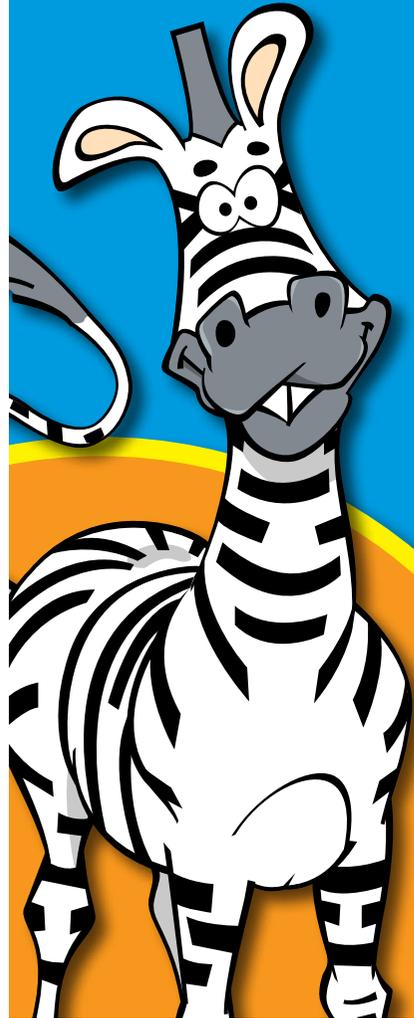


Walking School Bus Guidelines *for Schools and Parents*

Let's get
moving!



Travel Plan



What is a walking school bus?

A walking school bus is a group of families living in a neighbourhood who form a walking group to take children in their area to and from school. Parents or caregivers take turns as 'drivers', walking along a set route to and from school, collecting children from designated 'bus stops' along the way. Younger children are provided with fluorescent items to increase their visibility on the streets.

What are the benefits of a walking school bus?

A walking school bus can:

- Provide exercise to improve children's physical health, memory and concentration.
- Encourage children to be independent and responsible while being part of a team.
- Assist children with learning road safety in a practical and supervised situation.
- Encourage families in the neighbourhood to get to know one another.
- Save parents' money by not using their vehicle.
- Save parents' time when there aren't 'driving' the bus.
- Reduce traffic congestion around the school and adjoining roads.
- Improve the environment for children by reducing vehicle pollution around the school.

How often does the walking school bus operate?

The walking school bus operates whenever it suits the families involved. Buses may operate daily or only a couple of days a week. Some buses may operate every morning and every afternoon taking children to and from school. Other buses may operate only in the mornings or only in the afternoons or a combination of mornings and afternoons. It will all depend on the availability of volunteers to supervise the bus on a rota.

How many children can travel in a walking school bus?

The number of children in a walking school bus depends upon the number of families involved in the neighbourhood. The Council recommends one adult supervises no more than eight children. Many walking school bus supervisors believe that ratio should be one adult to five or six children, particularly if the bus crosses busy roads or includes young (five and six year old) children.

Do children have to be picked up and delivered to their homes?

The Walking School Bus has a set route with pick-up and drop-off points - like bus stops - along the route. The children wait at these points for the walking school bus in the morning or are dropped off at these points in the afternoon. Parents can accompany their children to these pick-up points or wait for them there in the afternoon. The walking school bus route, with its pick-up and drop-off points, is determined by the families participating in the walking school bus.

How do I set up a walking school bus?

In order to identify other families who may be interested in participating in walking school buses, ask your school to send out a survey with the school newsletter (see the questionnaire below for the information you will need to obtain). Once the forms have been returned to the school, organise a meeting of the interested parents/caregivers. At the meeting have families sort themselves into potential walking school buses (i.e. families who live in the same neighbourhood should get together). Provide each group with a map of the school zone on which to mark out a potential walking school bus route that will work for them. Ask for someone to volunteer to be the coordinator and contact person for each group. It is the responsibility of the parents/caregivers on each walking school bus to organise their own rota and the walking school bus timetable. This may take longer than the time available at the establishment meeting (which should only last about one hour). Groups should be encouraged to get together to finalise arrangements, and to familiarise themselves with the following health and safety recommendations.

Travel Plan



Walking School Bus Registration of Interest

Name(s) of Parent(s)/Caregiver(s) _____

Family's Street address _____

Phone Number _____ Email address _____

Names of our children who can walk on the walking school bus	When they can walk to and/or from school on the Walking School Bus									
	Monday morning	Monday afternoon	Tuesday morning	Tuesday afternoon	Wednesday morning	Wednesday afternoon	Thursday morning	Thursday afternoon	Friday morning	Friday afternoon

Tick boxes as appropriate

Names of parents/ caregivers who can take turns supervising the walking school bus	When I/We Can Help Supervise the Walking School Bus									
	Monday morning	Monday afternoon	Tuesday morning	Tuesday afternoon	Wednesday morning	Wednesday afternoon	Thursday morning	Thursday afternoon	Friday morning	Friday afternoon

Tick boxes as appropriate

(a) THE ROUTE

Walk the Route First

Before starting a new walking school bus, all those who will be walking school bus drivers should walk the route together first, identifying the safest crossing points and any hazards along the way. It is helpful to ask your Police Education Officer to walk the route with you, and to have him/her do some road safety education in your junior classes before you get underway. Some very young children may have had no prior experience of walking on the footpaths and crossing busy roads.

