

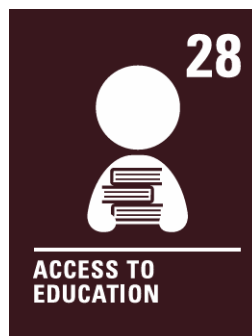


# **Policy for children travelling to and from home to school**

**Policy written: April 2026**

**Approved by LAB : 6<sup>th</sup> May 2026**

**Date of next review : April 2028**



### St Chad's CE Primary School Values:



At St Chad's, compassion is at the heart of everything we do: nurturing and teaching the changemakers of the future. Enabling them to fly as far as they can. Developing them as resilient, respectful individuals who take responsibility for themselves, others and their environment, through service and excellence. They are resourceful and know what is needed for their own success and the success of the community. Just as Noah did, they will go on to make a positive impact on the world.

### Overview

Guidance tells us that if schools are aware that parents are allowing an older sibling to look after a younger child, it would be good practice to provide information to parents/carers to assist safe decision making about the arrangements.

There is no set legal age that children can walk to and from school independently or be left on their own. However, it is an offence to leave a child alone if it places them at risk and therefore schools have a continual obligation to alert relevant authorities if they believe this is the case. This could, theoretically, include the journey to and from school.

Further guidance contained in a small booklet produced by the NSPCC states that children under 8 cannot judge speed and distance of moving vehicles. The booklet is very informative and amongst other things has a section for parents on 'Keeping your Child Safe'. For further information please visit the NSPCC website at [www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)

The DFE indicate that it is for each school to decide on their own pupil collection policy.

The school is not responsible for the safety of a pupil once the school day is over and the pupil has left the school premises.

The school is not responsible for the safety of a pupil before they enter our school gates, at 8:35. If a child is walking to school with friends or alone, they remain the responsibility of the parents.

### **Approach**

St Chad's CE Primary School, Uppermill has developed its own policy regarding how it approaches the issue of parents/carers wishing to allow their child/ren to walk home alone or be collected by a sibling or other responsible party. The policy not only reflects the values of the school, but more importantly addresses the safeguarding of our pupils.

### **Allowing your child to walk home alone**

#### **EYFS and KS1 Lower KS2**

The school **WILL NOT** permit any child below Year 5 to walk home alone. In all circumstances a responsible adult, usually a parent or carer, or somebody authorised by a parent or carer and known by the school should collect the child at the end of the school day.

Where this is an unfamiliar adult to staff, you will be asked to give a password to ensure the safety of children at all times.

#### **KS2**

Pupils in years 5&6 can, with the prior consent of a parent or carer walk home unaccompanied. Parents/carers wishing to exercise this option should give permission on Arbor.

These consents update every September, as circumstances may have changed.

Any child/ren who does not have permission to walk home alone on Arbor, will not be permitted to leave the building without a responsible adult to pick them up.

### **Assessing whether your child is ready to walk home alone**

As a parent/carers, we all ask ourselves, "At what age should I let my child walk home alone?"

The answer unfortunately isn't that straight forward. A child doesn't automatically at some predetermined age become confident, assertive, capable and powerful. Ideally, and in reality the development of these attributes is a gradual process of ever-greater challenges during which a child gains experience and autonomy.

### **Behaviour of children walking home alone**

Children walking home from school alone are still representatives of our school. They will still be wearing our uniform, be in our local community and members of the community will likely know the school they attend.

Therefore, we expect all children walking home alone to continue to behave in line with our school values.

Children who do not behave in a: compassionate, respectful and responsible way will be discussed with parents and carers on a case by case basis.

This will involve the following:

- Discussion with child regarding their behaviour
- Discussion with the parent
- Reminder of expectations in line with our school values (if appropriate)

- If necessary, the Headteacher will remove the permission for the child/ren to walk home alone and the child will not be released without a responsible person.
- This may be for a set period of time, or indefinitely, depending on the behaviours being exhibited, their impact on others and the child/ren's age.

### **Drop off and collection by older siblings**

If it is not safe for a child to walk home alone unaccompanied, it is the parent/carer's responsibility to ensure that the child is dropped off and collected by a responsible person.

There is no minimum age set in law when a young person is allowed to remain in charge of another child, however it is an offence to leave a child alone if it places them at risk. This can include in the care of an older sibling if the level of supervision is 'likely to cause unnecessary suffering or injury to health' (*Children and Young Persons Act, 1933*). Therefore parents/carers must understand and be prepared to take responsibility for anything that should go wrong in their absence. They are also responsible for the care and safety of their eldest child, even while that child is acting in a caring role for younger siblings.

If parents have given permission for older siblings to collect /drop off younger children this will be recorded on Arbor by the school. If the school has any concern that older siblings are not competent to take younger siblings to and from school or there are concerns about any child's safety or welfare due to these arrangements; this must be raised with the parent (ideally in advance of collection) and if alternative arrangements are not made, a safeguarding referral made to Children's Services where necessary.

The school has therefore set out in its policy that the minimum age at which an older sibling can collect or drop off a younger sibling is 14 years of age. The school have the right to refuse any person under this age permission to collect a pupil from the school's premises. Any changes to this will be discussed on a case-by-case basis.

