

Choosing a Day Nursery

Introduction

Choosing the right Day Nursery can be a difficult decision; most parents wonder what to look out for when they start looking. Not every nursery will match your child's personality, so be prepared to look around. Visit several and ask questions about the childcare provided. The best childcare settings expect questions and are happy to answer them.

Day Nurseries must follow the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) which sets standards for the learning, development and care of your child from birth to 5 years old. All Day Nurseries in Middlesbrough are registered to deliver Achieving Two Year Olds and the Nursery Education Grant which follows the EYFS framework.

Questions to ask

This is not an exhaustive list of questions but gives an idea of the types of things to ask or consider when choosing a Day Nursery.

- What is the ratio of staff to children? How many children do you care for?
- What qualifications and/or experience do you have?
- What are the daily routines and how can you incorporate my child's and other children's routines?
- Do you operate a key worker scheme (whereby one member of staff has main responsibility for your child)?
- What are your policies on discipline and how do you manage children's behaviour?
- Do you provide meals, snacks, nappies etc or will I need to provide them?
- Where can my child sleep or rest?

Don't worry about asking these questions. You may feel it's impolite to ask, but you are within your rights to find out how your child will be treated. There are no right or wrong answers, but the best Day Nursery for you will be the one whose answers closely correspond with your views.

Things to look out for when visiting a Day Nursery

Take your child with you to see whether they like it too. Visit when it is in full flow and, if possible, make a return visit so you can see the setting at different times during the day and week.

- Is the staff trained and experienced & ready to learn and respond to your child's individual needs.
- Is it busy, but relaxed, do the children seem happy and purposeful.
- Are the premises safe and clean - welcoming and friendly with outside play space?
- Is there cultural sensitivity and responsiveness to children's home life?
- Do the staff team and group of children reflect local ethnic and cultural groups?
- Are fun activities planned each day? Exercise and quiet times to relax are important.
- How do staff talk to the children e.g. do they show patience and consideration?
- Was there a big welcome for you and your child

Practicalities

- Day Nurseries must be registered with and inspected by Ofsted. Ask to see their Ofsted registration and insurance certificates and latest inspection report.
- Ask about safety. What happens in an emergency? What precautions have been put in place? Do they have finger guards on doors? Is it secure? Do they have visitor control systems in use? Your child's safety should be top priority.
- Can they provide childcare that fits in with your work hours? Ask about costs. Ask about contracts. Do they charge for late pick-up?
- Check what food is provided. Is there a healthy, balanced diet on offer? Is water available whenever children want it?
- Is the facility flexible about a settling in period for your child? Can you stay with your child to help her / him settle?
- What procedures are there for emergency medical treatment and first aid?
- What about toilet training and what if your child has an accident?

What is expected?

- The Day Nursery should ask you to complete a contract to agree things like fees, hours and arrangements for holidays and sickness. This provides a safeguard for you and the Nursery. It is important that you read over and agree the terms of the contract in advance, as these are the guidelines by which you and the Nursery will work in future.
- Day Nurseries are required to keep simple records on the children in their care and will need your co-operation in this. It is your responsibility to ensure that they have accurate, up-to-date information about you and your child.
- A settling in period is advisable, during which time your child can become gradually accustomed to being in the care of the Nursery. This is also an opportunity for everyone involved to try out the arrangement and decide whether it is going to work.
- Childcare settings are expected to treat all children and families with equal concern and should respect a child's religious and cultural background. They will expect a similar respect from parents using their service.
- It is important that parents abide by the conditions agreed. You should bring and collect your child on time, and make sure your child has everything they need. Any changes to normal routine or problems arising should be discussed as soon as possible. Regular communication and mutual respect is the key to a successful and happy arrangement.