Collection, Late Collection & Uncollected Child Policy

Applies to all families and employers within Dots and Tots Day Nursery

Policy Statement

At Dots & Tots Day Nursery, children's safety and safeguarding remain our highest priority throughout the day, including at arrival and collection.

Children will only be released to a parent/carer or another person who has been properly authorised to collect them. Staff will never release a child where they are uncertain about the identity, authority, age or suitability of the person collecting.

We recognise that family arrangements can occasionally change and unforeseen circumstances can cause delays. We will work respectfully with families while ensuring that safeguarding procedures are consistently followed.

Authorised Collectors

Parents/carers must provide the nursery with details of the people authorised to collect their child. Collection information will be recorded within the nursery management system and kept up to date. Prior to starting and during the registration process a picture of each emergency contact will need to be provided to ensure relevant details are held before the time of emergency.

Children will not be released to somebody simply because they state that they know the child or family, or because they have previously collected another child from the nursery.

Parents/carers are responsible for informing Dots & Tots promptly of any changes to authorised collectors or collection arrangements.

Authorising a New Collector

Where a person has not previously collected the child from Dots & Tots, specific authorisation must be provided by one of the child's main parents/carers.

Authorisation for a new collector cannot be given by another nominated or authorised collector.

Before collection, the main parent/carer must provide:

- The collector's full name.
- A clear photograph of the person who will be collecting.
- Confirmation that the parent/carer has authorised that person to collect the child.
- A collection password, which the collector must provide to staff on arrival.

Staff will compare the person arriving with the photograph and information supplied and ask for the agreed password.

Where staff remain uncertain about the person's identity, they may request photographic identification and/or contact the child's main parent/carer using contact details already held by the nursery.

The child will not leave Dots & Tots until staff are satisfied that all required collection checks have been successfully completed.

A password, photograph or identification check individually does not automatically authorise collection. Staff must be satisfied that the overall collection arrangement has been properly authorised and that it is safe to release the child.

Collection Passwords

Collection passwords form one part of the nursery's identity and authorisation checks. Parents/carers should ensure that passwords are shared only with people they have authorised to collect.

Where there is any uncertainty, concern or inconsistency, staff will pause the collection and verify the arrangement directly with a main parent/carer before releasing the child.

Minimum Age for Collection

Dots & Tots will not release a child to anyone under the age of 18, including siblings, relatives or other nominated people.

Where staff are unsure whether an authorised collector is aged 18 or over, photographic identification will be requested to verify their age before the child is released.

Emergency Contacts

Parents/carers must provide at least two emergency contacts. These are in addition to ensuring that the nursery holds appropriate primary parent/carer contact information.

Emergency contacts must also be authorised to collect the child if required.

Parents/carers are responsible for ensuring that emergency-contact details remain accurate and for informing Dots & Tots promptly of any changes.

Changes to Collection Arrangements

Parents/carers should inform Dots & Tots as soon as possible where collection arrangements change. Where the proposed collector has not previously collected the child, the new collector procedure within this policy must be followed.

Where a request is unusual or staff have concerns, the nursery will contact a main parent/carer using contact details already held on the nursery system rather than relying solely on information supplied by the person presenting for collection.

Identity Checks

Where staff do not recognise a collector, or where there is any uncertainty, photographic identification may be requested.

The nursery will not release a child until staff are satisfied that the collection has been properly authorised. Staff should never feel pressured into releasing a child because a person becomes impatient, angry or states that the family has given permission.

If there is doubt, the child will remain safely in the care of Dots & Tots until the required checks have been completed.

Parental Responsibility, Court Orders & Family Disputes

Staff will be made aware, where relevant, of people who have parental responsibility for a child and any lawful restrictions affecting collection or contact.

Where there is a court order, prohibited steps order or other legal restrictions affecting collection or contact, parents/carers should provide the nursery with appropriate documentation. Relevant information will be stored securely and shared only with staff who need to know.

Where a collection dispute occurs, staff will prioritise the child's safety, avoid involving the child in adult disagreement and contact the Nursery Manager or Acting Manager immediately. Police or Children's Social Care advice will be sought where necessary.

Collector Appearing Under the Influence or Otherwise Unsafe

If a person collecting a child appears to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs or otherwise appears unable to safely care for the child, staff will immediately inform the Nursery Manager or Acting Manager.

Staff will attempt to discuss the concern calmly and, wherever possible, arrange for another authorised and suitable adult to collect the child.

Where the adult intends to drive, staff will consider the immediate danger to the child and others. If staff believe a child is at immediate risk of significant harm, police will be contacted.

