



Ruby goes to Nursery

An on-entry transition
and assessment tool
for nursery teachers and
practitioners

Ruby has just had her third birthday and is going to nursery for the first time. She is very excited but she doesn't know what it will be like. When it's time for Mum to leave her she's not sure if she wants to stay. Ruby's key person, Dawn, says that Mum will be back before she knows it and she shows her around the nursery and encourages her to play. Ruby has a fun time playing and when Mum does come back she doesn't want to go home - she wants to stay and play for longer!

We hope that this book will help children to talk about their experiences and feelings about starting nursery for the first time and help them to reflect on that experience as the year goes on.

Along with the book this pack also includes:

- a guide for effective transition into nursery
- attachment, well-being and involvement
- the characteristics of effective learning
- assessing how children learn
- assessment
- a baseline observation sheet
- a baseline assessment grid



A guide for effective on-entry transition to nursery

The key to effective transition is:

- identifying clear aims for the transition activities in terms of supporting children to settle quickly
- effective management in order to achieve these aims

Transition event	In all these transition events you should consider: ● What are the aims for the event? ● Are these aims being achieved with the current arrangements?
Open days	Open days take many different forms in schools from one off events for the whole family to a series of events for a parent and child to explore the environment.
Stay and play sessions	Stay and play sessions provide opportunities for parents and children to visit the nursery, explore the resources and experience what it will be like. This may happen alongside the current cohort or not. Schools sometimes offer refreshments to parents which enables them to leave their child in the provision and meet with other parents whilst still being close at hand. This may provide a good opportunity to observe how the child copes with separation and their interests.
Home visits	Home visits are a very valuable opportunity to gather information on a child's development, experiences, opportunities and interests. This information will be invaluable in helping you to plan effectively for the child once they enter the provision, as well as providing evidence for an on-entry, baseline assessment. <i>N.B. it might be useful to find out about childhood vaccinations and the 2 year old check and whether anything was raised about the child's development.</i>
Staggered entry	Staggered entry allows time for staff to settle small groups of children quickly and are valuable opportunities to make observations of children's development and interests.
Foundation Stage booklet	Any information that you can provide for children and parents will help support children to settle quickly. Booklets/leaflets with pictures of the provision, the staff and key information such as start and finish times, lunch arrangements etc are easily made.
Website	Films of your provision and links from your school website to information about the early years and what children and parents can expect.
Other parents	Volunteers can be recruited from existing parents whose children are in the early years. They can be useful sources of information for the school about what it was like for them and their children to start in the provision but also for new parents to have a friendly face they can approach. This will help to ease parents anxieties about separating from their child.
SEND and links with other professionals	Links with other professionals are important in helping to form a picture of the child prior to starting within the nursery. This is particularly the case for children with SEND as they may well have received support prior to starting in the provision.

Attachment, well-being and involvement

The role of the key person

Children thrive when they have secure, loving relationships. This is naturally provided by a child's parents and in early years settings it is provided by a key person. It is a statutory requirement of the EYFS to assign each child a key person (this is also a safeguarding and welfare requirement). Once you have met with the families who are new to your setting you must inform them of the name of the key person and explain their role. The main aim of the key person is to build a relationship with the child and their family and to keep an oversight of their development and well-being. The key person responds sensitively to children's feelings and behaviours and meets their emotional needs by providing reassurance. Depending on the number of staff in your team the key person can also meet with their children for small group activities.

Here is a statement you may want to include in your information leaflet/booklet: 'The key person is the member of staff who will build the initial relationship when your child starts in the nursery and will be able to answer any of your questions. Every key person has a group of children in their care and keeps a special eye on their well-being and involvement day to day.'

Why attachment matters

Attachments are the emotional bonds that children develop initially with their parents and then with other carers such as a key person. Children with secure attachments find it easier to separate from their main carer, engage in more pretend play and can sustain their attention for longer periods of time. Having a strong emotional attachment enables children to feel secure and this in turn will result in a child being more independent and having confidence to try out new things.

