

Briefing for schools: safeguarding considerations for before and after school (dropping off and picking up)

September 2018

This factsheet is aimed primarily at primary schools, but some of the information may be useful for secondary schools.

As part of schools' wider safeguarding responsibilities they should have policies and procedures in place around the dropping off and collection of children to and from the school site. These should be shared with parents/carers when a child joins the school. Parents/carers should read and sign to confirm they have understood this.

On enrolment to the school, parents/carers should provide the following information:

- the names and full addresses of parents/carers (including confirmation of parental responsibility/private fostering arrangements and any relevant paperwork)
- home, work and mobile phone numbers
- email addresses where appropriate
- two authorised adult contacts who may be called in the event of the parents/carers being unobtainable or in the case of an emergency
- information about any person who has been denied legal access to the child (with copies of any relevant legal documents).

The school should use a secure system to store this information and update it on an annual basis.

The drop-off/pick-up policy should cover:

Children walking to/from school alone

There is no law on what age children may travel to school unsupervised. Parents/carers should make their decision based on their child's maturity, ability and the safety and distance of the route to school.

Many schools advise parents/carers with children under the age of 8 to make sure they are accompanied by an adult or an older sibling.

The Department for Education (DfE) provides statutory guidance on home-to-school travel and transport or local authorities (Department for Education, 2014).

The Scottish Government provides school transport guidance (Scottish Government, 2003).

The Education Authority Northern Ireland (EANI) provides advice about safe school transport on their website (EANI, 2018).

The National Assembly for Wales provides Home to school transport – a guide for constituents research briefing includes information about pupil safety (The National Assembly for Wales, 2016).

Older siblings accompanying a child to/from school on a parent/carer's behalf

There is no law determining the age at which a sibling can accompany a child to school.

Many schools prefer not to send a child home with a sibling unless the sibling is aged 14 years or older. It is ultimately up to the parents/carers to decide whether they feel this is appropriate. Factors that parents/carers should take into account include:

- the maturity of all the children involved
- the length and nature of the journey home
- the behaviour of all the children involved
- the relationship between the children collecting/being collected.

What happens if parents/carers are late to collect their child

If parents/carers have authorised someone else to collect the child, they may not always be aware the child is being collected late.

Every school should have a procedure for late collection, which all staff and parents/carers should be made fully aware of. This should include that in the event of lateness for collection the school will attempt to:

- contact the parents/carers on the telephone numbers or email addresses they have provided
- call emergency contacts if parents/carers cannot be reached, so an authorised adult can come and collect the child
- keep records of late collections.

If parents/carers are frequently late collecting their children, schools should send home a letter advising that they have concerns about the care the child is receiving and why.

Parents/carers should be informed that if concerns about the child's welfare continue the school may need to make a referral to children's social care so that the family can receive support.

What happens if none of the authorised people can collect the child

If parents/carers or authorised people are not able to collect the child and have arranged for someone else to come instead, the parents/carers must notify the school as soon as possible. Identification may be required when the person comes to collect the child.

Some schools use a password system for collection of a child.

What happens if parents/carers do not collect their child

If nobody comes to collect the child, the school must make every effort to contact the parents/carers and authorised person whose details have been supplied. Schools may wish to stipulate a cut-off time after which they will apply child protection procedures and contact children's social care.

Until the child is collected, they should stay at school in the care of two fully vetted members of staff (one should preferably be the nominated child protection lead or deputy child protection lead).

Staff should **never**:

- take the child home with them
- transport the child home
- go in search of parents/carers.

Staff should make a full written report of the incident.

What happens if parents/carers appear unable to provide safe care for their child

There may be times when the school is worried that the adult collecting a child is under the influence of alcohol or drugs, or their behaviour otherwise suggests that they may not be in a fit state to safely look after the child. In this case, the school may decide to:

- contact another family member to collect the child
- record the incident as a potential safeguarding concern.

Repeated instances of an adult appearing unfit to provide safe care should be discussed with children's social care.

Schools do not have the legal authority to keep a child on the premises against a parent/carer's will.

If the school has immediate concerns about a child's welfare and the parent/carer insists on taking the child, then the school should:

- contact the police
- make a safeguarding referral to children's social care
- keep a full written report of the incident.

What happens if someone else comes to collect a child

Schools should not allow children to go with any unauthorised person without first speaking to the authorised parents/carers.

If a parent/relative who does not have legal custody of the child arrives and tries to take them, the school should contact the child's legal guardian.

If a child's social worker is planning to collect them from school, this should be agreed in advance by the child's parents/carers (DfE, 2018).

How to manage issues relating to parental responsibility

- The Department for Education (DfE) has produced guidance for schools in England on how to understand and deal with issues relating to parental responsibility, for example when
- there are disputes between a number of adults who each claim to have parental responsibility for a particular child
- a child does not live with one or both parents
- a child is in the care of children's services (a looked after child - LAC)

The Scottish Government's Guidance for education authorities, parent councils and others on the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006 includes advice on parental responsibilities for schools in Scotland.

What to do if a child says they don't want to go home

If a child discloses that they don't want to go home because of abuse or neglect, then the school should follow their child protection procedures.

After school activities

The school's procedures for dropping off and collecting pupils should apply to after school clubs on the school premises.

References

Department for Education (DfE) (2014) Home-to-school travel and transport statutory guidance for local authorities

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/home-to-school-travel-and-transport-guidance> [London]: Department for Education.

Department for Education (DfE) (2018) Understanding and dealing with issues relating to parental responsibility

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dealing-with-issues-relating-to-parental-responsibility/understanding-and-dealing-with-issues-relating-to-parental-responsibility> [London]: Department for Education.

Education Authority Northern Ireland (EANI) Safe school transport

<http://www.eani.org.uk/schools/safe-school-transport/> [Accessed 17/09/18].

National Assembly for Wales (2016) Home to school transport – a guide for constituents <https://www.assembly.wales/research%20documents/faq16-010%20-%20school%20transport/faq16-010-web-english.pdf> [Cardiff]: National Assembly for Wales

Scottish Government (2003) School transport guidance circular

<https://www.webarchive.org.uk/wayback/archive/20170106194918/http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Education/Schools/Parents/transport/transport-guidance> [Edinburgh]: Scottish Government

Scottish Government (2006) Guidance for education authorities, parent councils and others on the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006

<https://www.gov.scot/Publications/2006/09/08094112/0> [Edinburgh]: Scottish Government

Training

Our online and face to face courses can help develop your understanding of how to protect children from abuse

Child protection in schools

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-you-can-do/get-expert-training/child-protection-schools-online-course/>

Safeguarding and child protection training courses – schools and education

<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/training/schools/>

Related documents

We've produced a guide advising parents on how to decide if a child is ready to be out on their own and how to prepare them for different situations:

- walking to and from school by themselves
- attending sports or holiday clubs
- going out to play with friends

Out alone: is my child ready to go out alone?

<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/leaflets/out-alone/>

Contact the NSPCC's Knowledge and Information Service with any questions about child protection or related topics:

Tel: 0116 234 7246 | Email: learning@nspcc.org.uk | Twitter: [@NSPCCpro](https://twitter.com/NSPCCpro)

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