



# ST MARY'S C of E (VA) PRIMARY SCHOOL WALKING TO AND FROM SCHOOL ALONE.

Agreed by Headteacher February 2024

*'Let your light shine... as you grow', (inspired by Matthew 5: 15-16)*

*Our vision is: 'We nurture our pupils to be the best they can be in every way - in an inclusive and supportive environment, rooted in Christian teachings.'*

## **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 / Carers 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 Early Years (Reception) / Key Stage 1 (Years 1 & 2)**

St Mary's (VA) Primary School policy is that no pupil in Early Years / KS 1 should walk to or from school on his / her own or with an older sibling below the age of 14. No child should be left on their own on the school premises either before or after school.

### **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 and 4 should still be brought to and collected from school by an adult. Therefore, as regards pupils in Year 5 and 6, we believe that you as parents / carers need to decide whether your child is ready for the responsibility of walking to and from school alone as this very much depends on their maturity and confidence and that you are satisfied they are safe to do so (see points to consider on page 2).

Pupils will not be handed over to other adults unless the school has been informed by the parent / carer that they have made this arrangement. We also ask that you keep us informed of any changes in arrangements, preferably by email or 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, they will be kept in school and parents / carers contacted. If the child is not collected and we have failed to contact the child's parents / carers, we will contact the emergency contact for the child and inform the School's Safeguarding Lead (DSL/DDSL), if need be we will consult with the Children's and Family Hub. We will not allow older brothers or sisters in school to collect younger siblings except in extreme circumstances and with the agreement from the Headteacher.

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).

In deciding whether your child is ready to walk to school you should assess any risks associated with the route. Work with your child 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 always 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 child 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 route 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 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 their own.

If you decide that your child is ready for this responsibility then you must inform the school by the online form which is sent out every September. Contact the school office if you need this resent. 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 proven they can be trusted again.

Where children walk to, or walk home from school, alone, we would usually expect that a parent / carer 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. Once your child(ren) has left school it is the responsibility of the parent / carer for their safety.

IF AT ANY TIME YOU NEED TO CHANGE THE ARRANGEMENTS YOU HAVE MADE, PLEASE ENSURE YOU LET US KNOW IN WRITING IMMEDIATELY VIA THE SCHOOL OFFICE ON [info@st-maryscofe.essex.sch.uk](mailto:info@st-maryscofe.essex.sch.uk)