



Walking Bus Toolkit: Main Document

This guidance is intended for setting up a Walking Bus for the journey to School. More information on Walking Buses after School can be found in the FAQs.

This information is used by B&NES Council and is intended as guidance only. Requirements in your area may be different.

Throughout this document Actions to be taken are highlighted **Orange**, Paperwork to be completed in **Magenta**, and Sections of the Toolkit in **Green**.

Produced by:
Schools Travel Plan Officer,
Bath and North East Somerset Council

Bath & North East
Somerset Council

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Introduction to Walking Bus

What is a Walking Bus?

A Walking Bus is where a group of children are escorted to school by adult volunteers. Children and adults walk in a group wearing hi-vis tabards along an approved route and stopping at set points to collect additional 'passengers'.

Adults are volunteers from the school community – school staff, parents, grandparents, child minders, nannies etc. Every parent/ guardian who uses the Walking Bus should be committing to volunteer.

A Walking Bus can be anything from a few hundred meters to a few miles walk, and can be set up for a number of reasons. Sometimes they might facilitate a park & stride scheme.

Why a Walking Bus?

- Provides an enjoyable, sociable and fun journey to school
- Promotes healthy exercise & camaraderie for both adults and children
- Saves time and helps parents get to work on time
- Develops children's Road Safety awareness & pedestrian skills
- Reduces congestion around the school gate
- Makes the journey to school safer
- Gives children the chance to learn more about their local environment
- Parents share the task of taking their children to school
- Improves attendance and engagement with school activities for some children
- Benefits to School (Ofsted, Modeshift STARS, Other outcomes...)

Park and Stride

A Walking Bus can be combined with a Park and Stride scheme for families who live far away. Locate a point on the route (preferably the beginning) where parents can park their car to join the Walking Bus.

A Park and Stride scheme can also be used to support more walking to School when a Walking Bus is not appropriate.

For more information on setting up a Park and Stride scheme see FAQs.

Getting Started

The first question to answer is does the school think a walking bus is viable? Can you quickly think of a few parents who would likely volunteer to help, and are there a good number of families who already walk? Are there a number of pedestrian routes to the school safe for a group to walk along?

Support from the School

Having the support of the Head Teacher will greatly help you to achieve your Walking Bus. Ask members of staff to [watch the Walking Bus Teacher Video](#) to build interest and support from the School.

Volunteers need be covered by the School's insurance policy in case an incident occurs. The School should [check with the Insurance Provider](#) for details of who is covered and what requirements for coverage exist.

Establish parent interest

If you are a parent that is walking to school start by talking to other parents that are also walking to school along the same route about a Walking Bus.

Whether you are a parent or member of staff, it a good idea to arrange an [Initial Meeting](#) for parents/ guardians that may be interested in participating. Remember that some parents will not be able to attend afterschool meetings so make sure information is available and that they still have the opportunity to participate.

Your Initial Meeting will give you a good indication if there is enough parent interest to make a Walking Bus viable, and can be used to start identifying potential routes to follow.

Appoint a Walking Bus Coordinator

The Coordinator's role is to ensure the smooth running of the scheme. They will act as the point of contact for the Walking Bus, and also maintain the administration and rota. A Co-ordinator could be a parent/ guardian or a teaching assistant.

The responsibility of Walking Bus Co-ordinator can be delegated by parents, or by the School.

More information on the role of Co-ordinator and other roles on the Walking Bus can be found in ['The Walking Bus Helpers Guidelines'](#).

Top Tips for Setting up an Initial Meeting

Suggested action for the School

- **Play the Walking Bus Animation Video** in a classroom or Assembly.
- Give each child the **Meeting Invitation Letter to Parents** to take home with the date and time of the introductory meeting. Include the reply slip to give an indication of the attendance to expect.
- **Include information in the school newsletter** on the Walking Bus & the scheduled meeting.
- The day before the meeting each child should take home a slip reminding parents of the introductory meeting the following day.

At the meeting

- Play the **Walking Bus Animation Video**, and **Parents Video** to give an overview of what a Walking Bus is.
- Discuss the expectations from parents, pupils and the school.
- **Guide a route making session** (see 'Creating a Route for a Walking Bus').

Creating a route for the Walking Bus

Step 1 - Identifying a proposed route

Use a large scale map of the local area around the school site to consider potential routes for your Walking Bus.

Routes can be identified in the **Initial Meeting** through a **guided route making exercise**. Parents draw their current route in pencil on a giant map. With a different coloured pen they begin to roughly map potential routes, and (with a third colour) note potential bus stops.

