

# Little Acorns Montessori

Bracknell & Crowthorne

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## LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN (LAC) POLICY

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Every child deserves to achieve their fullest potential.  
This policy sets out how Little Acorns Montessori fulfils its statutory duties towards children who are Looked After or Previously Looked After.

Document Control	
Policy Title	Looked After Children (LAC) Policy
Setting	Little Acorns Montessori — Ascot, Bracknell & Crowthorne
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Distribution	All staff, volunteers, students on placement, parents/carers on request

## 1. Policy Statement

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Little Acorns Montessori is committed to providing the highest quality of care and education for every child in its settings, including those who are Looked After Children (LAC) or Previously Looked After Children (PLAC).

We recognise that children who are, or who have been, in the care of a local authority may face significant challenges arising from instability, loss, and adverse childhood experiences. We are equally aware that, with the right support, these children can thrive. Our role is to be a consistent, nurturing, and professionally rigorous presence in their lives.

Little Acorns Montessori is committed to the following principles in relation to Looked After and Previously Looked After Children:

- Every LAC and PLAC attending our settings has an equal right to high-quality early years provision.
- The best interests and welfare of the child are the primary consideration in all decisions we make.
- We will work in close partnership with placing authorities, social workers, foster carers, and all relevant professionals to ensure a coordinated and effective approach to each child's care and education.
- We will contribute meaningfully to each child's Personal Education Plan (PEP), ensuring it reflects the child's needs, strengths, and early learning goals.
- We will designate a skilled and appropriately trained Key Person for every LAC, who will act as a consistent and trusted adult.
- We will approach all practice with an attachment-aware and trauma-informed perspective, recognising how early experiences shape a child's capacity to learn and form relationships.
- We will maintain confidentiality rigorously, sharing information only on a lawful, need-to-know basis.
- We will ensure that all staff who work with LAC or PLAC receive appropriate training and support to fulfil their responsibilities.
- We will not discriminate against any child on the basis of their care status, and we will actively challenge any such discrimination, in line with our obligations under the Equality Act 2010.

This policy applies to Little Acorns Montessori settings in Ascot, Bracknell and Crowthorne.

## 2. Scope

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This policy applies to all individuals working at or on behalf of Little Acorns Montessori, regardless of their role, contract type, or length of service. This includes:

- The Nursery Manager
- All permanent, part-time, and bank/sessional members of staff
- Volunteers
- Agency workers
- Students on placement
- The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Deputy DSL

This policy also provides guidance relevant to parents, carers, and foster carers of children attending our settings.

This policy operates across both nursery settings: Bracknell and Crowthorne. Where practice or local authority contacts differ between settings, these will be documented in the individual setting's operational procedures.

This policy must be applied in the context of the relevant placing authority for each child. Children attending the Bracknell setting are most likely to be placed by Bracknell Forest Council. Children attending the Ascot setting may be placed by the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (whose Virtual School function is operated by Achieving for Children). Children attending the Crowthorne setting may be placed by Wokingham Borough Council. Where a child is placed by an authority other than Bracknell Forest, the DSL must identify and contact the correct Virtual School Head at the point of enrolment. Contact details for each relevant Virtual School are maintained in the DSL's operational records and are reviewed at each policy review.

## 3. Definitions

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The following definitions are used consistently throughout this policy.

### 3.1 Looked After Child (LAC) / Child in Care

Under the Children Act 1989, a child is 'looked after' by a local authority if they are:

- In the care of the local authority by virtue of a care order (Section 31) or interim care order;
- Accommodated by the local authority under a voluntary agreement with their parent or carer (Section 20); or
- Subject to a placement order under the Adoption and Children Act 2002, pending adoption.

The terms 'Looked After Child', 'Child in Care', and 'LAC' are used interchangeably in this policy and in relevant statutory guidance.

### 3.2 Previously Looked After Child (PLAC)

A Previously Looked After Child is a child who was formerly in local authority care and has since left care through one of the following routes:

- Adoption;
- A Special Guardianship Order (SGO); or
- A Child Arrangements Order (formerly known as a Residence Order).

PLACs may continue to carry the impact of their early care experiences and are entitled to additional consideration, support, and targeted funding (Pupil Premium Plus) to promote their wellbeing and development.

Where a child is living with extended family under a kinship or informal care arrangement, staff should seek clarification from the carer or placing authority as to whether the child has any prior care history. Even a brief period in local authority care constitutes a care episode for these purposes and may entitle the child to consideration as a PLAC.

