

# Understanding Symbolic Development

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This case study was gathered by Alex Cole.

## **Finnley and his blanket 'Janet'**

Finnley was 3 years old when he started a full-time Nursery School place in the autumn term. At this time he found it very difficult to separate from his mum or settle into the nursery routine and would at times become very distraught.

To support Finnley we adopted a very gradual settling in process involving Finnley's Mum, Nan and myself (his class teacher and key person). Each day Finnley would spend time in the classroom with Mum or Nan and then some time with me while Mum had a cup of tea. During this time Finnley developed a strong relationship with me; however, he would still become distressed if one of us was not around.

One morning Finnley brought in his blanket called 'Janet', and I suggested that Janet may support Finnley in his transition from home to school. This worked very well, and when Finnley became unsettled he would use Janet to snuggle up in and enjoy quiet activities, and when she was not needed 'Janet' would hang on her own hooks around the nursery – though always in sight of Finnley.

A few weeks ago Finnley accidentally left 'Janet' at school, and I saw this as an opportunity to support Finnley's learning and extend his understanding of 'Janet'. I wrote a story about what Janet did when left at school, showing that although 'Janet' was somewhere else *she still existed*. Finnley has now started talking about what all the people in his life do while he is at school, and has recently chosen to look at Janet's story for comfort rather than using Janet.

We now plan to make a book about what Mum does when Finnley is at school, extending his symbolic understanding still further.

