

# Walking Bus

## Information Pack

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## What is a walking bus?

***A 'walking bus' is a group of children walking to or from school under the supervision of at least two trained adults, one leading the group ('driver') and one at the rear ('conductor'). Usually run by parent volunteers, it will follow a set route and timetable, with pick up points - 'bus stops' at the start and along the way.***

### Some Reasons for setting up a walking bus:

- Provides an enjoyable, sociable and fun journey to school
- Can improve health and fitness for both adults and children
- Saves time and helps parents get to work on time
- Saves money
- Develops children's road safety awareness and road safety skills
- Reduces congestion and school gate parking problems
- Reduces pollution and is environmentally friendly

### Walking Buses in Leeds

Walking buses in Leeds first started in 1999, and operate at several schools, some with more than one route, throughout the city. Some start outside someone's house, others start at a local parking facility. Where families live further away, parents can drive their children to the start or to another pick up point.

They are mostly run to encourage and support walking to school, with associated benefits, but at some schools, they also aim to improve punctuality and attendance. They can be demonstrated to have been successful in achieving these aims (see case study).

#### **GOOD PRACTICE CASE STUDY : MEANWOOD C OF E PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Meanwood C of E Primary School is a single form entry voluntary aided school which adopted their travel plan in 2005. Since the school is situated on a narrow road and suffers from considerable congestion at the beginning and end of the school day one of the first initiatives to be progressed was a Walking Bus.



Supported by the Road Safety Team, the walking bus started in May 2005.

- 20-30 children walk with the bus each day, with about 40 children involved overall.
- In October 2004 before the travel plan 57% of pupils travelled by car
- After the walking bus was established this reduced to 40% in October 2005
- A 15% increase in pupils walking has been achieved by the Walking Bus

Leeds City Council Road Safety and Travelwise Teams support Walking Buses, as part of a package of measures to support school travel plans. We provide:

- travel plan and road safety advice
- guidelines (see later pages)
- training for adult volunteers
- third party liability insurance for adult volunteers
- support for risk assessments and route planning
- hi-visibility waistcoats
- promotional materials

Walking buses have usually been run by a group of parent volunteers operating on a rota basis. One or 2 people, either parents or sometimes school staff have taken on most of the organisation and administration. In Leeds, one walking bus is run by a committee.

### **Getting started:**

- It is important to seek support from your Headteacher and Governors.
- Identifying someone as a coordinator is important to ensure a walking bus scheme runs smoothly.
- The proposal to start a Walking Bus and the benefits need to be publicised to parents and children. Ways to do this could include:
  - *the school newsletter*
  - *flyers and posters designed by the children*
  - *displays and information available at parents evenings*
  - *assemblies*
  - *the school council.*
- Interest from parents and children in joining a walking bus then needs to be sought. This is usually done through a letter with a return slip (see example as part of this pack).
- Potential routes can be identified from where interested families and volunteers live. Volunteers can include:
  - *Parents*
  - *Grandparents*
  - *Governors*
  - *School staff*
  - *Friends of the school*
- Arrange a training session for volunteers with the Road Safety Team. This can often be dovetailed with the route risk assessment.
- The training and information about the route-specific risk assessment must be disseminated to all volunteers, including those who may join later. To ensure this, the coordinator or another responsible adult needs to be approved to train new volunteers
- Incentives/rewards for children and adults taking part and regular updates can help maintain enthusiasm

- Recruiting new volunteers and children is key to keeping the bus going over the longer term. Information for new starters, in the prospectus and at parents evenings can assist with this

**Each walking bus is likely to require the following paperwork:**

Route map  
Consent forms  
Volunteer training record  
CRB forms  
Route specific risk assessment  
Route information and timetable  
Adult rota  
Child rota/pickup  
List of names, addresses and telephone numbers  
Emergency cover availability  
School specific guidelines if needed

