



SPARKEN HILL
ACADEMY

Adoption and Fostering Policy for Staff

(including Connected Party Arrangements)

Rev	Date Issued	Prepared By	Approved	Comments
1.0	March 2024	RTL	07.03.24	
1.1	February 2026	RTL	26.02.26	Next review F&P Feb 2028

1. Introduction

This policy outlines the procedures and support available to staff members of Sparken Hill Academy who wish to adopt or foster a child. Recognizing the importance of supporting staff in these life-changing decisions, we are committed to providing guidance, flexibility, and assistance throughout the adoption or fostering process while ensuring the best interests of the school, its staff, and students.

2. Scope

This policy applies to **all** employed staff members of Sparken Hill Academy, including teachers, support staff, and administrators who are considering adoption or fostering, including arrangements for **connected persons*** (see section 5)

In agreeing this policy, the Trustees of Sparken Hill Academy Trust delegate the decisions and recommendations herein, to the Principal. All information relating to applications are treated as 'sensitive' and as such, should be treated as confidential.

3. Principles

Equality and Diversity:

We embrace diversity and ensure that all staff members, regardless of their gender, sexual orientation, marital status, or any other characteristic, have equal access to adoption and fostering support. An Equality Assessment has been carried out relating to this policy.

Confidentiality:

Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the process, respecting the privacy of staff members and the children involved.

Support and Flexibility:

We are committed to providing support and understanding to staff members throughout the adoption or fostering journey, including reasonable adjustments to their work arrangements when necessary.

4. Process

- 4.1 Initial Inquiry:** Staff members who are considering adoption or fostering are encouraged to inform their line manager or the designated point of contact within the school. This initial verbal discussion will be kept confidential to the line manager and Principal.
- 4.2 Support and Information:** The school will provide information and support to staff members regarding the adoption and fostering process, including available resources and external support services.
- 4.3 Connected Parties:** Should the fostering arrangement be considered a Connected Parties arrangement (as defined in section 5), additional information is required and Risk Assessments need to be completed before the process can progress. Ideally, this process should allow 4 weeks in order for a full assessment of the risks to be undertaken.
- 4.4 Time Off:** Staff members are entitled to reasonable time off for adoption or fostering-related appointments, as per statutory entitlements and school policies.

4.5 Flexible Working Arrangements: Upon request, the school will consider flexible working arrangements to accommodate adoption or fostering responsibilities, such as flexible working hours or temporary adjustments to workload / caseload.

4.6 Returning to Work:
Staff members who have taken adoption or fostering leave will be supported in their return to work, with arrangements made to ease their transition back into the school environment.

5. Connected Persons

Relevant Regulations

- Children Act 1989
- Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010 - Regulation 24 and 25
- Nottinghamshire Guidance / Policy Document on Connected Parties can be found [here](#).

Definition

A 'Connected Person' is anyone who has a pre-existing connection to a child through their extended network. This may be someone who knows the child in a more professional capacity such as a childminder, a school based member of staff, a youth worker, although these are not exclusive categories.

The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 require that the Local Authority satisfy itself that any placement into which the child is accommodated is appropriate, safeguards and promotes the child's welfare and meets the child's needs. As such, if the Local Authority is proposing to place a child in the care of a 'connected person', an assessment will be required to determine whether that placement is consistent with the requirements of the Care Planning, Placement & Case Review Regulations 2010.

If the child is 'looked after' by the Local Authority, a full assessment of the 'connected person' will need to satisfy the requirements of The Fostering Services Regulations 2002.

The school based processes identified in this policy aid a recommendation for an LA assessment and reassure the applicant that they have the support of the Academy.

This does not mean the final decision and responsibility rests with the Academy. The decision and responsibility is that of Nottinghamshire County Council and this is ratified by a viability assessment and/ or full fostering assessment followed by approval from the fostering panel.

In the case of school based staff at Sparken Hill Academy acting as a Connected Person (particularly if this involves Fostering a child who is a current / ex-pupil), such applications could present with additional risks or complications that will require careful structured consideration before any decisions are made.

Connected Parties Decision Making Process

The process is therefore as follows:

1. Applicant must notify their line manager and Principal as early as possible
2. The application to remain **highly confidential** until agreed actions are undertaken and a conclusion reached.
3. Appendix 1 highlights additional identified considerations. A signed acknowledgment of these needs to be completed before progressing.
4. A meeting between the applicant, their line manager and the Principal will be convened and Appendix 2 – Structured Conversation will be completed.
5. Once complete, the Principal and Line manager will meet to have a case discussion and complete a Specific Risk Assessment
6. All evidence is considered before a second meeting with all parties is convened. At this point, the control measures in the risk assessment are discussed and agreed. Appropriate measures may be put in place to mitigate conflicts of interest or potential safeguarding risks.
7. A decision to recommend (or not) is communicated with the applicant.

The school will provide assistance in navigating the assessment process and accessing appropriate support services.

The paramount consideration will always be promoting the welfare of pupils but the Academy also has a duty of care to its employees. If risks cannot be adequately mitigated, the school leadership reserves the right to reassign connected staff members or refuse the application.

Appeals

Applicants have the right to appeal if the conclusion leads to a decision *not to support* the application. This would usually be because control measures cannot adequately mitigate potential risks. Appeals should be requested to the Principal in writing with the reason for the appeal clearly stated. An independent SLT member (who has no involvement in the process so far) would review the case.

