

## Can children travel on the bus on a casual basis ?

No. Each child must go through the full application process, even if they are only travelling once or twice. It ensures everyone's safety and well being.

## Does the bus run in bad weather ?

Yes. Come rain or shine the bus operates on every agreed day of term, unless there are exceptional circumstances. This will be the job of the school walking bus co-ordinator to inform the parents of necessary changes.

## If my school operates an afternoon bus, what happens if a parent fails to collect their child from the bus stop as arranged ?

If the parent has indicated on the application form that their child does not have permission to walk home alone from the bus stop, a volunteer will return the child to the school office. The volunteer is obliged to inform the Head Teacher of the incident and reasons behind it. If the situation occurs on a regular basis without reasonable explanation; the Head Teacher reserves the right to remove the passenger from the walking bus system.

## School bags ?

Some walking buses have a trailer for schoolbags. However, this can be awkward to manoeuvre and can potentially compromise road safety. For this reason, West Berkshire Council recommends that children carry their own bags. If carrying a rucksack, they should use both straps, one over each shoulder.

## Other Queries ?

All problems and queries relating to the walking bus should be directed through the school's walking bus co-ordinator. They will ensure the appropriate action is taken. If appropriate they will liaise with the Head Teacher or Road Safety officer to resolve the situation.

## Available in the School Office

Further leaflet information:

**Leaflet 1**  
Walking Bus

**Leaflet 2**  
Volunteer Information

### School contact details:

**Traffic & Road Safety Team**  
**Transport & Countryside**  
West Berkshire Council  
Market Street  
Newbury  
Berkshire RG14 5LD

[Trafficandroadsafety@westberks.gov.uk](mailto:Trafficandroadsafety@westberks.gov.uk)

[www.westberks.gov.uk/roadsafety](http://www.westberks.gov.uk/roadsafety)

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# Walking Bus



## Frequently Asked Questions

## How will a Walking Bus benefit parents & children ?

A Walking Bus encourages children's own independence. Walking to school with friends without direct supervision by their own parents promotes responsibility – 'controlled freedom'. It provides an excellent environment for learning road safety skills, and the regular daily exercise can help protect against diseases later in life. It can reduce car dependency and is therefore good for the environment too. Parents can also benefit from TIME; sharing the responsibility for taking children to school leaves more time for parents to do other things on the days when they are not involved in escorting the walking bus.

## How will the School benefit ?

The main benefit to the school will be the reduction of vehicular traffic, the opportunity to improve local community relations and encourage better road safety for their pupils.

## Who can volunteer to 'drive' or 'conduct' (leaders) a walking bus?

Any Adult known to the school. Volunteers must be between 18-65. The school will also check all volunteers through the Criminal Records Bureau. Volunteers agree the timetable for running the Walking Bus with the school. A rota is then created, so the work load is spread between the volunteers.

All volunteers are given contact numbers for other volunteers on their rota in case of an emergency.

Road safety Training will be provided by the West Berkshire Council, Road Safety Officers. Training needs to be completed otherwise the volunteer 'leader' is not covered by the authorities Public Liability Insurance.

## What age children are suitable for the Walking Bus ?

Infants & Juniors aged between 4 and 11 years. Leaders should hold hands with any children under 7 years old. If leaders need to take pre-school children with them, they should be in a pram, pushchair, on reins or held by the hands at all times. If using a pram or pushchair the child should be securely strapped in.

## How many children travel on the Walking Bus ?

The minimum ratio of adults to children must not exceed the 1 to 8 ratio for juniors or the 1 to 4 ratio for infants. Where there is a mix of juniors and infants the ratio is calculated accordingly and should be agreed with the Road Safety Officer. The potential maximum number of children would not exceed 16.

Each Walking Bus should have at least 4 adults available to act as 'leaders'.

The Council also reserves the right to reduce the maximum numbers of children on the walking bus, if on completion of the risk assessment, local problems are apparent.

## In the event of an accident who takes responsibility ?

Parents whose children use the walking bus, sign an agreement accepting the conditions and guidelines as set out. In signing the form, parents give permission for their children to participate at their own risk and agree to instruct their children to behave sensibly and to follow any instructions given by the adults supervising the walking bus. In the event of an accident involving the children whilst travelling on a walking bus and a leader is shown to be at fault, the leader will be indemnified (protected) by West Berkshire Council's Public Liability Insurance arrangements. All other incidents must be reported to the walking bus co-ordinator and entered into the school accident book if appropriate. There is no cover for personal injury.

## How is the route chosen ?

The route is identified and agreed by the school's Head Teacher and Road Safety Officer. Sometimes the Highways and Transport engineers will also be consulted as local projects or highways works may need to be considered and the route adjusted accordingly.



## What happens if the route needs to be changed for some reason ?

If a route has a temporary blockage such as roadworks or a parked vehicle the walking bus leader must take a sensible decision as to the best alternative route. But if this problem persists this needs to be reported back to the school walking bus co-ordinator, who will liaise with West Berkshire's Road Safety Officer to agree an alternative route or take action to have the obstruction removed. Another re-assessment of the route may need to be completed. Seasonal changes can also affect risk assessments of routes and if appropriate, should be reported. The Road Safety Officer will monitor on a regular basis.

## Is there a timetable ?

Yes. Like a normal bus, the walking bus operates to a strict timetable. The walking bus will leave at an agreed time, those who arrive late run the risk of not getting on. The walking bus MUST arrive on time at school.

## Is there a register ?

Yes. On every journey the driver will check the names of the bus passengers against the days register – provided by the school. At the end of each half term the completed registers are passed to the school walking bus co-ordinator. Registers are then sent to the Road Safety Officer in West Berkshire Council as evidence of modal shift.

## Protective clothing ?

Both adults and children are provided with high visibility vests supplied by West Berkshire Council. These must be worn at all times during the walking bus journey to school. During wet weather days parents are expected to provide appropriate waterproof clothing, the high visibility vests should be worn over the top of the child's personal jacket or coat. **NO HIGH VISIBILITY VEST – NO WALKING BUS.**

Umbrellas are discouraged due to other potential road safety issues.

## Incentives ?

The school might want to consider operating an incentive scheme to encourage children to participate and to maintain interest. Stickers, house points and merit certificates have all been used in schools.