Safeguarding Pupils Walking to and From School Unaccompanied Policy

Reviewed by	Headteacher and Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)
Approved by and when	Approved by the LGB on 30th September 2026
Frequency of Review	Every two years
Next Review	September 2028

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Purpose and Scope of this policy

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 does not disallow independent travel. However, as a school we are responsible for the welfare of our pupils and therefore must 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.

Decisions regarding independent travel should take account of the individual child's age, maturity, needs, route, confidence and overall safety.

Pupils in Reception, Year 1, Year 2 and Year 3

Our school policy is that no pupil in Reception, Year 1, Year 2 or Year 3 should walk to or from school on their own or be left on their own outside the school premises or on the school premises either before or after school. The school playground is not supervised by school staff before or after 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 in writing. If no one turns up to collect a child in these year groups they will be kept in school and parents contacted. We will not allow older brothers or sisters in school to collect younger siblings.

The Nursery has its own collection arrangements.

Pupils in Year 4, Year 5 and Year 6

While there is no set age when children are ready to walk to school or home on their own, our recommendation is that pupils in Year 4 should still be brought to school and be collected from school. In exceptional circumstances, parents may request permission for a Year 4 child to walk independently. Such requests will be considered individually by the Headteacher.

For pupils in Year 5 and Year 6, we believe that parents need to decide whether their child is ready for the responsibility of walking to and from school unaccompanied. In deciding whether a child is ready to walk to school, parents should assess any risks associated with the route and the child's confidence.

Parents should work with their 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 develop road awareness and independence through a variety of experiences, including walking with trusted adults and learning safe travel behaviours. 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 to 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
- Cross the road 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 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 form below. Your child will be prevented from walking home unless this permission has been given in writing. 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 may be asked to accompany them or collect them. The school reserves the right to review independent travel arrangements where weather conditions, visibility or other environmental factors create increased risk.

Parents are responsible for their child on their route to school and on their route home.

Where children walk to, or walk home from school unaccompanied, we would usually expect that a parent, or other responsible person, is at home when they leave or arrive. If a child in Year 5 or Year 6 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 school reserves the right to refuse permission for a pupil to walk to or from school unaccompanied where there are safeguarding concerns, concerns regarding a child's maturity, vulnerability, SEND needs, medical needs, behaviour, attendance, or any other factor that may place the child at increased risk.

The school will consider its duties under the Equality Act 2010 when applying this policy and may make reasonable adjustments where appropriate.

Appendix 1 – Permission Form Year 5 and Year 6

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

Woodlands Park School

Permission for Year 5 and Year 6 pupils to walk to and from school unaccompanied

Person with parental responsibility to complete and return this reply slip to school

Name of child: .....

Year Group:.....

I wish to inform you that my child will be walking to/from school on a regular basis. I will notify you immediately should this arrangement change. I have read and understood the guidelines, systems and reasonable precautions set out in Woodlands Park School Policy 'Safeguarding Pupils Walking To and From School Unaccompanied'.

I understand that responsibility for my child transfers to me once they have left the school premises and that I accept responsibility for the arrangements for their journey to and from school.

Signed..... Date: .....

Name.....

Appendix 2 – Permission Form Year 4

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

Woodlands Park School

Permission for Year 4 pupils to walk to and from school unaccompanied

Person with parental responsibility to complete and return this reply slip to school

Name of child: .....

Year Group: .....

I wish to inform you that my child will be walking to/from school on a regular basis. I will notify you immediately should this arrangement change. I have read and understood the guidelines, systems and reasonable precautions set out in the 'Safeguarding Pupils Walking To and From School Unaccompanied Policy'.

I understand that Woodlands Park School does not recommend that children in Year 4 walk home unaccompanied.

I understand that responsibility for my child transfers to me once they have left the school premises and that I accept responsibility for the arrangements for their journey to and from school.

There will be an adult at home when my child leaves for school and arrives home.

Signed..... Date: .....

Name .....