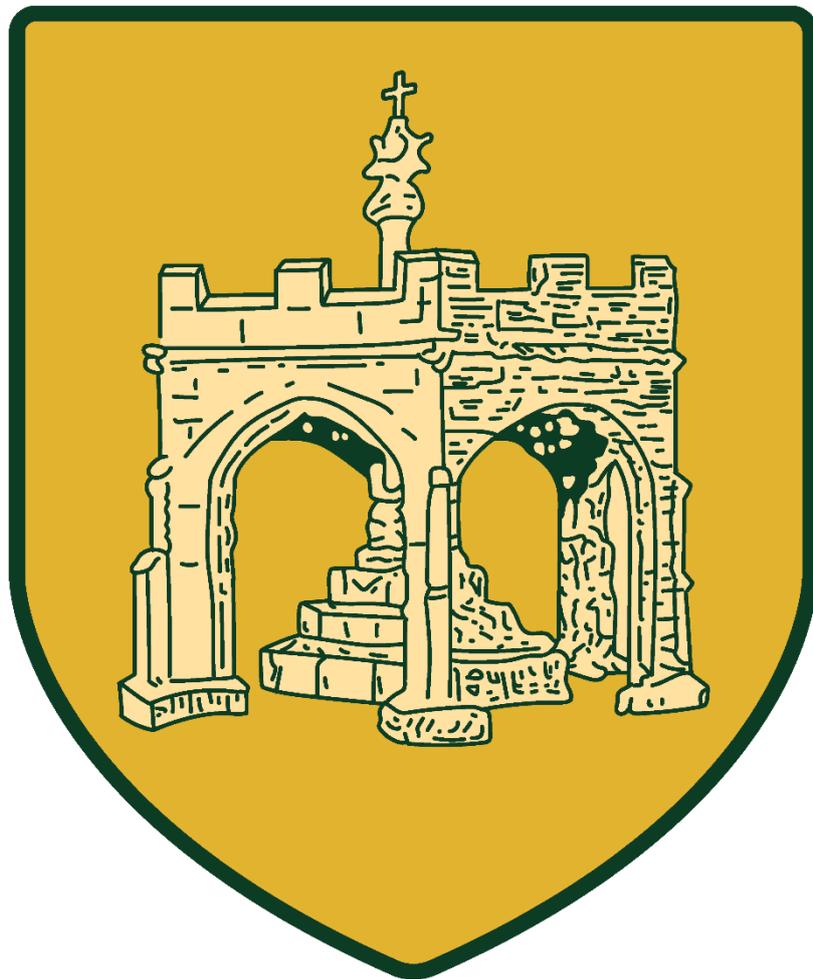




# Cheddar First Preschool

Where Every Child Is at the Heart

## Managing Separation Anxiety in Children Under 2 Years Old Policy



Date Agreed	30 <sup>th</sup> January 2026
Review Date	30 <sup>th</sup> January 2027

## **Policy Statement**

Cheddar First Preschool recognises that separation anxiety is a normal developmental stage for babies and toddlers. When children do not feel securely attached to their key person, they may experience distress that can affect emotional wellbeing, brain development, and learning.

Our goal is to reduce anxiety, support secure attachments, and promote positive experiences for children and their families.

## **Identifying Separation Anxiety**

Staff should be alert to signals of distress which may include:

- Crying inconsolably for extended periods (may cause coughing, breath-holding, vomiting)
- Head banging, rocking, or frantic movements
- Ambivalent behavior toward the key person (wanting to be picked up then struggling free)
- Biting, tantrums, or snatching from others
- Jealousy toward other children
- Refusal to eat or drink; digestive problems
- Brief interest in toys or peers, then returning to crying
- Prolonged sleep or staring blankly
- Standing by doors or showing anxiousness about who enters/exits
- Being held without responding or smiling
- Crying when the parent collects, or cheering up immediately upon parent arrival

Observation over time helps build evidence to support discussion with parents and planning strategies.

## **Possible Causes of Separation Anxiety**

Separation anxiety may be triggered or worsened by factors such as:

- Hurried or incomplete settling-in due to parental time pressures
- Inadequate key person continuity during settling-in
- Part-time attendance preventing sufficient attachment
- Absence of the key person during early sessions
- Change of key person in the setting
- Changes or stressful events at home (illness, family travel, holidays)
- Previous distressing experiences at another setting

## **Staff Responsibilities**

- Observe and document the child's behaviour and signals.
- Communicate with parents/carers about observations and collaborate on strategies.
- Review and adapt settling-in plans as necessary.
- Encourage daily attendance for part-time children until they are familiar with the setting and key person.

- Support the child in forming a secure attachment through consistent, responsive care.
- Ensure key person continuity whenever possible during settling-in.

### **Parent Partnership and Planning**

- The key person and parent discuss potential causes and create a plan tailored to the child.
- Plans may include:
  - Parent or trusted relative staying temporarily to support settling
  - Adjusted settling-in schedule
  - Consistent routines to provide security
- The goal is for the child to feel safe, secure, and confident in the setting.

### **Settling-In Process**

- Reviewed regularly to ensure all steps are completed.
- Replanning may be required if:
  - The child is not forming an attachment
  - Signs of distress persist or worsen
- Settling-in strategies are documented and monitored.

This policy should be read alongside the Settling in Policy.

This policy is reviewed annually and updated in line with current legislation, statutory guidance, and best practice.