## Walking Bus Guidelines

1. There should be at least two adults on each route escorting up to 16 children; there must be one adult for each eight children thereafter.
  - a) Pre-school children in buggies/pushchairs may be brought on the walking bus, but do not count in the ratio, and are the responsibility of their parent/carer. Pre-school children who are walking do count.
2. One adult should be the 'Driver' leading the bus, the other should be the 'Conductor' at the back of the bus. Other adults should walk between, so that children are supervised at reasonable intervals, concentrating on smaller children.
  - a) The ideal position for an adult volunteer with a child in a buggy is as the 'Conductor' at the rear of the bus. The 'Driver' may also push a buggy, but only if there is a 3<sup>rd</sup> adult, without a buggy, to lead any road crossing.
3. The above ratios must not be exceeded. If there are not enough adults, children joining en route will have to be taken to school by an alternative means. Otherwise, an additional parent/carer must join the bus and help supervise.
4. All children and adults walking with the bus must wear high visibility waistcoats.
5. Children must stay with the group. Some adults find it easier to organise a structured crocodile, although walking two by two is not essential. This depends on the route-specific risk-assessment.
  - a) Any children who do not stay with the group, or behave in such a way that the adults feel is unacceptable, must be warned of the possible dangers and consequences. If they are consistently badly behaved the parents will be told that they cannot continue with the bus. Any problems can be referred to the co-ordinator if tackling them directly is not possible.
6. **Road Crossing**
  - a) Any road with through traffic and any major road should be crossed as a whole group - the Driver must stop at the kerb and they or the other adult leading the road crossing must wait for the whole bus to be together before commencing crossing when the road is clear:
    - i. *When there are only 2 adults on the bus* – For very quiet side roads and at controlled crossings, the driver should lead the bus over. For other roads, the driver should walk out first and stand in the road as the bus crosses, catching up with the front of the bus as the conductor enters the road.
    - ii. *When there is an additional adult to lead the road crossing* – For very quiet side roads, the driver may still lead the bus over. For other roads, and at controlled crossings, the additional adult should stand in the road whilst the driver, bus and conductor cross.
  - b) If at any point crossing becomes unsafe, the group should split and wait for the next opportunity. This may happen at signalised crossings. The bus should regroup once everyone has crossed.

- c) Children should be learning traffic awareness and be made aware of danger areas. The walking bus is an ideal situation to teach road crossing skills. Talking to them on the way, about why you are stopping at the road edge and pointing out risks such as cars coming out of driveways, walking too close to the road and the differences between road and pavement, is helpful in starting their road crossing skills, although they may not be able to learn to cross independently until age 8 or over.
7. It is suggested that children should not be allowed to run off at the school-gate, but should stay with the bus into the playground. Some Key Stage One children may need escorting to their cloakroom. Nursery children are in general accompanied by a parent but, if not, need to be taken to their classrooms.
  8. Accident reporting - it is suggested that a Walking Bus accident book be kept and filled out for any minor accident. Any major accident should be dealt with by one adult whilst the children are moved out of the way by the other adults. Afterwards, the school and the Road Safety Unit must be notified, and the appropriate reporting forms used.
  9. Parents of each child using the bus should read and undertake to abide by the guidelines, signing a permission slip accordingly. This should be filed by the walking bus route co-ordinator.
  10. All Walking buses must operate according to the Road Safety Unit H & S generic written risk assessment (see page 8 of this pack). This indicates that all adults must be CRB certified. This should be done through the school.
  11. Adults operating walking buses within these guidelines, and trained according to LCC Road Safety Promotion Unit guidelines, will be covered by Leeds City Council's extended liability insurance. However, some walking buses may have their own insurance, in which case the council cannot be held liable.
  12. Mobile phones may be useful on the routes. These can be for emergency use, as well as checking attendance issues.
  13. It may be possible to use a trolley for children's bags. There may be other equipment, such as provision of umbrellas, that the Road Safety Unit can advise on.
  14. Walking buses generally operate into school although it may be possible to organise them from school. Please contact the Road Safety Unit to discuss this.

## Walking Bus Training for Accompanying Adults

### Walking Along

Between junctions there are a variety of styles, some where the children walk in pairs, and some having a looser organisation. There are merits for both. Walking along is a chance to talk and generally enjoy the experience.

It is worth keeping an eye out for the following:

- Cars reversing/emerging from drives
- Inconveniencing other pedestrians, especially older people / those with special needs
- Cyclists / rollerbladers / skateboarders
- Obstacles such as wheely bins, overhanging branches, dog dirt

Try not to allow the group to get too spread out, as it may become difficult to communicate with the group. Older children should not be allowed to go in front of the 'driver' (adult at the front) of the bus or behind the 'conductor' (adult at the rear).

