

Date	Review Date	Drawn up by	Committee Approving
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St Thomas Becket Catholic Primary School



Safe Drop Off And Collection Of Children Policy



Section One: Introduction

What is the purpose of the guidance?

It is for school to use in circumstances where:

- Children are collected late
- Children are not collected
- It is not safe for children to go home unaccompanied
- There are concerns about supervision before and after school (childcare by siblings and children travelling to and from school alone)
- There are concerns about the parent / carer's ability to offer safe care, possibly because they are under the influence of alcohol / drugs or there are concerns around parental mental health.
- In circumstances where you are asked by Police or Social Care that the child not leave school due to safeguarding concerns for the child.

What is the legislative framework?

Role and Responsibilities of School Staff

- The *Teacher Standards 2012* state that teachers, including Headteachers, should safeguard children's wellbeing and maintain public trust in the teaching profession as part of their professional duties.
- All school and college staff have a responsibility to provide a safe environment in which children can learn.
- All school and college staff have a responsibility to identify children who may be in need of extra help or who are suffering, or are likely to suffer, significant harm. All staff then have a responsibility to take appropriate action, working with other services as needed.

(Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2017)

Safeguarding arrangements should include consideration of the procedures for dealing with children who are late to be collected or are not collected at the end of the school day / authorised activity. It also applies to circumstances where staff have concern about a child travelling to and from school alone, concerns about the effective care by the person collecting the child and circumstances where the school are asked not to allow the child to leave school premises where there are safeguarding concerns.

Please note that procedures for dealing with children arriving LATE for start of school are also dealt with in our school **Attendance Policy**.

Section Two: Admission Information

When a child starts at the school, parents / carers are given information on the school day and routines, as well as expectations around punctuality of the drop off and collection of children.

Parents / carers are made aware of any other relevant policies / guidance in place, in accordance with the school's child protection policy.

What essential information should be on the child's file?

It must also be ensured that when a child begins at the school, parents / carers supply key information such as but not limited to;

- ✓ Names, Dates of Birth and full addresses of parents / carers (including confirmation of parental responsibility / private fostering arrangements* and copies of any legal orders where appropriate).
- ✓ Information about any person who has been denied legal access to the child (and copies of any relevant legal orders).
- ✓ Pre-approved persons who may collect the child.
- ✓ Place of work where applicable.
- ✓ Home, work and mobile numbers.
- ✓ The details of at least 2 emergency contacts who may be called in the event of the parent / carer being unobtainable or in the case of an emergency.

Additional information which may be useful in the case of an emergency;

- ✓ Ethnicity of the child
- ✓ Religion of the child
- ✓ Language (if English is a second language)
- ✓ Special Dietary needs
- ✓ Medical needs, including medication (include GP details)
- ✓ Details of any siblings and if appropriate details of any other schools / nurseries attended

*Private fostering is an informal arrangement where a person looks after somebody else's child who is under the age of 16 years (or 18 if the child has a disability) for more than 28 days, when they themselves are not a close relative of the child and do not have parental responsibility for the child. A placement may have been arranged by the child themselves or by a parent but not by the local authority. The birth parents retain full parental

responsibility for the child and for the making of all decisions in respect to the child. **If you become aware that a child is being privately fostered and the arrangement has not been assessed, this needs to be referred to children's services as per usual procedure.** The local authority will make arrangements to visit the family to assess the suitability of the private foster carer and to ensure that the child's welfare is safeguarded and promoted.

Section Three: Supervision before and after school

The NSPCC provides guidance on children being left home alone as well as children being out alone. There is no set legal age that children can walk to and from school independently or be left on their own. It is an offence, however, if to leave a child alone, places them at risk. Schools therefore have a continual obligation to monitor and alert relevant authorities if this is the case. This would, theoretically, include the journey to and from school.