Positive, strong attachments influence all aspects of a child's development, hence the importance of the key person.



Well-being and involvement

Developed by Ferre Leavers, the Leuven Scale is a five-point scale that allows early years practitioners to measure children's emotional well-being and involvement. According to Leavers, children in a high state of 'well-being' are like 'fish in water'. They are comfortable in their environment, confident and eager to experiment and explore. Children with low levels of well-being often appear frightened, anxious and dependent, making it hard for them to learn in a sustained way.

High levels of 'involvement' are characterised by curiosity, fascination, deep satisfaction and a genuine interest in what they are doing.

The Leuven Scale for levels of emotional well-being

1. Extremely low: the child shows clear signs of distress such as crying or screaming. They may seem withdrawn, frightened or aloof, and may behave aggressively, hurting themselves or others around them.
2. Low: they may seem uneasy and display a slumped posture. However, the discomfort is not evident all the time and is not as strongly expressed as in Level 1.
3. Moderate: the child has a neutral expression and demeanour. Their posture and expression neither show signs of sadness, pleasure, comfort or discomfort.
4. High: the child looks happy, cheerful and satisfied. But, these signals are not always present with the same intensity.
5. Extremely high: the child is lively, cheerful, confident and shows no signs of stress or tension. Their actions are spontaneous and expressive. They may talk to themselves, hum, sing and look entirely at ease with themselves.

The Leuven Scale for levels of involvement

1. Extremely low: the child may seem absent-minded and displays a lack of energy. They may stare aimlessly or look around to see what others are doing. Their actions may seem passive and repetitive.
2. Low: they are easily distracted. They might focus on a task while they are being observed, then lapse into phases of absent-mindedness - looking blankly at what is happening around them.
3. Moderate: the child may seem involved in an activity but at a routine level. They might look like they are making progress with what they are doing but rarely show much energy or concentration.
4. High: they are not easily distracted and seem entirely engrossed in what they do.
5. Extremely high: the child demonstrates continuous and intense activity indicating complete involvement. They are focused, creative, lively and persistent.

The characteristics of effective learning

There is a close link between the Leuven Scale and the characteristics of effective learning. When we see a child displaying these characteristics - we are seeing learning taking place. *"The learner has to do the work, you can't teach someone something as if you're just putting it into their brain - the learner has to take experience in, make sense of it and have the interest and the motivation in the first place."* Nancy Stewart (February 2019)

Playing and exploring

Finding out and exploring

- Showing curiosity about objects, events and people
- Using senses to explore the world around them
- Engaging in open-ended activity
- Showing particular interests

Playing with what they know

- Pretending objects are things from their experience
- Representing their experiences in play
- Taking on a role in their play
- Acting out experiences with other people

Being willing to 'have a go'

- Initiating activities
- Seeking challenge
- Showing a 'can do' attitude
- Taking a risk, engaging in new experiences, and learning by trial and error

Active learning

Being involved and concentrating

- Maintaining focus on their activity for a period of time
- Showing high levels of energy, fascination
- Not easily distracted
- Paying attention to details

Keeping on trying

- Persisting with activity when challenges occur
- Showing a belief that more effort or a different approach will pay off
- Bouncing back after difficulties

Enjoying achieving what they set out to do

- Showing satisfaction in meeting their own goals
- Being proud of how they accomplished something – not just the end result
- Enjoying meeting challenges for their own sake rather than external rewards or praise

Creating and thinking critically

Having their own ideas

- Thinking of ideas
- Finding ways to solve problems
- Finding new ways to do things

Making links

- Making links and noticing patterns in their experience
- Making predictions
- Testing their ideas
- Developing ideas of grouping, sequences, cause and effect

Choosing ways to do things

- Planning, making decisions about how to approach a task, solve a problem and reach a goal
- Checking how well their activities are going
- Changing strategy as needed
- Reviewing how well the approach worked

Assessing how children learn

Using the characteristics of effective learning and the Leuven Scale.

