PSED - Making Relationships



An Early Years Curriculum Document

The Lilycroft and St Edmund's Nursery Schools' Federation, Bradford

Making Relationships

The Importance of Early Relationships

Loving, stable and responsive relationships are fundamental to every child's development. Through relationships, children learn how to think, understand, communicate, behave, express emotions and develop social skills. Children's relationships shape the way they see the world and affect all areas of their development. Through relationships with parents, other family members and carers, children learn about their world.

Transitions

Transitions are opportunities for professional dialogue both within the Nursery and with those from home. This enables new carers/educators to begin to get to know a child, providing an excellent starting point from which to begin to build the new relationships that will become an essential part of ensuring the best experience of Nursery possible for every child.

The Transition Process

Effective transition is a process rather than an event and should be planned as such. Numerous visits over time enable children and their families to become as familiar as possible with where children are going and with whom they will be building relationships before any move actually takes place. The school does not have a "one size fits all" approach to transition as every child's circumstances are different. To begin to build a relationship with a new key person may take much longer for some than others, and the aim is to facilitate as many visits as are necessary. If the transition process is carried out in a sensitive way, it will have a positive impact on how children cope with future transitions and also on how they build relationships with new people as they move through life.

Home Visits

Home Visits provide the initial contact between a key person, a child and their family. This is when staff see a child in their home environment and the child sees staff being accepted into their home by their family. Staff become, in a sense, part of their "tribe" and trust begins to build. Practitioners learn about each child and their family life to set the foundations for positive, professional relationships. Every family is unique, so home visits provide an essential opportunity for learning about individual circumstances in order to tailor specific support for the whole family.

Building Family Connections

Transition visits are also important for families. The goal is for family members to meet all the adults that will be working with their child and for them to start to build positive, trusting and respectful relationships. This is an opportunity for families to see how everything works, to ask questions and be reassured that their child will be well looked after. It is important that families are made to feel valued and welcomed and to know that staff are there for the whole family, not just the child.



The Key Person's role

The Importance of the Key Person

The Key Person's role is vital in supporting the development of young children's early relationships. The key person is an important role model for the child who they can relate to and rely on, forming a secure attachment. From birth, babies and young children are reliant on adults in their lives and the kind of attachments that they have with them will, for young children, form an early picture of relationships. It will impact on how they interact with others and how they feel about themselves.



Building Secure Attachments

This is why it is crucial that babies and young children develop a secure attachment with a caring, loving and responsive adult. A key person who is attentive and knows their children well will be able to effectively support their personal, social and emotional development.

Parents know their children the best and in order for a practitioner to gain very good knowledge of the children they work with, it is imperative to have a close, professional and respectful relationship with families.

Communication and Relationship Management

The key to this is a continuous, good communication with parents, not just during Home Visits, Transitions or at Better Together meetings, but on a daily basis such as at drop off and pick up times. Sometimes an assigned key person is not the one that a child develops the closest relationship with. It is important to recognise this and change a child's key person if necessary, letting the child develop the relationship with the person they have grown attached to.







Valuing Diversity and Inclusion

A commitment to valuing and respecting the diversity of individuals, families and communities is essential in ensuring that all children experience a sense of belonging and feel valued and respected.

It is vital for all children and their families to be included and for difference to be celebrated.

Every child is unique.

When they arrive in our setting, every child brings with them a rich heritage; their homes, families, life experiences and beliefs provide the bedrock to their identity and if we are to build successful relationships with our children and their families, we need to ensure that we find out as much as we can about them.

This is not just about gathering information about families, but wanting to know more about their culture, background and family dynamics in a gentle, respectful and non-intrusive manner.

Practitioners need to be available for parents, listen to their worries and concerns and provide support.

It is also important that early years practitioners are aware of the significant physical, emotional and cognitive barriers many children encounter in accessing early education.

Low socio-economic status, mistrust of the establishment, lack of access to play experiences, overcrowded living conditions, parental illiteracy, etc. all take a toll.

