**Looked after children (LAC) 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 are 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. 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.

* We do not normally offer placements for babies and children under two years who are in care,
* In exceptional circumstances, we offer places to 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 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 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.
* 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.

Procedures

* The designated person for looked after children is the designated Safeguarding officer – Saara Mehrban
* 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.
* 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 sufficient relationship with his or her key person for them 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 firm 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.

* The transition to school will be handled sensitively. 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.

Further guidance

* 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)

**Policy Statement**

We at Docklands Day Nursery are committed to providing a welcoming and inclusive and equality nursery for the children and families. All staff members in the nursery are committed to doing all they can to enable ‘looked after’ children (LAC) in our care to achieve and reach their full potential.

We recognise that children who are being looked after have often experienced traumatic situations; physical, emotional, or sexual abuse or neglect and 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 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.

The term ‘looked after child’ is generally used for a child’s current legal status. Looked after is used to describe a child who is looked after by the local authority. This includes children who are subject to a care order or temporarily classed as looked after on a planned basis for short breaks or respite care.

The legal framework for this policy is supported through the following Acts:

* Adoption and Children Act (2002)
* Children Act (1989 and 2004)
* Childcare Act 2006
* Children and Young Persons Act (2008)
* Children and Families Act (2014)
* Children and Social Work Act (2017).

All our Nursery staff are committed to doing all they can to support all children to achieve their full potential. The nursery staff team are all trained to understand our safeguarding policy and procedures. Practitioners are always supported by management, and we have an open-door policy if they need to discuss any sensitive issues regarding any child(ren).

Where applicable, we will contribute to any assessment about the child, such as those carried out under local authorities’ assessment frameworks or Early Help Assessment (EHA) and to any multi-agency meetings, case conferences or strategy meetings in relation to the child’s learning and development. The child’s key person will attend meetings as appropriate.

**Every** child in the nursery has an allocated key person. The key person will support the child initially with transition and settling in and then continue to support and build up a relationship with the child, Caregivers, and any other agencies. Regular contact will be maintained with the Caregivers, throughout the child’s time at the nursery as well as the social worker and professionals. When required, the nursery will develop a care plan with Caregivers, and other professionals, which will include: the following:

* 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 – 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
* How any special needs will be supported.
* 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 the setting, when, where and what form the contact will take will be discussed and agreed on.
* Who may collect the child from nursery and who may receive information about the child
* Wherever possible, and where the plan is for the child to return to their home, the birth parent(s) should be involved in planning, etc
* Where applicable, the nursery will complete a Personal Education Plan (PEP) for any children aged three to five in partnership with the social worker and other professionals.

As a statutory duty, the Nursery will inform the local authority when the nursery is made aware of a child who is subject to a private fostering arrangements by contacting the local authority children’s social care team.