

## Solidoe: Babies in the Lead

Below is a new chapter of our pedagogical policy: Babies in the Lead. In this piece, we translate the knowledge we have gained during the trainings into the practice of Solidoe, in line with our [general pedagogy](#).

To meet the requirements of the IKK law, all pedagogical staff working with zero-year-olds must obtain a certificate in "Working with Zero-Year-Olds" by January 1, 2025. In 2018, a working group of pedagogical staff and the Department of Pedagogy and Quality investigated which certified training courses fit our pedagogical vision and align well with our experienced staff. Ultimately, we chose the training by Hanneke Poot and the Pikler training given by Gonny Tromp. Employees could choose from these two trainings.

During the six-part training, a lot of knowledge was shared and experiences were exchanged about the specific development of the baby. Both trainers are baby specialists; they give inspiring lessons and motivate the staff to get started with the new knowledge. In the coming years, these trainings will be offered to ensure that all staff working with zero-year-olds obtain this certificate by 2025. But we want more: namely, to put the new insights into practice. This policy is the first step towards that goal.

Solidoe's Vision of the Child:

A child is **social**, **creative**, **curious**, and **always itself**

*Every child is inherently curious and wants to explore their world, in their own way. A child is active and creative in playing and discovering, both together and alone. Children are focused on others, learning from each other and from adults. Each child is unique and develops their own identity.*

In the trainings, we were immersed in the development of young babies and encouraged to see them as "competent babies" who are already very capable of showing what they want or don't want. This vision aligns perfectly with our image of the child!

The competent baby needs a loving, safe, and sensitively responsive<sup>1</sup> environment with plenty of space to move and explore. This requires staff to approach the child with

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<sup>1</sup> *Sensitive to the baby's cues and responding to them adequately.*

confidence, take the time to look closely at the child, and wonder what the child is showing them.

In addition to taking the time to look, it is very important that we give babies time to "respond" in a sensitive and responsive way. We know that a baby needs 15 to 20 seconds to react. Waiting for a reaction is a challenge for adults. We are often one step ahead of the baby. For example, we say, "I'm going to pick you up to change your diaper" and have already put the baby on the changing table before it has had a chance to react. The baby doesn't feel seen. Things are happening to them while it is important for them to experience that they are allowed to be there.

Through the trainings, the collaboration in the baby workgroup, and the writing of policy, we have become even more aware of the development of babies, what they need in childcare, and how we can best support them.

In chapter 1 we write about how we translate our pedagogical principle: "you are allowed to be there" into attention in everything we do with and for the baby and parents. And in chapter 2 we write about how we also shape "Discovery" for the babies.

With this baby policy, we provide a practical way to get started with the group, with extra attention and space for the baby's influence.

## Chapter 1: Attention, the Most Beautiful Thing You Can Give!

In the pedagogical policy of Solidoe, it is stated that we want to give 145% attention to the children (with two employees per group). This means that the employees organize their time and tasks in such a way that there is 145% attention for the children per day. For babies, it is of great importance that there are one-on-one moments, with 100% attention for the child. This interaction provides social experiences between baby and employee, which leads to attachment. In the family, this happens more or less automatically. In childcare, extra time and attention is needed to create a safe attachment between child and employee.

It is of great importance that we work attentively and sensitively with the babies so that the baby notices that it is welcome and has influence. In this way, the baby experiences the care and attention as pleasant. These positive experiences give a feeling of security which helps a child to start playing on its own or to be able to sleep peacefully. That is important

and nice for each individual child and for parents who pick up a satisfied baby at the end of the day. It also has a lot of positive influence on the atmosphere in the entire group.

Pikler breaks down this attentive care into eight steps<sup>2</sup>. We therefore prominently describe the eight steps for attentive care in this chapter. We believe that this should be the basis of our work with babies in everything we do, from care to play. In this way, we ensure that the competent baby gets time and attention.

1. *Initiating contact and making contact*
2. *Telling the child what you are going to do*
3. *Picking up the child*
4. *Keep telling the child what you are doing and what you see them doing or experiencing*
5. *Asking for the baby's cooperation, also with gestures*
6. *Responding to the baby's actions*
7. *Completing the action*
8. *Telling the child that you are now going to do other things*

## 1.1 Focus on Care

### 1.1 on the changing table

*"Care is always communication" (Pikler)*

Changing a baby on the changing table is the perfect time to calmly go through all eight steps. Although we follow the child's pace, the employee maintains control during the diaper change. We work together with the child towards completion. To ensure that it is a calm and clear moment, we work in a preparatory way.

We put the child's basket, diapers, and other care products within reach, and if necessary, the bottle is already prepared. We ensure a predictable way of changing by agreeing within the team on the order of care that everyone uses. Because the baby recognizes the structure, the child experiences security, 100% attention, and can actively participate.

