UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Travel to School Policy

Approved by
Full Governing Body

Last reviewed on
October 2025

Next review due
October 2026

RELEASING THE IMAGINATION: CELEBRATING THE ART OF THE POSSIBLE

1. INTRODUCTION AND LEGAL CONTEXT

1.1 Purpose

This policy sets out the University of Cambridge Primary School's approach to children travelling independently to and from school. It aims to balance children's developmental need for age-appropriate independence with our safeguarding responsibilities under Section 175 of the Education Act 2002.

1.2 Legal Framework

There is no statutory age limit in UK law for children walking to school independently. This decision rests with parents exercising their legal parental responsibility under the Children Act 1989. However, the school has safeguarding duties that apply during school hours and on premises, and we provide this policy framework based on safeguarding best practice and statutory guidance.

1.3 Policy Scope

This policy applies to:

- All journeys to and from school during regular dismissal times
- Journeys following after-school clubs and activities
- All pupils from Reception through Year 6

1.4 Key Principles

- Parents hold primary responsibility for ensuring their children travel safely to and from school
- The school's duty of care begins when children arrive on premises and ends when they leave at the end of the school day (except where we provide or organize transport)
- Individual assessment is more important than rigid age thresholds
- Safeguarding must be balanced with promoting age-appropriate independence

2. INDEPENDENT TRAVEL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Year Group Guidance

Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 (Reception - Year 2, ages 4-7)

- Children in these year groups **must be collected by a responsible adult** (aged 16+)
- Independent travel is **not permitted** for this age group
- Named adults authorized for collection must be documented

Years 3-4 (ages 7-9)

- Children in these year groups **must be collected** - they cannot walk independently
- Collection must be by either:
    - A responsible adult (aged 16+), OR
    - A named older sibling (aged 14+) who may collect a maximum of 2 younger children
- Parents must provide written details of all authorized adults/siblings for collection

Years 5-6 (ages 9-11)

- Children may travel independently **with written parental consent**
- Permission requests will be assessed based on individual child readiness

- Parents must complete the Independent Travel Consent Form on ParentMail
- Year 5 pupils may be granted permission from the summer term to allow gradual transition
- Independent travel permission can include after-school clubs (see Section 5 for important considerations)

Note on siblings: Year 5-6 pupils may walk to/from school alongside siblings who also have independent travel permission (e.g., two siblings both in Years 5-6 walking together). However, Year 5-6 pupils cannot act as the responsible collector for younger siblings who require adult collection - see Section 2.2 for sibling collection requirements.

2.2 Sibling Collection

Important Distinction: Children in Years 5-6 may have permission to walk independently themselves, but this does NOT automatically mean they can collect younger siblings and leave the school premises with them.
Requirements for Sibling Collection:

- Older siblings must be aged 14 or over to collect younger children and leave the premises
- The older sibling must be named on the younger child's authorized collection list
- Older siblings may collect a maximum of 2 younger children
- This arrangement requires separate written parental consent
- The older sibling must demonstrate maturity and responsibility

Years 5-6 Pupils - Special Arrangements: Pupils in Years 5-6 (ages 9-11) do not meet the age requirement to collect younger siblings and leave the premises independently. However, for practical convenience, the following arrangement is permitted:

- A Year 5 or 6 sibling may collect their younger sibling from their classroom
- They must then wait on the school premises (e.g., playground, collection point) for collection by a responsible adult (aged 16+) or authorised older sibling (aged 14+)
- The younger child effectively remains under school supervision until the appropriate adult/older sibling arrives
- This arrangement must be documented on the younger child's collection arrangements form
- Staff will monitor that children are not leaving the premises without appropriate collection

Example: A Year 6 pupil can collect their Year 3 sibling from their classroom door at 3:15pm, then wait with them in the playground for their parent to collect both children. The Year 6 pupil cannot walk off the premises with the Year 3 child.
Legal Context: While parents have legal responsibility for deciding who collects their children, the school sets this age threshold based on safeguarding best practice. A 9-11 year old does not have the maturity, legal capacity, or physical capability to take responsibility for younger children's safety during the journey from school to home.

