Woodcroft Primary School

Private Fostering Policy 2026

Date policy last reviewed: September 2026

Signed by:

Craig Tallon	Headteacher	Date:	5th October 2026
Robert Kulawik	Chair of governors	Date:	5th October 2026

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Statement of intent

Woodcroft Primary School understands its duty to safeguard and protect children – this includes private fostering arrangements. In line with 'Keeping children safe in education', we will ensure that staff understand their responsibilities to privately fostered children and are aware of who to contact with a concern over a child in private foster care.

This policy outlines the duties that we have in terms of privately fostered children and what the school will do to ensure their safety.

Signed by:

	Headteacher	Date:	
	Chair of governors	Date:	

1. Legal framework

1.1. This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Children Act 1989
- Children Act 2004
- The Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005
- DfE (2005) 'Children Act 1989: private fostering'
- DfE (2005) 'National minimum standards for private fostering'
- DfE (2018) 'Working Together to Safeguard Children'
- DfE (2026) 'Keeping children safe in education 2026'
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1.2. This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Barnet Admissions Policy (outlined in the school brochure)

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2. Awareness of private fostering law

2.1. Private fostering is when a private arrangement is made for the care of a child under the age of 16; or under 18 if the child is disabled, by someone other than a parent or close relative with the intention that it should last for 28 days or more. The period for which the child is cared for and accommodated by the private foster carer should be continuous, but that continuity is not broken by the occasional short break.

2.2. A close relative is defined in law as a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt – whether of full blood, half blood or by marriage – or a step-parent.

2.3. Governors, the SLT and staff will be made aware that if a child lives with someone who is not their parent, a person with parental responsibility, or a relative as defined above for more than 28 days, the LA must be notified. Where private fostering arrangements come to the attention of the school, and the school is not involved in the arrangements, the governing board will notify the LA to allow it to check the arrangement is suitable and safe for the child.

2.4. The SLT and staff will be made aware that once a private arrangement has been entered into, it is the private foster carer who becomes responsible for providing the day-to-day care of the child in a way which will promote and safeguard their welfare; however, overarching responsibility remains with the parent or other person with parental responsibility.

2.5. The school may be involved in setting up private fostering arrangements in certain circumstances, including:

2.6. · When the school makes living arrangements for pupils who do not return to their parents over the school holidays, e.g. allowing them to stay at school under the care of an 'education guardian' or arranging a host family.

2.7. · Where the school is involved in the relocation of a pupil into private foster care, e.g. following its involvement in a safeguarding concern about the pupil.

2.8. · Where the school makes arrangements for pupils to stay with 'host families' during home exchange trips.

2.9. Where the school has been involved in setting up private fostering arrangements, it will notify the LA immediately.

2.10. The government considers privately fostered children to be potentially vulnerable due to having been separated from their parents, and it is vital that governors, the SLT and staff are aware where a pupil is privately fostered to ensure that adequate support and early help can be offered, where applicable.

2.11. **Parental responsibility** refers to all the rights, duties, powers, responsibilities and authorities that a parent has by law in relation to a child, as defined by section 3 of The Children Act 1989.

2.12.

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3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1. The school is responsible for:

- Ensuring staff understand private fostering and how to identify a child who may be privately fostered.
- Ensuring the school's Admissions Policy includes steps to verify the relationship of the adults who are registering a child with the school.
- Reporting cases of private fostering arrangements to the LA.

3.2. The headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementing this policy.
- Ensuring all staff understand their roles in terms of private fostering.
- Ensuring the school meets its legal duty to provide support to privately fostered children.
- Circulating LA guidance to all members of staff.
- Seeking training opportunities which ensure that staff understand private fostering.

3.3. The DSL is responsible for:

- Responding to private fostering concerns that staff may have about a child by referring it to the LA.
- Offering training and advice to staff in regard to private fostering.
- Liaising with the LA, where appropriate.
- Assisting with advising and supporting carers to undertake their duties while a privately fostered child is living with them.
- Ensuring the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy is adhered to at all times and that school staff are aware of their responsibilities in relation to it.

3.4. School staff are responsible for:

- Understanding private fostering and their responsibilities in relation to it.

- Attending any private fostering training opportunities that are offered to them.
- Reading all material provided by the LA concerning private fostering.
- Understanding the signs that a child may be in a private fostering arrangement.
- Asking parents/carers questions about their relationship to a child, if it is unclear or concerning.
- Working with the LA to ensure the needs of any privately fostered children are met.
- Monitoring the safety and welfare of any privately fostered children.
- Raising any concerns with the DSL.

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4. Identifying privately fostered children

4.1. The governing board will ensure that the admissions process clearly establishes the relationship between a child and the adult applying for their place at the school, in accordance with the Admissions Policy.

4.2. Prior to a child's official enrolment at the school, the school will be aware of:

4.3. · Who has parental responsibility for the child.

4.4. · Details of any court orders.

4.5. · Under whose care the pupil lives and their relationship to the child, and whether this falls under a private fostering arrangement in line with the law.

