Bushey Heath Primary School
Children Walking to and from School Alone Policy

A vibrant school inspiring children to realise their potential

Procedure for Collection from School and Protocol for Safeguarding Children Walking to and from School Alone

In this Policy, 'teacher' refers to the adult who is responsible for dismissing children from class. This may be a class teacher, teaching assistant or sports coach.

There are no laws around age or distance of walking to school. 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."

We are also mindful of NSPCC advice on road safety, which states:

- Children under 8 cannot judge the speed and distance of moving vehicles. They still need help when crossing roads.
- Children under 8 should not be outdoors for a considerable length of time unaccompanied.
- Children under the age of 12 should not be home alone for more than a very short period of time.

Whilst we are not directly responsible for children on their way to and from school, we do share responsibility for their overall welfare and therefore have to consider what we believe is good practice in ensuring their safety. We have an obligation to alert relevant authorities (usually Children's Services and/or police) should we believe a child's welfare is at risk.

All Pupils

- Every September, we will send a form called Safety at the End of the School Day to all parents/carers. The information gathered will be entered onto a spreadsheet which will be given to any adult who will be responsible for dismissing children. It will also be entered into Arbor the management information system used by the school.
- Children must be collected from their classroom at the end of the school day except for children in Years 5 and 6 who may leave school on their own but only with written permission.
- Teachers will not release children until they have seen the adult who is due to collect.
- Children will not be released, if they are showing signs of distress or anxiety, until the situation has been discussed with a Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- In an emergency/ unplanned situation a member of staff may take a child home to their parent or legal guardian with that adult's permission. In this case the Designated Safeguarding Lead will be informed first.
- If a child is to be collected before the end of the school day, the school is to be notified on the same morning. On arrival at school to collect the child, the adult collecting will report to the School Office. The child will then be brought, by staff, to the reception to be taken home by the parent/carer.
- If the person who normally picks a child up is not doing so then parents must let the school know, either in person at drop off, by email or by telephone.
- Should arrangements change during the day the school, must be contacted by telephone or email.
- If the parent/carer or alternative nominated adult is going to be late to collect their child, they should let the school know as soon as possible. We will keep children in school until their arrival. We may allow children to attend After School Club in this circumstance if there is space available for them to do so. We reserve the right to charge for this.

Pupils in KS2
There is no set age when children are ready to walk to school or home on their own. It very much depends on their maturity and confidence.

Years 3 and 4
Knowing that children under the age of eight cannot judge the speed or distance of moving vehicles we expect Year 3 and 4 children to be brought to school and we require them to be collected from school.

Year 5 and 6
Year 5 and 6 children may be released from the school at the end of the school day to make their own way home. This is for parents and families to decide but in order for children to do this written permission must be given. Every September, parents of children in Years 5 and 6 will be asked to email their consent if they want their children to walk home alone. Parents can also give consent during the course of the school year. Confirmation emails will be kept on record and teachers of children in Year 5 and 6 will be given a list of children who are allowed to walk home alone. Parents should be aware that if they give permission for their children to walk home, school staff will release children to the school boundaries at 3.20pm and it will be parents'/carers' responsibility from this time to ensure that children are safeguarded.

As part of the school's work around safety in school, children are provided with regular guidance on what to do if they walk home alone and an adult is not there. This may be to go to a pre-agreed neighbour or to return to school. We would encourage parents/carers to regularly reinforce this message at home.

Walking Home Alone
We advise parents to think about whether your child is ready to walk to and from school and 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 may not have the opportunity to develop road awareness and may therefore be 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 self-assurance 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 and definitely never look at a mobile phone whilst walking or crossing the road.
- Cross in a place where you can see clearly in all directions. Avoid crossing between parked cars or at bends in the road.
- Look both ways before crossing; listen for traffic coming and cross while keeping an eye on traffic.
- Wear hi-visibility clothes especially in dull weather and in Winter
- Look out for cyclists.
- Remember that drivers may not see a child, even if the child 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.) If that person tries to convince the child to go with him or tries to physically get close, then scream, "Help! This is not my dad!" or "Help! This is not my mum!" and run away. If they grab them, tell your child to kick, punch, and hit as hard as they can.

When deciding whether your child is ready for this responsibility you might want to consider the following:
- Do you trust them to walk straight home?

- Do you trust them to behave sensibly when with a friend?
- Are they road safety aware?
- Would they know what to do if a stranger approaches them?
- Would they have the confidence to refuse to do what a stranger asked?
- 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 or fight)?
- Would they know what to do if they needed help?
- 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. 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.

Children who are not collected on time

We are aware that delays happen and sometimes cannot be helped. Please let us know as soon as possible if you are going to be late. This allows us to reassure your child and avoid them becoming anxious because they don't know where you are.

The following procedures will be used for late collection:

- The child will remain with the teacher for up to 10 minutes.
- After 10 minutes the child will be taken to the School Office.
- The administrative team in the School Office will try to call the parents.
- If the parents cannot be contacted, we will try to call any other contacts given on the child's confidential data collection sheet.
- If no contact can be made with any of the listed contacts, the school will continue to try and make contact until 4.30 pm, at the latest.
- After 4.30 pm, if we have not been able to make contact then Children's Services will be contacted for advice.
- Two members of school staff (which will always include at least one Designated Safeguarding Lead) will remain at school until Children's Services attend and/or provide further advice.
- The school will ensure that these protocols have been followed by staff and a note of all calls will be completed.
- If a child is not collected on time frequently then Children's Services will be informed.

NO CHILD WILL EVER BE LEFT ON THE SCHOOL PREMISES UNATTENDED.

Unsafe Adults Collecting Children

If the person picking up a child is, in the judgment of staff, impaired (under the influence of drugs or alcohol) or extremely unwell and unable to adequately care for the child:

- The staff will not release the child to that person.
- The staff may ask that person to leave school premises.
- The staff will inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead immediately.
- The child will be taken to the School Office and the Headteacher, Deputy Head or a Senior Member of Staff will offer to call a relative or friend to pick up the person and child. If necessary, in the judgement of the Designated Safeguarding Lead, or if no-one else is available to collect the child, Children's Services will be contacted.

Parental Responsibility

Legally, the school cannot refuse to release a child to an adult who has parental responsibility for that child even if the other parent does not want us to. If you do not want your child's other parent to collect them from school, you should let us know and we will keep this request on our records. We will contact you if the

other parent approaches us to collect the child and can delay collection until we have spoken to you but, ultimately, if you do not want your child's other parent to collect them, this must be resolved between you.

Child Arrangement Orders

If you have a Child Arrangement Order in place regarding arrangements for collecting your child from school, please make sure that we have a copy on record. We cannot ensure that we follow the order if we don't know about it.

IF AT ANY TIME YOU NEED TO CHANGE ARRANGEMENTS YOU HAVE MADE PLEASE ENSURE YOU LET THE SCHOOL KNOW IMMEDIATELY.

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Headteacher:	Penny Barefoot
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