



09 Early years practice procedures

09.06 Prime Times – Arrivals and Departures (Team Approach)

Prime times of the day—arrivals and departures—are essential opportunities for emotionally ‘tuning-in’ to each child and supporting smooth, secure transitions. They also present increased safeguarding risks due to the movement of parents and carers. At Stepping Stones Preschool, a shared team approach ensures that every child is welcomed and handed over safely, consistently, and with emotional attunement at the centre of practice.

Arrivals – A Shared Team Responsibility

- The key person or back-up key person aims to greet each child. When this is not possible, any team member steps in to ensure the child is welcomed by a familiar, trusted adult.
- The receiving staff member records the child’s arrival time in the register.
- If an expected child does not arrive, the absence is recorded and the manager is informed immediately so they can follow procedure 09.2 Absence.
- Staff ensure that parents/carers have signed the child in and clearly indicated who will collect them and at what time.
- Staff greet parents/carers warmly, listen to any information shared, and communicate relevant updates such as agency staff, flexible workers, planned outings, or special events. Any required consent forms are completed.
- The receiving staff member tunes in to the child’s emotional state and prepares to meet their needs.
- Parents/carers are encouraged to spend a few minutes settling their child with a familiar adult. The team supports this calmly and sensitively.
- Parents/carers are encouraged to say goodbye clearly and explain when they will return using predictable language such as “after tea”.
- If the receiving adult is not the key person, they pass on all information to the key person as soon as possible.

Injuries Noted on Arrival

- If a child arrives with visible injuries, staff follow procedure 6.1 without delay.

Team Handovers and Shift Changes

- When the key person leaves or takes a break, they hand over the child’s care to the back-up key person.
- If another team member has received the child, they share any information from the parent/carer and record key details for the key person. Confidential information is passed directly to the manager.

- The team works collaboratively to ensure that all information is passed on accurately so that parents/carers receive consistent updates at collection time.

Departures – A Shared, Safe and Consistent Approach

- Children are prepared for home with clean faces, hands and clothes where needed.
- The key person aims to greet parents/carers at collection. If they are unavailable, another team member steps in to ensure a warm, informed handover.
- Staff check that the person collecting the child is authorised on the signing-in/out form and record the time of departure.
- Only persons aged 16 or over should normally collect children.
 - If a parent has no alternative, the manager completes a risk assessment with the parent/carer.
 - No child will be released to anyone under 14 years of age.
 - Risk assessments consider the child's age/vulnerability, the journey home, and supervision arrangements.
- Staff share verbal updates with parents/carers at collection.
- If the key person is not present, they ensure that general information is passed to the team or written for parents/carers. Confidential information is shared with the manager.

Password System for Unknown Collectors

If a person arrives to collect a child and they are not known to staff, the following team-wide safeguarding procedure is followed:

- Staff remain calm, polite and professional, and ask for the agreed family password.
- The adult must provide the correct password before the child is released.
- If the adult does not know the password, staff immediately contact the child's parent/carer using the number held on file to confirm whether the collection is authorised.
- No child is released until authorisation is confirmed.
- If staff cannot reach the parent/carer, the child remains in the care of the team until contact is made.
- All staff are responsible for ensuring the password system is used consistently and that any concerns are reported to the manager without delay.
- Parents/carers are reminded to update the password if circumstances change or if they believe it may have been shared inappropriately.

Maintaining Safety and Security – A Whole-Team Safeguarding Duty

Arrivals and departures carry increased safeguarding risks, especially during busy periods or when working in shared premises. To minimise the risk of a child leaving the building unnoticed:

- The manager completes a risk assessment identifying potential hazards such as busy doorways, staff engaged in conversations, or doors left ajar.
- Control measures are implemented and reviewed regularly.
- The risk assessment is shared with the line manager and updated as needed.
- All staff remain vigilant, monitor external doors, and work together to maintain a safe environment during transition times.