6. Training and Development

The school will offer training and development opportunities to staff members involved in the adoption or fostering process, including relevant workshops, seminars, and access to expert advice.

7. Review and Monitoring

This policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure its effectiveness and compliance with legal requirements. Feedback from staff members will be sought to identify areas for improvement.

8. Conclusion

Sparken Hill Academy is committed to supporting staff members who are considering adoption or fostering, recognizing the positive impact that such decisions can have on children's lives. Through this policy, we aim to provide practical assistance, emotional

support, and flexibility to enable staff members to navigate the adoption and fostering process successfully.

Connected party fostering arrangements in primary schools present potential additional inherent risks that require careful assessment, proactive management, and robust safeguarding measures.

By implementing effective control measures and mitigation strategies, the Academy can help ensure the safety, well-being, and educational success of children in foster care placements as well as protecting staff.

Signed: 

Principal

Date: 02-02-26

Next Review Date: February 2028

Appendix 1: Additional identified considerations associated with Connected Party Arrangements

If a staff member intends to adopt or foster is connected as a relative or close friend to pupils already/previously on roll at Sparken Hill Academy, additional considerations are warranted.

We wish to bring to your attention the following points for consideration. This list is not exhaustive but covers some of the major risks identified.

1. It is unusual for an existing employee to foster an existing (or previously on roll) pupil. It needs to be very carefully considered before progressing.
2. Your current role could be too demanding (for instance, time, flexibility) which could have a detrimental impact on the child.
3. There may be logistical issues that could act as a barrier e.g. home address, length of school day etc.
4. Any "Low Level Concerns" relating to you would need to be fully investigated and shared with both yourself and the Local Authority.
5. The arrangement could result in accusations against you. For example, if the child requires intimate care / bathing etc. this needs to be carefully considered.
6. The birth family may have a negative perception of the arrangements and this could affect the efficient and safe running of school. Risk of conflicts arising between you and the birth family may also impact the child's emotional well-being and behaviours in school.
7. Your professional boundaries may be questioned. For instance, accusations of "pecuniary personal interest" may be levelled against yourself by the birth family
8. There may be potential challenges in managing expectations and relationships between you, the child, and biological family.
9. You may have various personal commitments which may affect the care of a LAC child. These needs to be fully explored before progressing.
10. Depending on your role in the Academy, you may inadvertently be unable to meet your contractual obligations. Again, this needs to be fully explored before progressing
11. Access to sensitive data related to the fostering arrangement would need to be restricted. If you currently have access to educational / safeguarding records as part of your role, this would need to be removed and reallocated to a new key person
12. Depending on your role in school, it may be felt necessary to make adaptations to where you work and (within the confines of your contract) what you do.
13. The application would involve complete transparency. You will need to make the Academy aware of any personal connections to the biological family, any previous social care involvement with your own family or anything that may affect the viability of the placement or your role in school.

I have read and understood the identified risks. I wish to continue with the process

Signed: _____ (Applicant)

Signed: _____ (Principal)

Date: _____

Appendix 2: Structured Conversation to inform Risk Assessment for Connected Party Fostering Arrangement: Sparken Hill Academy

To be completed by the applicant together with the Principal (or delegated member of SLT) and the applicant's line manager. The outcomes of this structured conversation will then be integrated into a Specific Risk Assessment for Connected Parties. Once assessed, a further meeting to discuss and agree control measures (and to conclude the process) will then be convened.

Only when this process has been satisfactorily completed, will a decision be made.

Details of Meeting:		
	Date of Meeting:	
	Attendees:	Applicant: SLT Member: Line Manager:
Applicant's Role:		
1a	Has the applicant had any current involvement with the child / children.	
1b	If so, what involvement?	
2	Are there any perceived logistical issues that could act as a barrier? <i>e.g. home address, length of school day etc.</i>	
3a	Have there been any previous / current social care involvement with relation to the applicant?	
3b	Details:	
4a	Has the applicant had any issues relating to the child's family members (e.g. altercations / discourse over child's care etc)	
4b	Details	
5a	Have any of the applicant's professional opinions ever been shared in relation to the care of this child (e.g. S47 report writing, court attendance etc).	
Family Dynamics		
6a	What is the applicant's family makeup?	

6b	Are there any other vulnerable people living in the applicant's family home?	
6c	Does the applicant have any significant other personal pressures?	
	Contractual Implications	
7	Would taking on this commitment encroach upon any contractual obligations?	
	The Child	
8	Is the child aware of the request?	
9	What is the age of the child and is development congruent with chronological age?	
	Does the child present as having additional needs and have these been fully understood by the applicant?	
	Would the child require personal / intimate care?	
10	Does the child have a positive relationship with the applicant?	
11	Has the child ever made any allegations against adults? If so, give details:	
12	Does the child present any concerning behaviours (including violence, HSBs) that would present a risk?	
13	Does the child express a view on the potential arrangements?	
14	Has thought been given into what would happen if the placement breaks down? What would be the impact on the applicant, school placement and the child?	
	Would there be any protected characteristics to take into account?	
	Wider (birth) family issues	
	Do the birth parents / other child's birth family members present a risk to the staff member / child if this arrangement was to progress?	
	Additional Information:	
	Any other line of enquiry that has become evident as a result of this dialogue?	

