

Fairhouse Primary School



Walking to and from school alone

Adopted: Autumn 2018

To be reviewed: Autumn 2020

This guidance was created using information from Gov.UK, NSPCC & RoSPA

At Fairhouse Primary School we take the safeguarding and well-being of our children very seriously and will try to work with our families around young children walking to and from school alone. As a school we recognise and sympathise with the often complex pressures faced by many families in balancing work and childcare.

“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.

Children in Foundation Stage or KS1

Our school guidance is that **no pupil in Foundation Stage or Key Stage 1 (Years 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 children in these year groups to named adults or older siblings provided they are 16 years old or above, unless prior arrangement has been made with the SLT. Children will not be handed over to other adults unless they are named on the school collection sheet or the school has been informed by the parent/carer 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 arrives to collect a child in these year groups, the child will be kept in school and the family contacted. We will not allow older brothers or sisters in school to collect younger siblings in this age range.

Children in Key Stage 2 (Years 3, 4, 5 & 6)

There is no set age when children are ready to walk to school or home on their own. It very much depends upon their maturity and confidence. Therefore, as regards pupils in Key Stage 2, we believe that you as parents/carers need to decide whether your child is ready for this responsibility. With permission, we allow children in Years 5 and 6 to walk home alone; we do not allow this for children in Years 3 and 4, unless prior arrangement has been made with the SLT.

In deciding whether your Year 5 or Year 6 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.

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 approached them?
5. Would they have the confidence to refuse to do what a stranger asked?
6. Would they know the best action to take if a stranger tried to make them do something they didn't want to do (scream, shout, kick, fight)?
7. Would they know what to do if they needed help?
8. Would they know who best to approach to get help?

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

There is a template permission letter attached as an appendix to this policy which parents/carers should use if giving permission for their Year 5 or Year 6 to walk home alone.

We are aware that it is the parent/carer's responsibility to ensure that their child/ren are dropped off and collected by a responsible person if it is not safe or appropriate for the child/ren to walk to school or to home unsupervised.

Parental responsibility includes:

- Provide a home for the child.
- Protect and maintain the child.
- Disciplining the child.
- Choosing and providing for the child's education.
- Agreeing to the child's medical treatment.
- Naming the child and agreeing to any change of name.
- Looking after the child's property.
- Ensuring the child is supported financially.

(Gov.UK Parent rights and responsibilities)

Although there is no minimum age set in law when a young person is allowed to remain in charge of another child, it is an offence to leave a child alone if it places them at risk.

Gov.UK advice states;

- Children under 12 are rarely mature enough to be left alone for a long period of time.
- Children under 16 should not be left alone overnight.
- Babies, toddlers and very young children should never be left alone.
- Parents and carers can be prosecuted for neglect if it is judged that they placed a child at risk by leaving them at home along. *(Please note that this could include travel to and from school).*

The NSPCC guidance adds:

- A child should never be left at home alone if they do not feel comfortable with this, regardless of their age.
- If a child has additional needs, these should be considered when leaving them at home alone or with an older sibling.

- When leaving a younger child with an older sibling, think about what might happen if they were to have a falling out – would they both be safe?

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents and the NSPCC recommend that no one under the age of 16 should be left to care for a younger child.

We suggest that parents/carers use the attached 'Checklist for supervision of children before/after school' to assist them in making an informed decision.

Checklist for supervision of children before/after school:

The following factors should be considered when children are left unsupervised at home; walking to/from school alone:

- Has the parent/carer considered the risk/s posed by leaving their child alone?
Walking to/from school?
- How old is/are the child/ren?
- How mature is/are the child/ren? What is their level of understanding/awareness about being unsupervised/walking to or from school? How comfortable is/are the child/ren with the arrangements?
- Where will the children be left? Is this a safe place?
- How long, and how often, will the child/ren be left?
- Is the home environment safe and secure, especially if the child walking home alone is returning to an "empty" home? Has the parent/carer assessed the home environment/journey to or from school for risks?
- How far will the child/ren have to walk (if appropriate)?
- How far away will the parent/carer be? Will they be easily contactable?
- Do any of the children have additional needs – medical, emotional, behavioural, learning difficulties/disabilities? How will these needs be met in the parent/carer's absence?
- Does the child know what to do in an emergency? Does the child know who they can contact in case of an emergency?
- Does the child have knowledge about how to keep themselves and younger siblings safe e.g. road safety?
- What is the level of knowledge when it comes to first aid?

Home Address:
.....
.....
.....

Telephone:

Date:

Permission for my Year 5 or Year 6 child to walk home alone

I give permission for my child (Name)
..... (Class) to walk home alone from school.

I have been given a copy of the school's guidance on children walking to and from school alone and understand the school's concerns around the safety and wellbeing for my child.

I understand that I will be responsible for my child's safety once he/she has been dismissed by his/her teacher to walk home alone.

Yours sincerely,

Parent/Carer.