### 3.3 Personal Education Plan (PEP)

A PEP is a statutory document that forms part of a Looked After Child's overall care plan. It records the child's educational achievements, learning targets, and the support they require to achieve their full potential. For children of pre-school age, the PEP includes Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) learning objectives. Little Acorns Montessori has a statutory duty to contribute to and support the PEP.

### 3.4 Virtual School Head (VSH)

Each local authority in England must appoint a Virtual School Head. The VSH is a senior officer with specific statutory responsibility for promoting the educational achievement of all Looked After Children placed by their authority, including those of early years age. The VSH oversees the use of Pupil Premium Plus funding and supports settings in meeting a LAC's educational needs.

### 3.5 Designated Person for LAC

In a private nursery setting, there is no statutory requirement to appoint a 'Designated Teacher' as there is in maintained schools. At Little Acorns Montessori, the responsibilities equivalent to those of a Designated Teacher are held by the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), supported by the Nursery Manager and the child's Key Person. The DSL is the primary point of contact for all matters relating to the education and welfare of LAC and PLAC.

### 3.6 Placing Authority

The placing authority is the local authority that holds corporate parental responsibility for a Looked After Child. This may be a different authority from the one in which the child is physically placed. For example,

a child placed in Bracknell may be 'looked after' by a local authority outside of Bracknell Forest. All formal communications regarding the child's care must be directed to the placing authority.

### **3.7 Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)**

An IRO is appointed by the placing authority to chair the statutory review meetings for each Looked After Child. The IRO is responsible for ensuring that the care plan, including the PEP, is reviewed regularly, that the child's wishes and feelings are taken into account, and that all agencies fulfil their duties. Little Acorns Montessori staff may be asked to contribute to or attend these reviews.

### **3.8 Pupil Premium Plus (PP+)**

Pupil Premium Plus is additional government funding allocated to local authorities and early years settings to support the educational progress of Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children. For LAC of pre-school age, the VSH allocates PP+ funding. Little Acorns Montessori must use this funding in line with the child's PEP to provide targeted support and may not use it for general nursery expenditure.

## 4. Statutory and Regulatory Framework

This policy is written in compliance with the following statutory legislation and regulatory guidance. All references are to the most current versions available as at the date of adoption of this policy.

Document / Legislation	Relevance to This Policy
<b>EYFS Statutory Framework (DfE, 2025) Effective 1 September 2025</b>	Sets mandatory requirements for safeguarding and welfare, including a strengthened duty to promote the welfare of every child. Section 3 is the primary EYFS reference for this policy.
<b>Working Together to Safeguard Children (DfE, 2026) Published March 2026</b>	Statutory guidance on multi-agency working to protect children. The 2026 edition strengthens expectations for children in any care arrangement, including those who are looked after.
<b>Children Act 1989</b>	Defines 'looked after' status, establishes corporate parental responsibility, and sets out the duties of local authorities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in their care.
<b>Children Act 2004</b>	Strengthens multi-agency working and places a duty on relevant agencies to cooperate to improve outcomes for children.
<b>Children and Families Act 2014</b>	Promotes the educational outcomes of looked after children and introduces provisions for Previously Looked After Children.
<b>Children and Social Work Act 2017</b>	Strengthens corporate parenting principles and places new duties on local authorities and relevant agencies. Introduces 'corporate parenting principles' that inform how all services engage with children in care.
<b>Equality Act 2010</b>	Prohibits discrimination. Care status is not itself a protected characteristic, but many LAC are covered by other protected characteristics (disability, race). The nursery must ensure no child is disadvantaged.
<b>The Designated Teacher for Looked-After and Previously Looked-After Children (DfE, February 2018)</b>	Statutory guidance for maintained schools, applied here for contextual best practice alignment. The equivalent role at Little Acorns Montessori is held by the DSL and supported by the Key Person.
<b>Ofsted Education Inspection Framework (EIF) Effective November 2025</b>	Sets out how Ofsted inspects early years settings. Safeguarding is assessed separately (met / not met). Inspectors will evaluate how the setting supports vulnerable children, including those who are looked after.

Note: This policy will be reviewed in the event of any amendment to the above legislation or guidance. Particular attention should be paid to the forthcoming updated Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE, 2026), currently under consultation, which is expected to be published later in 2026.

## 5. Roles and Responsibilities

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Clear lines of responsibility are essential to ensure that every Looked After Child receives consistent, effective support. The responsibilities of each role are set out below.

