



Walking Home Alone Policy

Date Written: February 2024

Review date: February 2026

Purpose: The purpose of this policy is to clarify our procedures and expectations regarding children travelling home from school alone and to ensure children are safe.

Rationale

The need for the school to devise this policy is to:

1. Clearly outline the walking home procedures to the school community
2. Ensure all stakeholders are clear in their responsibilities.
3. To ensure that each child is safe.

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.

Parents who wish their child to walk to school and home unescorted by an adult at must adhere to the following guidelines:

- Parents must have registered with the school that they give permission for their children to walk directly home from school at the end of the day. Only pupils in Forms 5 and 6 are permitted to walk home alone.
- It is the parents' responsibility to check the route that their children may walk home and assess the appropriateness of the journey. Crossing of fast roads, walking through secluded areas is to be discouraged. Parents should agree a route with their child.
- Parents should be confident that their child has an awareness and understanding of the green cross code and what to do if approached by a stranger person they know who should not be taking them home. It is parents' responsibility to ensure they are sufficiently happy that their child can undertake the proposed journey safely.
- During winter months and/or inclement weather, children must be dressed appropriately.
- Children should preferably walk in a group and not alone.

- Children should know their home phone number (plus one other emergency contact) and preferably have their own mobile phone. Mobile phones are to be kept in the office during the day.

We recommend that where children are walking home alone there should be someone at home to meet the child on their arrival.

- Any child must be capable of arriving home within 10 minutes of the end of the school day. Journeys over 10 minutes are not considered appropriate for children to walk at this stage.
- If any child does not arrive home within a reasonable timeframe, parents must immediately notify the school in order that appropriate action can be taken.
- If any child does not arrive home within a reasonable timeframe and direct contact with the child has not been established by either school or parents, the school will instigate the missing child procedure. In line with our Missing Child Policy, if the child cannot be found within fifteen minutes, the police must be informed.
- If the missing child procedure is initiated there must be a point of contact remaining at both the home and school location until further advised by the emergency services.
- If the child does arrive home after the missing child procedure has been instigated, immediate notification to the emergency services and school must be made. This is to enable the missing child procedure to be stood down.

Preparing your child to make an independent journey.

There are lots of ways you can prepare your child to make an independent journey. 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 find their way on their own, in preparation for walking with friends or alone when they are older.

Teach your child to:

- Always pay attention to traffic 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, 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). And if that person tries to convince him to go with the child or tries to physically get close, then the child should shout for help and run away.

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 or someone they know but is not a designated "safe" adult approached them?
5. Would they have the confidence to refuse to do what was asked by such a person?
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 are not confident about the above, parents should consider whether you should allow their child to walk on their own.

If you decide that your child is ready for this responsibility, then you must inform the school by letter or by completing the slip below. Your child will be prevented from walking home unless this permission has been given in writing.

IF AT ANY TIME YOU NEED TO CHANGE ARRANGEMENTS YOU HAVE MADE, PLEASE ENSURE THE SCHOOL IS INFORMED IN WRITING.

CONFIRMATION THAT MY CHILD MAY WALK HOME ALONE

Please complete and return to the School Office.

Note that this form is only applicable to children in Form 6 or in Form 5

I confirm that my child _____ in Form ____ at St Wystan's School may walk home from school alone.

I confirm that I have read and understood the school's **Walking Home Alone** Policy.

Signed: _____

Name: _____

Relationship to child: _____

Date: _____