

SECTION 4: Best Practice

Settling in

Policy statement

We want children to feel safe, stimulated and happy in the setting and to feel secure and comfortable with staff. We also want parents to have confidence in both their children's well-being and their role as active partners with the setting.

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. Research shows that a key person approach benefits the child, the parents, the staff and the setting by providing secure relationships in which children thrive, parents have confidence, staff are committed and the setting is a happy and dedicated place to attend or work in.

We aim to make the 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 Welfare Requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Stanmore Montessori offers a key person for each child.

The procedures below set out a model for developing a key person approach that promotes effective and positive relationships for children who are in settings.

Procedures

- We allocate a key person before the child starts
- The key person is responsible for the induction of the family and for settling the child in Stanmore Montessori ensuring that their care is tailored to meet their individual needs.
- The key person offers unconditional regard for the child and is non-judgmental.
- The key person works with the parent to plan and deliver a personalised plan for the child's well-being, care and learning.
- The key person acts as the key contact for the parents and has links with other carers involved with the child, such as a childminder, and co-ordinates the sharing of appropriate information about the child's development with those carers.
- A key person is responsible for 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.
- The key person encourages positive relationships between children in her key group, spending time with them as a group each day.
- In the absence of the child's key person, the parents can contact the manager.
- We promote the role of the key person as the child's primary carer in the setting, and as the basis for establishing relationships with other staff and children.

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- Before a child starts at Stanmore Montessori, we use a variety of ways to provide his/her parents with information. This include written information (including our prospectus and policies), displays about activities available with the setting, information days and evenings, the website and individual meetings with parents.
- During the half-term before a child is enrolled, we provide opportunities for the child and his/her parents to visit the setting. These introductory sessions are free of charge.
- We allocate a key person to each child and his/her family before he/she starts to attend; the key person welcomes and looks after the child and his/her parents at the child's first session and during the settling-in process.
- We use pre-start visits and the first session at which a child attends to explain and complete with his/her parents the child's registration records, if not already completed.
- When a child starts to attend, we explain the process of settling-in with his/her parents and jointly decide on the best way to help the child to settle into Montessori.
- We have an expectation that the parent, carer or close relative, will stay for most of the sessions during the first week, gradually taking time away from their child, increasing this as and when the child is able to cope.
- Younger children may take longer to settle in, as will children who have not previously spent time away from home. Children who have had a period of absence may also need their parent to be on hand to re-settle them.
- We will reassure parents whose children seem to be taking a longer time settling in to the setting and develop a plan with them.
- We encourage parents, where appropriate, to separate themselves from their children for brief periods at first, gradually building up to longer absences.
- 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 person when he/she arrives, 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 re-assure their child that they will be coming back.
- We recognise that some children will settle more readily than others but that some children who appear to settle rapidly are not ready to be left. We expect that the parent will honour the commitment to stay for at least the first week, or possibly longer, until their child can stay happily without them.
- We do not believe that leaving a child to cry will help them to settle any quicker. We believe that a child's distress will prevent them from learning and gaining the best from Montessori.
- We respect the circumstances of all families, including those who are unable to stay for long periods of time in the setting, and reassure them.
- We will review the nominated key person if the child is bonding with another member of staff to ensure the child's needs are supported and met.
- We reserve the right not to accept a child into the setting without a parent or carer if the child finds it distressing to be left. This is especially the case with very young children.
- Within the first four to six weeks of starting we discuss and work with the child's parents to start to create their child's record of achievement.