/building for the remainder of the session. Staff will support the child during the separation and provide reassurance and comfort as required.
- **Third settling session – one hour with a shorter separation:**
The parent or carer remains with the child for the first 10 minutes and then leaves the building for the remainder of the session. Staff will continue to support the child and help them to develop confidence in being at Playhouse without their parent or carer.

The purpose of these sessions is to gradually introduce separation while allowing the child to build a trusting relationship with their key person and become familiar with the setting.

Individual needs

All children are unique and some children may require additional settling-in sessions or a different approach.

If a child becomes particularly distressed during a settling session, staff will work with the parent or carer to consider the most appropriate next step. This may include additional settling sessions, shorter periods of separation or adapting the approach to suit the child's individual needs.

Parents and carers will be kept informed about how their child is settling and are encouraged to share information about their child's routines, comforters, experiences and ways of communicating their needs.

Some younger children may take longer to settle, as may children who have not previously spent time away from home. Children who have had a period of absence may also need additional support when returning to the setting.

Separation from parents and carers

When a parent or carer leaves, we ask them to say goodbye to their child and explain that they will be coming back and when.

Parents and carers are encouraged to keep goodbyes positive, calm and clear. Staff will support the child and acknowledge their feelings during the separation.

We do not believe that leaving a child to cry without appropriate support will help them to settle more quickly. We recognise that children need sensitive and responsive support when they are distressed and that significant distress can affect their ability to engage in learning and experiences.

Staff will comfort and reassure children and respond to their individual needs.

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Where a child is unable to settle despite appropriate support, we will discuss this with the parent or carer and agree how to proceed. Additional settling sessions may be arranged before the child begins their usual sessions.

When a child is considered settled

We consider a child to be settling successfully when they are beginning to:

- Develop a trusting relationship with their key person and other staff.
- Seek reassurance or comfort from familiar adults.
- Become familiar with the environment and daily routines.
- Show interest in activities and experiences.
- Begin to engage with other children.
- Separate from their parent or carer with increasing confidence.
- Show signs that they feel safe and secure at Playhouse.

Settling is an individual process and children will not necessarily demonstrate all of these signs immediately.

Partnership with parents and carers

Parents and carers are encouraged to share information that will help staff understand and support their child during the settling-in period.

Staff will communicate with parents and carers about how their child has managed each settling session and will work together to identify any additional support that may be required.

Within the first two weeks of a child starting their usual sessions, a settling-in report will be completed and discussed with the parent or carer.

This policy was agreed by the staff of Playhouse Pre-school Broadwater.

Adopted on 12th May 2016 and will be reviewed annually.

Reviewed on 25th September 2026 by Z. Munford