8. Staff, Volunteers and Students

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8.1 Employment

(Including suitability, contingency plans, training and development)

Policy statement

We meet the Safeguarding and Welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage ensuring that our staff and volunteers are appropriately qualified and we carry out checks for criminal and other records through the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) in accordance with statutory requirements.

Procedures

Vetting and staff selection

- We work towards offering equality of opportunity by using non-discriminatory procedures for staff recruitment and selection.
- All staff have job descriptions which set out their staff roles and responsibilities.
- We welcome applications from all sections of the community. Applicants will be considered on the basis of their suitability for the post, regardless of disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, sex, age, marriage or civil partnership. Applicants will not be placed at a disadvantage by our imposing conditions or requirements that are not justifiable. As a Christian based preschool, staff are asked to be sympathetic towards our Christian ethos.

- We follow the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage and Ofsted guidance on checking the suitability of all staff and volunteers who will have unsupervised access to children. This includes obtaining references and ensuring they have a satisfactory enhanced criminal records check with barred list(s) check through the DBS. This is in accordance with requirements under the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act (2006) and the Protection of Freedoms Act (2012) for the vetting and barring scheme. If any caution or convictions appear or are disclosed, then the DfE statutory guidance is followed.
- No individuals will be allowed to begin working or volunteering at the setting until the enhanced criminal records check and barred list check have been received.

Recruitment checks

Obtaining references

As part of our commitment to safer recruitment and in line with the EYFS statutory requirements the Fledgelings Preschool will always obtain references from applicants including staff, students and volunteers for roles in our setting. Robust recruitment checks are essential to ensuring that unsuitable persons cannot have contact with children through employment with us.

Obtaining references is an essential element of our recruitment process. We will always obtain at least one written reference before an individual is recruited in line with the requirements of the EYFS as follows:

- Our application process requires candidates, to supply us with the contact details of a suitable referee from:
  - Their current employer, training provider or early years education and care setting
  - A senior person within the organisation who is authorised to provide a reference.
- If the applicant is not currently employed, or is not currently working with children we will:
  - Obtain verification of the applicants most recent relevant employment if they are not currently employed
  - Obtain a reference from the applicants most recent relevant employer from the last time they worked with children
- If the applicant has never worked with children we will obtain a reference from their current employer, training provider or education setting.
- We do not rely on applicants to obtain their own references
- We do not accept references from the following
  - Family members
  - A generic reference i.e. ‘to whom it may concern’.

Once a reference is received

- A reference received electronically will be checked to ensure that it originates from a legitimate source.
- We will compare the information on the original application form against relevant information given in the reference, for example, checking that dates align, and roles and responsibilities listed are consistent. Where this is not the case, we will take up any discrepancies with the applicant.
- If information is incomplete or we feel it is insufficient for us to make an informed decision about the applicant's suitability, we will contact the referee for clarification.
- Before an offer of employment is made, we will ensure any concerns are resolved satisfactorily.
- In line with best practice, we will seek to gain explanations for any gaps in employment.

Continued suitability

- Where an individual is subscribed to the DBS Update Service we carry out a status check of their DBS certificate, after checking their identity and viewing their original enhanced DBS certificate to ensure that it does not reveal any information that would affect their suitability for the post.
- We keep all records relating to the employment of our staff and volunteers; in particular those demonstrating that suitability checks have been done, including the date of issue, name, type of DBS check and unique reference number from the DBS certificate, along with details of our suitability decision.
- We require that all our staff and volunteers keep their DBS check up-to-date by subscribing to the DBS Update Service throughout the duration of their employment with us.
- All staff and prospective staff, students and volunteers are expected to disclose any information that may affect their suitability to work with children including, but not limited to, arrests, charges, convictions, cautions, court orders, reprimands and warnings (whether received before or during their employment/placement at the setting).
- We obtain consent from our staff and volunteers to carry out on-going status checks of the Update Service to establish that their DBS certificate is up-to-date for the duration of their employment with us.
- Where we become aware of any relevant information which may lead to the disqualification of an employee, we will take appropriate action to ensure the safety of children. In the event of disqualification, that person's employment with us will be terminated.
- Contracts are issued once all references and checks have been carried out.

