

## Drop-off and Collection Policy

Askea Community Childcare Centre believes that the safety and welfare of children attending our service is of paramount importance. We are committed to ensuring that children are received into the service safely and securely and that they are returned safely into the care of their parents/guardians or their nominated carers each day.

### Principle of Drop-off and Collection

This policy is underpinned by the Childcare Act 1991 [Early Years Services] Regulations 2016, Registration of School Age Services 2018, Our Duty to Care 2002 and Children First National Guidelines for the Protection & Welfare of Children

#### The purpose of this policy is:

- To ensure that the welfare and safety of the children in the service always is prioritised.
- To ensure specific information is available regarding a child's guardians and any person who is authorized by the legal parent/guardian to take the child from the service.
- To ensure that children are received into the service safely and securely.
- To ensure children are returned safely into the care of their parents/guardians or nominated carers.
- To ensure clarity for the staff team and parents/guardians/carers on the service requirements and the procedures for children's safe and secure reception into the setting as well as their safe return to their parents'/guardians' care at the end of each day.
- To ensure clarity for the staff team on the service requirements and the procedures when dropping/collecting children to/ from Holy Family Girls National School and Holy Family Boys National School.
- To ensure that parents/guardians/carers and the staff in the service communicate positively with each other and make decisions and arrangements for their transitions from one setting to another that are in the children's' best interests.
- To ensure that all staff members know how to identify which persons can or cannot take a child from the service in order that all parents/guardians can be confident that no person who has not been nominated by them (in person or in writing) will be allowed to take their child from the service.
- To ensure parents have clear information on what the procedures are for any changes to arrangements and/or authorisations agreed on enrolment.
- To provide clear procedures on how people authorised/nominated by parents/guardians are to be identified where they are unfamiliar to staff.
- To encourage all parents/guardians or their assigned carers to come for their children on time.
- To ensure that, in cases where a parent/guardian/carer does not arrive on time for their child at the end of their session/closing time, the child is cared for safely by at least one competent staff member who is known to the child.
- To ensure that children are protected where there is any dispute and/or any concern for their welfare.
- To support staff members in handling challenging or exceptional circumstances related to the children leaving the setting daily.

**Definitions/Glossary:**

<b>Legal Guardian in Ireland</b>	A person who has a duty to maintain and properly care for a child and has a right to make decisions about the child's religious and secular education, health requirements and general welfare. Legal guardianship and custody can be held jointly between parents or solely by one. Legal guardianship can also be held by persons other than parents in certain circumstances. In addition, all rights to custody of a child can be changed by a Court Order.
<b>Custody</b>	Custody is the right of a parent to exercise physical care and control in respect of the upbringing of his or her child on a day-to-day basis. The married parents of a child are automatically joint guardians and custodians of their child.

Please see some further information relating to Guardianship which is relevant to this policy in Appendix 1.

## Procedures for Drop-off and Collection

### On enrolment, information will be obtained by the service about:

- Who the child's guardians are and their contact details.
- Names, addresses and telephone numbers of anyone, other than a guardian, who is authorised by the legal parent/guardian to take the child from the service.

This information is updated as often as necessary. Parents/guardians must inform the service in person and/or in writing of any changes to the planned arrangements for their child/ren leaving the service.

See Appendix 2.

All persons authorised by parents/guardians to take a child from the care of the service must be over the age of 18 years, be fit to care for the child and be authorised in writing or in person by the child's parent/guardian.

Persons who have not been named in the enrolment form by the parent/guardian **must**:

- Have a dated note from the parent/guardian allowing the child to leave with them; **and**
- Present photo identification
- The parent/guardian **must** also have confirmed this arrangement with the service by phone or in person beforehand.

Adequate supervision is provided to ensure that no one can remove a child from the service without at least one staff member's knowledge and a record being kept. Any person, including a parent/guardian, who comes to take a child out of the service, **must** be over 18 and **must** make contact directly with an appropriate member of staff before doing so.

In exceptional circumstances and with written authorisation from the Parent a minor over the age of 16 years, who is fit to care for the child, may collect a child from the service.