Practitioners should acknowledge the unique situations that families find themselves in, and plan to lessen the effects of these barriers by offering additional opportunities.







0-2 Room

Babies enjoy and seek the company of others so it is important that adults offer loving, warm and consistent care and interactions, making good eye contact and handling babies gently and respectfully.

Babies show their social readiness by face watching, following the movement and changing facial expressions in response to others.

Babies draw others into social interaction through calling, crying and babbling, smiling, laughing and moving their bodies and limbs, showing a deep drive to know more about people and their world.

Practitioners will know their children well and be able to tune into babies' early communication skills, responding appropriately.

Songs and rhymes provide a great opportunity to engage young children in communication, making eye contact, copying facial expressions and body actions and having fun together, which of course, contributes positively to building strong relationships.





Babies display attachment behaviours such as wanting to stay near to their close carers, checking where they are and protesting when separated, so it is very important to build close relationships with babies and young children through respectful interactions and taking things slowly.

Building positive relationships is vital for children's learning and development and it should take priority over everything else.

Practitioners will always explain what is going to happen and invite babies' participation.

They will be physically and emotionally available and provide a secure base for babies and young children to feel secure and supported in their play and independent explorations.

We accept that very young children need security and allow them to stay close by if they are feeling insecure or anxious.

After a period of separation (i.e. a holiday), caregivers may have to focus on regaining the baby or young child's trust by remaining available to them constantly until they feel secure again.

Only when they feel secure will babies begin to explore confidently and are more likely to engage with new or challenging situations.

Young children enjoy playing alone and alongside others and are interested in being together and playing with other children.

Practitioners will be on hand to support social interactions between children and model gentleness and kindness in interactions with children and each other.





Practitioners will help toddlers to understand each other's thoughts and needs by suggesting useful phrases, commenting on what might be going on in their minds and modelling respectful and considerate responses during play.

We will cultivate a sense of belonging by involving all children in welcoming and caring for one another and through shared experiences such as mealtimes, singing and having stories together.



2-3 Room

Young children will start to form relationships with special people but may show anxiety in the presence of strangers. Practitioners in 2-3s will continue to provide children with a secure base for them to return to and to explore from by being available if needed.

Children at this age are becoming more able to separate from their close carers and explore new situations with support and encouragement from another familiar adult. Young children show some understanding that other people have perspectives, ideas and needs that are different to theirs.

It is important that children have the support of a caring adult in understanding their own and the emotions of others. With the support of a caring, warm and familiar adult, children will begin to learn to regulate their emotions, which will have a positive impact on their ability to form friendships and relationships.

Young children will start to show empathy and concern for people who are special to them by partially matching others' feelings with their own, e.g. may offer a child a toy they know they like.



It is important to provide positive feedback in these situations and during play, noticing and acknowledging children's thoughtfulness towards each other, e.g. 'I like how you shared the building blocks that was very kind'.

Young children are beginning to be able to cooperate in favourable situations, such as with familiar people and environments and when free from anxiety. They will seek out others to share experiences with and may choose to play with a familiar friend or a child who has similar interests.

It is important to provide resources to promote cooperative play and reduce conflict e.g. duplicate items and toys that require cooperation.



Lunch and snack time are ideal occasions for children to practise social skills by sitting together in small groups with a familiar adult.

We will use these opportunities to talk about what children like eating at home and point out the similarities and differences in their tastes - turning their attention to each other.

3-5 Room

Practitioners will continue to offer a warm and consistent presence, spending time playing and being with children, one-to-one and in small groups as well as supporting the whole group.

Children use their experiences of adult behaviours to guide their social relationships and interactions.

This is often observed in the Home Area and during imaginative play, when children are acting out their personal experiences.

Children will start to seek out companionship with adults and other children, sharing experiences and play ideas.

This is the age that for many children, real friendships start to develop and become important.

Children need to build skills that help them with friendships such as sharing, turn taking, cooperating, listening to others and managing disagreements.







