

South Hill Primary School

DROPPING OFF POLICY

SECTION ONE

This Policy 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 a sibling/child walking to or from school alone)
- There are concerns about a parent/carer's ability to offer safe care, because they are under the influence of alcohol/drugs or there are concerns about their mental health state.

References to parents in this guidance can mean a parent or carer. References to a child means those ages 0 to 18 years. References to schools includes maintained (including aided and foundation schools), non-maintained, pupil referral units, independent schools (including academies and city technology colleges) and FE colleges (where students are under the age of 18).

This Policy should be read and applied in conjunction with existing safeguarding policies in the school. It is for reference only and should be used to inform the local drop off and collection procedures developed by schools, which reflect the services they offer. Non-maintained schools should seek their own independent legal advice on any matters to which this guidance relates.

What is the legislative framework?

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 requires local education authorities and the governing bodies of maintained schools and FE colleges to make arrangements to ensure that their functions are carried out with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. In addition, those bodies must have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State in considering what they need to make for the purpose of that section.

Section 157 of the Education Act 2002 and The Education (Independent Schools Standards) (England) Regulations 2010 – require proprietors of independent schools (including academies and city technology colleges) to have arrangement to safeguard the welfare of children who are pupils at the school.

Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education, DfES 2007 DfES 2007 and Working Together to Safeguard Children, DCSF 2010

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 a school day/authorised school activity and where the Governing Body or Proprietor retains responsibility for the use of school premises. It also applies where staff have concerns about effective care by the person collecting the child and the impact of this on a child's safety outside of school, in

South Hill Primary School

line with *Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education, DfES 2007* and *Working Together to Safeguard Children, DCSF 2010*.

Other legislation relevant to this guidance:

Children Act 2004

Children Act 1989

Children and Young Persons Act 1993

Occupiers liability Acts 1957 and 1984

(Links to these documents can be found in Appendix 4)

SECTION TWO: ADMISSIONS 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 drop off and collection of children. It is made clear that school staff are responsible for the children during school opening hours, but they have other commitments once their teaching day has finished. Please see our School Prospectus.

Please ensure that when a child begins at school, parents/carers supply key information such as:

√Names and full addresses of parents/carers (including confirmation of parental responsibility/private fostering arrangements and copies of any legal orders)

√Information about any person who had been denied legal access to the child (and copies of any relevant legal orders etc.)

√Home address and telephone numbers

√Place of work and work telephone numbers

√Mobile phone numbers where appropriate

√Emergency contacts who may be called in the event of the parents/carers being unobtainable or in the case of an emergency.

This information is kept safely and the appropriate members of staff have access to it. Parents are asked to check this information on an annual basis.

SECTION THREE: SUPERVISION BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL

Living Streets, a national charity that launched the Walk to School Campaign in 1994, suggest that most school age children should be able to walk twenty minutes (around one mile) to and from school. The average distance to primary school is under 1.5 miles.

South Hill Primary School

Children walking to and from school alone

"There is no law prohibiting children from being out on their own at any age. It is a matter of judgement for parents to decide when children can play out on their own, walk to the shops or school"

Is it Legal? A parent's guide to the law' by the Family and Planning Institute (June 2011)

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, to leave a child alone if it places them at risk and therefore schools have a continual obligation to alert relevant authorities if they believe this is the case. This could, theoretically, include the school journey.

"(1) Cruelty to persons under sixteen

If any person who has attained the age of sixteen years and [has responsibility for] any child or young person under that age, wilfully assaults, ill-treats, neglects, abandons, or exposes him, or causes or procures him to be assaulted, ill-treated, neglected, abandoned, or exposed, in a manner likely to cause him unnecessary suffering or injury to health (including injury to or loss of sight, or hearing, or limb, or organ of the body, and any mental derangement), that person shall be guilty of a misdemeanour, and shall be liable....."

Section 1 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933.

The NSPCC advise the following:

- children under 8 should not be outdoors for a considerable length of time unaccompanied
- children under the age of about 12 should not be home alone for more than a very short period of time

Schools are only responsible to safety on the school journey where they have specifically arranged transport.

If parents choose to let their child travel to/from school independently, then they should assess the risks associated with the school route and their own child's confidence. Parents should work with their children to build up their independence, while walking to and from school together, through route finding, road safety skills and general awareness. The most important factor to consider about suitability of a child walking to/from school alone is any **risk to the child**. As a school we are more than happy to discuss specific arrangements with families if needed.

At South Hill School, we allow our Year 5 and Year 6 pupils to walk home from school. Parents must write a letter or email admin@southhill.herts.sch.uk to inform the school. If your Year 5 or Year 6 child is to walk home on an ad-hoc basis, you must inform the school on each occasion.

The note is only giving permission. It is then the parents/carers responsibility for their child's safety. Please note that our Year 5 and Year 6 walkers should not be taking home their younger siblings.

South Hill Primary School

Supervision on school site

Where schools allow children onto the premises before the school day begins, the school has to reasonably ensure that there are no inherent dangers (*The Education Act 2002; Children's Act 2004; Occupiers Liability Acts 1957 and 1984*).