2.3 Alternative Transport Arrangements (Taxis, Private Hire, Minibuses)

Parents may wish to arrange alternative transport for their children, such as taxis or private hire vehicles. The school's position on these arrangements depends on the age of the child and the nature of the service.
Reception - Year 4: Children in these year groups require collection by a known, authorised adult. Standard commercial taxi services with rotating drivers do not meet this requirement, as:

- Drivers are not known to the child or school
- There is no consistent relationship or accountability
- Safeguarding concerns exist about children traveling alone with unknown adults

Acceptable alternatives for Reception - Year 4:

- Regular private hire with a named, consistent driver who is formally authorized by parents and known to the child
- SEND transport arranged by the Local Authority with vetted drivers
- Shared transport arrangements where a named, DBS-checked adult regularly transports children (e.g., friend's parent, childminder)

Parents must provide the school with:

- Name of the driver/transport provider
- Contact details
- Vehicle registration
- Written confirmation that the arrangement is regular and consistent

Years 5-6: Children with independent travel permission may use commercial taxis if:

- Parents have given specific written consent for taxi use
- The child is capable of managing this independently (getting in/out, providing address, having payment/account arranged)
- Parents understand they retain full responsibility for this arrangement

General Safeguarding Requirements: For any alternative transport arrangement (all year groups):

- Parents retain full legal responsibility
- The school's duty of care ends when the child is handed to the authorized person/transport
- Any concerns about arrangements will be addressed with parents
- The school reserves the right to refuse arrangements that present safeguarding concerns

Occasional vs. Regular Use:

- Regular arrangements (e.g., daily taxi with same driver) require formal authorization as above
- Occasional use (e.g., emergency taxi once) should be communicated to the school office in advance where possible, with parent confirming collection details

2.4 Exceptional Circumstances and Individual Risk Assessments

Whilst this policy sets out standard arrangements applicable to all families, the school recognises that in exceptional circumstances, individual risk assessments may be necessary.
When Exceptional Arrangements May Be Considered:

The Executive Headteacher (or Associate Headteacher in consultation with the Executive Headteacher) may approve arrangements that differ from standard policy where:

- There are significant mitigating family circumstances (e.g. lone parent with work commitments, medical needs, specific family situations)
- A comprehensive individual risk assessment has been completed
- The arrangement demonstrably reduces rather than increases risk to the child
- Alternative arrangements are not reasonably available to the family
- The arrangement is time-limited and subject to regular review

Temporary Nature of Exceptional Arrangements:
All exceptional arrangements are temporary measures designed to support families through specific challenging periods. They are not permanent solutions and will:

- Be granted for a specific time period (typically one term, maximum one academic year)
- Require regular review (at least termly)
- Be reassessed if circumstances change
- Be phased out when circumstances improve or alternative arrangements become available
- End automatically at the end of the specified time period unless formally renewed following reassessment

The expectation is that families will work towards standard policy-compliant arrangements wherever possible.

Assessment Process:
Any request for exceptional arrangements must:

- Be made in writing with full details of circumstances
- Include a meeting with the Designated Safeguarding Lead and/or Executive Headteacher
- Be assessed using the Individual Risk Assessment Framework (considering all factors in Section 3)
- Be documented with clear rationale for the decision and specified time limit
- Be reviewed at least termly or when circumstances change

Important Notes:

- Exceptional arrangements are not precedent-setting and do not oblige the school to grant similar requests in different circumstances
- Each family's situation is unique and assessed individually
- The school cannot disclose details of other families' arrangements due to confidentiality
- All decisions prioritise child safety and wellbeing
- Parents may appeal decisions through the school's complaints procedure

Transparency and Equity:
The school is committed to treating all families fairly and equitably. However, equity means responding appropriately to individual circumstances, not treating everyone identically. The school will always be transparent about the process and criteria used for decision-making, whilst maintaining appropriate confidentiality about individual family circumstances.

3. ASSESSMENT OF CHILD READINESS

3.1 Factors for Individual Assessment

Before granting permission, parents and the school will consider:

Child Capability

- Maturity level and decision-making ability
- Understanding of road safety (Green Cross Code)
- Stranger danger awareness and ability to resist approaches
- Knowledge of emergency procedures
- Ability to follow instructions reliably
- Behavioral reliability, especially when with friends

Journey Characteristics

- Distance from home to school
- Volume of traffic along the route
- Availability and quality of pavements
- Number and type of road crossings required
- Presence of pedestrian crossings and traffic lights
- Street lighting adequacy
- Presence of secluded areas or known safety concerns

Home Circumstances

- Whether a responsible adult will be home upon arrival
- Child's ability to access emergency support if arriving to an empty house
- Reliable communication methods available (e.g., mobile phone)

