

Cherrywood Federation

Settling in Policy



Approved by:

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Introduction:

For many children, starting Nursery or Reception can be their first separation from their main carer, as a result we recognise that 'parents are a child's first and most enduring educators' (Early Years Foundation Stage – Positive Relationships/Parents as Partners).

Starting in a new setting is a major event in a child's life and this time of transition can be stressful for both children and parents. To ensure that both children and parents feel supported as they work towards feeling at ease in their new setting, at both Joseph Hood and Hatfeild Primary Schools, we seek to ensure a smooth transition by working in close partnership with parents.

"Transition is a process, not an event. High quality transitions recognise the importance of feeling "known". Key to a high-quality experience for all children in the early years is ensuring continuity between home, key people and all the settings that make up children's individual learning journeys. When transitions in the early years are managed sensitively it lays the foundations for positive feelings towards the many other transitions children will face through life."

Practitioners can make transitions more seamless by first visiting children in the setting in which they are known, confident and comfortable. Ideally, this would be the home as the place where children feel most secure and where children can see their parents and practitioners developing warm and positive relationships. Practitioners can also visit the setting that children are currently attending so children meet new adults in a familiar place. During these times practitioners can learn about the child from the parents as well as give information, in order to be fully aware of and responsive to the needs and concerns of each child and their family. It is important that families' concerns are listened to, but are voiced away from the child.

Children then need to visit their new setting with a parent and/or key person so their first experience of any new setting is with a familiar and trusted adult. For all children – and parents – at every transition in the early years and beyond, repeated opportunities for relaxed contact with and visits to the new setting over a sustained period of time can support a positive move. Transition processes that are tailored to meet the needs of each unique child are more effective than a "one size fits all" process. [Transitions – Birth To 5 Matters](#)

We therefore believe that it is important for staff to take time to get to know the children, their parents and their home environment. The EYFS aims to be fully accessible to children and families from all sections of the local community.

Aims and objectives of this policy

This policy aims to support both school staff and parents/carers in recognising that all children will start school with a diversity of individual experiences, attitudes, expectations and developmental differences.

The objective of this policy is to ensure that during the transition process, all staff maximise their efforts to recognise and meet the specific and additional needs of all individual children.

At The Cherrywood Federation, we aim to:

- Make the children feel happy and secure, and give them a sense of belonging in their new environment in the absence of their parent/carer.
- Make the children feel confident to explore and experiment in their new physical surroundings.
- Help the children to develop the independence required to freely access all of the resources available in their new environment.
- Support the children to develop positive relationships with both adults and other children.
- Help children to communicate their needs to others in an appropriate way.
- Promote appropriate behaviour, with clear expectations and positive reinforcements.
- Work in partnership with parents in their child's learning.
- Support children to build upon the prior experiences and knowledge they have gained in their home environment.
- Encourage and welcome open and honest communication between staff and parents.

As a staff we aim to:

- Always put the children's social and emotional well being at the centre of the transition process.
- Make any transition as seamless as possible and a positive experience for the child and their family-transition is not an event, it is an ongoing process.
- Show empathy and sensitivity towards new parents and children.
- Be responsive and flexible by taking into account the individual needs and experiences of the children and parents.
- Take time and provide the space to get to know new children and their parents/carers whilst they are settling in.
- Organise and manage the environment in such a way that the children can operate independently, safely and imaginatively.

Guidelines and Procedures:

- The children and parents are always warmly welcomed into the school.
- All children and their parents / carers are made very aware of their teacher and support staff before they start in the EYFS.
- Prior to starting, Reception children will be invited in for two 'Stay and Play' sessions. School will also make contact with any previous settings. Where they are direct entry from home, school will meet with parents/carers to discuss the child in depth.
- Prior to starting, Nursery will have a 'Home Visit' by the Nursery staff. This will be an opportunity to engage with the child and family in a familiar setting. Nursery will also be offered a 'Stay and Play' session.
- Each teacher / key person is responsible for helping their group of children to become familiar with the EYFS and to feel safe and confident within it.
- Each practitioner develops a genuine warm and caring professional relationship with each child in their class as well as the child's parents/carers.
- Each practitioner responds sensitively to the feelings, ideas and behaviour of each child in their class and endeavours to meet each child's particular needs and those of their parents.
- Information is provided to the parents to familiarise them with daily routines and an overview of the termly and yearly events.
- School staff will assist parents in completing any necessary forms/paperwork in partnership with parents if required.
- Parents are asked to complete an 'All About Me', questionnaire before their child starts in the EYFS in order to give us additional information about each child.
- We encourage the parents to leave their child after a short period of time, with the understanding that if the child has been upset at the separation, we will contact them soon after to reassure them that their child has settled.
- If the child continues to be upset staff will contact the parent/carer asking them to return to school.
- For the initial half term in Nursery, parents/carers are able to choose to send their child/children for a reduced period of time, if they feel their child is not ready for the full 3 hrs a day session. *(This will be agreed between staff and parents and reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure the agreed plan continues to best meet the needs of the child.)*
- For some children in Reception settling in may be, for various reasons, an upsetting or traumatic experience. In these cases, Reception teachers and parents will discuss and agree an individual settling in plan which may include a parent supporting in sessions or the child having shorter session times for a period of time. These plans will be reviewed regularly, based on the child's progress and development.
- In the initial two week settling in period, parents will be advised when they can start to use the school breakfast and after school club. No Reception children will be permitted to use After School/Breakfast clubs in their first week at school. We do not

