

The Walking Bus Helpers Guidelines

Various types of adult helpers are needed to support your Walking Bus Schemes:

- Co-ordinators
- Leaders
- Conductors
- Helpers

These Guidelines explain their roles.

Co-ordinators

The Co-ordinator's role is to ensure the smooth running of the scheme.

- The Co-ordinator should check that the school has received a 'Permission Note' from the participating child's parents / guardians and that the pupils have understood and agreed to obey the rules of the Walking Bus (known as 'Pupil's Promise').
- The Co-ordinator must ensure that there are at least two adult helpers for each bus and that the ratios are being adhered to. In mixed groups a points system will operate: each Junior child = 1 point / each Infant child = 2 points up to a total of 8 points per supervising adult. The recommended ratio of adults to children can be reduced but never exceeded. Adults must not delegate responsibility to older children to look after younger children although they can help to do so.
- The Co-ordinator should keep a list of helpers, their telephone numbers and availability. In cases where a number of helpers are available, the Co-ordinator is responsible for devising a rota and to be the point of contact should there be problems eg sickness, behaviour or the route used.
- The Co-ordinator should keep a list/ register of children, their phone numbers and which collection points they will be picked up from. They will ensure that the Leader has a copy of this.
- If there is a reason for the bus to be cancelled, extremely bad weather, several volunteers are ill and the ratio cannot be maintained, the Co-ordinator should phone all volunteers and children and inform them the walking bus is cancelled.

Leaders

Leaders are the helpers who lead at the front of the Walking Bus. **The School should be responsible for identifying volunteers to fill this role.**

The Driver should remain at the front of the bus at all times, setting good road-user behaviour standards, directing the children and checking for hazards. Points to remember include:

When on the Pavement

- The Leader should set the pace of the Walking Bus, and not go any faster than the slowest child.
- The authorised route should not be changed although some diversion may be necessary if any of the pathway cannot be used because of a temporary blockage eg roadworks or parked vehicles.
- If pavement is completely blocked, lead bus to nearest safest crossing to other side of road to avoid walking in the road
- Be aware of temporary road closures and advanced notification of portions of the route becoming unavailable and plan diversions accordingly.
- For planned diversions a mini route specific risk assessment needs undertaking and volunteers appraised of temporary changes in route guidance.
- Where appropriate, children should walk in pairs to keep the length of the bus as short as possible. Other pedestrians should always be given enough space to pass.
- When approaching driveways, check that it is safe to cross.
- Look for people inside parked cars, they may accidentally open doors into the walking bus.

When crossing the Road

- Cross at the places shown during your training. These will have been checked for safety and ideally should be in safer places eg: away from parked cars/corners/ junctions etc, where there is good visibility for pedestrians and for children.
- Should a Walking Bus become too large to cross part of the route safely, the group should be split into smaller sections to cross the road and regrouped on the other side.

Remember – Walking Bus Helpers have no formal powers to stop traffic. If any driver stops to allow the group to cross it is vital that you check that other traffic is aware of what is happening and has stopped before you step into the road – there is always the danger that a driver behind may not have seen the reason for this car to have stopped and so may pull out to overtake.

If there are formal pedestrian crossing places along the route then, where possible these will be incorporated and should be used as follows:

Zebra Crossings

Ensure all traffic has stopped before leading children across the road. Children should walk in pairs and as quickly as possible without running.

Pelican Crossings

After pressing the button, wait until the green man shows and traffic has stopped. Do not start to cross if the green man is flashing. Time is important with this type of crossing, so if you have many children, there must be extra adult help and it will be better to split the group into at least two smaller groups and cross the road separately, reforming on the other side.

Puffin Crossings

Similar to the pelican crossing; make sure that the group arrives at the crossing together before the button is pressed. The red/green man signals are on the same side of the road as the pedestrian so that you can see the traffic approaching. Use the green man as an indicator to cross, not the traffic lights. There is no flashing man, but the detectors should extend the red for traffic when they detect pedestrians still crossing.

Island / Pedestrian Refuge

Be Careful – large groups must not be squeezed onto a small island. They must be split and reformed on the other side of the road. Helpers should not attempt to control both halves of the road by standing on the island.

School Crossing Patrol

Cross in front of the School Crossing Patrol, but only when instructed to do so by the patrol.

Always encourage the children to help you to look and listen before and whilst crossing the road. This will pay dividends whilst they are on the Walking Bus and when out on their own. Remember in bad weather it will take the drivers longer to stop and it is more difficult for you to be seen. Extra care should be taken if you are wearing a hooded coat or using an umbrella as they can obscure hearing and vision.

Conductors

The Conductor must always walk at the back of the group of children.

As the Leader is primarily concerned with the route and checking for hazards, the Conductor must at all times be aware of the children's behaviour, and ensure that the directions and instructions given to the group, by the Leader, are carried out. Points to watch out for are:

- Keep children away from the kerb.
- Pass other pedestrians on the inside.
- Ensure children walk at all times
- Remind children of the need for good behaviour
- Relay unheard messages from the Driver.
- Encourage children to hold hands wherever possible
- Remind children to look after their own belongings carefully
- Ask the Driver to slow the bus down if the children are separating too much.

All Helpers

It is very useful to have extra helpers who can walk midway or at various points throughout the bus generally helping to ensure the children behave sensibly.

- All helpers should wear high visibility waistcoats and walk on the outside of the children.
- Every opportunity should be taken to involve the children in learning road safety skills by encouraging them to look and listen for traffic.

- Bad behaviour must not be tolerated and should be reported to the Co-ordinator or Headteacher who should consider withdrawing the child from the scheme.
- The Walking Bus should not stop to wait if a child is late in the morning
- If you encounter any verbal abuse or aggression from drivers avoid reacting, note registration number and report it to the School and the Police.

If you notice any problems along your route such as overgrown hedges, overhanging branches, dog's mess, damage to the pavement and other items which may have an impact on the safety of your route please contact BANES Council Connect 01225 394041 and give them precise details and location of the problem.

Alternatively you can also report issues using the FixMyStreet App (available on iOS and Android) or online <https://fix.bathnes.gov.uk/>

Council Connect will inform the relevant department, and where requested provide feedback on actions taken.

If you prefer you could email: councilconnect@bathnes.gov.uk