These rules are clearly set out for parents/guardians at enrolment.

**The safety and welfare of the children will always be our first consideration.** This includes where parents/guardians or their nominated carers fail to come for their child on time, or arrive for a child in what appears to be an unfit state. All appropriate measures will be taken to protect children in keeping with our Child Safeguarding Statement and Policy and we will do our best to support parents.

A custodial parent has the right to request that the service does not allow another parent to visit or call for the child, provided that the custodial parent makes the request in writing and presents to the

Manager a dated letter from a Solicitor confirming the existence of a certified copy of the relevant Court Order. Only a Court can limit the guardianship rights of parents even where they have separated or divorced.

Staff will observe current Covid-19 health and safety measures for themselves and the children in their care.

#### **Authorised persons to collect a child:**

Parents must provide information regarding the child's legal guardians and provide their contact details on enrolment.

Parents must inform the service directly if the child will not be attending by **9.30 am** and when they expect that their child will be returning. The staff member who receives this notification will record it in the Reception Daily Communication Book and notify relevant staff.

Parents/guardians must notify the service personally (either verbally or in writing) if any person other than those already authorised, is to collect their child/ren on any given day. Any such person is required to produce photo identification on arrival.

Details will be recorded in the Reception Daily Communication Book and relevant staff notified.

If there is no written record by a staff member or a parent/guardian as to alternative arrangements for the child leaving the service, **nobody but the parent/guardian or a previously authorised person known to the service** will be given access to the child.

Askea Community Childcare Centre will not release a child to anyone who is not authorised without prior consent from parent/guardian.

#### **Routine for drop off:**

- The entrance door is always kept locked to ensure the safety of all children and staff and only staff are permitted to open the door to parents/guardians/carers and visitors to the service.
- Children must be taken into the service by a parent/guardian or their nominated carers and 'signed in' on arrival.
- Children must not be left in the foyer, hall, stairways, or left outside the service prior to the opening hours of Askea Community Childcare Centre and must be escorted to their designated room by a parent/guardian or their nominated carers.
- On daily arrival at the service, parents/guardians/carers must ensure that they make direct contact with an appropriate member of staff. This is an important opportunity to share any information relevant to their child's care, wellbeing and development. This will result in better engagement for the child. (see Settling-In Policy)
- Parents/guardians must have stated on the Registration Form the names of persons (over the age of 18 years) authorised to come to the service for their child/ren.

#### **Supervision during collection times:**

- During collection times, each child is under the direct supervision of a competent staff member, until it is ensured that the child leaves the premises in the care of their parent/guardian or a person nominated by their parent/guardian.
- On returning daily to take their child from the service, parents/guardians or their nominated carers are provided with information on any significant events, experiences or incidents involving, or relevant to, the child during the day. If parents cannot attend in person and wish to be given the information directly, this can be provided by phone or email communication at a time which does not impact on the staff members responsibilities to engage with and supervise children.

## SCHOOL COLLECTIONS- SCHOOL AGED CHILDREN

At Askea Community Childcare Centre we have established procedures for the drop off/collection of school -aged children to ensure a smooth transition and effective time keeping within our service. **The aim of this policy is to ensure the safety and welfare of children by making sure that the responsibilities and expectations of all parties are clear when it comes to children** being brought to and collected from Holy Family Girls National School and Holy Family Boys National School, Askea.

### Dropping off at the School Age Breakfast Club

- Children must be taken into the service by a parent/guardian and 'signed in' on arrival in the designated sign in book located in the Afterschool room.
- Breakfast will be provided as required.
- To ensure effective time keeping children must arrive at the Breakfast Club no later than 8.50 am as we cannot delay the departure time to school for children who arrive late.
- School Age children returning to the service in the afternoon may bring one additional bag which can be stored within the building to facilitate a change of clothing on return to the service and must be taken home by the child each day.

