Hop on Board
Walking Bus Guidelines

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Contact Details:
www.kmwalktoschool.co.uk for details on how to get started.

For further information on Walking Buses please contact the KCC Walking Bus Co-ordinator at Kent Highways and Transportation on 08458 247 800
Walking Buses in Kent

What is a Walking Bus?
A Walking Bus is the name for a supervised group of children walking to or from school. It is made up of at least two adult volunteers, who act as a 'driver' and a 'conductor' and escort the children. Adults and children all wear high-visibility waistcoats.

The Bus follows a set route and 'walks' to a published timetable. Children can join or leave the Bus at set points along the route. The decision on when a Walking Bus operates is left to the school and volunteers; it doesn't have to operate morning or afternoon, or even every day.

Walking Buses depend totally on the Support from volunteers. For the scheme to succeed, volunteers need to be enthusiastic and committed. A lead Co-ordinator needs to be identified to be the main contact for the walking Bus. He or she must be someone the school knows.

What are the Benefits?
The walking Bus scheme can benefit children, parents, the school and the local community by:

- Improving pedestrian and road safety skills
- Promoting healthy exercise
- Saving time and fuel costs for the parents
- Developing children's independence and social skills
- Reducing traffic congestion around schools to help improve the environment
- Earn rewards for pupils, families and schools through the KM Walk to School Schemes

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How do we get started?

You need support from your Head teacher and parents.

The school should send a letter to parents to ask if they would support and be interested in the scheme. The more parents involved, the less time each has to commit.

Next, contact the KM Walk to School Team (part of the KM Charity Team) they will send you an Introduction Pack which gives you the step by step instructions, flyers and forms for setting up a bus. They will also arrange a date and time for a school meeting and parent talk. Their contact details are walktoschool@thekmgroup.co.uk

In order for the walking Bus to progress, someone will have to be appointed as the Co-ordinator. The school must be happy with the person that is appointed. Success will rely on having an enthusiastic Co-ordinator.

It is the schools responsibility to ensure all volunteers, parents and pupils are fully aware of these safety guidelines.
Choosing A Route

The next step is to arrange, with the KCC Walking Bus Co-ordinator, a meeting to risk assess the proposed route/s and bus stops. A copy of the risk assessment will be forwarded to the school and subject to a satisfactory outcome, provisional approval will be given for the walking bus. A map of the approved route will also be provided to the school.

The Walking Bus must follow the approved route at all times. If any section of the route becomes unsafe, or needs to change, the Co-ordinator must tell KCC’s Walking Bus Co-ordinator as soon as possible. Insurance becomes invalidated if the approved route is not followed.

The Walking Bus and the volunteers do not have the authority to stop traffic.

The KCC’s Walking Bus Co-ordinator will advise where the safest places to cross are and how this should be done. You can find all of our top tips at www.kmwalktoschool.co.uk
**Timetable**

Although the Walking Bus should operate on every agreed day, no matter what the weather is like, the Co-ordinator should agree with the school a procedure to deal with unforeseen or sudden circumstances, such as severe weather, or not enough volunteers to meet the required ratio.

All Walking Buses must operate to a strict timetable and should not wait for the children who are late, even if they are expected to walk with the bus. Parents are responsible for making sure that children who miss the bus arrive at school safely.

Parents must make sure that children are at the appropriate pick up point in the morning and collected from the drop-off point in the afternoon, if applicable, unless they have been given written permission to continue home from the stop unsupervised. The Co-ordinator must see this permission prior to the journey.

Parents are responsible for their child’s safety on the way to and from the chosen bus stops.

**Ratios**

There must always be AT LEAST two adults present – one acting as the ‘driver’ and the other as the ‘conductor’. The overall ratio of adult volunteers to children should be 1:6. If you have more than 12 children on the bus you will need additional adults. Where younger children are involved, you may wish to consider a higher adult volunteer to child ratio.

Pre-school children, including those in pushchairs, are welcome to travel with the bus, if accompanied by their parent/guardian. However, they should be included within the overall adult to child ratio. Pre-school children are not covered by the general Kent County Council (KCC) insurance, regardless of whether they are walking or not.
Volunteers

The success of a Walking Bus totally depends on the volunteers and the support of the school. As a result, it is essential that the scheme has as many volunteers as possible, so the routes are always covered and the responsibility does not just fall on a few committed people.

The Co-ordinator must draw up a rota and give it to all the volunteers. If a volunteer cannot carry out their duty they must inform the Co-ordinator, who is responsible for finding a replacement. If, for any reason, the minimum number of volunteers cannot be provided, the journey must be cancelled. All volunteers must be able to contact each other in an emergency.

Each Walking Bus route will need a register of children who want to use the Walking Bus and on which days they wish to travel with it.

Every Walking Bus will have a ‘driver’ and ‘conductor’. The ‘driver’ will lead the walking Bus from the front and the ‘conductor’ will walk at the back, so the children can be seen and are kept under close supervision. Any extra volunteers will be positioned throughout the Walking Bus to help supervise the children. The volunteers must stay with the Walking Bus at all times while on the agreed route.

All children and volunteers must wear high-visibility waist coats at all times when on the Walking Bus. These remain the property of the KM Walk to School Team and must be returned when leaving the scheme.

All volunteers who want to take part in the scheme must have received guidance from their school and must have enhanced CRB (Criminal Records Bureau) checks. Volunteers who already have an enhanced CRB check from any organisation other than KCC will need to be re-checked. All CRB checks are processed through the school.

Volunteers who leave and re-join the walking Bus may have to be re-checked.

Volunteers are not allowed to take pets on the Walking Bus.

