



The Walking Bus

A step-by-step guide

Introduction

A walking bus is the name for a supervised group of children walking to or from school. It comprises of at least two adult volunteers, who act as a 'driver' and a 'conductor'. Adults and children all wear high-visibility tabards. The bus follows a set route and collects children from 'bus stops' at agreed times.

Benefits

The walking bus benefits parents, students, the school, and local community in a variety of ways:

- It can be a vital sustainable resource for a school travel plan
- It develops pedestrian and road safety skills
- It promotes moderate physical exercise
- They are time saving for parents
- Develops children's independence in a supervised environment.
- Children arrive at school more alert and on time
- Reduced traffic congestion around the school gates
- Improved air quality

Volunteers and Walking Bus Co-ordinator

The success of the walking bus is heavily dependant on the volunteers.

Every walking bus will have a 'driver' and a 'conductor'. The driver leads from the front and the conductor will walk at the back; this ensures close supervision of children. Any extra volunteers are placed at intervals throughout the bus. It is essential that a walking bus has as many volunteers as possible so that the responsibility can be shared.

The walking bus 'co-ordinator', perhaps a volunteer parent or a teaching assistant, will maintain the administration and rota for the walking bus. See the Volunteer's Guidelines for more information.

Identifying volunteers and a school co-ordinator is the responsibility of the school.

Safety

All volunteers are CRB checked by the school. A Travelchoice representative will ensure that all participants have the opportunity to discuss any concerns they have prior to starting the first walking bus.

Ratio

There must be a ratio of 1:8 adults to juniors and 1:4 adults to infants. If for any reason, the minimum number of volunteers cannot be reached then the walking bus must be cancelled.

Tabards

All volunteers on the walking bus must wear identification badges provided by PCC. All children and volunteers must wear high-visibility tabards whilst on the walking bus. These are the property of the walking bus and must be returned when a volunteer or child leaves the scheme.

Parental Consent

The parent or guardian must sign a consent form before their child can join the walking bus. This includes:

- Emergency contact details
- Any medical conditions
- The days the child will attend the walking bus
- The bus stop they wish to use
- Parent's Promise
- Pupil's Promise

Bus Passengers

Children on the walking bus will also have to sign a 'pupil's promise' which commits them to good, safe behaviour and to wearing the high-visibility tabards at all times on the bus.

Parents must stress the importance of good behaviour on the walking bus. Any child putting themselves, or others, in danger will be reported to the head teacher and possibly removed from the walking bus.

Insurance

Peterborough City Council's Public Liability insurance indemnifies its employees and authorised volunteers who assist in conducting Walking Buses against any liability in law arising from any proven negligence.

However, participation on a Walking Bus is dependent on compliance with the following conditions:

- High Visibility clothing must be worn at all times on the Walking Bus.
- The route set in the risk assessment must be followed (roadworks permitting).
- The correct ratio of adults to children (1:8 juniors, 1:4 infants) must not be exceeded.
- The bus is operated following the safety guidelines outlined in this document.
- Volunteers must be registered to operate the Walking Bus. Substitutions are not permitted.
- A parental consent form must be signed for each child using the Walking Bus.
- The School reserves the right to exclude any child from the Walking Bus if their behaviour is considered to present a danger to themselves or others on the Bus.

Emergency Procedures

The register is carried by the driver and will contain emergency contact details. If the incident is serious, emergency services should be contacted. Any incident, however minor, must be reported to the school. The school must inform all volunteers of the emergency procedures.

Routes and Risk Assessment

The walking bus follows a set route. The route is worked out by the school in conjunction with the council's School Travel Plan Co-ordinator. The proposed route will undergo a risk assessment by the School Travel Plan Co-ordinator to ensure the route is suitable and safe for a walking bus. If changes are made to the route, a new risk assessment will have to be done and the parents informed.

Children must walk in pairs wherever possible. Sufficient room must be made so that pedestrians can pass freely. Children carry their own bags; use of a trolley is optional but must be provided by the school. If a trolley is used this must be considered in the risk assessment. If the bus becomes too big to negotiate hazards (i.e. more than 20 children) then a second bus will need to be set up. A school may have more than one Walking Bus, covering a number of routes.

Bus 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 school on a procedure for unforeseen circumstances, such as extreme weather conditions or not enough volunteers.

The walking bus operates on a strict timetable and can not wait for latecomers. Parents are responsible for making sure that children who miss the bus arrive at school safely. If a child is absent from school it is important that the parent informs the school co-ordinator.

Parents must make sure that their children are at the correct pick-up point and if applicable, that they are collected from the correct drop-off point.

Volunteers and parents must be aware of:

- a. The risk assessment report
- b. The route and bus stop points
- c. Emergency procedures
- d. Green Cross Code

Training

School Co-ordinator to walk the selected route with a Travelchoice representative.

- a. Volunteers to be walk the route and discuss the guidelines with School Coordinator
- b. Children/ parents to be briefed by the school on behaviour and safety guidelines before joining the Walking Bus

Monitoring

A Travelchoice representative will visit your walking bus within the first month, and yearly after that. If there any changes are made to the route or the bus ceases

operation, Travelchoice must be informed as soon as possible. The school co-ordinator should complete the Monitoring Form termly and send this to Travelchoice.

Incentives

In order to generate interest and then maintain motivation, incentives or rewards for children involved in the walking bus could be provided.

Publicity

Once you are ready to start your walking bus, contact Travelchoice to arrange a press release and photo opportunity!

Useful Links

For high-visibility clothing try www.brightkidz.co.uk/index
www.redoakdirect.com

Contact details

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