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<sup>2</sup> See page 43: *The Unknown Possibilities of a Zero-Year-Old*. Emmi Pikler Stichting Nederland

Working with babies is special, there is a lot of skin-to-skin contact which is experienced as intimate in relationships. How special is it that we are allowed to do this with the babies that are entrusted to us? This requires a very respectful and child-oriented attitude from us.

*Skin contact is crossing boundaries. The skin is the boundary of the body. It is important to realize that when we touch children, we are crossing their boundaries. That is why it is so important how we touch children. (H. Poot).*

Changing a diaper is an intimate experience for the baby. We should act and talk with attention and respect for the child's boundaries. We should be positive and tell the baby what we are doing and seeing. Avoid saying things like "Oh, you have a dirty diaper!" or "It smells bad!" For children, poop is not dirty. Negative words and sounds create an unpleasant experience.

## 1.2 Eating with presence

It goes without saying that we also use the eight steps of attentive care when feeding. Feeding and nutrition is a very important topic for parents, so we always agree on what to give the child. In order to meet the child's needs, we will never force food or drink. This way, the child will experience for itself when it is hungry or thirsty (autonomy). Then eating and drinking becomes enjoyable.

In addition to experiencing hunger and thirst for themselves, doing things for themselves is also very important. We let children up to two years old eat with their hands because their motor skills are not yet developed enough to use cutlery. This way they can discover and taste for themselves, which is important for their self-confidence and development.

Motor and sensory development influence what and when a child can eat. For example, a child can eat bread when it can sit. As long as a child cannot sit, we strive to feed them as much as possible individually and on our lap. When we do choose to put them at the table, a child is allowed to leave the table or the seat as soon as they are finished.

In this phase, in which children are still very mobile, it is not appropriate for their development and needs to sit at the table for longer than necessary. They also do not yet

understand what it means to wait for someone else and it is too early to teach them these values and norms.

In everything we do, we strive for balance between the child's control and the caregiver's control. Most experiences are new for babies. This also applies to all food. It takes at least seven to ten times for babies to recognize a taste and know if they like it, and usually more often. That is why we often prepare the fruit snacks and first sandwiches in the same way. It is also important to know that babies 'gag' at the first bites because of the gag reflex and not because they find something disgusting. This reflex must disappear by practicing giving them bites.

### 1.3 Sleep awareness

Sleeping is more important for a baby than food!

(Statement by Hanneke Poot at a parents' evening in May 2019)

The pedagogical staff continuously observe the children to see and understand the child's needs and to adjust the rhythm accordingly. At the daycare, it is different than at home, the child receives more stimuli and can therefore get tired more easily. We do not look at the clock, but at the child. This means that we always let the baby sleep when it is tired. We tell the parents from the familiarization period that we follow the child's rhythm, do not skip naps and let children wake up on their own, so do not wake them up earlier.

It is nice to put the baby to bed when it is tired but not yet asleep. Sometimes he cries for a while, but that's not bad. This is how the baby learns to fall asleep without help. We therefore offer a flexible daily rhythm and no fixed meal times. We use the bedrooms as efficiently as possible.

We take a good look at whether the child has slept enough. When a baby seems to wake up between deep and light sleep (makes noise/moves), we go to the child and try to promote the second sleep cycle. We state that the child is not yet ready to sleep and can still sleep a little longer. Just some attention, confirmation and clarity. Experience shows that this helps many children to sleep well.

Just like with changing diapers, we also create a fixed ritual when putting the child to bed and the child gets the same bed to sleep in as much as possible. We always mention what

is going to happen: we are going to put on your sleeping bag and you will get your teddy bear. We state that the child is going to sleep and that we will come and get it again. No toys are taken to bed, the bed is for sleeping!

#### 1. 4 Adapting for the parents

Many parents experience pregnancy and the postpartum period as an intensive period where there is exclusive one-on-one attention for their baby. Taking the child away and transferring care to the childcare staff is a really big step. It is important that parents gain confidence in the daycare, the staff, and leave their child with a peace of mind. When parents feel welcome and comfortable, the baby also experiences that others are allowed to care for him or her.

You can read about getting used to Solidoe in the "[Getting to know Solidoe](#)" section. We hold intake interviews outside the group, so that there is optimal attention for the parents and the new baby and we do not disturb the other children in the group.

During the first familiarization day, parents or caregivers are allowed to come to the group with a maximum of two people. The goal is for the parents to explore the space with their child and experience the rhythm. So parents still give the bottle themselves or change the child on the changing table. This way, the child experiences the new environment in the trusted hands of the parent.

