

Sustainable Communities

Setting Up a Walking Bus

A Guide for Schools in Central Bedfordshire



This guide has been produced to help schools who wish to set up a Walking Bus. It has been designed to provide all the information you need to get your bus up and running and is a resource that can be added to as your project evolves.

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1. Introduction



At the most basic level a Walking Bus consists of a group of children who are escorted to school by registered adults. Small groups of children and a minimum of two adults walk a pre-defined route to (and from) school. Adults act as a 'driver' at the front and a 'conductor' at the back. The children are collected at 'bus stops' along the route at agreed times. Parents are an important part of the walking bus, working on a rota system to supervise the bus.

The scheme provides many benefits including:

- promoting healthy exercise
- developing pedestrian and social skills
- giving children independence whilst in a safe environment
- reducing traffic around schools
- cleaner air around schools and
- saving time for parents

The task may seem a daunting one but the rewards are many and your journey will be fully supported by staff from both the Central Bedfordshire Council's Sustainable Transport and Road Safety teams throughout setting up and sustaining the walking bus. ***Safety is vital to any walking bus and is considered at all times.***

A walking bus is a whole school project and whether you are a teacher, parent or governor this pack is designed to help you through the process.

Good luck and happy walking!

2. Getting Started

There may be a number of reasons why you have decided to set up a walking bus but whatever your reason the following information will help to get the process going. ***If you haven't done so already contact the Sustainable transport team at Central Bedfordshire Council now.*** We are here to help and work through this with you.

2.1. Setting up an Initial Meeting

Discuss setting up a walking bus with your Headteacher, explaining that teachers will not be required to take on additional work. In conjunction with the Headteacher, send out a letter to parents inviting them to attend a meeting. An example letter is enclosed. Ask if the idea of a walking bus can be raised in assembly to gain the children's interest.

You may wish to survey parents to see if there is a demand for a walking bus. This can be done in conjunction with the school through one of their newsletter or interest could be sought at a school open evening, parents evening or school fête. Alternatively you may wish to produce a flyer (example enclosed) to raise awareness and interest, inviting people to attend an initial meeting.

Once it has been established that there is sufficient enthusiasm for a walking bus (at least two parent volunteers and eight children), appoint a walking bus coordinator. He or she will be the person who will act as the point of contact between the school and other organisations (e.g. Central Bedfordshire Council, Police and town/parish council), who will have overall responsibility for the school's input into the walking bus development. The walking bus coordinator is usually a member of the PTA, teacher, Headteacher, Governor or parent.

Contact the Sustainable Transport team on 0300 300 6581 to liaise with an officer who will attend the meeting and answer any questions that you might have.

School
Logo

Sample Letter

All aboard the walking bus!

To make walking to school a more viable option for your children and in an effort to ease congestion and improve safety around our school gate, we are considering setting up a walking bus.

A walking bus is a scheme which encourages parent volunteers to walk children to school along a set route. The children walk in pairs and everybody wears a high visibility tabard. Parent volunteers act as a 'driver' (adult leading the bus from the front) and a 'conductor' (adult supervising the bus from the rear) at the back. The children are collected at "bus stops" along the route at set times which are locations appropriate to for children to join the group.

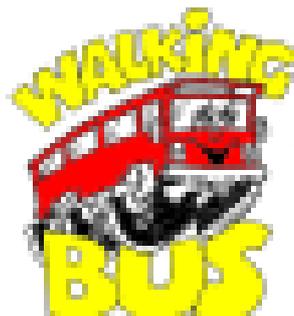
Parents are an important part of the bus working on a rota basis to supervise the walking bus. This fits well with the national curriculum and gives children an opportunity to consider personal safety with parental encouragement and advice.

Walking buses are a fun and safe way to get to school. The walking bus provides many benefits to children, promoting healthy exercise, developing pedestrian and social skills as well as improving children's independence whilst in a safe environment.

Please try to attend our walking bus meeting on XXXXXX at Xpm for more information and to discuss the idea further.

Yours Sincerely

XXXX XXXXXXXX
Headteacher



2.2 At the Meeting

- **Presentation by Sustainable Transport Officer**

At the meeting the CBC Officer can do a short presentation explaining what a walking bus is and what is involved. After this if parents are still interested you can begin to discuss possible routes.