ID Badges for Volunteers

All volunteers should be issued with an identification badge that must be worn whilst with the Walking Bus; these badges are prepared by the school, once a satisfactory enhanced CRB check has been received.
Parents’ Permission

Parents must complete a consent form before their child is allowed to travel on the Walking Bus. This should provide:

- Emergency contact details
- Any medical conditions the Walking Bus should be aware of
- The days when the child will be using the Walking Bus
- The bus stop they wish to use
- Whether or not the child will be met from the afternoon bust stop (if applicable)

Parents will be asked to agree to allow limited personal information to be recorded, but only for the Co-ordinator or school to use if necessary.

Parents must make sure that they are waiting at the bus stop when their child is dropped off on the journey home, unless they have given written permission for them to go home from that point unsupervised. It is expected all infant children will be met.

It is essential that parents tell the Co-ordinator if their child cannot go to school for example, because they are ill), or will not be going home on the Walking Bus. If parents cannot contact the Co-ordinator, they should notify the school instead, although the Co-ordinator is the first point of contact for the Walking Bus.

We advise that the Co-ordinator agrees a procedure with the school for the cancellation of the Bus, for reasons such as severe weather, or not enough volunteers to meet the required ratio.
**Bus ‘Passengers’**

All children using the Walking Bus will sign a pupil’s promise to wear their high-visibility waistcoat properly and behave sensibly and considerately at all times on the Walking Bus. A sample form can be downloaded from www.kmwalktoschool.co.uk. Parents must stress the importance of good behaviour on a journey to and from school. Any child who is putting themselves or others at risk, or who behaves in an inappropriate way, will be withdrawn from the Walking Bus at the end of the journey. The Co-ordinator and school have the final decision on who should not use the Walking Bus.

If a Walking Bus operates in the afternoon and, for any reason, a child misses it, they should report to the school office and tell a member of staff. Under no circumstances should they walk home alone.

**Monitoring**

The Walking Bus will be monitored annually by KCC’s Walking Bus Co-ordinator to ensure that the Bus is operating in accordance with the guideline’s set out in this document.

Adult to child ratios, use of high-visibility waistcoats and adherence to basic road safety guidelines will all be checked.
Insurance

Schools who do not purchase their insurance services from Kent County Council should seek clarification from their insurers about cover for Walking Buses.

Volunteers will benefit from our public liability insurance cover in the same way as though they were KCC employees, as long as they follow the guidelines below:

• Follow road safety guidance (see Road Safety Top Tips)
• Wear the high-visibility waistcoat
• Provide personal details and have a satisfactory enhanced CRB check
• Ensure there are sufficient volunteers on the Bus
• Ensure approved route is being followed.

As long as these conditions (and the conditions of KCC’s insurers) are met, we will protect volunteers against any amounts they would have to pay as damages for:

• Accidental injury (fatal or otherwise) of, or to, any person
• Accidental loss of or damage to property which happens while they are acting as a volunteer

Emergency Procedures

An emergency procedure should be in place and agreed with the school should a serious incident occur.
Sponsorship

Companies are often willing to support local initiatives and your school may be able to get sponsorship for items such as high-visibility waistcoats. Please contact the KM Walk to School Team for further information and advice.

Incentives

You could use incentives or rewards for the children involved. These can include school merit points or gift tokens for those who use the Walking Bus regularly. These could be provided by the school, parent teacher association or a commercial sponsor.

Publicity

Letting parents and the public know about your Walking Bus through local media or school based publications is very important. Please contact the KM Walk to School Team for further information and advice.
Glossary of Terms

**Bus Stop**
A pre-arranged point on a Walking Bus route where children can be dropped off or collected.

**Parent(s)**
Parents, guardians, carers, other relatives or anyone looking after a child.

**Walking Bus**
A supervised group of children walking to and from school.

**Volunteers:**

**Co-ordinator**
The adult who acts as the organiser for a particular Walking Bus.

**Conductor**
The adult who walks at the rear of the Bus.

**Driver**
The adult who walks at the front of the Bus.
Walking Buses

Additional Advice

- Please remember to look at our Top Tips Road safety Guidance.
- For larger schools with multiple buses it may be advisable to have a Co-ordinator for each route.
- Schools should retain parents consent and pupil promise forms as a record of who is authorised to be on the Bus.
- If a Bus eventually becomes unmanageable due to the numbers ‘on board’ it may be safer to split it into two buses.
- Remember that wearing a high-visibility waistcoat does not authorise volunteers to stop traffic.
- When crossing a wide road or a road with a traffic island it may be better to split the Bus into manageable numbers rather than ‘overflow’ the island.
A quick guide to setting up a Walking Bus

1. Survey parents to gain support for a walking bus at your school.
2. Contact the KM Walk to School Team to arrange a date and time for a parental talk. All potential volunteers and interested parents should be invited to attend.
3. Appoint a Walking Bus Co-ordinator who will be the key point of contact between your Walking Bus, KCC and the KM Walk to School Team. Schools should start to process enhanced CRB checks for all volunteers.
4. On a map plot your proposed route, including the start and finish points, pick up points (bus stops), suggested timetable and days of operation.
5. Contact KCC’s Walking Bus Co-ordinator to organise a date and time for your route to be risk assessed. The school’s Walking Bus Co-ordinator and a school representative should attend this risk assessment.
6. A copy of the risk assessment will be forwarded to the school and subject to a satisfactory outcome, provisional approval will be given for the walking bus. A map of the approved route will also be provided to the school.
7. On confirmation of successful CRB checks, the school will provide the volunteers with photo identification badges. The KCC Walking Bus Co-ordinator will inform you when everything is in place, at which point you should contact the KM Walk to School Team to organise hi-viz jackets, a launch date and publicity for your Bus!

Launch your Bus!
Your walking Bus route will be reviewed annually by KCC’s Walking Bus Co-ordinator to ensure it is operating correctly.

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