

Concordia Academy

Safeguarding: Independent Arrival and Dismissal for Children

Last updated: September 2024

Statement of Intent: Children walking to and from school on their own.

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 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.

Our agreed school policy is that no pupil in Reception to Y4 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 over pupils to named adults or older siblings provided they are 16 years old or above. Pupils will not be handed over to other adults unless the school has been informed by the parent that they have made this arrangement. We also ask that you keep us informed of any changes in arrangements, preferably by letter. If no one turns up 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 in school to collect younger siblings.

Children in Y5 and Y6

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. Therefore, as regards pupils in Y5 and Y6 we believe that you as parents need to decide whether your child is ready for this responsibility. 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 and the dangers of becoming 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.
- Avoid any interaction with strangers and teach them what to do if someone approaches them. You should also talk to your child about how they should handle dangerous situations. One way is to teach them, "No, Go, Yell, Tell." If in a dangerous situation, children should say no, run away, yell as loud as they can, and tell a trusted adult what happened right away. Make sure that your children know that it is okay to say no to an adult in a dangerous situation and to yell to keep themselves safe, even if they are indoors. It's good to practise this in different situations so that your children will feel confident in knowing what to do.

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 (such as scream and shout)?
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 to and from school on their own. If you decide that your child is ready for this responsibility, then you must inform the school in writing and give your consent. Your child will be prevented from walking home unless this permission has been given in writing.

If your child is unwell in the morning, you MUST call in to the office before school, this is so the school is aware that your child is not walking to school alone and has not failed to arrive. This is for your child's safety. Failure to do so will result in your child needing to be dropped to school by an adult.

Your child will also be responsible for their own behaviour whilst on the school premises either before or after school. Should their behaviour not be acceptable (either at school or off-site on the way to and from school) then you will again be asked them to accompany or collect them until they have proved they can be trusted again.

If your child, when walking to school alone, arrives late to school then you will be required to drop your child to school in the mornings - this is at the school's discretion.

If there are any breaches of this policy then the school reserves the right to withdraw permission for your child to walk to and from school alone.

If at any time you wish to change the arrangements you have made, then please ensure that you let us know in writing immediately.