Child Collection Policy 2027

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Policy Responsibility: **Sam Gibbs (Principal)**
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Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL): ***Sam Gibbs***
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL): ***Jess Eaton***
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PERFORMERS THEATRE COMPANY

INTRODUCTION AND COMMITMENT TO SAFE COLLECTION

Performers Theatre Company is committed to ensuring that all children and young people attending its activities arrive, participate and leave in a safe, secure and appropriately supervised manner.

The safe collection and dismissal of students is an essential part of our safeguarding responsibilities.

We recognise that students attending Performers vary considerably in age, maturity, independence and individual needs. Our activities also take place across different venues, including weekly classes, rehearsals, productions, performances, workshops and holiday programmes.

For this reason, collection arrangements may differ depending on the nature of the activity, the age and needs of the students, the venue and the arrangements agreed with parents or carers.

However, our fundamental commitment remains consistent:
No child should be released from our care without appropriate arrangements for their safe departure.

Performers Theatre Company will:
- Maintain clear and appropriate collection procedures.
- Ensure that children are supervised until they are safely dismissed.
- Respect agreed parental collection arrangements.
- Take reasonable steps to verify the identity and authority of individuals collecting children.
- Support age-appropriate independence where parental authorisation has been provided.
- Respond promptly to late collection and unexpected changes.
- Take appropriate action where safeguarding concerns arise.
- Maintain accurate records of significant collection incidents.
- Communicate expectations clearly to parents, carers, students and staff.

Our approach reflects our organisational commitment to maintaining strong relationships alongside clear, consistent expectations.

We are kind, but we are not negotiable when it comes to safety.

This policy must be read alongside the Performers Theatre Company Safeguarding Policy.

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to establish the arrangements for the safe collection, dismissal and departure of children and young people attending Performers Theatre Company.

It aims to:
- Clarify the responsibilities of staff, students and parents/carers.
- Establish appropriate procedures for standard collection.
- Support safe arrangements for independent travel.
- Provide guidance for collection by alternative adults and taxis.
- Explain procedures for early departure and illness.
- Establish arrangements for late collection and uncollected children.
- Address collection disputes and safeguarding concerns.
- Ensure consistent arrangements across different venues and activities.

This policy applies to all children and young people under the age of 18 participating in Performers activities.

It also applies to:
- The Principal and Leadership Team.
- Teaching staff and assistants.
- Volunteers and chaperones.
- Visiting practitioners and production personnel where they have responsibility for supervising children.
- Parents, carers and authorised collectors.

Adult participants aged 18 and over are ordinarily responsible for their own departure arrangements, subject to any relevant individual support or safeguarding considerations.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Principal
Sam Gibbs, as Principal, has overall operational responsibility for implementing this policy.

Responsibilities include:
- Establishing appropriate collection arrangements.
- Ensuring staff understand dismissal procedures.
- Overseeing significant collection concerns.
- Supporting communication with parents and carers.
- Ensuring safeguarding matters are escalated appropriately.
- Reviewing incidents and identifying improvements.
- Ensuring appropriate records are maintained.

Vice-Principal
Alex Fentiman supports the Principal in overseeing safe collection arrangements.

The Vice-Principal may coordinate collection procedures, respond to concerns and make operational decisions where authorised.

Where the Principal is unavailable or has a conflict of interest, the Vice-Principal may act within their delegated responsibilities.

Designated Safeguarding Lead and Deputy
The DSL and DDSL are responsible for coordinating safeguarding responses where collection arrangements raise concerns about a child's safety or welfare.

They will consider whether:
- Immediate protective action is required.
- Further information should be obtained.
- Parents or carers should be contacted.
- Children's social care or police advice is necessary.
- A safeguarding record or referral is required.

Staff, Volunteers and Chaperones
All individuals responsible for supervising children must:
- Understand the collection arrangements for their activity.
- Maintain appropriate supervision.
- Follow agreed dismissal procedures.
- Take reasonable steps to verify collection arrangements.
- Avoid releasing children to unauthorised individuals.
- Report concerns promptly.
- Follow safeguarding and missing child procedures where necessary.
- Record significant incidents accurately.

