

The Walking Bus

This booklet contains detailed information and guidance for schools in Cambridgeshire who wish to set up a 'Walking Bus' scheme.



Parents and carers need to be committed to the idea at the outset if the Walking Bus is to be successful. By organising a rota for escorting the children, parents and carers can gain more free time for themselves as well as giving a greater sense of independence to their children.

The materials and forms in the booklet may be freely photocopied. This pack contains:-

- Operating Guidelines
- A Step by Step Guide
- Documents Needed
- Sample Paperwork

Contents

- ◆ **Introduction**
- ◆ **Setting up the walking bus**
- ◆ **Operating Guidelines for school and organiser**
- ◆ **Accident Procedures**
- ◆ **Examples of forms and letters used in setting up and running a Walking Bus**

For further information please contact:

**Cambridgeshire County Council
Road Safety Education**

e-mail road.safety@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Introduction

This guide provides information on how to set up, organise and run a Walking Bus. The contents of this guide can be photocopied or amended to suit the situation at each school.

Once you have read the following guidelines and you have recruited volunteers to help you, please contact Cambridgeshire County Council's Road Safety Education Team who can advise you on how to set up your Walking Bus and will come and assess the planned route.

For a Walking Bus to be successful, the organisers and school must be committed to the scheme from the outset. However, once a Walking Bus is running, the advantages - including reduced congestion and improved fitness of children - will benefit not just the children and school, but also parents and carers and the local community. Looking through the guide, it may seem that setting up a walking bus is difficult but do not be put off. There are many schools within the county that have set up and successfully operated a Walking Bus.

- ◆ This guide contains the following:
- ◆ A step-by-step guide to setting up and running a Walking Bus
- ◆ Operating guidelines
- ◆ Examples of forms used in setting up and running a Walking Bus

Setting up a Walking Bus

For a Walking Bus to succeed, it is essential to have the support and help of parents and carers and most importantly, the school.

There are a number of steps that need to be followed:

1. Find an Organiser

The first thing to do is find someone who is prepared to take on the role of organiser for the Bus. The organiser will be responsible for making the necessary arrangements and undertaking the work required for setting up a Walking Bus. It is a role often volunteered for by teaching assistants, school governors or parents and carers. But, as you have asked for this guide and are therefore interested in a walking bus, maybe you could do this job?

2. Is there enough interest and support among parents and carers for a Walking Bus?

Next, it is necessary to find out how much support there is among parents and carers for a Walking Bus. The organiser, with assistance from the school has to send a letter to parents and carers explaining what a Walking Bus is and what the benefits are. This letter should invite parents and carers to express their interest in their children riding the walking bus, usually this is done by parents and carers completing a short questionnaire which details their name, address and if they would be prepared to help the organiser run the Walking Bus. (Documents 1 and 2.)

3. Decision time – Is the walking bus possible?

Once all the returns have been received to the letter, the organiser needs to analyse the results to find out if a Walking Bus is possible.

You will need to find out:

- ◆ Where people live.
- ◆ The number of parents and carers prepared to help run the Bus.
- ◆ What is the best route the Walking Bus could take to serve the most parents, carers and children? A route for the Walking Bus will largely depend on where the majority of pupils wanting to use the Walking Bus live.
- ◆ The number of potential Walking Bus participants

The organiser will probably need a map of the local area to help them when analysing the returns.

It is not necessary for a Walking Bus to operate every single day. A Walking Bus can operate once, twice or three times a week according to demand and availability of helpers. For example, the school could have their Walking Bus on just Wednesdays and have 'Walking Wednesdays.' Or another example is that it could run on Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays only. The Walking Bus can take place in the morning and afternoon, the morning or afternoon only – it's up to you.

A Walking Bus is adaptable to the situation at **your** school.

