

Comhairle Contae Fhine Gall Fingal County Council



WHAT IS A WALKING BUS

The Walking Bus is a group of primary school children who walk to and from school, led by an adult, usually a parent, with another adult taking up the rear.

All Walking Bus passengers wear fluorescent reflective jackets and children are supervised until they reach school, or home or are met by a parent.

The Bus travels along a pre arranged route collecting or dropping off children at 'bus stops' along the way.



WHY USE A WALKING BUS

- ➡ The walking bus provides a chance for everyone to take part in regular exercise. Evidence shows that more active children are likely to become more active adults. *Just a 15-minute journey to and from school can contribute to half the daily-recommended exercise for children.
- ➡ Children who walk to school on a walking bus are part of a large and visible group, which is supervised by adults and seen safely into school. This reassures parents who are concerned about letting their children walk on their own
- ➡ The walking bus helps children learn pedestrian skills so that when they begin to walk on their own they are better equipped to deal with traffic.
- ➡ The journey to school gives children a chance to talk and make new friends, when they've arrived at school they've done their chatting and are more ready to learn.
- ➡ Every journey made on foot helps reduce the amount of traffic around schools, which will help reduce air pollution and improve our local environment for everyone
- ➡ Did you know that research has proved that if you make a short journey in a car, you are exposed to more air pollution, than if you walk! By using a walking bus, children will have fresh air to wake them up, before settling down to work in class.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Q. *What age can children start using the walking bus?*

Children can start using the walking bus from the age of 5 up to 11.

Q. *What is the ratio of supervisors to children?*

A minimum of 2 adults should supervise each walking bus. Based on current Walking Bus operations in the UK we would recommend a minimum ratio of 1 supervisor for a group of 6 children.

Q. *What is the maximum number of children in a walking bus?*

We would recommend a maximum of 18 children in a walking bus with 3 supervisors. If and when this number is reached a second bus should be established on the same route. The departure times should then be staggered by 5min.

Q. *Does the bus operate in bad weather?*

Walking buses throughout the UK, including Northern Ireland, operate in almost all conditions. Obviously some conditions are too extreme. Provided children were the correct protective clothing there shouldn't be a problem. The more they're out in these conditions the more resistant they become and the less they suffer from colds and flu's.

Q. *What happens if a volunteer is unable to supervise on a particular day?*

Volunteers will be organised into a rota and their contact details kept on a register, which will be distributed to every volunteer. If a volunteer is unable to fulfil their post they must find a replacement. The replacement can only be a registered volunteer. Each week one volunteer should be on call to provide emergency

cover. In the event that no one is available to supervise the walking bus, parents with children registered to use the bus should be informed and it will then be the parent's responsibility to get the children to school.

Q. *What happens if the bus is late?*

The bus should be timetabled to arrive at the school 10-15min earlier than first bell/class etc. This provides some flexibility in case the bus is late. In extreme cases parents would be able to contact the supervisors by mobile phone to find out when they will arrive.

Q. *Will the volunteers be vetted before being allowed to supervise a bus?*

The Gardai are in support of the walking bus project. Names of supervisors should be submitted to the local Garda Station.

Q. *What is the procedure in the event of an accident or injury to a child during the journey?*

In the unlikely event of a serious injury the supervisors should first contact the emergency services if they have access to a mobile phone or pay phone and/or try to get help from the nearest source e.g. a nearby house or a passing motorist. Supervisors will, if possible, contact the child's parents contact details. Each child should carry these details.

Q. *Who provides insurance cover for the walking buses?*

The Walking Bus Initiative will be covered by Fingal County Council's insurance policy. Fingal will also be providing Personal Accident Cover for the supervisors registered in the scheme.

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO ORGANISING A WALKING BUS

STEP	ACTION	NOTES
1	<i>Identify suitable routes for the bus</i>	Routes should be based on maximising accessibility and suitable pedestrian infrastructure.
2	<i>Identify suitable 'Pick up' points on each route and notify all parents.</i>	A number of 'pick up' points should be selected for each route. Parents will also be able to bring their child out onto a route for collection.
3	<i>Find out which parents are interested and where they live.</i>	Issue a letter to all parents explaining the walking bus with contact details of the Working Group. Include a return slip to enable parents to indicate their willingness to participate as a volunteer and their availability, to provide a 'safe house', and/or to register their child/children.
4	<i>Have the supervisors vetted</i>	Parents will be informed of this procedure in the original letter.
5	<i>Appoint a Walking Bus Coordinator</i>	This can either be a volunteer or a member of the working group. This person will be the main point of contact for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • parents to register their child/children; • parents to volunteer as supervisors; and • parents to make inquiries about the bus.
6	<i>Devise a rota for volunteers & Issues details to them.</i>	Volunteers should then be issued with a copy of the rota; a list of registered children on their route; a map indicating the routes and collection points; and the procedures for operating the walking bus.
7	<i>Inform the parents</i>	The list of volunteers and their contact details, routes and collection points should be issued to parents who have registered their child for the bus. Parents should also be reminded of their responsibilities.
8	<i>Distribute Hi-Vis vest to each child and adult supervisor.</i>	Hi-Vis vests should be issued to each child registered to use the walking bus and all volunteers. The vests help to create a greater awareness of the children among motorists and other road users.
9	<i>Work to a recommended ratio of adults to children of at least 1 to 6.</i>	Juniors are children between the ages of 7-11.
10	<i>Update the register of pupils and volunteers each year.</i>	It is vital that the registers are updated regularly and that everyone involved is informed.