Changes to staff

- We inform Ofsted of any changes in the person responsible for our setting.

Training and staff development

- All staff and volunteers working with children have appropriate training, skills, and knowledge.
- Appropriate steps will be taken to verify qualifications
- Our setting leader and deputies hold at least the CACHE Level 3 Diploma for the Children and Young People's Workforce or an equivalent qualification and at least half of our other staff members hold the CACHE Level 2 Certificate for the Children and Young People's Workforce or an equivalent or higher qualification.
- We provide regular in-service training to all staff - whether paid staff or volunteers - through the Early Years Learning Alliance and external agencies.
- Our setting budget allocates resources to training.
- We provide staff induction training in the first week of employment. This induction includes our Health and Safety Policy and Safeguarding Children and Child Protection Policy. Other policies and procedures will be introduced through the Employee Handbook and within an induction plan.
- We support the work of our staff by holding regular supervision meetings and appraisals.
- We are committed to recruiting, appointing and employing staff in accordance with all relevant legislation and best practice.

Staff taking medication/other substances

- If a member of staff is taking medication which may affect their ability to care for children, we ensure that they seek further medical advice. Staff will only work directly with the children if medical advice confirms that the medication is unlikely to impair their ability to look after children properly.
- Staff medication on the premises will be stored securely and kept out of reach of the children at all times.
- If we have reason to believe that a member of staff is under the influence of alcohol or any other substance that may affect their ability to care for children they will not be allowed to work directly with the children and further action will be taken.

Managing staff absences and contingency plans for emergencies

- Our staff take their holiday breaks when the setting is closed. Where staff may need to take time off for any reason other than sick leave or training, this is agreed with the manager with sufficient notice.
- Where staff are unwell and take sick leave in accordance with their contract of employment, we organise cover to ensure ratios are maintained.
- Sick leave is monitored and action is taken where necessary in accordance with their contract of employment.
- Our contingency plans to cover staff absences are as follows:
- Generally we have a higher ratio of staff than is required. Should there be staff absences we have a bank of staff on which we can call upon to cover. In the event of those staff being unavailable to work

we will ensure that the correct ratio of staff is maintained by putting other duties to one side and working directly with the children. Should the need arise members of the management committee who are DBS checked will be called upon to assist as necessary.

8.2 Student placements

Policy statement

Our setting recognises that qualifications and training make an important contribution to the quality of the care and education we provide. As part of our commitment to quality, we offer placements to students undertaking early years qualifications and training. We also offer placements for school pupils on work experience.

We aim to provide for students on placement with us, experiences that contribute to the successful completion of their studies and that provide examples of quality practice in early years care and education.

Procedures

- The setting manager ensures that students meet the 'suitable person' requirements in line with the EYFS and these are completed prior to the placement commencing which includes safer recruitment.
- The setting manager discusses the aim of the placement with the student's tutor prior to the placement commencing. The expectations of both parties are agreed at this point.
- We prefer students in our setting to have a sufficient understanding and use of English to contribute to the well-being of children in our care.
- We require schools placing students under the age of 17 years with the setting to vouch for their good character.
- We supervise students under the age of 17 years at all times and do not allow them to have unsupervised access to children.
- Students undertaking qualification courses who are placed in our setting on a short term basis are not counted in our staffing ratios.
- Students and apprentices, over the age of 17, who are undertaking a level 3 qualification may be considered to be counted in the ratios if our manager deems them to be suitably qualified and experienced, and if they hold a valid and current PFA qualification.
- We take out employers' liability insurance and public liability insurance, which covers both students and voluntary helpers.
- We require students to keep to our Confidentiality and Client Access to Records Policy.
- We co-operate with students' tutors in order to help students to fulfil the requirements of their course of study.
- We provide students, at the first session of their placement, with a short induction on how our setting is managed, how our sessions are organised and our policies and procedures.
- We communicate a positive message to students about the value of qualifications and training.
- We make the needs of the children paramount by not admitting students in numbers that hinder the essential work of the setting.
- We ensure that trainees and students placed with us are engaged in bona fide early years training, which provides the necessary background understanding of children's development and activities.