Assessment criteria

1	Not yet
2	Rarely
3	Sometimes
4	Often

Name: _____ DOB: _____

Playing and Exploring - Engagement	Involvement	Well-being
Finding out and exploring: <i>Is the child interested in exploring their world using their senses?</i>		
Playing with what they know: <i>Are experiences from their life reflected in their learning/play?</i>		
Being willing to 'have a go': <i>Are they willing to have a go at new experiences and challenges?</i>		
Active learning – Motivation	Involvement	Well-being
Being involved and concentrating: <i>Do they show sustained focus in their learning/play?</i>		
Keeping on trying: <i>Do they persist when things become difficult?</i>		
Enjoying achieving what they set out to do: <i>Do they show pride and satisfaction?</i>		
Creativity and Thinking Critically - Thinking	Involvement	Well-being
Having their own ideas: <i>Are they innovative in their learning/play and have their own ideas?</i>		
Making links: <i>Do they make links in their learning/play?</i>		
Choosing ways to do things: <i>Do they plan, review and adapt their learning/play?</i>		

Assessment

On-entry assessment for nursery teachers and practitioners

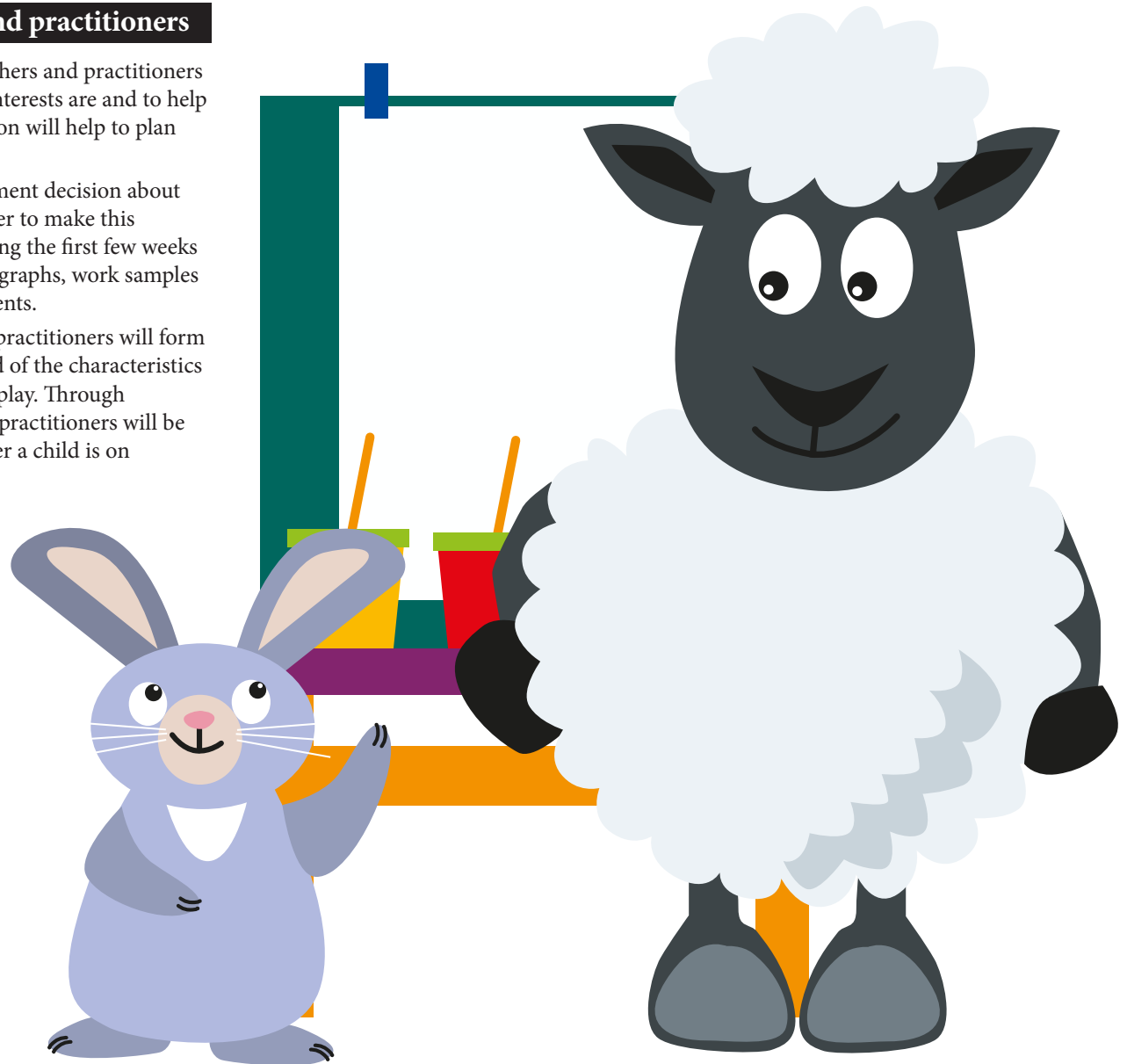
An on-entry assessment, or baseline, is necessary to help teachers and practitioners identify what children already know and can do, what their interests are and to help establish whether the child is 'on track' or not. This information will help to plan meaningful activities that will optimise children's learning.

