

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Safe Drop Off & Collection Policy





St. Joseph's Catholic Primary School



Safe and Successful Drop off and Collection of Children

Section One: Introduction Purpose of this guidance:

This practice guidance has been written to assist the Designated Safeguarding Lead for Child Protection, Senior Leadership and school governors to consider the drop off and collection arrangements for children to ensure effective safeguarding practice.

This document replaces the previous protocol for dealing with children not collected from school and managing safeguarding emergencies.

Who is it for and when should it be used?

The guidance is mainly relevant to staff working with primary aged children, although will also apply in some circumstances to older children with additional needs.

It is for schools 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
- Police or Social Care ask you not to allow the child to leave school premises due to safeguarding concerns

This guidance should be read and applied in conjunction with existing safeguarding policies in the school. It is for reference and guidance only and should be used to inform the local drop off and collection procedures developed by the Federation, which reflect the services it is able to offer and reflective of the needs of the children in our settings

NB

- References to parents in this guidance can mean a parent or carer.
- References to a child means those 0-18 years old.

What is the legislative framework?

Role and Responsibilities of Governing and Proprietors in Safeguarding

S175 of the Education Act 2002, and regulations under s157 relating to safeguarding pupils in Independent schools (including academies), place a duty on schools and their governing bodies to have arrangements in place to ensure;

- That the functions relating to the conduct of the school are carried out with the view to safeguard and promote the welfare of children;
- Must have regard to statutory guidance as issued by the Secretary of State when considering what arrangements they need to make when considering the safeguarding and welfare of their pupils

Role and Responsibilities of School and College 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, 2020)

Safeguarding arrangements 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 and where the governing body retains responsibility for the use of school premises. It also applies to circumstances where staff has 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.

These arrangements should be considered in line with '*Keeping Children Safe in Education, updated 2020 and Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2015.*'

Other legislation relevant to this guidance:

- Children Act 1989
- Children Act 2004
- Children and Young Person Act 1933
- Occupiers liability Acts 1957 and 1984

Section Two

Admission Information:

When a child starts at our 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. It is made clear that school staff are responsible for the children during school opening hours, including extra-curricular activities outside of normal school hours, but parents resume full responsibility for the welfare of their children once the teaching day has finished.

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

- Children walking to/from school alone
- A sibling accompanying a child to/from school on a parent's behalf
- What will happen if the parent/carer is late to collect their child
- What will happen if the parent/carer fails to collect their child
- What will happen if the parents/carers are not considered able to offer safe care for their child (due to alcohol/drug misuse or mental health concerns)
- Circumstances where the school have been asked not to release the child at the end of the school day due to safeguarding concerns.

These areas are within the home/school agreement which the parent/carer signs. If a related issue should then arise, it gives a framework to address this by working in partnership with the parents.

Essential information that must 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 we ask for as this is 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
- ✓ 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 we become aware that a child is being privately fostered and the arrangement has not been assessed, this must 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. As schools we therefore have a continual obligation to monitor and alert relevant authorities if this is the case. This includes the journey to and from school.

We:

- Support children walking home alone from Year 5
 - with the signed consent of the parent
 - with the reading by the parent of the guidance given by school on the back of the signed consent sheet (See appendix)
 - where the child is agreed to be of a responsible disposition and is not considered a vulnerable child
- KS2 children may only escort a KS2 sibling. They cannot take a KS1 or EYFS siblings

The NSPCC advise the following;

- Children under 8 should not be outdoors for a considerable length of time unaccompanied
- Children under the age of around 12 years, should not be home alone for more than a very short period.

School is only responsible for the safety on the school journey where it has specifically arranged transport (see section 7). If parents choose to let the child travel to/from school independently, then they need to assess the risks associated with the school route and the child's confidence, maturity, and age. Guidance can be provided to parents from information via the NSPCC website. Parents should work with their child to build up their independence, while walking to and from school together, through route finding, road safety skills and general awareness. The most important consideration for a parent about the suitability of the child to travel to and from school alone is **any risk to the child.**

As part of our good practice we advise parents if we feel a child should not be walking home alone and attempt to identify alternative options. Support can be offered to parents in the decision-making process by considering the potential risks to children being left home alone and lone school travel arrangements

by using the **checklist for supervision of children before/after school** at the end of this section.

