A blue circle with a castle and a shield

Description automatically generated**Castle Cary Primary School**

**Children walking to and from school alone safeguarding**

**guidelines and agreement**

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| **Policy date** | September 2025 |
| **Reviewed and Updated** | New Policy |
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**Introduction**

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."*

*The NSPCC states: ‘While every child is different, we wouldn't recommend leaving a child under 12 years old home alone, particularly for longer periods of time. Children in primary school are usually too young to walk home from school alone, babysit or cook for themselves without adult supervision.’*

Parents are legally obliged to ensure their children get to school and attend regularly, but this does not disallow independent travel. 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.

Walking to school is a great opportunity to learn road safety skills. Road safety is best taught in a practical setting meaning that parents are ideally placed when walking their children to school to discuss road safety topics such as safe and dangerous places to cross the road. Children often mimic the behaviour of their parents and carers, so it is vital to be consistent and put into practice safe crossing techniques. The best way to do this is for children to walk with a parent/ carer 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.

**Pupils in Foundation Stage or KS1**

Children at this age cannot accurately judge the speed of traffic and safe gaps in traffic in the way that adults can and should not be left unsupervised to cross even quiet roads alone.

Our agreed school policy is that no pupil in Foundation Stage or Key Stage 1 should walk to or from school on his or her own or be left on their own on or outside the school premises either before or after school. 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. If someone turns up to collect your child and we have not been notified, the adult will have to wait until we have checked the arrangement with the parent/ carer. 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.

**Pupils in KS2 (Years 3, 4, 5 and 6)**

As there is no set age when children are ready to walk to school or home on their own, we believe that you, as parents, need to decide whether your child is ready for the responsibility of walking to and from school alone. When your child reaches the age of eight or nine, you may be starting to consider whether to allow them to walk part of the way to school independently. It will also depend on the journey that they will need to navigate. It can be a tough decision, as you will need to consider their development and weigh up the benefits of them being active with the traffic dangers they may face on the journey. It is important to bear in mind that as children develop at different rates, some children will not be ready to cross the road independently at the age of eight. Remember that children can be impulsive and forget for a moment the dangers of traffic if they are distracted.

**Checklist for readiness:**

In making this important decision, there are some practical considerations and checks that will help you. Before letting them make the whole journey independently, work with your child to build up their independence to help them prepare for this next step.

**Can your child:**

* Pay attention to traffic at all times when crossing the street; never become distracted.
* Always cross at an identified safe place and identify other safe crossing places (where they can see clearly in all directions; avoid parked cars; avoid bends in the road).
* Look both ways before crossing; listen for traffic coming; cross while keeping an eye on traffic.
* Look out for cyclists.
* Check/ pause to make sure that drivers have seen them (e.g. in driveways, when cars are reversing).
* Judge the speed and distance of a car and be suitably confident and cautious to wait for a pause in traffic if they are not sure there is a sufficient gap to safely cross.

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

**Do you trust your child to?**

* Walk straight home/ to school or to where they need to be?
* Get themselves to where they need to be after school independently- (remembering whether this is home, agreed meeting place, after-school club if this changes on different days of the week)?
* Behave sensibly when with a friend(s)?
* Be road safety aware and be able to ignore distractions?
* Ignore/ not look at their phone whilst crossing the road?
* Know what to do if a stranger approaches them?
* Have the confidence to refuse to do what a stranger might ask?
* Know the best action to take if a stranger tries to make them do something they do not want?
* Never, ever, follow or accept a lift from someone who is either a stranger or someone they know but is not a designated "safe" adult.
* Know what to do if they needed help?
* Know whom best to approach to get help?

If you are not confident about how your child would react to any of the above then you should seriously consider whether you should allow them to walk independently.

If you decide that your child is ready for this responsibility, then you must inform the school by completing the slip (Appendix 1). Your child will be prevented from walking home unless this permission has been given in writing.

Should we be made aware that your child is behaving in a risky or disrespectful way on their journey to and from school, we will contact parents who will be asked to accompany them or collect them until they have proved they can be trusted again.

We do not recommend that Primary School aged children never walk home alone in the dark. Please bear in mind that if they are attending an after-school club it may be dark when the club finishes during winter months.

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.

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| A blue circle with a castle and a shield  Description automatically generated  **Castle Cary Primary School**  **Permission / Agreement for pupils to walk to and from school unaccompanied** | | |
| **Name of child** | |  |
| **Year Group / Class** | |  |
| I wish to inform you that my child will be walking to/from school on 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 ‘Pupils walking to and from school alone Safeguarding Guidelines’. | | |
| I fully understand that once I give permission for my child to walk to and from school alone, I take full responsibility for my child’s actions or whereabouts when they are not on the school premises. | | |
| I confirm that I am confident that my child can confidently and independently carry out all of the aspects on the checklists provided. | | |
| I confirm that I consider my child responsible enough to be able to make sure that they are where they need to be at the end of the day (an agreed meeting place or a club), or ask a trusted adult for help if they are not sure. | | |
| **Signature** |  | |
| **Print** |  | |
| **Date** |  | |
| IF AT ANY TIME YOU NEED TO CHANGE ARRANGEMENTS YOU HAVE MADE PLEASE ENSURE YOU LET US KNOW IN WRITING IMMEDIATLEY. | | |

Appendix 1

Appendix 2

[Teaching Road Safety: A Guide for Parents](https://www.rospa.com/siteassets/images/active-travel/parents-and-carers/teaching-road-safety-a-guide-for-parents.pdf)

A book cover with text and images of a person and a child

AI-generated content may be incorrect.

A page of a paper with text

AI-generated content may be incorrect.

A brochure of a family

AI-generated content may be incorrect.

A page of a child's guide to a pedestrian crossing

AI-generated content may be incorrect. A screenshot of a web page

AI-generated content may be incorrect. A close-up of a road sign

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