

Drop Off and/or Collection including by Older Siblings

It is the parent/carer's responsibility to ensure that their child/ren are dropped off and collected by a responsible person if it is not safe or appropriate for the child/ren to walk home unsupervised. Although there is no minimum age set in law when a young person is allowed to remain in charge of another child, it is an offence to leave a child alone if it places them at risk.

Many schools allow siblings over the age of 14 to drop off or collect a child from school, however, The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents and the NSPCC recommend that no one under the age of 16 should be left to care for a younger child.

Parents/carers must understand and be prepared to take responsibility for anything that should go wrong in their absence. They are also responsible for the care and safety of their eldest child, even while that child is acting in a caring role for younger siblings.

As a school we recognise and sympathise with the often complex pressures faced by our families in balancing work and childcare and therefore politely request that siblings collecting younger family members are 16 years of age or older and that parents complete a permission slip (available from the school office) which states they give their permission having considered the potential risks of this arrangement, including the maturity of the child collecting/being collected; the length and nature of the journey home, the behaviour and relationship of the children collecting/being collected.

Please use the attached 'Checklist for supervision of children before/after school' from the 'Safeguarding Practice Guidance: Drop Off and Collection of Children' in making an informed decision.

Checklist for supervision of children before/after school

The following factors should be considered when children are left unsupervised at home; walking to/from school or in the care of a sibling:

- Has the parent/carer considered the risk/s posed by leaving their child alone? Walking to/from school or in the care of a sibling?
- How old is/are the child/ren?
- How mature is/are the child/ren? What is their level of understanding/awareness about being unsupervised/walking to or from school?

- How comfortable is/are the child/ren with the arrangements (this includes the younger child and the older child who is acting as 'carer')?
- Where will the children be left? Is this a safe place?
- How long, and how often, will the child/ren be left?
- Is the home environment safe and secure? Has the parent/carer assessed the home environment/journey to or from school for risks? Has the older child or 'carer' been involved in this risk assessment?
- How far will the child/ren have to walk (if appropriate)?
- How far away will the parent/carer be? Will they be easily contactable?
- Do any of the children (this also includes the older sibling or 'carer') have additional needs – medical, emotional, behavioural, learning difficulties/disabilities? How will these needs be met in the parent/carer's absence?
- Does the child or sibling caring for another child know what to do in an emergency? Does the child know who they can contact in case of an emergency? Have instructions been left e.g. in case of a fire?
- What are the expectations of the child/ren during this time? I.e. are they expected to cook for themselves etc.?
- Does the child have knowledge about how to keep themselves and younger siblings safe e.g. road safety, not answering the door to strangers, cooking etc.?
- What is the level of knowledge when it comes to first aid?
- How well do the siblings get on? How will tension be managed in the absence of the parent/carer?
- Are the children clear about rules and boundaries of what they can and can't do while parents/carers are out? If they are looking after a younger sibling, do they have the confidence and authority to implement these rules consistently? What will they do if the younger children misbehave?
- Is the home environment safe and secure? Has the parent/carer assessed the home environment/journey to or from school for risks? Has the older child or 'carer' been involved in this risk assessment?

(Taken from School Safeguarding Practice Guidance CSO269 2012)