If an agreement cannot be reached with the parent and the school feels that the child is being placed at potential significant risk, then we will need to follow our child protection policy and procedures, informing the parents of this decision.

If school agrees for the child to make their own way home, we will consider registration arrangements when the child leaves the building and ask the parent to write a letter confirming the agreed arrangement, (form) ensuring that it is reviewed regularly. It is made clear to parents/carers that the responsibility for their child's safety rests with them.

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 can 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.

The suitability of a sibling caring for a younger child needs to be considered on a case by case basis, by a judgement of potential risks of this arrangement; the maturity of the child collecting/being collected; the length and nature of the of the journey home, the behaviour and relationship of the children collecting/being collected. Please see checklist within this section for further factors to consider.

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accident and the NSPCC recommend that no one under the age of 16 should be left to care for a younger child.

Please note that in the case of illness, we will only release a pupil to a sibling who has attained the age of 18 years.

It is known that when parents supervise their children it reduces the chance that a child will be injured. However, when older siblings supervise younger children there is an increased risk of injury.

The idea behind the research was to explore why the risk of injury to young children increased when they were supervised by older siblings. The researchers found that mothers were more likely to spot and remove hazards, whereas older siblings were more likely to interact with the hazards in front of the younger children (for example, an older child may make themselves a hot drink and put it within reach of a young child, whereas the mother would more likely to keep hot drinks well away from toddlers).

It is well known that younger children tend to copy their older siblings – and indeed, this was found to be the case during the study. Children also behaved in a more risky manner when they were supervised by a sibling; however, their sibling babysitters were less attentive to that risk than their mothers would be. The problem was compounded by the fact that young children were less likely to listen to their siblings when asked to stop risk taking.

In conclusion, the researchers found that both the behaviour of the younger children and their supervisors contributed to the increase in injury risk when older siblings supervise younger ones.

Excerpt taken from:

Morrongiello, B.A, Schell, S.L and Schmidt, S. (2010). *“Please keep an eye on your younger sister”*: Sibling supervision and young children’s risk of unintentional injury. Journal: Injury Prevention. Vol. 16. No.6.

At St. Joseph’s, we have a policy in place stipulating the age at which it would be permitted for another young person to drop off and collect children from school. If we are aware that parents are allowing an older sibling to look after a younger child, in good practice we will provide information to parents/carers to assist safe decision making about the arrangements (see **checklist for supervision before/after school**). If parents have given permission for older siblings to collect/drop off younger children, this is recorded. If we have concern that older siblings are not competent to take younger siblings to and from school or there are concerns about any child’s safety or welfare due to these arrangements, we will raise this with the parent and if alternative arrangements are not made, a safeguarding referral to children’s services may be necessary.

Extra-curricular activities

The same procedures for drop off and collection are applied to extended school activities, where the school provides the activity. Safeguarding concerns are reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), who will decide on the appropriate response.

Where an external organisation provides the activity, it is the responsibility of that organisation to identify and respond to safeguarding concerns, including those arising from drop off and collection issues. The governing body will 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.

Checklist for supervision of children before / after school

The following factors should be considered when children are left unsupervised at home, walking to/from school or in the care of a sibling:

- ✓ Has the parent/carer considered the risks posed by leaving their child alone, walking to/from school or in the care of a sibling?
- ✓ How old is/are the child/ren
- ✓ How mature is/are the child/ren? What is their level of understanding/awareness about being unsupervised/walking to and from school?
- ✓ How comfortable is/are the child/ren with the arrangements (this includes the younger child and the older child who is acting as 'carer').
- ✓ Where will the children be left? Is this a safe place?
- ✓ How long, and how often, will the children be left?
- ✓ Is the home environment safe and secure? Has the parent/carer assessed the home environment/journey to or from school for risks? Has the older child or 'carer' been involved in the risk assessment?
- ✓ How far will the child/ren have to walk (if appropriate)?
- ✓ How far away will the parent/carer be? Will they be easily contactable?
- ✓ Do any of the children (this includes the older sibling or 'carer') have additional needs – medical, emotional, behavioural, learning difficulties/disabilities? How will these be met in the parent/carers absence?
- ✓ Does the child or sibling caring for another child know what to do in an emergency?
- ✓ Does the child know who they can contact in case of an emergency? Have instructions been left. e.g. in the case of a fire?
- ✓ What are the expectations for the child/ren during this time? For example, are they expected to cook for themselves etc?
- ✓ Does the child have knowledge about how to keep themselves and younger siblings safe e.g. road safety, not answering the door to strangers, cooking etc?
- ✓ What is the level of acknowledge when it comes to first aid?
- ✓ How well do the siblings get on? How will tension be managed in the absence of a parent/carer?
- ✓ Are the children clear about rules and boundaries of what they can and can't do while not in adult supervision? If looking after a younger sibling, do they have the confidence and authority to implement these rules consistently? What will they do if the younger children misbehave?

