**Castor & Ailsworth Preschool**

**Safeguarding during COVID**

Castor & Ailsworth Preschool will refer to the Government guidance for education and childcare settings on how to implement protective measures including social distancing: implementing protective measures in education and childcare settings.

The Preschool continue to follow the advice from Public Health England on handwashing and other measures to limit the risk of spread of Covid-19.

Preschool will continue to be a safe space for children to attend and flourish.

We recognise that for those children returning to school as vulnerable children or the children of critical workers will be challenging and staff will support children to adjust to the necessary changes to the school environment and routines.

Supporting children’s wellbeing will be at the forefront of our approach and preschool staff will seek to provide reassurance to children as we manage the transition period. Staff will talk to the children about the changes to the school day in an age appropriate manner, acknowledge and listen to pupil anxieties and support children to understand the altered routines. Preschool recognises that the current circumstances may adversely affect the mental health of children and their parents. School staff have been briefed to look out for changes in behaviour or in a child’s emotional state, which could range from being excessively clingy, fearful, withdrawn or aggressive as more children return to school. As always, the childs wellbeing is at the heart of our work, preschool staff will seek to provide appropriate support for children both in school and where required from specialist services.

Preschool recognises that for some children, home may not be a safe space, and there may be children who are relieved to return to preschool. Preschool staff have been reminded of the need to respond sensitively to pupils’ differing experiences. Preschool staff have been asked to be particularly vigilant for signs and indicators that a child may have experienced/be experiencing abuse or neglect and must follow the Safeguarding policy and be referred immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or Manager) in the usual way.

At this time, parents and carers will also be asked to advise the preschool of particular circumstances affecting a child or family, such as bereavement, a relationship breakdown, an incident of domestic violence, this will be shared with staff on a need-to-know basis so that children can be best supported.

**Supporting Children Not in Preschool**

Preschool we are committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all its children and young people. Where the DSL has identified a child about whom there have been concerns but not currently open to social care, they should ensure that a robust communication plan is in place for that child or young person. Details of this plan will be recorded, as should a record of all contact made. This plan must be reviewed regularly and where concerns arise, the DSL will consider any referrals as appropriate. If we are unable to contact a child about whom there have been concerns after a reasonable number of attempts, we may need to seek further advice about safe and well checks.

**Vulnerable children**

All vulnerable children and looked after children continue to be eligible to attend preschool full time during the period of lockdown. The Safeguarding Lead and Manager have the flexibility to offer a place to those about whom there have been concerns but not currently open to Social Care.

There is an expectation that vulnerable children who have a Social Worker will attend an education setting, unless the child/household is shielding or clinically vulnerable. In circumstances where a parent does not want to bring their child to an education setting, and their child is considered vulnerable, Preschool will explore the reasons for this directly with the parent.

Preschool will then follow up on any children that they were expecting to attend, who does not.

Where parents are concerned about the risk of the child contracting COVID19, Preschool will talk through these anxieties with the parent/carer following the advice set out by Public Health England.

Preschool will encourage our vulnerable children and children to attend a school.

In all circumstances where a vulnerable child does not take up their place at Preschool, or discontinues, Preschool will continue to contact for support and contact any relevant professionals such as; your social worker.

**Attendance monitoring**

Preschool will continue to follow up with any parent/carer if they were expecting the child to attend and they subsequently do not attend school.

We monitor by recording attendance in the register and the reason for absence.

Non-attendance will be followed up in line with the Preschool’s normal attendance protocols.