Adjust your pace to that of the slower children.

### Road Crossing

***Road Crossing is covered more fully in Walking Bus guidelines point 6. Please ensure that you are familiar with both the training information and the guidelines.***

With a walking bus the safer place to cross should be covered by the adults. It is important to remember that the safest place to cross can change from day to day, depending on traffic, parked vehicles, refuse collection etc.

Make sure that all the group stop at the kerb either in a group or lining up behind the driver. Be aware that some children may teeter right on the edge - a small pace back is safer. When stopping at kerb make sure that those crossing the road first have the best view of all traffic.

Look and Listen. Be aware of distractions and pressure to get across the road quickly. Make sure that other children do not rely on the judgement of the person in front. It is good to encourage children to look and listen even though they are part of the group. If a child does wait because they don't feel it is safe, if possible ask them about it rather than hurrying them up.

Adults may be required to stand in the road whilst children are crossing. Only police and traffic wardens are permitted to direct traffic. It is important to make eye contact with drivers and be clear and unambiguous with your actions. It is important to know that standing in the road and stopping traffic is a judgement that the adult makes and that it should not necessarily be undertaken as a matter of course.

### **Road Crossing: Teaching Children**

When teaching or helping children to cross the road it is important to consider the following:

Stature - look at things from the level of the child's eyes

Age / Experience - what do they know and what are they capable of (ask open q's)

Eyesight & Hearing - what can they see and hear?

Judging Speed & Distance - do they think that the approaching traffic is likely to pose a threat?

Adult Expectations - are they saying they understand just to please you?

Peers - are other children exerting an influence or distraction?

Child road crossing strategies should consist of the following:

- Find a safe(r) place to cross
- Stop at the kerb
- Look and Listen - (what are they looking and listening for?)
- Think: is it safe to cross?
- Cross straight across the road but don't run
- Look and listen whilst crossing the road

### **Accidents & Insurance**

Consider basic first aid training for any adults.

When thinking about accidents we generally think about the most unlikely and disastrous, and forget the more minor but more likely. Actions that prevent the first group are important but the event may be out of our control, whereas actions to prevent the latter may be easily overlooked. It is important to keep up to date records of all accidents so that we can monitor any trends.

In the event of a serious accident / incident, it is important to move the rest of the group away and keep them supervised and reassured. At least one adult should stay with an injured child. Try not to worry about the consequences, but aim to cope with the situation. If a mobile phone is available use it to get help or emergency services. If any vehicles are involved make sure that you get the details of the vehicle and occupants. When the immediate danger has been dealt with get the other children to school as soon as is practical. Make verbal contact with the school and make sure that the parents of any injured children are informed.

When the accident / incident has been dealt with make sure that all the adults involved write down what happened and that the school and the Road Safety Unit are notified. Use the relevant reporting forms.

## Health and Safety at Work

### Written Risk Assessment for Walking Bus Training conducted by Leeds Road Safety Promotion Unit

#### Introduction

Health and safety at work legislation requires that employers produce a written risk assessment of potentially hazardous operations.

Walking bus training involves Council employed Road Safety Staff training adults (trainees) to supervise groups of children walking to school. It can be construed as potentially hazardous as it involves use of the footway and crossing facilities by trainers, trainees and children.

This document is a written risk assessment of such training and supervision, it will be reviewed at least annually by the Leeds Road Safety Promotion Unit. It will be circulated to all involved, all listed trainees will be made aware of the contents

The risks undertaken during training are taken in the belief that they will decrease future risks to trainees and children, and provide realistic and relevant experience.

#### Definition of the Hazards and their Potential for Harm

Trainers, trainees, and children will be exposed to the potential for collision with vehicles on the roads they cross or the footways. In addition they might fall or have other minor accidents.

All involved will be brought into contact with members of the public and animals.

#### Precautions taken to reduce and/or eliminate the hazards

High visibility tabards or waistcoats will be issued and will be worn by all involved.

Trainees will receive walking bus training from an approved trainer. The training will include a discussion of the hazards raised in this document. The Road Safety Promotion Unit will regularly review the training and hold a list of trainers and all those approved to operate walking buses.