#### 1.5 Adapting for the baby

To give a baby who is getting used to an unfamiliar environment a sense of security, it is important that it receives a lot of individual attention from a 'permanent' person. This way, the baby experiences security, which allows it to explore the environment with other children and adults.

Each child is assigned a mentor, who works as much as possible on the same days as the child is present. The mentor ensures as much as possible that they are there during the

settling-in days and give 100% attention to the settling-in child. Even afterwards, the mentor takes care of the care of this new child as much as possible for the first four weeks. This is to promote the bond between the child and the pedagogical staff member.

Research shows that drop-off and pick-up moments are experienced as stressful by young children. It is a difficult situation in which they go from one environment to another and in which they also have to say goodbye to their parent(s). We make it easier by making sure that the baby goes from the arms of the parent to the arms of the pedagogical staff member. This way, the child is literally transferred and feels that it is okay for someone else to take care of it. It is important to discuss this with parents so that they take the time to calmly transfer the child to the pedagogical staff member.

For toddlers and preschoolers, it is nice if a fixed ritual is created. For example, reading a book, then cuddling and waving. Here too, it is important that this is done calmly so that the child has time to process the transition with all the stimuli and to be able to react.

Children can also cry when saying goodbye calmly, which does not feel good for both the child and the parent. Clarity remains important. We ask parents not to come back after they have said goodbye. We will comfort the child and, in consultation, call later in the day to see how things went.

When picking up, the pedagogical staff member and the child together hand over the child and do not talk over the child's head. In this way, the baby notices that parents and staff members are together caring for it and are involved.

## Chapter 2 Discovering through play - discovery play

We believe in the competent baby who wants to develop itself, which is why it is important to give the baby as much space as possible.

Literally, by giving them space to move by often putting them on the ground (or in a large playpen). Figuratively, by giving babies the space to really play and explore on their own. We do this by offering materials that are appropriate for their development and interests and by only naming what we see the babies doing without giving them compliments. Not by demonstrating or taking over, but by observing and guiding.

Another important point is to give space for repetition. For young children, experiences are always new and repetition is needed to automate experiences and movements. This makes playing and moving fun, creates pleasure and endurance, and allows the child to develop optimally.

## 2.1 Exploring

**Exploring** is a key pillar in our general pedagogy. We say: "*Our employees connect with the interests of the children and at the same time challenge them to push their boundaries. We believe it is important for children to experience, try out and discover for themselves.*"

Although we have this in our pedagogical policy, it was nice to become aware that this also applies to babies, and that this requires a specific approach. It requires knowledge of developmental stages, making time to observe the child, and a patient attitude to let the child do things for themselves. It also requires a well-equipped space with corners and good play materials.

It is important that the space is both low-stimulus and challenging, because babies are not yet able to filter stimuli themselves. A rotating mobile above a baby provides a lot of stimuli. A child can often do little with it and cannot influence it themselves. It is much more pleasant for the baby to lie in the playpen or on a blanket. Three or four toys to play with is enough. The material is then low-stimulus, because the toy that is offered does nothing if the baby does not pick it up or push it. And it is challenging because the child has to do it themselves.

## 2.2 Suitable play materials

For all children, including babies, the preference is for passive toys. This is a term from Pikler pedagogy, and it means that the toys are designed to challenge children to play and discover on their own. Toys that do nothing on their own but become toys only when children pick them up, move them, drop them, taste them, etc.

At Solidoe, we also use the term open-ended materials. This refers to toys such as blocks. They can be used in many different ways and can be used to create all sorts of things. A toy phone can only be used as a phone.



You don't need to go to the toy store for toys for babies (see the appendix on toys for babies: Pikler). Every object is interesting for a baby and a young child to explore. A baby uses its whole body to explore, so it is important that the material is safe, that the child can grasp it, feel it, and taste it.

### 2.3 Facilitating interactions

So far, we have written a lot about the individual attention that babies need. In daycare, children stay in a group with other children. This means that they have to share attention. But it also has its benefits, because looking at or making contact with other children provides many opportunities and fun. Babies are initially mainly focused on contact with adults, but they soon learn that other children are also interesting.

Just like with other activities or care moments, babies need support when making contact. It is fun to create situations where babies can make contact. For example, by putting two babies together on the mat. It is important to stay close to prevent the babies from unintentionally getting in each other's way or hurting each other. This way you ensure that the interactions are positive.

Acknowledge positive behavior and also the moments when something unpleasant happens: "Oh, Tim, you are turning all the way to Sofie and now she is stuck. Come on Tim, I'm going to get you out of the way so Sofie can roll herself again." We look closely at the interactions between children in your group and try to build on that. This way, attention is already paid to interaction in the babyhood.

