2. The Role of the Key Person and Settling In

2.1 The Role of the Key Person

'Each child must be assigned a key person. Their role is to help ensure that every child's care is tailored to meet their individual needs, to help the child become familiar with the setting, offer a settled relationship for the child and build a relationship with their parents and/or carers. They should also help families engage with more specialist support if appropriate.' (EYFS 2026)

Babies and young children need to form a secure attachment to key person when they join the setting to feel safe, happy, and eager to participate and learn.

Statutory requirements from 1 September 2026

This policy has been updated to reflect the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework for group and school-based providers effective from 1 September 2026. The EYFS framework is mandatory for early years providers in England. The setting will ensure that the key person and settling-in arrangements are implemented alongside the strengthened safeguarding and welfare requirements introduced from 1 September 2026.

In particular, staff will:

- have regard to the Department for Education's guidance on children's screen use in early years settings;

- follow the EYFS safer-sleep requirements and ensure that relevant arrangements for babies and young children are understood and implemented;

- follow the setting's safeguarding procedures where there are concerns about harm to a child and ensure that relevant notifications to Ofsted are made where required;

- ensure that staff, volunteers and other adults working in the setting meet the current suitability and criminal-record-check requirements before they are permitted to work in accordance with the EYFS; and

- where childcare is provided on domestic premises, ensure that the setting complies with the EYFS requirements relating to notifying Ofsted or the relevant childminder agency about changes to people aged 16 or over living or working on the premises.

These requirements are supported by the setting's Safeguarding Children, Safer Sleep, Staff Suitability/DBS, Health and Safety and other relevant policies.

The key person role

- A key person builds an on-going relationship with the child and their parents and/or carers, helps ensure that the child's care is tailored to their individual needs, helps the child become familiar with the setting, offers a settled relationship and supports families to engage with more specialist support where appropriate.
- Every child that attends is allocated a key person before they begin settling in - it is not the responsibility of the child to choose their own key person.
- Where possible a ‘back up’ key person is also identified for each child so that they can fulfil the role in the absence of the main key person, for example, during annual leave or sickness.
- The key person conducts the progress check at age two for their key children.
- The role is fully explained to parents on induction and the name of the child’s key person and ‘back up’ key person is recorded on the child’s registration form.
- The key person is central to settling a child into the setting. The setting manager and key person explain the need for a settling in process and agree a plan with the parents.
- Shift patterns and staff absence can affect a child who is just settling in; where possible, settling in should be matched to when the key person is on duty.

- The number of children for each key person takes into account the individual needs of children and the capacity of the key person to manage their cohort; it is also influenced by part-time places and part-time staff. The setting manager should aim for consistency i.e. matching part-time staff to part-time children; full-time children should not be divided between key persons during the week.
- Photographs of key persons and their key groups are displayed clearly.
- The key person spends time daily with his or her key group to ensure their well-being.

Parents

- Key persons are the first point of contact for parents with regard to matters concerning their child and any concerns parents may have are addressed with the key person in the first instance.
- Key persons support parents in their role as the child's first and most enduring educators.
- The key person is responsible for the child's developmental records, completing the progress check at age two, and for sharing information about progress with the child's parents.

Learning and development

- The key person helps to ensure that every child's learning and care is tailored to meet their individual needs. This is achieved through regular observation and assessment of children, using information gathered about their achievements, interests and learning styles to support each individual child's learning and development.
- If a child's progress in any of the prime areas gives cause for concern, the key person must discuss this with the setting manager or SENCO and the child's parents.

Key Person Relationships and Continuity of Care

- Each age group has at least two key persons who work closely together to provide consistent, responsive care and support for the children. They collaborate on planning and delivering small group activities, sharing observations and information to support each child's individual needs, development and well-being.
- We pride ourselves on ensuring that all staff build positive, secure and trusting relationships with all children. This approach helps children feel safe, settled and confident with the adults who care for them, promoting a strong sense of belonging within the setting.
- If a child's key person is absent or unavailable, the wider team continues to provide familiar, nurturing and consistent care, drawing on the secure relationships children have developed with other members of staff.
- In the absence of the key person, the leadership team is responsible for communicating relevant information to parents and ensuring that continuity of care is maintained. They will ensure that any important information regarding the child's well-being, experiences, needs or day is shared appropriately.
- The leadership team will ensure that relevant information is passed on to the child's key person upon their return, supporting continuity in care, communication and the ongoing development of the child's learning and well-being.