When deciding on routes also consider these additional factors;

Distribution of school community	<p>A Walking Bus should take account of where families within the school community travel from.</p> <p>Mapping where families live (and how they travel) is a helpful way to understand where a Walking Bus will best facilitate more walking to school.</p>
Popular walking routes	<p>Routes that are convenient for families that walk will have higher take-up.</p> <p>Popular walking routes will highlight the most amenable ways to walk to school. Pupils can be asked to draw on a map the route they walk to school as a curriculum activity.</p>
Location of Parent Volunteers and their route to School	<p>Setting a route which is convenient to initial parents/ guardians will incentivise them to support the Walking Bus going forward - important if you have a limited pool of volunteers.</p>
Suitable locations for 'Park & Stride' (if required)	<p>Locate a point on the route where parents can park their car to join the Walking Bus.</p> <p>Seek agreement with local shops or pubs to have use of their car park, or choose a quiet side street (see FAQs for further details).</p>
Pedestrian facilities	<p>Make use of pedestrian facilities such as pavements and crossing points.</p>
Selecting traffic free/ quieter routes	<p>These are likely to have less hazards, improved air quality, and be a more pleasant experience for those involved.</p>
'Bus stops' for suitable pick-up	<p>Locations where participants can wait for the Walking Bus safely, without causing obstruction for other road users.</p>

Step 2 - Carry out Risk Assessment of route

The proposed route will need to be risk assessed before running a Walking Bus. If the Walking Bus is an official activity of the School then this must be carried out by them. The School may delegate the responsibility to an individual they consider appropriate, however the assessment must be officiated, accepted and adopted by the School.

Use the **BANES Route Specific Risk Assessment Template**. Individuals carrying out the risk assessment need to have information on; the roads/ pathways, location of the bus stops, and times of arrival. The Route RA should be carried out during the time of day the Walking Bus will be running.

The objective is to identify potential hazards on the route which pose a risk to your participants, and ways to reduce that risk. Refer to the Route Specific Risk Assessment for further instructions.

The Council can provide feedback on a Risk Assessment carried out by the school. The Council is not able to carry out a Risk Assessment on behalf of an academy.

Step 3 - Finalise the route

Once a RA of the route is carried out the School should present their findings. The School may recommend measures to mitigate specific risks on your identified route such as safer crossing places, or suggest safer alternate routes if risks are too great on the original proposed route.

It is sometimes useful to walk the route with children so you can see how long it will take to arrive at each bus stop.

Key participants for the Walking Bus should meet to confirm the final route, including;

- where 'bus stops' will be located
- where the Walking Bus will be crossing the road
- Timetable for each bus stop

When the route is finalised produce copies of the **route map** for the school and adult volunteers. This will be useful for publicising the Walking Bus with other families. Produce **timetables** including bus stop times to give out to participating families.

If your Walking Bus includes a Park and Stride facility please refer to FAQs for more information.

Initial Actions for the School

These steps can take a while to process. It is therefore a good idea to start them as soon as you make the decision to set up a Walking Bus and have a rough idea of numbers.

General Risk Assessment

A **General Risk Assessment** lists the risks applicable to any Walking Bus scheme, and the measures you are taking to reduce those risks. **The Template General Risk Assessment** contained in this Toolkit is an example of best practice. Your School can use this example, or edit it as per the requirements of the Insurance Provider.

The School needs to understand and **sign a General Risk Assessment** which is approved by the Insurance Provider. The Insurance Provider may ask for additional requirements to cover your Walking Bus. It is therefore important to make the General Risk Assessment available to the Insurance Provider before it is signed off by the School.

The **Template General Risk Assessment** and **Walking Bus Risk Mitigation Chart** can be made available to the Insurance Provider to demonstrate the steps you plan to follow to reduce risk on your Walking Bus.

More guidance on insurance cover can be found in the FAQs.

Carry out DBS Checks/ I.D Badges for Volunteers

The school will have to conduct a **DBS check for new volunteers**. This is an essential procedure.

After volunteers have passed their DBS check the School may want to **produce photo I.D. badges** for them to wear on the Walking Bus. This means parents can easily identify volunteers when they are dropping their children off.

Order Hi Vis Tabards

These can be requested free of charge from the Council. They come with B&NES Council branding and the Walking Bus Logo. Hi-Vis Tabards should be worn by children and adults on the Walking Bus at all times.

