

Tips for parents on settling a child into pre-school

A carefully managed happy settling in period will ensure your child successfully settles into new situations. Research shows that a child who is supported in settling into a new situation for example a pre-school is more likely to find settling into other new situations easier in the future. Spending time supporting your child to settle confidently into pre-school provides the foundations to prepare your child to settle into other situations for example school.

Your child is an individual. Some children will settle quickly and easily, others will take longer and need more time and reassurance from you as parents and from pre-school staff.

Your child will need time to build a trusting relationship with people who will care for them in the setting. He/she will build this new relationship through playing with his/her key worker and being near her throughout the session.

You will find it useful to familiarise yourself with the settings settling in policy to help prepare your child.

Before your child is due to start, discuss the importance of settling in sessions this can be discussed with your child's key worker and Manager. Each child is unique and there should be no ceiling in the number of settling in visits a child may need.

The setting will be able to give you information about routines and activities and about the key worker who will build a relationship with your child and support him/her during his/her time in the setting. Use this information to talk to your child about the kind of situation they will be involved in, what the expectations will be, and about the routine.

Talk to your child before they start. It is very important for children to understand when you will be there with them: when you will leave; where you will be for that time without them, and when you will be coming back to collect them.

Read stories to your child about attending pre-school and help them talk through any concerns.

It is often useful if you leave your child for short periods with family or friends if possible so they have experienced time away from you before they start pre-school.

Sometimes when you are out and about walk or drive past the setting and talk to your child about the things he/she might be doing. Keep it simple and very positive.

It is important for your child to see you building a new positive and trusting relationship with their key worker and other members of staff as they are likely to copy your behaviour.

Tips for successful settling in

Children need you to be 'boring' while the key worker and other staff engage your child in activities/experiences. This will help your child to move away from you and explore.

When you and your child feel ready leave your child for short periods increasing the length as your child is ready. Always return when you say you will and while your child is still happy. Don't worry if it takes several sessions before your child is settled enough for you to leave. This is normal.

When you leave your child aim to leave quickly. Say goodbye and tell them where you are going and when you will be back.

Even though you may be anxious try and stay calm otherwise your child may feel they have reason to be anxious as well.

Once your child is staying for longer periods of time always ensure your child knows who will be collecting him/her, giving advance warning if it is someone different.