The suitability of a sibling caring for a younger child will be to be considered on a case by case basis, by a judgment of the potential risks of this arrangement; the maturity of the child collecting/being collected; the length and nature of the journey home, the behaviour and relationship of the children collecting/being collected. We are happy to discuss this with any parent who wishes to.

### **Extra-curricular activities**

The same procedures for drop off and collection can be applied to extended school activities, where the activity is provided by the school. Safeguarding concerns are reported to Children's Services, who will decide on the appropriate response.

Where the activity is provided by an external organisation, it is the responsibility of that organisation to identify and respond to safeguarding concerns, including those arising from drop off and collection issues. The school governing body should ensure that as part of the service level agreement, the organisation has confirmed that safeguarding arrangements are adhered to.

### Right to refuse a parent or carer to collect a pupil

There are factors which may affect a parent/carers ability to care for and look after a child/ren and ensure and provide a safe and friendly environment for them.

The use of drugs/alcohol or the presence of mental health difficulties does not in itself necessarily mean that the parents/carers are uncaring, incompetent or unable to offer safe care to their child/ren.

However, if the extent of a parent's own needs mean that they cannot keep the child safe from harm, then a safeguarding referral to Children's Services is required.

'Drugs' in this context refers to all drugs including medicines, volatile substances, alcohol, tobacco and illegal drugs.

If an adult with parental responsibility presents at school and staff are concerned that their presentation suggests they are unable to offer safe care, steps must be taken to clarify the situation and assess the risk to the child. Please see below for some factors to consider:

- 1) Be mindful of staff safety and the safety of the children in the building
- 2) Talk to the parent and ascertain if they appear safe to be able to offer safe care for their child/ren.

### Considerations

- Appearance of the parent/carer
  - ☐ Can they maintain eye contact?
  - ☐ Is the smell of alcohol or drugs detected on them?
  - ☐ Are they staggering or swaying?
  - ☐ Are they speaking incoherently?
- Personal needs of the parent/carer
  - ☐ Are their needs going to compromise their ability to meet the needs of the child/ren?
  - ☐ Are there other carers at home who could meet the child/ren's needs and those of the person collecting the child/ren?
- How do they intend to get home /how did they arrive at school with the child? Is the parent driving? Are they fit to do so?
- Is the parent/carers in sole care or charge of the child? Can the adult identify another parent or supportive adult to be with them and the child?

If concerned about ability to care for the child based on the factors above, then a safeguarding referral to Children's Services is required.

The school should aim to retain care of the child whilst awaiting the advice of Police and Children's Services.

Schools do not have the authority legally to retain a child against a parent/carers will; therefore if this is not possible, then the school should consider ringing for a Police welfare check on the **non-emergency** number, **101**.

There may be occasions where an immediate, **emergency** call needs to be made to the police (i.e. **999**), because it is judged that a child or another person (including staff) may be imminently at risk of serious danger. Examples include:

- An intoxicated parent is behaving violently or is threatening violence such that the belief is that the threats may be carried out thus compromising the immediate safety or care of a child, or;
- Places others in danger by driving a car whilst unfit through drugs or alcohol.

### **Dropping off children at school**

Children under Year 5 should not be dropped off at the locked school gates before school opens. This is not a safe place for children to be left, and school staff are not yet available to take responsibility for children should something happen outside the school gates.

If children in Year 5 and 6 are dropped off before the gates open, this cannot be more than 10 minutes before they are unlocked. If this is more than 10 minutes, children may be taken into Before School club and you may be charged. Children should only be dropped off before school opens if they are able to behave inline with our school values and the child knows and are responsible enough to know what they should do if they need an adult.

### **In the event of school closure**

In the event of school closure, when families may have already started making their way to school, parents will be alerted via email as soon as possible.

Children whose parents have deemed are responsible enough to walk, will need to be able to be located by their parents and a contingency plan put into place.

It is the suggestion of school that if you do not have a way to communicate with your child, you should not allow them to travel to and from school without a responsible adult.

### **Equal Opportunities**

St Chad's CE Primary School is an inclusive school where we focus on the well-being and progress of every child and where all members of our community are of equal worth.

We believe that the Equality Act provides a framework to support our commitment to valuing diversity, tackling discrimination, promoting equality and fostering good relationships between people. It also ensures that we continue to tackle issues of disadvantage and underachievement of different groups.

The Equality Act 2010 was introduced to ensure protection from discrimination, harassment and victimisation on the grounds of specific characteristics (referred to as protective characteristics). This means that schools cannot discriminate against children/staff or treat them less favourably because of their gender, race, disability, religion or belief, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, pregnancy or maternity. Age and marriage and civil partnerships are also "protected characteristics."

The formulation of this policy is in line with the Equality Act.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

Policy and practice is regularly evaluated. Feedback along with recommendations to inform future policy and planning will be given to all relevant parties.

The school leadership team have a responsibility to ensure the policy is embedded into the school provision and report to governors on the effectiveness of the policy at least every 3 years.