The revised EYFS (2021) requires teachers to make an assessment decision about whether children are developmentally on track or not. In order to make this decision practitioners need to observe children carefully during the first few weeks in the nursery, and may collect evidence in the form of photographs, work samples and written observations to support them in making judgements.

Through meaningful interactions and playing with children, practitioners will form their own thoughts and ideas about a child's development and of the characteristics of effective learning that children demonstrate through their play. Through discussions of what they know and of the evidence collected, practitioners will be able to make an assessment judgement together about whether a child is on track or not.

The assessment grid in this pack lists some statements that will help practitioners to identify on track children. If children cannot do the things listed then they are likely to be below on track and if they can confidently do all and more then they are above on track but would be recorded as 'on track'. Assessments are based on the age ranges found in the 'Birth to Five Matters' document. For children who are not on track practitioners should list the areas of learning where children need more support.

N.B. 'On track' for children with additional needs may look different and practitioners should consider carefully what is appropriate for individual children.



Nursery baseline observation sheet

On-entry assessment	PSED	Physical Development	Expressive Arts
On track (tick box) ☐			
Not on track (tick box) ☐			
Reason(s) if not on track			
Pupil's Interests	Communication & Language	Mathematics	Pupil's Voice
	Literacy	Understanding the World	



Nursery baseline assessment grid

This is not a tick list. The statements should be used as a guide to help you make a decision about whether a child is on-track or not.

On track

Range 5 (36-48 months)

Not on track

Working in age spans below Range 5

N.B. Ranges of development can be found at www.birhtto5matters.org.uk

PSED

- Separates from carer happily
- Manages emotions when reasoning and explanations are given
- Able to share with adult support
- Parallel play with some communication

L

- Enjoys making marks and may sometimes give meaning to them
- Listens to and joins in with stories one-to-one and in small groups
- Enjoys singing and rhymes

PD

- Fist to tripod grip and gaining more control
- Manages the toilet independently
- Beginning to negotiate space more successfully
- Coordination improved and more upright when moving around

M

- Knows some number names and can say some numbers in order e.g. 1, 2, 7, 9, 4
- Uses numbers correctly to identify small amounts when playing e.g. "I've got two bricks"
- Is interested in shapes and enjoys building
- Knows some colours

CL

- Beginning to use simple sentences and refine grammar
- Beginning to initiate and understand conversation and stories
- Asks and answers questions

UW

- Explores using senses and with some intention
- Knows about own wider family and where they live
- Is curious and asks 'why?'

