



**Havering**  
LONDON BOROUGH

# **Policy and Procedure for Primary and Junior aged Children not collected from School at the end of the school day**

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## **Executive Summary**

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on Local Education Authorities (LEAs) 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. This duty should include having arrangements for dealing with children not collected at the end of the school day, or following an unauthorised school activity where the Governing Body or Proprietor retains responsibility for use of the school premises.

This protocol has been agreed by the agencies likely to be involved in the process, including Children's Social Care, Police and the Local Authority Education Services. The policy provides guidance for schools managing safeguarding emergencies at the close of the school day involving Children's Social Care and the Police. The protocol is endorsed by the Havering Safeguarding Children's Board (HSCB) and will be clearly communicated to both parents/carers and staff.

This protocol should be followed on those occasions where a child has not been collected from school at the end of the day and it has not proved possible to contact the parents/carers or the emergency contact person for the child. These situations are time consuming for the school and can be upsetting for the child, but in the majority of cases the child is collected, albeit, late from school.

Where children are collected late from school on a regular basis, then the school must make a referral to the Education Welfare Service and the matter followed up with the parents/carers.

There will be the occasions when parents/carers fail to collect a child due to an accident, illness or other emergency, which will result in the child not being able to go home at the end of the day. On these occasions, it is important that a protocol is available, which will enable the child to be looked after in a safe and welcoming environment.

The guiding principle in dealing with any situation, in which a child is not collected from school, must be to minimise distress to the child and for him or her to remain in familiar surroundings and/or with familiar people for as long as possible.

The knowledge that a procedure exists for managing such problems should give reassurance to parents/carers that the welfare of their children is assured.



## School Responsibilities

1. To ensure that parents/carers are notified periodically of the start and end time of the school day.
2. To instigate a system of regular updates of family/carer information, contact numbers and emergency contact numbers. This can be done by:
  - Sending out slips requesting confirmation or updating of contact information. e.g. annually
  - Attaching a slip to letters sent by school which require a response e.g. parents' evening invitations, which can be followed up during the consultation
  - Any other suitable system of communications already established by any particular school

Please be aware of the need to make adequate arrangements for parents, whose first language is not English.

3. To ensure that relevant parental contact numbers and home addresses are known and accessible to staff in the school, who might need them.
4. To ensure that all children, staff and parents know where children will wait if they are not collected on time.
5. To ensure the Policy and Procedure for Children not collected at the end of the School day are known to the parents (Appendix 5).

This can be done by:

- Including the information in the school prospectus/brochure
- Reminders in school newsletters to parents
- Information posted on the school website
- Letter sent out to parents

This information should include advice to families that:

- They should contact school as soon as a delay is anticipated
- To ensure they make adequate alternative collection and supervision arrangements of their children if possible (and inform School)
- That school will keep a record of children not collected and the reasons given for the delay. The collecting adult to sign the record on collection
- To inform them that procedures are in place to notify Children's Social Care and the Police, if parents persistently collect their children late, without any reason having previously been given to the school. This procedure may lead initially to a meeting with the Safer Schools Police Officer or a possible referral to Children's Social Care. If the maximum time is reached with no contact from a parent/carer, this could result in their child(ren) needing to be collected from Children's Social Care offices or possibly foster care.



## Action to be taken by School Staff

1. Children, who are not collected at the end of the school day or where the person calling to collect the child is not considered an appropriate adult e.g. is under age, appears intoxicated, and it has not been possible to contact the parent/carer or the emergency contact, will be taken, by their teacher to a designated area within the school. Individual schools will decide where this area should be.
2. Children should be signed in by the teacher and signed out by the collecting adult with the reason for the delay indicated.
  - If parents persistently collect their children late from school, a letter will be sent to the parent explaining the concerns and that a referral to Children's Social Care may be made (Appendix 1).
3. If the school has not been contacted within a reasonable time, (suggested 10 minutes after the end of the school day), a staff member must try to contact the parent/carer and all emergency contact numbers held by the school. These actions and their outcomes must be recorded.
4. If school are unable to make contact with the parent/carer or emergency contact, and an hour has elapsed since the end of the school day, a telephone referral to Havering's MASH Team must be made (01708 433222). This telephone referral should be made no later than 4.15pm. This contact will alert the service that a child may be in need of Local Authority Care due to not having been collected by their parent.
  - If the child(ren) have an allocated Social Worker, contact should be made directly with them.
5. When the telephone referral has been made, a written referral should be completed, which includes a copy of the child's details including; full name, DOB, home address, parent/carer's full name/s, and all contact numbers, must be emailed to Children's Social Care immediately ([tmash@haverling.gov.uk](mailto:tmash@haverling.gov.uk)), this should be completed using the Havering Referral Form (Appendix 2).
6. If children are taken into care, the school will make efforts to inform parents/carers of the action that has been taken, by hand-delivering a letter to the home address, if in close proximity to the school (Appendix 3), and leaving a letter in a prominent place at the school (Appendix 4).
  - These actions will be recorded on the child's file for future reference by Children's Social Care and the School.
7. A child should never be sent to an After-School Club/Play Centre (unless arrangements have previously been made with all parties) if the parents/carers has not arrived.
8. Once the child is in the care of Children's Social Care, they will take the responsibility for tracing the parents/carers.



