

# Belmont Nursery School

## Settling In Policy



**Date Reviewed & Signature of Principal: *Anne Burke, October 2025***

**Date Ratified by Chairperson & Signature: *Sean T Murphy, October 2025***

**Review Date: *October 2026***

*This policy has been written following a consultation process, ratified by the Board of Governors and communicated to the school community as required. It will be monitored and reviewed as part of the school's policy review schedule.*

Belmont Nursery School provides a friendly, secure, safe and caring environment for all our children. Every child will experience a rich variety of activities which will be stimulating, challenging and enjoyable. The curriculum is structured to provide progression for all levels of ability and all rates of development. Recognition will be given to those children who have special educational needs.

## **Aim**

\*To make the children feel happy and secure in their new environment in the absence of their parent/carer.

\*To make the children feel confident to explore and experiment in the physical environment.

\*To help the children to develop independence in the new environment and freely access all the resources.

\*To support the children to develop positive relationships with both adults and other children in the setting.

\*To help children to communicate their needs to others in an appropriate way.

\*To promote appropriate behaviour, with clear expectations and positive reinforcements.

\*To work in partnership with parents in their children's learning.

\*To support and build upon the children's prior experiences and knowledge gained in their home environment.

\*To encourage and welcome open and honest communication between staff and parents.

### **As a staff we aim to:**

\*Show empathy and sensitivity towards new parents/carers and children.

\*Be responsive and flexible by taking into account the individual needs of the children and parents/carers.

\*Take time and space to get to know new children and their parents/carers whilst they are settling in.

\*Organise and manage the environment in such a way that the children can operate independently, safely and imaginatively.

## **The Procedure**

All children take different amounts of time to settle into a new routine, a new environment and to get used to new people. At Belmont Nursery School we settle children slowly and carefully to ensure they feel secure and comfortable with the changes they are experiencing. Slow but sure rules the way!

During open day which is held in late June parents and children are invited into the school to spend some time playing in the nursery environment and getting to know the staff. During open day parents will be asked to complete relevant paperwork on site. This paperwork provides important information to help staff to get to know the children and their needs. Parents are issued with the relevant information including the child's starting schedule - this details times the child will attend for the first 6 weeks but may change dependent on how children are settling. We aim to have children settled before the 6 weeks if possible.

If a child has a SEN, they are invited in for an additional play opportunity during June. This allows the Principal to assess the level of support the child might require and which SEN Assistant is best suited to each child.

Children start nursery usually during late August. We encourage the children to attend on their own from the word 'go' as we find it makes for an easier transition from home to school in the long run. The first settling in phase usually requires children to attend for 1-1½ hours at a time in a group of 13 children. This will continue for 2-3 weeks depending on how the child settles. The teacher will gradually build up the children's time and the size of the groups by merging the 2 groups until they are in their full time hours.

We encourage all parents to follow the routine, being on time for nursery school and always collecting them on time. Attending nursery school regularly is really important as long absences or breaks in the routine mean that your child gets confused and may become more unsettled.

When saying goodbye to the child we encourage parents/carers to try not to linger as this can only make the situation worse. If a child is in it's parent's arms and upset we ask permission to lift the child from them and try to distract the child with resources and other children. Children may cry when they see a parent go, but as long as they know that the parent is coming back and on time they will soon learn to trust the situation and settle down more easily to enjoy their day. If the parent is distressed, we encourage them to WhatsApp the class mobile to see how the child has settled. We reassure all parents that if a child is not settling, we will contact them, we will not have a child upset at school.

Children are admitted to school in two different groups, red heart and yellow star, for 1-1.5hrs five days per week. (Parents will be given a starting schedule before the summer. Depending on how the children settle in this procedure will carry on for a few weeks until both groups are merged together. However some children may not be ready for this stage and the teacher will advise parents/carers and make alternative arrangements.

The majority of children 'settle in' to Belmont Nursery School by the end of half term. If a child still needs support to help them to feel secure, safe and happy in the nursery, we continue to work closely with the parents/carers to help enable their child to feel confident within the setting.

## Some Settling In Strategies

- Ask mum or Dad to go to Tesco for biscuits for snack. Ask child's permission to allow them to go for "five" minutes. Make sure parent knows we don't need biscuits! See how child copes on their own.
- Use a phone as if you are having a conversation with mummy. "Your mummy says she would like you to ... and she will be back soon."
- Help child be with a friend or small group based on interests which you will have ascertained at settling in interview. Give child train if they love trains.
- A walk around the garden will often help – look at trees, pick an apple as a present for Mum or Dad... Be aware of Child Protection. If no other child or staff member is out stay in view of open area
- Assign a nursery assistant /volunteer to a child so they can build a strong bond with the child.
- Tell the child often how wonderful you think they are – beautiful hair, lovely manners, lovely trainers...
- Use Jenny as an empathy doll to model the behaviours the child is displaying e.g. crying, wailing, stamping, grabbing toys. This may encourage the child to really think about its effect on others. Tell the child when Jenny behaves like this it makes everyone feel sad, frightened...
- Use positive targets and reinforcement – reward charts/stickers
- Child can bring in a favourite item from home to keep in their tray
- Use a social story. "Once upon a time there was a little girl called.... She cried and cried but couldn't tell her teachers what was making her sad. One day she was able to say why she was sad. Her teachers helped her and now she is the happiest little girl in the school."
- Keep a continuous dialogue with the parents so if the session length has to be reduced they understand why.
- Reduce session time – Draw up a Risk Management Plan if required.
- Enlist the help of a significant adult to stay with the child. (This can be positive and may be a solution for some children.)
- If behaviour does not respond to strategies after a period of 4-8 weeks then implement the Special Needs Policy. In consultation with parents draw up an Individual Education Plan.

**We have found from many years of experience that rushing this process doesn't save time in the long term. Children are happier when they feel secure.**

Children have a busy day at nursery school and to make the most effective use of time, both the children's and staff, children should be fully toilet trained before starting Nursery School.

Children who cannot use the toilet on their own will not be admitted for their full hours until they are independent with their toileting needs.

We hold a 'Settling-in Review', seven to eight weeks after the child initially starts, to discuss with the parent/carer how their child has settled in and how they are making progress, as well as how they can support their child at home

A 'Settling In' questionnaire is given to all new parents after seven to eight weeks to gather feedback and to ensure we are doing all we can to make the process as smooth and happy as possible.