(b) THE BUS

Ratio of Drivers to Children

This can vary depending on the road environment and the age of the children. One adult to about six children is about right. If the route is along roads which have little traffic, there is good visibility, and the footpaths and berms are wide, it may be safe to have more children per adult. Older children can help look after younger ones, but should not be entrusted with the responsibility of being a walking school bus driver as they have neither the maturity nor authority for this task.

Walking on the Bus

- Have the youngest, slowest children at the front of the bus, setting the pace. Don't allow other children to get ahead or straggle behind.
- Walk on the pavement away from the kerb.
- Leave toys like balls at home. They create distractions, are tempting to play with, and cause safety issues if they should bounce out onto the roadway.
- It is possible that a courteous driver will stop to let you cross the road. Make sure that all other drivers are aware of what is happening and also stop for you before you step onto the road. It may be safer to wait and wave the stopped vehicle on.

Crossing Roads

Cross away from parked cars. Gather the children around you away from the kerb until you decide that it is safe to cross. Always cross any street in one group. Don't let children go ahead or straggle behind the group.

Supervision of Children Joining Your Route

Safe bus stops (collection and drop off points) need to be identified for children joining the bus along the route. These children should be accompanied by their parents to this point, particularly if they need to cross the road to reach you. You cannot leave your group to help another child across the road. It is the parent who is responsible for their child's safety to and from the bus stop.

(c) THE DRIVERS

The Coordinator

Each walking school bus should have one person who is the coordinator, who will be the liaison person between the school and the parent volunteers, and a contact person in times of emergency (as when a situation arises that prevents a designated driver fulfilling their obligations, such as sickness).

Role of Drivers

The role of drivers is to make sure the children walk to and from school safely along the predetermined route. Except for small buses (when the number of children is six or less and having one driver may be sufficient) it is ideal having a driver at the front of the bus and another at the back.

Model Safe Behaviour

Children learn by observation. They model their behaviour on what they see adults do. It is important that walking school bus drivers set a good example.

Teach Safe Behaviour

The walking school bus is an ideal opportunity to teach good road safety behaviour, but when teaching a small group of children how to safely cross the road it is helpful to remember that they don't see the world as adults do. For one thing they are shorter and their eyesight is not fully developed. Teaching slogans like "look right, look left, look right again" has no value unless children are taught what to look for when they look right and left. Keep in mind that young children often cannot judge the speed of an approaching vehicle in relation to how long it will take them to cross the road. Encourage children to participate in the decision making as to when to cross the road, but make sure they understand that you make the final decision about when it is safe to do so.

(d) HAZARDS

Identify “Sneaky Driveways”

When supervising a walking school bus, everyone needs to be on the look out for “sneaky driveways” – driveways from which a reversing driver does not have a clear view of pedestrians on the footpath. As you become familiar with the route you will get to know potential problem driveways. Check that the way is clear before letting children walk past these. Having more than one driver – one in front of the group and one behind – and keeping the group moving at a similar pace so its stays together will help with managing this hazard. A leaflet to distribute to householders along the route asking them to watch out for children when leaving their driveway is available.

Reporting Hazards

Whether it is vegetation obscuring visibility when crossing a road, or parked cars blocking the footpath, or threatening animals, Council staff don’t know about these hazards unless you phone to inform them. The number to ring is 941-8666. A hazard register is included below, along with a sheet for recording new hazards and what has been done to eliminate, isolate or minimise them. It is advisable to keep on file an up-to-date hazard register at the school.

Dogs

Remind children not to pat dogs they encounter along the way. Children may feel safe in a larger group and not appreciate the dangers of greeting dogs, who may be aggressive or become agitated by the presence of a large number of children. You could ask your school to book the Council’s Animal Control Team’s Dog Safety Education Programme.

Visibility

Having drivers and children dressed in high visibility clothing makes them more visible to motorists. Child size fluorescent bibs are available for those families who wish to use them.

(e) SMOOTH RUNNING OF THE BUS

Share Contact Details

Each family should keep handy a record the contact details of other families. It would be helpful for drivers to carry a cellphone with them and have the numbers of the school and their walking school bus coordinator listed among their contacts.

Have Back Up Drivers

From time to time a designated driver may be unable to drive the bus. It is useful to have back up drivers that the walking school bus coordinator can call upon on such occasions. This avoids the necessity of the coordinator having to contact all the other families to inform them that the bus is cancelled that day, and the possibility that someone might not get the message and be waiting for a bus that never turns up.

Wet Weather Plan

The wet weather plan is up to the drivers involved. The important thing is that it is consistent and that all the families know the plan. If children have the right wet weather gear (umbrellas are provided as additional protection), it is possible to walk on all but the most inclement days. Children seldom mind walking in the rain. Whatever you plan, it is essential everyone knows it so that no one ends up being stranded.