If the organiser and the school decide a Walking Bus is possible, you can move on to the next stage

4. Risk assessing the best route

You need to decide on the best route for the Walking Bus - based on returns from the letter - and then have this route risk assessed in line with your schools' risk assessment procedures and policies. The risk assessment should look for risks and potential hazards on the route and provide guidance on how to minimize the risks. A written copy of the assessment should be kept with all the other Walking Bus documents in school.

The route needs to be re-assessed by the co-ordinator on an annual basis in case circumstances have changed.

If you decide to change the route at any time, or use a different route or even set up another Walking Bus, then the new route will also need to be risk assessed.

5. Meeting with adult helpers

The organiser needs to meet with parents and carers prepared to help in order to explain in detail what they will need to do as helpers. All adults helping on the Walking Bus will need to complete all relevant checks for adults working with children. This includes any adults who join as helpers after the bus has started operating. The school should hold a stock of relevant documentation and any costs associated with checks will have to be paid for by the school. It is best to organise this well in advance of the Walking Bus starting.

The organiser will also need to obtain the name, address, contact number and availability of the helpers. This is necessary in order to produce a rota of volunteer supervisors.

You will need at least two adults for each Walking Bus, one to lead the group - the Driver - and one at the rear - the Conductor. The suggested ratios of adults to children is:

Infants: 1 adult to 4 children 2 adults to 8 children
Juniors: 1 adult to 6 children 2 adult to 12 children

The organiser and volunteers need to be trained in order to ensure everyone knows how the Bus will operate and what their responsibilities will be. Some of the volunteers will be Drivers of the Bus and some Conductors. The training should consist of the following:

- ◆ Walking the agreed route pointing out any hazards identified by the Risk Assessment.
- ◆ Pointing out designated crossing points.
- ◆ Guidance on approved safety procedures and how to deal with, and report, accidents.

The organiser is responsible for arranging training additionally the school will need to complete further risk assessments of the Walking Bus route on an annual basis.

6. Finding the passengers

Once the Walking Bus route has been agreed and the Walking Bus team trained, it is necessary to find participants for the Walking Bus. This is done by:

Sending out letter from school to all parents and carers letting them know when the Walking Bus will start, the time it will go, the route of the Walking Bus and where the stops to pick up passengers are, and when it will be operating. For example, the Walking Bus may operate only in the mornings or just specific days of the week, e.g. Mondays and Wednesdays only. (Document 3.)

The letter should also include a consent form for parents or carers to fill out and return to the organiser. The consent form and information it contains will be used to make up the register of passengers who use the bus. This information must be kept up to date and a copy kept with the school and Walking Bus Organiser. (Document 4.)

On receipt of the Parental or Carer Consent form, parents or carers will be sent a copy of the Parents User Guidelines (Document 5) as well as a letter confirming their children has a place on the Walking Bus. The letter of confirmation will details when the Walking Bus will start and where from. The letter will also provide details of who the Bus Driver and Conductors are and their contact details. (Document 6.)

Children must be told of their responsibilities when on the Walking Bus before using it. They could sign an agreement – a Pupil's Promise - detailing what their responsibilities are when using the Walking Bus. (Document 7.)

The school will need to obtain a small quantity of high visibility tabards for adults and children to wear. It may be possible to obtain sponsorship for tabards from a local company.

7. Start the Walking Bus

The Walking Bus is now ready to set off and everyone who uses it can enjoy the benefits of walking to school.

A Walking Bus can start as soon as:

- ◆ The Walking Bus route has been risk assessed.
- ◆ Volunteer helpers have been trained and all necessary checks completed.
- ◆ There are children to use the Walking Bus
- ◆ Written parental or carer consent has been received.

- ◆ Pupils have been told about their expected behaviour and responsibilities.

Operating guidelines for the school and the coordinator

Walking Bus timetable

The Walking Bus has a timetable to keep to. In the morning it cannot wait for latecomers. If the Walking Bus operates in the afternoon, it will leave when all the children are assembled at the designated start point.