Please **contact the School Travel Plan Officer with your order**. These can take up to 1 month to be delivered so put your order in early once you have a clear idea on numbers.

To order your tabards, please send the following details to the School Travel Plan Officer;

- Number of infant tabards
- Number of junior tabards
- Number of adult tabards

After The Route Has Been Finalised...

You can only carry out these steps when your Route Specific Risk Assessment has been completed and your route finalised.

1 Send out Parent Permission Forms

The **Parent Permission Form and Pupil Promise** should be filled in by every adult and child who will be using the Walking Bus. **It needs to be edited** to include the final details of the route, and the days of the week the Walking Bus will be running.

By signing this form all participants on the Walking Bus will know what is expected of them. Getting a written agreement from parents and children makes sure they have understood and agreed to obey the rules of the Walking Bus.

This provides all details required by the Co-ordinator to organise Volunteer Training and complete the Volunteer Rota.

2 Volunteer training

Volunteer training equips adults on the Walking Bus with the skills to accompany large groups of children safely along the approved route. **Schedule the training** at a time that suits as many volunteers as possible.

The School can use their existing knowledge of escorting large groups of children, or delegate the responsibility to an individual they consider appropriate to deliver the training.

Training must be carried out by walking the route with volunteers before running the Walking Bus. The trainer should have a clear understanding of the Route Specific Risk Assessment, and include the hazards and mitigation measures within the training.

Volunteers should also receive safeguarding training from the School, and be instructed to read the **Walking Bus Helpers Guidelines**, and **General Risk Assessment**.

It is best practice that 2 volunteers on a Walking Bus have undergone Volunteer Training. The Co-ordinator should record the Parent Volunteers that receive training in the **Volunteer Management Spreadsheet**.

Final Preparations

1 Create a Volunteer Rota

Use the tabs in the [Volunteer Management Excel Spreadsheet](#) to record the information you have collected and [create your Volunteer Rota](#).

You need to have filled out Parent Permission Forms and carried out Volunteer Training to give you the information you require to create a Volunteer Rota. This includes;

- Details of pupils that will be joining the Walking Bus on each day and from which 'bus stop'
- What days your volunteers are able to help out on the Walking Bus and which 'bus stop' they will be joining
- A list of volunteers that have completed Volunteer Training

The volunteer rota should be organised to meet the following requirements;

- The correct adult to child ratios (Infants – 1 adult to 4 children; Juniors – 1 adult to 8 children)
- 2 volunteers who have undergone Volunteer Training on the Walking Bus at any one time, including a Leader and Conductor
- Emergency cover in case a volunteer is not able to accompany the Walking Bus
- Pupils with additional needs are to be assessed on a case-by-case basis. If the need requires adult accompaniment this adult cannot count towards volunteer ratios

The School should be responsible for identifying appropriate adults to lead the Walking Bus. See [Helpers Guidelines](#) for more details on roles.

2 Have correct procedures in place

Use this list to make sure additional arrangements that are necessary to make the Walking Bus run smoothly are in place.

- Walking Bus will continue if families are not on time at the agreed bus stop, and that families are made aware of this
- All incidents should be reported to the school and recorded in the accident book in as much detail as possible
- A procedure in case of sickness of helpers, with back up helpers agreed and a way of contacting all parents in case all helpers are sick (ideally through the Walking Bus Co-ordinator)
- If a volunteer that is needed for the required adult: child ratios has not arrived at the agreed stop the Conductor should stop the bus and contact the Walking Bus Co-ordinator

3 Finalise and distribute paperwork

Refer to the '[Walking Bus Checklist](#)' at the end of the document to make sure you have everything you need to launch your Walking Bus. Make sure the School, Volunteers, and the Walking Bus Leader have the relevant information.

Promotion and Incentives

Launch your Walking Bus

Having an official launch is a great way to generate publicity for your Walking Bus. This will help you to attract more families to the scheme, and help the School demonstrate the positive impact they are making in the local community.

Raise the profile of your Walking Bus Launch by **linking it to a national event**. Examples in the UK include;

- International Walk to School Month (October)
- Earth Day (April)
- Walk to School Week (May)
- Clean Air Day (June)

You could arrange a celebratory event such as a Walking Bus Breakfast. Invite local politicians and any sponsors that were involved.

Consider **writing a press release** to a local newspaper - local press are often interested in covering a Walking Bus Launch.