Staff must not make assumptions about collection arrangements based solely on a child's age, confidence or previous behaviour.

Parents and Carers
Parents and carers are responsible for:
- Providing accurate contact information.
- Informing Performers of relevant collection arrangements.
- Ensuring children are collected promptly where collection is required.
- Notifying staff of changes to authorised collectors.
- Providing appropriate consent for independent travel.
- Informing Performers of relevant court orders or safeguarding restrictions.

- Ensuring suitable arrangements for travel after a child has been properly released from Performers' supervision.

Parents and carers must ensure that emergency contact details held within ClassManager remain accurate and up to date.

COLLECTION ARRANGEMENTS AND PARENTAL AUTHORISATION

Performers Theatre Company recognises that different collection arrangements may be appropriate for different students and activities.

These may include:
- Direct handover to a parent or carer.
- Collection from a supervised reception or designated waiting area.
- Collection by another authorised adult.
- Independent departure with parental permission.
- Taxi or private hire collection under agreed arrangements.

Collection arrangements should be communicated to staff responsible for supervising the relevant activity. Where possible, parents and carers should provide collection information through ClassManager or another approved communication method.

Independent Travel Authorisation
Performers recognises that independent travel arrangements have previously been managed informally. To strengthen safeguarding and consistency, the organisation will progressively establish a clearer record of parental authorisation for students who travel home independently.

Parents or carers should confirm whether their child is permitted to leave independently and whether any conditions apply.

This may be recorded through ClassManager, written communication or another approved method.

Until an arrangement has been confirmed, staff should not assume that a child is authorised to leave independently.

Where there is uncertainty, staff must seek clarification before allowing the child to depart.

Changes to Collection Arrangements
Parents and carers should notify Performers as soon as possible of any change to normal collection arrangements.

Where a change is communicated at short notice, staff must take reasonable steps to verify the instruction before releasing the child.

A child's statement that someone else is collecting them will not, by itself, be sufficient authorisation where verification is required.

STANDARD COLLECTION PROCEDURES

Collection arrangements will be adapted to the activity, venue, age group and individual needs of students.

Younger Students
Younger students will ordinarily be handed directly to a parent, carer or authorised collector.

Staff must ensure that the child is released to an appropriate individual and must not assume that an unfamiliar adult is authorised to collect them.

Older Students
Older students may be permitted to leave independently where appropriate parental authorisation has been provided.

Staff must be aware of any conditions or restrictions affecting the student's departure.

Supervised Collection Areas
Where a reception, waiting area or designated collection point is used:
- Students must remain within the agreed supervised area until dismissed.
- Staff must maintain appropriate oversight.
- Collection arrangements must be checked where necessary.
- Students must not be sent outside to locate an unknown collector.
- Any concerns must be referred to the responsible member of staff.

Staff Handover
Where responsibility for supervising students transfers between staff members, relevant collection information must be communicated clearly.

Staff must not leave a child without appropriate supervision because a session has ended.

STUDENTS TRAVELLING HOME INDEPENDENTLY

Performers Theatre Company recognises that independent travel can be appropriate for some older students.

Such arrangements must take account of:
- The child's age and maturity.
- Their understanding of the journey.
- The time of day.
- The location and surrounding environment.
- The nature of the journey.
- Relevant additional needs or vulnerabilities.
- Any known safeguarding concerns.
- Parental or carer authorisation.

There is no automatic entitlement to independent departure based solely on reaching a particular age.

Parents and carers should provide clear permission for independent travel.

Where staff have reasonable concerns about a student's immediate safety, they must seek clarification or safeguarding advice before allowing departure, even where general permission has previously been given.

Students travelling independently are encouraged to:
- Travel directly to their intended destination.
- Use safe and familiar routes.
- Inform parents or carers of significant changes to travel arrangements.
- Avoid engaging with unfamiliar individuals.
- Follow reasonable personal safety advice.

Mobile Phones
Performers operates a mobile phone-free environment during student sessions.

Where phones have been handed in, they will ordinarily be returned at the end of the session before authorised independent departure.

Students must be able to access appropriate communication arrangements where a collection or travel concern arises.

COLLECTION BY ALTERNATIVE ADULTS

Parents and carers may arrange for another responsible adult to collect their child.

