

SURVEYING THE SECTOR



Are you getting things off to a good start for families? **Dr Jo Verrill** shares key headlines from recent research, and Laura Henry gives her thoughts on successful settling-in strategies...

Autumn is a busy time of year for early years settings welcoming new children and helping them settle into their new environments. At Ceeda, we recently introduced 'settling-in surveys' for early years organisations across the country to help in this vital process. Parents' views are captured and instantly fed back into practice at what is a critical time for families and staff alike.

Since introducing the research in May 2013, 895 parents have given feedback on their experience of settling their child at nursery. For the vast majority, this is a very positive experience with almost one in two parents (49%) rating their overall satisfaction an impressive 10 out of 10 and 87% saying their child is settled (54%) or very settled (33%).

Looking in detail at the feedback received, presented in the table on this page, very high levels of satisfaction are recorded for the friendliness and approachability of early years staff (9.27 out of a maximum score of 10) and the reassurance and support they provide (9.26).

Satisfaction dips slightly around the input of senior managers, though it still reaches a positive average score of 8 out of 10. Parents would welcome occasional 'keep in touch' contact with senior managers in addition to daily input from their child's regular carers.

Parents' thirst for feedback cannot be underestimated and this is particularly acute at the settling-in stage. With an average rating of 8.96 out of 10, many families are happy that they feel in touch and involved with what happens during their child's day. Open feedback highlights a need to avoid formulaic daily reports with a heavy focus on sleep, nutrition and toileting. Parents particularly value personalised feedback on children's activities, experiences and behaviours.

Successful settling

How can settings improve their approach to settling? In the view of early years expert



Laura Henry (pictured, laurahenryconsultancy.com), there are a number of key factors. "The settling-in period is a crucial time for child, parents and the key person to build a rapport and begin lasting personal relationships," she says. "It's imperative that the key person gets to know the child and the parent. This can be done by enabling the key person and child to have an initial meeting, as a 'getting-to-know-you period'; by finding out about the child's likes, passions and routines, and the key person discussing how the nursery will support the child. I've devised a useful template for key persons to use with their new key children, called 'my personal page'. Using this, parents can clearly state how their child needs to be supported and what is important to their child.

"The settling-in period should go at the child's pace. Some children will settle within two weeks, others take longer. Progress should be communicated honestly and sensitively to parents, and practitioners should be mindful of the age, stage and ability of the child.

"Some nurseries carry out a home visit; some extend this by having the key person take the child out on visits, for example, to the local park. This is a positive way to start the key person relationship and the getting-to-know-you process for everyone involved.

Settling in How well are we doing in ensuring that:	Average score out of 10
Staff are friendly, approachable and make your family feel welcome	9.27
Staff have been supportive and reassuring during the settling in period	9.26
You received all the information you needed when your child first joined us	9.00
The nursery manager keeps in touch with you to check you are happy and your family's needs are being met	8.00
We respond promptly and effectively to any issues or queries you have had whilst settling in	9.12
You feel in touch and informed about how well your child is settling in and getting on at nursery	8.96
Overall how satisfied have you been with our service during this settling in period?	9.06

Source: Ceeda settling in survey benchmark
Averages are calculated across all cases answering the question

Base: 895 surveys returned in the period 01/05/13 to 31/08/14

"Remember, every nursery should have a transparent key person and settling-in policy, which staff need to be aware of and share with parents. The settling-in period is all about keeping the child's needs central at all times."

find out more

Dr Jo Verrill is director at Ceeda. To find out more about Ceeda research services, you can email her at enquiries@ceeda.co.uk or call 0845 680 0631. Visit ceeda.co.uk or share your thoughts on this month's focus by tweeting @ceeda_uk

EVERY NURSERY SHOULD HAVE A TRANSPARENT KEY PERSON AND SETTLING-IN POLICY, WHICH STAFF NEED TO BE AWARE OF AND SHARE WITH PARENTS