Section Four: Factors that may compromise a parent's/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. We have a drug policy which sets out the school's role in relation to all drug matters, both the content and organisation of drug education and the management of drugs within school boundaries. In addition to this, we have an agreed a range of responses and procedures for managing drug incidents, which are understood by all members of school staff and documented within the drug policy.

If an adult with parental responsibility presents at school and staff are concerned that their presentation suggests 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 will be considered:

1. Be mindful of staff safety and the safety of children in the building
2. Talk to the parent and ascertain if they appear safe to be 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/carers 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. We will aim to retain care of the child whilst awaiting the advice of Police and children's services. Although we do not have the authority to retain a child against a parent/carer will, if we are unable to retain the child we will 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 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 is made clear to parents that the school must be notified immediately if it becomes apparent that the person collecting the child may be late. We have procedures for late collection, which all staff (including those in charge of after school activities) are familiar with to ensure the situation can be resolved as quickly as possible to cause as little distress as possible to the child.

Such procedures may include:

- Checking for any information about changes to the normal collection routines
- Attempting to contact the parents/carers at home/work/mobile phone
- Attempting to telephone emergency contacts
- Keeping a record of incidents where parents/carers are late for no explained or good reason, or where there are repeat incidents. (See appendix 3).
- Sending 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 1a).

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), whether there is a regular or pre-planned arrangement, 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 and provide a password.

This must be recorded, and in good practice we write to the parent / carer to confirm that this arrangement was made at their request and with their consent (see appendix 1b). In line with many settings we insist on parent/carers giving the school a password in these circumstances, known by the parent/carer and the collecting adult to check the identity of the person who is to collect the child.

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

If the child/ren remain uncollected and no contact has been made with a parent/carer or emergency contact by 16:30 we will progress to our non-collection procedures.

Section Six: Non-Collection

If we are unable to contact a parent / carer or emergency contact, a first notification by telephone call to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) is made at **16:00**. A senior social worker will provide consultation in the form of advice and support to progress the situation.

If the decision is taken that the matter requires a child protection response, the school will be asked to complete a Multi-Agency Referral Form (MARF). The MASH will accept a fully completed CAF in the

first instance detailing any previous concerns. A MARF must then follow the CAF within 24 hours. If the matter remains unresolved by **16:30** a second notification by telephone to the MASH should be made to agree next steps. First notifications to children's social care post **16:45** will need to be referred to the out of hours service with a view to establishing a plan of action.

At the point of notification, the MASH social worker or emergency duty social worker is provided with the information held by the school regarding any current or previous child protection concerns and any previous incidents of not being collected from school. Consideration will also be made as to whether the child has any medical or additional needs which may better inform the advice and support from the social worker in how best to proceed.

There may be circumstances where it is necessary and appropriate that the child is transported to the Vibe in Dagenham as a place of safety whilst further enquiries are being made by social care. The school may be directed by social care to leave a message for the child's parent/carer and emergency contacts notifying that you have contacted social care MASH/Emergency Duty Service and you have been advised to transport the child/ren to the Vibe as a place of safety until social care can arrive, leaving contact details.

There must be agreement between social care and the school that transporting the child to the Vibe is the only available and safest option for the child, before transporting to the Vibe. The Vibe must be contacted in advance confirming an arrival time. It is important that parent/carers understand that this is the procedure and that they sign the attached documents providing consent for the children to be escorted in the event of an emergency.

Vibe Opening Hours:

- Monday – 9:00 – 17:30
- Tuesday – 9:00 – 19:30
- Wednesday – 9:00 – 20:30
- Thursday – 9:00 – 21:00
- Friday – 9:00 – 17:30

When considering the needs of the child, the school are best placed to determine what is in the child's best interests. There may be circumstances that transporting a child to the Vibe is not in the best interests of the child. For example, the child has a level of need whereby they are unable to cope with unfamiliar surroundings.