### 5.1 The Nursery Manager

- Has overall responsibility for the implementation and monitoring of this policy across both settings.
- Ensures that sufficient, appropriately trained staff are available to support any LAC enrolled.
- Ensures that the DSL and Deputy DSL are identifiable and accessible to all staff.
- Ensures that Pupil Premium Plus funding, where allocated, is used in full accordance with the child's PEP and the direction of the VSH.
- Ensures that this policy is reviewed annually, or sooner following changes in legislation or guidance.
- Acts as a point of escalation where concerns cannot be resolved at practitioner level.
- Ensures that the setting cooperates fully with Ofsted and any local authority inspection or review process.

### 5.2 The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

- Acts as the named lead for all matters relating to the safeguarding, welfare, and educational support of LAC and PLAC.
- Liaises directly with the placing authority, social worker, IRO, VSH, and any other relevant professionals.
- Ensures that a PEP is in place for every LAC and that the nursery's contribution is submitted promptly.
- Ensures that PP+ funding decisions are made in consultation with the VSH and are clearly linked to the PEP.
- Maintains secure, confidential records for every LAC in line with Section 11 of this policy.
- Provides advice and support to the Key Person and other staff working with a LAC.
- Attends statutory review meetings, or ensures the Key Person can attend in their place.
- Ensures all staff who need to know about a child's LAC status are informed on a need-to-know basis only.
- Attends LAC-specific safeguarding training at least every two years, in addition to core DSL training.

### 5.3 The Deputy DSL

- Acts in place of the DSL in their absence, with full authority to make decisions in relation to LAC.
- Maintains sufficient knowledge and training to discharge all DSL responsibilities as required.
- Supports the DSL in maintaining records and professional relationships with the placing authority.

### 5.4 The Key Person

- Serves as the consistent, trusted adult for each LAC in the nursery setting.
- Builds a secure, warm, and attachment-aware relationship with the child from the earliest opportunity.
- Observes, assesses, and records the child's progress and wellbeing in line with the EYFS framework and the PEP.
- Contributes written observations and assessments to the PEP review process, as directed by the DSL.
- Communicates any concerns about the child's welfare, emotional wellbeing, or development to the DSL without delay.

- Maintains appropriate professional boundaries while providing a nurturing and predictable relationship.
- Attends statutory review meetings where possible and appropriate, and with the agreement of the DSL.
- Participates in relevant training, including attachment-aware and trauma-informed practice.

## **5.5 All Staff**

- Must be aware of this policy and understand their responsibilities in relation to children who are looked after.
- Must not disclose a child's LAC or PLAC status to any third party without the explicit authorisation of the DSL.
- Must report any concern about a LAC's welfare or behaviour to the Key Person or DSL immediately.
- Must not promise confidentiality to any child or adult regarding a safeguarding concern.
- Must complete any LAC-awareness training required by the nursery.
- Must be able to identify and actively challenge racism and discrimination in relation to any child in their care, including LAC and PLAC, in line with the expectations set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children (DfE, 2026). Awareness alone is not sufficient; staff are expected to act on concerns and raise them with the DSL.

## **5.6 Parents, Carers, and Foster Carers**

- Foster carers and any other person with day-to-day care of a LAC are encouraged to share relevant information with the nursery to support the child's settled start and ongoing wellbeing.
- Foster carers should inform the DSL of any changes to the child's care arrangements, contact arrangements, or emotional wellbeing without delay.
- Parents or carers of PLAC are encouraged to inform the nursery of any relevant history that may assist staff in supporting the child effectively.
- All parents and carers must respect the confidentiality of information shared with them in the context of PEP reviews or professional meetings.

## 6. Admission and Enrolment Procedures

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The admission of a Looked After Child requires additional steps beyond the standard enrolment process. These steps must be completed promptly and without creating barriers to the child starting as quickly as possible.

### 6.1 Prior to the Child Starting

- The Nursery Manager or DSL must be notified as early as possible that a LAC is being considered for a place at Little Acorns Montessori.
- The DSL must make contact with the child's social worker and the placing authority at the earliest opportunity to gather relevant background information.
- The DSL must request a copy of the child's current care plan, PEP (if one exists), and any health or SEND documentation, subject to consent from the placing authority.
- The DSL must establish the identity of the child's IRO and ensure contact details are recorded in the child's secure file.
- The DSL must confirm the identity of the Virtual School Head (VSH) for the placing authority and make initial contact to discuss PP+ funding entitlement.
- The Key Person must be identified and briefed by the DSL before the child's first session, with particular attention to the child's attachment history, communication needs, and any known triggers or strategies.
- A settling-in plan must be agreed with the foster carer, social worker, and Key Person before the child starts. The plan should allow for a gradual transition and should not be curtailed by placement timescales without professional agreement.