Where the collector is not already known to Performers, advance notification should be provided wherever possible.

This should include:

- The child's name.
- The name of the individual collecting them.
- Their relationship to the child, where relevant.
- Any necessary identifying information.
- The date or period for which the arrangement applies.

Staff may request photographic identification where the collector is unfamiliar or where verification is necessary.

If the identity or authority of the collector cannot be established, the child must remain supervised while staff seek clarification.

Staff must not release a child solely because an adult claims to have parental permission.

Where there is a dispute or safeguarding concern, the matter must be referred to the Principal, DSL, DDSL or another authorised senior member of staff.

TAXI AND PRIVATE HIRE COLLECTION

Where a child is to be collected by taxi or private hire vehicle, parents or carers must notify Performers in advance wherever reasonably practicable.

The arrangement should identify:

- The child concerned.
- The expected collection time.
- The taxi or private hire provider, where known.
- Relevant booking or vehicle information.
- Whether the child is authorised to travel without an accompanying adult.

Staff must take reasonable steps to confirm that the arriving vehicle is consistent with the agreed arrangement.

Where appropriate, students should wait in a supervised collection area.

Staff should not direct a child into an unidentified vehicle or permit departure where there are unresolved concerns about the collection arrangement.

Where a staff escort to the vehicle is required, the staff member must follow the organisation's supervision and professional boundaries arrangements.

Parents and carers remain responsible for arranging an appropriate and lawful transport service.

Where the child requires an accompanying adult or additional support, this must be agreed in advance.

EARLY DEPARTURE AND ILLNESS

Students may occasionally need to leave a session early due to illness, appointments, family circumstances or other reasons.

Parents and carers should notify Performers in advance wherever possible.

Planned Early Departure

Where a child is expected to leave early, staff should confirm:

- The intended departure time.
- Whether the child will be collected or travel independently.
- The identity of any collector.
- Any relevant parental authorisation.

The child's departure should be recorded where necessary.

Illness or Injury

Where a child becomes unwell or is injured during an activity, staff must assess the immediate situation and take appropriate action.

This may include:

- Providing appropriate first aid.
- Contacting parents or carers.
- Arranging collection.
- Seeking medical assistance.
- Following safeguarding procedures where necessary.

Children who are significantly unwell, injured, distressed or otherwise unable to travel safely should not ordinarily be permitted to leave independently.

Parental permission alone does not remove the organisation's responsibility to consider immediate safety. Where independent departure is considered appropriate, the decision must take account of the child's condition, maturity, journey and any relevant risks.

The decision and parental authorisation should be recorded where appropriate.

Where emergency medical attention is required, staff must contact emergency services without delay.

LATE COLLECTION AND UNCOLLECTED CHILDREN

Performers Theatre Company recognises that delays may occasionally occur because of traffic, transport disruption, emergencies or other unforeseen circumstances.

The organisation will respond calmly, proportionately and with the child's welfare as its primary consideration.

Initial Response

Where a child has not been collected as expected:

1. The child must remain appropriately supervised.
2. Staff should check the agreed collection arrangements.
3. Reasonable attempts should be made to contact the parent or carer.
4. Alternative authorised emergency contacts should be contacted where appropriate.
5. The Principal or responsible senior member of staff should be informed where the delay becomes concerning.

Risk-Based Escalation

Performers does not operate an automatic fixed-time threshold for escalating late collection concerns. Instead, staff will consider:

- The child's age and individual needs.
- The length of the delay.
- The time of day.
- Whether parents or carers can be contacted.
- Whether a credible collection arrangement has been confirmed.
- The child's emotional wellbeing.
- The availability of appropriate staff supervision.
- The safety and security of the venue.
- Any previous collection concerns.
- Any indication of neglect or another safeguarding risk.

Where a parent or authorised collector is contactable and a safe arrangement has been confirmed, continued supervision may be appropriate.

Where no suitable adult can be contacted, the delay is prolonged or circumstances raise concerns about the child's welfare, staff must seek safeguarding advice promptly.

There must be no unnecessary delay in contacting children's social care or police where the circumstances indicate that intervention may be required.