EAD

- Recalls and sings a few songs
- Engages in role play
- Explores and uses construction materials
- Enjoys the creative area



When making your baseline assessments remember this is a snapshot judgement and the most accurate picture of the child's overall learning will come from an holistic view of all the descriptors.



Ruby goes to Nursery

Words: Sue Rogers

Pictures: Peter Rogers

This is Ruby.
Ruby has
just had her
birthday and
now she is
three.





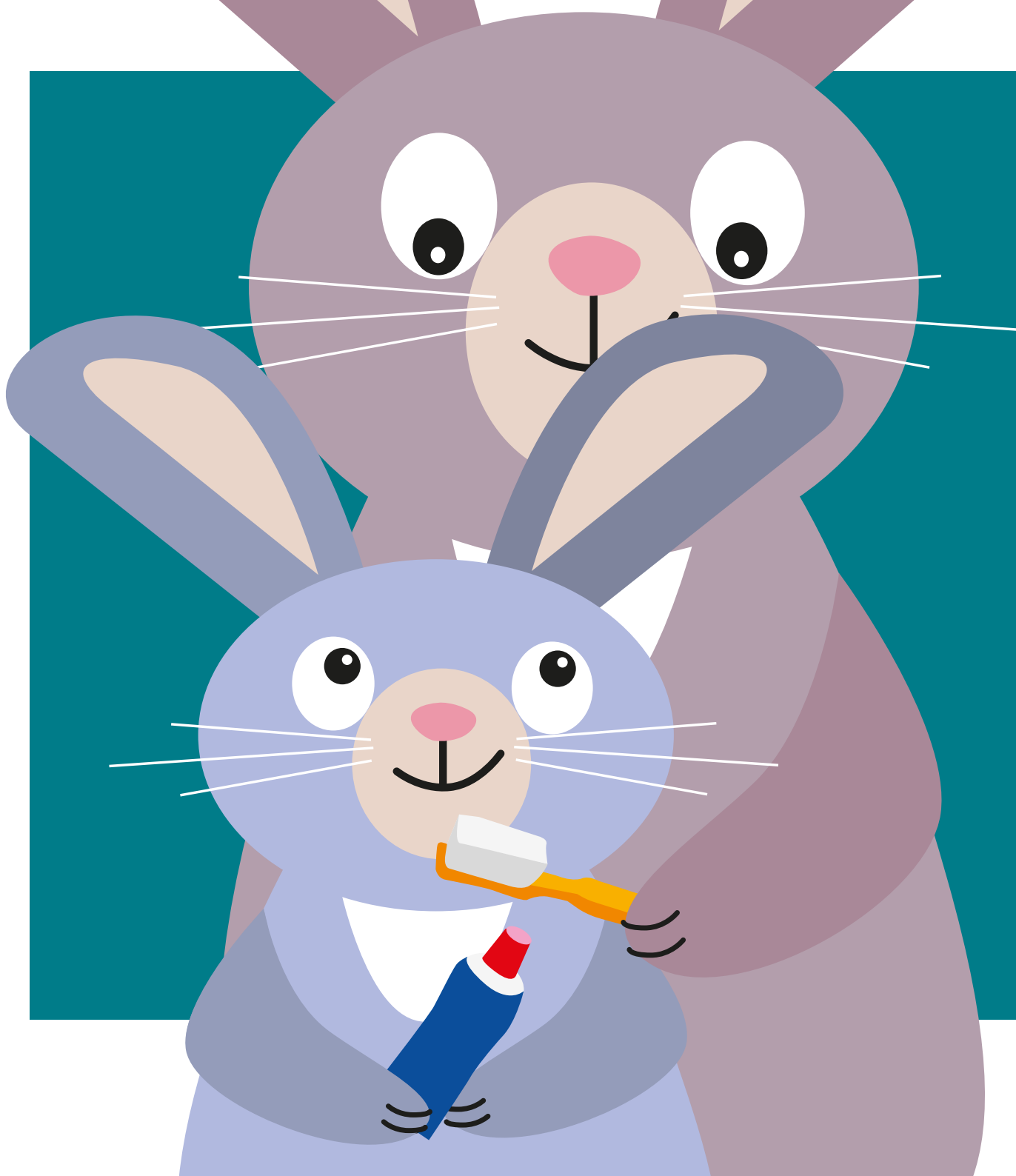
Tomorrow Ruby is going to nursery for the first time. Mum says it's going to be fun, there will be lots of other children to play with and she will make lots of new friends.