### Dropping off at School

- At 8.55 am, only children who are registered for attending the School Age Breakfast Club will be escorted by staff as they walk to their neighbouring schools from Askea Community Childcare Centre.
- Staff and children will walk in a group to schools.
- One member of staff will remain at Holy Family Girls National School and a second member of staff will proceed to Holy Family Boys National School.
- Staff will remain with children until they enter the school premises at school start time of 9.00 am before returning to the service.
- The Authorised Staff Member drops the children at the agreed location/to their teacher. The Authorised Staff Member records the time.
- School age children are encouraged to ensure they have all belongings to be brought to the school before leaving the service. Where items are forgotten, it is at the discretion of the School Age Service to bring the child's belongings to the school.
- School Age children are expected to always follow the service's Managing Behaviour Policy.
- Staff will observe current Covid-19 health and safety measures for themselves and the children in their care.

### Walking

- In the interest of child protection and to comply with legislation child / staff ratios will always be adhered to.
- High visibility vests must be worn by the school age children and Authorised Staff Member(s).
- Appropriate clothing and footwear should always be worn. It is the parent's responsibility to ensure these are provided for their children.
- Our Insurance Company is informed of our method of conveying children to/from school.

### Emergency Procedures

Whilst independence is encouraged for each child, the safety and welfare of the school age children is paramount during arrival and/or collection times. Where possible we intend to always keep the children in our care safe from harm. However, should an incident occur we will:

- Firstly, reassure the injured child whilst making sure that the other children in our care are safe.
- Should the incident be minor then, with prior permission, we will administer basic first aid.
- Should the incident be more serious then we will call 999 and accompany the child to the hospital. Regardless of the severity of the injury, the child's parents will be notified immediately. If necessary, emergency backup cover will be contacted to cover the absent member of staff so that the uninjured children can be dropped off/collected.

#### **Other emergencies:**

- Should any other emergency occur, such as a child becoming ill on the way to school, we will contact the child's parents /guardians immediately and ask that they be collected.
- If there is an incident or a child falls after they have been dropped off at the school the procedures of the school will apply. We cannot collect children from school in such circumstances.
- We will record all details in our accident and incident book and make these available for parents to sign with a copy provided for them.

If the incident is significant we will inform Tusla in accordance with our Safeguarding Policy (if necessary) and our Insurance Company as soon as possible.

A risk assessment will be carried out following an incident/accident occurring.

#### **Collections from School**

- Parents/Guardians must clearly communicate collection needs with Askea Community Childcare Centre.
- The parent/guardian must provide the name of the Centre to the school and advise them that the SAC service will be collecting the child.
- A collection point is agreed between the school, child, parents and the service. Any changes to this must be agreed in advance.
- School Age children who are usually collected should not leave the school until the Authorised Person(s) arrives to collect them.
- If children are to be collected from school by someone other than the Service or if a child has not attended school due to an appointment, illness etc., Askea Community Childcare Centre must be informed no later than 1.30pm. This policy also applies to un-notified changes of collection times. Failure to do so can waste valuable time and causes undue concern for staff collecting the child from their school.
- Authorised staff who are collecting children from school only leave the service for collections at 1.40 pm and 2.40 pm when they have confirmed the names of all children to be collected on that day.
- The details of each collection are recorded. This includes the individual name of the child/children, number of children being collected, name of Authorised Staff Members, time returning and/or any incidents.
- It is at the discretion of the service to facilitate collections from out-of-school activities. These will be agreed with parents on a case-by-case basis bearing in mind the needs of all children attending the service, availability of personnel to facilitate collections etc.
- School Age Children must ensure that they have all their belongings with them upon collection. Where items are forgotten, it is at the discretion of the School Age Service whether they can return to the school or not to retrieve them.
- School Age children are expected to always follow the service's Managing Behaviour Policy.

- School Aged Children are supervised by the Authorised Staff Members from the time they are collected from the school.