Supervision

A child awaiting collection must not be left alone or sent home independently without appropriate authorisation and consideration of safety.

Staff should maintain appropriate professional boundaries and, wherever practicable, avoid isolated one-to-one situations.

Where the venue is closing, staff must arrange a safe and appropriate continuation of supervision and seek advice where necessary.

A child must not be taken to a staff member's home or transported in a private vehicle simply to resolve a collection delay.

Any exceptional transport arrangement must comply with the Safeguarding Policy and be appropriately authorised and risk assessed.

Repeated Late Collection

Repeated late collection will be discussed with parents or carers.

Where appropriate, Performers may:

- Clarify collection expectations.
- Agree an improvement plan.
- Review the child's participation arrangements.
- Apply relevant contractual charges where expressly provided for in the Terms and Conditions.
- Consider whether repeated incidents raise safeguarding concerns.

Financial charges must never delay or prevent action necessary to protect a child.

COLLECTION DISPUTES AND SAFEGUARDING CONCERNS

Performers Theatre Company recognises that some families may have complex parental responsibility, custody or collection arrangements.

Parents and carers are responsible for informing the organisation of relevant arrangements and providing appropriate documentation where necessary.

Parental Responsibility

The existence of parental responsibility does not automatically resolve every question concerning a child's safe release.

Staff must consider:

- Any relevant court orders.
- Verified collection arrangements.
- The child's immediate safety.
- Any known safeguarding restrictions.
- Advice from relevant statutory agencies where necessary.

Staff must not attempt to interpret complex legal disputes independently.

Where a dispute arises, the child should remain appropriately supervised while advice or clarification is obtained, provided it is safe and lawful to do so.

Unsafe or Concerning Collection

Staff must raise concerns where an individual collecting a child appears unable to provide safe care or transport.

Examples may include:

- Apparent intoxication or significant impairment.
- Threatening, aggressive or abusive behaviour.
- An unresolved identity or authorisation concern.
- A known safeguarding restriction.
- A serious dispute concerning collection.
- Circumstances suggesting immediate risk to the child.

Staff must not physically confront or restrain an adult except where lawful and necessary to prevent immediate harm.

Where immediate danger exists, police must be contacted on 999.

Where there are safeguarding concerns, the DSL or DDSL must be informed promptly and appropriate statutory advice sought.

Any significant incident must be documented.

MISSING CHILDREN AND UNAUTHORISED DEPARTURE

Where a child is missing, cannot be accounted for or leaves without appropriate authorisation, staff must follow the Missing Child Procedure.

Immediate action should include:

1. Informing the responsible senior member of staff.
2. Establishing when and where the child was last seen.
3. Checking relevant attendance and dismissal information.
4. Conducting an appropriate search without leaving other children unsupervised.
5. Contacting parents or carers where appropriate.
6. Contacting police promptly where the circumstances indicate that the child may be at risk.
7. Recording the incident and subsequent actions.

Staff must not wait for a fixed period before contacting emergency services where there is an immediate risk.

The Principal or DSL must ensure that appropriate follow-up action is taken.

PRODUCTIONS, PERFORMANCES AND OFF-SITE ACTIVITIES

Performers Theatre Company recognises that productions and off-site activities may involve different collection arrangements from weekly classes.

These may include:

- Theatres and backstage areas.
- Extended rehearsals.
- Evening performances.
- Holiday programmes.
- Workshops and masterclasses.
- External venues and trips.

For each activity, the responsible organiser must establish appropriate arrangements for:

- Arrival and registration.
- Supervision.
- Designated collection points.
- Authorised collectors.
- Independent departure where permitted.
- Late collection.
- Emergency communication.
- Handover between staff or chaperones.

Where licensed child performances are involved, collection arrangements must be consistent with applicable licensing conditions, chaperone responsibilities and safeguarding requirements.

Children must not be released from backstage or other supervised areas without appropriate authorisation.

Parents and carers must be informed of any collection arrangements that differ from normal weekly classes.

COMMUNICATION, RECORDING AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Parents and carers must be informed of relevant collection expectations and procedures.

Collection arrangements may be communicated through:
- ClassManager.
- Email.
- Parent information documents.
- Production and rehearsal information.
- Direct communication with authorised staff.