8.3 Induction of Staff and Volunteers

Policy statement

We provide an induction for all employees and volunteers in order to fully brief them about the setting, the families we serve, our policies and procedures, curriculum and daily practice.

Procedures

- We have a written induction plan for all new staff, which includes the following:
  - Introductions to all staff and volunteers, including management committee members.
  - Familiarising with the building, health and safety, fire and evacuation procedures.
  - Ensuring our policies and procedures have been read and are carried out.
  - Introduction to parents, especially parents of allocated key children where appropriate.
  - Familiarising them with confidential information where applicable in relation to any key children.
  - Details of the tasks and daily routines to be completed.
  - Copies of contracts and the Employee Handbook issued and explained, including the disciplinary and grievance procedure.
- The induction period lasts at least two weeks. The manager inducts new staff and volunteers. The chairperson or senior manager inducts new managers.
- During the induction period, the individual must demonstrate understanding of and compliance with policies, procedures, tasks and routines.
- Successful completion of the induction forms part of the probationary period.
- Following induction, we continue to support our staff to deliver high quality performance through regular supervision and appraisal of their work.

8.4 Deployment of Staff

Policy statement

We provide a staffing ratio in line with the Safeguarding and Welfare Requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage to ensure that children have sufficient individual attention and to guarantee care and education of a high quality. Our staff are appropriately qualified and we carry out checks for criminal and other records through the Disclosure and Barring Service in accordance with statutory requirements.

Members of staff, including assistants, bank staff and students (where eligible to be counted in ratios) at the Fledgelings Preschool are deployed to meet the care and learning needs of children and to always ensure their safety and well-being. Staff are also deployed to ensure the safety of staff and other people on site.

Procedures

To meet this aim we use the following ratios of adult to children:

- Children aged two years: 1 adult : 4 children:
  - at least one member of staff holds a full and relevant level 3 qualification; and
  - at least half of all other staff hold a full and relevant level 2 qualification.
- Children aged three years and over: 1 adult : 8 children:
  - at least one member of staff holds a full and relevant level 3 qualification; and
  - at least half of all other staff hold a full and relevant level 2 qualification.
- Where our setting has a person with Qualified Teacher Status, Early Years Professional Status, Early Years Teacher Status or another suitable level 6 qualification who is working directly with children aged three and over between the hours of 8am and 4pm we follow the Early Years Foundation Stage Safeguarding and Welfare Requirements:
  - there is at least one member of staff for every 13 children; and
  - at least one other member of staff holds a full and relevant level 3 qualification.
- The number of children for each key person takes into account the individual needs of the children and the capacity of the individual key person to manage their cohort.
- We only include those aged 17 years or older within our ratios. Where they are competent and responsible, we may include students on long-term placements and regular volunteers (aged 17 or over) and apprentices (aged 16 or over), where we deem them to be suitably qualified and experienced, and if they hold a valid and current Peadiatric First Aid qualification.
- A minimum of two staff/adults are on duty at any one time; one of whom is either our manager or deputy.

