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 Propeiter 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 Responsiblities

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 4pm. 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@havering.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 authorites 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 Club's, 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.

Appendix 1

Havering education services
Supporting excellent learning outcomes for children, young people and adults
www.haveringeducationservices.co.uk

Attendance, Behaviour & Traveller Support Service

London Borough of Havering
9th Floor, Mercury House
Mercury Gardens Romford RM1 3SL

t. 01708
e. @havering.gov.uk

Date

(Name)
(Address)
(Town)
(County)
(Postcode)

Dear

Re: DOB: Registered Pupil at

The Attendance Service meets with School on a regular basis and following a recent review on , I was concerned to see that frequently fails to be collected from school on time.

This has happened on occasions this term and despite school bringing this to your attention it is still happening.

School finishes at pm and your child needs to be collected at that time. It is important for you to note that persistent failure to collect your child on time may result in a referral being made to Children's Social Care.

Please do not hesitate to contact me on the above number if you have any queries regarding this letter and I will be happy to help you.

Yours sincerely

Attendance & Behaviour Support Officer

Appendix 2

Havering
LONDON BOROUGH

MULTI AGENCY REFERRAL FORM

4th Floor North Wing, Mercury House, Mercury Gardens, Romford, RM1 3DW
Telephone: 01708 433 222 **Facsimile:** 01708 433 375 **Email:** tmash@havering.gov.uk
Website: www.havering.gov.uk/Pages/Category/Children-and-families.aspx

Consent *Refer to guidance on last page. Where possible, written consent should be obtained unless seeking consent will put the child at imminent risk of significant harm.*		
Do you have consent, from a person who has parental responsibility for this child, to make this referral and share appropriate information with other agencies? **Written** ☐ **Verbal** ☐ **Not Obtained** ☐		
Consenters Name:	Relationship to Child:	Date of Consent:
Signature:		

Family Details	
Family Address:	
Young Person's contact details if applicable:	
First Language:	Is an interpreter required? Yes ☐ No ☐
Does any child or family member have a disability? If yes, please provide details:	

Family Composition			
Child 1	Name:	DOB/EDD:	Gender:
Tick if same Address ☐ Other address:		Ethnicity:	
Child 2	Name:	DOB/EDD:	Gender:
Tick if same Address ☐ Other address:		Ethnicity:	
Child 3	Name:	DOB/EDD:	Gender:
Tick if same Address ☐ Other address:		Ethnicity:	
Child 4	Name:	DOB/EDD:	Gender:
Tick if same Address ☐ Other address:		Ethnicity:	
Parent/Carer	Name:	DOB:	Gender:
Tick if same Address ☐ Other address:		Ethnicity:	Contact Details:
Relationship:			
Parent/Carer	Name:	DOB:	Gender:
Tick if same Address ☐ Other address:		Ethnicity:	Contact Details:
Relationship:			

Referral
What is the reason for your referral? *Do you believe the child is at immediate risk of significant harm? Please state the nature of harm.* *Has the subject sustained an injury? Please provide a description of the injury.* *Is the child/young person afraid to be home? If yes, where is the child currently?* *Please state date, time and location of the incident.* *Has the child been spoken to? What is their account?*
Are there any support services that the child/family is currently or has previously been receiving?
What are the desired outcomes you would like to see? What services do you believe are required?
Are there any contributing factors that you would like us to be aware of such as health, housing, financial, education, and emotional/social wellbeing? *e.g. In your opinion, are there any heightened risks to persons making contact with the child/family such as a dangerous dog, persons of a violent nature, drug use in the home etcetera?*

Referrer's Details		
Name:		
Role:	Agency (if applicable):	
Full Work Address, including post code:		
Telephone, including mobile:	Fax:	Email:
Name of Agency Safeguarding Lead:	Date:	

Consent

Parents/Carers should be asked to provide consent to both the referral being made to Havering Children's Services and to obtaining and sharing information with partner agencies. In most circumstances the agreement of the parent/legal guardian must be sought before a referral is made, providing this will not place the child at an increased risk of significant harm.

If a professional has any concern that informing a parent may place a child at risk, please seek advice from the Triage, MASH and Assessment Team on 01708 433 222.

For all referrals to the Early Help Service, a signature is required from the Parent/Carer.

Appendix 3

HAND DELIVERED

Date:

Dear

As your child was uncollected at the end of the school day, and we were unable to make contact with you using the contact numbers you provided, the procedure laid out in our school brochure and/or website has been implemented.

You have been informed via the school brochure/prospectus/website, and reminded in our newsletters, that it is the school policy to refer to Children's Social Care in such cases. Therefore is now being looked after by the London Borough of Havering's Children's Social Care. In compliance with section 20 of the Children Act 1989, your child was determined to have been abandoned.

Please contact Havering's main switchboard immediately on 01708 433222 and ask to be put through to the MASH Team. Unless otherwise directed, and if it is after 5pm, please call the Out of Hours Team on 01708 433999.

Yours sincerely

(Name)
(Designation)

Appendix 4

(Please note do not change 'Dear Parent/Carer' to specific names to maintain confidentiality. The parent/carer will know who they are)

Date:

Dear Parent/Carer

As you did not collect your child within an acceptable time, and all attempts to contact you were unsuccessful, the procedure laid out in our school brochure and/or website has been implemented.

Your child is now in the care of Havering Children's Social Care, please contact their main switchboard immediately on 01708 433222 and ask to be put through to the MASH Team. Unless otherwise directed, and if it is after 5pm, please call the Out of Hours Team on 01708 433999.

Yours faithfully

(Name)
(Designation)

Appendix 5

Date:

Dear Parent/Carer

Local Safeguarding Children's Board Policy and Procedures for Children not collected at the end of the school day

This school has now adopted the above named policy and procedure to safeguard children not collected at the end of the school day, where no contact has been made with the school with an acceptable explanation for the delay. It is recognised that situations occur where children are not collected occasionally for reasons beyond their parents' control, such as a traffic accident. This procedure is intended to help parents and carers in these situations. The knowledge that a procedure exists for managing such problems should give reassurance that the welfare of their children is assured.

However, it is very distressing for children to be left at the end of the school day. Parents who persistently collect their children late will be contacted and invited to a meeting with a member of the Police Safer Schools Section and myself to discuss how this matter may be resolved. We take very seriously our duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of your children, and trust the parents of children attending this school will make adequate arrangements for the timely collection of their children at the end of the school day.

Should your child/ren be left at school without contact from you, and we are unable to contact you on any of the home or emergency numbers you have given, procedures are in place as follows: a referral will be made to the Children's Social Care. As a last resort, your child/ren will be looked after by Social Workers from this service until you contact them and arrangements can be made to return them to your care.

It is hoped that all children will be collected at the end of the day and that the above procedures will not have to be invoked.

A copy of the policy and procedures can be viewed at school and/or website.

Yours faithfully

(Name)
(Designation)

Appendix 6

HAND DELIVERED

Date:

Dear Parent/Carer

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

Unless the school instructs otherwise, the driver will return your child to the school and arrangements will be made to ensure their safety.

Please ring the school on as soon as possible. If no-one is available when you call, please contact the MASH Team on 01708 433222 or, if after 5pm, the Out of Hours Team on: 01708 433999.

Yours faithfully

(Name)
(Designation)