NSPCC advice on leaving children home alone

- Babies, toddlers and very young children should never be left alone
- Children under the age of 12 are rarely mature enough to cope in an emergency and should not be left at home alone for a long period of time
- Children under the age of 16 should not be left alone overnight
- Parents and carers can be prosecuted for neglect if it is judged that they placed a child at risk by leaving them at home alone
- A child should never be left at home alone if they do not feel comfortable with this, regardless of their age
- If a child has additional needs, these should be considered when leaving them at home alone or with an older sibling
- When leaving a younger child with an older sibling think about what may happen if they were to have a falling out - would they both be safe?

Further guidance can be found at

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/leaving-child-home-alone/>

Drop off and collection by older siblings

It is the parent's responsibility to ensure that the child is dropped off and collected by a responsible person if it is not safe for the child to walk home unsupervised. There is no minimum age set in law when a young person is allowed to remain in charge of another child, however it is an offence to leave a child alone if it places them at risk. This can include in the care of an older sibling if the level of supervision is 'likely to cause unnecessary suffering or injury to health' (Children and Young Person Act, 1933). Therefore parents / carers must understand and be prepared to take responsibility for anything that should go wrong in their absence. They are also responsible for the care and safety of their eldest child, even while that child is acting in a caring role for younger siblings.

Extra-curricular activities

The same procedures for drop off and collection can be applied to extended school activities, where the activity is provided by the school. Safeguarding concerns are reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead, who will decide on the appropriate response.

Where the activity is provided by an external organisation, it is the responsibility of that organisation to identify and respond to safeguarding concerns, including those arising from drop off and collection issues. The school governing body should ensure that as part of the service level agreement, the organisation has confirmed that:

- All staff have received appropriate safeguarding training
- A child protection policy is in place
- An appropriately trained designated member of staff is responsible for responding to safeguarding concerns.

Section Four: Factors that may compromise a parent / carer's ability to offer safe care

The use of drug / alcohol or the presence of mental health difficulties does not in itself necessarily mean that the parent / carers are uncaring, incompetent or unable to offer safe care to their children. However, if the extent of a parent's own needs means that they cannot keep the child safe from harm, then a safeguarding referral to children's services is required.

'Drugs' in this context refers to all drugs including medicines, volatile substances, alcohol, tobacco and illegal drugs. If an adult with parental responsibility presents at school and staff are concerned that their presentation suggest they are unable to offer safe care, steps must be taken to clarify the situation and assess the risk to the child.

The following factors should be considered:

1. Be mindful of staff safety and the safety of children in the building
2. Talk to the parent and ascertain whether they appear able to offer safe care for their children. Consider the questions below:
 - How is the adult presenting – are they staggering, speaking incoherently?
 - Does the parent / carer's needs compromise their ability to meet the needs of the child/ren's basic physical and emotional needs? If so, how?
 - How do they intend to get home / how did they arrive at school with the child? Is the parent driving?
 - Is the parent / carer in sole charge of the child? Can the adult identify another parent or supportive adult to be with them and the child?
3. If concerned about the ability to care for the child based on the factors above, then a safeguarding referral to children's services is required.
4. The school should aim to retain care of the child whilst awaiting the advice of Police and children's services. Schools do not have the authority to retain a child against a parent / carers will; therefore if this is not possible, then the school should consider ringing for a Police welfare check on the non-emergency number 101.
5. There may be occasions where an immediate emergency call needs to be made to the Police on 999. It may be judged that a child or another person (including staff) may be imminently at risk of serious danger. Examples include:
 - Where an intoxicated parent is behaving violently or is threatening violence such that the belief is that the threats may be carried out, thus compromising the immediate safety or care of a child, or;
 - Place others in danger by driving a car whilst intoxicated with drugs or alcohol.
6. If ever unsure of how to proceed, contact should be made directly with the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) who will be able to offer advice on next steps.

Section Five: Late Arrival

Children must attend on time to be given a present mark for a session. Parents are expected to ensure that children are present at registration. Children may come into classes from 8.45am and the school day begins at 8.55am.

