

John Ray Junior School
Walking home alone from school

There are no laws around age or distance of walking to and from 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 does not disallow independent travel. However, as a school we are responsible for the welfare of our pupils and therefore must 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 Y3 and Y4

While there is no set age when children are ready to walk to school or home on their own, we believe that pupils in Years 3, 4 and 5 should be still brought to and collected from school and this is our school approach.

Pupils in Y5 and Y6

Parents need to decide whether their Y5 / Y6 child is ready for the responsibility of walking to and from school alone.

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 many 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 for children 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 wayfinding on their own, in preparation for walking with friends or alone when they are older.

Teach your child to:

- Always pay attention to traffic when crossing the street; never become distracted.
- Always cross at the intersection where there are traffic lights or where there is a crossing patrol; 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 its own.

If you decide that your child is ready for this responsibility, then you must inform the school by completing the form at the bottom of this letter.

Children walking home are still representing the school and the DfE publication Behaviour and discipline in school, 2014 states that **teachers have the power to discipline pupils for misbehaving outside of the school premises "to such an extent as is reasonable"**. This means that children not behaving appropriately on the way to and from school may receive consequences in line with our behaviour policy.

Where children walk to, or walk home from school, alone, we would usually expect that a parent, or other responsible person, 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.

[Permission for Year 5 & 6 children to walk home – Fill out form](#)