

Parental Involvement Policy

Policy statement

At Into The Woods we understand that parents are a child's most important educators. We also understand the importance of listening to and learning from parents, and in engaging them with their children's learning. Research shows that parents who are actively involved with their child's learning help their children to achieve more and we believe that if they are involved in the right way, parents can have a huge positive impact on their children's attitude to learning and success at nursery and school. And we believe that nurseries who, like us, actively seek to establish good partnerships with parents, and learn from them about their child, understand the children they care for and are best placed to support them in their learning and personal development.

We also believe that parents have a vital role to play in developing the nursery. As a nursery we continually evaluate and improve our practice and provision, and listening to parents views and suggestions is one of the most effective ways of identifying areas for improvement. Parents are the second most important stakeholder in the nursery (after the children), and this level of involvement means that they are valued and engaged, and know that they can help shape the provision to which they send their children.

Working together to support your child

Into The Woods practitioners work in partnership with parents to progress their child's learning and personal development.

Settling in

Settling in is a key time for a child's parents and key person to get to know one another. Into The Woods practitioners use this opportunity to engage with parents and start building a relationship. They will seek to find out as much as possible about the child – for example, key interests and relationships, what they are like at home, important likes/dislikes that might affect their enjoyment of nursery, specific areas of concern that parents have. They will do this both informally and through more formal meetings – see below.

See also *Settling In Policy* for how parents are involved in this process.

All About My Child

At some point during a child's settling in week, their key person will have an All About My Child meeting with one or more parent. Together they will complete the child's All About My Child form, with key information about the child. This process develops the key person's understanding of the child, and the information will be used to support them as they settle in and throughout their time at nursery. The aim for all our practitioners is to get to know their key children as well as possible, so that they feel secure at Into The Woods, and All About My Child is the starting point.

Next steps meetings

At the end of each term, each nursery practitioner will arrange to meet with the parents of their key children for a Next Steps meeting. In this meeting they will discuss how the child is getting on, in terms of settling in, enjoyment and engagement, and in making progress against any Next Steps that were set previously. They will also agree some Next Steps for the next term. Parents have as much say as the practitioner in setting their child's Next Steps, and they will reflect what the parents and practitioner agree is the most important area of personal development for the child.

Ongoing collaboration

The meetings described above are more formal opportunities to review how a child is getting on and any

areas for development. However, just as important is informal communication before and after sessions. Our practitioners understand the importance of daily communication with parents.

Drop-off and pick-up times are very busy, and our first priority during these times is the children's safety – ensuring they are signing in, allocated to their group, etc. However staff also will also use this time to engage and exchange information with parents.

At drop-off time practitioners will always give each child a warm welcome and engage with whoever is dropping them off. This is an opportunity for parents and carers to update or inform staff about their child's wellbeing, emotional state on that day or week, or any other information that they feel their child's key person or group leader might need in order to support their child during the session. Staff know the importance of this input and welcome it.

And at every pick-up time, staff members will give brief verbal feedback about each child's session to whoever is picking them up, and answer any questions they might have. If this needs to be more than a quick word, then they will ask to meet with the parent or carer. See below.

Arranging a meeting – when a quick word is not enough

As well as an informal chat at drop-off or pick-up time, parents are also encouraged to arrange to meet with their child's key person or the nursery manager if they have any concerns about how their child is doing at Into The Woods. Staff will also be proactive in asking to meet with parents if there is anything they need to discuss. It may not always be possible to meet on the same day, but the relevant staff member will find and agree a time which is as soon as possible and before the child's next session at Into The Woods.

Meeting with nursery manager

If a parent has any suggestions, questions or concerns, the normal process is to first meet with their child's key person. However, parents are welcome to request a meeting with the nursery manager at any time, if they would prefer.

Observations and assessments

Into The Woods use observations of the children during the sessions to assess their progress. See *Assessment and Observations Policy* for more information. The observations, which mostly include photos, become a record of the child's time at the nursery, which we call their Learning Journey.

Parents are encouraged to input into this process, by sending their own observations of their child to the nursery. These are then incorporated into the child's learning journey, so that it becomes a more holistic and meaningful record of their progress and learning over time. The nursery uses an online tool to create and share learning journeys, and this allows parents to add their own observations directly.

Weekly update emails

Every weekend the nursery sends out an email to all parents, describing what the children did and learned during the week.

The email also prompts parents to ask questions and make suggestions about the nursery and serves as a reminder that we are always approachable and that they can call or email at any time.

Email policy

Although face to face communication is often best, we know that email is a very important communication channel for parents today. Parents are welcome to email us (for the attention of any staff member or the nursery manager) about any issue. We have a policy of responding to emails from parents as quickly as possible and aim to answer all emails concerning anything to do with a child's experience at the nursery (ie, not administrative or a suggestion nursery development) the same day; and aim to answer all emails from existing parents within a few days.

Helping out at the nursery

Being a parent helper is a great way for parents to be more involved with the nursery. Parents are welcome to come and take part in a session (not necessarily when their child is there) and also to join on nursery outings and trips. One way that parents can help out during sessions and really benefit the children, is to share their own special interests or culture with the children.

At Into The Woods we welcome and encourage parents to get involved in this way because it is a great way of creating closer links between home and nursery, of using the range of experience and knowledge of our parents to enhance the learning experiences of the children, and of getting the perspective of our parents on the day to day running of the nursery. Parents who want to do so are asked to contact the nursery manager to arrange the specific session and agree how they will get involved in supporting the children's learning.

Supporting the nursery development

It is our belief that taking on board parents' suggestions and ideas is fundamental to the development the nursery. Parents have a different perspective on the nursery to any of the staff, and can often identify important areas for improvement. We also want parents who are actively engaged with the nursery as this benefits the children, and so we want parents to have an opportunity to help shape the future of the provision they have invested in.

Parents group

The nursery management established and continue to support and promote a parents group. This is run by parents, who meet separately from the staff to discuss the provision, and then feed back suggestions and questions to the nursery manager. New parents are invited to join this group by the nursery manager.

Seeking feedback informally

Parents are encouraged to give feedback or suggestions at any time, and are prompted to do so every week via the weekly email newsletter.

Parents questionnaire

The nursery carries out a formal survey of parents opinions and views once a year.

Using parents feedback

The nursery management listens to and review all suggestions received through all the various different channels, including those above, and as appropriate feed them into the Nursery Development Plan.

Policy review

Last reviewed: November 2020
Last modified: 17 March 2021
Next review date: November 2022