



## **Children not collected from school care at the end of the day**

### **Introduction**

In Birmingham, it can be expected that over 200,000 children will transfer from the care of their parent/carer to the care of a school every school day. These children will be expected to return to the care of their parent/carer at the end of school activities.

The largest number of these children will be of an age and ability to make their own way home, but for a large number of primary age pupils, and some secondary pupils, arrangements will have been agreed for them to be collected from school by a parent/carer, and the school will have made arrangements to ensure this safe transfer of care.

A small number of pupils are transported by taxi from home to school and from school to home. In these cases the transfer of care takes place at the home address.

These arrangements are well established and understood by parents and carers and generally work extremely well, however there are many occasions where events prevent parents or carers arriving on time to collect their child. In most of these cases the delay is minimal and schools can offer flexibility in their arrangements. In other cases the school will have been informed about the difficulty and would have agreed new arrangements with the parent/carer.

This guidance and protocol is concerned with the few cases where the above arrangements fail, and where a child is left in the care of the school for an unreasonable length of time, and/or where contact with all parents/carers is not accessible.

### **Statutory Duties in Safeguarding Children**

- Section 175 Education Act 2002 places a duty on Local Authorities education provisions and Governing Bodies of schools, to make arrangements to ensure that their functions are carried out with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. A similar duty is placed on proprietors of independent schools. This duty should include having arrangements for dealing with children not collected at the end of the school day, or following an authorised school activity where the Governing Body or Proprietor retains responsibility for use of the school premises.
- Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 places a responsibility on Local Authorities to make the necessary arrangements to ensure that staff have a clear understanding of their responsibilities for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, and know what action should be taken if they have concerns about the safety or welfare of a child.



- The CYP&F Social Care Services are the lead agency under the Framework for Assessment of Children In Need and their Families. They are the key service in assessing the needs of children and coordinating safeguarding services for these children.
- The Police hold the primary duty of protection of life and property. Amongst their key contributions to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children they have a role in identifying vulnerable children, protecting the lives of children, and using police powers to take children into protective custody when appropriate

### **Working Together to Safeguard Children**

Whilst the statutory responsibilities and powers of the key services are important in this protocol, there is a shared responsibility on all agencies and professionals to work effectively together in delivering measures that best promote children's welfare.

It is therefore essential that the safety and welfare of the child remains the paramount consideration in determining appropriate action.

### Scope of Protocol

- This guidance and protocol details the arrangements in place for dealing with children not collected from school at the end of the school day or school activity, and for parental absence when children are transported home at the end of the school day. In both cases the normally expected transfer of care from school to parent/carer is hindered by the unexplained absence of the parent/carer.
- Schools should adopt this guidance and protocol, which has been agreed by the other agencies likely to be involved in the process: CYP&F Social Care Services, and the Police. Birmingham Safeguarding Children Board has also endorsed this protocol.
- School policy relating to these matters, and relevant aspects of this protocol should be clearly communicated to parents, carers, and staff.
- For the guidance and protocol to have best effect it is important that parents/carers of pupils at schools will be made aware of this protocol, in writing, when their child first starts at school. Staff of schools and other involved agencies must also be made aware of this protocol along with the fuller Birmingham Safeguarding Children Board procedures.

### St Paul's School Policy

- It is essential that parents provide school with an up to date and accurate record of their contact details i.e. names(s), address (es), home, work and



mobile telephone number(s). If possible, parents should also provide school with the contact details, (and methods to prove identity as required), of at least two other relatives/carers who can be called when the parent/carer cannot be contacted or in the event of an emergency. The school must keep this record up to date and ensure that key staff are informed of any changes.

- It is important that only the first named parents/carers are able to notify school of any changes in these contact details.
- School must make clear to parents/carers in writing the normal times for school closing, arrangements for collection from school, or transport to home, and ensure that any changes are notified also in writing.
- School must also make clear the arrangements to care for a pupil when parents/carers are not present as expected and until such time as he/she is collected by a parent/carer, and an indication of the period of time the school will wait before involving CYP&F Social Care Services.
- School may also highlight their duty to make appropriate alternative arrangements with CYP&F Social Care Services to ensure the child's safety.

#### Procedure:

Whenever a child fails to be collected from school, or where the parent/carer is not at home to receive the child: -

1. This will be brought to the attention of the Head Teacher or Designated Senior Person (DSP). The Head Teacher or DSP will then make every effort to contact the parent(s) or carer(s) or named alternative carer(s).
2. The school's DSP will maintain a record of incidents where parents do not collect a child from school, are absent when the child is transported home, and where this is a repeat occurrence. Any child welfare concerns arising out of such an incident(s) will be dealt with in accordance with the school's child protection procedures.
3. The Head Teacher will send a letter to the parent(s)/carer(s) notifying them of the incident and of the arrangements that were made to care for the child. (*An example of this letter can be found at Appendix A*).
4. The Headteacher or DSP will ensure that at least 2 staff are present whilst the child is at school
5. If the child has not been collected/received by 4.30pm (or within 60 minutes of the end of the school activity) and the Head Teacher or DSP is unable to contact a parent or named carer, he/she will phone the CYP&F Social Care Services team for the area in which the child resides, or an allocated social worker where this applies, and provide the following information:



