



Role of Key Person Policy

Playhouse Pre-school

Statement of intent

At Playhouse Pre-School, we recognise that children develop best when they have secure, consistent and responsive relationships with adults who know them well. We believe that every child should have a key person who helps them to feel safe, secure, valued and settled within the setting.

Our key person approach is particularly important for our younger children, including babies and toddlers from 9 months of age. The key person takes time to understand each child's individual personality, interests, communication, development, routines, care needs and family circumstances.

We work closely with parents and/or carers to ensure that the child's experiences at Playhouse Pre-School are consistent with their needs and routines at home. We recognise parents and carers as their child's first and most important educators and value the information they share with us.

Aim

We aim to:

- provide every child with a named key person before they start at Playhouse Pre-School;
- provide children with a secure and settled relationship with a familiar adult;
- support children to settle into the setting at their own pace;
- understand and respond to each child's individual needs, interests, development and personality;
- work in partnership with parents and/or carers to understand the child's routines and experiences at home;
- provide continuity of care and consistent responses from all staff;
- ensure that information about children's health, dietary requirements, allergies, sleep, personal care, communication and other individual needs is known and understood by the appropriate staff;
- support babies and toddlers to develop secure relationships and increasing independence;
- monitor and support each child's learning, development and well-being;
- ensure that parents and carers are kept informed about their child's experiences, progress and well-being;
- identify when additional support may be beneficial and work with parents, carers and other professionals where appropriate.

Procedures

Allocation of a key person

- Every child is allocated a named key person before they start at Playhouse Pre-School.
- Parents and/or carers are informed who their child's key person is.
- Where possible, the key person will meet the child and family during the settling-in process and will begin to build a relationship before the child starts attending independently.
- The key person approach does not mean that a child can only be cared for by their key person. All practitioners are responsible for the care, safety, learning and well-being of every child.
- Staff will work as a team to provide consistency and continuity of care, particularly for babies and younger children.

Building relationships with children

The key person will:

- develop a warm, responsive and respectful relationship with the child;
- show genuine interest in the child and respond sensitively to their communication, emotions and cues;
- provide comfort, reassurance and encouragement when needed;
- learn how the child communicates their needs, including through sounds, gestures, facial expressions and behaviour;
- recognise individual signs of tiredness, hunger, distress, discomfort and the need for comfort;
- support the child to develop confidence and independence at an appropriate pace;
- help the child develop positive relationships with other practitioners and children;
- provide appropriate physical comfort and care in line with the child's needs, the setting's safeguarding procedures and the child's wishes and responses;
- never use a child's key person relationship to prevent them developing relationships with other trusted adults within the setting.

For babies and toddlers, the key person will pay particular attention to the child's need for responsive interaction, comfort, communication and opportunities to explore safely. The key person will work with parents to understand what helps the child feel secure and what routines or comfort measures are used at home.

Working with parents and carers

The key person will work in partnership with parents and/or carers to obtain and maintain accurate information about the child.

This will include, where relevant:

- the child's home routines and experiences;
- the child's personality, interests and preferences;
- how the child communicates and expresses their needs;
- comforting and settling strategies;
- sleep routines and individual sleep needs;
- feeding routines;
- the child's stage of weaning and the textures and foods they are familiar with;
- allergies, intolerances and dietary requirements;
- medical conditions and health needs;
- toileting and nappy-changing needs;
- developmental needs;
- cultural, family and individual circumstances;
- any additional needs or support required;
- information from other professionals involved with the child, where appropriate and with the necessary consent or in accordance with safeguarding and information-sharing requirements.

For babies and younger children, information about feeding, weaning, sleep and personal care will be reviewed regularly because these needs can change quickly as children develop.

Parents and carers will be encouraged to share changes at home which may affect their child's well-being, such as changes in routines, sleep, eating, health, family circumstances or emotional well-being.

Feeding and nutrition

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Where children are provided with food and drink at Playhouse Pre-School, the key person will ensure that relevant information about the child's individual dietary needs is understood and communicated to the appropriate staff.

For children from 9 months, the key person will work closely with parents and carers to understand:

- the child's stage of weaning and introduction to solid foods;
- the textures the child is familiar with;
- foods the child has already been introduced to;
- any allergies, intolerances or special dietary requirements;
- any relevant cultural or family preferences;
- any health or developmental considerations affecting eating or drinking.

