



# **PARKSIDE MIDDLE SCHOOL PRIVATE FOSTERING POLICY**

**Dated: January 2023**

**Review date: January 2024**

**Headteacher.....**

**Chair of Governors.....**



## **PARKSIDE MIDDLE SCHOOL**

### **PRIVATE FOSTERING POLICY**

#### **Introduction and Context**

Most children and young people spend some time away from their home staying with relatives and friends. In cases where children/young people stay for a longer period, special procedures may apply.

A private fostering arrangement is one that is made privately (that is to say without the involvement of a Local Authority) for the care of a child under the age of 16 (under 18, if disabled) by someone other than a parent or close relative with the intention that it should last for 28 days or more. If a child or young person is under 16 (or if disabled under 18) and living with a family member or friend for longer than 28 days this is then seen as private fostering. This does not have to be continuous; if a child/young person is staying with family members or friends that add up to 28 days or longer in any period of time this may then be seen as private fostering. Private foster carers may be from the extended family, such as a cousin or great aunt. However, a person who is a relative under the Children Act 1989 ie a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt (whether of the full or half blood or by marriage) or step-parent will not be a private foster carer.

Private fostering is an arrangement made by the parent with the carer who has agreed to look after the child/young person on their behalf. In some circumstances they may not have agreed, or the circumstances of their living arrangements raises health, welfare and safety concerns for the child/young person.

There are a variety of reasons why a parent may be unable to care for their own child on a short or long-term basis and a private fostering arrangement can be a positive response from friends and the local community to a family in need of support.

However, any child separated from their parents is potentially vulnerable and the Local Authority has a responsibility to make sure the alternative care they receive is suitable.

By law, the Local Authority must be told about all private fostering situations. The child's parents, private foster carers, and anyone else involved in the arrangement are legally required to inform the council immediately. Professionals, such as teachers, doctors or religious leaders, who are made aware of a privately fostered child, should also inform the council immediately.

## **Our responsibilities**

Parkside Middle School fully recognises its responsibilities regarding private fostering ensuring staff are fully aware of how to identify a child/young person and the circumstances around private fostering. This includes a duty to report any instances to the Local Authority if it is believed the child/young person is possibly living in a private fostering arrangement.

This policy should be read in conjunction with “How to Identify a Privately Fostered Child” Appendix A, found at the end of this policy, more information/guidance can be found by following this link: [Family and friends | Worcestershire County Council](#)

## **Schools & Educational settings**

### **Our Policy**

Under the Children Act, 1989, the Local Authority has a duty to make sure a private fostering arrangement that the child/young person is in provides for their needs and safeguards his/her welfare.

Parkside Middle School will ensure all Staff, Governors and Volunteers in the school are aware of this duty.

If a member of Staff, Governor or Volunteer becomes aware that a child/young person may be living in a private foster arrangement it is the responsibility of that person to report the details to the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) who will then make further enquiries to try and establish the circumstances.

The Safeguarding Designated Lead should seek advice from Children's Social Care as to whether the child/young person is in a privately fostered arrangement under the regulations. If this is confirmed upon taking this advice a referral will be made by the DSL to Children's Social Care.

Essential information for making a referral includes:

- Full names and dates of birth for the child
- Address and daytime phone numbers for the current carer including mobiles.
- The child's address and phone number.
- Whereabouts of the child (and siblings).
- Child and family's ethnic origin.
- Child and family's main language.
- Actions taken and people contacted.
- Special needs of the child, including need for an accredited interpreter, accredited sign language interpreter or other language support.
- A clear indication of the family's knowledge of the referral and whether they have consented to the sharing of confidential information.
- The details of the person making the referral.

Other information that may be essential in a referral about a possible privately fostered child or young person:

- Address and daytime phone number of the parent / parental responsibility holder.
- Address and phone numbers of any other family members.

- Any other helpful information about the parent/parental responsibility to assist in an understanding of why this child or young person is not living with them.

Parkside Middle School will work together with the Local Authority to help safeguard and promote the child's safety and welfare.

### **Safeguarding Roles and Responsibilities**

All Staff, Volunteers and Governors have responsibility for the following:

- To ask parents/carers questions about their relationship with the child/young person if this is unclear, confusing or concerning.
- To follow up any discussion with a child/young person about their living arrangement when it 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 or young person is living in a private fostering arrangement:

- To work with, monitor & report to the Local Authority ensuring the child/young person's needs, safety & welfare are being met whilst in a private fostering arrangement.
- To assist with advising and supporting the carer(s) to undertake their duties whilst the child/young person is living with them in a privately fostered arrangement.

### **Management of the Policy**

The Designated Safeguarding Lead(s) will ensure they are familiar with this policy regularly updating all Staff, Governors and Volunteers regarding the legal requirements and duties.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead(s) will endeavour to read and cascade information on private fostering to school staff on a regular basis.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead(s) will undertake a Worcestershire Children First private fostering e-learning module ensuring a copy of their certificate is held on the School safeguarding training portfolio.

The Headteacher will ensure that private fostering forms part of staff safeguarding induction and is used in safeguarding training in school.

The Headteacher will report on issues relating to private fostering and any impact on the school to the Governing body.

The Governing Body will oversee the policy, ensuring its implementation and reviewing its content on an annual basis in line with the S175 Safeguarding Audit.

Date of Policy: January 2023

Review date: January 2024

## Private fostering arrangements

How to identify a private fostering arrangement and what to do next.

A privately fostered child is one who is:

- Under the age of 16 (18 if disabled).
- Living with someone other than a parent or person with parental responsibility or close relative or step-parent.
- With the intention that it last for 28 days or longer – either as a single episode or cumulatively.

This means:

- The local authority is not involved in making the arrangement.
- The child is not in care.

**There is a duty under the Children Act to notify the local authority of a private fostering arrangement – this duty applies to:**

- Any parent or other person with parental responsibility proposing to place a child in a private fostering arrangement.
- Any person proposing to privately foster a child.
- Any other person involved in the proposed arrangement.
- Education, health and other professionals who become aware of a possible private fostering arrangement where they are not satisfied that the local authority have been, or will be, notified of the arrangement.

Universal children's services – such as primary care, health visiting, school nursing, schools and early years, voluntary sector – are especially well placed to identify children who are not living with a parent who may be privately fostered. Below is a simple question and answer format for checking whether or not this may be the case.

### How to identify a possible private fostering arrangement

Is the child aged under 16 years (18 with disability)	YES                  NO If <b>NO</b> , the child cannot be privately fostered
Is s/he living with a parent/person with Parental Responsibility or a close relative – aunt, uncle, step-parent, grandparent, sibling but not a cousin or great-aunt/uncle	YES                  NO If <b>YES</b> , the child cannot be privately fostered
Is s/he adopted or in care, subject to special Guardianship or a residence order	YES                  NO If <b>YES</b> , the child cannot be privately fostered
Has the child been living with a person providing accommodation for 28 days or longer, or is the child <b>planning to, or is likely to</b> , be living with the person providing accommodation for 28 days or longer – either as a single stay or cumulatively	YES                  NO If <b>YES</b> , the child <b>is/may be</b> privately fostered.