That night Ruby has a bath
and goes to bed right on
time. Dad reads her
a story and she goes
straight to
sleep.



In the
morning
Mum wakes
her and says,
“Time to get
up and go to
nursery!”





Ruby eats
her breakfast
and then
Mum helps
her to clean
her teeth
and wash
her face.

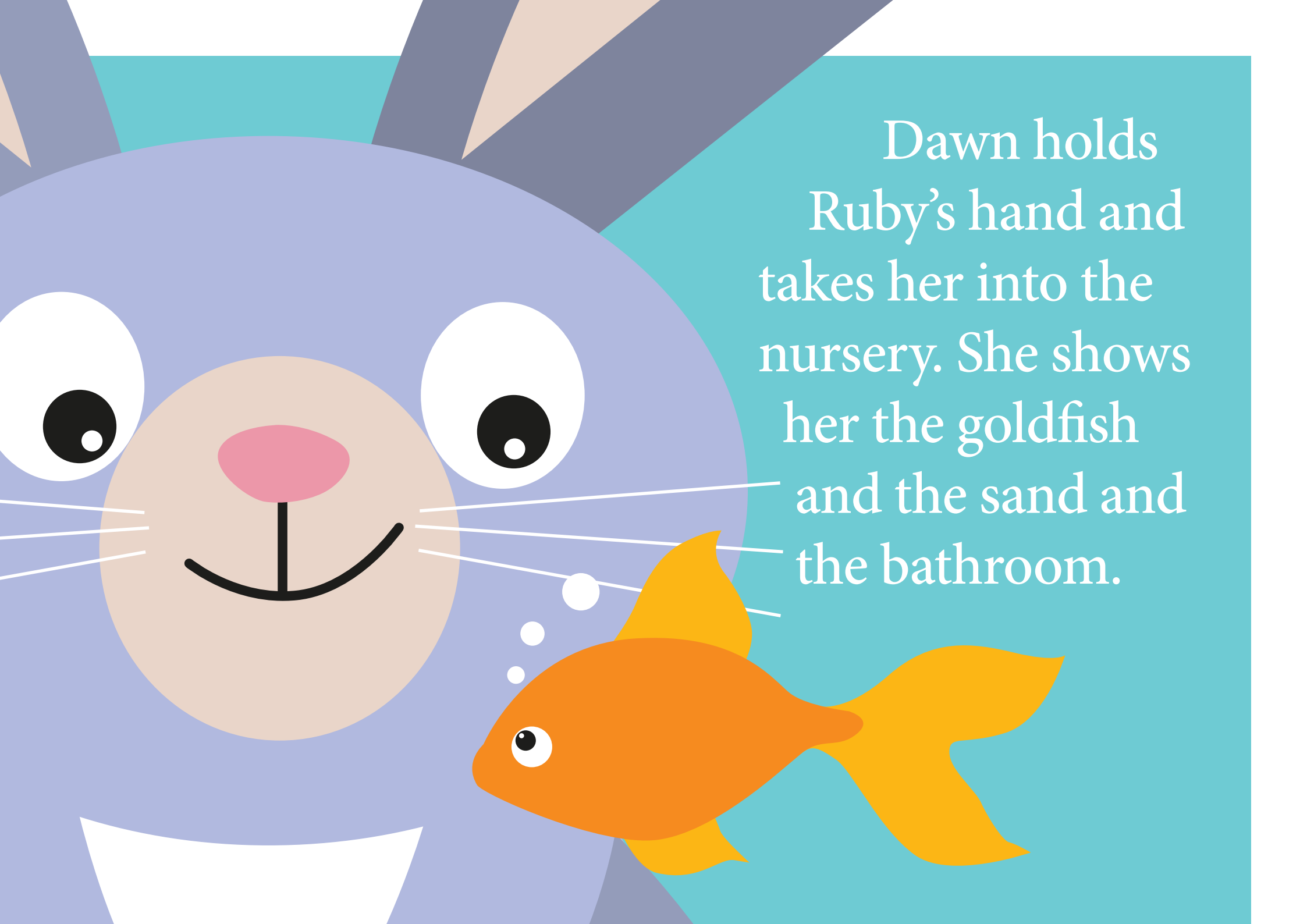
When they get to
nursery a lady says,
“Hello, you must be
Ruby. My name
is Dawn.
Would you like to
say goodbye to
Mummy and come and
play?” Ruby’s not sure.