### 6.2 Consent and Confidentiality at Enrolment

- The DSL must clarify with the placing authority and social worker what information may be shared with which members of staff, and must record this agreement in writing.
- The child's LAC status must not be disclosed on any general nursery documentation or displayed in any shared space.
- Information about the child's care history must be stored in a secure, separate file (see Section 11) and must not be included in the child's general Learning Journey.
- Parental responsibility for LAC is complex. The DSL must clarify with the placing authority who holds parental responsibility and what decisions require the consent of which parties before any significant decision is made.

### 6.3 No Delay in Admission

- Little Acorns Montessori must not delay the admission of a LAC pending the completion of all paperwork. The child's need for a stable, early start in a nurturing setting must take precedence.
- Where information is incomplete at the point of admission, the DSL must actively pursue the outstanding information and document all attempts to do so.

## 7. The Key Person Approach

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The Key Person role is a statutory requirement under the EYFS Statutory Framework (DfE, 2025) and is of particular significance for Looked After Children, for whom consistent, warm, and predictable adult relationships are essential to development and emotional security.

### 7.1 Assignment of the Key Person

- Every LAC must be assigned a named Key Person before they begin attending the setting.
- The Nursery Manager and DSL must jointly consider which member of staff is best placed to fulfil this role, taking into account the practitioner's training, experience, emotional availability, and continuity of attendance.
- A deputy Key Person must also be identified to ensure consistency on days when the primary Key Person is absent.
- Where a LAC is already settled with a Key Person and a change of Key Person becomes necessary, the transition must be managed carefully and in discussion with the foster carer, social worker, and DSL.

### 7.2 Responsibilities of the Key Person

- To build a secure, warm relationship with the child through consistent, responsive, and attuned interactions.
- To implement the child's PEP targets within daily practice and plan activities accordingly.
- To observe and document the child's progress, emotional wellbeing, and developmental milestones, sharing these observations with the DSL to inform PEP reviews.
- To communicate regularly with the foster carer or other day-to-day carer, using agreed communication methods (see Section 14).
- To be alert to changes in the child's behaviour, mood, or appearance that may indicate a safeguarding concern, and to report these to the DSL immediately.
- To support the child's transitions within the setting (e.g., room moves) and beyond (e.g., starting school) with particular care and planning.

### 7.3 Emotional Availability and Professional Support

- The nursery recognises that working with LAC can be emotionally demanding. The Key Person must be offered regular supervision by the Nursery Manager or DSL.
- Where a Key Person has concerns about their capacity to meet a child's needs, they must raise this with the Nursery Manager at the earliest opportunity.
- The nursery will not place unreasonable demands on a Key Person without providing adequate professional support.

## 8. Personal Education Plan (PEP) and Learning Support

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The Personal Education Plan is a statutory document. Little Acorns Montessori has a duty to contribute to and support the PEP of every Looked After Child in attendance.

### 8.1 The Nursery's Role in the PEP

- The DSL is responsible for ensuring that the nursery's contribution to the PEP is completed accurately, promptly, and with specific reference to the child's progress within the EYFS framework.
- The Key Person must provide written observations and assessments to the DSL in advance of any scheduled PEP review meeting.
- The nursery's contribution to the PEP must include: current developmental assessments across the EYFS prime and specific areas of learning; identified areas of strength; areas requiring additional support; any agreed targets for the next period; and proposed use of PP+ funding.
- The DSL or Key Person must attend the PEP review meeting where practicable, or submit a written report where attendance is not possible.
- Following every PEP review, the DSL must ensure that any updated targets or support strategies are communicated to the Key Person and implemented without delay.

### 8.2 Accessing Pupil Premium Plus (PP+)

- The DSL must contact the Virtual School Head for the placing authority at the point of enrolment to confirm whether the child is entitled to PP+ funding and, if so, the amount allocated.
- PP+ funding must be spent on provision that directly benefits the individual child and that is recorded in the PEP. Examples include: additional Key Person hours, specialist intervention, communication and language resources, and CPD for the Key Person.
- PP+ spending must be recorded clearly and reported to the VSH on request.
- PP+ funding must not be used to meet the nursery's core staffing or operational costs.