- **Planning your route**

The CBC Officer can bring along maps of the area and pupil postcode plots to identify clusters of children or routes that are likely to attract walkers. Usually, the route will be identified by the volunteers and is likely to be influenced by where they live. Advice can be given at this stage on the suitability of the route and appropriate potential bus stop locations. Once a suitable route is identified a Road Safety Officer will risk assess the route and give advice on its validity.

- **Identify possible volunteers**

Within the group you can then identify appropriate volunteers that will be able to accompany the bus along the whole route.

- **Set up a rota**

If more than two volunteers are available, you may wish to set up a rota. Remember however it is not required for the walking bus to go twice a day everyday, you may wish to start small and do one morning a week or just do afternoons. It is always better to start small and build on success without over commitment to help ensure the longer term sustainability of the bus. A sample rota is enclosed.

Volunteer Rota

Morning

	Driver	Conductor	Other Volunteers
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			

Afternoon

	Driver	Conductor	Other Volunteers
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			

3. The walking bus volunteers

3.1 Recruiting Volunteers

For a walking bus to be successful it is essential to have volunteers. A walking bus has more chance of success if there are lots of volunteers on a rota basis, rather than overloading a few willing walkers. The more volunteers there are, the less frequently they will have to walk with the bus.

All approved volunteers acting as drivers and conductors are covered by Central Bedfordshire Council's public liability insurance as official volunteers of the school, provided they have undertaken training and are acting within the guidelines set for the walking bus.

3.2 What do I need to do as a volunteer?

- Commit to a rota on a weekly basis. If volunteers are unable to take their turn(s) on the rota they must make arrangements for another volunteer member of the team to take their place.
- Agree to apply for a Criminal Disclosure – this is an information service provided by the Criminal Records Bureau. This check is required for all adults who work with or who come into contact with children as part of education, social or sporting activities. This is free of charge and applications can be submitted through the school. This process can take a while so it is important to get things moving as soon as possible once volunteers are identified.
- We recommend that volunteer escorts make themselves familiar with 'Stepping Out Safely', Central Bedfordshire Council's pedestrian training scheme in schools. All volunteers will be formally trained on the route by a Road Safety Officer.
- Wear high visibility clothing during training and when operating the bus
- Agree to be monitored on any journey to ensure that no problems have arisen
- To provide a contact name, telephone number and address to the other volunteer members of the team and to the school
- To record and report any incidents to the walking bus coordinator

3.3 Number of Adults Needed

For the walking bus to be viable there needs to be sufficient adults to cover each journey. There must be a minimum of two adults supervising each route: one to be the 'driver' leading at the front and the other to be the 'conductor' supervising at the rear. This ensures that all the children can be seen and encouraged to behave sensibly.

Some routes may have restrictions due to local circumstances, e.g. lack of official crossing points or the width of pavements. These will be decided by the RSO at the risk assessment.

Parents may have other children with them who are not formally part of the school walking bus, for example a younger brother or sister in a pushchair. This is fine as long as the child is still accounted for in the ratio and the road safety guidelines are followed.

Should you have a child with special education needs, please contact the road safety officer for additional guidance.

The Ratios:

Minimum 2 adult volunteers per route

Key Stage 2

2 adults to 8 children. + 1 adult for up to 8 additional children.

Key Stage 1

2 adults to 4 children. + 1 adult for up to 4 additional children.

Mixed KS 1&2 groups

1 adult to 6 children

2 adults to 6 children. + 1 adult for up to 6 additional children.

4. Risk Assessment

Once a route has been suggested it will be walked by a Road Safety Officer. They will carry out a risk assessment with potential volunteers. This will take place at the time the bus will actually operate. This allows any concerns to be discussed and resolved as early as possible.

A copy of the risk assessment will be shown to every volunteer. A copy should be kept in this file along with a map of the route.

Volunteers should inform the Road Safety Officer of any changes along the route which will be reassessed annually. An example risk assessment is enclosed.

4.1 Being Seen

In order to be covered by Central Bedfordshire Council's public liability insurance, adult volunteers and children are required to wear fluorescent tabards with reflective strips at all times when travelling on the walking bus.

You will need to decide how these are issued and managed. For example the driver may keep the tabards and then issue them out for each journey or alternatively you may decide each child and their parent is responsible for their own tabard and ensuring they arrive for the bus in the correct clothing.

