

Stillness Infant School

Private Fostering Policy (Revised November 2023)

Introduction and Context

Many children spend some time away from their home and stay with relatives and friends. Some of these children may stay for longer and therefore special measures may apply.

If a child is under 16 (under 18 if disabled) and lives with someone other than a close relative as part of a private arrangement for longer than 28 days this is seen as Private Fostering. This does not have to be continuous, and periods staying with family or friends that add up 28 days or longer in any period may then be seen as Private Fostering.

Private Fostering is an arrangement made between a parent and a carer who has agreed to look after the child on their behalf.

Private foster carers are responsible for the day to day care of the child; however the overarching responsibility for the child's welfare remains with parent or person with parental responsibility.

Children living with foster carers may be vulnerable because of the informal nature of the arrangements and because the private foster carers may not be equipped to best protect children from risks to their welfare and safety.

There are many private fostering situations. These may involve children or young people:

- who are sent to this country for education or health care by their birth parents from overseas
- whose parents work or study long or anti-social hours
- who are living with a friend's family as a result of parental separation, health issues, is in prison or there are alcohol or drug issues, or arguments at home
- whose parents have died or separated
- who are living with their partner's family
- adolescents estranged from their parents
- who have been trafficked into the country.

Both the parents and the private foster carers have a legal duty to inform the local authority if they are setting up private fostering arrangements.

Our Responsibilities

Stillness Infant school recognises its responsibility to:

- understand what private fostering is, and be able to identify a child who may be in a private fostering arrangement;
- report to the L.A. if it is believed that the child is living in such an arrangement.

Private fostering arrangements can be difficult to identify but some questions on admission to school could help to identify children who are privately fostered:

Is the child living with someone other than a close relative?

*Has the child been living there or is there the intention to live there for 28 days or more?
Has this been arranged and agreed by the child's parent or person with parental responsibility?
If the child is from overseas, what are their living arrangements? Are their parents with them?*

We will follow the procedures set out by Lewisham Authority. Information can be found at the link below:

<https://lewisham.gov.uk/myservices/socialcare/children/fostering/private-fostering>

Our Policy

Under the Children Act 1989 the L.A. has a duty to make sure the arrangement that the child is in will provide for the child's needs and safeguard his or her welfare. Stillness Infants will ensure all staff, governors and volunteers of the school are aware of this duty.

If a member of staff, governor or volunteer becomes aware that a child may be living in a Private Foster arrangement, it is the responsibility of that person to report this to the Designated Safeguarding Lead. The DSL may need to make further enquiries to try to establish this. The DSL should seek advice from Children's Social Care as to whether the child is privately fostered under the regulations. If so, a referral must be made.

Safeguarding Roles and Responsibilities

All staff, governors and volunteers have responsibility for the following:

- to ask parents / carers questions around their relationship with the child if this is unclear, confusing or concerning;
- to follow up any discussion with a child about their living arrangement which is unclear, confusing or concerning;
- To have robust consent/ trips/ outings letters which clearly define the child's relationship to the adult giving consent.

If a child is living in a Private Fostering arrangement staff have the responsibility to:

- work with the LA to ensure the child's needs are being met;
- to monitor and report to ensure the safety and welfare of the child whilst being privately fostered;
- to assist with advising and supporting the carer to undertake their duties whilst the child is living in such an arrangement.

Management of the Policy

The DSL's will become familiar with this policy and ensure all staff, governors and volunteers are aware of, and familiar with, the legal requirements and duties.

The SLT will endeavour to read and provide information on Private Fostering to staff on a regular basis.

The Head teacher will report on any issues relating to Private Fostering and any impact for the school to the governing body.

The Head teacher will ensure that Private Fostering forms part of the Staff safeguarding induction, and is included regularly in whole school safeguarding training.

The Governing Body will oversee the policy, ensure its implementation and review its content on a 3 yearly basis or sooner if required.

Review date: November 2025 (or sooner if required).