

Innsworth Preschool Settling-in Procedure

Last Updated: 1st January 2026

1. Purpose and Scope

1.1 Overview: This procedure outlines Innsworth Preschool's approach to settling new children into the setting.

1.2 Objective: The aim is to ensure a secure, supportive, and legally compliant transition for each child by meeting their individual needs, in line with our duties under the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), the Children Act 1989, and the Equality Act 2010.

2. Legal and Statutory Framework

2.1 Compliance: This procedure aligns with the following legislation and guidance:

- The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).
- The Children Act 1989.
- The Equality Act 2010 and the SEND Code of Practice.
- Working Together to Safeguard Children.
- The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.
- Data Protection Act 2018 (UK GDPR): Regarding the recording and retention of settling observations.

3. Our Principles

3.1 Approach: Our approach is child-led and based on a strong partnership with families, within a framework that ensures safety and consistency for the entire group.

4. The 30-Day Trial Period

4.1 Mandatory Trial: The settling-in process forms the start of a mandatory **30-day trial period** for all new placements, as detailed in the Parent-Provider Agreement. This period allows for a mutual assessment of the suitability of the placement. The Manager leads placement decisions; the DSL leads safeguarding decisions. Where both apply, the safeguarding process takes precedence.

4.2 Termination During Trial: During these 30 days, the placement can be terminated by either the parent or the preschool with **48 hours' written notice**.

4.3 Equality Act Compliance & Support Steps: To ensure compliance with the Equality Act 2010, any decision by the preschool to terminate a placement during the trial period will be evidence-based, proportionate, and non-discriminatory. It will be taken only after reasonable adjustments have been explored.

- **Adjustments:** These may include shorter sessions, phased hours, a consistent key person, a comfort plan, visual supports, SENCO input, or an agreed handover routine.
- **Evidence:** We will evidence what was tried and why it did (or did not) work in this setting.

4.4 Funding Liability: For government-funded places, parent liability applies only where funding is withheld or reclaimed by the Local Authority due to:

- Ineligibility;
- Failure to provide/renew a valid code by the deadline; or
- Inaccurate parent declarations. We will not pass on adjustments caused by provider error. Funding is claimed only for eligible attendance delivered in accordance with Local Authority rules.

5. The Key Person Role

5.1 Requirement: The Key Person system is a **core safeguarding and welfare requirement** of the EYFS.

- **Assignment:** Parents will be informed of the name of the Key Person before the child's first session.
- **Role:** The Key Person will lead the settling plan, provide agreed updates, and act as the primary point of contact for parents.
- **Continuity:** A second named 'buddy' will cover Key Person absence to maintain continuity of care.

6. The Settling-in Process

6.1 Step 1 – Pre-start Visit (The "Safety Gate"): All families attend a pre-arranged stay-and-play session. This visit is used to verify safety information via a strict checklist. A child **cannot commence** their first dropped-off session until the Key Person has confirmed the following are in place:

- Enrolment health forms completed and signed.
- Individual Healthcare Plan (IHCP) / Allergy Plan in place (where required).
- Medication received, in date, labelled, and stored per policy (where applicable).
- Consent for administration recorded.
- Photo permission for staff-only allergy board (if used).
- **Deferral:** If any item is missing, the start date is deferred or interim controls are agreed in writing following a risk assessment.

6.2 Step 2 – Initial Settling Sessions: The first few sessions are carefully structured and staff-led. The length and content are flexible and adjusted based on the child's emotional needs.

6.3 Data Protection (Settling Records): Settling records (observations, welfare notes) are processed for the purpose of child welfare and educational support. Access is restricted to the Manager, Key Person, SENCO, and DSL. Records are retained in line with our retention schedule.

7. Separation and Parental Conduct

7.1 Protocols: Separation anxiety is normal. To ensure a smooth transition, we require parents to adhere to the following rules:

- **Positive Handovers:** Handovers should be positive and brief.
- **Parental Access:** To ensure group safeguarding, operational control, and consistency, parents are generally not permitted to remain in child-access areas during sessions.
- **Exceptions:** Any exception is by invitation only, time-limited, supervised, and recorded via risk assessment. We will consider reasonable adjustments that do not compromise safeguarding, supervision, or the running of the session.
- **Manager's Authority:** The Manager makes the operational decision for that session based on safeguarding, ratios, and risk assessment. Parents may request a review meeting; outcomes will be confirmed in writing where appropriate.

8. Managing Individual Preferences in a Group Setting

8.1 Rationale: We value parental input and will always explain the rationale behind our decisions. However, Innsworth Preschool is a **group care setting**.

- **Group Needs:** While we make reasonable efforts to accommodate preferences, our routines are designed to meet the needs of the group as a whole.
- **Final Authority:** The final operational decision on daily provision rests with the **Preschool Manager**, ensuring a consistent and fair environment for all.

9. Communication and Partnership

9.1 Feedback: Staff provide daily feedback to parents. We are committed to an open partnership where parents' concerns are heard and decisions are documented.

9.2 SEND and The Graduated Response: For children with emerging needs, we follow the SEND Code of Practice "Assess-Plan-Do-Review" cycle. Any necessary reasonable adjustments will be planned and reviewed in partnership with parents.

10. Managing Extended Settling-in Periods

10.1 Review: If a child continues to show distress after the initial period, we will arrange a formal review.

10.2 Defining and Recording Distress: To ensure objectivity, "significant and prolonged distress" is defined by crying or withdrawal lasting more than a specific portion of the session (e.g. 30+ minutes), occurring across multiple consecutive sessions, or affecting physical wellbeing (e.g. vomiting).

- **Trigger:** If these criteria are met, we hold a formal settling review and record an action plan.
- **Recording:** Staff will record duration, antecedents, interventions, and recovery time to evidence patterns.

10.3 Adjustments and Funding: We may agree on a temporary reduction in hours or a phased approach. We will explain in writing how any agreed phased hours interact with funded entitlements under current LA rules. Parents remain responsible for maintaining eligibility codes where applicable.

10.4 Unsuccessful Settling (Best Interests): In the rare instance that the group environment continues to cause unmanageable distress despite documented reasonable adjustments (see section

4.3) and the "Assess-Plan-Do-Review" cycle, we reserve the right to terminate the placement if we cannot safely meet the child's needs.

11. Monitoring and Safeguarding

11.1 Trigger: We escalate to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) where distress indicates a safeguarding concern (e.g. disclosures, unexplained injury, fear responses linked to home, or signs of neglect/abuse), or where wellbeing is deteriorating (refusing fluids/food, repeated vomiting, or other health risk). This is managed under our **Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy**.

11.2 Review: This procedure is reviewed annually.

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