

**"As unique individuals, we do our best at work and play for the love of God and others."**



**St Benedict's Catholic Primary School**

# **Walking to and from school alone policy**

**November 2023  
To be reviewed: 2026**

## POLICY ON SAFEGUARDING PUPILS

### WALKING TO AND FROM SCHOOL ALONE

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.

#### **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 his or her 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 (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 letter. If someone turns up to collect your child and we have not been notified, the adult will have to wait until we have verified his or her 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.

#### **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, 4 and 5 should be still brought to and collected from school by parents and this is our school policy. Year 6 – you, as parents, need to decide whether their 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.

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:

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 approaches 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 did not want to do?
7. Would they know what to do if they needed help?
8. Would they know whom 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 its own.** If you decide that your child is ready for this responsibility then you must complete the form in Appendix 1. 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 will be asked to accompany them or collect them until they have proved they can be trusted again.

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.

**We will assume that your child will know whether they are walking home or not on a daily basis. If you do not think your child is responsible enough to know where they should be, please consider whether you should be giving them permission.**

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

Appendix 1

Should you, as parents, feel your child is mature enough to cope with this responsibility would you please complete and return the slip below, giving permission for your child to do so.

No child will be allowed to walk home without prior consent from a parent or guardian.

Child's full name	
Name of parent completing the form	
My child has permission to walk home from school – please circle as appropriate: Yes/ No	
My child will walk home independently on (please circle as appropriate)	Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Or It will change each week but the child will be informed which days they should walk home
My child attends these after school clubs and will walk home after that club	Please list the clubs your child attends
Please list the safety measures you have in place/ that have been agreed with your child:	
<p>If you sign to say you are giving your child permission to walk home, please ensure that they know what to do in the event of an emergency. For example, if your child forgets their key.</p> <p>If they are worried or uncertain at any time, they can return to school and ring on the school gate or go to the after school club in the school hall.</p> <p>Here are a few things that you may wish to discuss with your child:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do not walk alone.</li> <li>Stick to a well-lit and used route.</li> <li>Wear bright/reflective clothing.</li> <li>Be vigilant at all times.</li> </ul>	

Parents with shared custody: if the permissions are different depending on which house the child is returning to, please complete two forms.

I give permission for my child to walk home (or to another specified destination) on their own after school. I have explained to my child the safety aspects of walking home on their own. I understand that it is the responsibility of parents, and not the school, once my child has left the school premises.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's name \_\_\_\_\_