

Walking Home Statement

January 2023

Children Walking Home Alone

Safeguarding Children Walking to and from School Alone - A Guide for Parents

There are no laws around age or distance of walking to school. A families' guide to the law states: "There is no law prohibiting children from being out on their own at any age. It is a matter of judgement for parents to decide when children can play out on their own, walk to the shops or school."

Parents are legally obliged to ensure their children get to school and attend regularly, but this in itself does not disallow independent travel. However, as a school we are responsible for the welfare of our pupils and therefore have to consider what we believe is good practice in ensuring the safety of our pupils. We also have an obligation to alert relevant authorities should we believe a child's welfare is at risk.

Pupils in Foundation Stage, KS1 & LKS2

Our agreed school policy is that no pupil in Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and Lower Key Stage 2 (Years 3 and 4) should walk to or from school on their own or be left on their own on the school premises either before or after school. In addition, we will only hand over pupils to named adults or older siblings provided they are 16 years old or above. Pupils will not be handed over to other adults unless the school has been informed by the parent that they have made this arrangement. We also ask that you keep us informed of any changes in arrangements, preferably by letter. If no one turns up to collect a child in these year groups they will be kept in school and parents contacted.

Pupils in Upper KS2 (Years 5 and 6)

In deciding whether your child is ready to walk to school you should assess any risks associated with the route and your child's confidence. Work with your children to build up their independence while walking to school through route finding, road safety skills and general awareness. There are lots of ways you can prepare your child to make an independent journey. Children who are driven to school do not have the opportunity to develop road awareness and are therefore more vulnerable when they start to walk to school independently. Walking to school is a great opportunity to learn road safety skills. The best way to do this is to walk with your children from a young age, teaching them about crossing the road, learning how to navigate and a host of other skills. This helps them gain the experience and confidence to deal with traffic and way finding on their own, in preparation for walking with friends or alone when they are older.

Teach your child to:

- Pay attention to traffic at all times when crossing the street; never become distracted.
- Always cross where there are traffic lights or on the designated crossing with the school crossing patrol staff member; do not cross in the middle of the road. Alternatively, cross in a place where you can see clearly in all directions. Avoid parked cars or bends in the road.
- Look both ways before crossing; listen for traffic coming; cross while keeping an eye on traffic.
- Look out for cyclists.
- Remember that drivers may not see them, even if they can see the driver.
- Remember that it is hard to judge the speed of a car so be cautious.
- Never, ever, follow someone who is either a stranger or someone they know but is not a designated "safe" adult. (A safe adult is someone who has been previously agreed upon by you and your child to be safe, such as a grandparent or trusted neighbour).

When deciding whether your child is ready for this responsibility you might want to consider the following:

1. Do you trust them to walk straight home?
2. Do you trust them to behave sensibly when with a friend?
3. Are they road safety aware?
4. Would they know what to do if a stranger approaches them?
5. Would they have the confidence to refuse to do what a stranger asked?
6. Would they know the best action to take if a stranger tried to make them do something they didn't want to do?
7. Would they know what to do if they needed help?
8. Would they know who best to approach to get help?

If you are not confident about how your child would react, then you should seriously consider whether you should allow them to walk on their own. If you decide that your child is ready for this responsibility, then you must inform the school by completing the electronic consent within the ParentMail. Your child will be prevented from walking home unless this permission has been given electronically. Your child will also be responsible for their behaviour whilst on the school premises either before or after school and on the way home. Should their behaviour not be acceptable you will be asked to accompany or collect them until they have proved they can be trusted again. School may also ask parents to bring children to school or collect them if they feel that daily face to face contact is required or if school have concerns about behaviour of safety.

Children in Years 5 and 6 accessing our Extended Schools before and after playcare along with all children using this facility must be dropped off at the door and check-in with a member of staff as well as being collected from the door.

Parents of children in Years 5 and 6 who are attending extra-curricular school clubs finishing at 4.20pm must communicate with the class teacher or the member of staff leading the club if they can walk home. A record of this will be made.

Once the clocks go back commencing in the Autumn Term, as the dark nights come, children attending extra-curricular activities will be required to be collected from the school office area by a person aged 16 or over.

IF AT ANY TIME YOU NEED TO CHANGE ARRANGEMENTS YOU HAVE MADE PLEASE ENSURE YOU LET US KNOW IN WRITING IMMEDIATELY.

Permission for pupils to wait at the school gate

As a bridge between walking home with an adult and walking independently, some parents may like children to be collected at the school gate (Years 5 and 6 only)

If you wish your child to meet you at the school gate at the end of the day, please could you complete the electronic consent within the ParentMail. However, can you discuss with your child the importance of not going out of the gate until whoever is collecting them is in view. You also need to be confident that they would not go off with any other adults other than those you have made arrangements with. The gate is not supervised. We supervise every classroom door at the end of the school day. We would also advise that you ensure you arrive in good time to meet your child.