Some examples of how adults can help children develop those skills are:

Modelling friendly and respectful interactions with children and other adults in the room.

Modelling a caring attitude, for example pretending to soothe and cuddle a 'sad' doll.

Providing opportunities for collaboration and that encourage children to play together e.g. den building.

Playing games that require turn taking.

Playing games in which children need to choose a friend e.g. saying the name of a child and then rolling the ball to them.

Encouraging listening to each other e.g. 'Ali, listen to what Jack said that he likes to play with. Tell Ali what your favourite toy is Jack. What do you like to play with Ali?'.

Name cards and photo labels provide opportunities for children to identify their friends. For example, a child can help an adult to put up photos on the snack board or the name cards on the registration board, finding their friends' names and talking about them.







3-5 Room

Children will start to show increasing consideration of other people's needs and gradually develop more impulse control in favourable conditions, e.g. giving up a toy to another who wants it.

Children will practise skills of assertion, negotiation and compromise and look to a supportive adult for help in resolving conflict with peers.

We will model key skills of empathy, negotiation, compromise and positive assertion when playing with children and during everyday interactions.

Adults will offer calm and considered support for children as they experience conflict with their peers.

We will use a problem-solving approach; 'You are fighting because you both want the blue bike, what can we do about this?'.

Pause before intervening in children's disagreements, to allow children time to resolve issues themselves if they can.



Children enjoy playing alone, alongside and with others, inviting others to play and attempting to join others in play.

Adults will sensitively support this where necessary.

We will notice and celebrate young children's valuable contributions to their relationships with others, e.g. to younger children, new children or new practitioners.

Shy children or some with social and emotional difficulties may be anxious when interacting with peers.

One-to-one or smaller group encounters in a familiar, cosy space can help a child to build confidence.



Personal, Social, and Emotional Development (PSED):



PSED Connections to the "50 Things" Examples

#1 Get To Know You: This aligns with the Key Person's role in building secure attachments and acting as a role model. It helps children develop a sense of belonging and identity.

#6 Rhyme Time: As noted in the curriculum, songs and rhymes provide a great opportunity to engage young children in communication and have fun together, which contributes positively to building strong relationships.

#10 Sharing Books: In the 3-5 Room, children use their experiences of adult behaviors to guide their own interactions; sharing a book with an adult models focused, shared attention.

#15 Dressing Up: This is often observed in the Home Area where children act out personal experiences and seek out companionship with others to share play ideas.

#27 Park Keeper: Helps children explore the world around them from a secure base, building confidence in new or challenging situations.

#28 The Wheels on the Bus: Group activities like this cultivate a sense of belonging by involving all children in shared experiences.

#30 Yummy Picnic: Mealtimes are ideal occasions for children to practice social skills by sitting in small groups and talking about their likes and differences.

#37 Show and Tell: Supports children in understanding that others have perspectives, ideas, and needs different from their own.

#39 Talking Signs: Encourages children to identify and interact with their environment and friends, similar to using name cards and photo labels to find friends' names.

#45 Wonderful Waiting Games: These help children develop impulse control and the ability to take turns, which are vital skills for managing relationships.

Ofsted Outstanding Provider

Ofsted

Read our report

WEBSITE

REVIEWS ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Absolute fantastic nursery school! Teachers and staff are very supportive, friendly and always there for parents and children. They provide fun activities indoors and outdoors. My son really enjoyed it here and it has built his confidence. Can't wait to put my daughter in nursery next Sept.
Thank you for everything x

This place is amazing, so inviting from the moment you walk down the street. Staff are lovely and friendly. The children are happy and smiling. The provision and activities are well thought through and educational. The children are learning all the time. Outdoor activity is ongoing in all weathers and staff never complain!
So many opportunities for parents to join in various activities. I love this place. And so does my son! 😊

50 things to do before you're five™

Scan the QR code below to view all activities

Last Reviewed: 27th Maj 2026
Approved By: Sian Hudson - Executive Headteacher
Next Review Due: 28th May 2029