Safeguarding children

- The key person has a responsibility towards their key children to report any concern about their development, welfare or child protection matter to the setting manager and to follow the procedures in this respect.
- Regular supervision with the setting manager provides further opportunities to discuss the progress and welfare of key children.
- The wider team has duty likewise.

This policy was adopted by	St Mary's Nursery, Camberley	*(name of provider)*
On	1st September 2026	*(date)*
Date to be reviewed	1st September 2027	*(date)*
Signed on behalf of the provider		
Name of signatory	Sue Dunn	
Role of signatory (e.g. chair, director or owner)	Acting Chairperson	

2.2 Settling-In Policy

We recognise that starting nursery is a significant transition for children and their families. Our aim is to ensure that every child experiences a positive, secure, and supportive introduction to nursery life. We are committed to a child-centred approach, recognising that every child is unique and may settle at their own pace.

Our Approach

We work closely with parents and carers to support children as they begin their nursery journey. We understand that children have different needs, personalities, experiences, and levels of confidence, and therefore there is no single approach that suits every child.

Any hours or attendance patterns offered during the settling-in period will be determined with the child's individual needs and wellbeing at the centre of decision-making. Where appropriate, children may be offered a gradual introduction to nursery life to help them build confidence, develop secure relationships with staff, and become familiar with the nursery environment.

Individual Settling-In Plans

Prior to a child's start date, nursery staff will work in partnership with parents and carers to gather information about the child's interests, routines, preferences, and any additional support needs.

An individual settling-in plan will be suggested for each child to help make the transition into nursery as smooth and positive as possible. This plan will be tailored to the child's needs and may include:

- Short introductory sessions.
- A gradual increase in attendance hours where appropriate.
- Opportunities for the child to become familiar with their key person and nursery environment.
- Regular reviews and adjustments based on the child's progress and wellbeing.

The settling-in plan will remain flexible and may be adapted in consultation with parents and carers to ensure it continues to meet the child's needs.

Partnership with Parents and Carers

Parents and carers play a vital role in supporting their child's transition into nursery. We encourage open communication throughout the settling-in process and welcome feedback regarding how a child is adapting both at home and within the setting.

Nursery staff will provide regular updates and work collaboratively with families to ensure that children feel safe, secure, valued, and ready to engage in nursery life.

Review of the Settling-In Process

The settling-in period will be monitored closely by the child's key person and the wider nursery team. Decisions regarding attendance patterns, session lengths, and any additional support

required will be made in the best interests of the child, ensuring their emotional wellbeing, confidence, and sense of belonging remain our priority.

Our ultimate goal is for every child to develop secure relationships, feel confident within the nursery environment, and enjoy a successful start to their early years education.

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2.3 Progress Check at Age Two

- The key person is central to the progress check and must be the person completing it.
- Settings should take guidance from their local authority as to when the progress check at age two is completed; if no such guidance is provided, the progress check is completed when the child is between 26 and 30 months old. The child should be attending the setting for at least 1 term before the check is completed.
- Parents are invited to contribute to their child's progress check on Tapestry and have a meeting either by telephone or in person at a mutually convenient time.
- The setting must seek to engage both parents and make allowance for parents who do not live with their child to be involved.

Completing the progress check at age two

- On-going observational assessment informs the progress check and must be referred to.
- Children's contributions are included in the report. Staff must be 'tuned in' to the ways in which very young children, or those with speech or other developmental delay or disability, communicate/
- Where any concerns about a child's learning and development are raised these are discussed with the parents, the SENCO and the setting manager.
- If concerns arise about a child's welfare, they must be addressed through Safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults procedures.
- The key person must be clear about the aims of the progress check as follows:
- to review a child's development in the three prime areas of the EYFS
- to ensure that parents have a clear picture of their child's development

- to enable practitioners to understand the child's needs and, with support from practitioners, enhance development at home
- note areas where a child is progressing well and identify any areas where there are concerns

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