

Safe, Active & Sustainable School Travel

What is a walking Bus ?

A Walking Bus is an initiative to encourage more children to walk to school. It is organised and run by the school's community and supported by Moray Council.

The scheme can provide benefits to children, parents, the school and the local community. The Walking Bus:

- Promotes healthy exercise
- Develops pedestrian and social skills
- Reduces traffic congestion around schools
- Improves air quality
- Saves time for parents
- Gives children independence, whilst in a safe environment

Who operates it ?

Walking Buses depend totally on volunteer support. For a scheme to succeed, those volunteer operators need to be enthusiastic and committed. A Lead Walking Bus Operator known to the school needs to be identified. They will be the focal point of contact for matters regarding the running of the Walking Bus (es) for that school.

The Walking Bus is made up of two adult operators, who act as a 'driver' and a 'conductor' and escort a group of children walking on their journey to and from school. The bus walks along a set route collecting children at 'bus stops' on the way at set times.

All volunteers who wish to act as Walking Bus Operators must have satisfactorily completed a Disclosure Scotland Police Check.

Operators will undergo a training session run by the School Travel Co-ordinator before they are allowed to take up their operator duties. Operators when on duty must wear the high visibility tabards provided.

A large bank of volunteer operators will be required if the scheme is to run successfully and not be dependent on just a few. Rotas will enable the duties to be more fairly shared amongst the volunteers and this list should be available to all participants.

A weekly/monthly schedule will need to be drawn up to show the details of who are the designated operators for each day and for operating the also a complete listing of their contact information. If an operator is unable to fulfil their escort duty it is their responsibility to find a replacement and inform the Lead Operator of the changes. If, for any reason, the minimum number of escorts cannot be provided, that journey must be cancelled. Every attempt must then be made to inform passengers and their parents; even if this is at very short notice. If this occurs frequently the arrangements walking bus should be reviewed.



How many children can use the bus ?

The recommended ratio of children to adults on the Walking Bus is as follows:

- For P1 - 3 who can walk without close supervision ⇒ 1 operator to 4 children.
- For P1 - 3 children who require closer supervision ⇒ 1 operator to 2 children.
- For P4 - 7 children ⇒ 1 operator to 6 children.
- Children in P1 - P3 will need to be assessed for their ability to walk sensibly.

There must be a minimum of 2 operators on any walking bus.

Operators should not delegate responsibility to older children to look after younger children. At no times should these numbers be exceeded - the provision of an additional bus on the same route should be considered instead.

Where will the Walking Bus Operate ?

- The route must be risk assessed and be approved by a School Travel Co-ordinator. The agreed routes must be used at all time unless exceptional circumstances apply.
- Routes chosen for the bus will depend on the number of volunteers coming forward and where both they and the children live who will use the routes.
- Routes should avoid crossing main roads and, whenever possible and practical, make use of controlled crossing points. Where the foot-way/pavement is narrow the “bus passengers” must walk in single file.

Walking Bus Operators and any accompanying adults do not have the authority to stop traffic in order to cross the roads. Should any driver stop to allow the “bus” to cross, the operators must ensure that all other traffic has stopped before attempting to cross the road.

When will the Walking Bus Operate ?

The bus will operate as follows:

- The Walking Bus will operate on every agreed day, regardless of weather conditions unless exceptional circumstances occur or the school closes.
- The Walking Bus will operate according to a strict timetable and will not wait for late comers.
- Parents are responsible for the safe arrival at school of children who miss the bus.

Parents must ensure that they are waiting at the bus stop when their child is dropped off on the journey home, unless they have been given permission for them to continue home from that point unsupervised.

How do we register ?

Parents must register their children, in advance, for all journeys on the Walking Bus.

This process involves the completion of a consent form, together with a registration form (for school's with more than 1 Walking Bus), including emergency contact details and any medical/physical information useful to the operators. The Lead Operator/designated operators must keep this information in the route register, for use as appropriate. Parents will be asked to agree to allow any personal data to be recorded, but only for use by the Lead Operator/designated operators, as circumstances require.



Safe, Active & Sustainable School Travel

The route register must have details of the on duty operators and their contact information, plus the list of passengers with the above details.

The designated escorts will carry a route register and record all children using that particular route on that day. Morning escorts need to collect the register the night before and, on arrival at school, leave it there during the day for the home journey escorts to use in the afternoon.

Parents must notify the Lead Operator/designated operator if their child is not going to school or returning home on the occasion(s) already booked. If there is any difficulty contacting the Lead Operator/designated operators, parents should let the school know. It is important that parents understand the school is not responsible for the running of the Walking Bus and the first priority is to make every attempt to contact the Lead Operator/designated operators.

Children who wait for the bus, but are not listed on the register for a particular journey, will be allowed to join the bus, in the first instance. However, those parents must be informed/reminded that their child/children will not be allowed to join the bus in future unless they are registered in advance

Are there safety procedures and insurance ?

Any accident, however minor, must be recorded in the school Accident Book as soon as possible. In any event, relatives, the school and Lead Operator should be contacted immediately. Only trained people should deal with any incident, if in doubt, the emergency services should be called. A first aid kit will be carried on the Walking Bus

The Walking Bus will be covered by Moray Council's Public Liability Insurance.

What are the Parents' and Childrens' Responsibilities ?

Parents must have completed and returned a consent form before a child is allowed to travel on the bus. This form should include emergency contact details and identify where the child will use the bus. This information will then be placed on the route register.

It is the parents' responsibility to advise the driver of any change to the child's regular travel pattern. For afternoon walking buses parents should be at the bus stop in good time to collect children on their homeward journey. If a child is not met they will continue to the end of the route where the parents will be contacted.

Parents are responsible for their children's safety on the way to and from the designated bus stops and should ensure their children are dressed appropriately.

Parents should also ensure that their children understand how the bus operates and impress upon them the need to behave sensibly and obey any instructions given by the driver or conductor.

How can you help your child?

Always use the road sensibly - your child will want to copy you.

Explain how to cross the road safely and show them how to use crossing facilities.

When walking with your children, make sure they walk on the inside of the pavement if there is one. Hold the hands of younger children and when you're out make sure you both wear clothes that make you easily seen.

When walking on roads without pavements, walk on the right hand side of the road, facing the oncoming traffic unless visibility on a junction or bend make this difficult.



Safe, Active & Sustainable School Travel

Encourage children to learn to make their own decisions and talk to them about road safety.

Children's responsibilities

Children must wear their high visibility tabards whenever they use the bus. They must behave sensibly and follow instructions.

Any children who endanger themselves or others or who misbehave generally will be reported to the head teacher. The child's parents may then be requested to withdraw that child from the walking bus.

Should the walking bus run in the afternoon and a child is left behind for any reason he/she should report to the school office and/or explain to a member of staff.

Example Walking Bus Agreement

- I agree to wear my tabard when using the walking bus
- I will listen to the adult helpers and behave sensibly when using the walking bus
- I understand that I must cross roads safely and follow all instructions
- I understand my responsibilities when using the walking bus

Signed (child) _____

- I have read the guidelines and explained to my child the need for sensible behaviour
- I understand that I am responsible for the journey between home and the bus stop
- I understand that my child should be dressed appropriately for the weather and wear suitable footwear

Please check the details below are correct and add information where indicated*

Child's Name _____ Class _____

Joining at stop number ____ Accompanied YES/NO Leaving at stop number ____ Accompanied YES/NO

*Home Address _____

*Contact telephone numbers and names _____

Signed (parent/carer) _____ Date _____

