Settling in policy

Children develop in individual ways and at varying rates and that is why at Windmill Pre-school we offer a settling in procedure that is flexible to meet these needs. Each family has different needs and we aim to provide for these, however, the child’s emotional well-being will always be the priority.

Children’s friendships, relationships and social development are an important part of overall development. At Windmill Pre-School every interaction is based on caring professional relationships and respectful acknowledgement of the feelings of children and their families.

Children need to feel safe and secure in their surroundings, stimulated and happy to develop and grow and feel secure and comfortable with the practitioners at Windmill Pre-School. We also want parents to have confidence in both their children’s well-being and their own role as active partners with the Pre-School. Children will feel a sense of belonging in the setting when their parents are involved.

**Aim**

We aim to make Windmill Pre-School a warm welcoming environment where children and their families are permitted to settle at a pace they are comfortable with. Consideration will be given to the individual needs and circumstances of children and their families.

Starting Pre-School is a big transition for both the child and their family and Windmill pre-school aim to ensure this transition goes as smoothly as possible whist always putting the needs of the child first. We will achieve this by;

- Before a child attends the Pre-School we use a variety of ways to provide the child’s parents/carers with information. These include written information (including our prospectus and policies), an invitation to visit the Pre-School for a tour of the premises and to attend a short session with their child.

- Each child is allocated a Key Person before starting at Pre-School.  A Key Person has special responsibilities for working with a small number of children. They give them the reassurance to feel safe and cared for and will build relationships with their parents. It is important for the child to see their parent/carer talking with their Key Person and for them to see that their parents trust and like their Key Person. If a child sees that their parent trusts the Key Person then they will also. A Key Person helps the child to become familiar with the setting and to feel confident and safe within it. A second Key Person is provided for children so that when the main Key Person is unavailable there is a familiar and trusted person who knows the child well.

- Home visits are offered and advised for all new starters. Where possible the child’s Key Person will attend. This enables the child and Key Person to form a positive relationship and get to know each other better. This time also offers parents the opportunity to ask any questions they may have. At this meeting parents will go through the ‘All about me’ form with the Key Person or member of staff. This includes family information e.g., how do they like to spend time as a family, cultural views, any pets, and information about the child, e.g., interests, special toys, language, and development. By providing for the child’s interests they are more likely to settle in more quickly in Pre-School. If the family do not have a home visit, this form can be filled out at a settling in session.

- Introductory visits can be arranged with the family to enable the child to become more familiar with the setting and practitioners while having the support of their parent/carer who stays with them. Once the child has started Pre-School, and is settling in, parent/carer can stay as long as the child needs them. Each child and family have different needs and the Pre-School recognize this. The child’s Key Person or room leader will discuss with parents the needs of the child and agree on a plan. This is very flexible and will change due to each child’s needs. This may include parents staying for the whole session, parents leaving their child for ten minutes and gradually building this up or parents leaving the child for the whole session.

- Pre-School encourages parents/carers to always say goodbye to their child. This helps to build up trust between them and they also realise that their parents will not be leaving until they have said goodbye, allowing them to settle faster. Once parents have decided to leave, they are encouraged to say goodbye in a calm, brief manner and tell the child when they will return. If the child becomes upset a member of staff, ideally the child’s Key Person will care for the child at this time until they have settled. If a child doesn’t settle the parents may be contacted and asked to return to Pre-School to stay with their child.

- Within the first few weeks of starting, we normally discuss the Early Years Foundation Stage and explain what this means for each child. We will use the Leuven scale of emotional well-being in the first 2-3 weeks to ascertain if each new child is settled and engaged in Pre-School. If this shows that they aren’t yet settled and involved, no development checks will be done. If a child isn’t settled and engaged in the setting they will not be displaying levels of development that is normal for them. The Leuven scales will be re-visited every couple of weeks until it shows that the child is settled and engaged in Pre -School. Only then will the child’s Key Person complete a ‘starting point’ to give an overview of the child’s development on entry to Pre-School. This will be shared with parents and there is an option for parents to comment also.

- Children at Pre-School, whether just starting or fully settled, are able and encouraged to bring any comforters with them. This is especially important for new starters as it can give them a level of comfort that staff may not be able to until a good relationship has formed.

**This policy was reviewed on 21st March 2024**

**Bryony Smith – Chair of Windmill Pre-School Management Committee**

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**Claire Baker – Manager of Windmill Pre-School**

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