Mum says, “You go
and play, I’ll be back
to take you home
for lunch.”

She gives Ruby a
kiss and she waves
goodbye. “Don’t
forget to have fun!”
she says.



The illustration features a large, close-up face of a purple rabbit named Dawn on the left. Dawn has large, white, round eyes with black pupils, a pink nose, and a simple black line for a smiling mouth. Her whiskers are thin white lines extending from her face. To the right of Dawn's face is a teal-colored area representing water. In this water, a small orange and yellow goldfish named Ruby is swimming towards the left. Three small white bubbles trail behind Ruby. The background consists of several large, overlapping geometric shapes in shades of purple, blue, and teal, creating a stylized environment.

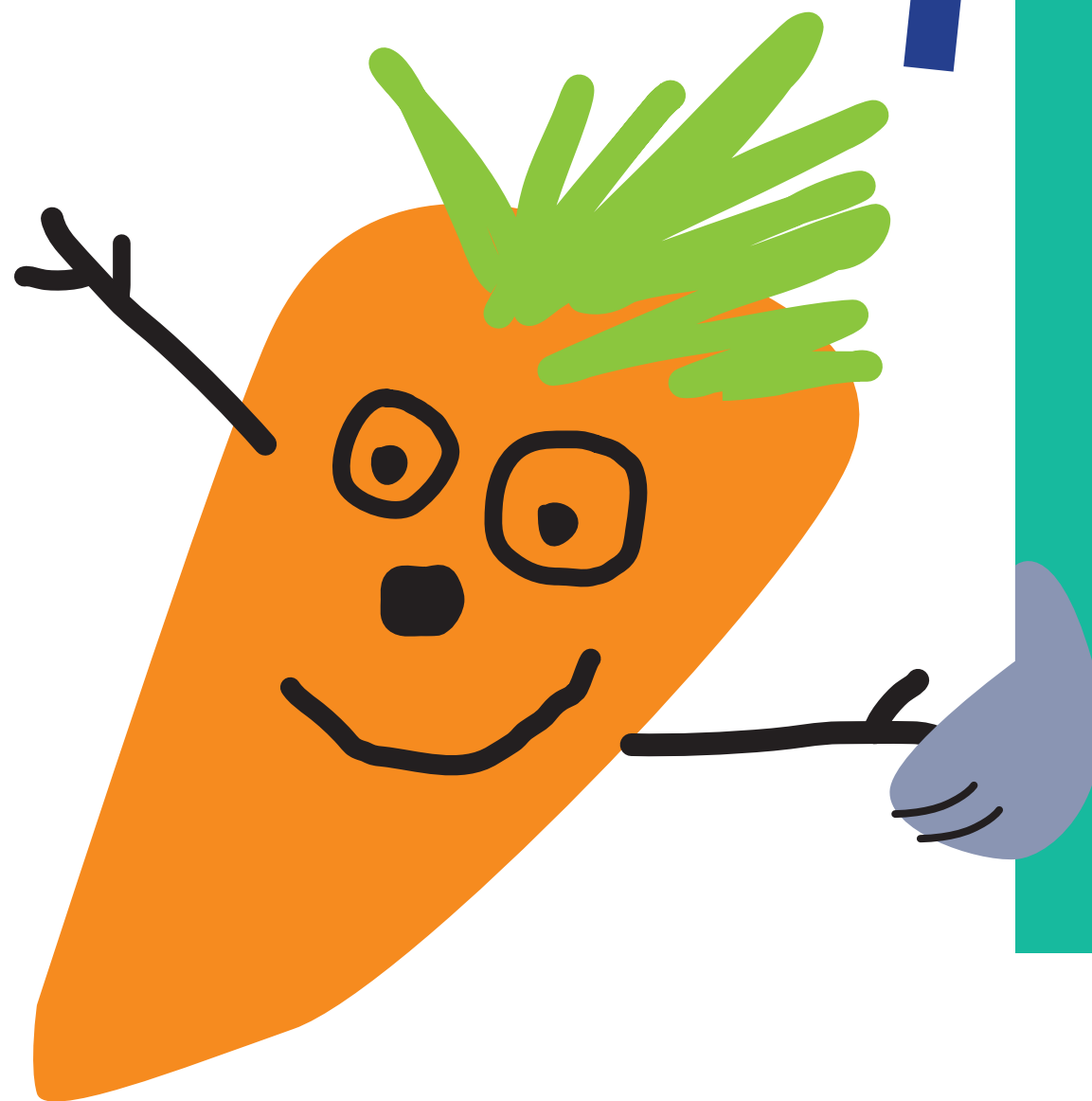
Dawn holds
Ruby's hand and
takes her into the
nursery. She shows
her the goldfish
and the sand and
the bathroom.

Ruby sees the
painting easel
and says, “Can
I paint a picture
for my
Mum?”

Dawn says,
“Of course!”



When Ruby
has finished
her painting
Dawn shows