### 8.3 Assessment and Tracking

- The Key Person must use the nursery's standard assessment and observation tools to track the child's progress across all EYFS areas.
- A record of the child's developmental progress must be updated at least half-terminally and shared with the DSL.
- Where a LAC is identified as having Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND), the nursery's SENCO must be involved and the SEND Policy must be applied alongside this policy. The PEP must reflect any SEND support plan or Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan.
- Progress information must be kept securely and separately from the child's general Learning Journey (see Section 11).

## 9. Confidentiality and Information Sharing

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Little Acorns Montessori takes its confidentiality obligations seriously. Information about a child's LAC status is highly sensitive and must be handled with the utmost discretion.

### 9.1 Principles

- Information about a child's LAC or PLAC status must not be shared with any person who does not need it to fulfil their professional role in supporting the child.
- Staff must not discuss a child's care status with other parents, family members, or any person outside the setting.
- Information sharing must comply with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR), the Data Protection Act 2018, and the information-sharing principles set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children (DfE, 2026).
- The lawful basis for sharing personal data about a child will generally be: compliance with a legal obligation, or the processing of special category data where necessary for the purposes of safeguarding.

### 9.2 What Information May Be Shared, With Whom

- The DSL may share relevant information with: the placing authority social worker; the IRO; the VSH; OFSTED inspectors; the child's GP or health visitor where relevant to the child's welfare; and other professionals identified in the child's care plan, with appropriate consent.
- Within the nursery, information about a child's LAC status is shared on a strict need-to-know basis. The Key Person, Deputy Key Person, and the Nursery Manager will generally require this information. Other staff will be informed only where this is necessary to ensure the child's safety or welfare.
- Absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed where there is a concern about a child's safety. In such cases, the duty to safeguard the child takes precedence over confidentiality.

### 9.3 Secure Handling of Records

- All documentation relating to a child's LAC status must be stored separately from the child's main file. See Section 11 for full recording and storage requirements.
- Staff must not take photographs of a LAC on personal devices. All images must be taken on nursery equipment and stored securely.
- The taking and use of any photograph of a LAC must be subject to the explicit written consent of the placing authority and/or those with parental responsibility.

## 10. Safeguarding and Child Protection

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This policy must be read alongside Little Acorns Montessori's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. That policy is the primary document governing all child protection matters. This section sets out the additional safeguarding considerations specific to Looked After Children.

### 10.1 Heightened Vigilance

- All staff must be aware that Looked After Children are statistically more vulnerable to abuse, exploitation, and mental health difficulties than their peers.
- The Key Person must be particularly vigilant for any changes in the child's behaviour, emotional presentation, or physical appearance that may indicate a concern, including changes that occur following contact visits.
- The DSL must review the child's wellbeing and safeguarding status regularly and not solely at formal review points.
- Any concern about a LAC, however minor it may appear, must be reported to the DSL without delay. In line with Working Together to Safeguard Children (DfE, 2026), it is everyone's responsibility to act on concerns promptly.
- In line with Working Together to Safeguard Children (DfE, 2026), safeguarding and child protection apply to all children, and any assessments and planning undertaken in relation to a LAC should be linked to the child's existing care plan. The DSL must ensure that the nursery is actively engaged in the local Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA) relevant to the placing authority, and that the nursery's concerns and observations are fed into those arrangements in a timely way.

### 10.2 Reporting Concerns — Internal Escalation

- Any member of staff with a concern about a LAC must report this verbally to the DSL (or Deputy DSL in the DSL's absence) on the same day the concern arises.
- The DSL must record the concern in the child's secure file within 24 hours (see Section 11).
- The DSL must assess whether the concern requires an immediate referral to the placing authority's children's services, or whether it should be monitored and discussed with the social worker at the next scheduled contact.
- Where the concern relates to an allegation against a member of staff, the nursery's safeguarding procedures for allegations against staff must be followed immediately, and the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) must be contacted.

### 10.3 Reporting Concerns — External Referral

- Where the DSL determines that a LAC may be at risk of significant harm, a referral must be made to the placing authority's children's services without delay, and in all cases within 24 hours of the concern arising.
- The DSL must also notify the child's social worker at the earliest opportunity, even where the referral is being made to a different team or local authority.
- In an emergency where a child is at immediate risk of harm, the DSL must contact the police (999) and children's services emergency duty team immediately, without waiting to seek management approval.
- All referrals and their outcomes must be documented in the child's secure file (see Section 11).

