



Walking Bus FAQs

Introduction

A Walking Bus comprises of at least two parent volunteers, acting as a 'driver' and a 'conductor', and a line of school children. The pupils are escorted to school along a set route, and stop off at 'bus stops' along the way picking up more 'passengers'. Some Walking Buses use a trolley to carry heavy bags and musical instruments.

1. How will a Walking Bus benefit parents and children?

A Walking Bus gives children the opportunity to become independent, by walking to school with friends, without direct parental control. It's an excellent way to learn road safety skills, and it contributes towards the 60 minutes of daily recommended physical activity. It helps reduce car dependency and is good for the environment. Parents also benefit from the time saved in the morning.

2. How will the school benefit?

Enabling more children to walk to school will reduce traffic and congestion outside the school gates. Research also shows that children who walk or cycle to school arrive at school more alert and ready to learn. The Walking Buses may also be used as a curriculum link to PSHE and Healthy School projects. Ofsted inspectors look favourably on such schemes.

3. Who can volunteer on a Walking Bus?

Any adult (over 18/under 65) associated to the school (e.g. parent, governor, employee). It is at the school's discretion whether to vet volunteers through the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB).

4. I already have a CRB, do I need another?

Yes. A CRB is valid for a specific job and organisation. If you are already CRB checked in the school, you may be able to keep the same one but this is the school's decision.

5. What happens once the CRB form is completed?

A copy will be sent to the school and yourself. Processing time varies but it usually takes 4-6 weeks.

6. If I volunteer, will I need to run the Bus every day?

No. Volunteers work in a rota with other parents.

7. How many volunteers run the Bus?

Each bus must have at least two volunteers, acting as a 'driver' and a 'conductor' at all times. The ratio of adults to children is 1:8 for juniors or 1:4 for infants. The ratio is calculated accordingly when there is a mix of juniors and infants. For example, if there were 5 juniors and 3 infants, 2 volunteers would be needed. If there were 3 juniors and 5 infants, 3 volunteers would be needed.



8. How many children are on the Bus?

As long as there is the correct number of volunteers, as few as 1 and as many as 20 children may be on the bus. If the number of children exceeds 20, it is advised that a new bus is created.

9. What should a volunteer do if a child misbehaves on the Bus?

A child who puts others/themselves in danger, or who misbehaves, must be reported to the headteacher by the volunteer.

10. What happens if there is an accident?

Parents, whose children use the bus, sign an agreement accepting that they are still responsible for their child's journey to school, even though the child is on the Walking Bus. Any accident or incident involving the Walking Bus must be reported to the headteacher.

11. Does anyone need to be First Aid trained?

No, but at least one volunteer needs to carry a mobile in case of emergency.

12. How is the route chosen?

The route is identified by the school/volunteers and is likely to be determined by where the passengers live.

13. How is the route assessed?

A Travelchoice representative will risk assess the route and suggest modification if appropriate. He/she may also advise on the most appropriate location to cross the road and make recommendations regarding parent to child ratio. The risk assessment is circulated to all volunteers and coordinators.

14. What happens if the route changes?

Travelchoice (Peterborough City Council) must be informed if the route is to change as a risk assessment will need be carried out on the new route.

15. What are Bus Stops?

'Bus stops' are points along the route where the group will pick up children. Bus stops are located near to where 'passengers' live.

16. Is there a register?

Yes. On every route the volunteer driver will check the names of bus passengers against that day's register.

17. Can children join the Bus on a casual basis?

No. Each child must go through the application process prior to joining a Walking Bus.

18. What happens if a child wants to change the day they use the Bus?

If the change is temporary, the child's parents only inform the relevant bus driver. When the change is permanent, arrangements are made with the school. Therefore, parents are given a list of volunteers' contact details and should make necessary changes. Volunteers must not accept changes to the register that compromise the adult to child ratio.



19. Does the Walking Bus only run in the mornings?

Most Walking Buses tend to be more successful in the mornings; however, provided there are sufficient volunteers, there is no reason why your school should not operate afternoon buses as well.

20. Who is the Walking Bus School Co-ordinator?

The School Coordinator is a parent volunteer/school representative who may also be a driver or conductor. They are the point of contact for volunteers and handle the day-to-day running of the Bus. In particular they will ensure that new volunteers are fully aware of their responsibilities and have been through the necessary checks prior to becoming a volunteer.

21. How do parents keep up to date with changes?

The School Co-ordinator will inform parents of important changes. This may include new volunteers, changes to the route, and changes to times.

22. Does the Bus run in bad weather?

Yes. The Bus operates come rain or shine! In very severe weather it is the responsibility of the volunteers and parents to make a decision regarding the operation of the bus.

23. Is high visibility clothing provided?

Travelchoice have a starter pack to loan. All volunteers and children are advised to wear a high visibility tabard, particularly in poor weather. These remain the property of the school when a child or volunteer withdraws from the bus.

24. Do all buses have trolleys?

No. Trolleys may be provided by the school to carry children's bags, but can be a hindrance if pavements are narrow. They should be pulled by an adult at the front of the bus as the volunteer at the back must be 'hands free' in case of an emergency. Use of a trolley is considered in the risk assessment.

25. How can I set up a Walking Bus?

Contact your school or Travelchoice for more information and guidance on how to set up a Walking Bus.

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