School starts at 8.50am and if children, parents and families arrive before this time they are under the care of the parents. Classroom doors open at 8.40am so that children can prepare for the day.

Drop off and collection by older siblings

It is the parent/Carer'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 Persons 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 the potential risks of this arrangement; the maturity of the child collecting/being collected; the length and nature of the journey home, the behaviour and relationship of the children collecting/being collected.

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 be 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 "Please keep an eye on your younger sister": sibling supervision and young children's risk of unintentional injury: Injury Prevention, August 2010.

South Hill Primary School

Again, like before, we ask parents and carers to alert the relevant staff if older siblings are collecting children from school. This should be done in advance if possible. The school has a duty of care to refuse an older sibling to take home a child if the school feels it would be unsafe for that child (and the older sibling). This would be arranged in advance if possible – if alternative arrangements cannot be made – a safeguarding referral would be made to Children's Services where necessary.

Extra-Curricular Activities

The same procedure for drop off and collection can be applied to extended school activities, where the activity is provided by the school.

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 will ensure that appropriate safeguarding measures are in place.

SECTION FOUR: FACTORS THAT MAY COMPROMISE A PARENT/CARER'S ABILITY TO OFFER SAFE CARE

The use of drugs/alcohol or the presence of mental health difficulties does not in itself necessarily mean that the parents/carers are uncaring, incompetent or unable to offer safe care to their children. However, if the extent of a parent's own needs mean 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. The school has a Drugs Policy (for all contexts) which would be followed if needed.

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 will be taken to clarify the situation and assess the risk to the child.

- 1) We will be mindful of our staff safety and the safety of the children in the building.
- 2) We will talk to the parent and ascertain if they appear safe to be able to offer safe care for their children.
- 3) If concerned about ability to care for the child based on the factors above, then a safeguarding referral to Children's services will take place.
- 4) We will aim to retain care of the child whilst awaiting the advice of Police and Children's Services. We do not have the authority legally to retain a child against a parent/carer's will; therefore if it is not possible, then the school 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 (i.e. 999), because it is judged that a child or another person (including staff) may be immediately at risk of serious danger.

South Hill Primary School

SECTION FIVE : LATE COLLECTION

Parents and carers share in responsibility to work with staff to ensure their children are safe and in the care of a responsible adult. Please notify the school immediately when it becomes apparent that the person collecting the child may be late. Our procedures in such an instance are:-

- 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 repeated incidents.
- 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.
- Due to exceptional arrangements that have been discussed with the Head Teacher, a child may be collected up to 15minutes after school has finished. If there is an arrangement this should be reviewed with the Head Teacher every term so that other possible avenues can be explored. This is linked to the point above.

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 this 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. (This must be recorded.)

SECTION SIX : NON COLLECTION

It is our duty to inform parents that in the event that their child is not collected from the setting by an authorised adult and **no contact has been established with the parents/carers within forty five minutes to one hour of the usual collection time**, the school will follow their child protection procedures, i.e. Police will be informed and a safeguarding referral to Children's Services will be made.*

Detailed, timed records of the action taken will be taken and calls made and under no circumstances should staff go to look for the parent/carer or take the child home with them.

Once the situation has been resolved it is important to establish how and why the circumstances arose and to ascertain whether there is anything that the school could reasonably do to avoid a recurrence of this situation. It will be necessary to discuss with the parent steps that they could take to avoid recurrence e.g. ensuring that the school has current

South Hill Primary School

contact details etc. It will also be necessary to review the procedures used to ensure that they worked smoothly and if necessary to amend for future incidents. The school will instigate and follow such procedures.

*This will be after all necessary phone calls have taken place to all possible telephone numbers the school has. These phone calls begin after 5 minutes of having the child waiting at school and not receiving a message.

There are exceptions to this rule, where because of exceptional arrangements that have been discussed with the Head Teacher, a child may be collected up to 15 minutes after school. If there is an arrangement this should be reviewed with the Head Teacher every term so that other possible avenues can be explored.

SECTION SEVEN: REGULARLY TRANSPORTED CHILDREN

Regularly transported children in this context refers to children who have a statutory entitlement of free home to school transport from the Local Authority. This includes:

- Children who have been placed in a school that is not within the statutory walking distance (2 miles for pupils under 8, and 3 miles for those aged 8 plus)
- Children who have been placed in a school where there is no safe walking route
- Children from "low income families" if they are aged 8-11 and live more than 2 miles away from their nearest suitable school/
- Children with special educational needs or a disability (SEND) who have a statement which had transport requirements written into it.

*Those who are entitled to free school meals or whose parents receive the maximum Working Tax Credit.

The responsibility of parent/carer is to ensure that their child is ready for collection at the designated time as notified by the LEA or operator and that there is a suitable person to receive their child at the end of the school day.

The Passenger Transport Unit has guidance to follow in the event that there are concerns about safe care of a child that has been transported home, in line with the Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children Board Interagency Child Protection Procedures.

Date Agreed : September 2020

Date to Review : Sep 2021