- Brief circumstances of incident, and arrangements in place.
  - Child's details
  - Name(s)
  - Date of birth
  - Address
  - Gender
  - Ethnicity
  - Religion
  - Language spoken
  - Special dietary needs
  - SEN/behavioural difficulties/medical needs
  - Parent/Carer Contact Details
  - Parent/carer/alternative carer details
  - name(s)
  - address (es)
  - home/work/mobile telephone number(s)
  - Any current or previous child protection concerns
  - Any previous incidents of not being collected from school
  - Details of GP.
6. Note: The CYP&F Social Care switchboards close at 5.15 p.m. (4.15 Friday) after which the Emergency Duty Team must be contacted.
7. The call should be immediately confirmed by a fax and then followed up in writing within 48 hours using a multi-agency FACIN referral form.
8. CYP&F Social Care Services will give advice and may carry out appropriate checks and make further attempts to contact the parent/carer. If there are any concerns about the welfare of the parent/carer, social care services will ask the local police to visit the home address.
9. If an appropriate relative or carer is located, he/she will be asked to ensure that the child is collected / received from the school. If there is a genuine reason for the relative or carer being unable to do this, social care services will liaise with school about arrangements for the child to be taken to the address.
10. Decisions made by CYP&F Social Care, in consultation with the school and relevant others, must always prioritise interim care arrangements that best meet the child's personal and emotional needs.
11. In most cases by 5.30 p.m. (or two hours from end of school day) and in no case later than 6.00 p.m. a decision will be made by Social Care to assume direct responsibility for the child's care, and arrangements will be confirmed with the school & those caring for the child at that time. *(Following normal closing times and certainly after 5.30 p.m. it is not usually appropriate for a school to be accommodating a child.)*
12. If attempts to contact a parent or appropriate carer are still unsuccessful, CYP&F Social Care Services will arrange for the child to be taken to a place of safety e.g.



a temporary foster carer or residential home. They will notify the school of the child's placement and provide contact details as appropriate.

13. Plans for transporting the child will take into account staff availability out of hours, the need for adequate insurance cover, appropriate gender balance, and any information about special needs or behavioural difficulties etc provided by the school. Where possible, two adults should be present. If there is a shortage of staff a mini cab could be used with a suitable escort.

#### Children Transported (Special Educational Needs)

14. Where arrangements are in place for a child, with special educational needs, to be transported home from school, and there is no response at the home address, the guide or driver will immediately inform the school, who will agree the initial action to be taken. The school must also inform the Education Transport Service. If other children have to be taken home, the child will remain in the vehicle whilst this is done. The guide or driver will leave a proforma (see Appendix B) at the child's address with the school's contact details. In the meantime, the school will contact CYP&F Social Care at Harris House, or after 5.15 the Emergency Duty team, in the event that the parent or carer continues to be unobtainable. (See also 7 -12 above) The school will communicate action agreed between the guide/driver and Social Care.
15. Schools must ensure they provide an emergency telephone number that can be made available to the guide or driver and the Education Transport Service for use on occasions that the school/switchboard may have closed. If a member of staff cannot be contacted, the guide or driver will contact Social Care at Harris House (or if this is after 5.15 the Emergency Duty Team) who will undertake enquiries and advise the guide or driver of a place of safety for the child (usually this will be a specialist children's home). Social Care will assume responsibility for the child until safe and appropriate care is established. (Social care will also send the school a fax outlining what they have done)

#### Looked After Children transported

16. There are a small number of LAC who do not have special needs but are transported by the LA arrangements. If these children are not collected the area CYP&F specialist team responsible (not Harris House) must be contacted.

#### Joint Planning in Cases of Ongoing Concern

17. Where more than one incident occurs, or where there are reasons for concern regarding the ability of parent(s)/carer(s) to collect/receive their child from school, a discussion between School and the parent will identify a strategy for addressing these concerns. Where agreement with parents is not achieved or in cases where there are child protection concerns Social Care Services will be invited to contribute to identifying the strategy for addressing the concerns and safeguarding the child.



## APPENDIX A

Dear ..... Parent/Carer's name

Re:

On.... Day/ Date/ Time. Your Child(ren)'s .....name(s)

were not collected/ received from school at the end of the school day, and we were unable to contact you or your named carer(s). As a result, in order to safeguard and promote the welfare of your child(ren), we implemented the procedure for dealing with children not collected/received at the end of the school day or school activity.

This procedure, which has been agreed by the school, social care services, police and the Birmingham Safeguarding Children Board, involved us contacting Social Care in order that arrangements could be made to ensure your child was safeguarded.

I hope that the reasons for your child not being collected are not serious, but would you please contact me as soon as possible to discuss this matter further.

You can also contact Social Care on ..... for further information about the action taken.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher



**APPENDIX B**

Dear Parent/Carer

On     /     /           at           pm, there was no response when your  
child(ren) ..... was/were returned to his/her/there address as  
previously arranged.

In this event we took the following action:

- Waited until you arrived.*
- Returned the child to school*
- Referred the matter to Social Care..*
- Etc..*

Please note that in such cases, unless the school instructs otherwise, the driver will return your child to the school, or to a Social Care provision, and arrangements will then need to be made to ensure his/her ongoing care.

Please ring the school on ..... as soon as possible. If no-one is available when you call, please contact social care on .....

Yours faithfully

.....

Head Teacher



## APPENDIX C

### CONTACT TELEPHONE NUMBERS

School Tel.....

Head Teacher.....

Designated Senior Person (DSP).....

Social Care Services Referral and Assessment Team Tel.....

Emergency Duty Social Worker Tel.....

Harris House Tel.....

Police Tel.....