

**Looked After Child policy**

**Statement of Intent**

Our setting is committed to providing quality provision based on equality of opportunity for all children and their families. All staff are committed to do all they can to enable looked after children in their care to achieve and reach their full potential.

A child who has been in the care of the Local Authority for more than 24 hours is known as a looked after child (or sometimes referred to as a child in care).

**Aims**

We recognise that children who are being looked after have often experienced traumatic situations; physical, emotional or sexual abuse or neglect. However, we also recognise that not all looked after children have experienced abuse and that there are a range of reasons for children to be taken in to the care of the local authority. Whatever the reason, a child’s separation from their home and family signifies a disruption in their lives that has impact on their emotional well-being.

In our setting, we place emphasis on promoting children’s right to be strong, resilient and listened to. Our policy and practice guidelines for looked after children are based on these two important concepts, attachment and resilience. The basis of this is to promote secure attachments in children’s lives as the basis for resilience. These aspects of well-being underpin the child’s responsiveness to learning and are the basis in developing positive dispositions for learning. For young children to get the most out of educational opportunities they need to be settled enough with their carer to be able to cope with further separation, a new environment and new expectations made upon them.

**Methods**

* The term ‘looked after child’ denotes a child’s current legal status; this term is never used to categorise a child as standing out from others. We do not refer to such a child using acronyms such as LAC.
* We offer places to two-year-old children who are in care. In such cases, the child should have been with the foster carer for at least **two** months and show signs of having formed a secure attachment to the carer and where the placement in the setting will last a minimum of **two** months.
* We offer places for funded three and four-year-olds that are in care to ensure they receive their entitlement to early education. We expect that a child will have been with a foster carer for a minimum of **two** months and has formed a secure attachment to the carer. We expect that the placement in the setting will last a minimum of **two** months.
* The designated person for looked after children is the designated safeguarding lead officer. The designated person for this setting is Sara Pearce.
* Every child is allocated a key person before they start and this is no different for a looked after child. The designated person ensures the key person has the information, support and training necessary to meet the looked after child’s needs.
* The designated person and the key worker liaise with agencies, professionals and practitioners involved with the child and his or her family and ensure appropriate information is gained and shared.
* The setting recognises the role of the local authority social care department as the child’s ‘corporate parent’ and the key agency in determining what takes place with the child. Nothing changes, especially with regard to the birth parent’s or foster carer’s role in relation to the setting without prior discussion and agreement with the child’s social worker.
* At the start of a placement there is a professionals meeting (including social workers, key workers etc.) that will determine the objectives of the placement and draw up a care plan that incorporates the child’s learning needs. This plan will be reviewed regularly.
* The settling-in process for the child is agreed. It should be the same as for any other child, with the foster carer taking the place of the parent, unless otherwise agreed. It is even more important that the ‘proximity’ stage is followed until it is visible that the child has formed a relationship with his or her key person sufficient to act as a ‘secure base’ to allow the gradual separation from the foster carer. This process may take longer in some cases, so time needs to be allowed for it to take place without causing further distress or anxiety to the child.
* In the first two weeks after settling-in, the child’s well-being is the focus of observation, their sociability and their ability to manage their feelings with or without support.
* Further observations about communication, interests and abilities will be noted to firm a picture of the whole child.
* Regular contact should be maintained with the social worker through planned meetings that will include the foster carer.

This policy was adopted on 1st September 2020

Reviewed September 2023

This policy should be read in conjunction with our:-

Confidentiality policy

Safeguarding children policy

Although under constant review, an overall review date has been set for **September 2024**