4. Key person

The key person role

All children are unique and the amount of time that a child takes to settle into our nursery can vary enormously. Therefore, children will be given time to settle in at their own pace to make them feel welcome, safe and confident in a new environment.

We believe 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. We are committed to the key person approach which benefits the child, the parents, the staff and the setting. It encourages secure relationships which support children to thrive, give parents confidence and make the setting a happy 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 our staff. We also want parents to have confidence in both their children's wellbeing and their role as active partners with our setting. We aim to make our 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 Safeguarding and Welfare Requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Each child must have a key person. These procedures set out a model for developing a key person approach that promotes effective and positive relationships for children.

The key person's responsibilities

The key person supports the child to feel safe, secure and understood, responds sensitively to their individual communication and emotional needs, and works with parents and the setting SENCO to identify and respond to any emerging developmental concerns or special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

We allocate a key person before the child starts. The key person is responsible for:

- Providing an induction for the family and for settling the child into our setting

Completing relevant forms with parents

- Explaining our policies and procedures to parents, focusing on policies such as safeguarding and our responsibilities under the Prevent Duty
- Offering unconditional regard for the child and being non-judgemental
- Working with the parents to plan and deliver a personalised plan for the child's well-being, care, and learning
- Acting as the main contact for the parents

Developmental records and for sharing information 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

- Having links with other carers involved with the child and co-ordinating the sharing of appropriate information about the child's development with those carers.

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 adults and children. However, as a small setting, the staff work very much as a team, and support one another in providing for the needs of every child, not just those for whom they act as play partner.

The induction process

The nursery strongly encourages parents/carers to visit the nursery with their children before they apply for a place. Prior to starting at the nursery, parents/carers are required to complete an enrolment form, so that the nursery has essential contact, health and other relevant information about the child. New parents/carers are invited to bring their child to some free short taster sessions before they start. The sessions last 1-2 hours and children attend with a parent/carer. The session provides an opportunity for the children to enjoy some of the nursery's toys, activities and routines, and meet their key worker.

Parents/carers are then asked to complete an All About Me questionnaire. This allows them to provide more information about their child, and their individual

likes, dislikes and needs. The key person will aim to develop a bond with the child and their family and to offer a close, settled relationship.

The settling in process

When children start their scheduled sessions with us, parents are welcome to stay for a while to help their child settle but should feel confident to leave once their child is engaged and happy. We do not offer a formal settling in timetable in these first couple of weeks, but if a child is finding it hard to settle, we will work with the parent or carer to vary the child's initial session times in whatever way is most helpful.

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 worker when they arrive, 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.

If it seems that a child is taking a long time to settle in, this will be discussed with their parents/ carers at the earliest opportunity. Likewise, if a parent/carer feels that there is a problem during the settling in period, they should raise this with a member of staff. Staff will always be available to discuss any concerns or other issues with parents/carers regarding their child and their attendance at the nursery.

During the first weeks at nursery, children will be informed about the nursery's routines and the programme of activities. Ground rules and boundaries will be explained to the children. Fire drills take place every term on different days of the week, so that new children can experience the fire evacuation procedure

Review and partnership: The key person regularly shares relevant information about the child's wellbeing, learning and development with parents, listens to their knowledge and concerns, and works with colleagues and other professionals where appropriate. Information is shared in line with confidentiality and safeguarding procedures.