



## **Mary's Pre-school Child Care Practice**

### **The role of the key person**

## **Policy & Procedures Document**

Approved by the Board of Trustees on

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# Introduction

## Why we have this policy

We believe that children settle best when they have a key person to relate to, who knows them and their parents well, and who can meet their individual needs. Research shows that a key person approach benefits the child, the parents, the staff and the setting by providing secure relationships in which children thrive, parents have confidence, members of staff are committed and the setting is a happy and dedicated place to attend or work in.

We want children to feel safe, stimulated and happy in the setting and to feel secure and comfortable with staff. We also want parents to have confidence both in their children's well-being and in their own role as active partners with the setting.

Because we aim to make the setting a welcoming place where children settle quickly and easily, consideration has been given to how secure attachments are formed based on the individual needs and circumstances of children and their families.

The key person role is set out in the Welfare Requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage (attached as an appendix). We are committed to offering a key person approach for each child within our setting.

The procedures set out a model for developing a key person approach that promotes effective and positive relationships for children who are in St Mary's Pre-school.

## Our procedures

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- Once families have registered online, the bookings team will offer a place to a family and arrange for any enrollment papers to be passed onto the family.
  - Once this has been done, a key person will be allocated by the Pre-school team and a home visit arranged for two members of staff, one of whom will be the key person, to visit the child at the family home. The aim of this is to meet the parents as partners and the child/ren. We believe that this enables parents and children to meet members of staff in the place where they feel most at ease – at home. It also enables the child to become familiar to and with the key person. The second person checks and gathers further information whilst the key person spends time with the child, with the help of resources brought from the setting.
  - It is at this point that all enrollment records are complete, including information from the child's red book and specification of who will be the familiar person/s dropping off and picking up
  - At this stage a profile about the child is made with the parents in order to aid settling in at the setting with a photo of the child and family;
  - The key person is responsible for the induction of the family and for settling the child into our setting. However, key persons are also there to advise parents on the importance of reading all the policies and procedures of St Mary's Pre-school which can be found on the website and on parent notice boards in the lobby area. Other topics, such as allergies, medication and

emergency information, are discussed as part of the home visit when completing the enrollment form.

- On arrival and greeting at the setting, key persons are to be ready to support and engage with the child/ren and parents from beginning to the end of settling in.
- The key person offers unconditional regard for the child and is non-judgemental. Comforters such as dummies, blankets, favourite toys or bottles are used to bring calm and comfort to the child at what could become a stressful time. Under no circumstances should key persons remove comforters unless the child feels comfortable that they should do so. It is important to take note of the child's lead.
- The key person works with the parent to plan and deliver a personalised plan for the child's well-being, care and learning i.e. discussions with parents to determine any particular routines to be followed to help ensure children settle in well. Considerations of whether the child has any transitional objects are taken into account at this point.
- The key person acts as the key contact for the parents and has links with other carers involved with the child, such as a childminder, and co-ordinates the sharing of appropriate information about the child's development with those carers. A key person is responsible for developmental records and for sharing information on a regular basis with the child's parents to keep those records up-to-date, reflecting the full picture of the child in St Mary's setting and at home. S/he is expected to feedback any information that may be significant towards the child's development through informal discussions, reports and morning or end of day pick-up. Reports/assessments are to be written with clarity and must represent the child in line with the Early Years Foundation Document.
- The key person encourages positive relationships between children in her/his key group, spending time with them as a group each day. Key times are lunch, snack and quiet times, which are used to reflect and promote positive relations with peers, building a secure base with the key person. Key persons are to be the initial link to encourage a child to explore, take risks and encourage the child to experience new learning experiences with opportunities for extension.
- We provide a back-up key person, whom we call a co-key person, so the child and the parents have a key contact in the absence of the child's key person. Often if the key person is not available the co-key person would ensure the child's personal needs are being met and would keep the child 'in mind' throughout the session. They would also ensure information is shared with the parents on the day. Key persons are to be aware they have a duty of care and responsibility for all the children within the setting and must clearly communicate to colleagues or through the communication book significant information relating to children and families.