However you decide to manage the tabards it is important to ensure that each child on the bus is wearing one.

5. Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) Checks

All walking bus volunteers must be CRB checked. This is not only to ensure the safety of the children on the bus but also to comply with the Central Bedfordshire Council's public liability insurance.

As a volunteer the process of going through the check is free and can be carried out by a nominated person within the school staff. This process can however take some time so it is essential to start as early as possible to ensure the launch of the bus is not delayed.

A record of the parent volunteers and confirmation that they have been cleared is required. The form overleaf can be used and whilst a copy of the information provided on the forms is not kept by the Council, it is essential that we have confirmation from the school that all volunteers have been checked. Some people may have been previously checked for another job but will need to be re-checked should this be over twelve months ago.

Further information can be found at www.crb.gov.uk

Confidential Information – please keep this list safe and secure and only for use with the walking bus.

Volunteers contact details

Name	CRB (Clearance received)	Address	Telephone number	Other Information

I can confirm that the above volunteers have Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) disclosure

Signed _____ Headteacher

Date _____

The walking bus coordinator should retain a copy for the walking bus records. A copy should be sent to the Sustainable Transport team at Central Bedfordshire Council.

6. Insurance

All walking bus volunteers subject to criminal records bureau disclosure and in receipt of training on the route by Central Bedfordshire Council, are covered by the Council's public liability/third party liability insurance.

The Council's public liability/third party policy will cover claims from third parties who have suffered personal injury and or damage to property arising from the operation of the walking bus. The liabilities of official volunteers are covered under the policy.

Further information can be obtained from the Central Bedfordshire Council's Insurance Section.

7. Operation of your bus and record keeping

It is essential for clear, up to date records of the walking bus to be kept. Information should be easily available to all volunteers.

7.1 Timetable

The bus should operate every school day for which it is planned, including the first day of term. Notice should be given to all parents if for any reasons the bus cannot operate on a particular day.

The bus will operate to a strict time table and will not wait at the bus stop for late comers in the morning, even if certain children are expected to travel.

Parents are reminded that they are responsible for their children's safety on the way to and from the designated stops. Parents are also responsible for the safe arrival to school of children who miss the bus.

Parents sign to indicate that they are permitting children to participate in the walking bus at the parent's own risk.

It is essential that full contact details for all parents are easily accessible to volunteers in case of emergency. Please see enclosed pupil contact sheet.

7.2 Walking bus consent form and code of conduct

A sample consent form is provided which you may wish to use for all parents whose children wish to use the bus. Copies of this should be kept in this file.

Included on the consent form is a suggested code of conduct, which you may wish to adapt for your school. In signing this form parents will agree to their child abiding by this code of conduct. Each child will also sign this code of conduct.

Children should be instructed how to behave beforehand. Children should have ideally taken part in the 'Stepping Out Safely' pedestrian training scheme.

Children must wear high visibility tabards when on the walking bus and must behave sensibly and follow instructions at all times.

Any children who misbehave or endanger themselves will be reported to the Headteacher. The child's parents may then be requested to withdraw their child from the walking bus.

School
Logo

The walking bus volunteer consent form

School

I wish to volunteer my services on the school walking bus.

I am available to help on:

	Morning	Afternoon
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		

I understand that a Criminal Records disclosure will be carried out on everyone who volunteers to help on the walking bus.

The route has been risk assessed and I have received a copy of this and subsequently will be trained on the route that the bus operates on.

Further monitoring will be carried out to ensure that no problems arise. All volunteers and children on the walking bus will wear fluorescent/reflective tabards for the whole journey.

I have read and understood the road safety guide notes.

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone Number _____

Mobile _____

I understand the information on this form and agree to abide by it

Signed _____

Date _____

School
Logo

The Walking Bus Parent Consent From

I agree to my child taking part in the walking bus scheme

Name _____

Class _____

Address _____

Telephone number _____

- I have read the walking bus guidelines and have explained to my child the need for good behaviour and to follow instructions.
 - I understand my child's journey to and from school is still my responsibility even though they will be using the walking bus.
 - I understand that there will be no personal injury insurance cover for my child on the walking bus
 - I will make sure that he/she is at the bus stop at the specified time and wears the fluorescent tabard provided
- Please provide any details of any medication that your child may be taking and any medical or physical conditions that the walking bus coordinator should be aware of.

