

Resource 4:

Walking school bus guidelines for parents/caregivers and drivers

These guidelines are an example only. They should be adjusted to suit your bus (eg agreeing to your own wet-weather policy or process for handling behavioural issues).

There should always be two adults present, if possible – one at the front and one at the back of the group. This will depend, however, on the number of children and availability of adults.

Rain or shine!

The walking bus should take place whatever the weather – rain or shine! However, if your children will not be walking due to heavy rain, please contact the parent leader rostered on for that day by 8am or 2.30pm to let them know. (If it turns out that no one will be using the bus, it will save the leader a wet, lonely walk.) If you are the leader on a wet day, you must go ahead if you have not heard from everyone.

Walking route

The route has been finalised (please see enclosed timetable).

It begins at: _____

crosses at: _____

and the bus stops are at: _____

This route must be adhered to at all times. It will be reviewed after four weeks, so if you have any suggestions for improvements, please let the coordinator know.

If any part of the pathway cannot be used due to a temporary blockage (eg road works, parked vehicles), the leaders will need to divert accordingly. If there are persistent problems with a route, these should be reported to the local council.

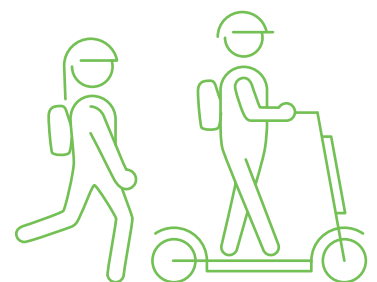
Safety

Parents are responsible for their own children's safety to and from the designated bus stops. Drivers must stay with the group on the authorised route and take care when children join and leave the bus.

Parents should speak to their own children about road safety before letting them join the walking school bus, but it is a good idea for the driver to give newcomers to the bus a brief reminder about acceptable behaviour. Emphasise that children must listen to the leader and obey their instructions at all times – particularly about stopping and crossing.

The driver will be in the front leading the group. If there is a second parent, they should be at the rear to ensure there are no stragglers. **No child should walk ahead of the parent driver or behind the second parent.** We recommend having the youngest and slowest children in front with the leader.

The children should walk along the pavement away from the kerb in an orderly manner, and in pairs where possible, allowing other pedestrians to pass.



Crossing roads

Drivers should follow these guidelines when crossing the road with children.

Choose a safe place away from parked cars. When crossing, gather the children around you away from the kerb until you decide that it's safe to cross. It may be quicker and safer to cross them in a bunch, eg rows of four children. Walk across, looking and listening as you go. When you have crossed safely, reform your group and continue on.

Remember, you are not empowered to stop traffic to cross. If any vehicle stops to allow the group to cross, it is vital you check other drivers are aware of what is happening and have stopped too. There is always the danger of other vehicles overtaking the stationary vehicle.

At the school crossing, make sure the whole group is assembled before going across.

Parents' responsibilities

Parents must have completed a consent form before a child is allowed to use the walking school bus. This form includes emergency contact details and an indication of when the child will use the bus. This information will be held on the route register.

It is a parent's responsibility to inform the leader of any change to their child's regular travel pattern. For permanent changes, please contact the parent coordinator so the register can be updated.

Parents should also ensure their children understand how the bus operates and impress upon them the need to behave sensibly and obey any instructions given by the leader.

Parents are responsible for their children's safety to and from the designated bus stops and must discuss with their child what to do if they miss the bus for any reason.

If your child is having a friend over to play, their parents must write and sign a note giving their child permission to walk on the walking school bus. If safe adult-to-child ratios are exceeded, you may be asked to come and walk with the group.

Children's responsibilities

Children must behave sensibly and follow instructions. If they miss the bus in the morning, they can walk up and join if it's still visible. Otherwise, they must return home so their parents can arrange an alternative way to get to school.

If for any reason they are left behind after school, they must go to the school office and inform a staff member.

Vetting volunteers

Please refer to your own school policy and Ministry of Education advice to decide if walking school bus volunteers should be vetted by Police.

www.education.govt.nz/school/people-and-employment/principals-and-teachers/police-vetting-for-schools-and-kura-maori/