THOMAS HARDING JUNIOR SCHOOL

GUIDANCE ON PUPILS WALKING TO AND FROM SCHOOL ALONE

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.

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. At Thomas Harding, we will release children to walk home alone from the summer term in Year 5 and during Year 6. Children will only be released if the slip below has been completed and returned to school.

We recognise that you may feel your child is ready to walk to or from school alone, earlier than summer term in Year 5. If this is the case, please contact the Headteacher for a discussion and this will be agreed with you on a case by case basis.

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.

See NSPCC guidance Keeping children safe at school | NSPCC

https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/away-from-home/at-school/#homealone

Teach your child to:

- Make sure they know their address and your telephone number by heart, in case they get lost or have to navigate home from somewhere new.
- If they have a mobile phone, remind them to fully charge it before leaving the house, and make sure they have all your contact numbers saved.
- Talk to them about road safety. They should always look both ways before crossing the street, and never be on their phone whilst crossing a road.
- Remind them never to accept a lift from someone they don’t know, or let a stranger into the house. They should never give personal information away – in real life or online.
- Remind them that if they feel unsafe or uncomfortable at any time, they can call you or a trusted adult.
- If they ever feel like they’re in immediate danger, they should call the police straight away on 999.

When deciding whether your child is ready for this responsibility please 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 by completing the slip below. Your child will be prevented from walking home unless this permission has been given in writing. If we have any concerns about your child's behaviour when leaving the school site alone, we will contact you to discuss this.

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

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Thomas Harding Primary & Nursery School Permission for pupils to walk to and from school unaccompanied

Person with parental responsibility to complete and return this reply slip to school.

Name of child: Year:

I wish to inform you that my child will be walking to/from school on regular basis. I will notify you immediately should this arrangement change. I have read and understood the guidelines, systems and reasonable precautions set out in 'guidance on safeguarding pupils walking to and from school alone'.

Signed…….....

Date: (d/m/y) …… (Name)…….