Muddy Boots Pre-School CIO

The role of the key person and settling-in

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The role of the key person and settling-in

'Each child must be assigned a key person' (EYFS 2024)

Young children need to form a secure attachment to key person when they join Muddy Boots to feel safe, happy, and eager to participate and learn.

The key person role

- A key person builds an on-going relationship with the child and their parents/carers and is committed to that child's well-being while in the setting.
- 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/carers 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 considers 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.
- Having links with other carers involved with the child and co-ordinating the sharing of appropriate information about the child's development with those carers.

Parents/carers

- Key persons are the first point of contact for parents/carers regarding matters concerning their child.
- Key persons support parents/carers 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/carers.

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 plan for 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/carers.

Settling-in

- Before a child starts to attend the setting, we use a variety of ways to provide their parents with information. These include written information in our welcome pack and on our website, as well as displays about activities within the setting. We use mainly email to communicate important information and news to parents and carers.
- We provide opportunities for the child and their parents to visit the setting before the child starts.
- When a child starts to attend, we explain the process of settling-in with their parents and jointly decide on the best way to help the child to settle into the setting.
- We work closely with the parents if the child does not settle quickly.
- Younger children will 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.
- When parents leave, we ask them to say goodbye to their child and explain that they will be coming back, and when. This can be adapted to the needs of each child.
- 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 the setting.
- We will work with the parent or carer if the child finds it distressing to be left.

The progress check at age two

- The key person carries out the progress check at age two in accordance with any local procedures that are in place and referring to the supporting guidance to the EYFS *A Know How Guide: The EYFS progress check at age two.*
- The progress check aims to review the child's development and ensures that parents have a clear picture of their child's progress.

- Within the progress check, the key person will note areas where the child is progressing well and identify areas where progress is less than expected.
- The progress check will describe the actions that will be taken by the setting to address any developmental concerns (including working with other professionals where appropriate) as agreed with the parent(s).
- The key person will plan activities to meet the child's needs within the setting and will support parents to understand the child's needs in order to enhance their development at home.

Routine parts of the day

- The key person also maintains other responsibilities for key children including administering medication and signing accident records.

Back-up key person

- The role of the back-up key person is to step in when the main key person is absent or unavailable to provide a stable and consistent care relationship for the child.
- The back-up key person is identified when the child starts but is not introduced to the child until an attachment is beginning to form with the key person.
- The back-up key person gradually forms a relationship with the child until the child is happy to be cared for by this person.
- The back-up key person shares information with parents/carers in the key person's absence and makes notes in the child's records where appropriate.
- The back-up key person ensures information is shared with the key person.

Safeguarding children

- The key person has a responsibility towards their key children to report any concern about their development, well-being and 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, well-being and welfare of key children.
- The back-up key person has a duty likewise.

Further guidance

Being a Key Person in an Early Years Setting (Alliance Publication)