

Grange Primary School



Collection of children by siblings

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This guidance was created using information from Gov.UK, NSPCC &
RoSPA

At Grange Primary School we take the safeguarding and well-being of our children very seriously and will try to work with our families around young children walking to school, collecting from school and supervision on these journeys by older siblings. As a school we recognise and sympathise with the often complex pressures faced by many families in balancing work and childcare, and with permission from parents will allow older siblings of secondary school age to collect their siblings at home time.

We are aware that it is the parent/carer's responsibility to ensure that their child/ren are dropped off and collected by a responsible person if it is not safe or appropriate for the child/ren to walk to school or to home unsupervised.

Parental responsibility includes:

- Providing a home for the child.
- Protecting and maintaining the child.
- Disciplining the child.
- Choosing and providing for the child's education.
- Agreeing to the child's medical treatment.
- Naming the child and agreeing to any change of name.
- Looking after the child's property.
- Ensuring the child is supported financially.

(Gov.UK Parent rights and responsibilities)

Although there is no minimum age set in law when a young person is allowed to remain in charge of another child, it is an offence to leave a child alone if it places them at risk.

Gov.UK advice states:

- Children under 12 are rarely mature enough to be left alone for a long period of time.
- Children under 16 shouldn't be left alone overnight.
- Babies, toddlers and very young children should never be left alone.
- Parents and carers can be prosecuted for neglect if it is judged that they placed a child at risk by leaving them at home alone. (Please note that this could include travel to and from school).

The NSPCC guidance adds:

- A child should never be left at home alone if they do not feel comfortable with this, regardless of their age.
- If a child has additional needs, these should be considered when leaving them at home alone or with an older sibling.
- When leaving a younger child with an older sibling, think about that might happen if they were to have a falling out – would they both be safe?

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents and the NSPCC recommend that no one under the age of 16 should be left to care for a younger child.

In giving permission for an older sibling to collect a younger child(ren), parents/carers must understand that they are responsible for anything that may go wrong in their absence. They are also responsible for the care and safety of their eldest child, even while that child is acting in a caring role for younger siblings.

At Grange Primary School, our guidance is that any child in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 MUST be collected by an 'authorised adult' or older siblings provided they are 16 years or above. We do not allow any child in these year groups to walk home alone, unless prior arrangement has been made with the SLT. In some cases, if there is an emergency and consent is given, an older sibling under the age of 16 may be allowed to collect a child as a one-off exception.

Children may be collected by an older sibling who has the parent's permission to collect them. Where an older sibling who is collecting a child/ren from our school is at school/college, parents/carers are responsible for ensuring that the older sibling is able to collect the child/ren **on time**. Attendance at Grange Primary School clubs or other activities may mean a later finish; parents/carers are responsible for making the necessary arrangements with older siblings. (See our Charging and Remissions Policy.)

Children in Years 5 and 6 may walk home alone providing we have written permission from the parent/carer. A form will be sent home at the start of the academic year when your child is in year 5 and 6 to request permission. Any children who do not have permission will not be allowed to walk home alone.

We suggest that parents/carers use the 'checklist' below to assist them in making an informed decision.

The following factors should be considered when children are left unsupervised at home; walking to/from school or in the care of a sibling:

- Has the parent/carer considered the risk/s posed by leaving their child alone? Walking to/from school or in the care of a sibling?
- How old is/are the children?
- How mature is/are the children? What is their level of understanding/awareness about being unsupervised/walking to or from school? How comfortable is/are the children with the arrangements (this includes the younger child and the older child who is acting as 'carer')?
- Where will the children be left? Is this a safe place?
- How long, and how often, will the child/ren be left?
- Is the home environment safe and secure? Has the parent/carer assessed the home environment/journey to or from school for risks? Has the older child or 'carer' been involved in this risk assessment?
- How far will the child/ren have to walk (if appropriate)?
- How far away will the parent/carer be? Will they be easily contactable?
- Do any of the children (this also includes the older sibling or 'carer') have additional needs – medical, emotional, behavioural, learning difficulties/disabilities? How will these needs be met in the parent/carer's absence?
- Does the child or sibling caring for another child know what to do in an emergency? Does the child know who they can contact in case of an emergency? Have instructions been left e.g. in case of a fire?
- What are the expectations of the child/ren during this time? i.e. are they expected to cook for themselves etc?
- Does the child have knowledge about how to keep themselves and younger siblings safe e.g. road safety, not answering the door to strangers, cooking etc?
- What is the level of knowledge when it comes to first aid?
- How well do the siblings get on? How will tension be managed in the absence of the parent/carer?
- Are the children clear about rules and boundaries of what they can and can't do while parents/carers are out? If they are looking after a younger sibling, do they have the confidence and authority to implement these rules consistently? What will they do if the younger children misbehave?
- Is the home environment safe and secure? Has the parent/carer assessed the home environment/journey to or from school for risks? Has the older child or 'carer' been involved in this risk assessment?