



ST MARGARET OF SCOTLAND CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Safeguarding Children Walking To and From School Alone

September 2021



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 children and therefore have to consider what we believe is good practice in ensuring their safety. We also have an obligation to alert relevant authorities should we believe a child's welfare is at risk.

Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1

Our agreed school policy is that **no child in Foundation Stage or Key Stage 1** 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 children over to named adults or older siblings provided they are 16 years old or above. We require parents to set up a password and children will not be handed over to other adults unless the school has been informed by the parent and the password is known. We also ask that you keep us informed of any changes in arrangements, preferably by letter.

If no one comes to collect a child in these year groups they will be kept in school and parents contacted.

We will not allow older brothers or sisters under the age of 16 years of age to collect younger siblings.

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. As a school we follow what we believe to be good practise that pupils in Years 3 and 4 are still brought to and collected from school. At St Margaret's we are happy to allow children in Years 5 and 6 to walk to and home from school with written permission from parents.

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 lots of 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. (A safe adult is someone who has been previously agreed upon by you and your child to be safe, such as a grandparent or trusted neighbour). And if that person tries to convince them to go with him/her or tries to physically get close, then scream, "Help! This is not my dad!" or "Help! This is not my mum!" and run away. If they grab them, tell your child to kick, punch, and hit.

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 didn't want to do?
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.

If you decide that your child in Year 5 or 6, is ready for this responsibility then you must inform the school by completing the slip below and returning to the Class Teacher.

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.

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



St. Margaret of Scotland Catholic Primary School



Permission for children in Year 5 and 6 to walk to and from school unaccompanied

Person with parental responsibility to complete and return this reply slip to school

Name of child: Class:

I wish to inform you that my child will be (please tick box below)

walking to/from school alone on a regular basis

getting the bus to/from school alone on a 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 the 'Policy on safeguarding pupils walking to and from school alone'.

Signed: Date:

Print Name: Contact number:.....