In the afternoon, parents and carers must ensure they are waiting for their children at the designated Walking Bus stopping points unless they have made alternative arrangements and informed the school and/or organiser.

Parental and Carer Consent and Responsibility

Parents and carers are responsible for their child's safety to and from designated Walking Bus stops.

Parents and carers **must** complete and sign the consent forms (Document 4) before their child can use the Walking Bus. Completion of this form indicates parents and carers are allowing their child to use the Walking Bus at their own risk and accept the rules of the Walking Bus.

Signing the consent form also means parents or carers have made clear to their children the necessity for them to behave sensibly and comply with any instructions given to them by the adults in charge of the Walking Bus (Driver / Conductor.)

On receipt of the completed form, parents or carers are issued with Walking Bus User Guidelines (Document 5). The Guidelines detail the responsibilities of parents, carers and children.

Consent forms are kept by the school and made available to the adult volunteers running the Bus. It is the responsibility of parents and carers to ensure the information on the consent forms is kept up to date. It is also the parent's and carer's responsibility to inform the Driver of any change to a child's travel pattern detailed on the Parental and Carer Consent forms.

Child Passenger Behaviour

Before starting to use the Walking Bus, children must be briefed about their expected behaviour and responsibilities. Children should be expected to:

- ◆ Behave well
- ◆ Not to cause danger to others or themselves
- ◆ Follow the instructions of the accompanying adults

Children whose behaviour causes the adult volunteers concern will be reported to the school. Persistent unsafe or misbehaviour can result in parents or carers being asked to withdraw their child/ren from the Walking Bus.

Records

The school must keep a record of the Walking Bus route(s) as well as start and drop off times.

The school and organiser must keep a record of the rota detailing which volunteers are staffing the Walking Bus and when. This rota should be passed to all volunteers (Document 8.) The rota should include contact telephone numbers. In the event a volunteer is unable to run the Walking Bus, they should contact the organiser who will arrange for a replacement volunteer.

Walking Bus drivers must be provided with a register of pupils using the bus. This register should detail when the pupils use the bus as well as home addresses and telephone numbers. (Documents 9 and 10.)

Conspicuity

All children and volunteer helpers must wear high visibility tabards when travelling with the Walking Bus.

Long Term - Sustaining the Walking Bus

- ◆ It is important to promote the Walking Bus to all new parents and at new pupils induction and information events.
- ◆ Publicising the Walking Bus on the school website and newsletters helps raise the profile of the Walking Bus
- ◆ Taking part in National events such as the Worlds Biggest Walking Bus, Walk to School Month, or Walk to School Week, all help to ensure that the Walking Bus remains topical
- ◆ Promoting Park and Stride to join the Walking Bus is also a way of recruiting more children

Accident Procedures

- ◆ Keep calm.
- ◆ If an injury is sustained or suspected, do not move the casualty. Protect them from further injury and danger.
- ◆ Know your limitations.
- ◆ Phone 999 for an ambulance. The control officer can, if necessary, pass messages on to other emergency services. Either the Driver or Conductor of the Walking Bus should carry a mobile phone when operating the Walking Bus.
- ◆ If a motor vehicle is involved, try to obtain the name and address of the Driver of the vehicle as well as details of their insurance company and the registration number of the vehicle. The name and address of any witnesses to the accident should also be obtained.
- ◆ The Walking Bus Driver or Conductor is responsible for advising the school as soon as possible that an accident has occurred. If the accident involves a pupil, the school will then contact the pupil's parent/ carer.
- ◆ If not attending the accident, the police should be informed as soon as possible.
- ◆ The Walking Bus Driver and Conductor must have contact numbers of both the school and all pupils using the Walking Bus although responsibility for informing parents /carers resides with the school.

Insurance

It is advised that the school notifies their insurers that they will be having a Walking Bus scheme. Cambridgeshire County Council holds public liability insurance in relation to the organisation of the Walking Bus Scheme. If the school pay the Walking Bus staff then the schools insurance covers these staff. As the Walking Bus staff then become employees not volunteers and must be paid through proper payroll. Then they will then be covered by the schools' employers liability insurance for injury to themselves, and by public liability for injury to those in their care.