The key person will not make assumptions about a child's eating abilities or stage of weaning based solely on their age. Food will be prepared and offered in a way that reflects the child's individual developmental needs and in accordance with the setting's Food, Nutrition and Safer Eating Policy.

Any concerns about eating, drinking, swallowing, allergies or possible choking will be discussed promptly with the manager and parents/carers and, where appropriate, relevant health professionals.

Sleep and rest

The key person will work with parents and carers to understand each child's individual sleep and rest needs.

For children under two, and particularly babies under 12 months, the key person will ensure that relevant information about the child's sleep routine is shared with staff responsible for their care.

All sleep arrangements must follow the setting's Safer Sleep Policy and the current EYFS requirements.

Children under two will be placed to sleep safely in accordance with the EYFS. Babies aged 12 months and under will only be placed to sleep in a cot, on a firm, flat surface, and children will be placed on their backs in their own separate sleep space. Sleep spaces will be kept clear and children will be appropriately monitored while sleeping.

The key person will not introduce sleep routines or practices that conflict with the setting's safer sleep requirements.

Parents and carers will be informed of the setting's safer sleep arrangements and encouraged to share relevant information about their child's sleep routine.

Personal care

The key person will support each child with their personal care needs in a respectful and age-appropriate way.

For younger children this may include:

- nappy changing;
- hand washing;
- toileting as developmentally appropriate;
- changing clothes;
- supporting children with eating and drinking;

- supporting children to recognise and communicate their personal needs.

The key person will promote children's growing independence while providing the level of support appropriate to their age and stage of development.

All personal care will be carried out in accordance with Playhouse Pre-School's safeguarding, intimate care, health and safety and infection-control procedures.

Health and individual care needs

The key person will ensure that information relating to a child's health and individual care needs is kept up to date and shared appropriately with staff who need to know.

This may include information relating to:

- prescribed medication;
- medical conditions;
- allergies and allergy action plans;
- dietary requirements;
- developmental needs;
- additional support needs;
- health care plans;
- sleep needs;
- feeding needs;
- other relevant individual care arrangements.

Where a child requires specific medical or health support, the key person will work with the manager, parents/carers and relevant health professionals to ensure that agreed arrangements are understood and followed.

Learning and development

The key person contributes to the planning and assessment of each child's learning and development.

They will:

- observe and respond to the child's interests and needs;
- use knowledge of the child to contribute to planning;
- support the child's learning through play, interaction and everyday experiences;
- recognise and celebrate the child's achievements;
- identify areas where the child may need additional support;
- share relevant observations and information with parents/carers;
- contribute to the child's developmental records and assessments;
- work with other practitioners to build a consistent picture of the child's development.

For babies and toddlers, the key person will recognise that learning and development take place through responsive relationships, communication, sensory experiences, movement, exploration, play and everyday routines.

Settling-in

The key person has an important role in helping children and families settle into Playhouse Pre-School.

The key person will:

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- meet the child and family during the settling-in process where possible;
- obtain information about the child's routines, interests and individual needs;
- work closely with parents/carers to develop a consistent approach between home and the setting;
- provide reassurance and emotional support to the child;
- respond sensitively to signs of distress;
- help the child develop confidence in the setting and relationships with other practitioners;
- communicate with parents/carers about how their child has settled and any support that may be helpful.

The settling-in process will be individual to each child. Particular consideration will be given to the needs of babies and younger children who may require additional time and consistent support to develop a secure relationship with their key person.

See the Settling-In Policy and Home Visit Policy for further information.

Absence of the key person

If the key person is absent, another familiar practitioner will provide continuity of care.

The key person will ensure that relevant information about the child is accessible to the staff who may care for them.

The setting will ensure that children are not dependent on one individual practitioner and that they have opportunities to form secure relationships with several trusted adults.

Partnership with other professionals

Where appropriate, the key person will work with the manager, SENCO, DSL, parents/carers and other professionals involved in supporting the child.

Information will be shared appropriately and in accordance with the setting's safeguarding, confidentiality and information-sharing procedures.

Where a child or family may benefit from specialist support, the key person will raise this with the manager and work with the family to identify appropriate support.

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

Adopted on 24th April 2015 and will be reviewed annually.

Reviewed on 29th September 2026 by Z. Munford