



WARWICKSHIRE
SAFE & ACTIVE
TRAVEL

Walking
BUS

Guidance for schools

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What is a Walking Bus?

A walking bus is the name for a supervised group of children walking to or from school. It is made up of at least two adult volunteers, who act as a 'driver' and a 'conductor' and escort the children. Adults and children all wear hi-viz waistcoats.

The bus follows a set route and 'walks' to a published timetable. Children can join or leave the bus at set points along the route. The decision on when a walking bus operates is left to the school and volunteers; it doesn't have to operate morning or afternoon, or even every day – just as long as everyone knows the timetable.

Walking buses depend totally on the support from volunteers. For the scheme to succeed, volunteers need to be enthusiastic and committed. A lead Co-ordinator needs to be identified in school to be the main contact for the walking bus. They must be someone the schools knows.

What are the benefits?

The walking bus can benefit children, parents, the school and the local community by:

- Improving pedestrian and road safety skills
- Promoting healthy exercise
- Saving time and fuel costs for parents
- Developing children's independence and social skills
- Improving school attendance
- Reducing traffic congestion around schools
- Being used as evidence for the Safe and Active Travel Award



How do we get started?

You will need support from:

- Headteacher
 - Parents
 - Volunteers
1. Headteacher to seek clarification from their insurers about cover for walking bus.
 2. The school should send a letter to parents asking if they would support and be interested in the scheme. The more parents/volunteers involved, the less time each has to commit. Try targeting parents in one area to begin with.
 3. The Headteacher appoints a Co-ordinator to progress and organise the scheme. Success of the scheme will depend on the enthusiasm of the Co-ordinator.
 4. Organise a meeting with the Headteacher, Co-ordinator and interested parents.

Choosing a route

Produce a map of the proposed route and carry out a risk assessment. This should be signed off by the Headteacher. Contact your Safe and Active Travel Officer for advice on safe routes and safe places to cross.

The walking bus must follow the approved route at all times. If any section of the route become unsafe, or needs to change, the Co-ordinator must tell the Headteacher as soon as possible.

Insurance becomes invalidated if the approved route is not followed.

The walking bus and volunteers do not have the authority to stop traffic.

Routes may choose to use a designated place for a 'bus stop' this could be a carpark, park, or another safe place to collect and drop children off. Alternatively, a route may be planned to collect children from outside their homes.



Timetable

Although the walking bus should operate on every agreed day, no matter what the weather is like, the Co-ordinator should agree with the Headteacher a procedure to deal with unforeseen or sudden circumstances, such as severe weather, or not enough volunteers to meet the required ratio.

All walking buses must operate to a strict timetable and should not wait for the children who are late, even if they are expected to walk with the bus. Parents are responsible for making sure that children who miss the bus arrive at school safely.

Parents must make sure that children are at the appropriate pick up point in the morning and collected from the drop-off point in the afternoon, if applicable, unless they have been given written permission to continue home from the stop unsupervised. The Co-ordinator must see this permission prior to the journey.

Parents are responsible for their child's safety on the way to and from the chosen bus stops or be at home if the route uses home collection/drop offs.

Ratios

The walking bus **MUST** always have TWO adults present – one acting as the `driver' and the other as the `conductor'. The overall ratio of adult volunteers to children should be 1:6 (please check with your insurance provider).

If you have more than 12 children on the bus, you will need additional adults. Where younger children are involved, you should consider a higher adult volunteer to child ratio.

Volunteers

The success of the walking bus totally depends on the volunteers and the support of the school. As a result, it is essential that the scheme has as many volunteers as possible, so that the routes are always covered and the responsibility does not just fall on a few committed people.

The Co-ordinator must draw up a rota and give it to all the volunteers. If a volunteer cannot carry out their duty they must inform the Co-ordinator, who is responsible for finding a replacement. If, for any reason, the minimum number of volunteers cannot be provided, the journey must be cancelled and parents informed.

All volunteers must be able to contact each other in an emergency.

Each walking bus route will need a register of children who want to use the walking bus and on which days they wish to travel on it.

The 'driver' will lead the bus from the front and the 'conductor' will walk at the back, so the children can be seen and are kept under close supervision. Any additional volunteers should be positioned throughout the bus to supervise the children. The volunteers must stay with the bus at all times while on the agreed route and must not use mobile phones unless there is an emergency situation.

All children and volunteers must wear hi-viz waistcoats at all times when on the bus. These remain the property of the school and must be returned when leaving the scheme.

