

# The Walking Bus



A guide for parents



Walsall Council



## What is a walking bus & how does it work?

A walking bus is a fun, safe and healthy way for your children to travel to and from school whilst being escorted by adult volunteers.

The walking bus is usually run with a minimum of two volunteers, one acting as a 'driver' who leads the way and the other as a 'conductor' who walks at the back of the bus. Child & volunteer ratios are adhered to at all times to further ensure the children walk safely.

The Walking bus scheme is run by adult volunteer operators who work on a rota system. They meet with the children at a safe point and escort them along a set risk assessed route to school. Children can join at prearranged pick up points along the way.

## Why do we need a walking bus?

Amazingly 20% of all traffic on the road at around 8.45am is a direct result of the school run, with many of these journeys usually short enough to walk. As a result of this alarming trend, most schools now have problems with traffic congestion and parking outside the school gates at peak school times. Congestion also increases pollution and creates safety issues for pedestrians and cyclists.

# What are the benefits?

## ***For Parents:***

- Working parents will have extra time to get to work and don't need to rush
- Less congestion outside school gates as less cars will be on the 'school run'
- Opportunities to meet other parents at the school gates
- Cost saving by not using your car for the school run
- Knowing that your child is getting exercise and travelling safely to school

## ***For Children:***

- Development of pedestrian skills
- Exercise on a daily basis helps to increase fitness and can improve health
- Improved road safety skills
- It's a fun way for children to meet with friends on the journey to school
- More awareness of local environment
- Can help to increase confidence and independence

# How does the Sustainable Travel & Road Safety team help?

***Route Selection:*** Walsall Council will work in conjunction with schools to choose routes that are as safe and suitable as possible. Children using the walking bus will be kept to a reasonable number in order to manage everyone safely on the route.

A risk assessment will be carried out to ensure all volunteers of the bus are fully aware of the route and any potential risks.

***Insurance:*** Volunteers, who have been trained by Walsall council and operate in conjunction with set guidelines, will be covered by Walsall Council's public liability insurance.

**Training & Support for schools and volunteers:** All volunteers receive training from Walsall Council and are provided with relevant literature to help them carry out their role in a safe and knowledgeable manner. Every adult volunteer on the walking bus will need to undertake a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check prior joining any walking bus.

**Consent:** Before any child can use a walking bus, a consent form must be completed by the parent or guardian.

Only registered children can participate on the walking bus as this helps to maintain the safety and manageability of the children. Children are also required to sign up to a walking bus agreement outlining their responsibilities and behavioural requirements.

## What's involved in becoming a volunteer?

- Volunteers operate the bus on a rota basis
- Helping out once a week can make a huge difference
- Buses do not need to run daily so they can be set up to suit the needs of volunteers
- CRB checks and training provided

## Interested? Here's how you can get involved

**If there is already a walking bus at your school, then ask how your child can join and how you can help. If there isn't a walking bus already set up, then why not suggest to your child's school that one is started? Your school can contact the sustainable travel team for advice on how to set up a walking bus.**

Contact the **Sustainable School Travel Team** by email at [schooltravel@walsall.gov.uk](mailto:schooltravel@walsall.gov.uk)