

Aspiring Foundations Federated Nursery Schools

Children in Care and Children Previously Looked After

Policy statement

Aspiring Foundations Federated Nursery Schools 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 all children in their care to achieve and reach their full potential.

In UK law :

Children in care are referred to as 'looked after children'. A child is 'looked after' if they are in the care of the local authority for more than 24 hours. Legally, this could be when they are:

- living in accommodation provided by the local authority with the parents' agreement
- the subject of an interim or full care order or, in Scotland, a permanence order
- the subject of an emergency legal order to remove them from immediate danger
- in a secure children's home, secure training centre or young offender institution
- unaccompanied asylum seeking children." (NSPCC)

The definition of **Children Previously Looked After** is:

1, A child who was looked after by the local authority or another local authority in England and Wales but ceased to be looked after as a result of:

- A child arrangements order which includes arrangements relating to with whom the child is to live, or when the child is to live with any person,
- A special guardianship order, or
- An adoption order within the meaning given by section 72(1) of the Adoption Act 1976 or section 46(1) of the Adoption and Children Act 2002, or

2. A child who appears to the local authority:

- To have been in state care in a place outside England and Wales because he or she would not otherwise have been cared for adequately, and
- To have ceased to be in that state care as a result of being adopted.

This duty applies to a child who is educated in a local authority's area and is:

- Receiving early years provision secured by the local authority
- Is of compulsory school age and
- The child attends a school in the local authority's area, or
- If the child does not attend school, the child receives all or most of his or her education in the local authority's area.

We recognise that children who are in / have previously been in care have often experienced traumatic situations; physical, emotional or sexual abuse or neglect. However, we also recognise that not all children in care / children previously in care have experienced abuse and that there are a range of reasons for children to be taken in to the care of the local authority / be the subject of a child arrangement order. 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.

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In our setting, we place emphasis on promoting *children's right to be strong, resilient and listened to*. Our policy and practice guidelines for children in care 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 terms 'child in care' / 'previously looked after' denotes a child's current legal status; these terms are never used to categorise a child as standing out from others. We do not refer to such a child using acronyms such as CIC.
- We offer places for funded three and four-year-olds who are in care / previously looked after to ensure they receive their entitlement to early education. We expect that a child will have been with a new 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 a new 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 children in care and children previously looked after is the designated child protection co-ordinator.
- Every child is allocated a key person before they start and this is no different for a child in care / previously looked after. The designated person ensures the key person has the information, support and training necessary to meet the child in care'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.
- For children in care 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.
- The settling-in process for the child is agreed. It should be the same as for any other child, with the new 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 new 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.

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- 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 areas of learning and development.
- Concerns about the child will be noted in the child's file and discussed with the carer.
- If the concerns are about the 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.
- 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 in care's birth parents.

Children in Care

- At the start of a placement there is a joint meeting between professionals and the carers that will determine the objectives of the placement and draw up a care plan that incorporates the child's learning needs. This feeds into the Early Years Personal Education Plan (EyPEP) – a Halton document which outlines the care and education needs for the child and is reviewed at the least at 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/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 the EyPEP 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 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's return home, the birth parent(s) should be involved in planning
 - 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.
- Whether Early Years Pupil Premium plus will be applied for, what the targets and activities for spending it will be, how the impact will be measured. This is reviewed termly.
- Regular contact should be maintained with the social worker through planned meetings that will include the foster carer.



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Further guidance

- Guidance on the Education of Children and Young People in Public Care (DfEE 2000)
- Children and Social Work Act 2017
- Who Does What: How Social Workers and Carers can Support the Education of Child in care (DfES 2005)
- Supporting Child in care Learners - A Practical Guide for School Governors (DfES 2006)
- Children and Young Persons Act 2008
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Early Years Personal Education Plan – Halton Borough Council