All volunteers should receive training from the Co-ordinator (and/or Road Safety Officer) prior to using the bus, and all must be DBS checked by the school.

Volunteers must not take pets on the walking bus.

ID Badges for volunteers

All volunteers should be issued with an identification badge that must be worn whilst walking with the bus; the badges should be prepared by the school, once a satisfactory enhanced DBS check has been received.

Parents' Permission

Parents must complete a consent form before their child is allowed to travel on the walking bus.

This should include:

- Emergency contact details
- Any medical conditions the walking bus should be aware of
- The days when the child will be using the walking bus
- The bus stop/home collection they wish to use
- Whether or not the child will be met from the afternoon bus stop (if applicable) and a guarantee that an adult will be there to meet them.

Parents will be asked to agree to allow limited personal information to be recorded, but only for use by the Co-ordinator or school to use if necessary.

It is essential that parents have contact details for the Co-ordinator, and parents must agree to inform the Co-ordinator if their child will not be using the bus (if they are ill for example). If parents cannot contact the Co-ordinator, they should notify the school instead.

A procedure should be agreed with the school for cancellation of the bus for reasons such as severe weather, or not enough volunteers to meet the ratio.



Bus 'passengers'

All children using the walking bus will sign a pupil's promise to wear their hi-viz waistcoat and behave sensibly and considerately at all times on the bus.

Parents must stress the importance of good behaviour on a journey to and from school. Any child who is putting themselves or others at risk, or who behaves in an inappropriate way, will be withdrawn from the bus at the end of the journey. The Co-ordinator and headteacher have the final decision of who should and should not use the bus.

If a bus operates in the afternoon and, for any reason, a child misses it, they should report to the school office and tell a member of staff. Under no circumstances should they walk home alone.

Monitoring

The walking bus must be monitored by the Headteacher or Co-ordinator once a term to ensure that the bus is operating in accordance with these guidelines. In particular, adult to child ratios, use of hi-viz waistcoats and adherence to basic road safety guidelines will all be checked.



Insurance

Schools should always seek clarification from their insurances about cover for the walking bus, and public liability insurance for their volunteers providing the following guidelines are met:

- Follow road safety guidance and receive appropriate training
- Wear hi-viz waistcoat
- Provide personal details and have an enhanced DBS check
- Ensure there are sufficient volunteers on the bus
- Ensure they use the approved route that has been subject to a risk assessment

Emergency Procedure

An emergency procedure should be in place and agreed with the school should an incident occur.

Glossary of terms

Bus stop

A pre-arranged point on a walking bus route where children can be dropped off or collected

Parent(s)

Parents, guardians, carers or other relatives who are authorised to look after a child

Walking bus

A supervised group of children walking to and from school

Volunteers:

A Co-ordinator is the adult who acts as the organiser for a particular walking bus

A Conductor is the adult who walks at the rear of the bus

A Driver is the adult who walks at the front of the bus

Additional volunteers are adults who are spaced along the bus to help supervise

Additional advice

For larger schools with multiple buses it would be advisable to have a Co-ordinator for each route. Schools should retain parents consent and pupil promise forms on file as a record of who is authorised to be on the bus.

If a bus becomes unmanageable due to the numbers `on board' it should be split into two buses. Remember that volunteers do not have the authority to stop traffic .

When crossing a wide road with a pedestrian refuge, it is advised to split the bus into manageable numbers rather than stop traffic or `overflow' the island.

Always carry out a risk assessment and review it regularly

Always wear hi-viz

And finally ...

The Warwickshire Road Safety Club focuses on five key areas and use of the Club Code should be encouraged by volunteers when walking with the bus

ROAD SAFETY CLUB CODE

- ✓ THINK about roads
- ✓ STOP at the kerb and wait
- ✓ LOOK and LISTEN for traffic
- ✓ THINK about what to do
- ✓ CROSS the road safely, look and listening all the time

Themes

Reception Class

The importance of holding hands, scooters and stopping at the kerb

Year One

People who can help keep us safe near the road, holding hands and stopping at the kerb.

Year Two

Learning to think, stop before the kerb, look and listen for traffic and cross safely using a safe place.

Year Three

Becoming more independent, being observant and looking for safer places to play

Year Four

Taking responsibility, identifying risks and hazards, wearing bright clothing when out and about

Year Five

Leading by example to younger children

Year Six

Moving on from primary to secondary school and safe strategies to travel independently and safely



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