Finally, **take photographs** – they may be useful for encouraging others to take part. Make sure you **get photo permissions** from the parent of each child.

Sustaining enthusiasm – Incentives

Once a Walking Bus is set up the enthusiasm of those volunteers and children that are using it needs to be maintained.

Run incentives to maintain enthusiasm for the children. Ideas for incentive schemes to support your Walking Bus include;

- Termly treats (such as a sticker or a medal) for walking to school on the Walking Bus
- Walking Bus poster design or colouring in competition
- The School can reward children who walk regularly with extra merit points, uniform free days or additional playtime
- Issue 'bus passes' for the walking bus children to make them feel part of this very important travel method. This could also incorporate emergency contact details of parents/carers and the School
- Incentives are a great way that small pots of money can be used to support your Walking Bus (see FAQ 'funding your Walking Bus')

The School can play an important role to support your Walking Bus by sourcing funding to pay for incentives.

Recruiting new volunteers and children – Promotion

To be sustained into the future a Walking Bus needs to **recruit new volunteers and children** to the Walking Bus when the initial Parent/ Guardian Volunteers leave.

The School can play an important role in recruiting new volunteers and children to join the Walking Bus. Here are some examples;

- Recruit new volunteers and children to join the Walking Bus continually through embedding information and videos in the prospectus, parent's evenings and Welcome Packs
- Print off flyers and posters designed by the children
- Publicise the scheme in newsletters and on the social media, through the School Council, or with a permanent advert on the school website, including links to the Walking Bus Videos
- Play the **Walking Bus Animation Video** in assembly and encourage pupils to ask their parents about joining the scheme
- Get a local celebrity to accompany the Walking Bus, for instance at the start of the year (make sure the individual dresses the part i.e. if they are a rugby player they should be in rugby uniform)

The Walking Bus that has continuing involvement from the School and will have a greater chance of being sustained long-term.

Frequently Answered Questions

How do I get a Walking Bus running quickly?

An Informal Walking Bus can be run by a small group of Parents/ Guardians that want to start trialling their ideas quickly. Starting informally will help your group to become familiar with the day-to-day running of your Walking Bus, and lead to a formal scheme when everything else is in place.

Remember that your Walking Bus is NOT yet an official activity of the School. Volunteers will not be covered under the School's insurance policy (in case an accident occurs), and therefore each parent remains responsible for their own child and accompanies them on the Walking Bus.

A School can support a Walking Bus to get off the ground quickly by initially running it with Members of Staff. In most cases this would be a temporary arrangement until enough volunteers required for the adult: child ratios had completed their DBS checks and Volunteer Training. Check with the Insurance Provider on what cover exists for members of staff on a Walking Bus.

How do I arrange Insurance Cover work for a Walking Bus?

Insurance cover for a Walking Bus is organised through the School. It is essential to check with the School's Insurance Provider for details of who is covered and what requirements for coverage exist for a Walking Bus. If the School belongs to a Multi-Academy Trust they may need approval from their trust before providing cover to Volunteers on a Walking Bus. A School should only cover a Walking Bus scheme when it is run as a permitted activity of the School (following the procedures outlined in this document).

Arrangements for insurance cover will vary depending on the type of School, and/ or which Multi-academy Trust they belong to:

Roughly half of Multi-academy Trusts have a Risk Protection Arrangement in place. Under this policy Volunteers on a Walking Bus are covered if the activity is ran by the School as a 'permitted activity', whereby Parent Volunteers are defined as employees of the school ([link](#)).

Maintained Primary Schools in B&NES will need to opt into the Councils insurance Package for 1) Combined Insurance which will cover them for Liability/negligence, and 2) School Journey.

Voluntary controlled Schools should check with their insurance provider whether Volunteers are covered on the Walking Bus.

Should an accident take place on a Walking Bus the Insurance Provider will look to see that a correct procedure was followed to mitigate risk.

How can I use funding to support a Walking Bus?

You may want to use funding to support your Walking Bus. Here are some examples of how it can be used:

- Incentives such as an Active Travel Breakfast, rewards for pupils that take part such as badges or stickers, or a Pedometer to record number of steps
- Sponsored Hi Vis Tabards

- Staff time to organise and administer the volunteer rota (approx. cost for 2hrs of TA support a week, £800)
- Paid escort to reduce the volunteer time required (approx. cost £1000 for a year, 5 days a week)

What funding sources can I use to support a Walking Bus?

