1.3 Looked After Children Policy

Policy statement

Early years settings are 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.

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 in to 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.

In our setting, 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.

1. **Principles**

1.1 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.

1.2 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 having formed a secure attachment to the carer and where the placement in the setting will last a minimum of three months.

1.3 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 has formed a secure attachment to the carer. We expect that the placement in the setting will last a minimum of six weeks.

1.4 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.

1.5 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.

2. **Procedures**

2.1 The designated person for looked after children is the designated child protection co-ordinator .

2.2 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. If a looked after child connects independently to another adult other than the assigned keyperson then they can transition to this person. This gives the child a sense of control and may help with the settling in process.

2.3 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.

2.4 The setting recognises 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.

2.5 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 and the child's learning needs. This plan is reviewed after two weeks, six weeks and three months. Thereafter at three to six monthly intervals.

2.6 The care plan needs to consider such issues for the child as:

i. the child's emotional needs and how they are to be met;

ii. how any emotional issues and problems that affect behaviour are to be managed;

iii. the child's sense of self, culture, language/s and identity – how this is to be supported;

iv. the child's need for sociability and friendship;

v. the child's interests and abilities and possible learning journey pathway; and

vi. how any special needs will be supported.

2.7 In addition the care plan will also consider:

i. 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;

ii. 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;

iii. 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; and

iv. 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.

2.8 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 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.

2.9 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.

2.10 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 6 areas of learning.

2.11 Concerns about the child will be noted in the child's file and discussed with the foster carer.

2.12 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.

2.13 Regular contact should be maintained with the social worker through planned meetings that will include the foster carer.

2.14 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 looked after child's birth parents.

Further guidance

- Guidance on the Education of Children and Young People in Public Care (DfE 2026)
- Who Does What: How Social Workers and Carers can Support the Education of Looked After Children (DfES 2025)
- Supporting Looked After Learners - A Practical Guide for School Governors (DfES 2006)

This policy was adopted at a meeting of	St Christophers playgroup	name of setting
Held on	September 2026	(date)
Date to be reviewed	September 2027	(date)
Signed on behalf of the management committee	KJCookes	
Name of signatory	Karen Cookes	
Role of signatory (e.g. chair/owner)	Playgroup Manager	