**4.1 The role of the key person and settling-in**

**Policy statement**

Little Owl Childcare believes 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, Little Owl Childcare staff are committed and the setting is a happy and dedicated place to attend or work in.

Little Owl Childcare wants children to feel safe, stimulated and happy in the setting and to feel secure and comfortable with us. We also want parents to have confidence in both their children's well-being and their role as active partners with our setting. We aim to make our 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.

The key person role is set out in the Safeguarding and Welfare Requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Each child must have a key person. These procedures set out a model for developing a key person approach that promotes effective and positive relationships for children.

**Procedures**

* We allocate a key person when a child starts with the setting, We understand that children will often develop a better relationship with a member of staff. We take care in allocating a key person to your child.
* The key person is responsible for:
* Working with the parents to plan and deliver a personalised plan for the child’s well-being, care and learning.
* Acting as the key contact for the parents.
* 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.
* 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.
* We promote the role of the key person as the child’s primary care in our setting, and as the basis for establishing relationships with other adults and children.

*Settling-in*

* Before a child starts to attend our setting, we use a variety of ways to provide his/her parents with information. These may include written information including our welcome pack and registration forms, displays about activities available within the setting, information days and evenings and individual meetings with parents.
* Before a child starts we will provide opportunities for the child and his/her parents to visit the setting.
* Staff will welcome and look after the child and his/her parents at the child's first session and during the settling-in process.
* We will conduct a home visit to ensure all relevant information about the child can be made known.
* We offer a play and stay/induction at the first session at which a child attends to explain and complete, with his/her parents, the child's registration records.
* 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.
* 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.
* We monitor a child to be settled when they have formed a relationship with a member of staff for example, the child looks for the member of staff 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. We work closely with parents; this may include asking parents to join us during sessions and gradually leaving them to enable the child to happily settle.
* 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.
* Within the first three to six weeks of starting, we discuss and work with the child's parents to begin to create their child's starting point.

*The progress check at age two*

* The key person will carry out the progress check at age two in accordance with any local procedures that are in place and referring to the guidance *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 development.
* 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 us to address any developmental concerns (including working with other professionals where appropriate) as agreed with the parent(s).
* The key person will provide resources in the environment 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.