Code of conduct

When walking with the walking bus

- I will follow instructions
- I will be polite to adults and children on the walking bus
- I will not run or play games near the road
- I will think about other people
- I will wear sensible clothing and shoes, including sensible clothing for wet weather
-

I agree to follow the rules and code of conduct of the walking bus

Signed _____ (child) Class _____

I have read the rules and code of conduct with my child and will ensure that they are well behaved

Signed _____ (Parent/ Guardian)

8. Emergencies on Route

Each volunteer will be provided with a Road Safety Check Sheet which should keep with them when the walking bus is operating. This will include details of emergency numbers if 999 is not appropriate.

Walking bus volunteers will also be offered the opportunity to attend a two and a half hour emergency life saving first aid course free of charge supplied by the road safety team on request.

9. Promotion and Incentives

From the beginning thoughts of setting up a walking bus through to ensuring its long term success it is essential that the walking bus is promoted and those that use it are rewarded. The school population is not static with parents and pupils changing over time.

To ensure longevity of the walking bus it is essential that you sustain interest in your walking bus. This can be done through school newsletters, information for new parents, information on the school website and making the journey fun by having special themed days.

Most walking buses start small and gain momentum once the idea catches on and gains popularity when established. It is a good idea to 'officially' launch your bus to generate maximum interest.

We can help you launch your bus. The key is to get as much publicity as possible. Decide on a date to launch the walking bus. This could coincide with Walk to School Week, Child Safety Week or a local event for raised profile. Alternatively, you could arrange a special breakfast for the children on the walking bus or hold a walking bus themed assembly.

Local press are often interested in covering the walking bus launch, please contact the Sustainable Transport Team who will coordinate the press and media release with Central Bedfordshire's Communications Team.

Sponsorship for walking buses is often forthcoming. Local companies and groups are usually more than pleased to be associated with walking buses, as they are beneficial to the local community.

Ideas for incentives schemes to support your walking bus include:

- Children can be given house points or stickers for walking to school with the walking bus
- Take part in national and international walking initiatives such as Walk to School Week and International Walk to School Day
- A walking bus race on sports day
- School assemblies focusing on the health and environmental benefits of walking
- Walking bus poster design or colouring in competition
- Walk Once a Week (WoW)



WoW is a simple, but effective scheme that encourages children and their parents/carers to walk to school by rewarding those that regularly walk once a week.

Children record how they travel to school, on a class wall chart or spreadsheet. If they walk, or incorporate an active travel element into their school journey - such as scooting, cycling, parking away a 10 minutes way from school, at least once every week they receive a themed badge, all of which are highly collectable and are designed by the children themselves in a national competition.



Living Streets sets a theme for the badges each year, such as 'Nature in the UK' or 'My Walk to School'. The theme for 2011/12 will be 'Sport' and the winning designs can be viewed at www.walktoschool.org.uk.

In addition there are a number of ways you can sustain interest from parents and pupils:

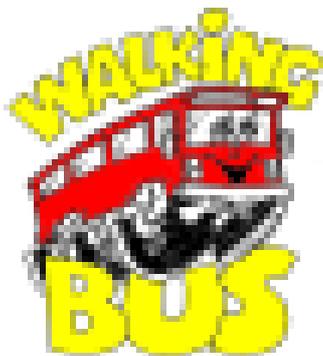
- Inclusion on the school prospectus and website
- Recruitment of volunteers at parent's evening
- Information put up on a notice board dedicated to the walking bus
- Inclusion in curriculum work

Checklist

You are ready to go once:

- The route has been risk assessed
- Volunteers have been CRB checked
- Volunteers have been trained on the route by a Road Safety Officer
- Volunteer consent forms have been signed and returned
- Written parental consent forms have been received
- Hi-Vis tabards have been acquired
- Timings for stops have been agreed and circulated
- Emergency contact details have been circulated to volunteers

Good luck and happy walking!



Central Bedfordshire in contact



on the telephone...

0300 300 8000



by email...

customer.services@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk



on the web...

www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk



Alternatively, you can write to:

Central Bedfordshire Council Priority House, Monks Walk,
Chicksands, Shefford, Bedfordshire, SG17 5TQ.

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More information

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**Central
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