



At Hotham our main priority is the safety and wellbeing of our pupils. We value our relationship with parents, family members, the school community and aim to work with them collaboratively to ensure this is prioritised when planning children's collection from school.

**The main principles behind this protocol are:**

- Pupil safety and wellbeing is paramount
- Effective communication between parents and school is key

**Legal principles:**

- 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."*
- 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.
- We also have an obligation to alert relevant authorities should we believe a child's welfare is at risk.

**Our protocol for collection:**

- In general we expect children to be collected from school by their parent, close adult family member, childcare professional, or another familiar adult as agreed in advance by the child's parent.
- Older siblings (secondary school aged and above) may collect younger pupils after consultation with the school.
- We will not hand a pupil over to an unknown adult unless we have been informed of this arrangement in advance; this should happen through the school office.
- Pupils of any age who are leaving during the school day (e.g. for appointments) must be collected by an adult.

**Walking to and from school alone:**

- We only allow pupils to travel to/from school unaccompanied when they are in year 5 or year 6, and only with the written consent of their parent. The parent is responsible for making this decision and for ensuring their child is ready for this responsibility.
- Where the school has a specific concern about a pupil aged year 5 or above travelling unaccompanied, this will be discussed with the parent.
- If a child is unwell in the morning, the usual protocol for reporting absence must be followed.
- The school behaviour policy applies to and from school, and parents will be involved in discussions about dealing with any incidents of poor behaviour which happen during this time. A consequence could include revoking the privilege of travelling unaccompanied.

**In the event of non-collection:**

- The class teacher supervises the child until 3:25pm and makes a phone call home.
- After 3:25pm, we record the collection as late.
- After 4:15pm, if we have not had satisfactory communication, we make contact with Wandsworth MASH to agree arrangements for the safety of the child.

## **APPENDIX 1 – Ways of supporting your child to walk unaccompanied**

Making the decision to allow your child to walk to/from school unaccompanied is a significant one, and should not be taken lightly.

In making this decision, we urge parents to consider the following questions:

- Do you trust your child to walk straight to school / home?
- Do you trust your child to behave sensibly when with a friend unaccompanied?
- Is your child road safety aware?
- Would your child know what to do if a stranger approached them?
- Would your child have the confidence to refuse to do what a stranger asked?
- Would your child know the best action to take if a stranger tried to make them do something they didn't want to do?
- Would your child know what to do and who to approach if they needed help?

Parents can support children in walking home alone by walking with your children from a young age, teaching them about crossing the road, learning how to navigate and a host of other skills.

We also advise you explicitly teach them to:

- Pay attention to traffic at all times when crossing the street
- Avoid becoming distracted when walking along the pavement or crossing a road
- Wherever possible, cross at the intersection where there are traffic lights; do not cross in the middle of the road.
- Avoid parked cars when crossing the road.
- Look both ways before crossing; listen for traffic coming; cross while keeping an eye on traffic; look out for cyclists.

Personal safety is very important, especially in a large city like London. We advise parents explicitly teach their children the following advice to ensure they are equipped to deal with unexpected situations when travelling to/from school:

- Keep valuables out of sight.
- 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 someone tries to convince them to go with him/her 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 someone tries to grab them, tell your child to scream, kick, punch, and hit as hard as they can.

### **Making the decision**

Parents need to decide whether your child is ready for this responsibility. 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. Please think carefully about the decision and ensure you are making it having assessed all the factors involved.

Your child will be prevented from walking home alone unless this permission has been given in writing.

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

## **APPENDIX 2 – Separated parents**

Parents with parental responsibility have specific rights, as set out by law.

Each person with parental responsibility for a child is entitled to:

- Receive information about their child
- Request to see their child's educational record
- Participate in statutory activities (such as parent governor elections)
- Be informed about meetings involving their child (such as parents' evenings or an exclusion hearing)
- Be asked to give consent (for things like school trips or sharing photos of the child on the school's website)
- Collect their child from school (unless there is a Child Arrangement Order or other Court Order in place).

This means that one parent cannot prevent others with parental responsibility from doing any of the things listed above.

### **Collection from school**

- As a school, we follow the set protocol for collection laid out in this protocol document.
- We will not hand a pupil over to an unknown adult (including a parent who we have not met) unless we have been informed of this arrangement in advance; this should happen by a notification from the known parent through the school office.

### **Disputes**

If one parent (even if they are known to the school) seeks to remove their child from school in contravention of the expected arrangements, and the parent to whom the child would normally be released has not consented, then the following steps are followed:

- The headteacher or a member of the senior leadership team will meet with the parent seeking to collect/remove the child and, in his/her presence, telephone the parent to whom the child would normally be released and explain the request.
- If the parent to whom the child would normally be released agrees, the child may be released and the records will reflect that the permission was granted verbally.
- In the event that the parent to whom the child would normally be released to can not be reached, the headteacher or senior staff member dealing with the issue may make a decision based upon available information.
- The headteacher or staff member may have to refuse permission if agreement/consent cannot be obtained and may need to take further advice before the child is released.

The school cannot prevent a parent from collecting their child but we will endeavour to keep children safe whilst we try and facilitate an agreement between parents.

### **Court orders**

If there is a Court Order restricting contact or it is in contravention of any access agreement, the child will not be released and the other parent advised to take the necessary action.

### **Mediation**

In situations involving separated parents, members of staff follow the law and the school's own policies. The school does not get involved in relationship matters or take sides. The school is unable to mediate or communicate between or on behalf of parents.

### **Disruptive behaviour**

In circumstances where there is a belief that a possible abduction of the child may occur or if a parent is unacceptably disruptive, the police and local authority will be notified immediately.