

PSA Bulletin

This week let's talk about 'supervision' and children being left unsupervised



Have you ever found yourself wondering...

“Can my child walk to school alone?” “Shall I let our eldest child look after their younger siblings?” or “Is it ok for my child to stay at home whilst I pop to the shops?”

From a safeguarding perspective, schools have a responsibility to ensure that children are kept safe and protected from harm just as parents do. As our children grow, it can be difficult to determine the suitable age that a child can be trusted to take on more responsibility.

The law does not say an age when you can leave a child on their own, **but it's an offence to leave a child alone if it places them at risk.** Find out more [about what the law says](#).

To support you with the decisions, here are some questions the safeguarding team at school would like you to consider.

Walking to and from school alone / without adult supervision

Have you practiced the route together and an alternative in case of an emergency road closure for example?

Is the route visible to other families or will the child likely be out of sight (e.g alleyways / unlit areas) and therefore potentially more vulnerable if followed?

Are you confident that rules and expectations will be followed, even if there were distractions?

Have you tested out the child's capacity to cross roads safely / find their way home?

How often are you having discussions about danger awareness?

Do they have a means of contacting you in an emergency and/or you being able to contact them?

Are there any factors which currently increase their potential vulnerability, e.g. disability / poor mental health / friendships issues?

Can they buddy up so that they do not have to navigate the whole walk home alone?

Have you communicated clearly with the school and class staff about the arrangements?

Can I leave my younger children 'at school drop off' with their elder sibling?

Would it be appropriate to leave them together unsupervised at home?

Does your elder child consent to having this responsibility and feel confident that they can support their siblings needs as well as their own? (For example, what if they become scared or upset?)

Will the younger children respond appropriately to their elder sibling having this responsibility/authority even for short periods?

Is it the case that you are having to leave the children unattended due to work commitments and if so, would it instead be more suitable to book them into breakfast club?

Are you satisfied that all of the children are going to be safe from danger if you leave them before the school gates are opened? Do they have any issues which potentially increases their vulnerability?

Could the children instead be supervised by a family who is accompanying their child / a peer?

Do the class staff understand the arrangements in place?

Is it ok for children to be left unsupervised at home for periods of time?

Are you confident that the children are safe without your supervision? Will anyone else know that they are home alone?

Can they be trusted to make wise/safe choices without adult guidance?

Are you likely to be aware of their activities and able to monitor what they get up to whilst you are out? (For example, do they have access to the internet / devices / apps or activities which might be more dangerous such as trampolines or climbing equipment?)

Do any of the children have SEN / disability / poor mental health which impacts on their vulnerability and/or have any of the children encountered recent traumas / experiences which could mean they are currently more vulnerable than usual?

Have you discussed safety plans, such as what to do in an emergency and how to contact someone trusted who could help them and do they have the means and the capacity to do so?

Have you considered what might happen for the children if something were to happen to you whilst you are out?

Do the children all understand very explicitly what the expectations and boundaries are whilst they are to be unattended/unsupervised?

Who will support the children if something were to scare or worry them whilst you are out?

Will the length of time you intend to be unavailable mean that the children will need to be independently attending to some of their basic needs such as accessing food / cooking or self-care activities / getting themselves to bed... and are they capable of doing this confidently and safely?

These lists are not exhaustive and are simply to provide examples so that parents can make informed decisions about the time when it may be appropriate for their child(ren) to be left unattended/unsupervised even for short periods.

Please also use the NSPCC for advice about how to help your child feel secure if you do decide that they are mature enough to be left alone at any point [Leaving Your Child Home Alone - Advice | NSPCC](#)

Take a short [NSPCC QUIZ ONLINE](#) if you are still unsure. It is important to be aware that frequently leaving your child home alone can constitute neglect, which is a form of child abuse. Please do read the advice at [Child Law Advice](#) which also helpfully provides a list of things that 'parents should do before leaving their child at home'.

How to contact me: It's never too soon to make contact if you have any concerns. You can reach me via text on the PSA mobile **07903 613074** or via email, terri-anne.old@celticcross.education Normal working days are Tuesday and Wednesday 8.00-16.00 and Thursday 8.00-13:00

