

## 1.3 Looked after children

### Policy statement

Early years settings 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 their care to achieve and reach their full potential.

Children and young people become 'Looked After' if they have been taken into care by the Local Authority, either via a legal route under The Children's Act 1989 or where a voluntary agreement has been reached with the birth family. Most Looked After Children will be living in foster homes but a smaller number may be in a residential home, living with a relative or friend, or even be placed back at home with their birth family. Some looked after children may be unaccompanied asylum seekers.

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 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. It is not appropriate for a looked after child who is under two years to be placed in a day care setting in addition to a foster placement.

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.
- In exceptional circumstances, we offer places to funded 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 the placement in the setting will last a minimum of three months.

- We offer places to funded 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 has formed a secure attachment to the carer. We expect that the placement in the setting will last a minimum of six weeks.
- We will always offer 'stay and play' provision for a child who is two to five years old who is still settling with their foster carer, or who is only temporarily being looked after.
- 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.

### **Objectives**

- The designated person for looked after children is the designated child protection co-ordinator Laura Davis.

### **Procedures**

- 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 ensures 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.
- At the start of a placement there is a professional's meeting to determine the objectives of the placement and draw up a care plan that incorporates the child's learning needs. This plan is reviewed after two weeks, six weeks and three months. Thereafter at three to six monthly intervals.
- 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; and
  - how any special needs will be supported.
- In addition the care plan will also consider:
  - 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;

- what contact the child has with his/her birth parent(s) and what arrangements will be in place for supervised contact. If this is to be at the setting, when, where and what form the contact will take will be discussed and agreed;
- what written reporting is required;
- wherever possible, and where the plan is for the child to return home, the birth parent(s) should be involved in planning; and
- with the social worker's agreement, and as part of the plan, the birth parent(s) should be involved in the setting's activities that include parents, such as outings and fun-days etc alongside the foster carer.
- 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 form a picture of the whole child in relation to the Early Years Foundation Stage prime and specific areas of learning and development.
- Concerns about the child will be noted in the child's file and discussed with the foster carer.
- If the concerns are about the foster carer's treatment of the child, or if abuse is suspected, these are recorded in the child's file and reported to the child's social care worker according to the setting's safeguarding children procedure.
- Regular contact should be maintained with the social worker through planned meetings that will include the foster carer.
- Transition to school will be handled sensitively and the designated person and or the child's key person will liaise with the school, passing on relevant information and documentation with the agreement of the child's social worker as detailed in the care plan.

All staff will:

- As with all children, have high aspirations and expectations and celebrate educational and personal achievements
- Be aware of the emotional, psychological and social effects of loss and separation from birth families, the reasons for that separation and that some children may find it difficult to build relationships of trust with adults because of their experiences
- Understand the reasons which may be behind a looked after child's behaviour and why they may need more support and intervention than other children
- Understand how important it is to see looked after children as individuals rather than as a homogenous group and to not publicly treat them different from their peers

- Appreciate the importance of showing sensitivity about who else knows about a child's looked after status
- Appreciate the sensitivity when celebrating events such as Mothering Sunday, or making cards for family members at times such as Christmas when looked after children may want to make cards for wider members of their family such as the Foster Carers as well as birth family
- Appreciate the central importance of the child's Personal Education Plan (PEP) in helping to create a shared understanding between staff, carers, social workers and most importantly, depending on age and understanding, the child, of what everyone needs to do to help them achieve their potential. Recognise the importance of aspirational target setting in PEP.
- Liaise with the setting manager where a looked after child is experiencing difficulties – these may be academic, pastoral, behaviour or attendance issues
- Respond to requests for information to support completion of PEPs and other documentation needed as part of review meetings

The designated person in this setting is Laura Davis. The designated person will serve as a champion and advocate for all looked after children and will oversee school structures and systems that support them. Laura Davis is the main contact for social services and The Virtual School for looked after children.

The designated person will:

- Establish and maintain the ethos in pre-school for looked after children
- Set up systems to monitor, record and report on the achievements and progress of all looked after children and their emotional well being and ensure they have the support they require within school
- Set up systems to monitor and track development and progress of looked after children across the Early Years Foundation Stage, be able to make comparisons with peers. Ensure targeted support is given to effectively narrow the gap.
- Facilitate effective communication between all parties both within school and externally
- Have up to date knowledge of statutory and good practice guidance about looked after children

### **The role of the setting management committee**

In order to achieve our aims and ensure we adhere to our principles, the committee will appreciate their specific responsibility for looked after children and will ensure this policy is adhered to. The committee will offer support to the setting in any way that will positively promote the welfare and progress of looked after children within the setting.

The role of committee is to be a champion for looked after children (as well as the designated person) and be a critical friend for the setting, ensuring that they are familiar with and follow statutory and good practice guidance.

### Further guidance

- Promoting the education of looked after children: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities. DfE July, 2014
- The Children Act 1989 as amended by the Children and Families Act 2014
- Guidance on the Education of Children and Young People in Public Care (DfEE 2000)
- Who Does What: How Social Workers and Carers can Support the Education of Looked After Children (DfES 2005)
- Supporting Looked After Learners - A Practical Guide for School Governors (DfES 2006)

This policy was adopted at a meeting of

Crick Pre-School

Held on

12<sup>th</sup> December 2018

Date to be reviewed

October 2019

Signed on behalf of the management committee



Name of signatory

Clare Thompson

Role of signatory (e.g. chair/owner)

Chair