**Looked After Children**

Policy statement

We are committed to providing quality provision based on equality of opportunity for all children and their families. All staff in our provision are committed to doing all they can to enable ‘looked after’ children in our care to achieve and reach their full potential.

Children become ‘looked after’ if they have either been taken into care by the local authority or have been accommodated by the local authority (a voluntary care arrangement). Most looked after children will be living in foster homes, but a smaller number may be in a children’s home, living with a relative or even placed back home with their natural parent(s).

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 is a range of reasons for children to be taken into 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 an impact on their emotional well-being. Most local authorities do not place children under five with foster carers who work outside the home; however, there are instances when this does occur or where the child has been placed with another family member who works.

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 two important concepts: attachment and resilience. The basis of this is to promote secure attachments in children’s lives, as the foundation for resilience. These aspects of well-being underpin the child’s responsiveness to learning and enable the development of 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.

**Principles**

* 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 for funded two, three and four-year-olds who 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 one month and that they will have formed a secure attachment to the carer. We expect that the placement in the setting will last a minimum of six weeks.
* Where a child who normally attends our setting is taken into care and is cared for by a local foster carer, we will continue to offer the placement for the child.

**Procedures**

* The designated person for looked after children is the designated Safeguard lead.
* 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 person liaise with agencies, professionals, and practitioners involved with the child and his or her family and ensure that appropriate information is gained and shared.
* The setting recognises the role of the local authority children’s 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.

The care plan needs to consider issues for the child such as:

* Their emotional needs and how they are to be met.
* How any emotional issues and problems that affect behaviour are to be managed.
* Their sense of self, culture, language(s) and identity and how this is to be supported.
* Their need for sociability and friendship.
* Their interests and abilities and possible learning journey pathway.
* How any special needs will be supported.
* How information will be shared with the foster carer and local authority (as the ‘corporate parent’) as well as what information is shared with whom and how it will be recorded and stored.