

You Can... **Walk to school**

Historically, primary schools have had tight catchment areas of less than a mile, unlike their secondary partners. Yet a surprisingly large number of families still opt to drive to school. This may be for any number of good reasons (and your travel survey should point this out) but there will still be an arguable number of families who could conceivably walk to school rather than drive. These are the groups that you should aim to target.

Thinking points

- Why walk? Any commuter or parent will tell you that driving near schools around the early morning drop-off or evening pick-up times adds a noticeable amount of time to your journey. Added to this, schools can seriously reduce their carbon footprint by encouraging families to walk to school rather than drive. Even if this is only one day a week, in real terms that is a 20% reduction in car journeys to school.
- If you are launching a walking scheme you may want to consider investing in high-visibility vests to keep children safer during the darker months. Grants can be given for these through the school travel plan, or your school PSA/PTA may support the costs for parents.



Tips, ideas and activities

- Schools can access postcodes via their school database. An analysis of this will give you a clearer understanding of the geographic spread of families across your catchment area. For this reason it is important to try to locate postcodes before children fill in their travel survey so that you can match surveys with geographic location.
- Park and stride is a convenient method for families who live a considerable distance from schools. The strategy is to encourage drivers to park a reasonable distance from school rather than dropping children off at the gates. This not only enables children to take part in walking events but it also reduces the congestion around the school entrance.
- Walk Once a Week (WOW) has been a hugely successful project running in London. Children each have a mini calendar that they fill in when they walk to school. If a child walks to school at least once a week during the month they receive a themed badge for that particular month. The project was developed to encourage children and families who live within a reasonable distance to try walking to school. Many schools have seen dramatic differences in school travel habits. For example, the number of children walking to school before WOW in one north London school was 22%. Four months into the project, that had leapt to 75% of children walking once a week and that figure was sustained to the end of the project and beyond.

- Below are a number of useful websites that could help inform, resource and develop walking as an alternative form of travel in your school:
www.safe-kids-walking.com
www.walktoschool.org.uk
www.walkingbus.com
www.thewalkingbus.co.uk
www.brightkidz.co.uk