her how to
hang it up to
dry.





Ruby looks in
the garden and
sees bikes and a
play house
and things to
climb on. Dawn
says she can go
and explore if
she wants to.

After a little while she hears
Dawn calling “Snack time!”
She follows the other children
into a large room and
sits on the carpet just
like they do. Next to
her is a little girl, who says,
“Hello, I’m Millie.
Are you new?”



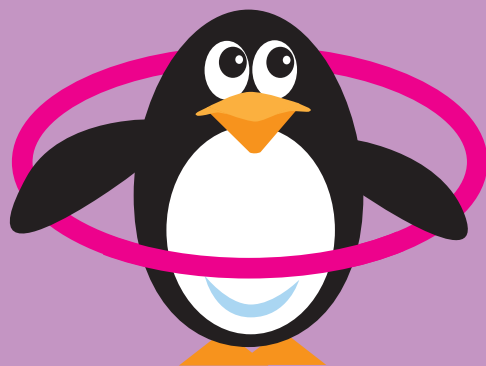


While they eat
their fruit
and drink
their milk
Millie tells her
lots of things
about the
nursery.

When they've
finished,
Millie
says,
“Let's play
outside,
I love
the play
house!”



Ruby is having so much fun that before she knows it Dawn calls her and says, “Ruby! Mummy’s here, it’s time to go home!”



“But I don’t want to go home,” says Ruby, “I want to stay and play for longer.”
“You can come again tomorrow”, says Dawn, “I’m so glad you’ve had fun and made a friend!”



As they
walk home,
Ruby tells her
Mummy all
about Millie,
the playhouse
and the
goldfish.





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