- Stakeholders/ governors may have contacts in the local community who may be able to help
- Local businesses may want to Sponsor your Walking Bus as it is benefiting the local community
- The P.E. and Sports Premium can be used to develop active travel by targeting the 1st of the 5 indicators – ‘the engagement of all pupils in regular physical activity’
- Pupil Premium can be used to fund a Walking Bus that aims to tackle low attendance
- A charge from parent/ guardians that use the Walking Bus

How do I setup a Park and Stride?

Park and Stride is a location where parent/carers can park their car to join a Walking Bus.

A Walking Bus can be combined with a Park and Stride scheme for families who live far away but still want to participate in the scheme.

Locate a point on the route where parents can park their car to join the Walking Bus. Seek agreement with local shops or pubs to have use of their car park, or choose a quiet side street.

Park and Stride can also be an alternative to a Walking Bus. For more information on setting up a Park and Stride scheme see the Living Streets website:

<https://www.livingstreets.org.uk/media/2035/park-and-stride-print.pdf>

How can I set up a Walking Bus after school?

Organising a Walking Bus after school presents additional challenges to set up and administer.

- You are more reliant on the organisation of other parents, which must be waiting at the bus stop/ drop-off point on time to collect their children
- Often parents/ children will have more variable routines afterschool (e.g. afterschool clubs) making it more difficult to manage the volunteer rota

A procedure needs to be set up if parents/guardians are not present to collect children from bus stops. For example, you may decide that the child should continue with the bus until the end of the route, giving opportunity for the parent/ guardian to reach a later stop. If a parent/ guardian does not collect their child then the child must be returned to school by the adults.

A Walking Bus after school should only be considered after you are successfully running your Walking Bus for the journey to school.

Walking Bus Checklist

Title	Who is it for?	Purpose	Complete
Route Specific Risk Assessment	School Volunteer Trainer ALL Volunteers	This must be carried out by the School and then held for insurance purposes. A copy should also be held by the Walking Bus Co-ordinator and Volunteer Trainer. Further guidance on RA for Walking Bus can be found by referring to the 'B&NES Walking Bus Guidance for RA'.	
Route map, information and timetable	School Participants	When the route is finalised create copies of the route map for the school and adult volunteers. It will also be useful for publicising the Walking Bus with other families. Produce timetables including bus stop times to give out to participating families and the School.	
General Risk Assessment (signed and owned by the School)	School Insurance Provider ALL Volunteers	Includes risks which are applicable to any Walking Bus. The School needs to understand, sign and hold the General Risk Assessment for their Walking Bus. A copy of the General Risk Assessment should be made available to the School's Insurance Provider before it is signed off.	
DBS forms	School	The school will have to conduct a DBS check for every individual that wishes to volunteer. This might take a while to process so it is best to start it as soon as you can.	
I.D Badges (optional)	Volunteers	The school may want to produce photo I.D. badges for adults to wear on the Walking Bus. This means parents can identify you when they are dropping their children off.	
Parent Permission and Pupil Promise Form	Coordinator	Every parents and children taking part in the Walking Bus should know what is expected of them. Getting a written agreement from parents and children makes sure they have understood and agreed to obey the rules of the Walking Bus. Every family participating needs to complete this form.	

Record the following information in the 'Walking Bus Management Spreadsheet'

Hi Vis Tabard Record	Coordinator	The Walking Bus Co-ordinator should record the families that have Walking Bus tabards. Ask for them to be passed on if a family pulls out from using the scheme.	
Volunteer Training Record	Coordinator	A record of adult helpers that have received Volunteer Training. Volunteers should refer to 'The Walking Bus Helpers Guidelines' before taking part on a Walking Bus.	
List of names, and telephone numbers	Coordinator	Contact list of all Volunteers (parent/ guardians who use the Walking Bus).	

Print off the information below to bring along on the Walking Bus

Child/ Volunteer Rota	Coordinator Leader	Administering the Walking Bus to ensure it is able to run each day that it is scheduled with the required adult/ child ratios (1:4 infants, 1:8 juniors). The Leader for each Walking Bus needs a record of all the children and volunteers scheduled to board on the day and at which bus stop.	
Emergency Cover Availability	Coordinator Leader	The Leader needs contact details of reserve volunteers in case a volunteer is not able to accompany the Walking Bus on the day.	
Details of each child	Coordinator Leader	The Leader on the Walking Bus must have the emergency contact details & medical information for each child.	

Coordinator responsible for ensuring the smooth running of the Walking Bus

Leader the volunteer who leads the Walking Bus