



Settling In Policy

At Sandcastle Nursery & Preschool, we recognise that every child is unique. Starting nursery is a big step for both children and their families, and our settling-in process is designed to be flexible and responsive to each child's needs. Our aim is to help every child feel secure, confident, and happy in their new environment.

Registration and Start Date

Parents/carers complete a registration pack, which includes agreeing on a start date. Before this, we offer free settling-in sessions so the child can become familiar with the setting and staff before their regular sessions begin. These sessions are planned in partnership with the family, taking into account availability and home routines.

Tailored Settling Sessions

While we offer a general framework for settling in, we adapt it to suit each child. Factors such as age, previous experience of separation, temperament, and home routines will influence how quickly a child settles.

Typical Settling-In Session Outline (*adjusted as needed*)

First Session – 30 minutes

- Child attends with parent/carer.
- Practitioner completes the child's routine sheet with the parent/carer and begins building a relationship.

Second Session – 1 hour

- Child attends without parent/carer.
- Parents are encouraged to say goodbye at the gate/door to promote confident separation.
- Session is ideally scheduled when the child does not need to feed or sleep.
- Staff will contact the parent/carer after 30 minutes if the child is very unsettled.
(Children aged 3+ typically complete the first and second sessions together.)

Third Session – Approx. 2.5 hours

- Includes a meal and/or nap to familiarise the child with the nursery routine.

Final Settling Session – Half session

- Mirrors a typical attendance slot.
- If attending full days, this session is scheduled directly before the first full day.





We always reassure parents/carers that if a child becomes very unsettled, we will contact them promptly.

Home Visits

For babies, we offer optional home visits on request. These can be particularly beneficial for children with additional or complex needs, allowing the first interactions to happen in a familiar environment.

Additional Settling Support

If a child struggles with the transition, we may:

- Gradually increase the duration of settle-in sessions.
 - Provide picture cards of the nursery for the child to take home.
 - Offer lots of praise, reassurance, and encouragement for both the child and the parent.
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For Children with English as an Additional Language (EAL)

We encourage parents to share a list of key familiar words or phrases (with pronunciation guidance) so we can use the child's home language for comfort and communication during the settling period.

Availability of Parents/Carers

We ask parents/carers to remain local and contactable during settling-in sessions in case they are needed to return.