- At least one Paediatric First Aider must always be on site when children are present, and at least one Paediatric First Aider must be present and within sight and sound of children at mealtimes. Consideration will be given around staff breaks, lunchtimes and absences from the setting so that the Fledgelings Preschool is compliant with paediatric first aid requirements.
- The setting manager deploys staff to give adequate supervision of indoor and outdoor areas, ensuring that children are always within sight or hearing of staff. Whilst eating, children must be within sight and hearing of a member of staff and where possible the staff member will be sat facing children when eating.
- All staff are deployed according to the needs of the setting and the children attending.
- Our staff, students and volunteers inform their colleagues if they have to leave their area and tell colleagues where they are going.
- Our staff, students and volunteers focus their attention on children at all times and do not spend time in social conversation with colleagues while they are working with children.
- Each child is assigned a key person to help the child become familiar with the setting from the outset and to ensure that each child has a named member of staff with whom to form a relationship. The key person plans with parents for the child's well-being and development in the setting. The key person meets regularly with the family for discussion and consultation on their child's progress and offers support in guiding their development at home.
- Key persons spend time with key groups daily; this is to support children's emotional well-being and may include promoting friendships and focused activities.

We hold regular staff meetings to undertake curriculum planning and to discuss children's progress, achievements and any difficulties that may arise from time to time.

8.5 Deployment of Volunteers

Volunteers and parent/carer helpers are always under the supervision of a permanent member of staff at the Fledgelings Preschool. They are not included in staff ratios, or as the two members of staff needed on the premises before children are admitted in the morning or at the end of the day.

- All volunteers must complete safer recruitment checks as required by the EYFS prior to starting at the setting
- The setting manager ensures that volunteers and parent/carer helpers are deployed to assist permanent staff and are directed to their work area by senior staff.
- Volunteers and parent /carer helpers assist staff in ensuring that the equipment in their designated area is used appropriately and that it is left tidy at the end of the session.
- Volunteers and parent/carer helpers give additional support for busy areas or to track or observe children.
- Volunteers and parent/carer helpers inform colleagues where they are going if they leave the room at any time.
- Volunteers and parent/carer helpers do not have unsupervised access to children; they do not take them into a separate room for an activity or toileting and do not take them off premises.
- Volunteers and parent/carer helpers are deployed in addition to two members of staff in the garden/outdoor area when in use.
- The setting manager can direct volunteers and parent/carer helpers to join those outside if the numbers of children warrant additional numbers of staff available.
- Volunteers and parent/carer helpers always focus their attention to children.
- Volunteers and parent/carer helpers do not spend time in social conversation with colleagues while they are with children.
- Volunteers and parent/carer helpers allow time for colleagues to engage in ‘sustained shared interaction’ with children and do not interrupt activities led by colleagues.
- Sufficient volunteers and parent/carer helpers are available to support staff at story and other circle times.

8.6 Sexual Harassment

Policy statement

The Fledgelings Preschool is committed to providing a safe, inclusive, and supportive working environment free from sexual harassment, where everyone is treated, and treats others, with dignity and respect.

The Fledgelings Preschool has a zero-tolerance policy of sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is unlawful, and it will not be tolerated in the workplace. All incidents of sexual harassment will be treated seriously and will be dealt with sensitively, promptly, and confidentially. The Fledgelings Preschool will take appropriate action against any person found to have sexually harassed another.

This policy covers sexual harassment which occurs in work and out of the workplace, such as work-related events, during work related travel or at social functions.

This policy applies to all employees, flexible workers, committee members and volunteers, and covers harassment by staff and also by third parties such as agency workers, parents and other customers, suppliers, contractors, freelancers or visitors.

Responsibility for this policy

The chair of the Management committee has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy but has delegated day-to-day responsibility for overseeing its implementation to the Preschool Manager.

The Preschool Manager has a responsibility to follow and implement this policy. They must ensure all staff understand and follow the policy and take appropriate action if the policy is breached.

All staff are encouraged to report any instances of sexual harassment and to support colleagues who have encountered sexual harassment.

What is sexual harassment?

Sexual harassment occurs when a person is subjected to unwanted conduct of a sexual nature that has the purpose or effect of either violating their dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. It also happens if they are treated less favourably because they submitted to, or rejected, that unwanted conduct.

