Looked after Children Policy

Policy statement

Stanmore Montessori is committed to providing quality provision based on equality of opportunity for all children and their families. All the staff are committed to doing all they can to enable 'looked after' children in our 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 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 impact on their emotional well-being.

At Stanmore Montessori 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 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.
- Where applicable, we contribute to any assessment about the child, and to any multi- agency meetings, case conferences or strategy meetings in relation to the child's learning and development. The designated person for looked after children and/or the child's key person will attend meetings as appropriate.
- We offer places to two-year-old children in exceptional circumstances 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 have formed a secure attachment to the carer and where the placement in the setting will last a minimum of three months.
- We offer places for funded three-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 has formed a secure attachment to

the carer. We expect that the placement in the setting will last a minimum of six weeks.
- Where a child who normally attends Stanmore Montessori 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 **Nicky Quint,** the designated child protection co-ordinator.
- 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.
- Where applicable, we contribute to any assessment about the child, and to any multi-agency meetings, case conferences or strategy meetings in relation to the child's learning and development. The designated person for looked after children and/or the child's key person will attend meetings as appropriate.
- 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.
- 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 there is a professionals' meeting that will determine the objectives of the placement and draw up a care plan that incorporates the child's learning needs. This plan is reviewed at regular 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 and 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.

- 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 the setting, when where and what form the contact will take will be discussed and agreed.
    - who may collect the child from the Setting and who may receive information about the child.

- 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.

- The settling-in for the child is agreed. It should be the same as for any other child, with the foster carer taking the place of the parents, 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 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 form a picture of the whole child in relation to the Early Years Foundation Stage key 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 care worker according to our safeguarding children procedure.
- Regular contact should be maintained with the social worker through planned meetings that will include the foster carer.
- 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. The child's individual file will be passed on to the carer at this stage.

Legal Framework

- Childcare Act (2016)
- Adoption of Children Act (2002)
- Children and Social Work Act (2017)
- Children and Families Act (2014)

This policy was adopted on	**Signed on behalf of the nursery**	**Date for review**
1 September 2026	*Nicky Quint*	*1 September 2027*