Hampton Court House

Travelling To and From School Independently Policy

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Reviewed by ACB

Introduction

This policy sets out Hampton Court House School's arrangements for pupils travelling to and from school independently. It explains when independent travel may be permitted, the responsibilities of parents and carers, and the procedures followed if a pupil does not arrive as expected.

Parents and carers are responsible for ensuring that their child arrives at school safely and promptly each morning. Where a child is accompanied, parents and carers should choose the safest practical route and ensure that the child remains with a responsible adult.

Independent travel can support a child's growing confidence and independence. Any decision to allow it must take account of the child's age, maturity, individual needs, the proposed route and the family's arrangements for responding if plans change.

Eligibility for Independent Travel

Children below Year 5 are not normally permitted to travel to or from school without a responsible adult. Independent travel is recommended only for pupils in Year 5 and above and only when the parent or carer is confident that the child can make the journey safely. Individual circumstances may be discussed with the school.

For pupils in Years 5 and 6, written consent from a parent or carer is required before the pupil may travel to or from school independently. The school must hold current emergency contact details, and parents and carers must notify the school in writing of any changes to the arrangement.

For pupils in Year 7 and above, it is generally expected that they will travel to and from school independently or in small groups, as parents and carers consider appropriate. Pupils will be released at the end of the school day unless the school has been instructed otherwise. To withdraw permission for independent travel, parents and carers should email the pupil's Class Teacher, Head of School and Reception.

Parent and Carer Responsibilities

Before agreeing to independent travel, parents and carers must assess the proposed route and be satisfied that their child has the maturity and practical skills to complete the journey safely. This applies even where the child is accompanied on the journey to school but travels home independently.

Parents and carers should:

- walk the route with their child and identify the safest crossings and alternative routes;
- ensure their child understands age-appropriate road safety guidance;
- discuss how to recognise unsafe situations and how to seek help from a trusted adult;
- agree how the child will make contact if the route changes or there is a delay; and
- ensure that an appropriate adult is available to receive the child at home or that another agreed arrangement is in place.

Routes that involve busy main roads, secluded or unlit areas, or roads without pavements should be avoided wherever a safer alternative is available. Parents and carers remain responsible for the child's safety during the journey, including where they are not physically present.

Consent and School Approval

Parents and carers who wish their child in Years 5 or 6 to travel independently must inform the school in writing. The school will maintain a register of pupils who have permission to travel independently.

The school may decline or withdraw permission where it considers that a pupil is not yet able to travel safely, the proposed route is unsuitable, or the arrangement may compromise the pupil's welfare. A journey of more than approximately 15 minutes may require further discussion. Any decision will take account of the individual pupil and route and will be communicated to parents and carers.

Arrival at School

Morning registration will be completed in accordance with the school's attendance procedures. Parents and carers must inform the school if their child will be absent for any reason.If a pupil who travels independently is absent without explanation, the school will contact the parent or carer in line with its usual first-day absence procedures.

If it is confirmed that the pupil left home intending to travel to school but has not arrived, the school will treat this as a missing-child concern. The police will be contacted immediately, the Designated Safeguarding Lead will be informed, and the school's safeguarding and children-missing procedures will be followed.

Departure from School

The school will maintain a register of pupils in Years 5 and 6 who have permission to leave school independently. Staff must check the relevant arrangements before dismissing a pupil where permission is required.

If a pupil has left school but does not arrive home when expected and direct contact with the pupil cannot be established, the parent or carer should contact the school promptly to confirm the time and circumstances of dismissal. As the school may not be contactable after the end of the school day, parents and carers are responsible for contacting the police without delay where the pupil's whereabouts remain unknown or there is an immediate safety concern.

Planning a Safe Route

When planning a route, parents and carers should consider traffic flow, speed limits, pavements, visibility, road crossings, lighting and how busy or isolated the area is. The route should be simple, familiar and appropriate for the child's age and confidence.

Where possible, choose a route that:

- uses quieter residential streets and roads with lower speed limits;
- has pavements and controlled or clearly visible crossings;
- passes familiar shops, landmarks, bus stops or other agreed safe places;
- is well lit and used by other pedestrians;
- avoids alleyways, secluded areas and other known hazards; and
- can be shared with a friend or another pupil making a similar journey.

Families should agree a backup route and a clear contact plan in case the usual route is unavailable. The child should practise both routes and know when to return to school, enter an agreed safe place or contact a parent, carer or the emergency services.

Appendix 1 Additional Safety Advice

Wear Visible Clothing

Choose outerwear and accessories that help drivers see the child, particularly in poor light. Where school uniform or a coat is dark, reflective patches or reflective accessories can improve visibility.

Practise Road Safety

Review road safety regularly. Make sure the child knows how to choose a safe place to cross, use pedestrian crossings, stay alert near driveways and parked cars, and avoid distraction while walking.

Walk the Route Together

Walk the planned route together several times before independent travel begins. Point out crossings, landmarks, safe places and any areas where extra care is needed. Practise the alternative route as well as the usual one.

Discuss Seeking Help

Talk through what the child should do if they feel unsafe, become lost or are approached by someone they do not know. They should not go anywhere with an unknown adult. They should move to an agreed safe place, return to school where possible, and contact a trusted adult or the police in an emergency.

Agree Safe Use of a Mobile Phone

Where a child carries a mobile phone for the journey, it should be charged and contain the necessary emergency contact numbers. The child should understand when and how to call a parent or carer and when it is appropriate to call 999. Any phone brought onto the school site must be managed in line with the school's current mobile phone arrangements.

Identify Safe Places

Agree suitable places along the route where the child may ask for help, such as a familiar shop, cafe, public building or the home of a known family. Ensure the child understands that these are backup locations rather than changes to the agreed route.

Do Not Use Headphones

Pupils should not wear headphones or earbuds while travelling independently. They must be able to hear traffic, announcements and other warnings and remain fully aware of their surroundings.

Travel with a Friend Where Possible

Travelling with another pupil can provide reassurance and make it easier to notice if plans change. Parents and carers should agree the arrangement in advance and ensure that each child knows what to do if they become separated.