**Bradgate Preschool settling-in policy and procedure**

At Bradgate preschool, we understand that it can be a difficult time for parents/carers to leave their child in a child care setting for the first time, particularly if the child is upset when their parent/carer leaves. We therefore aim to support and work closely with parents to ensure the child settles as quickly as possible.

At Bradgate preschool we want all children to feel safe, happy, and stimulated while in our care as well as feel secure and comfortable with all staff. It is also important to us that parents/carers feel part of the setting and have confidence in knowing that their child’s and their own well-being and safety is paramount to us.

It's natural for children to experience some separation anxiety or adjustment difficulties when starting preschool. However, if these struggles are prolonged or intense, we feel it is crucial to address them proactively through open communication with preschool staff and parents.

We recognise that every child is unique and may require a different level of support

**Before your child’s first session you will have:**

* met the manager and staff and visited the setting with your child,
* signed a PSOU or parent contract and other relevant forms,
* been given information about routines, activities and the environment,
* received a phone call from your child’s key person to introduce themselves and discuss any worries or concerns,
* discussed your child’s:
* Needs, abilities and interests;
* Family background;
* Previous child care experiences (where applicable)
* Preferred calming techniques
* Medical and/or dietary needs;
* Special requirements

**Strategies that may help the settling in process :**

* Talk positively about preschool: Frame it as a fun and exciting place to learn and play
* Acknowledge their feelings: Validate your child's emotions, letting them know it's okay to feel sad or anxious. Avoid dismissing their concerns or rushing them through the transition.
* Encourage independence skills: Practice self-care tasks like putting on coats, using the toilet, and tidying up at home to boost their confidence at preschool.
* Engage in fun activities related to preschool: Read books about starting school,
* Visit the family Hub building, and join any family fun sessions or mother and toddler sessions
* Talk about the preschool practitioners and any classmates they may already know.
* Consider bringing their children in with comfort toys, blankets or soothers to support the transition.

**On your child’s first session:**

It is natural for a child to arrive or become upset when saying goodbye and struggle to leave their parent/carer.

We recommend that parents keep goodbyes brief as this will:

* **Reduce anxiety:**

Prolonged goodbyes can amplify a child's anxiety about separation, making them feel more insecure.

* **Establish routine:**

A consistent, quick goodbye routine helps children understand the separation is temporary and predictable.

* **Promote positive associations:**

Short goodbyes help children associate preschool with a safe and enjoyable environment, rather than anxiety.

* **Support parent's emotional health:**

Lingering can be emotionally taxing for parents as well, and a shorter goodbye can reduce stress.

The preschool staff will provide reassurance and comfort, building trust at the child’s pace.

Regular communication from the child’s key person will be maintained through-out a child’s first session by means of a Tapestry posts and/or messages home. Parents are encouraged to get in touch by phone, email or tapestry post if they are concerned about their child settling in after dropping off.

**If a child struggles to settle:**

We will arrange a meeting with the parent/carer to discuss a settling process that will meet the child and parents individual needs. We will: -

* Consider potential triggers: Think about any changes at home, sensory sensitivities, or developmental stages that might be impacting their ability to adapt.
* Collaborate on solutions: Work together to find approaches that might be more effective for the child's unique needs.

Sometimes, a particular setting or teaching style might simply not align with a child's temperament or learning preferences. In this case we will support parents to explore alternative options, that suit the child and family’s needs. We will also support parents to reach out to relevant professionals where needed.