Parents and carers are expected to keep emergency contact information accurate and up to date.

Recording Incidents

Significant collection incidents must be recorded within Performers Theatre Company's central Incident Log, maintained securely on Google Drive with access restricted to authorised staff.

Records should include:
- The date, time and location.
- The child concerned.
- The nature of the incident.
- Individuals contacted.
- Relevant times and actions.
- Decisions made and reasons.
- Any safeguarding advice or referral.
- The outcome.
- Follow-up actions where required.

Where an incident raises safeguarding concerns, the Safeguarding Policy and associated safeguarding recording arrangements must also be followed.

Sensitive safeguarding information must be maintained within appropriately restricted records.

Information must be handled in accordance with the GDPR Policy and relevant retention and disposal arrangements.

EQUALITY, INCLUSION AND ADDITIONAL NEEDS

Performers Theatre Company recognises that collection arrangements may need to be adapted for children with disabilities, special educational needs, medical conditions, communication differences or other individual circumstances.

Staff must consider:
- Individual communication needs.
- Mobility and accessibility requirements.
- Appropriate supervision.
- Medical or personal care considerations.
- The child's level of independence.
- Relevant parental guidance.
- Reasonable adjustments.
- Any specific safeguarding risks.

Individual arrangements should be agreed with parents or carers where appropriate and communicated to relevant staff on a need-to-know basis.

No child should be disadvantaged because of a disability or additional need.

STAFF TRAINING, MONITORING AND REVIEW

Staff and relevant volunteers must be made aware of the organisation's child collection procedures and their responsibilities.

This will be supported through:

- Induction and staff guidance.
- Safeguarding training.
- Venue-specific collection arrangements.
- Production and rehearsal briefings.
- Communication of individual collection requirements.
- Review of incidents and near misses.

The Principal will monitor the effectiveness of this policy and consider whether changes are required following significant incidents, changes to organisational activities or relevant safeguarding developments.

This policy will be reviewed annually and sooner where necessary.

RELATED POLICIES AND GUIDANCE

This policy should be read alongside:

- Governance & Compliance Framework.
- Safeguarding Policy.
- Missing Child Procedure.
- Staff Code of Conduct.
- Staff Handbook.
- Student Code of Conduct.
- Parent/Carer Code of Conduct.
- Production and Rehearsal Policy.
- Health and Safety Policy.
- GDPR Policy.
- Risk Assessment Policy.
- Terms and Conditions.
- Relevant child performance licensing and chaperone arrangements.

Relevant legal and safeguarding considerations include:

- Children Act 1989.
- Children Act 2004.
- Equality Act 2010.
- Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR.
- Relevant child performance legislation and licensing conditions.
- Applicable statutory safeguarding guidance.
- Relevant Hampshire safeguarding procedures.

The specific legal duties applicable to Performers Theatre Company will depend on the activity and circumstances. School-specific statutory requirements do not automatically apply to an independent performing arts provider.

APPENDIX 1

Child Collection and Late Collection Procedure

Step 1 - Confirm Collection Arrangements
Check whether the child is to be collected, released independently or handed over under another agreed arrangement. Where independent departure is authorised, staff must be able to verify the parental permission recorded for the child.

Step 2 - Verify the Collector
Where necessary, confirm that the person collecting the child is authorised.

Do not release a child to an unidentified or unauthorised individual.

Step 3 - Ensure Safe Departure
Follow the collection arrangements appropriate to the child's age, needs, activity and venue.

Step 4 - Respond to Late Collection
Keep the child appropriately supervised and contact parents, carers or authorised emergency contacts.

Step 5 - Assess Safeguarding Risks
Consider the child's circumstances, the length and nature of the delay, available supervision and any safeguarding concerns.

Step 6 - Escalate Where Necessary
Inform the Principal or responsible senior member of staff.

Contact the DSL/DDSL or statutory services where safeguarding concerns require it.

Step 7 - Record Significant Incidents
Document significant concerns, decisions and actions in the central Incident Log.

Complete separate safeguarding records where required.

Step 8 - Review and Follow Up
Consider whether changes to collection arrangements, communication or safeguarding measures are necessary.