



Solo Walking Policy

Children walking to/from school alone

and

Collection of children at home time

Approved by: School Governing
Body

Date: 13th October 2022

**Last
reviewed on:** May 2023

**Next review
due by:** May 2024

CONTENTS

- Introduction
- Walking to and from school without an adult
- Preparing for your child walking alone
- Tips
- Walking alone guidelines
- Cycling to/from school
- Home time procedures
- Consent Slip

Introduction

There are many benefits to walking to school: it promotes independence, contributes to keeping children fit and healthy, gives an opportunity for friends to walk and talk and, of course, reduces car usage, which is good for the environment. Where children walk to school it is understood by the school that parents ensure that their child takes the safest route to school as possible and that they are accompanied to school by a responsible adult. However, in Upper Key Stage 2 many parents begin to consider allowing their children to walk to school unaccompanied, particularly if they live very close to the school and do not need to cross any major roads.

There is no official guidance on when it is best to allow your child to walk to school alone. The national Walk to School campaign takes the view that it is down to parents to judge when their children are ready to step out alone: *"Provided they are satisfied that the children are mature enough to do it, we would encourage it because it develops independence. However, it is important that the parent and the child are both ready"* [campaign co-ordinator, Andrew Fielding].

English law recognises that children are responsible for their actions from the age of ten. Therefore, we suggest that children may walk home unaccompanied, **with the permission of the parents/carers**, from their **10th birthday**. However, not all 10-years-olds are the same and you know your child better than anyone: some 10-year-olds are old enough to look after themselves in situations such as walking to school alone. Some are not. Therefore, it is important to consider each situation on an individual basis.

The following guidelines set out the school's advice, policy and procedures should parents wish to consider allowing their child to walk to or from school without an adult.

Walking to school without an Adult

Although it is up to parents' discretion how children travel to school each day, the school recommends that all children in Year 4 and below are accompanied by an adult on the way to school and that Year 5/6 children only travel without an adult if the parent is fully satisfied that it is safe for them to do so. Parents/carers are asked to inform the school if they wish their child to begin to **walk to/ from** school alone so that a member of SLT can talk to the child to ensure they understand how to safeguard themselves and so that a register can be compiled. Parents therefore take an informed decision that they are responsible for their child's safety on their way to **and from** school, even when they are not physically present. If the school has concerns about a particular child's ability to travel safely, safeguard themselves or if the child lives very far away, parents will be contacted to discuss any issues further with a member of SLT. **The school does not recommend that children walk younger siblings to/from school if they are in Year 4 or below.**

Preparing for your child walking alone

Before you make the decision to allow your child to walk unaccompanied, to help you decide, we suggest that you may want to consider the following issues:

-  **The journey itself:** from home to school, what environment do they walk through? Will your child have to cross busy roads? If so, are there pedestrian crossings? Is it the sort of area where people look out for one another? How long is the journey?
-  **Your child's nature:** how sensible and streetwise is your child? How savvy are they about road safety and 'stranger danger'? Do they get easily distracted – so if they see a good friend across the road are they likely to run across without looking?
-  **The time:** What time will your child be walking home? (It is recommended that children do not walk home in the dark or in failing light, for example, after a club)
-  **Walking with friends:** Does your child have some friends to walk home with? If so, are you confident that they will walk together sensibly?

If you are spending a lot of time thinking about this issue then it possibly is not the right choice just yet.

When you are ready to allow your child to walk to school

Here are some tips:

-  Walk the route with your child. Discuss all the best crossing points and danger zones. Start small and build up.
-  For the first few days or even weeks (depending on what you and your child are happy with), if you can all leave the car behind and walk, let your child go ahead of you but separately to help them, and you, gain confidence. Send them on small trips such as to post a letter or buy a pint of milk in a local shop.

-  If you know other children your child could walk with, there's an element of safety in numbers (unless they will distract each other or lead each other into mischief, which can sometimes be the case; again, you know how sensible your child is).
-  Discuss with your child who to ask or what to do if they encounter a problem on the way. Give possible scenarios, for example: you are delayed getting home and your child arrives before you, but they can't find their keys.
-  'Revise' road safety and 'stranger danger' messages to ensure they've sunk in, but don't go so over the top with it to make your child feel anxious! Remember that 'strangers' can be friendly helpful people too!
-  Try and keep your cool about it if you feel worried; your child will pick up on your anxieties.

Walking to/from school alone guidelines

- **Can older children walk their younger brothers or sisters home?**

As so many of our children live across at least one busy road, we think this places a huge amount of responsibility upon a 10 or 11 year old child. Therefore, to fulfil our child protection remit we do not recommend that children walk younger siblings to/from school if they are in Year 4 or below. It is ultimately a parent/ carers decision however.

- **What time should children arrive by?**

Children walking to school independently should not arrive at school before 8.40am and should be at school no later than 8.55am.

- **What if children don't arrive in time for registration?**

The school recognises a clear responsibility to contact parents if their child has not attended morning registration and no contact has been made by the parent to the school to inform the school of absence due to illness or other reason. The school will therefore ensure that registers are checked and will then make attempts to contact the parent/carer to ascertain a reason for absence or to highlight that a child has not attended registration.

Where a child has left their parent with the intention of walking to school but has not arrived and the school has made contact with the parent/carer and an issue of a missing child is therefore noted, the school will immediately contact the police to report a missing child. The school's designated senior person for child protection will then be immediately informed and safeguarding procedures for child protection will be followed.

- **What if a child is unable to attend school?**

Parents are responsible for informing the school immediately should their child be unwell or otherwise unable to attend school. This includes informing the school prior to taking their child for any early morning medical examinations (eg doctor or dentist) which may cause their child to miss registration in the morning and arrive in the school later than 8.55 am.

- **Can children hang around after school?**

Children who walk home alone are not permitted to stay and play on the school grounds after school. Children walking independently must ensure that they walk directly home.

- **How are children walking home alone dismissed?**

The school maintains a register of those known children whose parents have made the request that their child is dismissed by a member of staff at the end of the school day to walk home independently. Any child walking home MUST be on the Walking home register. A signed consent form needs to be received for the child to be placed on the register.

- **What if a child doesn't arrive home at the expected time?**

If a child has left the school to walk home alone but does not arrive home, the parent should contact the school in the first instance to seek clarification from the school as to when the child left the school site. If the parent feels that a period of time has passed and their child has not arrived at home and that this is unusual or causing concern, the school recommends that the parent immediately calls the police to report their concern.

Cycling to/ from school

We would not advise children cycling alone to school because of the increased risk of accidents. However if parents do wish their child to cycle to/from school unaided from the age of 10 then the following criteria must be met:

- The child wears a helmet.
- The bike is roadworthy, which the school reserves the right to check from time to time.
- The child has passed a cycling proficiency test and has a certificate to this effect.
- Bikes must be kept in the school bike sheds but the school cannot be liable for any loss or damage to cycles.

Home time Procedures

Children walking home alone will be dismissed by an adult from the Rainbow gate at 3.05pm.
If you would still like your child to walk solo, please sign and return the consent slip.

WALKING SOLO CONSENT SLIP

Child's Name: Class: _____

Date of birth: _____

By signing this form, I give consent for the school to allow my child to walk to school OR home unaccompanied at the beginning or end of the day.

By giving this consent, I understand that I take full responsibility for my child's safety before they get to school or once they leave the school premises.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

(Person with Parental Responsibility)

Print name: _____

Please return this slip to the School Office