

Walking to and from school alone

Policy date: Summer 2023 Review date: Summer 2023

Aims

St Paul's aims to allow children to gain more independence in walking to and from school alone when they reach Year 5 and 6, but in certain circumstances this may start from summer term in Year 4. This policy will outline our expectation regarding the children who are able to walk to and from school alone.

Background

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.

All classes have a record of which adult is collecting the children, so that they know who to expect. If there are any changes to who is collecting your child, please can you let staff know at the earliest opportunity – either on the gate in the morning or via email – so that this can be passed onto the class teacher.

Pupils in Reception or KS1

Our agreed school policy is that no pupil in Reception or Key Stage 1 should walk to or from school on their own or be left in the lane before school. In addition, we will only hand over pupils to named adults or older siblings provided they are 14 years old or above (however, if the professional judgement of the adult at school deems the older sibling not to be suitable, they will not hand the child over). 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 email. If someone turns up to collect your child and we have not been notified, the adult will have to wait until we have verified their identity. If no one turns up to collect a child in these year groups, they will be kept in school and parents contacted. If the child is not collected and we have failed to make contact with the child's carer, we will consult with family services.

We will not allow older brothers or sisters in school to collect younger siblings.



St. Paul's Dorking

Church of England (Aided) Primary School

Pupils in KS2 (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 (until the summer term in Year 4) should be still brought to and collected from school and this is our school policy. Therefore, for pupils from summer term Year 4, as well as in Year 5 and 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.

Once you are confident that your child could walk to or from school – or indeed part of the way – please complete the walking home alone form and hand into the school office. At the start of each academic year there will be an online form to complete, but if you decide that your child may walk to school mid year then please complete the walking to school form.

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 advice from the NSPCC:

- Make sure that they know their address and your phone number by heart, in case they get lost or have to navigate home from somewhere new.
- If they have a mobile phone, remind them to fully charge it before leaving the house, and make sure they have all of your contact numbers saved
- Talk to them about road safety. They should always look both ways before crossing the street, and never be on their phone when crossing the road.
- Remind them never to accept a lift from someone they don't know, or let a stranger into the house. They should never give personal information away – in real life or online.



St. Paul's Dorking

Church of England (Aided) Primary School

- Remind them that if they feel unsafe or uncomfortable at any time, they can call you or a trusted adult.
- If they ever feel like they are in immediate danger, they should call the police straight away on 999.

If you are not confident about how your child would react then you should seriously consider whether you should allow them to walk on its own.

If you decide that your child is ready for this responsibility then you must inform the school by completing the form – either online at the start of the academic year, or a paper copy if it is mid year. Your child will be prevented from walking home unless this permission has been given in writing. 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 after-school 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.

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

Appendix 1 –

Permission to walk home alone form



St. Paul's Dorking

Church of England (Aided) Primary School

Appendix 1

PERMISSION TO WALK HOME ALONE

Child's name: _____

Class: _____

I give permission for my child to walk home alone from school every day.

I give permission for my child to walk home alone from school on the following days:

- Monday
- Tuesday
- Wednesday
- Thursday
- Friday

Signed: _____

(Parent or person with parental responsibility)

Date: _____