Even if such behaviour is not intended to cause offence or distress, if that is the effect of the conduct, then it could be considered as sexual harassment. Someone may be sexually harassed even if the conduct was not directed at them because of the environment it creates for them.

Examples of sexual harassment include, but are not limited to:

- sexual comments or jokes
- displaying sexually graphic pictures, posters or photographs
- suggestive looks, staring or leering
- propositions and sexual advances
- making promises in return for sexual favours
- sexual gestures
- intrusive questions about a person's private or sex life or a person discussing their own sex life
- sexual posts or contact on social media
- spreading sexual rumours about a person
- sending sexually explicit emails or text messages
- unwelcome touching, hugging, massaging or kissing

Anyone can experience sexual harassment.

Sexual interaction that is invited, mutual or consensual is not sexual harassment because it is not unwanted. However, sexual conduct that has been welcomed in the past can become unwanted.

Third Party Harassment

Sexual harassment will not be tolerated by staff (which may include external staff on work placements) and third parties such as agency staff, consultants, contractors, parents and other customers, clients, suppliers and visitors.

Victimisation

Victimisation is when someone who reports harassment is treated badly by their employer or other employees. This could include, excluding then, denying them an opportunity, not promoting them or dismissing them. The Fledgelings Preschool takes victimisation as seriously as sexual harassment and will take appropriate action against anyone found to have engaged in it.

If you are being sexually harassed: Informal steps

If you are being sexually harassed and you feel comfortable raising the issue informally with the person responsible, you could explain to them that their behaviour is unwelcome, how it has made you feel and that you want the conduct to stop. You should make a note of the time and place of the meeting and who

was present so that there is a record, just in case there are further incidents. If there are further incidents, you should also keep a record of these should you wish to make a formal complaint under the procedure below.

If you do not feel comfortable taking this approach or would like confidential advice and support, you should speak to the Preschool Manager who can help you resolve the issue.

The Preschool Manager will:

- Keep a record of the discussions.
- Provide information about the relevant policies and procedures and the support available.
- Determine your views on what outcome you would want to achieve.
- Provide support and guidance on how to address the issue informally, which may include facilitating discussion between both parties to achieve an informal resolution.
- Discuss and agree next steps.
- Keep the matter under review and if the situation has not improved or is sufficiently serious, explain the options available to you.

If you are unclear whether an incident or series of incidents amounts to sexual harassment, please contact the Preschool Manager for informal confidential guidance.

If informal steps are not appropriate or have been unsuccessful, then you should follow the formal procedure set out below.

You can also report sexual harassment anonymously via our whistleblowing Policy. Although, the action we can take will be more limited.

Formal complaints

Reporting the complaint

If you want to make a formal complaint about sexual harassment, you should submit it in writing to the Preschool Manager, or to the Chair of the Management Committee if your complaint is against the Preschool Manager.

Your complaint should provide the full details of the incident(s), dates, times, witnesses and what happened. You should also include details of any actions taken under the informal element of the procedure if relevant.

Your complaint should set out full details of the conduct complained of, including the name of the harasser, the nature of the harassment, date(s) and time(s), witnesses and any other relevant information.

You do not have to be the recipient or target of sexual harassment or victimisation to submit a complaint. If you see it happening or become aware of a problem, you have the right to challenge it.

What happens next

The decision to proceed with a complaint is up to you. However, we have a duty to protect all staff and may pursue the matter independently if we consider it appropriate to do so.

The Fledgelings Preschool will investigate complaints promptly, sensitively, and confidentially, by appointing a member of the Fledgelings Management committee to become the complaint investigator.

The investigation will be carried out thoroughly, impartially and objectively and will be dealt with sensitively and with due respect for the rights of all parties concerned. We recognise there may be circumstances where an individual may feel more comfortable discussing their complaint with a complaint investigator of a particular sex due to the sensitivities of the case. We will try to accommodate this where possible.

