DROP-OFF AND COLLECTION OF SCHOOL AGED CHILDREN POLICY

Williamstown N. S. Afterschool 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.

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 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:

Legal Guardian in Ireland	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.
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.

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

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.

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 latter from a Solicitor confirming the existence of a certified copy of the relevant separation or divorce.

Authorised persons to collect a child:
Parents must provide information regarding the child's legal guardians and provide their

contact details on enrolment.

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 Managers 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.

Williamstown N.S. Afterschool will not release a child to anyone who is not authorised without prior consent from parent/guardian.

SCHOOL COLLECTIONS- SCHOOL AGED CHILDREN

At Williamstown N.S. Afterschool we have established procedures for the collection of children from their classrooms 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.

Access to the Afterschool

The Afterschool setting is located in the same building as Williamstown National School. Children availing of the service will be collected from their classrooms by Authorised Staff Members and walked along the corridor to the Afterschool rooms.

All children are supervised and fully insured during this transition.

Collections from the Afterschool

All Parents/Guardians/Authorised persons must enter through the assigned and clearly marked Afterschool entrance to collect their child/children from the Afterschool.

Parents will be facilitated to wait in the corridor adjacent to the main Afterschool room.

Children will then be released into the care and supervision of the Parent/Guardian/Authorised Person.

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.

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 collection for Williamstown N.S. Afterschool.

- The Authorised Staff Member(s) will be 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 Service policies must be understood by the Authorised Staff Member(s).
- A risk assessment is carried by the Authorised Staff Member(s) for the 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.

- Discuss with the parents/guardians whether they are experiencing particular difficulties in arriving on time.
- 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 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, Article10 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.

Williamstown N.S. Afterschool 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.

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.

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 Williamstown N.S. Afterschool.
- 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 the dropping off and collection of school aged children. 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 Manager's Office.

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.

A copy of this policy is also available on www.williamstownns.ie via the Afterschool Link.

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

Policy applicable to:

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

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
- Communications Policy
- Enrolment Forms
- Accident Management Policy
- Infection Control Policy
- Incident Recording Forms

Who Must Observe This Policy

This policy must be observed by The Manager and all Staff Members.

Appendix 1

GUARDIANSHIP[1]

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 cohabitees 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.

Information is from the Courts Service of Ireland 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 to reach us within one hour. Please give their contact details below.

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.

First emergency contact	**Name and address:**	**Relationship to child:**
	Mobile Number:	
	Home Number:	
Second 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:

……...

It is essential to also enclose a signed, headed letter from your solicitor confirming the

existence of the court order.