



Bromley Safeguarding Children Partnership

PROTOCOL FOR CHILDREN NOT COLLECTED FROM SCHOOL

Please ensure that before a child starts school, details of the child i.e. date of birth, address, address of both parents, and their contact details, who has parental responsibility for the child etc. are obtained. It is also important that details of the child's emergency contacts are sought. Please remind parents, on a regular basis, to inform the school of changes to any of these details.

Children Not Collected from School

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 parent(s)/carer(s) 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 most 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 parent(s)/carer(s). This protocol is not to be used to threaten or punish parents who are habitually late in collecting their children.

However, 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.

Protocol – for Schools

1. If a child has not been collected, the school should make every possible attempt to contact the parent(s)/carer(s). The child may well be able to indicate if something out of the ordinary has happened at home (e.g., parental illness or absence). On some occasions another parent may offer to take a child home with them. Schools should never release a child into the care of another adult without the consent of the parent(s)/carer(s). Neither should members of staff take, or drive, children to their home or to the home of the child (ren).
2. Initial attempt to contact parents/carers should be made when **15 minutes** have elapsed after school closing time. After **30 minutes** have elapsed, contact with all emergency numbers supplied by the family should be attempted.

3. If no contact has been made and no one has arrived to collect the child when **one hour** after school closing time has elapsed, then the school should contact Childrens Social Care via the C&F Hub on **0208 461 7373** or **0208 461 7379** or **0208 461 7026** and provide name, date of birth and address of the child, the names of the parents/carers and their contact numbers plus any other relevant information regarding the child and their family.
4. The Duty Social Worker will make arrangements for the child until the parent(s)/carer(s) can be traced. Please wait with the child in school until the social worker arrives, or, in exceptional circumstances, it is agreed that the school will bring the child to the Social Care Office.
5. A child should never be sent to an after-school club/play centre (unless arrangements have previously been made with all parties) if the parent(s)/carer(s) has not arrived. It is the responsibility of the school to follow these procedures to contact the parent. After-school clubs/play centres have their own procedures for uncollected children.
6. These arrangements can also be implemented in the following circumstances:
 - Where a parent does not arrive to collect the child and no contact can be made because the telephone numbers (including any emergency numbers) provided by the parent/carer have been cut off or are unobtainable.
 - Where the person calling to collect the child is not considered an appropriate adult, e.g., is underage, appears intoxicated, and it has not been possible to contact the parent/carer or the emergency contact.
7. Once the child is in the care of Social Care, they will take the responsibility for tracing the parent(s)/carer(s).

Children transported to and from school arranged by the Local Authority

If a child is taken to and from school by transport arranged by the Local Authority and no one is home to meet the child, then the driver/escort will ring the Local Authority SEN Transport Team. Calls will then be made to the contact numbers provided by the parents/carers. If no contact can be made the SEN Transport Team will ring Children's Social Care, with all the child's details. The Duty Social Worker will arrange for the child to be cared for. The driver/escort will stay with the child until the social worker arrives.

Protocol – for Children's Social Care

1. On receipt of a call from a school at or after one hour following the school closing time, Children's Social Care will need to be provided with relevant information about the child(ren) and their circumstances. It is important that accurate information is provided by the school to Social Care including all relevant names, addresses and telephone numbers – a copy of the school's record sheet for the child would provide a helpful basis for this. If the child has mentioned any recent changes in family circumstances or if there have been other occasions on which a child has not been collected from school, this information should also be conveyed to the duty social worker.
2. In most cases, parent(s)/carer(s) do arrive to collect their child – in less than 1% of all cases is it necessary for another agency to be contacted by the school. The duty social

worker will, therefore, want to discuss with the referring teacher how long the child can remain at the school since this is the place to which the parent/carer will go first if they have been delayed in collecting their child(ren).

3. Children's Social Care will identify a local foster carer(s) who are able to look after a primary school child on an emergency basis where s/he has not been collected from school. The child will be placed with that carer on a temporary basis as soon as possible. This placement will be treated as an informal arrangement if the child is collected before 10 pm. After that time, since the child will then be likely to remain overnight, they will be formally accommodated under Section 20 of the Children Act.
4. If a child is to be removed from school premises in these circumstances, then arrangements should be made for a note to be left for the attention of the parent/carer should they subsequently arrive at the school asking them to contact Children's Social Care.
5. At such point as Children's Social Care is planning for a child to be placed with a foster carer then the Police Child Abuse Investigation Team (CAIT) will be advised of the details of the child (Police will need to be informed by an 87A). No action should be taken by CAIT at this stage other than to note the details, complete relevant checks and to advise Social Care whether or not the Police are aware of any reason why the parent/carer has failed to collect their child. Should the parent/carer not contact any agency by 10 pm and the child be accommodated, then the Police will again be informed since the child will be regarded as having been abandoned necessitating consideration of a Police criminal investigation.
6. At each stage, it will be the intention of Children's Social Care to seek to return the child to the care of his or her parent(s)/carer(s) unless there is evidence of a risk of significant harm.

Nothing in this protocol changes the responsibilities of each agency as set out in 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' and 'The London Safeguarding Children Procedures'.