Usually within one week of receiving a formal complaint, a meeting will be arranged with you and the complaint investigator. You have the right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or a work colleague only. Those accompanying you must abide by the confidentiality of the investigation.

As part of the investigation, you may be asked to provide the investigator with details of anyone else who you think they should talk to, such as any witnesses.

If your complaint is about a colleague, we will consider whether to suspend them on full pay or make other temporary changes to working arrangements pending the outcome of the investigation. This is to allow a full and objective investigation to take place without any undue influence. The alleged harasser will be instructed not to discuss the matter with anyone else unless they have been authorised to do so. The investigator will arrange a meeting with the alleged harasser to respond to the allegations against them. They may also be accompanied by a trade union representative or a work colleague.

If your complaint is about a third party such as a parent or other customer, supplier, or visitor, we will consider what action may be appropriate for your protection pending the outcome of the investigation. Where possible, we will discuss the matter with the third party. We will also consider any request that

you make for changes to your own working arrangements during the investigation. For example, you may wish to avoid contact with the alleged harasser.

Where witnesses are interviewed, the importance of confidentiality will be emphasised to them.

You will be kept regularly informed of the progress of the investigation and supported throughout.

Outcome of investigation

Once the investigation has concluded, the complaint investigator will submit a report to the Preschool Manager to consider the complaint.

If the Preschool Manager considers that there is a case to answer, where the alleged harasser is an employee, the matter will be dealt with under our Disciplinary Procedure. The nature of any sanctions will depend on the seriousness and extent of the harassment. If the harasser is a third party such as a parent or other customer or other visitor, we will consider what action would be appropriate to address the issue and to protect you and fellow staff members.

Regardless of whether your complaint is upheld, we will consider how best to manage any ongoing working relationship between you and the person concerned and will provide support beyond the investigation and any disciplinary procedure.

Appeals

If you are not satisfied with the outcome, you may appeal in writing to the chair of the Fledgelings Management Committee, stating your full grounds of appeal, within seven days of the date the decision was provided to you.

We will hold an appeal meeting, usually within one week of receiving your written appeal. This will be dealt with impartially by the Chair of the Management Committee, who has not previously been involved in the case. You may bring a trade union representative or a work colleague with you to the meeting.

We will confirm the final decision in writing, usually within 14 days of the appeal hearing. There is no further appeal route.

Protection and support

The Fledgelings Preschool has a zero-tolerance policy of victimisation. Those who make a complaint of sexual harassment or who participate in good faith in any investigation must not suffer any form or victimisation or detriment as a result. Anyone found to have victimised someone in this way will be subject to disciplinary action under our Disciplinary Procedure.

Sexual harassment constitutes a 'qualifying disclosure' under whistleblowing law. This will mean protection from detriment and unfair dismissal for whistleblowers making a sexual harassment disclosure.

If you believe you have been victimised, you should inform the Preschool Manager. If the matter is not resolved, you should raise it formally either through this procedure or our Grievance Procedure.

The below organisations can also provide advice and support to anyone impacted by sexual harassment:

- ACAS – www.acas.org.uk
- Victim Support – www.victimsupport.org.uk
- Rights of Women – www.rightsofwomen.org.uk

Confidentiality

Details of the investigation including the names of the people involved must only be disclosed on a need-to-know basis and subject to any legal, statutory or regulatory obligations and requirements. Breach of confidentiality may lead to disciplinary action under our Disciplinary Procedure.

Information recorded about the complaint, the people involved, the outcome and any other relevant documents or notes compiled will be processed in accordance with our Data Protection Policy.

Relevant Legislation

- Equality Act (2010)

This policy was reviewed by	The Fledgelings Preschool
On	March 2026
Date to be reviewed	March 2027
Name of signatory	Ann Goodall
Role of signatory	Committee Member