### 2.3 Space for moving and playing

*"Motor development is the foundation of all development." (H. Poot)*

Although every child develops at its own pace, you can see that (almost) every child follows a predictable sequence. Certain skills are needed to move on to the next step. When a baby can lift its head and roll over, it will start crawling, and only when its balance develops further, the baby can stand up and walk. It is hard work for a baby and it is important to challenge and support the child but never force it to move on to the next stage. We only let the children sit when they can sit independently.

To challenge the children, we set up the space in such a way that they can pick up things themselves. Even the youngest ones! We put out baskets with suitable play materials and/or put materials on the play mat. We provide large mats for the children to lie on and play. The mats are not too soft, as children would sink into them and not be able to move independently. We use the floor box or blankets and no bouncy chairs. We have crawling and climbing materials in the group so that there are many opportunities for movement. It is very important that the staff often sit on the floor with the children so that they feel safe and seen and therefore dare to explore the space.

When offering materials, we make sure that there is a lot of variation in experiences, so both hard, soft, big, small, smooth/rough, etc. We often offer the same material, repetition gives a child the chance to automate movements/activities which is a prerequisite for more complex play and development. We make sure that there is always something to discover. This requires us to keep putting the right materials in the places where the children like to go. Tidying up is taboo. We rearrange the material so that the child can continue.

Supporting and stimulating development requires an observational attitude from the pedagogical staff. Demonstrating and playing along does not fit with letting children discover: we follow the child. To "support" we are available to the child and name what the child is doing, without compliments or additions. For example: "you want to fit the boxes together.... Now you drop them.... You pick up another one". It is a search for the balance between following and stimulating. We mainly stimulate by offering challenging material that is appropriate for the child.

## 2.4 Room lay-out

The **group room** must be safe and challenging at the same time. Safe in the sense that the materials are suitable for babies. It is also very important that it looks calm so that there are not too many unnecessary stimuli. We provide clear corners so that a baby learns where to find what.

We make sure that children can move around a lot on their own and thus encounter each other, after all, children are very interested in other children.

**Recommendation/summary for pedagogical staff:**

This policy document is an addition to our pedagogical policy specifically for babies. See it as an extra chapter. In choosing the topics, we were guided by the structure of the training courses. The great importance of attentive care, stimulus reduction and the extra attention to the input of the competent baby challenges us to take a fresh look at the way we work with babies in the groups. It is nice to experience and notice that at Solidoe, working with babies is already done in a sensitive and careful way. The policy contains many elements that are already common practice in the groups.

If we apply the new knowledge from the training courses, there are four points at Solidoe that require specific attention.

- We let children up to two years old eat with their hands because their motor skills are not yet developed enough to use cutlery. This way they can discover and taste for themselves, which is important for their self-confidence and development.
- In this phase, in which children are still very mobile, it is not appropriate for their development and needs to sit at the table for longer than necessary. They also do not yet understand what waiting for someone else is and it is too early to teach them these values and norms.
- So we don't look at the clock, but at the child. That means **we always let the baby sleep when it is tired**. We tell the parents from the familiarization period that we follow the child's rhythm, do not skip naps and let children wake up themselves, so do not wake them up earlier.
- During the familiarization period, parents can, if desired, look around the group for a longer period of time.

It is now important to carefully investigate what is needed at each location to give shape to these changes.

Sources:

De ongekende mogelijkheden van een nul jarige.

Noortje Brul e.a. Emmi Pikler Stichting Nederland

[contact@pikler.nl](mailto:contact@pikler.nl) [www.pikler.nl](http://www.pikler.nl)

De motorische ontwikkeling Leren door bewegen

De zintuigelijke ontwikkeling Leren door ontvangen

Spraakmakend; communiceren met het jonge kind

Hanneke Poot -van de Windt

[www.sirenevoorkinderen.nl](http://www.sirenevoorkinderen.nl) [info@sirenevoorkidern.nl](mailto:info@sirenevoorkidern.nl)

De baby in de opvang: inspirerende voorbeelden

Mehrnaz Tajik, Maryse Nijhof

Sardes [www.sardes.nl](http://www.sardes.nl)



**Als de baby of dreumes staat of loopt**

3 knuffels of aangeklede babypoppen

2 speelgoedbadjes

2 poppenbedjes of sjouwkisten

3 babyflessen

Verschillende boodschappenmanden

Kleine hoeveelheid duplo met enkele (zandbak)scheppen of rijstlepels

Petten en mutsen

Doeken

Grote wasmanden

*Veiligheid van het materiaal staat voorop. Als het speelgoed door een lege wc-rol past is het te klein met het oog verslik- en stikgevaar. Wanneer materiaal kapot is, moet je het direct vervangen. Let bij kunststof materiaal op recyclingcode. Plasticsoorten met codes 2, 4 en 5 worden gezien als (kind)veilig.*