### 10.4 Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and Honour-Based Abuse

- There is a mandatory duty under the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 (as amended by the Serious Crime Act 2015) to report known cases of FGM in children under 18 to the police. The DSL must ensure all staff are aware of this duty.
- Where there is any concern that a LAC may be at risk of FGM or any other form of honour-based abuse, the DSL must follow the referral procedures set out in Section 10.3 above.

## 11. Reporting and Recording

Accurate, timely, and secure record-keeping is a statutory duty and a professional obligation. The following instructions must be followed consistently by all staff involved in recording information about a Looked After Child.

### 11.1 What Must Be Recorded

- All contact with the placing authority, social worker, IRO, and VSH, including the date, method, summary of discussion, and any agreed actions.
- All contributions to and outcomes of PEP review meetings.
- All observations and assessments of the child's developmental progress, updated at least half-termly.
- All incidents, concerns, or changes in the child's behaviour or presentation, however minor.
- All decisions about PP+ funding, including what was agreed, when, and with whom.
- All safeguarding concerns, referrals made, and outcomes received.
- Any disclosures made by the child, recorded in the child's own words as far as possible, without leading questions.
- Details of any contact arrangements and any concerns arising from contact visits.

### 11.2 How Records Must Be Made

- Records must be factual, objective, and precise. Staff must record what they have directly observed or been told, not their interpretation or opinion — unless opinion is clearly labelled as such.
- Records must be written or entered on the day the event occurs, or at the earliest opportunity and no later than 24 hours after the event.
- All records must be signed, dated, and timed by the person making them. Where a record is created electronically, the system must log the author and timestamp automatically.
- Records must be written in clear, plain English and must avoid jargon or abbreviation where possible.
- Disclosures must be recorded verbatim in the child's own words, with the date, time, who was present, and what the recorder did in response.

### 11.3 Where Records Are Stored

- All records relating to a child's LAC status must be stored in a dedicated, secure LAC file, held separately from the child's general Learning Journey and day-to-day records.
- Physical LAC files must be stored in a locked cabinet accessible only to the DSL, Deputy DSL, and Nursery Manager.
- Where records are held electronically, they must be password-protected, encrypted, and accessible only to authorised personnel.
- The child's general Learning Journey must not contain any reference to the child's LAC status or care history.

### 11.4 Retention and Destruction

- LAC records must be retained for a minimum of 25 years from the date of the child's last attendance, or until the child's 25th birthday, whichever is later. This is consistent with best practice guidance for safeguarding records.
- Records must not be destroyed without the explicit written authorisation of the Nursery Manager and a record of their destruction.
- Where a LAC moves to another setting, their secure file must be transferred directly to the DSL of the receiving setting (not via the child or carer) and a record of the transfer must be retained.

## 11.5 Transfer of Records

- When a LAC leaves Little Acorns Montessori, the DSL must contact the receiving setting's DSL to arrange secure transfer of the child's records, including the most recent PEP contribution and any safeguarding information.
- Records must be transferred within five working days of the child's last attendance, or sooner if the circumstances require it.
- The DSL must notify the social worker and VSH when a child leaves the setting.

## 12. Supporting Emotional Wellbeing and Stability

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Little Acorns Montessori recognises that many Looked After Children have experienced significant early adversity, including trauma, loss, neglect, or disrupted attachment. An approach grounded in attachment theory and trauma-informed practice is essential to supporting these children.

### 12.1 Attachment-Aware and Trauma-Informed Practice

- All staff working with LAC must understand the impact of attachment difficulties and early trauma on a young child's development, behaviour, and capacity to engage with learning.
- Staff must understand that behaviours that may appear challenging (e.g., aggression, withdrawal, excessive clinginess, indiscriminate friendliness) may be a child's response to their history and must be responded to with empathy and patience, not punitive measures.
- The nursery will not use any behaviour management technique that involves withdrawal of adult attention, isolation, or any other approach that may reinforce feelings of rejection or abandonment.
- Staff must approach each interaction with consistency, warmth, and predictability to support the development of secure attachment.

