



Looked After Children Policy

Policy Statement

At Toddington Childcare and Forest School, we recognise that children who are looked after by a local authority may have experienced significant disruption, loss, trauma, neglect, abuse or family breakdown. These experiences can affect their emotional well-being, relationships, learning and development.

We are committed to providing a safe, nurturing and inclusive environment where all children are valued, respected and supported to achieve their full potential. We recognise our responsibility to promote positive outcomes for looked after children and to work in partnership with carers, social workers, the Virtual School and other professionals to ensure their needs are met effectively.

Our practice is underpinned by the principles of attachment, resilience, and child-centred care. We aim to promote secure relationships, emotional well-being and a sense of belonging, recognising that these are fundamental to children's learning and development.

Legal Framework

This policy is based on the provisions of the Children Act 1989 and subsequent Legislation and guidance relating to looked after children.

The four main categories of looked after children are:

Section 20

Children accommodated by the local authority with the agreement of their parents.

Section 21

Children who are compulsorily accommodated, including those remanded to local authority care or subject to criminal justice supervision arrangements.

Section 31

Children subject to a Full Care Order or Interim Care Order (Section 38).

Sections 44 and 46

Children subject to Emergency Protection Orders or Police Protection arrangements.

Principles

Toddington Childcare and Forest School will:

- Promote the welfare, development and educational progress of all looked after children.
- Ensure every child is treated as an individual and not defined by their legal status.
- Never use acronyms such as "LAC" when referring to children.
- Recognise the importance of secure attachments and stable relationships in supporting children's resilience and learning.
- Work collaboratively with carers, social workers, the Virtual School and other professionals involved in the child's care.
- Maintain confidentiality and share information appropriately in accordance with safeguarding and data protection requirements.
- Provide a welcoming, inclusive and stimulating environment where children feel safe, valued and supported.

Every child attending the setting will be assigned a Key Person. For looked after children, the Designated Lead will ensure that the Key Person receives the information, guidance and support required to meet the child's individual needs.

Where possible and appropriate, we will offer places to children who are looked after, enabling them to access their entitlement to early education and care.

Where a child already attending the setting becomes looked after and remains within reasonable travelling distance, every effort will be made to maintain their placement to provide continuity and stability.

Designated Lead for Looked After Children

The Designated Lead for Looked After Children is our settings Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), who is supported by our Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads (DDSL's).

The Designated Lead is responsible for ensuring that the educational, developmental and welfare needs of looked after children are effectively supported within the setting.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead works closely with the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads to ensure these needs are met consistently and that appropriate support, safeguarding and monitoring arrangements are in place.

Responsibilities of the Designated Lead

Within the Setting

The Designated Lead will:

- Ensure that relevant staff are aware of a child's looked after status where this information is necessary to support the child's welfare and development.
- Promote an understanding among staff of the challenges and barriers that looked after children may face.
- Ensure looked after children have access to high-quality learning experiences and opportunities.
- Provide a safe, welcoming and nurturing environment that supports emotional well-being and development.
- Monitor children's progress, development and attainment.
- Identify and coordinate appropriate interventions and support where needed.
- Support Key People in meeting children's individual needs.
- Work closely with carers to promote learning and development both at home and within the setting.
- Encourage participation in enrichment opportunities, activities and experiences wherever possible.
- Complete and review any self-evaluation tools or quality assurance frameworks relating to looked after children.

Supporting Looked After Children

The Designated Lead will:

- Ensure that an initial Personal Education Plan (PEP) is completed within required timescales.
- Attend and contribute to all PEP meetings and reviews.
- Ensure PEP reviews are completed termly or in line with local authority requirements.
- Obtain and consider the child's views, wishes, and feelings where appropriate to their age and stage of development.
- Support smooth and positive transitions into the setting.
- Seek additional guidance and support from the Virtual School and other relevant professionals when required.
- Contribute to the setting of realistic and achievable targets within the child's PEP.
- Ensure agreed targets are implemented and reviewed regularly.
- Monitor the effectiveness of support strategies and interventions.
- Work proactively to narrow developmental and educational gaps between looked after children and their peers.

Partnership Working

Toddington Childcare and Forest School recognises the importance of strong multi-agency working.

The Designated Lead will:

- Develop positive relationships with carers, social workers and Virtual School representatives.
- Ensure information is shared promptly, appropriately, and securely.
- Act as the main point of contact for professionals involved in the child's care.
- Attend, contribute to, or provide reports for care planning meetings, statutory reviews, and other professional meetings as required.
- Support effective transition arrangements when children move between settings or progress to school.
- Ensure reports and relevant documentation are shared with carers, social workers and the Virtual School as appropriate.

Training

The Designated Lead will:

- Maintain up-to-date knowledge of Legislation, guidance and best practice relating to looked after children.
- Attend relevant training opportunities.
- Share learning and updates with staff as appropriate.
- Ensure all staff understand their role in supporting looked after children and promoting positive outcomes.

Confidentiality

Information regarding a child's looked after status will be treated as confidential and shared only on a need-to-know basis, in accordance with:

- The Data Protection Act 2018
- UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
- Safeguarding and Child Protection requirements

The child's welfare will always remain the paramount consideration.

Linked Policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Confidentiality Policy
- Data Protection and Privacy Policy

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if there are changes to Legislation, statutory guidance, or local authority procedures.

Signed on behalf of Toddington Childcare and Forest School May 2026

Sarah Malcolm

Chair of Toddington Childcare and Forest School Parent Management Committee