



Secret Garden Nursery's Guide to choosing childcare

This is a huge decision – no doubt about it - and you need to feel happy and confident that your little one is going to be nurtured and cherished in the best learning environment possible, while they are away from you. As a parent, having searched for childcare myself, I understand how hard it can be to judge if it is right for you. What should you be looking out for? Well, I can definitely make this process much easier for you.

Firstly, don't be afraid to write down a list of burning questions for the nursery or preschool. And then use them! It is really OK to take them out of your pocket and refer to them! Very helpful to reflect on later!

Secondly, go on gut feel – you have to be comfortable with the people you meet and the atmosphere of the setting. The ethos must click with you, because if the nursery's beliefs and values are not yours then it will not be a good match. It is like buying a house, sometimes you just know when you walk in that it is right for you. And remember, this nursery community will be part of your life until your child goes to school. So choose well!

Thirdly, it is really helpful to bring your partner or another person with you, so they can give you their view. And of course, you can always come back a second time.



Fourthly, ask friends for nursery and pre-school recommendations- talk to people you trust so you will feel confident about which nurseries to visit and what to look for.

Fifthly, great nurseries are worth travelling for. This is a very important part of your child's life so choose the nursery that meets THEIR needs, and helps develop THEIR potential. Research shows that good early years nursery education can improve your child's achievement at school upto and including GCSEs. The nursery that is best for you and your child may not be the nursery closest to where you live.

Sixthly, start looking as early as possible so you can put your mind at rest.

And finally, you CAN turn up as and when, and see it warts and all. Alternatively, you can make an appointment, so that you get some quality time with the manager/owner and you SHOULD get a bespoke, detailed tour.



My Top Ten Questions when choosing childcare

These are my own top ten questions that I used when looking of a nursery for my eldest daughter, and these may be helpful to you:

- 1) Do the children look well-stimulated, involved in activities, engaged by the staff?
- 2) How is the day structured and what sort of activities are built into the timetable?
- 3) Does the building look attractive, well-kept, safe and secure?
- 4) How many of the staff are qualified? Are there any Early Years graduates or teachers?
- 5) Does it have a large outdoor play area with access to a range of play materials? If so, how often do children get access?
- 6) Are there separate rooms for babies, 2-3s and 3-5s?
- 7) Do they cook food on the premises? What are the menus like? Do they include a good combination of fresh (rather than tinned) fruit and vegetables?
- 8) How do they manage behaviour?
- 9) Are the staff friendly and welcoming, and do they seem to enjoy their jobs? Is there a low staff turnover (as this is a strong indicator of a happy and settled nursery)?
- 10) Do you have confidence that the nursery manager/owner possesses strong leadership skills, is well involved and has a 'hands on' approach? Does their ethos gel with you?

Hope this helps!

Stefanie Metcalfe

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P.S If you need more advice or want to book a place do contact us on 01934 853 350 or email us at office@secretgardennursery.co.uk