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### **The role of the key person when settling in**

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- Before a child starts to attend St Mary's Pre-school, we use a variety of ways to provide his/her parents with information. These include written information via a hard copy of our prospectus as well as the web site [www.marys.org.uk](http://www.marys.org.uk) and policies. The information contains more details about displays used, activities available within the setting, information sessions and individual meetings with parents as well as consents.

- A profile about the child made at the home visit with a photo of the child and family is added to the display notice boards. In addition, the child's name will be put on pegs, individual drawers, placemats and book bags.
  - The key person welcomes and looks after the child and his/her parents at the child's first session and during the settling-in process and ensures that the child knows where they can keep their personal items, such as comfort items. The child is shown the various areas of the setting and parents and children are shown the key person boards so as to see who else is within that key group.
  - When a child starts to attend, we explain the process of settling in with his/her parents and jointly decide on the best way to help the child to settle into the setting. This is in line with our settling in policy and our parents' welcome pack.
  - We have an expectation that the parent, carer or close relative will stay for most of the sessions during the first week, gradually taking time away from their child, increasing this as and when the child is able to cope. This time varies from child to child.
  - We judge a child to be settled when they have formed a secure attachment with their key person which provides them with a secure base from which to explore; for example, the child looks for the key person when he/she arrives, goes to them for comfort, and seems pleased to be with them. The child should also be familiar with where things are and be pleased to see other children and participate in activities.
  - When parents leave, we ask them to say goodbye to their child and explain that they will be coming back, and when.
  - We recognise that some children will settle more readily than others but that some children who appear to settle rapidly are not ready to be left. We expect that the parent will honour the commitment to stay for at least the first week, or possibly longer, until their child can stay happily without them.
  - We do not believe that leaving a child to cry will help them to settle more quickly. We believe that a child's distress will prevent them from learning and gaining the best from the setting. (This is not to say children will not cry on the initial separation as every child is unique)
  - We reserve the right not to accept a child into the setting without a parent or carer if the child finds it distressing to be left. This is especially the case with very young children.
  - Within the first four to six weeks of starting, we shall discuss and work with the child's parents to start to create the record of their child's achievement .
  - All children will receive a scrap book on accepting a place with us which we call 'All About Me'. We ask parents to support us in gathering information about the child, including family photos, which supports us in sharing something familiar with the child at the setting.
  - Parents will also receive a link to a digital observation system used by the pre-school for assessing the child's development. Parents will be encouraged to attend a workshop in order to become familiar with this tool and be encouraged to download the app for home preschool sharing.
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## Benefits of home visits

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- Parents and children often feel more relaxed in their own home, and parents appreciate having time to talk on a one-to-one basis. It helps to develop a relationship and build trust in a more relaxed environment. After a home visit, parents often feel more confident in approaching a practitioner with comments and questions. The closer relationship should also encourage families to be more inclined to take part in the workshop sessions, events and trips offered by the setting.
  - Children always remember and talk about a home visit long after the event; it is a special occasion in their lives and enhances the practitioner-child relationship. Digital photographs can be taken of the visit (with permission) and used, with the child, to recall the event. Seeing a child in their home environment can also help to explain certain behaviour patterns and interests.
  - Home visits help to break down stereotypes as practitioners gain knowledge about varied family practices, cultures and histories; they learn that all families are very different. Having greater knowledge about a child's home and family also enables a practitioner to 'tune in' to the child and have more meaningful conversations. This is particularly useful for children who have speech and language needs or who are in the very early stages of learning English as an additional language. During a visit, practitioners can discover what learning activities are already taking place in the home – whether the child has favourite books, likes particular videos, goes out on visits, cooks regularly. Information may also be gathered on who else might be able to support home learning – fathers, grandparents, older siblings, other relatives.
  - Home visits can be used to model positive interaction, working together with parents and children to re-tell stories, play games, sing rhymes or listen to stories on tape in the home language. A game, activity or tape can be used – or started and left with the family to repeat or complete. Parents can also be supported to think through how to manage certain aspects of behaviour at home, and strategies can be planned between home and the setting.
  - There may be some families who do not want a home visit and this will be respected. In such cases, a one to one meeting will be organised within the setting instead. Home visits will be planned to allow enough time to ensure the visit does not feel rushed.
  - The family will be told who to expect in advance of the visit and the time for arrival. The key person will gather equipment to take, for example something for the child to play with, a story book or maths game to share and a digital camera. The visit will be friendly and relaxed, with time available for the key person to share some information about the setting, listen to parents and children carefully, and follow up on what they say and ask.
  - The settings risk assessment for home visits will be adhered to for safety reasons.
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## Appendix – (EYFS) Early Years Foundation Stage key themes and commitments

