

Harrold Pre-School Policies



Looked After Children

Policy Statement

Harrold Pre-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.

Harrold Pre-School recognises that children who are being looked after will often have experienced traumatic situations; physical, emotional or sexual abuse or neglect. However, we also recognise that not all looked after children will 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 will have an impact on their emotional well-being.

Harrold Pre-School places 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 will never be used to categorise a child as standing out from others. Harrold Pre-School will not refer to such children using acronyms such as LAC.
- Harrold Pre-School will offer places to two and a half year old children who are in care. In such cases, the child will 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 our Pre-School will last a minimum of three months.
- Harrold Pre-School will 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 will expect that the placement at the Pre-School will last a minimum of six weeks.

- Harrold Pre-School will always offer 'stay and play' provision for a child who is two and a half 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 Pre-School 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 **Eileen Devine** who will work closely with the designated Safeguard Lead, **Sarah Burrows**.
- Every child will be allocated a key person before they start and this will be no different for a looked after child. The designated person for looked after children will ensure 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 will liaise with agencies, professionals and practitioners involved with the child and his or her family and will ensure appropriate information is gained and shared.
- Harrold Pre-School 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 will change, especially with regard to the birth parent's or foster carer's role in relation to the Pre-School, without prior discussion and agreement with the child's social worker.
- At the start of a placement there will be a professionals meeting that will determine the objectives of the placement. A care plan will be drawn up incorporating the child's learning needs. This plan will be reviewed after two weeks, six weeks and three months. Thereafter at three to six monthly intervals.
- The care plan will consider such issues for the child as:
 - a) The child's emotional needs and how they will be met;
 - b) How any emotional issues and problems that affect behaviour will be managed;
 - c) The child's sense of self, culture, language/s and identity – how this will be supported;
 - d) The child's need for sociability and friendship;
 - e) The child's interests and abilities and possible learning journey pathway; and
 - f) How any special needs will be supported.
- In addition the care plan will also consider:
 - 1) 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;

- 2) 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 Pre-School, when, where and what form the contact will take, will be discussed and agreed;
 - 3) What written reporting will be required;
 - 4) Wherever possible, and where the plan is for the child's return home, the birth parent(s) will be involved in planning; and
 - 5) With the social worker's agreement, and as part of the plan, the birth parent(s) will be involved in the preschool's activities that include parents, such as outings, fun-days etc. alongside the foster carer.
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- The settling-in process for the child will be agreed. It will 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 will 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 will be 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.
 - 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 will be recorded in the child's file and reported to the Safeguard Lead according to Harrold Pre-School's safeguarding children procedure.
 - Regular contact will 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 with the agreement of the looked after child's birth parents.