

## INSIGHT | HIGH-RISK TRANSITIONS

# Arrivals, Departures, and the First Failure Mode

*Most incidents cluster in the first and last twenty minutes. How services design arrival and departure routines that hold under pressure.*

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Arrival and departure routines can feel familiar — so familiar that teams underestimate them. But these are the moments when children, families, gates, authorisation, conversations, and attendance records all move at the same time. Risk concentrates here.

## Why the first and last twenty minutes matter

At arrival, children are entering a new environment. Parents are handing over care — sometimes with a lot to communicate, sometimes in a rush. Gates are opening and closing. Sign-in records are being updated. Educators may be mid-routine with children already present. At departure, the same dynamics reverse, with the added pressure of authorisation checks and end-of-day fatigue.

## The three controls that hold

1. Gate control: a named educator controls the entry and exit point. Not implied, not assumed — named.
2. Handover discipline: every child is handed over or released to an identified adult. If a casual educator doesn't recognise the collecting adult, they check authorisation with the room leader before the child is released.
3. Attendance reconciliation: the physical head count matches the sign-in record before the routine continues.

### THE CASUAL EDUCATOR RULE

If an unfamiliar adult approaches for collection, the response is always the same: "I need to check the collection authorisation with the room leader before the child can be released." This is not awkward — it is safe.

## Where services lose control

- Parent conversations at the gate that pull an educator's attention away from the group.
- Late arrivals processed while the group is mid-transition to outdoor play.
- End-of-day assumptions: "they always pick up at this time" replacing formal authorisation checks.

## Design the routine, don't rely on memory

Arrival and departure routines should be scripted enough that a new educator could run them on day one. Who controls the gate. Who processes sign-in. Who holds the group. Who checks authorisation. These are named roles, not cultural knowledge.

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