Any safeguarding concern arising from the incident will be recorded and managed through the nursery's safeguarding procedures.

Aggressive or Threatening Behaviour at Collection

Abusive, threatening, intimidating or violent behaviour towards staff, children or other families will not be accepted.

- Children will be moved away from the situation wherever possible.
- The Nursery Manager or Acting Manager will be called.
- Staff will avoid escalating confrontation.
- Police will be contacted where there is an immediate threat or risk.
- The incident will be recorded and any safeguarding implications for the child considered.

Future collection arrangements may be reviewed following a serious incident.

Refusing to Release a Child

There may be circumstances where staff determine that releasing a child would create an immediate safeguarding risk. This may include:

- The person is not authorised to collect.
- Their identity or age cannot be satisfactorily established.
- The nursery cannot verify a change in collection arrangements.
- The collector appears significantly intoxicated or otherwise incapable of safely caring for the child.
- Staff believe the child would be placed at immediate risk of harm.
- A relevant legal restriction prevents collection.

The Nursery Manager or Acting Manager should be involved wherever possible. The decision and reasons for refusing collection will be recorded and safeguarding procedures followed as appropriate.

Handover

Collection provides an opportunity for appropriate communication between nursery and home. Staff may share relevant information about the child's day, including wellbeing, food, sleep, toileting, accidents, incidents or other significant information.

Confidential or sensitive discussions will not take place where they can be overheard by other families or children. A private conversation or follow-up communication will be arranged where appropriate.

Children remain the responsibility of Dots & Tots until they have been formally handed over to an authorised collector. Once the handover has taken place, responsibility transfers to the parent/carer or authorised collector.

Secure Collection & Airlock Entrance

Parents/carers are expected to collect children by the end of their booked session and before the nursery closes. We recognise that genuine delays occasionally occur and parents/carers should contact the nursery as soon as they know they are going to be late.

Children will never be left alone because a parent/carer is late. Appropriate staffing will remain with the child until safe collection has taken place.

Staff will reassure the child and avoid making them feel that they have done anything wrong.

When a Parent/Carer Is Late

Staff will initially attempt to contact the child's parent/carer. If they cannot be reached, staff will attempt to contact the authorised emergency contacts held for the child.

Attempts to make contact will be recorded where the delay becomes significant. The Nursery Manager or Acting Manager will be informed.

Uncollected Child

Where a child remains uncollected and the nursery cannot establish contact with parents/carers or authorised emergency contacts, staff will continue to provide safe and appropriate care.

The child will not:

- Be taken home by a member of staff.
- Be taken to a staff member's home.
- Be left with an unauthorised person.
- Be left alone.
- Be transported in a staff member's personal vehicle simply to resolve the situation.

If the child remains uncollected and appropriate adults cannot be contacted, management will seek advice from Children's Social Care and/or police as appropriate and follow the advice provided.

Repeated Late Collection

Occasional genuine delays will be treated sensitively. However, repeated late collection can affect children's wellbeing and nursery staffing arrangements and may indicate a wider family support or safeguarding issue.

Management will discuss repeated lateness with the parent/carer and keep an appropriate record. Where persistent lateness creates concerns regarding the child's welfare, safeguarding procedures will be followed.

Any applicable late collection charges will be managed in accordance with the nursery's Fees & Funding Policy rather than within this safeguarding procedure.

Failed Collection Following Emergency or Early Closure

Where the nursery has announced an emergency or early closure, parents/carers are expected to make reasonable arrangements for their child to be collected. If they cannot personally collect, an authorised alternative collector should be arranged.

Children will remain supervised until safely collected and the Uncollected Child procedure will apply where nobody can be contacted.

Recording Collection Concerns

Significant collection concerns will be recorded. This may include unauthorised collection attempts, significant or repeated lateness, intoxication concerns, aggressive or threatening behaviour, collection disputes, police or Children's Social Care involvement, refusal to release a child and safeguarding concerns arising during handover.

Records will be factual, proportionate and stored securely.

Confidentiality

Collection information, court orders, family circumstances and safeguarding information will only be shared with staff who need the information to protect the child. Staff must not discuss family disputes or collection restrictions with other parents or unauthorised people.

Related Dots & Tots Policies & Procedures

- Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy.
- Admissions Policy.
- Fees & Funding Policy.
- Low Level Concerns Policy.
- Critical Incident, Emergency & Business Continuity Policy.
- Health & Safety Policy.
- Risk Assessment Policy.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner following a significant collection or safeguarding incident, changes to nursery procedures, changes in legislation or statutory guidance, or advice from Ofsted, safeguarding partners or West Northamptonshire Council.

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Signed

Christie Patton

Company Owner