### **Role of Authorised Staff Member(s)**

- The role of the Authorised Staff Member(s) must be clearly understood and respected by the School and Parent/guardian. The Authorised Staff Member(s) is the named person who undertakes drop off and collection for Askea Community Childcare Centre.
- The Authorised Staff Member(s) will clearly distinguishable by the School Age children at collection and/or drop off times. Children are aware of who the Authorised Staff Member(s) is.
- The Managing Behaviour Policy will always be adhered to by the Authorised Staff Member(s). No practices that are disrespectful, degrading, exploitive, intimidating, emotionally or physically harmful or neglectful are carried out in respect of a School aged-child whilst attending the service.
- The Authorised Staff Member(s) carries a charged and working mobile phone with network access, **parent and guardian contact details and emergency contact details** on each collection and drop off.
- The Service policies must be understood by the Authorised Staff Member(s).
- A risk assessment is carried by the Authorised Staff Member(s) for both dropping and collection of school age children on a regular basis.
- If there is an incident, it is recorded upon the arrival back to the service by the Authorised Staff Member(s). This will follow the service's Accident and Incident policy.

If parents have any issues or concerns regarding drop-off or collection procedures they are invited to speak to the Manager. Any complaints may be made in accordance with our Complaints Policy.

### **When parents/carers arrive late**

- Where a parent/guardian knows they will be late collecting their child after their agreed time, they are required to consult with the service to make alternative arrangements
- Ensure that the parents are aware of session ending times and ask them for their co-operation.
- A late fee is charged to parents/carers arriving late for children at a rate of € 1 per minute.
- Staff members who stay late are to document overtime for payment. The Child Care Act 1991 [Early Years Services] Regulations 2016 requires two members of staff (or a staff member and another adult) to always be present when children are on the premises.

### **Habitual lateness in arriving for a child/children**

Ensure that the child's parents/guardians are clear about session ending times and ask them for their co-operation.

If the problem continues:

1. Discuss with the parents/guardians whether they are experiencing particular difficulties in arriving on time.
2. Enforce the € 1 per minute fee to help cover cost of staff cover and to encourage parents/guardians to come for their children on time.

Consistent lateness of parents/guardians/carers may require care arrangements to be reviewed.

### **When the person who is to collect the child from the service does not arrive**

Parents/guardians are informed that if they are not able to collect their child as planned, they must inform the appropriate staff member. Parents are provided with our contact number to phone.

Parents/guardians are informed of our procedures so that, if they or their nominated carer are unavoidably delayed, they will be reassured that their child will be properly cared for.

Parents are also informed that in the event that they, or the person they have nominated do not arrive and we can no longer supervise the child on our premises, we will apply our Procedures as set out in our Child Safeguarding Statement and Policy.

Where we have not been contacted before the assigned time by a parent/guardian:

- A staff member will try to contact a parent/guardian as soon as possible.
- The Manager will be notified.
- Staff members will ensure that the child is cared for appropriately until the situation is resolved in order to avoid them becoming distressed.

In a situation where a parent/guardian or carer has not arrived for the child at close to normal collection time, or prior to 6 pm Monday to Thursday and 5 pm on Friday the following is the procedure:

1. Notify the Manager/Assistant Manager.
2. Two staff members will remain at service with the child/ren until the situation has been resolved.
3. A parent/guardian will be contacted via information on the Registration form to establish a time for them to get to the service.
4. After 30 minutes, staff members are to choose the best-suited option:
  - Remain at the Service – continuing to try to contact a parent/guardian or authorised emergency contact.
  - \*Ring and after consultation with them, arrange for the child/ren to become the responsibility of An Garda Síochána.
  - Do **not** allow the child to leave with any person not nominated by parent/guardian except An Garda Síochána

Under no circumstances are staff members to go to look for the parent/guardian or to take the child home with them.

### **A full written report of the incident will be recorded**

- A record of the incident is recorded in the Incident Report Book
- The service reserves the right to charge parents for the additional hours worked by staff

### **Parents/guardians/carers who arrive for children in an 'unfit state'**

It may happen that a person arrives for a child in an 'unfit state' due to illness, drugs or alcohol.

Where the condition is severe, it may be quite distressing for staff members who have concerns for the child's safety and/or wellbeing.

