



Whole School Policy for Looked After Children

Please also refer to **‘Whole School Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy’**, **‘Whole School Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures’** and **‘Whole School Policy on Children’s Rights and Entitlements’**

Policy Statement:

Cranford 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.

This policy has regard to the ‘Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage’ Safeguarding and Welfare Requirement: Child Protection (3.4 ‘Providers must have and implement a policy, and procedures, to safeguard children’) and ISSR Standard 7: ‘The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that (a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school’.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the **‘Whole School Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy’** and **‘Whole School Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures’** which are reviewed annually by the entire Governing Body. This document is available in the Cranford School Policies section of the Whole School Staff Teams area on Microsoft Teams for all staff to read. It is also available to parents and interested parties on the School website. This policy is reviewed annually, and when events or legislation requires.

Key Personnel:

The Key Person or Head of EYFS should be contacted should you have any questions or concerns regarding this document.

EYFS Key Themes and Commitments:

This policy corresponds with the following 'EYFS Key Themes and Commitments':

- A Unique Child (1.2 Inclusive Practice)
- Positive Relationships (2.1 Respecting Each Other)
- Enabling Environments (3.2 Supporting Every Child)
- Learning and Development (4.4 Personal, Social and Emotional Development)

Principles:

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 parents(s).

We recognise that children who are being looked after have often experienced traumatic situations such as 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.

Cranford School places emphasis on promoting children's rights to be strong, resilient and listened to. Our policy and 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. We therefore work under the following key 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';
- In exceptional circumstances, we would consider offering a place to a child who is in care to start during the term in which they turn three years old. In such a case, 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;
- We offer places for funded three and four-year-olds who are in care to ensure they receive their entitlements 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;
- 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 provide the place for the child.

Procedures:

Cranford School follows the procedures set out below with regard to 'looked after' children:

- The Designated Person for looked after children is the Designated Person for Safeguarding (DSL);
- Every child in the EYFS is allocated a Key Person before they start, and this is no different for a looked after child. The Designated Person ensures that the Key Person has the information, support and training necessary to meet the looked after child's needs;
- Pupils in the Junior School or Senior School are supported by the DSL, Form Tutor and Head of Year/Key Stage;
- The DSL and Form Tutor/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 School 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. No changes would be made, especially with regard to the birth parents' or foster carers' role in relation to the School, without prior discussion and agreement with the child's social worker;
- At the point of the child joining Cranford, a professionals meeting will take place to 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 should consider the following issues for the child:
 - their emotional needs and how they are to be met;
 - how any emotional issues and problems that affect their behaviour are to be managed;
 - their sense of self, culture, language(s) and identity and how this is supported;
 - their need for sociability and friendship;
 - their interests and abilities and possible learning journey pathway;
 - 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 School, when, where and what form the contact will take will be discussed and agreed;
 - what written reporting is required.
- In addition to this:
 - 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 parents(s) should be involved in the setting's activities that include parents, such as outings alongside the foster carer.
- The settling-in process for the child is then agreed with the Headmaster prior to the child starting. It should be the same as for any other child, with the foster carer taking the place of the parent, unless otherwise agreed. The settling-in period will continue until it is visible

that the child has formed a sufficient relationship with his or her Key Person/Form Tutor for them to act as a 'secure base' to allow the gradual separation from the foster carer. The 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, their sociability and their ability to manage their feelings with or without support is the focus of observation;
- For children in the EYFS, 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;
- 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 our '**Whole School Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy**' and '**Whole School Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures**';
- Regular contact will be maintained with the social worker through planned meetings that will include the foster carer;
- The transition from our Pre-School to Reception class (or alternative educational establishment) will be handled sensitively. The Designated Person and/or the child's Key Person will liaise with the School, following advice from the OSCB (Oxfordshire Safeguarding Childcare Board), passing on relevant information and documentation with the agreement of the looked after child's birth parents. This also applies to children in the Junior and Senior Schools when they move up the School into new classes and Year Groups. Form Tutors and Heads of Year/Key Stage will liaise to ensure a smooth transition.

Reviewed: November 2024 DSL

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