

St. Luke's C of E Primary School



Private Fostering Policy 2026 – 2029

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Statement of intent

St. Luke's C of E 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.

1. Legal framework

This policy has due regard to relevant legislation and statutory guidance, including:

- Children Act 1989
- Children Act 2004
- The Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005
- DfE 'Children Act 1989: private fostering'
- DfE 'National minimum standards for private fostering'
- DfE 'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026'
- DfE 'Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Admissions Policy

2. Awareness of private fostering law

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.

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.

Private fostering is different from a child being looked after by the local authority or placed with an approved foster carer. It may also be different from other kinship care arrangements. Staff are not expected to determine the legal category themselves; any uncertainty about a pupil's living arrangements must be discussed with the DSL.

Governors, leaders and staff will understand that where a child under 16, or under 18 if disabled, is cared for and accommodated for 28 days or more by someone who is not their parent, a

person with parental responsibility or a close relative as defined in law, this may be a private fostering arrangement. Where such an arrangement comes to the school's attention, it will be reported immediately to the DSL. The DSL will notify Nottinghamshire County Council through the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) so that the local authority can establish whether the arrangement is private fostering and check that it is suitable and safe.

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.

Privately fostered children may be vulnerable because they are living away from their parents. St. Luke's will ensure that relevant staff are aware of any known private fostering arrangement, on a need-to-know basis, so that the child's welfare, attendance, wellbeing and educational needs can be appropriately supported. Early help or other support will be considered where appropriate.

"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.

3. Roles and responsibilities

The governing body is responsible for:

- Ensuring that all governors, school leaders, and staff understand the school's responsibilities regarding private fostering.
- Ensuring staff are trained on 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.
- Ensuring possible private fostering arrangements are reported promptly to the DSL and notified to the local authority as appropriate.

The headteacher is responsible for:

- 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.

- Ensuring the school knows and has record of exactly who has parental responsibility, and/or who is caring for, every pupil on the school roll.
- Circulating LA guidance to all relevant members of staff.
- Seeking training opportunities which ensure that staff understand private fostering.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) is Mr P. Phillips. Concerns should be reported immediately in accordance with St. Luke's safeguarding procedures.

The DSL is responsible for:

- Responding to concerns about possible private fostering arrangements and notifying Nottinghamshire County Council through MASH where appropriate.
- Offering training and advice to staff in regard to private fostering.
- Liaising with Nottinghamshire County Council and other agencies, where appropriate.
- Working with the local authority and family, where appropriate, to support the child's welfare and education.

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 carers of a child questions about their relationship to the 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.

4. Identifying privately fostered children

The governing body 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.

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

- Who has parental responsibility for the child.
- Details of any court orders.
- 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.

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:

- A pupil mentioning that they are no longer living or staying at home or are living or staying with someone other than their parents.
- A pupil being regularly accompanied to school by someone other than their parent or recognised carer.
- A pupil's parent being vague about their living arrangements, needs or routines.
- It being unclear from a pupil's records who has parental responsibility for them.

Where the school is informed that a pupil is, or may be, living in a private fostering arrangement, the information will be passed to the DSL and recorded appropriately. The DSL will establish whether the local authority has been informed and will notify Nottinghamshire County Council through MASH where required.

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

St. Luke's recognises that a private fostering arrangement is not, in itself, evidence that a child is at risk of harm. However, privately fostered children may have additional vulnerabilities or

support needs. The school will consider early help and other support on a case-by-case basis and will respond to any safeguarding concern in accordance with its Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

All governors, school leaders and staff will understand that possible private fostering arrangements must be brought to the attention of the DSL. Where an arrangement is identified, St. Luke's will notify Nottinghamshire County Council so that the local authority can determine whether the arrangement falls within private fostering legislation and, where it does, assess its suitability and the child's welfare. Notification will be made through Nottinghamshire MASH on 0300 500 80 80.

Where the school becomes aware of a proposed or existing arrangement that may amount to private fostering, the DSL will speak with the parent/carer where it is safe and appropriate to do so, explain the requirement for the local authority to be informed, and make or support the appropriate notification to Nottinghamshire MASH. The school will not delay notification while waiting for a family to make contact themselves.

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.

The DSL will normally inform the parent or carer that the school is contacting the local authority, unless doing so could place the child at increased risk or compromise a safeguarding response.

Where there is reason to believe that the pupil may be at risk of harm, the DSL will follow St. Luke's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and make an immediate referral to children's social care through MASH. The police will be contacted where there is an immediate risk of serious harm or an emergency.

When making a notification or safeguarding referral, the school will share relevant and proportionate information needed by the local authority to understand the child's circumstances and safeguard their welfare. This may include the child's details, the names and contact details of parents and carers, the living arrangement, parental responsibility, siblings, SEND or communication needs, actions already taken and any known safeguarding concerns.

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

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:

- The child has no money but has a mobile phone and/or is expensively dressed
- The child exhibits self-assurance, maturity, and self-confidence beyond their age
- 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
- Signs of physical or sexual abuse are present
- The child's educational record contains missing links or unexplained moves
- The child appears malnourished or has an eating disorder
- The child is not registered with a GP
- The child displays signs of misusing alcohol or drugs
- The child displays signs of self-harm
- The child does not appear to have good relationships with the adults they live with
- The child seems to have limited freedom of movement in society
- The child appears tired, disengaged, excessively frightened or sexually promiscuous
- The child dresses inappropriately for their age
- The child is regularly picked up from school by an adult without parental responsibility, and who is much older than themselves
- The child is displaying signs that they may have been brought into the country illegally for the purposes of adoption

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

This policy is reviewed every three years by the DSL and the headteacher.

Any changes made to this policy will be communicated to all relevant stakeholders.

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

The next scheduled review date for this policy is September 2029.