## Action by Children's Social Care for Children Living in Havering

1. Children will only be accommodated in Local Authority Care, as a last resort, after it has been demonstrated that this is in the best interest of the child and that no other alternative family members or friends have been identified who can safely care for the children as an interim measure. Children's Social Care will need to satisfy themselves that the conditions for them providing accommodation under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989 are met.
2. On receipt of a telephone referral from school, details of the child's emergency contact numbers will be emailed over immediately with the completed referral form (Appendix 2). If the school do not have a form to hand, they should telephone the MASH Team to discuss the case and at the same time request the MASH SW email over a blank form.
  - The MASH SW will liaise with the school, and information known about the child/ren and family will be shared.
3. The MASH Team Manager will alert the relevant Team Manager that an emergency foster placement may be needed. The timing of any move to a foster placement will depend on the resources available at the school to continue to care for the child/ren. The immediate basic needs of the child/ren for food, rest and domestic facilities must be met, and consideration given to the likelihood of the children being collected imminently by parents/carers. It will always be in the child's best interest, where possible, to remain with familiar adults in a familiar surrounding, however individual circumstances need to be taken into account and a decision between Children's Social Care and the school will be agreed by 4:45pm in regards to the next steps required.
4. If a decision is made to accommodate the child/ren, a call to Police via 101 is required to inform them of the abandoned child/ren and the s.20 placement. This will ensure all partner agencies are aware of the situation in case parents/carers call the Police if they cannot locate their child/ren.
5. Depending on the time difference between school ending and the decision being made for placement, the relevant SW Team will make arrangements with the school for the child/ren to be taken to the emergency foster carer. For safety of school based staff, if possible, a senior member of staff accompanied by another member of staff should be involved in taking the child/ren to the placement to give them reassurance and help to manage their distress. The relevant SW will be present during the placement.
6. If child/ren are taken into care, the school will make efforts to inform parents/carers of the action that has been taken, by hand delivering a letter to the home address, if in close proximity to the school (Appendix 3), and leaving a letter in a prominent place at the school (Appendix 4). These actions will be recorded on the child's file for future reference by Children's Social Care and School. The letter should give details of the action taken and give a number for the parents/carers to contact. These notes will be used by EDT to alert them in case parents/carers call out of hours.

If it is necessary for children to be looked after by Children's Social Care due to being uncollected from school, this is under the legal status of section 20, of the Children Act 1989, on the grounds that the child/ren has been abandoned or their usual carer is temporarily or permanently unable, at that moment, to provide them with suitable care and accommodation.

7. Before the child/ren are left at the foster carers, the appropriate legal forms for accommodation of children will be completed by the allocated SW. The school staff may be helpful in supplying relevant information about the child/ren.
8. When contact is made with the parent/carers, (either by school staff or Out of Hours) the allocated SW will make a brief assessment of the circumstances leading to the child/ren being accommodated, and whether the current home circumstances are appropriate and



safe for the child/ren to be returned. This assessment will be made in person, and the information assessed in conjunction with information already held by Children's Social Care and other agencies.

9. The allocated SW will be present when the children are returned to the care of their parents/carers, to deal with any unforeseen circumstances at the time of discharge, complete discharge paperwork and inform parents/carers of further action that will be taken by Children's Social Care.
  - The Havering Local Authority operates a charging policy for children who are placed in our care. If child/ren do need to be accommodated by Havering Children's Social Care, the parents will receive a payable invoice for the period of time that their child/ren are accommodated.
10. An allocated SW will visit the family at home within 1 working day, following discharge from care, to further assess the circumstances resulting in the child/ren being uncollected, and discuss with parents/carers the seriousness of children being uncollected and any likely consequences. This is a statutory function under the Children Act 1989. Serious situations may result in child protection procedures being initiated.
11. The Social Worker will liaise with the school, as soon as possible, to update the school regarding the resolution of the incident and discuss any further welfare issues concerning the child/ren.

### **Action for Children Living in Other Authorities**

If the child/ren reside in other authorities but attend a Havering school, contact should be made with the MASH Team in the relevant borough, by the School, in the first instance.

If the child has an allocated Social Worker in another authority, the school should make contact with that worker in the first instance. If the home authority is unable to conduct the investigation, or requests the London Borough of Havering to undertake the investigation on their behalf, Havering would commence the investigation as per the London Child Protection Procedures.

If there is no allocated Social Worker, the child/ren resides outside of the Havering borough and requires a section 47 investigation under the Children Act 1989, Havering would commence the investigation, as per the London Child Protection Procedures, and then transfer the case and relevant information to the home borough.

### **Children uncollected from After School Clubs**

A number of after school facilities operate in Havering, operated by a variety of organisations including private and voluntary organisations and private companies. The issues for children uncollected from these facilities are very similar to those for children uncollected from school.

It is suggested that this procedure should also apply to children uncollected from After School Clubs, who should also hold information pertaining to the child/ren's parents/carers contact details. Children not collected from such activities should be referred to Havering's MASH Team on 01708 433222 or, if after 5:00pm, they should be referred to the Children's Out of Hours Team, who can be contacted on 01708 433999.

### **Regularly Transported Children**

Where arrangements are in place for a child to be escorted home from school, and there is no response at the home address, the driver will immediately inform the school. If other children have to be taken home, the child will remain in the vehicle whilst this is done. The driver will leave a note (Appendix 6) at the child's address with the school's contact details. Unless directed otherwise, the driver will then return the child to school. In the meantime,



the school will liaise with the MASH Team (01708 433222) or, if after 5:00pm, the Out of Hours Team (01708 433999) in the event that the parent/carer continues to be unobtainable.