

Settling in

Settling-in process at Aktion Kinderparadies e.V.

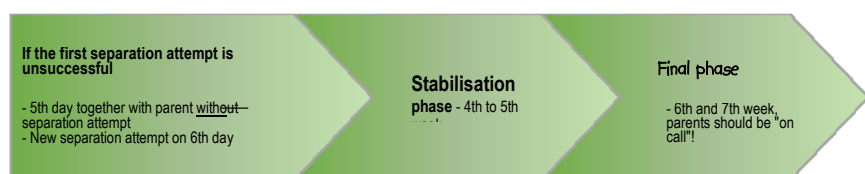
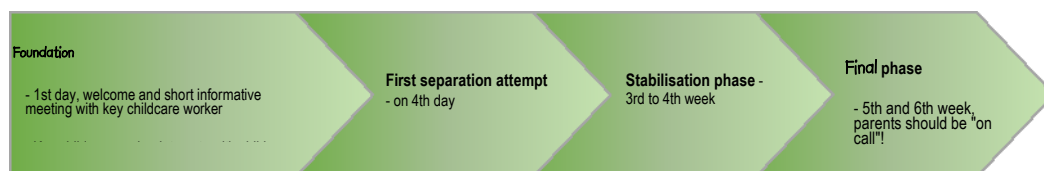
The aim of the settling-in process is for your child to build a relationship with his/her key childcare worker (*Bezugsbetreuerin*) at the playground, so that after a while the childcare worker becomes a "safe haven" for your child at the playground.

We use the "Berlin model" as the basis for successful settling-in. This gentle, phased model has been the tried-and-tested method for settling young children into nurseries and kindergartens for more than 20 years here in Germany. We have adapted the model to suit the specific environment and needs of Aktion Kinderparadies e.V., to ensure that the transition to what is often the first experience of childcare outside the family is a success for both your child and you as parents.

As a rule, the settling-in period lasts four weeks, but can take longer in some cases. This depends on your child. You should plan to be available for settling-in for approximately the first six weeks. It makes sense for **one parent** to do the settling-in.

If your child becomes ill shortly before or on the planned start of the settling-in, it is better to postpone the settling-in until your child is feeling better. There should be **no breaks during the settling-in period**, i.e. please don't plan any vacations during this time. It is also advisable to keep coming regularly immediately after the settling-in period, and not to go on vacation straight away. This will give your child a greater sense of security and familiarity. Familiar objects from home can be reassuring for your child in the new environment, so they are welcome to bring a favourite teddy/toy.

The settling in model used at Aktion Kinderparadies e.V. has four phases.



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1st foundation phase – days 1 to 3 (first two weeks)

(Tues-Thurs-Tues or Wed-Fri-Wed):

One parent comes to the playground with the child at **10:30 am** on each of the three days.

Why not at 9 am?

For successful settling-in, it is essential that the key childcare worker can fully concentrate on the child who is being settled in. At the usual starting time (9 am) there is lots going on – some children need comforting if they're having trouble saying goodbye, some parents need to quickly discuss something with the childcare workers, some children might need help taking clothes off or putting warmer clothes on, a nappy might need changing, etc. It's a busy time for the childcare workers! After the breakfast snack break, it is calmer, which means that your key childcare worker has time to devote her full attention to you and your child.

You may stay until the end of the playgroup at noon, but this could be too long for your child initially. At some point, their brains are saturated with all the new experiences and they need a break. Your child will indicate this with their behaviour – he/she might become more clingy, show signs of tiredness, start crying, or go into overdrive! At this point, it is advisable to leave early, and give your child the quiet time they need. You have the best feeling for when this is. Your child will soon manage the full 3 hours as they start to feel more at home at the playground!

You will not leave or attempt to leave your child at the playground during the first three days (no separation attempt)! The key childcare worker will always be close to your child.

What do I need to do during this period:

Parent's actions

- Predominantly passive. If possible, sit somewhere to the side and just observe;
- Don't force your child to leave you. Let him/her come and go as they please;
- Always be welcoming if your child comes to find you;
- Support your child in developing a connection with the childcare worker;
- **Enjoy watching your child explore!**

Childcare worker's actions:

- **Stays close to your child during the settling-in period** and carefully attempts to interact with him/her. This usually works well if they suggest an activity or join in with the child's activity;
- Doesn't force the child to do anything;
- Observes the interactions between you and your child. This means that, for example, from the second day she will be nearby and visible to your child when you change his/her nappy/diaper.

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2. Leaving your child at the playground (the first separation attempt) (day 4)

On this day, too, you should arrive at 10:30 am, after the breakfast snack break.

The aim is to decide (provisionally) how long the settling-in period should last.

On this day, you say goodbye to your child and leave the playground a few minutes after arriving, and stay away for 15 minutes. **During this time, please wait where you cannot be seen or heard, but stay close by** so you can be called back at any time if your child cannot be comforted.

Your child's reaction will indicate to the childcare workers how long the rest of the settling-in period is likely to last.

- If your child is relaxed and/or happy to be comforted by the key childcare worker, and remains interested in their surroundings, the separation phase can be successively prolonged over the following playgroup days. The childcare workers will discuss this with you;
- If your child seems disturbed or starts crying and cannot be comforted, the childcare worker will phone you and ask you to return immediately to comfort your child (end of this separation attempt). There will not be another separation attempt until the second day of the following week.

3. Stabilisation phase

(days 5 to 8 if settling-in is "short", days 7 to 10 if settling-in takes longer – 3rd & 4th or 4th & 5th week)

From day 4, the key childcare worker increasingly assumes the role of the "safe haven" for your child during the playgroup. She changes his/her nappy/diaper, and offers to play with him/her. As a parent, you assist only if your child has not yet accepted the childcare worker.

If, on day 4, your child was relaxed, or let him/herself be comforted by the childcare worker, the separation time is extended daily from the 5th day (30 minutes, 1 hour, ...). **From day 7 (week 4), you can start bringing your child at the usual time of 9 am.** If your child has difficulties at breakfast, it may be necessary for you to be around during the breakfast snack break to start with.

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Your child has settled in...

when your child feels sufficiently at home in their new surroundings, meaning he/she

- *actively engages with the toys, people and activities when you have left,*
- *approaches the childcare worker and lets him/herself be comforted by her if he/she is upset or has a problem,*

At this point, you no longer have to be present. The key childcare worker can now assume the role of the "safe haven" for the duration of the playgroup at the playground.

If you would like to stay and "observe" for one more day, that shouldn't be a problem. But you shouldn't do so for longer, otherwise your child could get too used to your being there, and this makes separation increasingly difficult.

This is why it is so important that, once your child has settled in, you do not stay at the playground for too long, not even to chat to other parents. It is better to say a swift goodbye and then to move out of sight and earshot to continue conversations with other parents! (There are lovely cafés close to both playgrounds for longer chats!)

4. The final phase – "on call" (5th and 6th week or 7th and 8th week)

As your child has only just started to build his/her relationship with the key childcare worker, and this relationship may not yet be strong enough to enable your child to be comforted in certain situations of extreme emotional stress, it is important that you are always available over the next two weeks, so that you can be contacted to come and comfort or pick up your child in an "emergency".

If the second separation attempt is also unsuccessful...

If your child cannot be comforted/calmed down by the key childcare worker during the second separation attempt, either, your child should be given the opportunity in the next few days (two weeks – weeks 4 and 5) to become more familiar with his/her new surroundings and feel more secure there. The next separation attempt will not take place until week 6. We will of course discuss this bespoke plan with you!