



A Parent's Guide

Supporting your child through the settling process.

Starting Pre-School can be enormously beneficial for children and their families, yet it can also be an anxious time too. Children have a strong attachment with you and will need time and support to form this with a new person, their key person, who will be responsible for settling your child and creating a bond.

All children are different and will cope with starting Pre-school in a variety of ways. Some children will cry and be wary of a new unfamiliar place and not want to leave your side, others will charge straight through the door without looking back.

However your child reacts to this new change is completely normal and we will work with you and your child to support their transition to starting Pre-School.

Tears are Normal!

When you leave your child at Pre-School for the first time it is highly likely they will cry. Tears are a normal form of expression for children of all ages. It does not make you a bad parent for leaving them and neither does it mean your child is extremely unhappy.

Children, especially young children, become overwhelmed by the range of emotions they will encounter starting Pre-School and they are unable to regulate their feelings at such a young age so what may be excitement, happiness or frustration turns into tears. It is natural and a process most children go through.

It Takes Time

The settling in process is a gradual process and staff are here to support you as much as our children during these difficult times. Even the most easy-going parent can find the whole experience quite heart-wrenching, and staff are compassionate to the difficulty's parents face leaving their child.

Children can take between 2-6 weeks to learn to deal with the concept of being left at Pre-School so please do not feel you or your child are failing if they haven't settled by the end of their first week! Give your child time to get used to the setting, the children, the toys and staff. Do not rush them or get frustrated if they are taking longer to settle than other children, remember all children are individual.

What works for one child will not work for the next. You must remember to stay calm and understand what your child is going through; it is not an easy process and will take time. If you become frustrated your child will pick up on these negative feelings and this will add to their anxieties about Pre-School. Children are very perceptive, much more than we give them credit for! Keep it positive and take the pressure off. Staff are on hand to help, by offering various ways to help ease your child in.

Settling in

We have a settling in procedure for best practice however this is not a miracle cure to getting children to not cry on their first day, this is a basis for us to start from with your child. We will then adapt this to your child's needs to decide how best to settle them.

The most important part of the settling process is your child's key person. They will be the one supporting you and your child throughout the whole process. The key person will learn from you what your child likes, how best to interact with them and what they need to do to meet your child's needs.

The key person will not force a relationship with your child and will allow them to initiate it when they are ready for the bond to start. Your child may form a bond with another staff member if this is the case, we will allow your child to have the key person of their choosing.

'Little and often' is useful to remember when your child is starting Pre-School. In other words, the start should be a gradual one, beginning with a short introduction and meet and greet at Pre-School with their parent. Then a settling in session trying some time away from you, meaning you leave for a short period of time. You must always let your child know you are leaving but will come back. Your child needs to feel secure in the fact that you always come back.

Factors that may affect your child in settling

The following factors may affect a child's start at Pre-School:

- Age and maturity: two children the same age can be very different so, while age is important so is maturity.
- Previous experience: If your child has had some previous separation, they may settle more easily than those children being left for the first time.
- Attendance at another childcare setting: Children are adaptable, but it can be confusing for them to move between childcare settings. Although everything may appear much the same to you, to your child everything is different.
- Family circumstances: If your child's start at Pre-school coincides with a house move, or the birth of a sibling this may affect the way they settle.
- Temperament: Some children are out going, sociable and independent. Others are more easily distressed, less adventurous and introverted. These children may need more support before they settle into Pre-School.
- Health: If your child is getting over an illness or coming down with one, during the settling in period this can affect how well they adapt, particularly if this disrupts the settling in period.

My child won't settle

In most cases given enough time and support children will settle, but on the rare occasion where a child seems unusually disturbed about being left at Pre-School the Manager's, key person and you will carry out a careful review to decide if there are other issues the need exploration.

Initially, the Manger's would consult with parents, staff and the child, and depending on the outcome of discussions they would need to consider what, in their professional judgement, is best for the child, before either taking or recommending further action.

Staff are here to support you and we will all do everything we can to ensure a positive outcome.

If you have any questions please talk to your child's key person or our Manager's.

Looking forward to seeing you soon.

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