

A parent asked us....

“I’m a bit worried about Rahima starting – she’s only ever been left with me or my mum. Do you think she’ll settle ok?”

The idea of this column is to say how we replied to a question from a parent on the spot. So, the answers are not exhaustive, but enough to respond to the query in the moment.



Sohail Khan is the manager of KoolKidze, a PVI in Newham. He previously worked in finance in the city for 12 years, after losing his job. Once he completed his degree, he started to open up various business. Eventually he studied a course on child care and decided to open up KoolKidze in 2010.



Caroline Vollans is the lead writer and editor for Sheringham's SPH. Caroline is a psychoanalyst and writer. She writes for Nursery World, family and the Foundation Stage Forum, and is author of *Wise Words: How Susan Isaacs changed parenting* (Routledge 2018) and co-editor of *Putting the EYFS Curriculum into Practice* (Sage 2023).

Sohail: *"Yes, Rahima will settle in, but we have to give her time. The main thing is that we try to help her feel comfortable and at home here."*

Rahima's mum: "I think it might take her quite a lot of time. Can I stay until she's more familiar with it all – it will be so new for her?"

Sohail: *"Of course, in fact we'd really like you to do that. It will help Rahima to settle and begin to feel at home."*

Rahima's mum: "It'll help me too - I'd like to be nearby. It's so new for her and me too."

Sohail: *"Of course - it's a big moment for both of you, but I'm sure it will be ok. When you come it's good to play and interact with Rahima – this works better than just watching. And it help you both get to know the activities and play areas."*

Rahima's mum: "Yes, that makes sense – also it'll be less boring than watching!"

Sohail: *"(laughs) Yes, it's so much more fun to get involved. Let's see how it goes then, and we'll be here and always available for any questions that occur to you."*

Rahima's mum: "Yes, I'll try not to be too demanding – I know I'm a bit anxious."

Sohail: *"Ah, no problem. The first day is bound to feel a bit daunting but we'll look forward to seeing you both and look out for you."*



In this conversation my aim was to reassure Rahima’s mum. I tried to say that it was a big change for them both, but also a manageable one and that we are there to support them with it.

At this stage I didn’t want her to feel overwhelmed so said very little really. I just wanted to concentrate on building a relationship of trust and reassurance. This is so important in the early years.

The Education Endowment Foundation’s (EEF) guidance report, ‘[Working with parents to support children’s learning](#)’ state, ‘Parents play a crucial role in supporting their children’s learning, and levels of parental engagement are consistently associated with better academic outcomes. Evidence from our [Teaching and Learning Toolkit](#) suggest that effective parental engagement can lead to learning gains of +3 months over the course of a year.’

Once that a strong relationship of trust and reassurance is established, settings can develop it to support the child’s learning both at home and in the setting. This will involve both listening to the parent, in order to understand more about the child’s learning, and sensitively offering advice about home learning.

The EEF’s guidance report comments that ‘for young children, promoting shared book reading should be a central component of any parental engagement approach. Home learning activities, such as playing with letters and numbers, are also linked to improved outcomes.’

We need to take every opportunity we can to engage with parents in a positive and reassuring way.
By Sohail Khan and Caroline Vollans

Future advice I may recommend:

PACEY: [Transitions and settling in](#): a parent fact sheet



PACEY: [Helping your child settle in](#)



Sheringham Nursery School: [Settling into Sheringham Nursery School](#)