The [Children First Act 2015](#), Article 10 requires that a provider of a relevant service shall ensure, as far as practicable, that each child availing of the service from the provider is safe from harm while availing of that service. In this regard **we will always act in the child's best interests**. In the case of a nominated carer who is not a guardian, the parent/guardian will be contacted immediately.

Askea Community Childcare Centre will not release a child who is deemed to be at risk if a parent/guardian or authorised person arrives at the service and staff are concerned that they are in an unfit state due to drugs or alcohol.

In the case of a parent/guardian being in an unfit state, the following measures may be adopted where appropriate:

1. Attempt to get the parent/guardian to take some time before they leave with the child, for example invite them to sit down for a cup of tea/coffee and talk with a staff member.
2. Offer to contact the other parent/guardian a family member or friend, or the person(s) listed as the child's emergency contact person on their enrolment form.
3. Offer to call a taxi.

If the parent/guardian rejects the above suggestions and insists on taking the child, the service will follow their Child Safeguarding Statement and Policy by contacting an Garda Síochána where there is a perceived risk to the child for example through negligent driving or the person's inability to appropriately supervise the child on the way home.

#### **Procedure if an unauthorised or unknown person attempts to remove a child from the service**

- If an unauthorised or unknown person arrives to take a child from the service the Manager will contact the parent/guardian immediately and inform them of the situation. We will ask for the person's identification with a photograph.
- We will emphasise the rules and procedures we are obliged to follow whenever we allow a child to leave the service indicating that these rules apply to everyone, including grandparents, siblings, other relatives, neighbours and family friends.
- We will explain that, as we are legally bound to follow the instructions of the person with legal guardianship, we cannot allow the child to leave unless we have that person's personal or written authorisation.
- If a person (even a child's parent or parent's partner) is **not** a guardian and does **not** have legal custody and is **not otherwise authorised** by the person who has legal custody, a child will not be released to the unauthorised person.
- If we feel that the situation is getting out of control or if the person threatens staff or the children in their care in any way, we will to call An Garda Síochána.

#### **Attempted collection by a parent/guardian who has been denied access by a Court Order:**

- Where a Custody or Restraining Order exists, the parent/guardian must provide the Manager with a Solicitor's letter confirming the existence of the Order. This will be kept confidentially in a locked filing cabinet and be referred to only by the Manager in the case of a dispute. All information must be compliant with the requirements of GDPR.
- A parent/guardian who has been denied access to a child through a court order will not be permitted on to the premises of Askea Community Childcare Centre
- If the parent/guardian who has been denied access becomes threatening and insists on attempting to remove a child from the service, the Manager will call An Garda Síochána.

#### **Record keeping**

All records relating to arrangements for collecting children will be kept for two years following the date of the child leaving the service for good.

#### **Communication Plan For staff & families**

All parents/guardians are informed of the Policy on Managing Behaviour on enrolment. Staff members check with parents/guardians that they have read and understood the policy and provide any assistance needed.

A summary of this policy is included in the Parents'/Guardians Information Pack. This policy will also be reviewed with the staff team at induction and annual staff training.

A copy of all policies will be available during all hours of operation to all staff team members, parents and school-aged children in the Policy Folder located in Reception.

Parents and school -aged children may receive a copy of the policy at any time upon request.

Parents and all staff members will receive notification of any updates.

### **Related Policies, Procedures and Forms**

- Admissions Policy
- Partnership with Parents Policy
- Confidentiality Policy
- Record Keeping Policy
- Child Safeguarding Policy
- Key Worker Policy
- Transitions Policy
- Interactions Policy
- Communication Policy
- Enrolment Forms
- Accident Management Policy
- Infection Control Policy
- Incident Recording Forms

### **References/Supporting Documents/Related Legislation**

- Tusla Quality and Regulatory Framework
- Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016
- School Age Regulations 2018
- Guardianship of Infants Act 1964
- Children and Family Relationships Act 2015
- Return to Work Safely Protocol, Covid-19 Specific National Protocol for Employers and Workers (2020)
- Covid-19 Infection Prevention and Control guidance for settings providing childcare during the COVID-19 Pandemic (HPSC, 2020)
- First 5, Guidance for Reopening, Government of Ireland (2020)
- Guidance for Early Years Services managing COVID-19, (Tusla, 2020)
- Síolta: The National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education
- Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017
- The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