Decide on How Disciplinary Issues will be Addressed

Walking school bus drivers need to decide among themselves beforehand how disciplinary issues will be handled. This will ensure the safety of children and help avoid misunderstandings among parents.

Incentives

Small rewards can keep enthusiasm alive and reinforce good behaviour. However, to be effective rewards need to be earned. That is rewards shouldn't be given out too often or too easily.

Apart from the small rewards (e.g. stickers, certificates) provided by the Christchurch City Council, schools themselves can provide inexpensive rewards that can keep enthusiasm for the walking school bus alive. This could be a monthly cup or a mounted shoe for the walking school bus that has walked most often during the month. Having theme days, like a decorated sunhat competition, can from time to time introduce extra fun into the programme.

Enjoy and Explore the Outdoors

Take the opportunity to observe the ever changing environment of your route to school. Walking to or from school isn't just a journey, it can be an adventure.

WALKING SCHOOL BUS ROSTERS

Route: _____

Day of Week	Supervisors	Contract Phone Numbers	Children	Contact Phone Numbers
Monday Morning				
Monday Afternoon				
Tuesday Morning				
Tuesday Afternoon				
Wednesday Morning				

Wednesday Afternoon				
Thursday Morning				
Thursday Afternoon				
Friday Morning				
Friday Afternoon				

Route: _____

Day of Week	Supervisors	Contract Phone Numbers	Children	Contact Phone Numbers
Monday Morning				
Monday Afternoon				
Tuesday Morning				
Tuesday Afternoon				
Wednesday Morning				

Wednesday Afternoon				
Thursday Morning				
Thursday Afternoon				
Friday Morning				
Friday Afternoon				

Route: _____

Day of Week	Supervisors	Contract Phone Numbers	Children	Contact Phone Numbers
Monday Morning				
Monday Afternoon				
Tuesday Morning				
Tuesday Afternoon				
Wednesday Morning				

Wednesday Afternoon				
Thursday Morning				
Thursday Afternoon				
Friday Morning				
Friday Afternoon				

WALKING SCHOOL BUS RISK MANAGEMENT REGISTER

Hazard	Potential Harm	Significant Hazard? (yes/no)	Eliminate	Isolate	Minimise	Controls
Crash with vehicle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head injuries • Fractures • Fatality 	Yes			X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ratio of adults to children is to be no more than eight children per each adult supervisor (preferably six children). • Children and/or adult supervisors are to wear high visibility clothing to make the group visible to motorists. • Children are not permitted to run on ahead of the others in the group or to straggle behind. • Children must cross the road altogether. • Adult supervisors are to check that the way is clear before permitting the children to cross a road. • The group is not to cross a road from behind a parked vehicle, out of site of on-coming traffic. • Adult supervisors are to watch for vehicles backing out of driveways. They should not permit children to walk into the path of backing vehicles.
Falls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head injuries • Fractures • Minor injuries like bruises and grazes 	Yes			X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robust footwear, suitable for walking should be worn. • Children should be made aware that in winter pavements can become slippery with ice. They should walk with care. • Children should stay away from construction machinery when roads and footpaths are being reconstructed, and be made aware that they can slip and fall on loose shingle. • Hazards on footpaths that could cause someone to trip, like tree roots and pot holes, are to be reported to the Council.
Dog bites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lacerations • Disfigurement • Infections 	Yes			X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children are not to be permitted to pat strange dogs, even if on a leash on the street. • Children are not to be permitted to go near dogs confined behind fences on private properties.

WALKING SCHOOL BUS HAZARDS RECORD FORM

Date	What is the hazard?*	Where is the hazard?	Who identified the hazard?	Who has been informed about the hazard?	What has been done, or is being done to eliminate, isolate or minimise the hazard?†

* Hazards could include busy intersections, over-hanging foliage obscuring view when crossing road, “sneaky driveways”, pot holes, scary dogs.

† Not all hazards can be eliminated. Strategies need to be put in place for minimising the danger of these hazards. For example having children wear safety jackets to make them more visible to motorists when the children are crossing the road and ensuring that there is an adequate parent supervisor to child ratio. Phone the Council about such things as over hanging foliage, pot holes, and dangerous dogs, phone 941-8666.
 Add hazards identified and how they are to be managed to walking school bus risk management register.

Walking School Bus Health & Safety Equipment Order Form

Item	Number Required	For Office Use
Child Fluorescent Safety Items		
Child Size Umbrellas		
Child Incentives (will change from time to time)		
Information and Resources for Families (will change from time to time)		

Post or Fax Order To:

Road Safety Coordinator (Schools)
Business Support Unit, City Environment Group
Christchurch City Council
PO Box 73014 Christchurch 8054
Fax: (03) 941-8384

Order to be Couriered to:

PLEASE PRINT

Name of Walking School Bus Coordinator: _____ **Phone:** _____

Street Address: _____

School: _____ **Date:** _____

Business Support Unit. City Environment Group

53 Hereford Street, Christchurch 8011
PO Box 73014, Christchurch 8154
Telephone 941 8999. Email: info@ccc.govt.nz
Or visit our website: www.ccc.govt.nz