



Hampton Court House

CHILDREN WALKING TO AND FROM SCHOOL ALONE POLICY

Reviewed By: ACB

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Introduction

It is the parents/carers responsibility to ensure their child arrives safely and promptly to school each morning. Whilst walking to school it is understood that parents/carers ensure that their child takes the safest route possible and is accompanied at all times by a responsible adult.

In Years 5 and above parents/carers may decide that their child is capable of independently walking to school. If this is the case, parents/carers make the informed decision that they are responsible for their child's safety on their journey to school, even if they are not physically present.

It is advised that parents/carers ensure their child is fully conversant with road safety guidelines.

The following guidelines set out Hampton Court House School's advice, policy and procedures should parents/carers wish to allow their child to walk to or from school without an adult.

It is the responsibility of the parent/carer to assess the route on which the child will walk home from school to ensure they are confident their child has the ability to walk home safely, even if their child is accompanied to school by a parent/carer. Crossing busy main roads and walking through secluded areas is discouraged.

Safeguarding is paramount and parents/carers need to ensure their child is fully aware of stranger danger and how to report any concerns to an appropriate adult.

Should a parent/carer wish to allow their child to walk to school unaccompanied by an adult, parents/carers are asked to inform the school and the walking travelling consent form is completed/updated so that a register can be compiled of key children to identify should a child not arrive at school at the appropriate time in the morning.

For pupils in years 5 and 6 it is essential that written consent is provided by the parent/carer to authorise independent travel to and from the school. The walking home policy must contain all emergency contact numbers and the parent/carer must notify the school and update the consent form in the event of any changes.

The school may refuse a proposal if a child is not deemed able to walk home alone.

If the school has concerns about a particular child's ability to travel safely or if a child lives too far away [more than 15 minutes], permission for the child to walk home alone may be refused.

There must always be an appropriate adult/parent/carer at home to meet the child on their arrival. Parents/carers need to be aware when walking home the school will not know if a child arrives home as planned. Hence the parent/carer needs to ensure adequate safety protocols are in place should an emergency/accident arise. If the school feels the welfare and safety of the child walking to school is compromised the school may revoke the arrangement and will notify parents/carers accordingly.

It is recommended that ONLY children in Years 5 and above be allowed to walk to school unaccompanied by an adult and only then if the parent/carer is confident that it is safe for them to do so.

However individual cases will be discussed with parents/carers. 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/carers responsibility to ensure that school is informed should their child be unable to attend school for any reason in accordance with the school attendance policy. If a child who walks to school unattended is not in school, contact will be sought with the parent/carer within [1 hour] of morning registration taking place and an absence without reason being noted by the classroom staff.

Arrival and departure from School

If upon contact it is confirmed that a child has left home with the intention of walking to school but has not arrived and therefore an issue of a missing child is noted, 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.

A register of children who have permission to walk home alone after the school day will be kept by the school.

If a child has left the school to walk home 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 parents/carers responsibility to notify the police.

Pupils of Senior School Age

As children grow it is developmentally appropriate that they become more independent and begin making their own way to and from school. For pupils in year 7 and above it is expected that they will make their way to and from school either on their own or in small groups as is deemed appropriate by parents.

From year 7 pupils will be released at the end of the school day to make their way home unless the parents have instructed otherwise. Should you wish to withdraw permission for your child to travel

alone, please email your child's form tutor and reception.

Safe Routes to School

Allowing a child to go to school on foot can be a real privilege, fostering independence and trustworthiness. However, it is the responsibility of the parent/carer to assess the route on which the child will walk home from school to ensure they are confident their child has the ability to walk home safely.

Identifying safe routes to school can be tricky. If you're planning a course to go to school on foot, consider these points:

- Use residential streets with less traffic
- Find roads with low-speed limits
- Avoid alleyways
- Avoid unlit areas
- Use routes with lots of shops and landmarks
- Use well-populated areas
- Avoid routes with scary dogs
- Try to design a route past other parents' houses
- Choose less busy crossings with lights and signals
- Choose roads with bus stops in case children need to leave quickly
- Avoid roads without pavements

In general, when parents rate the 'suitability' of child's walk to school safely, we suggest considering traffic flow, the presence of adequate footways, visibility, and opportunities for road crossing.

Have an Alternate Route Planned

If your child does get into trouble for any reason, or can't follow their regular route, you need to have a backup in mind. Make sure your child knows the alternative walk home as well as they know their primary route. You don't want them to get confused if they're already having the stress of taking a detour. Make sure you set up a system where they alert you if they must take the other route.

Appendix 1

CONFIRMATION/CONSENT THAT MY CHILD MAY WALK TO AND FROM SCHOOL/HOME ALONE

I confirm that _____ who is in Year _____ may walk home from school alone.

I confirm that I have read and understood the school's walking home alone policy.

In the event of an emergency please contact

Name:		tel:	
Relationship to child:		mob:	
Name:		tel:	
Relationship to child:		mob:	

Sign:

Date:

Print:

I will notify the school immediately of any changes to the emergency contact details. I understand the school may revoke this consent if child safety is compromised.

Appendix 2 - Other Safety advice for walking to school

Purchase Bright Clothing

While a black coat might be ideal for keeping the dirt at bay, it may stop your child from being seen by traffic. Make sure that you purchase a coat that can be seen by cars at nighttime. Choose a bright colour and try to opt for something with reflective material. Alternatively, if your child's school uniform denotes a dark coloured coat, you can sew on reflective patches or add reflective and luminescent accessories to your child's bag.

Get Up to Scratch with Road Safety

If you've never run through road safety rules with your child, now is a good time. If you've already been teaching these, run through them with your child to make sure they understand.

Walk the Route Together Beforehand

To instil confidence in your child about walking to school, walk the route with them several times beforehand – use the summer holiday as a chance to do this once or twice a week. Point out landmarks, notable houses, memorable businesses, and other unforgettable features. In doing this, your child starts to know the route off by heart but also knows how to correct themselves if they're wrong.

Brief them on Stranger Danger

As we've become quite an empathetic society, people often talk to children in the street. As pleasant as this is, it can be confusing for young children who aren't so savvy on which adults to trust. Talk through different scenarios with your children and give them safeguarding measures if they feel unsafe around another adult – never go with a stranger, call if they are worried, go back to school to find an adult etc.

Make Sure They Have a Working Mobile Phone

The mobile phone debate goes back and forth, but having a phone certainly gives you a point of contact for your child. It also means they can call you or the police if they feel threatened. If you choose to give your child a mobile phone, give firm instructions on usage as not to run up the phone bill. Explain that it is their responsibility to keep it charged and to notify you if they need topping up. Install all emergency phone numbers into the device and put them on speed dial just in case your child needs help in a hurry. Run through the procedure of dialling 999 for a real emergency.

Identify Safe Spots

If your child gets in trouble on their way home or they are having difficulty contacting you, they may need a safe place to go to ask for help. On the way home, make sure you point out some safe places that your child can seek help – this relieves them from having to ask a stranger. Try speaking to your local newsagent, cafe, coffee shop etc. They will no doubt be happy to help your child if they're in a fluster.

Enforce a Strict No Headphone Rule

Listening to music and walking can be quite meditative, which is exactly the reason it's a bad idea for children. Road safety demands a good working order of all senses and for children to stay alert. If they're listening to music or podcasts on headphones, they won't be able to hear oncoming traffic, which can be extremely dangerous.

Walk with a friend

There is indeed safety in numbers. Having children walk together helps them to remember the directions more clearly – while they can each watch one another's backs. It also means that if your child goes missing, it is more likely to be noticed immediately. Find neighbours who also have children walking the same route.