



Walking Independently Policy

Article 3: The best interests of a child must be a top priority in all things that affect children.

1. Purpose and Safeguarding Principles

At Poplar Farm School, safeguarding our children is the responsibility of everyone. This policy supports parents and carers in making decisions about their child's journey to and from school and sets out the arrangements the school will use to promote children's safety and welfare.

This policy should be read alongside the school's current Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

The school's safeguarding approach is based on prevention, protection, support and working with parents. Children's welfare is paramount, and concerns will be taken seriously and responded to through the school's safeguarding procedures.

The school recognises that safeguarding risks can arise within and outside the school environment, including in the local community and online. Parents and carers are therefore asked to consider the individual circumstances, maturity, confidence and route of their child before agreeing to independent travel.

2. General principles

- There is no specific legal age at which a child can walk to or from school alone. Parents and carers are responsible for deciding when their child is ready for this responsibility.
- Parents and carers remain responsible for ensuring that their child attends school regularly and arrives safely and on time.
- The school has a responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils while they are on the school site and to act where there are concerns that a child's welfare may be at risk.
- Where the school has a safeguarding concern, it will follow the procedures in its Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and, where appropriate, seek advice or make a referral to the relevant safeguarding agency.
- Any arrangements for independent travel should be reviewed if the child's circumstances, route, maturity, confidence or safety needs change.

3. Reception, Year 1, Year 2, Year 3, Year 4

- Pupils in Reception, Year 1, Year 2, Year 3, Year 4 should not walk to or from school alone or be left alone on the school premises before or after school.
- Children should be brought to and collected from school by an appropriate adult in accordance with the school's collection arrangements.
- Children in these year groups are not permitted to walk to school or travel home from school with a pupil in Year 5 or Year 6.

- Parents/carers must notify the school in advance if someone other than the usual authorised collector is collecting their child.
- If a child is not collected, the school will attempt to contact the parent/carer and will follow its safeguarding and child protection procedures where a child's welfare may be at risk.

4. Years 5 and 6 - independent walking

For pupils in Years 5 and 6, parents/carers may decide that their child is ready to walk to and/or from school independently, provided that they have considered the child's individual circumstances and the safety of the route.

Before giving permission, parents/carers should consider:

- whether the child can follow the agreed safe route and travel directly to school or home;
- the roads, crossings, traffic and other hazards on the route;
- if home is within a walkable distance to school;
- whether the child behaves sensibly when alone or with friends;
- the child's awareness of road and personal safety;
- what the child would do if approached by a stranger or another person they are concerned about;
- how the child would seek help in an emergency;
- whether the child understands how to keep themselves and others safe; and
- whether any individual needs, vulnerabilities or current circumstances mean that independent travel would not be appropriate.

Parents/carers who agree to independent travel must complete the Year 5 & Year 6 Independent Walking Home Agreement on Microsoft Forms.

The school will confirm receipt of the agreement.

5. Mobile phones and communication

- Parents/carers may provide a child who walks without an adult with a mobile phone so that they can contact a trusted adult if they need help.
- Any mobile phone brought onto the school site must be managed in accordance with the school's current mobile phone and safeguarding arrangements.
- Children should know how and where to seek help if they feel unsafe, are lost, are approached by someone they do not know, or encounter an emergency.

6. After-school activities and wraparound provision

- Children attending clubs, after-school activities or wraparound provision are not permitted to walk home independently.
- Children attending Poplar Pioneers or other school-based provision must follow the sign-in/sign-out arrangements in place for that provision.

- Where a child is not collected as expected, the school/provision will follow its safeguarding and collection procedures and take action proportionate to the circumstances.

7. Safeguarding concerns and review of arrangements

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

- If the school becomes aware of information suggesting that a child may be at risk of harm, neglect, exploitation or other safeguarding concerns while travelling to or from school, the school will respond in accordance with its Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.
- Concerns should be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or a Deputy DSL.
- School does not permit children to travel home independently in a taxi, Uber or equivalent method of transport without an adult known to them.
- All children travelling to and home from school independently using a bike or scooter or equivalent must wear a suitable helmet.
- The school may contact parents/carers, seek advice from safeguarding partners or make a referral where appropriate.
- The school may review or withdraw permission for independent walking where there are safeguarding, welfare, behaviour or other significant safety concerns.
- Any decision to review an arrangement will take account of the child's individual circumstances and the information available to the school.

Poplar Farm safeguarding contacts:

- Claire Buckley - Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)
- Kate Hodson, Faye Anderson and Lucinda Thorpe - Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads (DDSLs)
- The school safeguarding email is safeguarding@poplar-cit.co.uk

Related policies and guidance

- Poplar Farm School Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.
- Poplar Farm School Relationships and Behaviour Policy.
- Poplar Farm School Anti-bullying Policy.
- Poplar Farm School E-Safety / Online Safety Policy.
- Community Inclusive Trust safeguarding procedures and relevant local safeguarding arrangements.

This policy should be reviewed alongside the current Poplar Farm School Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

This policy was adopted on:	September 2026
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