



Pupils Walking To and From School Alone Policy

At St Mark's CE Primary School we take the safeguarding and well-being of our children very seriously and will try to work with our families around young children walking to and from school alone. As a school we recognise and sympathise with the often complex pressures faced by many families in balancing work and childcare.

"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 or Class 1 (Year 1 & 2)

Our school guidance is that no pupil in Foundation Stage or Key Stage 1 (Years 1 and 2) 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 children in these year groups to named adults or older siblings provided they are 16 years old or above, unless prior arrangement has been made with the Headteacher. Children will not be handed over to other adults unless they are named on the school collection sheet or the school has been informed by the parent/carer 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 arrives to collect a child in these year groups, the child will be kept in school and the family contacted. If the child is not collected and we have failed to make contact with the child's parent/carer, we will contact family services, we will not allow older brothers or sisters in school to collect younger siblings in this age range.

Pupils in KS2 or Class 2 (Years 3, 4, 5 and 6)

While there is no set age when children are ready to walk to school or home on their own, we believe that pupils in Year 3 and 4 should be still brought to and collected from school and this is our school policy. Therefore, as regards pupils in Year 5 & 6, we believe that you as parents need to decide whether your child is ready for the responsibility of walking to and from school alone.

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 many 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 at the intersection where there are traffic lights; 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. Speak to your child about what they should do if this should ever happen.

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

- Do you trust them to walk straight home?
- Do you trust them to behave sensibly when with a friend?
- Are they road safety aware?
- Would they know what to do if a stranger approaches them?
- Would they have the confidence to refuse to do what a stranger asked?
- Would they know the best action to take if a stranger tried to make them do something they did not want to do?
- Would they know what to do if they needed help?
- Would they know whom 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 a permission slip. Your child will be prevented from walking home unless this permission has been given.

Your child will also be responsible for their behaviour whilst on the school premises either before or after school. Should their behaviour not be acceptable you will be asked to accompany them or collect them until they have proved they can be trusted again.

We will not allow children to walk home alone in the dark. Please bear in mind that if they are attending an afterschool club it may be dark when the club finishes.

Where children walk to, or walk home from school, alone, we would usually expect that a parent, or other responsible person, is at home when they leave or arrive. If the child will be leaving from, or returning to, an empty house, we would expect that this is only for a short period of time and that the child knows how, and can, access emergency adult support if needed.

The following factors should be considered when children are left unsupervised at home; walking to/from school alone:

- Has the parent/carer considered the risk/s posed by leaving their child alone? Walking to/from school
- 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?
- 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, especially if the child walking home alone is returning to an "empty" home? Has the parent/carer assessed the home environment/journey to or from school for risks?
- 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 have additional needs - medical, emotional, behavioural, learning difficulties/disabilities? How will these needs be met in the parent/carer's absence?
- Does the child know what to do in an emergency? Does the child know who they can contact in case of an emergency?
- Does the child have knowledge about how to keep themselves and younger siblings safe e.g. road safety?
- What is the level of knowledge when it comes to first aid?

To be reviewed September 2027