Examples of forms

Document 1

Dear Parents / Carers

In order to ease congestion around the school and to help improve pupils' fitness, the school is considering setting up a Walking Bus.

Children using the Walking Bus will walk to school as a group using a route agreed under the supervision of at least two responsible adults – a Driver and a Conductor. There will be designated places along the route where children can join the Walking Bus.

Attached to this letter is a leaflet that answers some of the more commonly asked questions about a Walking Bus.

Subject to demand, we would like to be able to operate the Walking Bus every school day – morning and afternoon.

We would like to know if the idea of a Walking Bus has your support and also if you would be prepared to help run the walking bus. We would be grateful if you could complete the following questionnaire and return it to the school by the end of the week.

Yours faithfully,

Walking Bus Questionnaire

Would you like your child to use the Walking Bus if one were set up? YES NO
MAYBE

Would you be willing to help run the Walking Bus as a Driver / Conductor? YES NO
MAYBE (Full training will be given.)

Your Name _____

Name(s) of child/ren _____ Class _____

Home address _____

Post Code _____

Document 2



A Walking Bus Your Questions Answered

What is a Walking Bus?

- ◆ A Walking Bus consists of a line of children walking to (or from) school escorted by adult volunteers who act as driver or conductors. The Walking Bus follows a set route which has pre-arranged 'bus-stops' along the route where children can join or leave the walking bus.
- ◆ The Walking Bus operates every school day – rain or sun – morning and afternoon.

What are the benefits of a Walking Bus?

A Walking Bus has many benefits:

- ◆ By reducing the number of children being driven to school, a Walking Bus helps reduce congestion outside a school at the start or end of the school day. This also helps reduce pollution.
- ◆ There are health benefits, children who walk to school regularly can improve their fitness and health. Studies also show that children who walk to school are more alert and receptive in class
- ◆ Over the past 20 years, the percentage of children travelling to school by car has doubled, almost 40% of primary and 20% of secondary age children are now driven to school each day. Most of these journeys are less than two miles. A study by Sustrans, the sustainable transport charity, found that 51% of children driven to school would prefer to walk or cycle with friends.
- ◆ The school run can mean significant cost implications, with families spending over £370 annually on the drive to school in petrol costs and wear and tear to the average car. So the Walking Bus can help save parents and carers money as well as their time as they don't have to walk or drive to school each day!
- ◆ Children who walk to school learn more about their local environment - they find out who their neighbours are and make friends as they chat to other children on the way to school. The Walking Bus can be a great way to make new friends.
- ◆ Walking to school can help improve a child's independence and road sense.

Is it safe?

- ◆ The route taken by the Walking Bus is risk assessed by the Walking Bus organisers
- ◆ Adult volunteers who help run the Walking Bus are fully trained by the Walking Bus organisers
- ◆ All children and adults wear fluorescent yellow tabards so they are more visible to motorists.
- ◆ The school keeps an up-to-date register of children that use the Walking Bus with contact details.
- ◆ All children are instructed about correct behaviour and safety before joining the Walking Bus.

How can I take part?

Please complete the questionnaire on the attached letter and return to the school as soon as possible. The information gathered will allow us to determine if there is sufficient support to run a Walking Bus, whether it can operate and work out the best route.

If a Walking Bus is workable, we will be in contact with you soon to let you know the route the Bus will take and the times it will operate. You will also need to sign a Parental and Carer consent form before your child joins the scheme.

Document 3

Walking Bus Route and Timetable

Start Date: _____

Route and times:

Morning

Afternoon

Bus Stop

Time

Bus Stop

Time

At the end of the school day, the children will meet and wait at _____ before leaving with the Driver and Conductor.

