



NORTH STAR

COMMUNITY TRUST

Consenting to allow children
to travel to and from school
by themselves

NSCT Primary Academies

March 2021

Legal overview

There is no law which governs the age which children can travel to and from school independently however the NSPCC advise that: -

- Children under 8 should not be outdoors for a considerable length of time unaccompanied
- Children under the age of 12 should not be left home alone for more than a very short period of time

It is an offence, however, to leave a child alone if doing so places them at risk. As such, schools have a continual obligation to alert relevant authorities if they believe this is the case (which can include unaccompanied journeys to and from school).

Schools are only responsible for the safety of children on a school journey for which they have specifically arranged transport.

Steps that parents should consider

If parents choose to let their child travel to / from school independently, then it is *they* who should assess the risks associated with the school route, their own child's confidence and how long the child may be waiting at home by themselves.

Parents should work with their children to build up their independence, while walking to and from school together, through route finding, road safety skills and general awareness. The most important factor to consider about suitability of a child walking to / from school alone is any **risk to the child**

Parents may wish to have a discussion with the school about the decision and to help to identify alternative options if necessary (e.g. another parent taking the child home).

Schools can support parents in decision making and consideration of risks in relation to children being allowed to travel to and from school by using the **checklist for supervision of children before / after school** (see below).

The responsibility for their child's safety rests with the parent / carer.

Any concerns which the school has with regard to the competency of young children walking to and from school or if there are concerns about their safety or welfare due to these arrangements will 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 may be necessary.

Drop off and / or collection by older siblings

It is the parent / carer's responsibility to ensure that the child is dropped off and collected by a responsible person if it is not safe for the child to walk home unsupervised.

There is no law which governs the minimum age of a young person who is allowed to remain in charge of another child. However as it is an offence to leave a child alone if it places them at risk, this can include situations where they are left in the care of an older sibling if the level of that supervision is '*likely to cause unnecessary suffering or injury to health*' as per the [Children and Young Persons Act, 1933](#).

Therefore, not only should parents / carers 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 whilst that child is acting in a caring role for younger siblings.

The suitability of a sibling caring for a younger child must be considered on a case by case basis and this should be by a judgment of the potential risks of this arrangement such as: -

- 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.

If parents have given permission for older siblings to collect / drop off younger children this should be recorded.

Any concerns which the school has with regard to the competency of older siblings taking younger siblings to and from school or if there are concerns about any child's safety or welfare due to these arrangements will 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 may be necessary.

Checklist for supervision of children before / after school

Factors to consider with regard to the child (or children)

Where a child is to walk to / from school: -

How old are they?	
How mature are they and what is their level of understanding and awareness about being unsupervised when walking to or from school?	
How comfortable are they with the arrangements (this includes the younger child where an older sibling is acting as 'carer')?	
How far will they have to walk (if appropriate)?	
Has the parent / carer assessed the journey to or from school for risks?	
Do they have knowledge about how to keep themselves safe (e.g. road safety)?	
How long, and how often, will they be left?	

Where a child or children are to be left at home for a period of time unsupervised: -

Where will they be left? Is this a safe place?	
Is the home environment safe and secure?	
Has the parent / carer assessed the home environment for risks?	
What are their expectations during this time? (e.g. are they expected to cook for themselves?)	
How far away will the parent / carer be? Will they be easily contactable?	
Are they clear about rules and boundaries of what they can and can't do while parents / carers are out?	

What is their level of knowledge when it comes to first aid?	
Do they have knowledge about how to keep themselves safe (e.g. not answering the door to strangers)?	
Do they know who they can contact in case of an emergency?	
Have instructions been left e.g. in case of a fire?	

In addition to above where a child is to be supervised by an older sibling: -

Has the older child who is 'carer' been involved in this risk assessment?	
How well do the siblings get on? How will tension be managed in the absence of the parent / carer?	
Does the older sibling have the confidence and authority to implement and rules or boundaries consistently? What will they do if the younger children misbehave?	

Additional considerations: -

Do any of the children (this also includes the older sibling or 'carer') have additional needs (e.g. medical, emotional, behavioural, learning difficulties / physical disabilities)?	
How will these needs be met in the parent / carer's absence?	

Consent

Date of meeting

Member of staff conducting meeting

Pupil name: Year: Class:

Pupil name: _____ Year: _____ Class: _____

Pupil name: _____ Year: _____ Class: _____

Name of parent / guardian _____

Parent signature:



Date: _____