



24. DROPPING OFF AND COLLECTION OF CHILDREN

Document Title:	Dropping Off and Collection of Children
Unique Reference Number:	024
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Document Approved:	Stuart Buchanan
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Person responsible for approving Policy	Stuart Buchanan
Method of communication of policies to staff (email / hard copy / induction training)	Email & Hard Copy
Method of communication of policies to parents/guardians (full policies via email, hard copy)	Email & Hard Copy
Date the Document is Effective From:	May 2024
Scheduled Review Date:	Annually
Number of Pages:	5

This policy has been communicated to parents/guardians and staff.

Relevant staff know the requirements and have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities in relation to this policy.

Relevant staff have received training on this policy.

Statement of Intent: The well-being, safety and security of all the children in the setting is our main concern. The following procedure has been drawn up to ensure that this is maintained at all times, that an accurate record is kept of all children in the Service including absences, arrival and departure, and that all children leave the premises with either their main carers or the adults who are authorised to do so.

Consent is always sought from parents to allow someone other than the parent/guardian to collect the child. Records regarding authorisation are kept for 2 years from the time the child ceases in the service

Before any child starts the Service the parent/carer is required to provide the names and contact details of all people authorised to collect their child on their registration form. Only persons aged 16 years and upwards may be named on the registration form and will be permitted to collect the child.

If the named person/s cannot collect the child they are responsible for, the parent /carer must inform staff of the person, over 16 years of age, who will be collecting the child and give consent in writing where possible, with a clear description and contact details including address and telephone number of the responsible person.

If possible, we would like to meet the person collecting in advance, enabling the staff to feel confident about the child leaving safely and happily. If this is not possible, we suggest a password is given to ourselves and the person collecting, allowing us to permit entrance once the password has been checked at the door upon arrival.

In the instance of an unknown/unnamed adult coming to the setting to collect a child, they will be asked to wait outside while contact is made with the main carer. If this is not possible, they will be requested to wait until

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contact can be made. On no account will a child be allowed to leave the premises with an unauthorised person.

Any deviation made by any staff member will be considered as gross misconduct, and will be dealt with appropriately.

All Children arriving at or being collected from the Service must be signed in and out by either a member of staff or a parent/guardian or their nominated person. Please see our policy on Checking in and Out and Record of Attendance.

Note: All children must be supervised during collection times, and when entering and leaving the Service.

Attendance: It is essential to the efficient running of our Service that parents/guardians inform us if their child is unable to attend the Service, and follow up with a telephone call to inform management when the child will be returning. A register of the days and times that children attend is kept.

Morning Arrivals:

- For their own safety, children must be accompanied into the Service by a parent/guardian or their nominated person.
- Parents/guardians or their nominated person are responsible for their children during arrival at the Service.
- Under no circumstances may a child be left unattended on the premises; this includes a child on foot, in a stroller or wagon, in a car or other vehicle, or in any other situation.
- Parents/guardians, or their nominated person, gain access to the Service by using the keypad entry system with camera.
- A member of staff, a parent or guardian or their nominated person will register each child on arrival.
- Parents/guardians are asked to ensure that all external doors are securely closed for the safety of all the children when they leave.
- If a child will not be attending, we request that parents/guardians advise us.

Collection Policy:

- For their own safety it is the policy of the Service that no children will be permitted, under any circumstances, to leave the Service unaccompanied.
- Children must be collected by a parent/guardian or their nominated person.
- Parents/guardians or their nominated person are responsible for their children during collection at the Service and must accompany the child off Service premises.
- Parents/guardians or their nominated person gain access to the Service by using the keypad entry system with camera.
- A member of staff, a parent or guardian or their nominated person will register each child on collection.
- Parents/guardians must collect their child by the agreed collection time. Parents/guardians will be asked to give the names of at least two other people who are authorised to collect the child. If the parent is late arriving to collect the child, the person in charge will endeavour to contact the parent. In the event of being unable to contact the parent, the person in charge will contact the other named persons to collect the child.
- Children will not be released into the care of a person under the age of 16 years or to a person who appears to be incapable of caring for the child. Should this situation arise, the staff will contact an authorised collector. If no one is available to collect the child, then the person in charge should contact the TUSLA social work child protection team. Services are required to get proof of age for persons over 16.

