**LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN POLICY.**

Cowling Preschool is committed to providing quality provision based on equality of opportunity for all children and their families. All our staff will ensure that ‘looked after’ children are able to reach and achieve their full potential.

**Policy Statement.**

We recognise that children who are being looked after have often experienced traumatic situations, however we also recognise 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. 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 offer places to funded two, three and four year olds who are in care to ensure their entitlement to early education, however we expect that the child will have been with the foster carer for a minimum of one month and to have formed a secure attachment to the carer. We expect that the placement in the preschool will last a minimum of 6 weeks. We will offer a ‘stay and play’ provision for a child who is still settling with their foster carer, or who is only temporarily being looked after. Where a child who normally attends our setting is taken into care we will continue to offer the placement for the child.

**Procedures.**

* The designated person for looked after children is ……………………………………………………
* Every child is allocated a key person, 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.
* The designated person and the key worker will liaise with agencies, professionals and practitioners involved with the child and his or her family to ensure appropriate information is gained and shared.
* We recognise the role of the local authority social care department as the child’s ‘corporate parent’ and is the key agency on determining what takes place with the child. Nothing changes in relation to the child in our care without prior discussion and agreement with the child’s social worker, in particular with regard to the birth parent or foster carer’s role in relation to the setting.
* Where necessary at the start of a placement, a care plan will be drawn up to determine the objectives of the placement and the child’s learning needs. This plan will be reviewed after two and six weeks, then three months. Thereafter it will be reviewed at three or six months as required. The care plan will take into account:
  + 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;
  + How we will support the child’s sense of self, culture, language and identity;
  + The child’s needs for sociability and friendship;
  + The child’s interests and abilities and possible learning pathway;
  + How any special needs will be supported;
  + How information will be shared with the foster carer and the local authority, as well as what information will be shared with whom, and how it will be recorded and stored.
  + What contact the child has with his/her birth family, and what arrangements are in place for supervised contact, and whether any contact will take place with regards to our setting such as collection, outings, events and fun days.
  + What written reporting is required.
* The settling in process for the child is agreed the same as for any other child, with the foster parent taking the place of the parent, unless otherwise agreed. It is important that the ‘proximity’ stage is followed to allow the child to create a relationship with their key worker sufficiently enough to see them as a ‘secure base’, to allow for the gradual separation from their foster carer. This process may take some time and should be lengthy enough to prevent any 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 and 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 6 of learning.
* Concerns about the child will be noted in their file and discussed with the foster carer, or to the child’s social care worker where appropriate, according to our Safeguarding Children policies and procedures.
* Regular contact will be maintained with the social worker through planned meetings that will also include the foster carer.
* Transition to school will be handled sensitively and the designated person and/or the key person will liaise with the school, passing on relevant information and documentation with the agreement of the foster carer/social workers and birth parents accordingly.

**This policy was adopted on .………………………………….......**

**Date to be reviewed ...…………………………………….**

**Signed on behalf of the management committee …………………………………………**

**Name of signatory …………………………………………**

**Role of signatory (e.g. Chair/owner) …………………………………………**