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**Beaumont Community Preschool & Childcare Groups**

**The role of the key person, settling-in and transitions**

**Policy statement**

At Beaumont Community Preschool & Childcare Groups 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 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 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.

They key person role is set out in the Safeguarding and Welfare Requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Each setting must assign a key person for each child.

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

**Procedures**

* A key person builds an on-going relationship with the child and his/her parents and is committed to that child’s well-being while in the setting.
* For new children we aim to allocate a key person before the child starts.
* Where possible the key person is responsible for the induction of the family and for settling the child into our setting. Explaining our policies and procedures to parents with particular focus on policies such as safeguarding and our responsibilities under the Prevent Duty.
* The key person offers unconditional regard for the child and is non-judgemental.
* Working with the parents 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.
* 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 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 conducts the progress check at age two for their key children.
* 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.
* The key person encourages positive relationships between children in her/his key group, spending time with them as a group each day.
* We promote the role of the key person as the child’s primary carer in our setting, and as the basis for establishing relationships with other adults and children.
* All staff ensure they build an on-going relationship with the child each so that they can fulfil the role in the absence of the main key person.
* 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 settings management should aim for consistency.
* Photographs of key persons and their key groups are displayed clearly.
* Where there is the requirement for temporary staff they must be trained to administer medication and medical procedures proficiently and safely for individual children. They must also adhere to the guidelines and procedures on caring for the individual needs of children with SEND, as detailed in their Health Care Plans. Where necessary a Prioritised Place Risk Assessmentshould be used to identify any risks that may be incurred due to a change in key person for such children.

***Settling-in***

To feel securely settled and ready to learn, children need to form attachments with the adults who care for them, primarily a key person, but others too. In this way they feel part of a community; they are able to contribute to that community and receive from it. Very young children, especially two- to three-year-olds, approach separation from their parent with anxieties, older children have a more secure understanding of ‘people permanence’ and are able to approach new experiences with confidence; but also need time to adjust and feel secure. It is the entitlement of all children to be settled comfortably into a new environment.

* Before a child starts to attend the setting, we use a variety of ways to provide his/her parents with information. These include written information (including our prospectus and policies), information days and/or evenings and individual meetings/phone calls with parents.
* We provide opportunities for the child and his/her parents to visit the setting for settling in.
* We aim to allocate a key person to each child and his/her family before she/he 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.
* 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 the setting for example 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 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 say goodbye to their child and explain that they will be coming back, and when.
* 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, if we feel your child requires his/her parent to stay we will discuss this and agree a plan 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 the setting.
* 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.
* The settling in times are discussed with the parents/carers and will be flexible dependant on situation, age, stage, ability and the child’s individual needs. Where possible we encourage parents to settle in their child, this helps to give your child the best start within a strange environment by making them feel safe and secure.
* If your child is due to start at the setting after a school holiday, these settling in visits will occur during the first week of term. If you feel that your child needs more settling in sessions, this will be discussed and reviewed. We will phone the parents/carers if your child is not settling, and parents/carers may also phone the setting to see how their child is doing.
* For the Under 3s, settling in times will be discussed with the parent according to individual needs of the child. Frequent short visits with parents/carers will help your child to feel safe and secure, and to form a bond with the child’s key person before being left for short periods prior to their start date.
* If your child is to move from the Under 3’s room into the main pre-school room, parents’ presence is not essential, but they are welcome to visit with their child and view the preschool facilities offered.

**Establishing children’s starting points**

When children start at the setting they arrive at different levels of learning and development. In order to help them to settle and make rapid progress it is important that they are provided with care and learning opportunities that are suited to their needs, interests and abilities. This means establishing and understanding their starting points and whether there are any obstacles to their learning, so that teaching can be tailored to the ‘unique child’.

* The aim of establishing a child’s starting points is to ensure that the most appropriate care and learning is provided from the outset.
* Starting points are established by gathering information from the first contact with the child’s parents at induction and during the ‘settling in’ period. Staff do not ‘wait and see’ how the child is settling before they begin to gather information.
* The key person is responsible for establishing their key children’s starting points by gathering information in the following ways:
* observation of the child during settling in visits
* discussion with the child’s parents
* building on information that has been gathered during registration by referring to the registration form
* The key person must make a ‘best fit’ judgment about the age band the child is working in, referring to Development Matters or Birth to Five Matters.
  1. If the initial assessment raises any concerns that extra support may be required procedure Identification, assessment and support for children with SEND is followed.

**Transitions**

* Children moving from Bumbles to the Preschool room are given the opportunity to visit the main room as part of a normal day and participate in play and join in at mealtimes, becoming familiar with adults, children and the environment.
* When a child moves to the preschool room a new key person is identified. The key person discusses the plan for the child moving up with the parents. Parents are also given the opportunity to view the room.
* The current key person will spend time with the child in the new group, liaising with the new key person and ensuring that the child is familiar with all the main times of the day.
* The child gradually spends more time with the new key person until they can cope in their new room.
* As part of gathering information from parents, it is important to find out about the child’s experience of non-parental care, for example grandparents, or childminder; this informs staff as to how a child may respond to a new situation.
* For children with English as an additional language we ask parents in our All About Me section within our admission pack to list key words in the child’s home language. These words will be used to help support the child and parents.

**Transition to school**

Moving on to school is a major transition in a child’s life involving separation from familiar adults and children. Older children have a more secure understanding of ‘people permanence’ and are able to approach new experiences with confidence. However, they need preparation if they are to approach transition to school with confidence and an awareness of what to expect.

**Partnership with schools**

* Every effort is made to forge and maintain strong links with all schools that children may attend.
* Where possible we invite teachers to be part of our committee.
* Teachers are welcomed into the setting and sufficient time is made for them to spend both with the child, their parents and with the key person, to discuss and share information that will support the child’s transition to school.
* A child’s learning journey record is forwarded to the school along with other information that will aid transition and settling in. Parents receive a copy of this.
* Any action plans relating to a child’s additional needs are also shared, where this is in place.
* Other formal documentation such as safeguarding information is prepared in line with procedure Transfer of records.

**Partnership with parents**

* Key persons discuss transition to school with parents and set aside time to discuss learning and development summaries. Parents are encouraged to contribute to summaries.
* Key persons will discuss with parents how they are preparing their child for school and will share information about how the setting is working in partnership with the school to aid transition.
* Key persons will make clear to parents the information that will be shared with the school, for example, information regarding child protection and work that has taken place to ensure the child’s welfare.

**Preparing children for leaving**

* Children and parents form bonds with adults and children in the setting and will need preparation for separating from the relationships they have formed.
* The child’s last day should be prepared for in advance and marked with a special celebration or party that acknowledges that the child is moving on.
* Parents should not be discouraged from bringing the child for the occasional brief visit, as separations often take time to complete. Sometimes children need the reassurance that their nursery/pre-school is still there and that they are remembered.

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| This policy was adopted at a meeting of | **Beaumont Community Preschool & Childcare Groups** | (name of provider) |
| Held on |  | (date) |
| Date to be reviewed |  | (date) |
| Signed on behalf of the management committee |  | |
| Name of signatory |  | |
| Role of signatory (e.g. chair/owner) |  | |