3.2 Essential Safety Skills

Before walking independently, children must demonstrate:

- Road Safety Competence: Green Cross Code (Stop, Look, Listen, Think)
- Emergency Knowledge: Full name, home address with postcode, parent phone numbers
- Safe Adults Recognition: Ability to identify who to approach for help
- Risk Awareness: Understanding when to avoid taking shortcuts or alternative routes
- Communication Skills: Ability to contact parents if running late or feeling unsafe
- "Clever Never Goes" Understanding: Recognition that they should never go anywhere with someone without explicit parent permission

4. CONSENT AND DOCUMENTATION

4.1 Written Consent Process

Parents wishing their child (Years 5-6 only) to walk independently must:

- Complete the Independent Travel Consent Form on ParentMail at the start of each academic year
- Acknowledge they retain full responsibility for the journey
- Understand that consent can be withdrawn at any time

4.2 Annual Renewal

Consent forms must be renewed annually at the start of each academic year to ensure:

- Parents reassess appropriateness as children mature

- Family circumstances and routes are still suitable
- School records remain accurate

4.3 Changes to Arrangements

- Parents must notify the school in writing (email to school office acceptable) for any changes to usual arrangements
- Verbal messages via children will not be accepted for safeguarding reasons
- Consent can be withdrawn at any time by contacting the school office

4.4 School's Right to Withdraw Permission

The school reserves the right to withdraw permission if:

- The child demonstrates unsafe behavior on school premises before or after school
- Reports emerge of concerning behavior during journeys
- There are changes in the child's circumstances that affect safety
- Safeguarding concerns arise

Parents will be informed in writing if permission is withdrawn, with reasons provided.

5. AFTER-SCHOO CLUBS AND ACTIVITIES

5.1 Independent Travel After Clubs

Years 5-6 with Independent Travel Permission: Children in Years 5-6 who have written parental consent for independent travel may walk home after after-school clubs and activities. The independent travel consent granted via ParentMail applies to both regular dismissal times and after-school club dismissals.
Reception - Year 4: All children in Reception through Year 4 must be collected by a responsible adult (aged 16+) or authorized older sibling (aged 14+) after after-school clubs, regardless of any other arrangements.

5.2 Important Information for Parents: After-School vs Regular Dismissals

Parents should be aware that after-school club dismissals (typically 4:30pm or later) occur in significantly different circumstances than regular 3:15pm dismissal:

Key Differences:

- Fewer people around: Far fewer pupils, parents, and staff present, creating more isolated journeys
- Reduced supervision: Less natural supervision from the school community
- Darkness in winter months: During November through February, dismissal occurs after dark, creating additional visibility and safety concerns
- Driver awareness: Drivers are less expecting children near schools at these times

Parents are encouraged to discuss these differences with their children and consider whether adjustments to arrangements may be appropriate, particularly during winter months.

5.3 Winter Months Considerations

While independent travel permission applies year-round, parents are strongly encouraged to:

- Reconsider arrangements during winter months (November-February) when clubs finish in darkness
- Ensure children have appropriate visibility clothing/equipment (hi-vis, lights, reflective gear)
- Ensure children have fully charged mobile phones for winter evening journeys
- Consider weather conditions when making day-to-day decisions
- Have contingency plans for adverse weather

Parents may choose to collect their child after winter clubs even if they have independent travel permission. This is a day-to-day parental decision.

5.4 Safeguarding Rationale

This policy approach reflects:

- No legal requirement for universal adult collection after clubs
- Parental responsibility to assess appropriateness based on individual circumstances and seasonal factors
- School's safeguarding duty to ensure parents have relevant information to make informed decisions
- Recognition that Year 5-6 children with proven readiness for independent travel can manage different circumstances with appropriate preparation
- Balance between child independence and proportionate safety measures

5.5 Collection Procedures

When children are not collected: If a child expected to be collected after a club is not picked up:

- Staff will attempt to contact parents/emergency contacts
- Children will be supervised until collected
- Persistent failure to collect punctually may result in withdrawal of after-school club privileges
- The school maintains duty of care until child is safely collected

Last-minute changes: Parents must notify the school office directly (not via the child) of any changes to collection arrangements for after-school clubs.

6. MOBILE PHONES

6.1 School Approach

The school permits children walking independently to carry a mobile phone if parents choose. Mobile phones can provide:

- Contact with parents in emergencies
- GPS tracking capability for parental monitoring
- Access to emergency services if needed

The decision to provide a child with a mobile phone is entirely a matter for parents to decide based on their family circumstances.