### 12.2 Settling In and Transitions

- A graduated settling-in period must be planned for every LAC, taking into account the child's individual history and the advice of the social worker and foster carer.
- Room moves within the nursery must be planned well in advance for LAC, with additional transition visits and the involvement of both the outgoing and incoming Key Person.
- Where a child is moving on to school, the DSL and Key Person must work proactively with the receiving school's designated teacher for LAC and the VSH to support a smooth transition. A transition meeting or handover should be arranged wherever possible.

### 12.3 Working with Other Professionals

- The DSL must maintain active communication with any other professionals involved with the child, including health visitors, speech and language therapists, educational psychologists, and CAMHS practitioners.
- Where the child has identified SEND, the nursery's SENCO must be actively involved, and any SEND support plan must be integrated into the child's PEP targets.
- The nursery must participate in any Team Around the Child (TAC) or multi-agency planning meeting where the child's needs require coordinated professional input.

### 12.4 Mental Health Identification and Referral

- All staff working with LAC must be aware that early adversity significantly increases the risk of mental health difficulties in young children, including anxiety, developmental trauma responses, attachment disorders, and speech, language and communication needs that may have an emotional root. Staff must be alert to early signs of mental health difficulty, including persistent changes in mood, regression in development, withdrawal, or heightened distress responses that do not resolve over time. Where such signs are observed, the Key Person must bring them to the DSL's attention promptly. The DSL must ensure appropriate referral pathways are in place, including to health visitors, CAMHS, educational psychology, and speech and language therapy, and must act on these without delay. The child's PEP must reflect any identified mental health need and any targeted support being provided.

## 13. Staff Training and Development

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Effective training is essential to ensure that all staff are equipped to meet their responsibilities under this policy.

### 13.1 All Staff

- All staff must receive awareness-level training on Looked After Children as part of their induction and at subsequent refresher intervals.
- This training must cover: the definition of LAC and PLAC; the nursery's legal and professional obligations; confidentiality and information sharing; the role of the PEP; and how to report concerns about a LAC.
- All staff must read and sign to confirm their understanding of this policy upon induction and following each annual review.

### 13.2 The DSL and Deputy DSL

- The DSL must hold a recognised DSL qualification and must attend refresher training at least every two years, in line with EYFS Statutory Framework requirements (DfE, 2025).
- In addition to core safeguarding training, the DSL must undertake specific training on supporting Looked After Children in early years settings, including attachment theory, the PEP process, and the role of the VSH.
- The Deputy DSL must hold equivalent training to enable them to act fully in the DSL's absence.

### 13.3 The Key Person

- Any Key Person assigned to a LAC must complete training on attachment-aware and trauma-informed practice before or within four weeks of the child's start date.
- The Key Person must also receive a briefing from the DSL on the child's specific history and needs (within the bounds of appropriate information sharing) before the child begins.
- The nursery will fund and facilitate all required training for the Key Person as a priority.

### 13.4 Training Records

- The Nursery Manager must maintain a central record of all LAC-related training completed by each member of staff, including dates and the training provider.
- Training records must be made available to Ofsted inspectors on request.

## 14. Working in Partnership

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Effective support for a Looked After Child can only be achieved through consistent, respectful, and proactive partnership with all those involved in the child's care and education.

### 14.1 With the Placing Authority and Social Worker

- The DSL must establish and maintain a regular communication pattern with the child's allocated social worker from the point of enrolment.
- The DSL must notify the social worker promptly of any significant events, concerns, or changes in the child's wellbeing, as set out in Section 10.
- The DSL must be responsive to requests for information from the social worker or placing authority and must respond within the timescales agreed or, where none is specified, within five working days.
- In line with Working Together to Safeguard Children (DfE, 2026), early years settings are now explicitly expected to be active contributors to Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA) at local authority level, not merely recipients of referrals. The DSL must ensure the nursery is known to and engaged with the relevant MASA structure for each placing authority. This includes sharing the nursery's contact details and LAC lead with the local safeguarding partners, attending any early years safeguarding forums offered by the placing authority, and contributing to local data and learning reviews where appropriate.

### 14.2 With the Virtual School Head (VSH)

- The DSL must contact the VSH for the placing authority at the point of enrolment to introduce the setting and discuss the child's educational needs.
- The DSL must update the VSH following each PEP review and must seek the VSH's guidance on PP+ funding decisions.
- The DSL should involve the VSH in any significant decision about the child's educational provision or progress.

### 14.3 With the IRO

- The DSL or Key Person must attend, or submit a written report to, the child's statutory review meetings chaired by the IRO.
- Any contribution to a review meeting must be prepared in advance, be factual and objective, and focus on the child's progress, wellbeing, and educational needs.

