



South Hetton Primary School

Walking from School



Date Reviewed	September 2026
Next Review Date	September 2027

WALKING TO AND FROM SCHOOL ALONE

There is no legal minimum age at which a child may walk to or from school alone.

A family's 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.

In line with our safeguarding duties, as outlined in Keeping Children Safe in Education, we also have an obligation to alert relevant authorities should we believe a child's welfare is at risk.

Pupils in Foundation Stage or KS1

It is the advice of school that no pupil 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 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 or email. If no one turns up to collect a child in these year groups, they will be kept in school, taken to tea club, and parents contacted. We will not allow older brothers or sisters in school to collect younger siblings.

Pupils in KS2 (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.

The NSPCC advise that *'children under 8 should not go out alone, and that most children under 12 may not yet have the maturity or judgement to walk home alone safely.'*

However, we recognise that independence is an important skill and that you may feel that it is appropriate for your child to walk home alone as they become older and reach greater levels of maturity. Therefore, as regards pupils in KS2, we believe that you as parents need to decide whether your child is ready for this responsibility. We would strongly recommend that pupils in Years 3 and 4 continue to be accompanied to and from school by a responsible adult.

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 them or tries to physically get close to them, give your child strategies such as to scream and create a scene, run away, attract attention of others.

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 (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?

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 in writing. (*Appendix A*) 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. Should their behaviour not be acceptable, you will be asked to accompany or collect them until they have proved they can be trusted again.

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

After-school Clubs

Safeguarding and child welfare is our key priority. We would strongly urge you to collect your child from any after-school clubs, particularly in the winter months when children will be leaving in the dark. **All children in Year 4 and below must be collected by an adult.** If your child is in Year 5 or 6, and you would like them to walk home from an after-school club, you must provide written consent for this. (*Appendix A*)

Tea Club

Again, we would strongly urge you to collect your child from tea club, particularly in the winter months when children will be leaving in the dark. **All children in Year 4 and below must be collected by an adult.** If your child is in Year 5 or 6, and you would like them to walk home from tea club, you must provide written consent for this. (*Appendix A*)



South Hetton Primary School

Frederick Terrace
South Hetton
Durham
DH6 2TJ

Telephone: 0191 526 1662

Fax: 0191 526 5820

Email: office@shprimary.co.uk

Headteacher: Mrs. N. Mayo

The future begins here...

Dear Parent/Guardian,

The NSPCC advise that *'children under 8 should not go out alone, and that most children under 12 may not yet have the maturity or judgement to walk home alone safely.'* However, we recognise that independence is an important skill and that you may feel that it is appropriate for your child to walk home alone as they become older and reach greater levels of maturity.

If you give permission for your child to walk home, you must complete the reply slip overpage to provide this authorisation. Please note that once your child has been dismissed from school grounds by staff, they become your responsibility. It is your responsibility to ensure that your child arrives home safely, and that there is somebody responsible at home to meet them.

If your child does not have permission to walk home, please also complete the reply slip overpage to inform us of who has authorisation to collect your child. This will help us to ensure that all of our records are correct.

If at any point you wish to change your child's independent travel arrangements — for example, during the darker winter months — please inform the school. We will provide a new consent form for you to update your request.

Safeguarding children is our priority, and it is our goal to work together with parents to ensure that children reach home safely at the end of the day. Please note that we have an obligation to alert relevant authorities should we believe a child's welfare is at risk.

Our full Walking Home Policy and guidance is available on the school website should you wish to read it in more detail.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Kind Regards

Mrs N. Mayo

School Collection Arrangements

HOMETIME

☐

My child has permission to walk home once school has finished at 3:05pm.

☐

My child DOES NOT have permission to walk home. The following people are authorised to collect my child:_____

TEA CLUB

☐

My child has permission to walk home from tea club when it finishes at 5pm.

☐

My child DOES NOT have permission to walk home. The following people are authorised to collect my child:_____

AFTER-SCHOOL CLUB

☐

My child has permission to walk home from after-school clubs that I have signed my child up to on Arbor.

☐

My child DOES NOT have permission to walk home. The following people are authorised to collect my child:_____

I understand that it is my responsibility to ensure that my child makes it home from school safely, and I have considered the risks outlined in the walking home policy.

Child's name:

Child's Class:

Signed:

Relationship to child:



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The future begins here...

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Safeguarding the children in our care is always our highest priority.

The NSPCC advises that *children under 8 should not go out alone, and that most children under 12 may not yet have the maturity or judgement to walk home safely on their own*. In line with this guidance, and with our own safeguarding responsibilities, we are updating our records to ensure we know exactly who is authorised to collect your child from school.

Please complete the slip overleaf to confirm the adults who have permission to collect your child. Children will **only be released to named individuals aged 16 or over**. If you need to make any changes to these arrangements, please notify the school office in writing without delay.

If no authorised adult arrives to collect your child, they will remain safely in school or be placed in Tea Club until we are able to contact a parent/guardian.

Thank you for your support in helping us make sure every child leaves school safely each day. Working in partnership with parents and carers is vital to safeguarding our pupils.

Kind Regards

Mrs N. Mayo

School Collection Arrangements

HOMETIME

The following people are authorised to collect my child:

TEA CLUB

The following people are authorised to collect my child:

AFTER-SCHOOL CLUB

The following people are authorised to collect my child:

Child's name:

Child's Class:

Signed:

Relationship to child: