



## ADMISSIONS & SETTLING-IN POLICY

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### Policy Statement

Ohana Centre is a specialist early years setting for autistic children and children with SEND. We are committed to offering a warm, inclusive, and well-supported admissions and settling process that meets the emotional, sensory and communication needs of every child and family.

We understand that transitions can be challenging, especially for children who:

- struggle with separation
- have sensory sensitivities
- need routine and predictability
- have experienced previous difficulties in childcare or education
- rely on strong relationships with familiar adults

Our approach is gentle, child-led and designed to build trust through attuned, consistent relationships.

This policy must be read alongside:

- Key Person Policy
- SEND Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Curriculum Policy
- Behaviour & Emotional Regulation Policy
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy

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### 1. Aims

We aim to:

- Ensure admissions are fair, inclusive and transparent
- Offer a supportive and flexible settling process
- Build trusting relationships with families

- Provide clear information about the child's needs and strengths
- Ensure we can safely meet each child's needs before confirming a place
- Work closely with families and professionals
- Create a positive first experience of nursery life

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## **2. Admissions Procedure**

### **2.1 Initial Enquiry**

When a family contacts Ohana:

- Basic information about the child is gathered
- The family receives information about our setting
- A show-around is scheduled

### **2.2 Show-Around**

Show-arounds occur **outside of session time** to ensure:

- A calm experience for the child
- Parents can ask questions freely
- Staff can gather information
- Sensory factors can be discussed

During the visit, we explain:

- Our SEND approach
- Therapies offered
- Curriculum and daily structure
- Staffing ratios
- Fees/funding options
- Next steps

### **2.3 Assessment Visit**

Before confirming an offer, we complete an assessment:

- A short, child-led observation in the room
- Understanding communication style

- Sensory triggers and preferences
- Interaction patterns
- Emotional responses
- Needs around regulation and separation
- Risk factors (e.g., elopement)

This helps us determine whether:

- The environment is appropriate
- We can safely meet needs within our ratios
- Additional support is required
- A personalised plan is needed

## **2.4 Decision & Offer**

We support all children where we can safely meet their needs.

An offer is confirmed after:

- Assessment review
- Consultation with SENCO
- Review of any external reports (if available)
- Discussion with parents about expectations

Families are informed promptly of the outcome.

## **3. Priority Groups**

We prioritise:

- Children with SEND
- Children with an EHCP
- Children with high levels of need that require specialist provision
- Siblings of enrolled children
- Children referred by local authorities

We do not discriminate based on disability, health, ethnicity, language, religion, or family circumstance.

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#### **4. Required Documentation Before Start**

Parents must provide:

- Registration form
- Emergency contacts
- Medical information
- Allergy management plan
- Care plans (if relevant)
- EHCP (if available)
- Reports from SALT, OT, EP (if available)
- Consent forms
- Photo permissions
- Funding eligibility information

We may ask for further details if needs are complex.

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#### **5. Settling-In Process**

Settling-in is personalised and flexible.

Our approach respects children's emotional readiness and individual needs.

##### **Step 1 — Pre-Start Family Meeting**

- Key Person meets the family
- Parents share detailed information
- Sensory profile and routines discussed
- Regulation strategies identified
- Visual supports created where appropriate

##### **Step 2 — Initial Settling Sessions**

Sessions begin gradually, for short periods:

- Parent/carer stays initially
- Observing the child's responses

- Introducing Key Person gently
- Building familiarity and trust
- Using visuals and predictable structure

### **Step 3 — Gradual Separation**

When the child shows readiness:

- Parent steps out for short periods
- Child is supported through co-regulation
- Routines introduced slowly

Each child's pace is respected.

### **Step 4 — Increasing Time**

Over several days or weeks:

- Session length increases
- Child explores areas of the room
- Key Person becomes main secure base
- Regulation strategies used consistently

Some children require extended settling-in due to:

- Anxiety
- Attachment needs
- Lack of sleep at night
- Sensory sensitivities
- Past difficulties in settings

We adapt accordingly.

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## **6. Supporting SEND Needs During Settling-In**

We ensure:

- Low arousal environment
- Access to comfort items
- Visual schedules

- Sensory tools
- Movement breaks
- Gradual exposure to new areas
- Familiar staff wherever possible
- Clear transitions and predictable routines

Behaviour is never seen as “being difficult”.

It is always communication of emotional or sensory needs.

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## **7. Communication With Families**

We keep families informed through:

- Daily handovers
- Settling-in feedback
- Photos and updates (subject to permissions)
- Adjustments to plans if needed
- Parental partnership in problem-solving

Families are encouraged to share:

- Changes at home
- Sleep patterns
- Any concerns
- Routines that help the child feel safe

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## **8. When We Cannot Safely Meet Needs**

If, after assessment and discussion:

- A child requires equipment or staffing levels beyond our capacity
- The environment cannot be made safe
- A child needs constant medical monitoring
- Specialist provision is more appropriate

We communicate this sensitively and work with the family and professionals to support next steps.

This decision is never based on the child's diagnosis — only on safety and suitability.

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## **9. Transitioning From Home or Another Setting**

We may provide:

- Photos of the room and staff
- Social stories
- Extra settling sessions
- Joint visits with current professionals
- Gradual build-up of time
- Visual timetables for home

Transitions are planned with care and consistency.

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## **10. Moving On to School or Other Settings**

We support transitions by:

- Completing reports
- Sharing updated targets
- Attending transition meetings
- Providing photos or social stories for the new school
- Helping parents understand next steps (e.g., EHCP process)
- Preparing children emotionally through play and visuals

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## **Policy Review & Sign-Off**

- Original adoption: **4<sup>th</sup> November 2022**
- Last review: **8<sup>th</sup> December 2025**
- Reviewed By: Alba Arenas Martín
- Next review due: **November 2026** or earlier if statutory guidance changes.