4.6. The headteacher and DSL will ensure that school staff are aware of the signs that an existing pupil, who was not thought to be privately fostered at the time of their enrolment, has become privately fostered. These include:

4.7. · A pupil mentioning that they are no longer living or staying at home or are living or staying with someone other than their parents.

4.8. · A pupil being regularly accompanied to school by someone other than their parent or recognised carer.

4.9. · A pupil's parent being vague about their living arrangements, needs or routines.

4.10. · It being unclear from a pupil's records who has parental responsibility for them.

4.11. Where the school is informed by a pupil's parents or private foster carer that the child has entered into a private fostering arrangement, the headteacher will ensure this is reflected in the pupil's records, and will encourage the parent or carer to notify the LA if they have not already done so.

4.12. Where staff suspect that a pupil has entered into a private fostering arrangement, and the school has not been officially informed by the parent or carer of the child, this will be dealt with in line with the school's safeguarding procedures.

5. Safeguarding procedures

5.1. The school will be alert that children who are privately fostered may benefit from support through its early help processes, and will assess this on a case-by-case basis in accordance with its Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

5.2. All governors, school leaders and staff will be aware that, where a private fostering arrangement is identified, this should be reported to the LA so it can check the suitability of the arrangement. Although notifying the LA of private fostering arrangements is not a specific legal duty on schools, the school is aware that privately fostered children are considered 'vulnerable' under KCSIE and, therefore, the school may be required to inform children's social care of private fostering arrangements due to its duty to safeguard pupils.

5.3. Where the school is informed of the intention to place a pupil in private fostering arrangements, or where it is thought or known that an arrangement for a pupil's care has been entered into that could become a private fostering arrangement, the DSL will hold a meeting with the pupil's parent or private foster carer to ensure that they are aware of the legal requirement to notify the LA of private fostering arrangements and will encourage them to do so.

5.4. Where a member of staff suspects that a pupil has been privately fostered, but this information has not been disclosed, they will report this concern to the DSL immediately in line with the safeguarding procedures laid out in the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

5.5. The DSL will inform the parent or carer that the school has a safeguarding obligation to inform the LA of the arrangement due to privately fostered children being considered vulnerable, and will encourage them to do so as well.

5.6. Where there is any reason to believe that the pupil's safety is at risk, the DSL will report this to children's social care services immediately, or the police if it is thought that the pupil may be at serious, imminent risk of harm.

5.7. Where the school must notify the LA of a private fostering arrangement, the notification will include the following:

5.8. · The child's full name, sex, date and place of birth

5.9. · The religious persuasion, racial origin and cultural and linguistic background of the child

5.10. · **T**he name, address and phone number for the proposed or current private foster carer

5.11. · The name and address of the parents of the child and of any other person who has parental responsibility for the child

5.12. · The child's address and phone number (if applicable)
5.13. · The names, whereabouts and care arrangements of any siblings
5.14. · The actions the school has taken and who has been contacted
5.15. · Details of any SEND the child has, including any language support provided (e.g. sign language interpreter)
5.16. · Details of the family's knowledge of the referral and whether they have consented to the sharing of their confidential information
5.17. · The referrer's details

5.18. Where appropriate the school will provide the LA with any other relevant and helpful information it has which may assist the LA in ensuring the child's safeguarding and welfare needs are met. Where applicable, the school will also provide information on any known convictions, prohibitions or disqualifications.

5.19. Confidentiality will never stand in the way of protecting a child's welfare.

5.20. Staff will be aware that children thought to be under private fostering arrangements may have actually been victims of child trafficking. Staff will be aware of the following signs that may indicate that a child has been trafficked:

5.21. · The child has no money but has a mobile phone and/or is expensively dressed
5.22. · The child exhibits self-assurance, maturity and self-confidence beyond their age
5.23. · The child has a rehearsed story that seems very similar to previous cases of trafficked children that staff have heard in other incidents, training programmes or read about from materials produced by charities
5.24. · Signs of physical or sexual abuse are present
5.25. · The child's educational record contains missing links or unexplained moves
5.26. · The child appears malnourished or has an eating disorder
5.27. · The child is not registered with a GP
5.28. · The child displays signs of misusing alcohol or drugs
5.29. · The child displays signs of self-harm
5.30. · The child does not appear to have good relationships with the adults they live with
5.31. · The child seems to have limited freedom of movement in society
5.32. · The child appears tired, disengaged, excessively frightened or sexually promiscuous
5.33. · The child dresses inappropriately for their age
5.34. · The child is regularly picked up from school by an adult without parental responsibility, and who is much older than themselves
5.35. · The child is displaying signs that they may have been brought into the country illegally for the purposes of adoption

5.36. Where there is any suspicion that a pupil has been trafficked, the DSL will make a referral to children's social care immediately, and the police if it is

thought that the pupil is at immediate risk of harm. The school will cooperate with any LA arrangements after a referral has been made.

6. Monitoring and review

6.1. This policy is reviewed annually by the DSL with the School Safeguarding Team.

6.2. Any changes made to this policy will be communicated to all members of staff.

6.3. All members of staff are required to familiarise themselves with all processes and procedures outlined in this policy as part of their induction programme.

6.4. The next scheduled review date for this policy is **September 2027.**