The roads used by the walking bus will be risk assessed by one of the approved adults at least annually. A risk assessment sheet will be completed and filed.

Walking bus ratios of adults to children will be agreed by the organisers. Guidelines for each bus will be prepared from a central advice document held in the Road Safety Unit.

Accident procedures will be a part of the training. All accidents or injuries will be recorded on the appropriate form and reported both to the school and if necessary to the Road Safety Promotion Unit.

Trainees will be trained in crossing the road with groups of children. Where possible this will be on the roads they are expected to use, or similar roads, at times when similar traffic flows are to be expected.

Trainees will be helped to judge the safer places to cross and they will be made aware that this needs to be assessed every time they cross. Trainees will also be advised about standing in the road whilst children cross.

Trainees will be advised about the use of pedestrian crossings.

All adults involved in operating a Walking Bus will have to pass a CRB check which shall be renewed at least every three years.

# *Walking Bus Route Risk Assessment*

Issued by the Road Safety Unit  
The Leonardo Building  
2 Rossington Street  
Leeds LS2 8HD  
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It is important that you risk assess either when you are on the walking bus or when the conditions are the same as when the bus operates.

Use this sheet to record where you think hazards are on your route to school.

Write down the hazard and whether it is only present on certain times or days. Using the table below -

1. Estimate the **Severity** of injury that it might cause.
2. Estimate the **Likelihood** of it happening.
3. Multiply the two numbers to produce the **Risk Severity**.

<b>Severity</b>	<b>Likelihood</b>
<b>Rating</b>	<b>Rating</b>
5 Death / permanent injury	5 Will almost certainly happen
4 Serious injury / long term illness	4 Highly likely to happen
3 Temporary disability / absence	3 Possible
2 Require medical attention	2 Unlikely to happen
1 Minor injury eg bruise, graze	1 Remote possibility

Route Examined..... Date .....

<b>Hazard</b>	<b>Day</b>	<b>Severity x</b>	<b>Likeli hood</b>	<b>= Risk</b>
Continued over				



## Sample Letter to Parents

school headed paper

### The Walking Bus at ..... School

Dear Parents and Carers,

We are looking to address our school gate parking problems by organising a 'walking bus' to encourage and support children walking to school. The scheme is supported by Leeds City Council Road Safety Team and forms part of our travel plan.

What is a Walking Bus?

- A 'walking bus' is a group of children walking to or from school under the supervision of at least two trained parent/carer volunteers, usually on a rota basis, one leading the group ('driver') and one at the rear ('conductor')
- It follows a set route and timetable, starting at one point and making its way to school, with pick up points 'bus stops' to collect children along the way
- The more parents who get involved, the less time each parent needs to spend travelling to school themselves
- All routes are risk-assessed in conjunction with LCC Road Safety Team
- All volunteers are CRB checked and trained to LCC Road Safety guidelines
- All children and adults on the walking bus are given high-visibility waistcoats
- Even if you have to drive, you can still be a part of a walking bus by parking at the start or at a convenient pick-up point to join

Please return the slip to school by .....to let us know if you would be interested in being involved in a walking bus. More details will be given in the near future once we have this information. Thank you for your cooperation and support.

Name

Walking Bus coordinator

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Child's name.....Class.....

I would be interested in a place for my child on the walking bus on the following days:      Mon    Tue    Wed    Thurs    Fri      (Please circle)

I would be willing to be a volunteer on the bus and am available on the following days:      Mon    Tues    Wed    Thurs    Fri      (Please circle)

Address.....

Tel. no. .... Signed parent/carer .....

**Sample Consent Form**

.....**School Walking Bus**  
**Consent Form**

Child's name: ..... Class: .....

Address: .....

.....

Home Tel. no. .... Mobile no. ....

**I wish my child(ren) to use the Walking Bus.**

Route: .....joining at (please circle):

the start, bus stop 1, bus stop 2

He/She will travel on the bus to school each day, or as follows:

.....

I have read the guidelines and agree to abide by them. I have explained to my child(ren) about the need for good behaviour.

Print name.....

Signed.....

Date.....

Please return this form as soon as possible. This must be done before children will be permitted to join the bus.