6.2 During School Hours Protocol

If a child brings a mobile phone to school:

- The phone must be switched off upon arrival
- The phone must be handed to the class teacher immediately (Years 5-6) or to the school office (younger years)
- Phones will be stored securely in locked cupboards
- The child collects their phone at the end of the school day

6.3 Rationale

This protocol balances potential safety benefits for travel with safeguarding concerns about:

- Unsupervised internet access during school hours
- Potential for loss or damage to devices
- Distraction from learning
- Cyberbullying risks

Mobile phones must not be used during the school day and remain the responsibility of parents should any loss or damage occur.

7. SAFETY EDUCATION

7.1 Personal Safety Curriculum

The school will provide age-appropriate personal safety education through:

PSHE Programme

- Cambridgeshire PSHE Service Personal Development Programme
- Personal Safety Units focusing on:
    - Recognizing safe and unsafe relationships (family, friends, online)
    - Permission-seeking and giving in relationships
    - Appropriate boundaries both on and offline
    - Identifying trusted adults
    - Distinguishing safe and unsafe secrets
    - Body autonomy and correct language for body parts
    - Types of behaviors constituting abuse and neglect (Years 5-6)
    - Networks of Support and problem-solving strategies

"Clever Never Goes" Programme

- Teaching children to recognize when anyone asks them to "go" somewhere
- Understanding that most abuse comes from people known to children
- Core safety messages:
    - Never go anywhere without parent's permission
    - Don't accept items or get into anyone's car without permission
    - If someone makes you feel scared or uncomfortable, go to a safe place
    - Safe adults include: police officers, teachers, shop staff with name badges
    - "No, Go, Yell, Tell" protocol: Say no, run away, yell loudly, tell a trusted adult immediately

7.2 Road Safety Education

Green Cross Code Training

- Stop before crossing
- Look in all directions (especially for cyclists)
- Listen for approaching traffic
- Think whether it's safe to cross

Essential Road Safety Skills

- Cross only at intersections with traffic lights when possible
- Use pedestrian crossings where available
- Look both ways before crossing even on one-way streets
- Understand difficulty judging vehicle speed, especially above 20mph
- Never cross from between parked cars or at bends
- Awareness that drivers may not see them even if they can see the driver
- Never use phones while crossing roads

Practical Training

- Practical route familiarization recommended for all children
- Regular reinforcement through assemblies (minimum once per term)
- Role-playing scenarios for different age groups
- Road safety education integrated into PSHE curriculum

7.3 Emergency Procedures Training

Children walking independently must know:

- Their full name, home address with postcode
- Parent phone numbers and at least one emergency contact
- How to dial 999 and what information to provide
- Where "safe places" are (home, school, police station, shops with staff, libraries)
- How to identify "safe adults" (police officers, shop staff with name badges, teachers)
- What to do if lost (stay calm, don't wander, go to nearest safe place)
- What to do if running late (contact parent immediately, stay on agreed route, don't take shortcuts)
- Weather emergency procedures (when not to travel, safe shelter locations)

8. SAFEGUARDING PROCEDURES

8.1 When a Child Doesn't Arrive

If a child with independent travel permission fails to arrive for registration:

- Within 15 minutes: Office staff will contact parents/emergency contacts
- After 30 minutes: If unable to reach any responsible adult, the Designated Safeguarding Lead will be informed
- Risk Assessment: DSL will consider:
    - Child's age and vulnerability
    - Any known safeguarding concerns
    - Medical needs
    - Whether the child has previously gone missing
    - Weather conditions and time of year
- Emergency Response: For children considered at immediate risk, DSL will contact:
    - Police (999 for immediate danger, 101 for concerns)

    - Children's Social Care
    - Local Authority Children Missing from Education procedures if absence extends beyond 10 days

8.2 When a Child Isn't Collected

If a child expected to be collected is not picked up:

- School maintains duty of care until child is safely collected
- Office staff will attempt to contact all emergency contacts
- Police may be contacted if child welfare concerns exist
- Important: We can never send a child home alone if they arrived expecting collection, even beyond normal staff working hours

8.3 Change in Arrangements

- Parents must notify the school in writing (email acceptable) for any changes to usual arrangements
- Verbal messages via children will not be accepted for safeguarding reasons
- Last-minute changes should be communicated directly to the school office by telephone

8.4 Record Keeping

All actions will be documented with:

- Times of all communication attempts
- Content of conversations
- Risk assessments completed
- Decisions made and rationale
- Records stored on MyConcern system

9. SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

9.1 Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

Children with SEND may face additional vulnerabilities and barriers to independent travel. Each request will be assessed individually considering:

- Cognitive ability to understand danger
- Communication skills for seeking help
- Physical mobility and coordination
- Sensory impairments that may affect safety
- Ability to follow instructions consistently
- Social understanding and vulnerability to manipulation
- Behavioral issues that may increase risk

Enhanced support measures may include:

- One-to-one adult supervision
- Personal safety training adapted to needs
- Visual supports and social stories for routines
- More extensive route familiarization
- Assistive technology including GPS tracking
- Close liaison between parents, school, and support workers

9.2 Vulnerable Children

Additional considerations for:

- Children in Care or Previously Looked After: Close monitoring and liaison with Social Care
- Children with Social Workers: Information sharing about travel arrangements
- Children Experiencing Domestic Abuse: Individual risk assessment
- Children at Risk of Exploitation: Enhanced vigilance and monitoring
- Young Carers: Additional support considering their responsibilities

9.3 Separated Parents

When both parents hold parental responsibility:

- School will ideally seek consent from both parents
- If only one parent responds, that consent is valid
- In case of conflict, school will take the safer decision (interpreting consent has not been given)
- Parents may be advised to seek legal advice or court orders to resolve disputes
- Exception: If seeking consent from a particular parent may cause harm to the child

10. STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES

10.1 Designated Safeguarding Lead

- Overall responsibility for policy implementation
- Assessment of individual consent requests
- Risk assessments for vulnerable children
- Decision-making when children don't arrive or aren't collected
- Liaison with external agencies when required
- Training oversight

10.2 Class Teachers

- Awareness of which children have independent travel permission
- Awareness of collection arrangements for their class, including sibling collection arrangements
- Collection of mobile phones from Years 5-6 pupils
- Ensuring children without permission are directed to collection point
- Monitoring that Year 5-6 siblings collecting younger siblings remain on premises awaiting adult collection
- Reporting concerns about children's behavior before/after school

10.3 Office Staff

- Processing consent forms
- Maintaining records on MyConcern
- First point of contact when children don't arrive
- Managing last-minute changes to arrangements
- Storing mobile phones for younger year groups

10.4 All Staff

- Vigilance regarding children's safety before and after school
- Reporting concerns about unsafe behavior
- Supporting implementation of safety education
- Understanding that we cannot send children home without proper arrangements

11. PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES

11.1 Assessment and Training

Parents must:

- Honestly assess their child's readiness for independent travel
- Teach essential safety skills before granting independence
- Practice the route with the child multiple times
- Ensure the child knows emergency procedures
- Make gradual transitions (e.g., walking part-way, gradually increasing distance)

11.2 Ongoing Responsibilities

Parents retain full responsibility for:

- The journey to and from school
- Ensuring the child follows the agreed route
- Providing appropriate clothing and equipment for weather conditions
- Maintaining communication methods (e.g., ensuring mobile phone is charged)
- Being available or having responsible adult available at home
- Notifying school immediately of any changes in circumstances

11.3 Communication

Parents must:

- Complete consent forms honestly and thoroughly
- Renew consent annually
- Inform school in writing of any changes to arrangements
- Report concerns about route safety or incidents
- Respond promptly to school communications about their child's travel

12. Implementation and Review

12.1 Training

- All staff will receive training on this policy during induction and annually
- DSL will complete specific training on risk assessment for independent travel
- Governors will receive overview of policy and safeguarding implications

12.2 Communication with Parents

- Policy will be published on school website
- New parents will be informed during induction
- Existing parents will be notified of any policy changes
- Annual reminders will be sent about consent renewal

12.3 Monitoring

- DSL will maintain oversight of all independent travel arrangements
- Termly reporting to governors on:
    - Number of children with permission by year group
    - Any incidents or concerns arising
    - Changes to policy or procedures
- Annual review of policy effectiveness

12.4 Policy Review

- This policy will be reviewed annually by the Governing Body
- Reviews will consider:
    - Changes to statutory guidance
    - Local safeguarding partnership procedures
    - Incidents or concerns arising
    - Feedback from parents and staff
    - Best practice from other schools

12.5 Related Policies

This policy links to:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- PSHE Policy
- Mobile Phone Policy
- Online Safety Policy