### 14.4 With Foster Carers and Day-to-Day Carers

- Foster carers are a vital source of information about the child's daily life and wellbeing. The Key Person must establish a regular, respectful communication routine with the foster carer from the outset.
- The nursery must agree with the social worker and foster carer the preferred method and frequency of communication, and must record this in the child's file.
- Information shared by foster carers must be treated confidentially and used only to support the child's wellbeing and development.

### 14.5 Communication Protocols

- All significant communications with external agencies must be confirmed in writing by the DSL and a record retained in the child's secure file.
- The nursery will not discuss a child's LAC status or care history with any person who has not been identified as a relevant professional or authorised party.

## 14.6 Virtual School Contact Details by Placing Authority

Given that Little Acorns Montessori operates across three settings, the DSL must identify the correct Virtual School Head for each child at the point of enrolment, based on the placing authority. The current contacts are as follows and must be verified at each policy review:

**Bracknell Forest:** Bracknell Forest Virtual School, Acting Virtual School Head: Lorraine Petersen, Tel: 01344 353408, Email: lorraine.petersen@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

**Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead:** AfC Virtual School (a tri-borough service operated by Achieving for Children). Virtual School Head: Suzanne Parrott, Email: suzanne.parrott@achievingforchildren.org.uk. Lead for Previously Looked After Children: Rebecca Lloyd, Email: rebecca.lloyd@achievingforchildren.org.uk. Tel: 0208 831 6037.

**Wokingham Borough:** Wokingham Virtual School, Email: virtuelschool.admin@wokingham.gov.uk

Where a child is placed by an authority not listed above, the DSL must identify the relevant VSH at the point of enrolment and record their contact details in the child's secure file.

## 15. Monitoring and Review

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### 15.1 Monitoring

- The Nursery Manager is responsible for monitoring the implementation of this policy on an ongoing basis.
- The DSL must report to the Nursery Manager at least termly on the number of LAC and PLAC enrolled, the status of each child's PEP, PP+ funding usage, any safeguarding concerns raised, and any training completed.
- Any concerns about the effectiveness of this policy, or about the support being provided to a LAC, must be escalated to the Nursery Manager and recorded.

### 15.2 Annual Review

- This policy must be reviewed at least annually by the Nursery Manager, DSL, and Deputy DSL.
- The review must take account of any changes to relevant legislation, statutory guidance, or Ofsted inspection frameworks.
- In particular, the nursery must be alert to the anticipated update to Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE, 2026), which is expected to be published later in 2026, and must update this policy accordingly.
- Following each review, updated versions of this policy must be distributed to all staff and made available to parents and carers on request.
- All previous versions of this policy must be archived and retained for a minimum of six years.
- The review must also ensure that contact details for all relevant Virtual School Heads (Section 14.6) are verified as current, and that any changes to local MASA arrangements across Bracknell Forest, Windsor & Maidenhead, and Wokingham are reflected in the nursery's operational procedures.

## 16. Related Policies

This policy must be read in conjunction with the following Little Acorns Montessori policies. In the event of any conflict between this policy and a related policy, the DSL and Nursery Manager must be consulted, and the provision that offers the greater protection to the child must be applied.

Related Policy	Relevance
<b>Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy</b>	Primary policy for all child protection matters; this LAC policy must be applied alongside it.
<b>Confidentiality and Information Sharing Policy</b>	Governs the secure handling and lawful sharing of all sensitive information.
<b>Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy</b>	Many LAC have identified SEND needs; this policy governs how they are assessed and supported.
<b>Key Person Policy</b>	Sets out the Key Person's role and responsibilities for all children, including those who are looked after.
<b>Transitions Policy</b>	Covers how children are supported through settling in, room moves, and moving on to school.
<b>Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy</b>	Ensures no child is discriminated against on the basis of any protected characteristic or care status.
<b>Data Protection and Privacy Policy</b>	Governs the lawful processing and retention of all personal data, including records relating to LAC.
<b>Whistleblowing Policy</b>	Provides a mechanism for staff to raise concerns about practice, including in relation to LAC.

### Policy Sign-Off

<b>Policy Author</b>	Jonathan Duffy
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<b>Date</b>	June 2026
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Placeholders shown in grey italic text must be completed before this policy is adopted. Once completed, a signed copy should be retained in the nursery's policy file and a dated version archived in line with Section 15.2.