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- Nominated persons who are unknown to the Service will be required to produce either a driving licence, passport or other photographic identification which states the person's date of birth so that the Service can ensure that person is over 16 years of age.
- In the event of a parent collecting another child, a prior arrangement must be made.

If the nominated person arrives in an unfit state: Parents/guardians/Nominated Persons should be in a fit state to collect their children. If a parent arrives in an 'unfit' state, for example, under the influence of alcohol or drugs, the senior member of staff on duty will contact the other parent or nominated person as listed on the child's registration form (depending on authorisations and circumstances) or will contact the duty social worker or the Gardaí. The child's welfare and safety will always come first.

Attempted collection by a person who is not on the child's records: Children should be collected only by the adult/s named on the 'Collection Authorisation'. Should the person responsible be unable to collect the child, a letter of explanation must be presented, signed and dated by the parent/guardian with a contact telephone number. The staff member will then telephone the parent prior to allowing the child to leave the Service. If the parent personally arranges this with the staff member, the telephone call may not be necessary, but signed consent will be required at all times.

If the parent has not been personally contacted to authorise the collection of their child, the child **will not** be permitted to leave the premises until an authorised collector, as recorded in the child's records, is available.

Late Collection of Children:

We understand that sometimes a parent is unavoidably delayed when coming to collect their child. We will ensure that the child receives a high standard of care in order to cause as little distress as possible. Parents/guardians in this situation must contact the Manager to say that they will be late and arrange with staff what to do. Children are only released from the Service to individuals named by the parent.

We reserve the right to charge a late collection fee for persistent lateness in collection of children. The fee is €1 per minute.

Early Collection of Children: We ask that parents/guardians let us know if they or their nominated person will be picking up their child early so that we can have the child ready and minimise disrupting the rest of the group.

Late Drop Off: We ask parents/guardians to drop children off at the correct time to avoid disrupting the group once they have started and so that the child benefits from the full daily programme.

Where a child is not collected: In the event that child is not collected from the Service after the expiration of 10 minutes after the appointed time, the Management will contact the parents/guardians by telephone to ascertain when they will be arriving at the Service to pick up their child. Management will then make arrangements with the parent in relation to collection.

There is a Late Collection Fee of €1 per minute.

In the event that Management is unable to contact the parents/guardians by telephone, a text message will be sent to the parent or guardian. If no response is received to this text message within 5 (five) minutes, Management will contact the parent/guardian's emergency collection person identified to the Service to plan for the emergency person to collect the child from the Service.

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Where Management are unable to make contact with parents/guardians or the specified emergency person after the expiration of two hours after the appointed collection time and if there is no contact from parents/guardians or emergency person, the Management will notify Tusla and An Garda Síochána of the position in case an emergency has arisen.

Separated and Divorced Parents: Married parents are automatically joint guardians of their children. Neither separation nor divorce changes this.

- We cannot refuse either parent to collect their child unless a Court Order is in place. However, we reserve the right to seek clarification of identity when one parent has not had any contact with the Service or the contract has been with one parent only and a second parent makes unexpected contact. This is usually in circumstances where a separation is happening.
- We ask that parents give us information on any person that **does not** have legal access to the child.
- Where custody of a child is granted to one parent, we would ask parents to clarify the circumstances with us. This information will remain confidential and will only be made known to the relevant staff. If there are any legal documents such as Custody Order or Barring Order, we would ask parents to provide us with a copy to keep on file.

Attempted collection by a parent who has been denied access in a Court Order:

- A parent who has been denied access to a child through a Court Order will not be permitted on to the Service's premises.
- If the parent who has been denied access becomes threatening or violent and insists on removing the child from the Service, this will be viewed as trespassing. The Service will in this event contact the Local Garda.

By law, an unmarried mother is the automatic guardian of a child born outside of marriage. In some circumstances, unmarried fathers have automatic access. The Service should be informed about access rights. Unmarried fathers will automatically become guardians of their children if they meet a cohabitation requirement. An unmarried father who cohabits for 12 months with the child's mother, including 3 months following a child's birth, will automatically become the child's guardian. This provision is not retrospective, so guardianship will only be acquired automatically where the parents live together for at least 12 months after 18 February 2016.

Note: Records of all Collections are kept for up to two years from the time the child ceases in the service.

Signed: 

Date: 8th May 2024

Name: Stuart Buchanan

Person responsible for approving the Policy

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