### **Who Must Observe This Policy**

- Management and Staff
- Parents/Guardians
- Authorized persons nominated by parents/guardians on enrolment forms

## Appendix 1

### GUARDIANSHIP<sup>1</sup>

Guardianship means the rights and responsibilities of parents in respect of the upbringing of their children. The rights and responsibilities encompassed by conferring guardianship on a person include the responsibility to:

- Make decisions on the child's place of residence
- Make decisions regarding the child's religious, spiritual, cultural and linguistic upbringing
- Decide with whom the child should live
- Consent to medical, dental and other health related treatment for the child, in respect of which the guardian's consent is required
- Consent to the issuing of a passport together with other further
- Place the child for adoption and consent to said adoption

The married mother and father of a child are the most common guardians. For the father to have automatic guardianship status, the parties must be married at the time of the birth of the child. Alternatively, there are a number of other situations where automatic guardianship can be granted. A father can acquire guardianship status if the parties marry after the birth of the child or if he has been cohabiting with the child's mother for no less than 12 consecutive months, which must include three consecutive months after the birth of the child or if he has obtained equivalent guardianship rights in another State he can have those rights and responsibilities recognised in this jurisdiction by way of guardianship.

A father who is not married to the mother of his child can also become a guardian either by agreement with the mother (in which case a statutory declaration must be completed) or by application to the court.

Under the [Children and Family Relationships Act 2015](#) persons may be deemed eligible by the court to become guardians if they are over the age of 18 and they are married to or in a civil partnership with or have cohabited with a parent of the child and have had shared parental responsibility for the child's day to day care for a period of 2 or more years.

A person who has provided for the child's day-to-day care for a continuous period of more than a year may apply for guardianship if the child has no parent or guardian who is willing or able to exercise the rights and responsibilities or guardianship.

The expansion of guardianship rights under the [Children and Family Relationships Act 2015](#) to step-parents and cohabitantes where they have been acting effectively in loco parentis for a period of two years will apply to a large variety of family structures.

#### **Custody**

Custody is the right of a parent to exercise physical care and control in respect of the upbringing of his or her child on a day-to-day basis. The married parents of a child are automatically joint guardians and custodians of their child.

#### **When married parents separate**

Where married parents have separated or divorced, they can decide between themselves on custody arrangements for their children. If they cannot agree, they may try to work out an arrangement through mediation but if that fails they must apply to the court for a final decision.

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<sup>1</sup> Information is from The Courts Service of Ireland [www.courts.ie](http://www.courts.ie)

## Appendix 2

### Persons Nominated by a Parent/Guardian to take Child from the Service in Exceptional Circumstances or Emergencies

In the interests of safety, children can only be taken from the service by a person authorised in writing by a parent or a guardian and for whom the service has seen photographic identification (such as Driver Licence or Passport). Please supply contact information for these persons when enrolling your child.

Please nominate two local people who can come for your child in an emergency if you are not able to come – they will need to be able reach us within one hour – and give their contact details below.

Please note: we will require photograph identification from each emergency contact person to ensure we are transferring care of your child into safe hands. Children will only be given into the care of a responsible adult over 18 years old who is authorised by the child’s parent/guardian.

*Please also specify a password for each of your authorised emergency contacts:*

1 <sup>st</sup> emergency contact	Name and address:	Relationship to child:
	Mobile Number:	
	Home Number:	
2 <sup>nd</sup> emergency contact	Name and address:	Relationship to child:
	Mobile Number:	
	Home Number:	

Please inform us of any court order which disallows any person to have contact with your child as the service does not have the right to refuse access to a child by a parent who is a legal guardian or any other person who is a legal guardian, without evidence of such an order.

If there is such an order please give us the name of the person who is currently disallowed by a court to have contact with your child:

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It is essential to also enclose a signed, headed letter from your solicitor confirming the existence of the court order.