Top Tips For Choosing a Quality Early Years Childcare Setting

Information for parents and carers

Sandwell Family Information Service • 0121 569 4914

How to Contact us
Call the Sandwell Family Information Service 0121 569 4914
Between 8.30am and 5pm, Monday to Thursday
and 8.30am and 4.30pm Friday.
We operate an answer machine service for out of office hours
On the web:
www.askade.org
www.facebook.com/sandwellfis
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Email: family_information@sandwell.gov.uk
Make an appointment to visit us at:
Sandwell Family Information Service,
160 Beeches Road, West Bromwich, B70 6HQ
We are also out and about across Sandwell at community events and venues. Look out for us in your local area.

Sandwell Family Information Service is operated by Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council. We offer free, impartial and confidential information to parents and carers on all aspects of childcare and on a wide range of family services available locally in Sandwell and also regional and national services.

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Top Tips For Choosing a Quality Early Years Childcare Setting

There are many different types of childcare settings and entrusting a stranger with your child is a big step. You need to feel confident about the childcare setting you are using for your child so before you choose any type of childcare you should do some research.

It is important to make sure that you make the relevant checks yourself by asking the right questions to ensure that you are finding the right type of childcare that is safe and secure and which best suits your needs and the needs and age of your child.

“Parents are the right judge of whether an early years setting is right for their child but it pays to look carefully and ask a few questions before choosing. Every parent wants to do the best for their child and it’s the quality of the early learning on offer that will make the difference.”

Taken from core narrative on quality and Early Years Foundation Stage.
Definition of a setting:

“Setting – used to cover all providers – nurseries, after-school and holiday schemes, play services, childminders and other home-based carers, pre-schools, children’s centres, schools and extended services schools.”


Sandwell Family Information Service (FIS) and Parents as Partners in Early Learning (PPEL) have produced this short guide which goes through the different questions you should ask when you are considering using an early years childcare setting.

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Checklist

If you are considering using an early years childcare setting there are a number of questions you should ask to ensure that you are finding the right type of childcare to suit you and your child.

Things to look out for

Is the setting easy to access, approachable and welcoming and can you spend time in the setting?

☐ Yes  ☐ No

Are there different kinds of play areas for learning, including outdoors? For example areas for building, painting, reading and make believe.

☐ Yes  ☐ No

Is there a daily routine?

☐ Yes  ☐ No

Is the children’s work displayed attractively?

☐ Yes  ☐ No

Can you tell what the children are learning about?

☐ Yes  ☐ No

Do the staff talk to the children in a positive way?

☐ Yes  ☐ No

Do they praise children’s efforts and respect their choices and decisions regardless of who they are?

☐ Yes  ☐ No

Does the setting offer a variety of learning experiences through play?

☐ Yes  ☐ No

Are the children given support to learn at their own pace, and learn about things they are interested in?

☐ Yes  ☐ No

Are children encouraged to direct their own learning?

☐ Yes  ☐ No
Are there high expectations made of the children. For example are children challenged to take their learning further?
☐ Yes  ☐ No

Is their play valued and recorded, for example, through Learning Journals or Profiles?
☐ Yes  ☐ No

Do the activities in the room appear to cater for all of the children’s needs?
☐ Yes  ☐ No

Are parents/carers encouraged to share their own observations of what their children say and do at home, in order to plan future learning experiences?
☐ Yes  ☐ No

Does the setting provide ideas or resources for children and parents to borrow in order to support learning in the home?
☐ Yes  ☐ No

Are the children encouraged to experience all areas of learning?
☐ Yes  ☐ No

Are the children offered healthy meals or snacks?
☐ Yes  ☐ No

Are the children’s individual dietary requirements catered for?
☐ Yes  ☐ No

**Resources, materials and equipment**

Are resources, materials and equipment clean, safe and organised?
☐ Yes  ☐ No

Are children encouraged to access resources for themselves?
☐ Yes  ☐ No

Are the basic materials age appropriate and of sufficient variety?
☐ Yes  ☐ No
Do resources reflect their home culture and ethnicity?  □ Yes  □ No

Communication between children and adults in the setting
Is there lots of talking going on in the setting?  □ Yes  □ No

Do staff listen and talk appropriately to the children?  
□ Yes  □ No

Does the setting appear to actively encourage children’s language and literacy skills?  
□ Yes  □ No

Is there evidence of respect and celebration of other home languages?  
□ Yes  □ No

Are the books attractively displayed and easily available – does the setting encourage a home book scheme – where books are encouraged home to be read together with the parents/carers and child?  
□ Yes  □ No

Are there quiet areas where children can listen to stories?  □ Yes  □ No

Are stories, rhymes and songs a feature of the daily routine?  
□ Yes  □ No

Parents as Partners
Does the setting provide a key worker for your child?  □ Yes  □ No

Do the staff inform you of the planning and keep records about your child’s development?  
□ Yes  □ No

Are you encouraged to contribute and see your child’s Learning Journal or Profile?  
□ Yes  □ No
Do the staff work together as a team?  □ Yes □ No

Is the quality of relationships – warm, inviting, positive, relaxed and well organised?  □ Yes □ No

Is your child’s learning supported as they move from one learning base to another?  □ Yes □ No

Do the staff prepare you and your child as they move from the setting into school?  □ Yes □ No

Are you offered any additional information, advice and training in order to support you and your child?  □ Yes □ No

**Additional and Special Educational Needs**

Does the setting provide a designated member of staff who can discuss with you the best ways of supporting you and your child in the setting and the home?  □ Yes □ No

Are the staff welcoming and positive about your child’s needs?  □ Yes □ No

Are the staff prepared to make changes or undergo training to meet your child’s needs?  □ Yes □ No

Do you feel that you can ask for extra help for your child?  □ Yes □ No

Remember, you need to feel confident about the childcare you are using for your child. Find out as much as you can and then follow your feelings.
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