Children arriving after 9am will be marked late for registration. Parents must sign them in at the school office and provide a reason for the lateness.

If a child arrives after 9.30am, they are considered to have arrived after the close of registration and thus marked 'U'. This is regarded as unauthorised late absence.

Please note that the school day counts as two sessions, morning and afternoon. There are a minimum number of 380 sessions during the academic year.

Section Six: Late Collection

Parents and carers share in the responsibility to work with staff to ensure their children are safe and in the care of a responsible adult. It must be made clear to parents that the school must be notified immediately if it becomes apparent that the person collecting the child may be late.

In the event of a child not being collected staff should:

- Check for any information about changes to the normal collection routines
- Attempt to contact the parents / carers at home / work / mobile phone
- Attempt to telephone emergency contacts
- Keep a record of incidents where parents / carers are late for no explained or good reason, or where there are repeat incidents.
- Send a letter home to the parent / carer notifying them of the possible arrangements that may be put into place for their child if they continue to collect their child late and inviting parents in for a discussion about their circumstances if applicable. (See appendix 1).

If a parent / carer wishes for their child to be collected by somebody who does not have parental responsibility (including siblings, if appropriate and in line with school policy), the parent / carer must put this in writing. In the event of alternative arrangements being made in an emergency, the child's parent / carer must give verbal consent for an agreed person to take the child home. This information must be available to staff when completing the EXIT REGISTER at the end of the day.

Concerns related to the child's safety and welfare associated with late collection should be dealt with in accordance with the school's child protection policy and procedures.

Section Seven: Non Collection

If you are unable to make contact with a parent / carer or emergency contact by 16:00, the school will contact the SPOC Professionals' Consultation Line to seek advice.

If all possible means of contact have been exhausted and no contact can be made with the parent by 4.30pm, the school will contact SPOC and if advised to do so the police, who will arrange to collect the child or make arrangements for the child to be transported to the children's social care office.

These procedures will be followed in response to unpredictable circumstances deemed urgent where a child protection issue has arisen at the close of the school day and where parents have not been contactable, leaving the child/ren vulnerable on the school premises. There may also be times when school staff, in agreement with parents, or through common sense, or through LOCO parentis, agree / decide to transport a child to hospital or other establishments.

Please refer to guidance in staff handbook which states:

THE USE OF PRIVATE TRANSPORT

If unrelated pupils have to travel in a member of staff's car the following guidance must be followed:

- *Ensure that the Head is aware.*
- *Make sure that you are never in a situation where there is only one child in the car with only one adult – **this is not permissible.***

Section Eight: Children you are asked by the Police / Social Care not to leave school premises.

There may be circumstances when the school is asked not to allow children to go home with their parent / carer and in some situations, that parents are denied access to their child. This will most likely be due to a child protection issue where there is concern regarding the immediate safeguarding of a child. The school environment is a place of safety for a child who may be at risk of harm from a parent / carer.

If the school is asked by social care and / or Police to hold onto a child at the end of the school day you should confirm with the requester who will be coming to the school and when. Direct telephone numbers for person/s who are due to attend the school should be established in order to remain in constant contact.

If the parent is uncooperative and staff feel the parent's behaviour or actions may place any child or staff member within the school at risk, then the Police should be called immediately on 999. This includes both verbal and physical abuse and threats of violence.

Appendix 1a: Sample letter for use when a child is collected late from school

St Thomas Becket Catholic Primary School



Dear [Parent / carer]

As you are aware, [child] was collected late from school on [date]. I would like to remind you that in order to keep your child/ren safe, the school is obliged to implement its Late Collection procedure for children not collected on time.

If you are regularly late to collect your child or fail to make suitable alternative collection arrangements this may lead to the school implementing the procedure for dealing with children not collected at the end of the school day or school activity.

Please do speak with either myself or the school office if you are currently experiencing difficulties in collecting your child, or if you would like to discuss this further.

Yours Sincerely,