



LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN POLICY

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Committee member responsible	Steph Gattenby (Chair)
Date agreed with staff	
Date agreed at Committee	
Signed on behalf of Committee	
Print name & date	
Frequency of policy review	Biennial
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Document Version Control

Issue Number	Issue Date	Summary of changes
1.0	November 2009	Checked against PSLA guidelines.
1.1	December 2009	Cross reference to Safeguarding Children Policy

Policy statement

Lydiard Millicent Pre-school is committed to providing quality provision based on equality of opportunity for all children and their families. All staff 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 either been taken into care by the local authority, or have been accommodated by the local authority under 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 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.

At Lydiard Millicent Pre-school, we place emphasis on promoting children's right to be strong, resilient and listened to. Our policy and practice guidelines for looked after children aim to promote secure attachments in children's lives as the basis for resilience. 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.

EYFS Key themes and commitments

A Unique Child	Positive Relationships	Enabling Environments	Learning and Development
1.1 Child development 1.2 Inclusive practice 1.3 Keeping safe	2.1 Respecting each other 2.2 Parents as partners 2.4 Key person	3.2 Supporting every child 3.4 The wider context	4.4 Personal, social and emotional development

Principles

- The term 'looked after child' denotes a child's current legal status. This term is never used to categorise a child and we do not refer to a child using acronyms such as LAC.
- We offer places to children who are two and a half or older who are in care. In such cases, we expect that the child will have been with the foster carer for at least two months and show signs of having formed a secure attachment to the carer and we would expect the placement in the setting to last a minimum of three months.

- We offer places for 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 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.

Procedures

- The designated person for looked after children is the designated child protection co-ordinator, as laid out in our Safeguarding Children Policy.
- Every child is allocated a key worker before they start and this is no different for a looked after child. The designated person ensures the key worker 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 that will 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 and thereafter at three to six monthly intervals.
- The care plan needs to consider such issues for the child as:
 - the child's emotional needs and how they are to be met;
 - how any emotional issues and problems that affect behaviour are to be managed;
 - the child's sense of self, culture, language and identity and how this is to be supported;
 - the child's need for sociability and friendship;
 - the child's 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;

- 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, fun-days etc alongside the foster carer.
- The settling-in process for the child should be the same as for any other child, with the foster carer taking the place of the parent, unless otherwise agreed. We take care to be flexible in allowing the foster carer to stay during sessions until it is visible that the child has formed secure relationships with staff. We understand that handling separation may be a lengthy process for looked after children and will allow this process to take place gradually to avoid causing 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 6 areas of learning.
- 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 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 looked after child's birth parents.