

## Travelling To and From School Independently Policy March 2019

**Reviewed by:** Nicola Conlin, Sarah Fox

**Reviewed:** March 2019

**Next review:** March 2020

**Related Policies:** Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy, Missing Child Policy, Late Collection Policy

### Endorsement

Full endorsement is given to this policy by:

**Name:** Claudia Goodbrand

**Position:** Cambridge Steiner School Trustee

**Signed:** 

**Date:** March 2018

### Legal Position

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.

The NSPCC advise the following:

- children under 8 should not be outdoors for a considerable length of time unaccompanied;
- children under the age of about 12 should not be home alone for more than a very short period of time.

### Pupils in Kindergarten and Classes 1 and 2

Our agreed school policy is that in most cases **no pupil in Kindergarten or Classes 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 pupils to named adults or older siblings provided they are 14 years old or above. 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 letter. If no one turns up to collect a child in these classes they will be kept in school and parents contacted. We will not allow older brothers or sisters in school to collect younger siblings unless they are aged 14 years old or above and we have received the necessary consent.

That being said, we recognise the benefit to children in walking/cycling to school and so, in exceptional circumstances, where a child in Class 1 or 2 lives within two miles of the school, parents can discuss with their Class Teacher whether a

child is ready to travel independently to and from school. If there is agreement that the route is considered safe, and the child is able to manage the responsibility, an exceptional arrangement can be made in these circumstances.

If there is disagreement between school and parents, we will continue to discuss with parents alternative options to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the child. If at any point the school considers that the child is at risk of harm, we will follow our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

### **Pupils in Classes 3 and above**

There is no set age when children are ready to walk/travel to school or home on their own. It very much depends upon their maturity and confidence. Therefore, as regards pupils in these classes, we believe that you as parents need to decide whether your child is ready for this responsibility. We would still highly recommend that pupils in Classes 3-5 at least are still brought to and collected from school, unless they live very locally to the school.

### **Parents Responsibility to Assess the Risks**

In deciding whether your child is ready to walk/travel 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. If a child is using public transport, build up their skills by travelling with them at first and gradually enabling them to learn about using buses/trains safely. If a child is cycling, ensure that their bike is roadworthy, they are at an appropriate skill level to understand road safety and have the skills and knowledge to know what to do if they have a problem with their bike. We strongly recommend they have completed their Cycling Proficiency test.

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

1. Have you considered the risk/s posed by your child travelling independently to/from school or in the care of a sibling?
2. How mature is/are the child/ren? What is their level of understanding/awareness about travelling independently to or from school?
3. Do you trust them to walk/travel straight home?
4. Are they road safety aware?
5. Would they know what to do if a stranger approaches them?
6. Would they know what to do/who to approach if they needed help?
7. How comfortable is/are the child/ren with the arrangements (this includes the younger child and any older children who may be acting as 'carer')?
8. How far away will the parent/carer be? Will they be easily contactable?
9. How well do the siblings get on? How will tension be managed in the absence of the parent/carer?
10. Do they have the means to contact you on their way to/from school if needed?

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

### **After School Clubs**

Children in Class 3 upwards attending after school clubs, which finish after 5pm, must be collected by an adult, and are not permitted to travel home independently, without prior agreement from the school.

### **Required Actions**

If you decide that your child is ready for this responsibility then you **must complete a Travelling To and From School Independently Agreement** available from the school office/Class Teacher. Your child will be prevented from doing so unless this permission has been given in writing. [The Travelling To and From School Independently Agreement also needs to be completed if your child travels independently on an intermittent basis.]

The school will keep a list of children who have permission to travel to and from school independently. Parents of children who do so intermittently are required to inform their teacher by the end of the school day if they are travelling home independently that day.

As the responsible body receiving children from home at the start of the day, the school will ensure that morning registrations are taken in each class. If a child is found to be absent and no prior notice of such absence has been received from the child's parent/carer, the school recognises a clear responsibility to contact the parent/carer to ascertain the reason for absence or highlight that a child has not attended morning registration.

It is the parent/carer's responsibility to ensure that school is informed should their child be unable to attend school for any reason. If a child who walks/cycles to school unattended is not in school, contact will be sought with the parent/carer within 30 minutes of morning registration taking place by the School Manager or Receptionist. An absence without reason will be noted by the teacher in the school register.

If, upon contact with parents, it is confirmed that a child has left home with the intention of travelling to school independently but has not arrived, and direct contact with the child cannot be established, an issue of a missing child is noted. In these circumstances the school will contact the police immediately. The school's Designated Senior Person for safeguarding/child protection will then be immediately informed and safeguarding procedures for child protection/children missing procedures will be followed.

If a child has left the school to travel home independently but does not arrive home when expected and direct contact with the child has not been established, the parent/carer should contact the school in the first instance to seek clarification from the responsible adult who dismissed their child as to the time they left school. However the school may not be contactable after home time and therefore it will be the parent/carer's responsibility to notify the police.

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

## Appendix A – Letter to Parents

Dear

We understand that you would like .....to travel independently to and from school.

Parents are responsible for their child's safety on their way to and from school, even when they are not physically present. As you will appreciate, the safety of pupils is our main concern, and so I would like to share the following points:

- Children in Class 3 upwards may travel independently to and from school with written permission from parents/carers (**see the Travelling To and From School Agreement**). The school will keep a register of children permitted to travel to and from school independently.
- 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 (e.g. doctor or dentist) which may cause their child to miss registration in the morning and arrive in school later than 8.30am.
- Parents are responsible for being familiar with the school policy on Travelling To and From School Independently.
- We understand that you may wish for your child to carry a mobile phone/other technology if travelling independently, and this will be permitted. For safeguarding reasons, mobile phones/devices must be switched off and remain unused during school hours.
- Children in Class 3 upwards attending after school clubs which finish after 5pm must be collected by an adult, and are not permitted to travel home unaccompanied.

If you wish for your child to travel independently, please complete the form below. If you have any questions about this, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards

Nicola Conlin  
Compliance Coordinator

**Appendix B - Travelling To and From School Independently Agreement**

Child's name.....

- I give permission for my child to travel to and from school independently.
- I understand that my child is my responsibility outside of school hours (travelling to and from school independently).
- I understand that if my child brings a mobile phone/other device to school, it must be switched off and unused during school hours.
- I understand that the mobile phone/device will be the responsibility of my child at all times.
- I have read the Travelling To and From School Independently Policy and I am confident I have assessed the risks and ensured my child is safe to do so.
- I understand that any changes to this agreement must be put in writing and an acknowledgement received before the changes can take effect.

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

**Relationship to child:** .....