



INDEPENDENT TRAVEL POLICY

INTRODUCTION

According to a study from the University of Westminster, in 1971 86% of primary school pupils walked home by themselves compared to only 25% in 2013. This is in spite of the fact that road safety has improved over the similar time. Thomas's believes that it is good practice for senior pupils to travel independently, in preparation for independent travel to their future school. This is particularly sensible in the summer terms when light and visibility are good at each end of the day.

We would not expect pupils to travel to or from school independently until they are old enough to do so safely and responsibly. While this may vary from child to child the general guidance would be around 10 years old, starting initially in the summer term when the evenings are lighter.

Exceptions to this might be very local children walking together who have few roads to cross or siblings where both are in the Prep School.

Walking to School Independently

Pupils are encouraged to stick to an agreed route and are expected to walk directly from home to school and vice versa. The school also recommends that where possible pupils walk in pairs or threes for as much of the journey as is practical.

Travelling by public transport

Although children are allowed to travel on buses and tubes unaccompanied from the age of five, Transport for London state that children under the age of 11 are generally accompanied by an adult and Thomas's endorses this recommendation. Children aged between 11 and 15 may travel for free on buses and trams, and for a reduced fare on the tube. They need an Oyster photocard which must be applied for by their parent / guardian.

Travelling by taxi

All black cab taxi drivers are required to have DBS checks. There is no specific age limit for a child to ride alone in a black cab although it is illegal for a child under 135cm or 12 years old to travel without the appropriate booster or car seat. However the minimum age to have an Uber account is 18 years old and any account holder is not permitted to order an Uber for a minor. As such if parents occasionally require their children to travel unaccompanied to or from school by taxi, the school recommends that only black cabs are used.

PROCEDURES

Any parent/guardian who wishes their child to travel to and/or from school independently should first speak to their Head. It may be a request for general permission or may just relate to specific dates or occasions. The Head reserves the right to refuse to allow a child to leave independently if they feel this would compromise the safety of the child.

The parent / guardian will then be required to complete a Google form stating that they have given permission and listing the types of travel that their child is permitted to use. This information is kept by the School Office.

If the pupil has a mobile phone for use during the journey, this number should also be recorded on the form as being the initial point of contact in case of any concern. It is often recommended that this isn't a smart phone as a "dumb phone" is less likely to be a target for theft. Any phone should be handed in on arrival at school in accordance with the school procedures:

- Battersea and Clapham: hand into the form teacher
- Fulham and Kensington: hand into the School Office.

When arriving at school pupils should register in their form rooms as usual. The whereabouts of any pupil reported absent who is known to travel independently will be followed up as a matter of urgency.

Pupils leaving independently will shake the Form Teacher's hand at the end of the day to signal that the teacher's responsibility for the child is over for the day.

The School has the right to withdraw permission for independent travel should there be any concerns about a pupil's safety or behaviour.

Safety Guidance

Pupils who have been given permission to walk to school will be given guidance on safety from the Deputy Head – Pastoral. The general recommendations are:

- Walk in pairs or as a group if possible
- Stick to well-travelled streets, use the same route every day and avoid shortcuts through car parks or alleyways.
- Look out for landmarks to keep you on track
- Cross streets only at safe points i.e. at zebra crossings; never enter streets from between parked cars or from behind shrubbery.
- Always look both ways before crossing the street. "Stop. Look. Listen. Live."
- Walk -- don't run -- across crossings, and only when the symbol is green.
- On dark evenings stay in well-lit areas
- Carry backpacks and bags close to your body, not dangling by the straps
- If you have any money keep it in an inside coat or front trouser pocket, not a back pocket.
- Keep items of value (phones, fit bits) out of sight
- Do not wear headphones or text as you walk so you are aware of your surroundings
- Be aware of any friends' homes you may pass en route in case of difficulty
- Switch direction or cross the street if you think someone is following you or you feel unsafe.
- If you feel threatened or unsafe, walk into the nearest shop or restaurant

- If travelling on a bus sit downstairs and close to the driver
- If travelling by tube, always try to select a carriage with a number of other people in it
- If someone sits next to you who makes you feel uneasy, stand up and move to another seat
- Do not use your iPad whilst travelling on public transport or anywhere on your journey
- If travelling by pre-booked taxi, always check the driver knows your name and your destination before you get in the vehicle
- Always sit in the back of a cab
- If you feel uneasy and have a phone, ring a friend to say where you are
- If challenged do not retaliate
- How to make a 999 call

General safety awareness for all pupils is also supported by work in school, which may include:

- Travel Safety Talks led by local police officers
- Reinforcement of safe travel through PSHCE lessons and assemblies.
- Whole school participation in 'Walk to School Week' in May.
- Road Safety Officers (staff or parents) outside the front gate of the school

REFERENCES

This Policy was informed by:

Care.com Resources 'When can my child walk to school alone?' (October 2019)

DfE guidance 'Keeping children safe in education' (September 2019)

NSPCC guidance 'Is my child ready to go out alone?' (2019)

See also: [Behaviour Policy](#), [Code of conduct](#), [Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy](#), [Wellbeing Policy](#)

This policy will be reviewed annually		
Created: October 2019	By:	Joanna Copland, Vice Principal, Deputy Heads – Pastoral
Latest Review: September 2020	By:	Joanna Copland, Vice Principal No changes
Next Review: September 2021	By:	Joanna Copland, Vice Principal

Appendices

Appendix 1: Guidance for parents

INDEPENDENT TRAVEL POLICY APPENDIX 1,



GUIDANCE FOR PARENTS

The balance between allowing your child increasing independence and keeping them safe can be difficult to navigate. Questions to consider when making the decision about allowing independent travel are:

- The journey itself: Distance? Type of area? Safe road crossings? Amount of traffic? Local street safety measures?
- Your child's level of maturity: Can they follow directions? Can they be sensible and streetwise? Do they know how and when to ask for help? Are they 'savvy' about Stranger Danger?

The advice below is taken from the NSPCC guide "Is my child ready to go out alone?"

- Talk about the risks: Talk to your child early on about staying safe. How would they cross the road safely? What would your child do if they were approached by a stranger? Or if they were being bullied?
- Set the boundaries: Be clear about any places you don't want your child to go. Be willing to explain your decision so that your child understands your concerns.
- Make sure they're happy: Take the time to talk to your child, listen to them and check that they're happy to do things on their own. Don't make your child do something they're not happy with.
- Do a trial run: Let your child take the lead when you're out together. Only correct them if they do something that puts them at risk.
- Give them a chance to shine: Let your child show you they can be trusted. If they keep to the curfew and rules you set, you'll feel more confident about letting them do other things independently.
- Not ready? Don't feel pressured: Your child might insist that they'll be OK when they're out alone. But if you're still unsure, don't feel pressured. You need to be satisfied your child can make wise decisions on their own – even if they're with a sibling. It's easy to become separated or lost if they have an argument.