

# Sunflowers Day Nursery

## Our Key Person Approach

### Summary of Policy:

This Policy includes information about:

- The background of a Key Person Approach
- Sunflowers rationale behind our Key Person Approach
- How our approach meets the requirements of the EYFS
- What our Key Person Approach means in practice.

Responsibilities for each staff member include:

- Developing strong and trusting relationships with the children you work with regularly.
- Building up professional and open relationships with parents.
- Knowing each child's interests and how each child learns, this includes having high expectations of each child's learning and development.
- Meeting each child's emotional needs and being available when they need to 'check in'. Understanding the importance of this.
- Understanding the importance of our Key Person approach and Attachment Theory.
- Ensuring that familiar Key staff are meeting a child's physical needs and intimate care needs.
- Ensuring that the arrival and departure of each child is treated with utmost importance, diligence, care and respect.

# Sunflowers Day Nursery

## Our Key Person Approach – Guidance, background, procedure and policy.

Research has shown that children benefit greatly when they have formed a secure attachment to key adults within their lives. In addition to parents, carers or significant family members, key adults may also be staff working closely with your child at Nursery. Attachments can be described as emotional bonds which young people develop with key people in their lives.

The term 'Key Person' became popular in 1994 when Elinor Goldschmied and Sonia Jackson wrote a book called 'People Under 3 – young children in day care'. It was used to describe work which goes on in nurseries and other childcare settings to develop relationships between key adults and the children they care for.

Traditionally and in most day care settings one person would have the responsibility of developing a 'key person' relationship with a small group of children. This is often backed up with a 'buddy' or a second person who can step in and cover at times of staff illness and holidays etc.

At Sunflowers, we have done much research and trialled different methods of adapting a key person approach to fully meet the needs of the role and most importantly meet the needs of the children in our care. We believe that our current method is the most secure we have developed.

Sunflowers Day Nursery is open from 7.30am to 6.00pm Monday to Friday and staff work a variety of shifts to meet the needs of the business, to be able to meet the needs of their own families and home life and most importantly to be able to meet the needs of the children in our care. We are also flexible in the care we offer the children, meaning that parents are able to book extra days or swap days as their needs change.

For us, our intention is to provide a true 'Key Person' Relationship for the children – this is a relationship which is trusting, consistent and dependable. Through previous practice, we have found it detrimental to have a child develop a key and dependent relationship with one particular member of staff – we have found that this can cause anxiety for the child when that particular staff member is off ill or on holiday, that the start and the end of shifts are difficult to manage when there will undoubtedly be times when a child arrives and their designated key person is not at work due to shift patterns. Maintaining a buddy system to fill the gaps has not always been successful.

Our main focus has been to look upon the relationships which children in our care have with the staff who are caring for them. We know that developing positive relationships which support positive attachment influence a child's all round immediate development and the development of future relationships.

We know that if children are able to explore their immediate environment whilst having the security of a key person close by, they will feel more settled and happy and be more confident to explore and become confident learners.

We know it is important that the babies and children have the consistency of key staff working with them who know them, their family, their routine, and adults who are able to 'tune in' to each child to anticipate their needs – both physically and emotionally.

With all this in mind we have developed our Key Person system which is grounded in research, practice, reality, reasoning and the specific knowledge of each child which is needed for our approach to be a success.

## **Our Key Person Approach and the EYFS:**

### **In the EYFS (2024) it states:**

1.19 All children deserve high quality early education and care. This requires a quality workforce. A well-trained, skilled team of practitioners can help every child achieve the best possible educational outcomes. Children need to build an attachment with their **key person** for their confidence and well-being. The **key person** also promotes children's learning by developing a deep understanding of their individual needs and children can particularly benefit from their modelling and support.

3.41 – 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 (in accordance with 1.19) to help the child become familiar with the setting, offer a settled relationship for the child and build a relationship with their parents and/or carers. They should also help families engage with more specialist support if appropriate.

### **At Sunflowers we meet this requirement by ensuring:**

All staff have the responsibility to build a professional relationship with parents – this means that any parent can speak to any member of staff about their child's care and individual needs, and that member of staff would be able to either a) signpost them to the right member of staff who works with their child or b) pass the information on to the right member of staff at the first opportunity.

We are a small team and each member of the team is valued and has gone through a thorough recruitment, induction and on-going in-house training to ensure that everyone understands the importance of the key person relationship and attachment in practice.