allow Nursery children to use the Breakfast and After School Clubs, as we are not able to provide the staffing ratios and environment to meet their needs.

- We offer and undertake ongoing, regular, informal discussions with parents/carers to enable us to build up a picture of their child and the previous experiences they have on arrival to Nursery/Reception and share how each day is progressing and how their child is settling in.
- Parents are given opportunities to share what they know about their child either in written form, 'parentshare' or through informal interviews. This is used to help plan appropriate activities for the children.
- During the settling in period, activities and experiences provided in the EYFS are set up to help the children settle into their new environment and learn their new daily routines. (These are planned in response to how each child is progressing.)
- An emphasis is made in the first half term on looking at the children and their families and sharing photographs and home experiences. Displays are centred on the children, their families, experiences and interests.

Bilingual Children

We recognise that settling in is a particularly important time for bilingual children and it is important, for the success of this, to ensure that the environment and resources reflect (in some way) their family, ethnicity, religion and culture.

All staff value and celebrate language diversity and recognise the importance of maintaining and developing the child's home language, as language is closely linked to identity and self-esteem. Competency in a child's home language will also help a child to learn English.

Bilingual children and their families often have very specific needs, which we will take into account in order to help them settle into their new environment; for example:

- Parents/carers may have had very different educational experiences from the ones we are offering. Schools/settings may need to provide extra support to help parents/carers understand the curriculum and how and why we plan for young children to learn through play. They may also need support to understand the education system and with school communication.
- Recent-arrival families or asylum seekers and those with refugee status may be coping with particularly difficult social circumstances, which practitioners need to be aware of in order to support the child appropriately.

Children with special needs

It is important that we know and understand the needs of children in order for us to successfully meet them. Where necessary we will adopt a multi-agency approach for children with Special Educational Needs (SEN), which, with their parents/carers permission, will be shared from their previous setting and with their next school/setting.

This will help prevent vital information being missed on admission and provide a balanced profile on individual children allowing the receiving school/setting to liaise with other involved professionals to gain necessary resources and/or equipment.

Strategies we will employ include, and are not limited to:

- Meetings with both SENCOs, the sender and receiver, to discuss the child's individual needs. This provides the opportunity to share information between all involved and helps to prepare for the comprehensive integration of the child into the school/setting, including any further strategies to be put into place which will support the individual needs of the child and those of their parent/carer. This will help to make the transition as smooth as possible.
- Extra/additional transition/settling-in visits will be planned on a needs-led basis to enable the child and parents/carers to familiarise themselves with the new school/setting and its routines and for the child to be observed in their responses to the new provision. These visits will normally take place when the school/setting is operating and children are in situ and should be arranged when time can be given to the child and parents/carers.
- All information and records (e.g. EHCPs, medical history, support plans, reports from other agencies) will be handed over to the receiving school/setting in good time and before the child starts to make any visits to the school/setting. Further meetings will be arranged to clarify/confirm information concerning the child, as appropriate.
- In the case of a transition from home to a school/setting, we will liaise with professionals from any pre-school, portage, and/or other agencies who have vital additional information on the child or insight into their needs. We will ensure consent from the parent/carer is obtained before information is passed to the receiver.

Ongoing policy review

Our policy and procedures for 'Settling-in' are always open and responsive to feedback from parents/carers and staff. If it is felt worthwhile and helpful additions and changes will be made to the process. In all the things that we do to settle children into Early Years, we very much see it as a close collaboration between home and school as this is the best way to enable the very smoothest and happiest transition into both Federation Schools' Nursery and Reception for all concerned – parents, child and staff.

Reviewed December 2025

Next review-July 2027