



Looked After Children (LAC) Policy

All staff are committed to doing all they can to enable 'looked after' children in their care to achieve and reach their full potential.

Definition of 'Looked after Children' (LAC): 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 (a voluntary care arrangement). Most LAC will be living in foster homes, but a smaller number may be in a children's home, living with a kinship carer or even placed back home with their birth 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.

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.

In our setting, we place emphasis on promoting children 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.

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 to two, three and four year olds to ensure they receive their entitlement to 2 year old funding and 3/4 year old funding. However this has to be in the child's best interests. To ascertain this we work closely with the Local Authority, Social Worker and foster carers. The child should show signs of beginning to form a secure attachment to the carer before they are placed in our care. The role of the Key Person is paramount and therefore an experienced Key Person will be allocated

to the child. We will gather as much background information as we can to help a child settle in at nursery and will contribute to and or attend any meetings as required. 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 lead for looked after children is Ellen Hanna, child protection officer.
- The designated lead will be responsible for liaising with the Virtual School Head teacher is Ellie Hanna
- Every child is allocated a key person before they start and this is no different for a looked after child.
- The Safeguarding Lead will ensure that the key person has the information, support and training necessary to meet the looked after child's needs.
- The Lead and or Key Person will liaise with agencies, professionals and practitioners involved with the child and his or her family and ensures appropriate information is gained and shared.
- We recognise 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 the Lead and key person will meet with the foster carer and any other appropriate professionals involved in the child's life, to collect as much information as possible to enable the child to settle as quickly as possible. Unless there is a specific action plan relating to the child's development and education in place, the key person shall start a Learning Journal for the child to record, assess and plan for development across the Prime and Specific areas of learning.
- Consent for the use of online Learning Journal Tapestry will be gained from Social Worker/Foster Carer. If consent is not given the key person shall use a paper learning journal.
- When planning for the child the key person 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 the child are responded to;
 - the child's sense of self, culture, language/s and identity – 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 considerations will be made as to:
 - 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 in our 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's 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 our activities that include parents, such as outings, 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 child forms 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.
 - 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 onto Child Protection Record and reported to the child's social care worker and or Children's Services Duty assessment team.
 - Regular contact should be maintained with the social worker through planned meetings that will include the foster carer. These will normally be arranged via the foster carer.
 - Transition to school will be handled sensitively and the safeguarding lead 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.

This Policy was written by:	Ellie Hanna.
Adapted by:	Laura Woodgate
Read and agreed by:	Little Tinkers Nursery Staff
Date:	October 2021
Review Date:	October 2022