

Settling In Procedure

Field	Detail
Applies to	Any drop off session at Wildlings — new starters, trial children, and any child needing support to settle
Locations	Wildlings Dempsey and Wildlings West Coast Park (venue-specific points are marked)
Effective from	Monday 27 July 2026
Owner	Claire Seabrook
Related documents	Check-In & Check-Out Procedure (drop-off programmes) — this procedure follows its check-in and check-out rules in full
Status	V2.0

Why settling in matters

Settling in allows children to feel grounded and regulated before they gather as a bigger group. A well-settled child engages, explores and takes safe risks; an anxious child cannot. For new starters and trial children, the first session sets the tone for their whole Forest School journey — and for the parent's trust in us.

Every step below sits inside the transfer-of-care rules in the Check-In & Check-Out Procedure: a sprouts, sunbirds or hornbills child is either in their guardian's care or in ours, never in between.

Part 1 — Arrival and handover

1.1 Every session

- Children are dropped off at the Wildlings gate and greeted warmly by one of the educators.
- Every child is checked in electronically in Wix at the gate, following the Check-In & Check-Out Procedure (open the session, Manage Participants, Check In, select the session, check the child in).
- **Saturdays (Dempsey):** the car park can be busy and parking difficult for parents so whenever possible a member of staff waits by the pathway at the car park so customers do not need to park to drop off their children. The staff member receives the child directly from the guardian and escorts them to the gate for check-in. The handover point moves to the car park pathway — the rule does not: children never walk from the car park unaccompanied.
- Upon check-in, children leave their bags up in their home base and are invited to choose any space or experience they would like to engage in before the session welcome.

1.2 The settling-in window

- As a minimum, the first ten minutes of every session (00.00–00.10 on the session programme) are the settling-in window: unhurried free choice before the group gathers.

- The session welcome follows: welcome the children, introduce staff and children to new starters, revisit the Forest School Code of Conduct (regular reminders for younger children, with posters on display), and talk through the theme of the week and the experiences on offer.
- Staff should always have a welcome experience prepared for children to get stuck into if they are in the mood and this is especially important for new starters and trials.

Part 2 — New starters and trials

2.1 First-session admin

- Children may attend Forest School Club on a trial basis before enrolling for a term.
- At a child's first session, the parent completes the drop-off waiver and we check the booking details we have are correct.
- Any booking-data mistakes found (name, gender, date of birth) are passed to the admin team to correct in Wix — the single source of truth — as set out in the Check-In & Check-Out Procedure.
- On the first session of a term, children and staff wear name labels, and a staff member is positioned on the pathway to direct children to their home base (per the Check-In & Check-Out Procedure).

2.2 Before the first session

- Young children are encouraged to bring a comfort object to their first or trial session if they have one. This is included as a note to the parent in the booking form.
- For young and anxious children, parents are encouraged to attend Nature Playtime together first, before trying a drop-off session. This is to familiarize themselves with the space.

Part 3 — Settling in anxious children

3.1 At drop-off

- The session leader talks to parents of young children showing signs of anxiety, to find out what the child likes and what they might be looking forward to.
- If a child appears anxious, or at the parent's request, the session leader may invite the parent to enter. The leader explains that they will need to start the session shortly, and alerts the session assistant that there is an anxious child and parent who will need support.
- The session leader never tries to lead the session and support an anxious child at the same time — defer to the session assistant(s) as needed.

3.2 The graduated exit — 15 and 30 minutes

Parents may enter and explore with their child for the first 15 minutes. Depending on how the child is settling, after 15 minutes the parent may:

- Exit, and stay close by in the café or Dempsey Hill area; or
- Retreat to the front gate area or a quiet bench and wait inside the fence, where their child can check on them as and when they need to feel safe and secure.

If, after a further 30 minutes (approximately 45 minutes into the session), the child refuses to leave their parent at all and engage in the session and the child is here for a trial, discuss with the parent the option of trying again at a future date.

If the parent has already enrolled in the programme invite the parent and the child to join the remainder of the session together and check-in with the parent at the end to see if progress and positives can be found.

Parents on site are visitors: A parent staying inside the fence does not change the child's status: the child remains checked in and in Wildlings' care. If the child leaves early with the parent — at 45 minutes or any other time — the parent signs the child out on the check-out form before they leave the premises, exactly as at normal dismissal.

3.3 What session leaders never do

- Leave children to cry alone.
- Prevent parents from entering.
- Disallow parents from waiting by the gate or checking on their children from a distance.
- Get frustrated with a child.
- Try to lead the session and deal with an anxious child at the same time.

Part 4 — End of session

4.1 Updating new parents

- At the end of a session, the leader always checks in with any new parents to update them on their child's experience. The child is included in this discussion. This is essential.
- For trial children, feedback covers the child's experiences, your observations and — for young children — their readiness for Forest School, plus the booking process if they would like to sign up.
- **Timing:** this conversation must not break the check-out rules. Staff running sign-out have that as their sole focus — so the leader gives the update after the child has been signed out, or while another staff member manages the sign-out form. Check-out staffing ratios stay intact throughout.

4.2 Dismissal

Dismissal follows the Check-In & Check-Out Procedure in full: children are dismissed one group at a time, each child is signed out by their authorised guardian at the gate, and uncollected children remain under staff supervision until collection.