A Unique Child	Positive Relationships	Enabling Environments	Learning and Development
Inclusive practice Keeping safe Health and well-being	Parents as partners Key person	Supporting every child The learning environment	Personal, social and emotional development

There are six critical issues in being a key person to a child/family:

### 1. Being a key person – what it means

- Children learn to be strong and independent from a base of loving and secure relationships with parents and/or a key person. The Statutory Framework states: ‘Each child must be assigned a key person. Their role is to help ensure that every child’s care is tailored to meet their individual needs. (EYFS Statutory Framework p22,23)
- In accordance with paragraph 1.10 (p.10) to help the child become familiar with the setting, offer a settled relationship for the child and build a relationship with their parents. They should also help families engage with more specialist support if appropriate.
- In addition key persons must have sufficient understanding of English to ensure the well-being of children their care. E.g. They must be able to keep records in English, be able to liaise with other agencies and follow safety instructions.

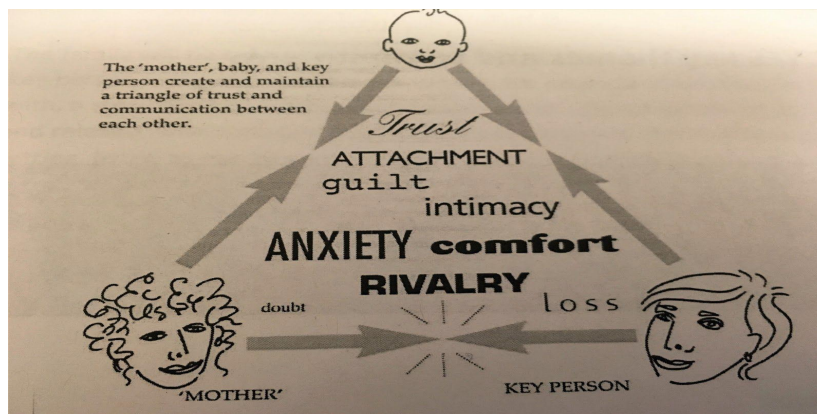
### What it does not mean

- That the key person must be there all the time – this is not physically possible.
- That the child cannot interact with other staff in the Preschool – the key person should help this not hinder it.
- To support this we have a co-key person system which enables the child to have continuity within the setting.

### 2. Why it matters so much for children, staff and parents

- Physical and emotional ‘holding’ is essential. Emotionally holding a child in mind is vital. It encompasses remembering their individual needs as well as supporting them through separation, building their confidence and other important aspects that support their learning. For more information see <https://www.sirenfilms.co.uk/product/attachments-key-people-development/>

### 3. Getting close to children should not happen unless parents are closely involved



Goldschmied, E. (2011)

- Partnership is essential - a critical factor in determining the emotional impact of nursery is how nursery and home help the child manage transitions. Ahnert, L. & Lamb, M.E. (2003)

### 4. Making it happen – getting to grips with the organisational realities

- Attention is paid to how we organise, whether at lunch time, with our co-key person system, intimate care, home visiting, room arrangements / deployment of staff

### 5. Making it happen – getting to grips with the personal realities

- Personal feelings and reactions to the key person approach are inevitable from parents and children. It is important to recognise we are real human beings working in real situations and people react in various different ways that can sometimes make them feel threatened

### 6. Professional practices

- Professional practices which matter this much take time to develop and grow, so it is important to build team confidence and trust so we can talk about the things that go wrong as well as those that go well.
- The team must be able to come together in a professional manner and this takes

practice References:

Elfer P., Goldschmied E. and Selleck D.Y. (2011). Key Persons in the Early Years: Building relationships for quality provision in early years settings and primary schools. Routledge. Ahnert, L. & Lamb, M.E. (2003). Shared care: Establishing a balance between home and childcare setting. Child Development, 74(4), 1044-1049.

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