If you would like you child to use the Walking Bus, please complete the Parental and Carer Consent Form and return to the school as soon as possible. Places on the Bus are limited so you need to register early to secure a place on the Bus.





Document 4

Parental and Carer Consent Form

Name of Pupil(s): _____

Class(es): _____

Home Address: _____

Contact telephone number: _____

Alternative contact number: _____

I wish my child/ren to use the Walking Bus

Mornings – Join at Bus stop: _____ Day of week: Mon Tue Wed Thu
Fri

Afternoons - Join at Bus stop: _____ Day of week: Mon Tue Wed
Thu Fri

I understand my child's journey to school remains my responsibility as parent / carer even though my child will be using the Walking Bus.

I will ensure my child is at the bus stop on time in the morning and that they are collected from the bus stop in the afternoon.

I will inform the driver if my child/ren is unable to travel.

I have read the 'Guidelines' and my child/ren understand the need for good behaviour.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Document 5

Walking Bus – User Guidelines for Parents

Morning

- ◆ The Bus operates to a timetable and will not wait for latecomers. Please make sure your child/ren is at the designated bus stop on time.
- ◆ If your child/ren is unable to travel on the walking bus then you must inform the **driver as soon as possible**.
- ◆ Contact details for the drivers will be provided with the letter to you confirming your child has a place on the Walking Bus.

Afternoon

- ◆ You **must not** allow your child/ren to use the Walking Bus in the afternoon unless someone is available to collect them from the designated bus stop. If a problem arises, please contact the school during the day and the school will inform the Walking Bus Driver.

Behaviour

- ◆ Please impress on your child/ren the need for them to behave sensibly and follow the instructions given by adults in charge of the Walking Bus.
- ◆ Any child that misbehaves or causes danger to themselves or others will be reported to the school.
- ◆ You may be required to withdraw your child/ren from the Walking Bus if they continue to misbehave or act in a manner that causes concern to the Bus Driver or Conductor.

Emergency School Closure

- ◆ In the event the school has to be closed due to an emergency, the Walking Bus will not operate. You should follow the normal procedures laid down by the school for such eventualities.

Document 6

Letter of Confirmation for place on Walking Bus

Dear _____

Date _____

I am writing to confirm that we have received your Parental and Carer Consent Form. We have reserved a place on the Bus for:

Name _____ Class _____

The Walking Bus will start on:

Date _____ Bus Stop: _____ Time: _____

There will be a short meeting at school on _____ at _____ so that you can meet the Driver(s) and Conductor(s).

CONTACT DETAILS - ADULT DRIVER(S)

Name	Address	Telephone
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Please remember that in the eventuality of your child/ren being unable to travel on the Bus, you **should inform the Driver as soon as possible using the contact number above.**

Document 7

Form for child passenger to sign agreeing to behave properly and safely when using Walking Bus.

Pupil's Promise

Name: _____

Class: _____

The Walking Bus

When I am using the Walking Bus I agree that:

1. I will be on my best behaviour at all times.
2. I will listen carefully to the Driver and Conductor and follow their instructions.
3. I will cross the roads carefully when I am told to do so.
4. I will be sensible when I am walking with my friends – especially when we are near to cars and buses.

This means we will all arrive safely.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Document 8

Duty roster and contact details for Walking Bus Driver / Conductor.

Morning

Driver / Conductor	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Telephone Number	Address

Afternoon

Driver / Conductor	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Telephone Number	Address

Document 9

Parental /carer contact details and how Walking Bus will be used.

Childs Name	Contact Name	Contact Tel Number	Home Address	Day and time of bus use (am/pm)	Bus Stop

Document 10

Walking Bus Register

Morning

CHILDS NAME	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri

Afternoon

CHILDS NAME	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri



**Cambridgeshire County Council
Road Safety Education**

Box No: D8e
Stanton House
Stanton Way, Huntingdon
Cambs
PE29 6XL

e-mail road.safety@cambridgeshire.gov.uk