



## Settling your Child



Leaving your son or daughter for a few hours at pre-school maybe something you have been concerned about, especially if they are not used to being without you. Children who have experience of being looked after by others realise that mummy/daddy/carer does come back – and that they can even have fun without mummy/daddy too! If you have someone you are happy to leave your child with it might be a good idea to practise this for the odd half-hour or hour - maybe do the shopping without distractions - to help your son or daughter understand that you will be back for them.

Stepping Stones' staff are trained to cope with children who feel upset and emotional about the separating process; an event which can sometimes be just as difficult for mum or dad as it can be for children; most children can be distracted by some thoughtful interaction from a key carer once mum / dad / carer is out of sight.

Our policy is to take the settling process at the pace that feels right for your child and also for you, their parent - as you know your child best of all. Children can also pick up on parents' emotions and concerns so we would like you to feel reassured and at ease with your decision. You are welcome to stay with your child to observe our sessions and give your child reassurance as they familiarise themselves with our environment and routine.

If your child has a comfort object then please bring it along as this will provide familiarity and comfort when needed – please let us know if it has a special name so that we can respond appropriately. Whilst we do not particularly encourage the use of dummies at pre-school if you always use one to help comfort your child please do not stop using one at the same time as your son/daughter starts pre-school until they have learnt to calm down through other means. This also applies to toilet training. It is a good idea to do this sometime before they begin pre-school or once they have been settled in for a few weeks. It could be expecting a little too much for children to manage a new skill such as toilet training or having other changes in their life at the same time as beginning pre-school.

We try to find out some special personal details to help children feel comfortable and familiar with us – names of their siblings, nick-names used, pets names and favourite toys, which children find comforting and reassuring.

We advise that you always talk about pre-school in a positive tone and it is a good idea to use the same routine each time you come to pre-school. Tell children in a positive tone that they will be able to play, paint etc and that mummy/daddy/carer will be back before/after lunch time. Help your child locate their peg, hang up their coat, and either leave your child with a member of staff or help them to find a cushion before saying a short but positive goodbye. Either way, once you have told your son/daughter you are leaving we recommend you leave *right away* – staff will support children and this sets up a positive pattern. Long goodbyes or lingering can quickly become emotional episodes for parent and child. However, all children

are different and whilst this works well for most children, we will always try to adapt and tailor the settling process to suit each child. (Don't forget to sign in!)

Mornings can be a bit busy so if you know your child becomes upset try not to arrive too early as they may become more concerned the longer they have to wait.

If your child is upset staff will be able to deal with the situation sensitively and thoughtfully but children can become more upset if they can still see mummy or daddy which can make it even more distressing for them. Nine times out of ten it is the actual process of separating that causes most anxiety, for both parent and child. Once parents have left the building children usually settle quickly with thoughtful intervention from staff. Parents can also find this process quite upsetting and we are here to support and reassure you also. We will telephone you after half an hour or so to let you know how things are going and a member of staff will update you at the end of the session, when you will be able to ask any questions you may have. Please be reassured that whatever happens, no doubt we will have seen or heard it before, please don't feel like it is 'only you'.