

**First Friends**

**Transitioning and Ensuring the Emotional Well-Being of Children Policy**

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**Reviewed by:**

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**Principles:**

First Friends acknowledges the crucial importance of ensuring all children are settled into the setting effectively, and that their emotional needs are met. We endeavour to provide a safe and welcoming environment where children are encouraged to form strong attachments to key members of staff from their very first visit. This is to ensure that children thrive emotionally as well as mentally and physically.

At First Friends we acknowledge the connection between personal attachments and separation anxiety in children. The term ‘attachment’ is used by professionals to describe an emotional tie or relationship that a child has to another person. Research shows that if separation is unsuccessful in early life it can create long lasting problems, such as struggling to settle into reception class or secondary school. *(nurseryworld.co.uk)*

We will ensure that the emotional well-being of children is a main focus from their key person throughout their time in the setting. All children will receive five hours of free settling in sessions, this helps support parents and carers with the transition and begins to build emotional security within the children. It has been proven that by forming strong relationships and attachments within the setting during the settling in process, will help alleviate some of the separation anxiety within the children when their parents or carers leave.

First Friends acknowledges the importance of working with parents and carers, and we pride ourselves on our “parent partnership”. Parent and carers views and opinions are taken into consideration from their very first visit to the setting. Key persons will gather all relevant information and ensure that it is recorded accordingly; this may vary on different sites. For children attending nursery all information regarding the child’s development is to be used in their initial assessment. *(See Child Assessment Policy)*

At First Friends we understand that the emotion well-being of children is one of the most important focuses when caring for children. To ensure that well-being is a key focus throughout a child’s time in the setting we will use ‘The Leuven Scale’. This scale looks at the level of well-being and the level of involvement in children while they are at the setting. By monitoring these levels enables staff to ensure that children are continuously thriving in the setting. It also helps identify if children are not thriving, which will enable staff to assess why this might be before implementing actions to improve the issue. (See Leuven Scale Procedure)

We aim to support parents and carers to help their children settle quickly and easily by giving consideration to the individual needs and circumstances of each child and their families. Each key person will support their key children in becoming confident thriving children.

**Aims and Objectives:**

* We aim for children to feel safe, stimulated and happy in the setting.
* For all children to feel secure and comfortable with all staff.
* To support parents and carers with the transitioning period into the setting and when moving rooms or sites.
* To ensure that all children thrive, and become school ready for the appropriate time.
* We aim to support children and families with future transitions into other rooms, schools and other settings.
* We aim to ensure that all staff has the relevant skills and training to ensure that they are able to support children and their families.

**Working with Parents:**

Staff will work in partnership with parents to settle their child into the setting. Each child will be looked at as an individual, using key information shared by parents and carers to ensure that the child is able to build attachments to their key person. Having a strong attachment within the setting will be crucial for children to settle once their parents or carers leave.

At First Friends we value the role that the key person plays in the child's transition into the setting. By ensuring that all staff has a procedure to follow during the settling in sessions will make certain that every child and their family have the same experience when attending the settling in sessions. This is to guarantee the smooth and easy transition of all children making sure to put the families at ease. All relevant information will be gathered from the parents and carers, and key persons will be responsible for ensuring that it is recorded appropriately. Settling in visits and introductory sessions are vital to ensure a smooth transition into the setting, beginning to build relationships with parents and carers ensuring good communication and information sharing from the very first meeting.

Staff will work in partnership with parents and carers by:

* Providing parents and carers with relevant information regarding the policies and procedures of the setting.
* Encourage the parents and carers to visit the setting with their child/ren during the weeks prior their admission date.
* Plan settling in sessions and introductory sessions that will last approximately 1-2 hours. These will be provided free of charge over a one or two week period dependent on individual needs and their age and stage of development.
* Each child and their family will be allocated a key person before they attend the setting. The key person will be responsible for looking after the child and their family during the settling in sessions, and throughout their time at the setting. This is to ensure that the family has a familiar contact person to assist with the settling in process and any queries or concerns they may have going forward.
* The key person nominated will be reviewed after the first 5 sessions to see whether the child is naturally bonding with another member of staff to ensure that the child’s needs are supported and that their well-being is met.
* All parents and carers will be welcomed to stay with their children during their first few weeks at the setting, until the child feels settled or the parent or carer also feels comfortable to leave them.
* Each child will be treated as an individual. For children who may take a longer time to settle, further strategies and prolonged visits will be offered to help reassure parents/carers.
* Key persons will work closely with all parents/carers to support them in separating themselves from their children where appropriate. To begin with for brief periods, gradually building up to longer absences and eventually full sessions.
* The circumstances of all families will be respected by staff, including the families who are unable to stay for extended periods of time during the settling period.
* All families will be informed of their child’s progress towards settling in.
* Children will not be taken on outings and trips until they have completely settled.
* An initial assessment document will be given to the parent/carer to fill in alongside the key person. This is to ensure that all relevant knowledge is gathered to help support the child through the settling transition (Nursery children only).

**Building Attachments:**

At First Friends we understand the importance of the key person attachment with the children. This attachment is vital for children beginning to feel safe and secure within the setting.

Without a relevant attachment within the setting children may begin to show signs of separation anxiety. This may be that the child becomes very upset, or they may demonstrate unwanted behaviours such as becoming angry and hitting out or banging their head. It can also be quite common for children who are overly upset to become sick and often appear to be inconsolable. The aim of the key person system is to avoid any children reaching this level of anxiety, and if we feel that is necessary parents and carers will be contacted.

**Supporting children:**

First Friends understand that some children may still become upset during their transition into the setting. It is the key person’s responsibility to work alongside parents and carers to decide the best actions going forward. If it is agreed that the child will be left in the care of their key person, steps must be taken to ensure that the child’s well-being is met. These actions must suit the individual needs of the child.

Some examples may be:

* Cuddle time with key person.
* Time alone in a quiet space of their own.
* Activities of their own preference to be used for distraction.

All children will be approached with an understanding and caring attitude by staff, to ensure that all of the children feel they have a voice and are understood within the setting. This will result in children feeling safe and cared for enabling them to thrive within the setting, which at First Friends is our immediate priority for our children.

At First Friends we understand that children can experience anxiety and become upset during any major changes to their routine, or when being separated from parents/carers. This may not only be when a child starts at the setting but could also be when they transition between rooms or to another site. All staff will ensure that children feel safe and secure during all transitioning periods.

**Supporting Parents:**

At First Friends we are conscious of the fact that parents and carers may also suffer from separation anxiety. It can be a difficult time for parents and carers who have not been away from their children previously. We will support parents and carers in any way that is reasonable for us to do so. Some actions that may be used to reassure parents/carers may be:

* Parents staying for a longer period of time during the settling in period. Although we do advise that the child is left with the key person at least once before their start date.
* Key person to build a strong relationship with parent/carer to build trust between them.
* Telephone conversations to reassure the parents/carers while their child is at the setting.
* Taking photos of their children engaging in play to reassure parents/carers that their children are happy and secure at the setting.

**Transitioning between rooms/sites:**

Before transitioning, the child will be assigned a key person and a main point of contact for parents/carers. Parents will be introduced to this person prior to the settling in sessions, and they will be given the opportunity to visit the new room. All parents/carers will be given dates and times of when their child will be visiting the new room.

When transitioning between rooms/sites the children will begin their settling in sessions, similar to when they started the setting. These sessions will last approximately between 1-2 hours and will be spread out over the session to ensure that children experience the whole routine.

The current key person will work closely the new key person to ensure a smooth transitioning. This will begin with a ‘Transition Sheet’ that will be completed and passed onto the new key person before transitioning begins. This will enable the new key person to fully understand any specific care needs and their generally likes and dislikes before the child moves into the room. Following this the key persons will continue to support the child in any way needed to continue meeting their well-being needs.

All parents/carers will be given updates after their children have settling in sessions. During this time the child’s progress will be discussed and any concerns can also be brought up if any have arisen. This will enable a verbal action plan to be derived to continue the smooth transition for the child. Actions that may be needed to support the child may be:

* Extended settling in sessions.
* Parents/carers to attend some of the settling in sessions.
* Key person to stay with the child during the settling in session.