The Vibe is a place of safety only. It is best practice and necessary that a member of school staff continue caring for the child at the Vibe until social care can arrive or a person known to the child can collect the child with the prior agreement of social care and the school.

The MASH social worker or emergency duty social worker may decide to carry out appropriate checks and make further attempts to contact the parent/carer. If there are concerns related to the welfare of the parent/carer, they will ask the local Police to visit the home address.

If an appropriate parent/carer or emergency contact is located, they will be asked to ensure that the child is collected from the school, or from the Vibe if the child has already been transported, if the social worker deems it appropriate. If there is a genuine reason for the parent/carer or emergency contact to be unable to do this, the social worker or emergency duty social worker will liaise with the school/Vibe to

determine the best way to return the child to the care of the parent.

If attempts to contact a parent/carer/emergency contact remain unsuccessful, the social worker/EDT social worker will arrange for the child to be collected that evening from the Vibe and taken to a place of safety e.g. an emergency foster placement.

It is generally accepted that there should be only two reasons why, in emergency circumstances, a child would be removed from school premises, by someone who is not the parent /carer:

- The child needs to be taken to hospital for medical care
- The child needs to be placed in emergency foster care. In which case social care will follow their procedures for removing a child to a place of safety.

This guidance has been developed 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 their home, hospital or other establishments. If the school has to use a taxi to transport children, the parent will reimburse school immediately. Please note staff cars are never used.

The transportation of children

Headteachers and school governing bodies will need to consider the practicalities of transporting children. The following considerations are recommended:

- The school has parental consent to transport a child in the case of an emergency, including not being collected at the end of the school day.
- Staff are not to transport children in their own vehicles
- Whether an approved taxi company is to be used.
- Staff should not transport children alone and therefore there should be a minimum of two staff present.
- What equipment is needed to transport a child? E.g. car seats etc.

Section Seven: Arrangements for children with additional needs Regularly transported children

Children who are escorted from school are dropped at pick up points across the local authority where it is expected that a parent/carer or pre-approved person is waiting for the transport arrival.

If a parent/carer is not at the designated meeting point at the designated time, the escort holds the essential information, including emergency contact details, and will attempt to make contact by telephone. If no contact can be made, the agreed process is for the children to be escorted to the Heathway Children's Centre as a place of safety.

The Heathway Centre staff will attempt to contact the parent / carer or emergency contact. If no contact is made, the MASH team or emergency duty team will be contacted to gain further advice and support in how to progress the situation.

Children with additional needs who are not regularly transported

In circumstances where a child has not been collected by their parent / carer and has additional needs, the process outlined in section 6 of this guidance should be followed in the same way.

The school and social care will need to consider the level of the child's needs and whether specialist provision is required. As discussed in section 6, the needs of some children may cause them distress if placed in unfamiliar surroundings. The level of care required should also be considered and the school and social care will need to jointly determine whether the level of need for the child can be appropriately met by staff at the Vibe.

Schools continuing to provide care for as long as possible should always be viewed as being in the best interests of the child. It is recognised however that this is not always practically possible. In certain circumstances it may be appropriate for children to be taken to the Heathway Centre as per the arrangement for children regularly transported, but this decision will need to be made in consultation with social care.

Section Eight: Children the Police/Social Care ask us not to all to leave school premises

There may be circumstances when we are 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.

It is recognised that these situations are difficult for schools to manage and so we include guidance for parents in the school child protection policy explaining such circumstances as a point of reference in the likely event that parents will be unhappy about these arrangements when denied access to their child.

If social care and/or Police, ask the school to hold onto a child at the end of the school day we confirm with the requester who will be coming to the school and when. We try to obtain direct telephone numbers for person/s who are due to attend the school to remain in constant contact. In some circumstances it may be appropriate to transport the child to the Vibe as a safe alternative if school premises are deemed inappropriate. This decision should be made in partnership with social care as per the guidance in section 6.

We have no legal authority to prevent a parent / carer with parental responsibility for a child removing the child from school premises, unless there is a legal order. It is reasonable to request Police presence when parents are informed that they cannot see their children. 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 will be called immediately on 999. This includes both verbal and physical abuse and threats of violence.

Last Reviewed: September 2024

Next Review: September 2027