

Settling Into Nursery

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Starting your child at nursery, or any other type of childcare provision, is a very emotional time for a parent. You've been their main carer, tending to their every need and now it's time to return to work, which is stressful enough, and settle your little one in a new environment with people you don't know.

Coming from a child care background and working for Longacre Childcare for many years I wish I could say that I was filled with confidence at leaving my little boy at nursery. I wasn't. Even though I knew most of the staff and was well acquainted with how the Nursery worked it didn't quell the sadness, guilt and protectiveness of my first born that I felt. I guess we must all feel like this in various degrees when the time comes to hand the care of our child over to others.

For a child or baby, starting nursery is also emotional. They are exploring a new world which can be scary to begin with but as they become used to their new surroundings and make relationships with supporting adults nursery evolves into a safe, happy and stimulating place to explore and develop their understanding and skills that will become the cornerstone of their educational journey.

When starting my little boy at nursery I had to remind myself of the advice I'd been handing out to parents for years.

Here are my top 5 tips for a smooth transition:

- Be positive
- Settling In Sessions
- Take your cues from the nursery staff
- Keep goodbyes brief
- Keep up communication



Be Positive: Even the youngest of children can pick on your emotions whether it is on the lead up to starting or on the day itself. Being positive, even when your insides have turned to jelly, is one of the most important parts of this process as children take their cues from us, by seeing that we are happy and confident it will ease the way. If you are still worried try and keep in mind what your child will gain from settling at nursery.

Settling In Sessions: Most nurseries will arrange for you and your child to attend a settling in session. This is so that you can go through all those important details about their routine, giving your child the chance to play and interact whilst having you close at hand for reassurance. I hadn't really left my baby with anyone else before, not even family and I knew he would struggle at first when being left. Luckily I was able to set up some shorter sessions in the lead up to his full contracted hours before I was due to start back at work. If you have time before you are due back at work I would highly recommend this.

Take your cues from the nursery staff: The staff within the nursery are experienced at settling in children and have a wealth of knowledge on how to distract and comfort your child through this transition. I met my son's Key Person at his first settling in session and was also introduced to the rest of the staff for their benefit as much as mine as it's nice to put names to faces. I let them lead me into how long I should leave him for each session and with advice on what to do to help him settle- he ended up taking a comforter in with him, so if you see a child with a wooden spoon walking around he'll be mine!

Keep goodbyes brief: This is the hardest and if I'm honest the most distressing part, for both you and your child. By keeping the drop offs short and positive your child will know what to expect which will in turn make them feel more secure. Linger at the doorway will only upset them more. Give them a kiss and



let them know when you'll be back, for me it's 'I'll see you after tea.' Even aged two and having attended for over a year there is still the occasional morning when I have had to unpeel my son's arms from around my neck as he sobs 'Mummy don't go.' But stay strong. If your little one is anything like mine, within minutes of me walking out the door, he's involved in some activity or other and happy as Larry!

Keep up communication: If you have any worries or problems at any point whether it be regarding the settling in process or anything else, speak up to your Key Person or to the Nursery Manager. They will only be able to help with or solve a problem if they know about it.



The nursery garden is one of the places that my boy loves, there's so much to explore. As his confidence has grown he moves further away from the adults side to do so.



When at home I can see the differences in his evolving understanding of concepts. Here he is counting and sorting my clothes pegs!

