

09 Early years practice procedures

09.03 Prime times – The role of the key person

'Each child must be assigned a key person' (EYFS 2023)

Young children need to form a secure attachment to key person when they join the pre-school to feel safe, happy and eager to participate and learn. The pre-school also wants parents/carers to have confidence in both their children's well-being and their role as active partners with the pre-school.

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 pre-school.
- 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 'backup' 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. Little Doves uses the phrase 'Buddy'.
- The key person is responsible for completing some relevant forms with parents/carers, for example two year old & three and four year old questionnaires, conducting the progress check at age two for their key children, explaining the procedures to parents/carers which are available to read on the website.
- The role is fully explained to parents/carers at the induction 'build up' session.
- The key person is central to settling a child into the pre-school. The pre-school manager and key person explain the need for a settling in process and agree a plan with the parents/carers to deliver a personalised plan for the child's well-being, care and learning.
- 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.
- Offering unconditional regard for the child and being non-judgemental.
- 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. If this is not possible, the named buddy will fulfil the role of the key person in settling-in the child.
- 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 pre-school 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.
- The key person spends time daily with their key group to ensure their well-being.

Parents/carers

- Key persons are the first point of contact for parents/carers with regard to matters concerning their child and any concerns parents/carers may have are addressed with the key person in the first instance.
- 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. The key person is responsible for compiling and maintaining their child's "Big book of me" learning journal.
- If a child's progress in any of the prime areas gives cause for concern, the key person must discuss this with the pre-school manager or SENCO and the child's parents/carers.

Prime times

The key person role is explained further in the prime time procedures (09.04, 09.06, 09.07, 09.08, 09.10, 09.14). The key person also maintains other responsibilities for key children. The administration of medicine procedure is detailed in 04.02 Administration of medicine procedure.

Backup key person or 'Buddy'

- The role of the backup 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 backup 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 backup key person gradually forms a relationship with the child until the child is happy to be cared for by this person.
- The backup key person shares information with parents/carers in the key person's absence and makes notes in the child's records where appropriate.
- The backup key person ensures information is shared with the key person.

Safeguarding children

- The key person and/or backup (buddy) key person has a responsibility towards their key children to report any concern about their development, welfare or child protection matter to the pre-school manager/deputy and to follow the procedures in this respect.
- Regular supervision with the pre-school manager/deputy provides further opportunities to discuss the progress and welfare of key children.