

Key Person & Attachment

The Key Person

Children thrive from a base of loving and secure relationships. This is normally provided by a child's parents but it can also be provided by a key person. A key person is a named member of staff with responsibilities for a small group of children who helps those children in the group feel safe and cared for. The role is an important one and an approach set out in the EYFS which is working successfully in settings and in Reception classes. It involves the key person in responding sensitively to children's feelings and behaviours and meeting emotional needs by giving reassurance, such as when they are new to a setting or class, and supporting the child's well-being. The key person supports physical needs too, helping with issues like nappy changing, toileting and dressing. That person is a familiar figure who is accessible and available as a point of contact for parents and one who builds relationships with the child and parents or carers.

Records of development and care are created and shared by the key person, parents and the child. Small groups foster close bonds between the child and the key person in a way that large groups cannot easily do. These groups allow the key person to better 'tune into' children's play and their conversations to really get to know the children in the group well. Children feel settled and happy and are more confident to explore and as a result become more capable learners.

Why Attachment Matters

What is attachment and why is it important for young children? Attachments are the emotional bonds that young children develop with parents and other carers such as their key person. Children with strong early attachments cry less when separated. They engage in more pretend play and sustain attention for longer. They are less aggressive and are popular with other children and with adults. Their sense of who they are is strong. Children need to be safe in the relationship they have with parents or carers. They are vulnerable but will develop resilience when their physical and psychological well-being is protected by an adult. Being emotionally attached to such an adult helps the child feel secure that the person they depend on is there for them. When children feel safe they are more inclined to try things out and be more independent. They are confident to express their ideas and feelings and feel good about themselves. Attachment influences a child's immediate all-round development and future relationships.

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