

09 Early Years Practice Procedures

09.05 Establishing children's starting points

Our Approach

Every child starts nursery with their own unique experiences, skills, interests, and abilities. To help children feel settled and make the best possible progress, we take time to understand where each child is starting from.

This allows us to provide care and learning that is right for each child from the very beginning.


Why Starting Points Matter

Establishing starting points helps us to:

- Support children to settle confidently
- Identify strengths, interests, and needs
- Recognise any barriers to learning
- Plan teaching and care tailored to the unique child
- Ensure meaningful progress

When Starting Points Are Established

- Starting points begin to be gathered from the very first contact with parents at induction.
- Information is collected during the settling-in period.
- Staff do not wait to see how a child settles before gathering information.

 All information is recorded within 4–6 weeks of the child's official start date, and sooner where possible.

The Role of the Key Person

Every child's key person is responsible for establishing their starting points by gathering information through:

 Observation

- Watching the child during settling-in visits
- Noticing how they play, communicate, move, and interact

Parent Discussions

- Talking with parents/carers about:
 - What the child enjoys
 - What they can already do
 - Any worries or concerns

Existing Information

- Using details from:
 - Registration forms
 - “All About Me” questionnaires

Assessing Learning & Development

- The key person makes a ‘best fit’ judgement about the age band each child is working within.
- This is based on Development Matters guidance.
- Evidence is gathered from more than one source, such as:
 - Parent comments
 - Observations during settling-in

The key person records where evidence came from to ensure assessments are accurate and balanced.

If Additional Support Is Needed

- If the initial assessment shows that a child may need extra support, we follow: Procedure 09.13 – Identification, assessment and support for children with SEND
- Parents are involved at every stage, and support is put in place as early as possible.

Working Together

Parents play a vital role in helping us understand their child. These insights help ensure each child receives the best possible start, emotionally, socially, and academically.