We have key staff who consistently work in key areas of nursery – each of these staff have the responsibility of building up trusting and meaningful relationships with the children they care for and their families. This means that there will ALWAYS be a member of staff working directly with the children who knows them well. This means that – even at times of unexpected staff illness or absence, staff holidays or additional bookings for a particular child there will ALWAYS be someone working who has worked hard to build up a relationship, someone whom the child trusts, and someone whom the child knows, who they can check in with for reassurance and comfort.

Our Key person system is well established – it endorses relationships and trust, it enables children to form specific secure attachments within the setting and promotes well-being and independence on every level.

Due to the nature of the staffing and rotas within the nursery it means that the children come into contact with staff from other rooms regularly – whilst having the security of their key staff being close by – which means transitions within the nursery environment are easier. The staff all work hard to ensure the children are emotionally prepared for any changes which may happen on a day to day basis. This includes transitions such as a child attending other settings and also the big transition to school.

Our key person system works in a way that any key member of staff, at any point can observe and assess a child's development and add to their developmental records with confidence. A child's developmental records are based on the knowledge and experience of several members of staff which makes for a broader, more holistic point of view - whilst being overseen by the Lead Practitioner for that room for consistency.

Our key person system also endorses the need for all physical needs such as nappy changing, toileting, feeding and dressing and other intimate care needs to be provided by a core team of key staff – who will always have built up a trusting relationship with the child beforehand. This system also works well in practice and ensures that our Key Person approach is tried and tested and is not superficial.

## **Our Practice:**

We need to ensure that our systems are working well. For this to happen staff need to have clear and consistent guidelines and we need to evaluate the effectiveness of our approach from time to time.

This is done as follows:

- Staffing in rooms should remain consistent where practicably possible. This includes staffing to cover holidays and sickness. This also includes staffing at the beginning and end of each day. The needs of the children attending nursery on a specific day will always come first.
- Lead Practitioners within each room have the responsibility for ensuring that all staff are building up loving and secure relationships with the children in our care and their families. Lead Practitioners will work with all staff to develop this, to identify children who specific staff may not know as well as others and to work with them to endorse relationships. This includes being proactive at drop off and pick up times and ensuring less confident staff are supported to develop relationships with parents and take part in feedback and information collecting. This is an important task each day.
- Lead Practitioners and Level 3 staff will ensure that each child's intimate care needs, such as nappy changing, toileting, getting dressed, sleep times and meals times are supported by staff members who know the children well. New staff will be supported through developing relationships with all children and will shadow other staff members prior to being expected to do these tasks alone. (see Safeguarding and Supervision Policies also). A 'new' member of staff may simply be a member of staff who is new to working in a particular room – we must make sure we do not assume that they know the children well or have already established a secure bond with a particular child. This needs careful monitoring and good team working.
- All staff to ensure they build up trusting and professional relationships with the parents of the children in our care. We must ensure that the parents know which staff are working with their children each day and that parents know who they can talk to about any particular need their child has (medication for example) or about any concerns or questions they may have about their child's development. This is done through information on each child's daily sheet, through verbal communication and through information displayed in each of the rooms at Nursery.
- Staff must acknowledge that sometimes children need time to just 'be' - this is often a time when children further develop key relationships – time for a story, time for a quiet moment to sit and chat or to have a hug. Lead Practitioners and Level 3 staff must ensure that the room is set up with a specific place for quiet time and a comfortable area – particularly the baby room, that an area is set up where a child and a key adult can spend time together.
- Key staff must make sure that they are readily available for a child to 'check in' with throughout the day – this will enable children to explore their environment fully and engage in different learning opportunities whilst having the security of a key adult close by if they feel anxious or if intimate care was needed.
- When a child first starts Sunflowers, care must be taken to allow these key relationships to develop. The Lead Practitioner in each room is responsible for creating a system which works for that child, giving the child the chance to explore and investigate the environment whilst mum/dad/carer are close by and by ensuring that key staff are available - both physically and emotionally to make new relationships and find out about the child, their routine, their family and their likes and dislikes, - this must be done in partnership with mum/dad/carer.
- Specific observations must take place regularly to continue to assess the effectiveness of our key person system and to observe the depth of relationships and the understanding of staff members within each room. This will be done through peer observation, direct observation of the children, monitoring of development and through parental questionnaires.
- This policy is a working document and will be reviewed for effectiveness and workability regularly.

**Policy reviewed March 2026 HCK**