

# Walking to School Alone

12th September 2016

# When are children ready to walk to school alone?

❖ No legal age

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.”

<http://www.familylives.org.uk/advice/primary/health-and-development/should-you-let-your-child-walk-to-school/>

# Who makes the decision?

## ❖ Parents:

Criteria to consider-

- The maturity of your child
- The distance to school
- The route to school (availability of pavements, roads to cross)
- Alone or with others
- Every day or not

- To or from school or both

# Questions to consider:

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 (scream, shout, kick, fight)?
7. Would they know what to do if they needed help?
8. Would they know who best to approach to get help?



❖ School:

We would still highly recommend that pupils in year 3 and 4 at least are still brought to and collected from school.



# If it's a yes...

## ❖ Preparation:

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.

Do a trial run and let the child take the lead

Make sure child is happy to walk on their own

Set the boundaries: where are they not allowed to go?

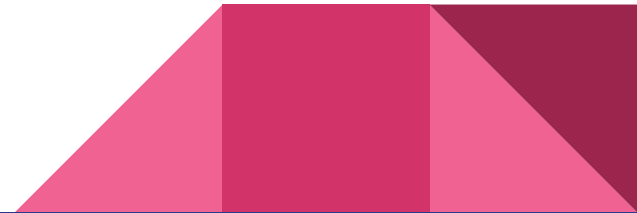
So when out and about remember to teach the following...



- 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.



Stick to the safest, most direct route home and avoid short cuts, particularly through isolated locations.



# Stranger Danger

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 him to go with him or tries to physically get close to him, 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 as hard as they can.

Ask for help from a trustworthy adult (police, shop keeper etc)

Stay in public places particularly if they feel they are being followed

# Mobile Phones

- ❖ Parent decision
- ❖ Apps to track a mobile phone to ensure they get to school
- ❖ If they do, they need to hand it into teacher at the beginning of the day



## Next steps...

- ❖ 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 completing a permission form.

(Your child will be prevented from walking home unless this permission has been given in writing)



# NSPCC

❖ Is my Child Ready to go out Alone? guide



Any questions?