GENERAL PROCEDURES

Supervisors

- Agree to a Garda criminal background check.
- Provide a contact name and address to other operators, the school and the Walking Bus Coordinator.
- Ensure you have the details of all registered children on your designated route.
- Ensure you are aware of the path of the route and the collection points.
- If possible, ensure you have a mobile phone with you at all times in case of an emergency.
- Wear the yellow vest provided, when training and operating the bus - available from the Walking Bus Coordinator.
- Organise a replacement if you are unable to fulfil your post.
- Agree to be monitored on occasion by the Local Authority Road Safety Officer to ensure that the bus is operating safely and in accordance with the guidelines.
- Record and report all incidents to the Walking Bus Coordinator, including accidents and injuries, improper behaviour of children, and any points of the route that are becoming a safety concern.
- In the event of a minor injury, volunteers should apply what first-aid they can. One volunteer should, if necessary, contact the child's parents and arrange to pick them up either at home or at the school, whichever the bus is closest to when the incident occurs. One supervisor will escort the child.
- In the event of a serious accident or injury, immediately contact the emergency services, apply first-aid if properly trained, contact the coordinator and the child's parents.
- One supervisor must be at the front of the line of children and the other at the back.
- If only one supervisor is available then they should take up the rear and place the most responsible child at the front.
- Supervisors must only cross a road at a formal crossing point.
- The walking bus must not deviate from the designated routes.
- Ensure that children maintain a single file formation as far from the edge of the footway as possible.
- Ensure they have received the basic safety training from the Road Safety Training Officer.

Parents

- Ensure that you have read and signed the consent form to participate as a volunteer and/or register your child/children for the walking bus.
- Ensure your child/children have your contact details (both home and work) on their persons at all times.
- Ensure your child/children is/are wearing the orange vest(s) provided by the coordinator.
- Ensure your child/children is/are aware of the need to obey the supervisors and to behave appropriately.
- Be aware that your child/children can be removed from the register if they continually misbehave on the walking bus – no child can be allowed to compromise the safety of the other children in the bus.
- Ensure your child is supervised until they are picked up by the bus and from when they are dropped off. Parents can agree, among themselves, to allow their child/children to be dropped off at other parent's homes but they must inform the Walking Bus Coordinator and supervisors.



Walking Bus Consent Form

Name of School: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____ Alternative Contact Number: _____

Child 1: _____ Class _____

Child 2: _____ Class _____

Our Child/Children walked to school before joining the walking bus: TRUE FALSE
(Circle the appropriate answer)

I would like to volunteer as a supervisor for a Walking Bus ☐

I hereby declare that the information provided is the truth to the best of my knowledge that I make this declaration knowing that I have no previous criminal convictions. I hereby authorise the school authorities to verify this information with An Garda Síochána.

Parents/guardians should note that the County Council's Personal Accident Insurance will cover volunteers involved in the Walking Bus.

I am available on the following days (please circle suitable times): **Monday** AM/PM **Tuesday** AM/PM
Wednesday AM/PM **Thursday** AM/PM **Friday** AM/PM

I would like to register my child to use the Walking Bus ☐

I understand that it is my/our responsibility to take my/our child/children to the designated Walking Bus/Stop. I also understand that on the journey home it is my/our responsibility to collect my/our child/children from the designated Walking Bus/Stop.

I/we understand that my/our child/children's journeys to and from school remains my/our responsibility despite my consent for him/her/them to use the Walking Bus. I also accept that my child/children's behaviour must be of a high standard and that he/she/they must obey all safety related instructions given to him/her/them by the volunteers.

Signed (Parent 1) _____ Dated _____

Signed (Parent 2) _____ Dated _____

Return to: Walking Bus Co-ordinator

IF YOUR CHILD WILL NOT BE COMING HOME ON THE WALKING BUS PLEASE ENSURE THAT THE WALKING BUS CO-ORDINATOR IS INFORMED.