

WALK TO SCHOOL



May 2021
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A Journey to Wellbeing

The benefits of active travel are many. This programme, aimed at 3-5 year olds and their parents/carers, is designed to encourage walking to or from nursery and school as a path to mental and physical wellbeing.



Walk to School

A Journey to Wellbeing

Background – What is Walk to School?

Walk to School is a new programme which is designed to encourage 3-5 yr olds, who are in a nursery or school setting, and their parents/carers, to walk to school. It has been inspired by SMILE - a combined active travel and health project, which focuses on ways to smile and improve mental and physical wellbeing, devised by Brighton & Hove City Council. The 'Smile PSHE Project' won the Best Sustainable Travel Initiative – Education, at the Modeshift National Sustainable Travel Awards in 2019.

One of the key remits of Bristol City Council's Sustainable Transport Team for action in 2021 and beyond is to improve and increase communication with schools and parents/carers with the aim of encouraging active travel to school right from the start of Reception year. The current Covid-19 situation has brought the issues of physical and mental wellbeing right to the fore and this, together with the strategy to promote active travel, makes it an ideal time to introduce Walk to School.

Walk to School – A Journey to Wellbeing has been created in collaboration with BEYORN (Bristol Early Years Outdoor Research Network).

The number of children walking to school is down significantly from a generation ago when 70% walked to primary school. In 2017 the government set its first ever target to increase the proportion of primary school children walking to school to 55% by 2025. Nationally the figure, as recorded pre Covid-19, currently stands at 51%.

The Benefits – for everyone

The **Walk to school** programme delivers all the core benefits of active travel – to children, parents/carers, school staff and the wider community:

- ✓ Good for physical health
- ✓ Good for mental health
- ✓ Safety – less congestion around schools and nurseries
- ✓ Cleaner – improves air quality
- ✓ Activity aids concentration and learning and can help improve sleep
- ✓ Cost – walking is free!

The programme will aim not only to encourage walking to school or nursery as a healthy alternative to travelling by car and forming active travel habits at an early stage, but also as a way of engaging with the world around us and enhancing overall wellbeing in both parent/carer and child.



Based on the NHS *5 ways to Wellbeing*, **Walk to School** incorporates activities and concepts from all five areas:

- Connect – building up good relationships through effective communication
- Be physically active
- Pay attention to the present moment (mindfulness)
- Keep learning (also through play)
- Give / be kind

(<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/improve-mental-wellbeing/>)

By including walking into a daily routine, it will become a habit. If this habit is embedded at an early age, it is more likely to continue through a child's school career and into adulthood. A young child needs the support and encouragement from parents, carers and teachers to be able to form this habit, so **Walk to School** is very much a partnership between the parent/carer and school/nursery.

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/walking-for-health/>

<https://www.bristolearlyyears.org.uk/why-schools-need-to-focus-more-on-the-under-fives/>

Changing ingrained behaviours is harder than fostering a 'good' behaviour from the start, so this is why **Walk to School** is specifically aimed at parents/carers and children as they begin their school life. By making the behaviour easy to achieve, fun and peer supported, there is a greater chance of success, so the **Walk to School** scheme will be led by the Active Travel Team and supported by resources from several areas within Bristol City Council, including the Early Years, Healthy Schools and BristolGirlsCan teams.

The Bristol City Council/school/parent partnership – what's involved?

Walk to School is a partnership arrangement between parents/carers, schools/nurseries and Bristol City Council. For 2021, our goal is to engage with 5 nursery/pre-school/school settings to be part of the pilot scheme. As part of the programme, Bristol City Council will support the schools/nurseries with a wide range of resources, free of charge:

- Walk to School Bar Chart (Walking Board)
- Weekly activity ideas, some of which will be contained in the Walk to School Resource Box
- Access to Wet Weather Gear Fund
- Park & Stride site wherever possible
- Webpage with links to relevant and helpful information
- Loan of Early Years Road Safety kit
- Children's Traffic Club materials
- Classroom sessions (Reception classes)
- Support using the Modeshift STARS system*



In return, we ask schools/nurseries to complete a Memorandum of Understanding and commit to the following:

- To engage with Modeshift STARS* and work towards Bronze accreditation (primary schools) or Green→Bronze (nursery schools).
- To engage children with their journey to school/nursery, however briefly, every morning by using the **Walk to School** Walking Board.
- To promote Park & Stride as an alternative if walking the whole way is impractical.
- To promote the **Walk to School** ethos on the school website and social media.
- To post on social media how many children are walking to school (or provide data to BCC to be posted on Twitter (Active_Bristol)).
- To make use of the Walk to School Resource Box and encourage parents/carers to participate.

Resources

There are three main barriers to walking to school:

1. Time. Work commitments and dropping siblings off at other settings put the most pressure on time available.
2. Distance. This is particularly relevant to nursery settings which are often chosen for reasons other than location/proximity to home.
3. Wet/cold weather. Children grow fast and suitable outdoor clothing can be expensive. In addition to this, many parents/carers do not have the knowledge or experience of how to dress appropriately for wet and cold weather.

The resources that are available as part of the **Walk to School** programme are designed to tackle and overcome all of these issues in one way or another, depending on the setting.



Walk to School is based around a range of activities and resources for parents/carers to use with their children with the aim of making the walk to school healthy, fun, educational and a good time for communication and reflection. The experience from the walk will be shared in nursery or in class on arrival at school (see Walking Board bar chart activity detailed in Resources appendix).



Accessibility and Inclusion

As some communities may have higher levels of English as a second language and/or no access to online resources, as many of the activities as possible have been designed either to be pictorial or readily translatable. Full access to translation services will be made available to parents/carers wanting to access the full range of resources.

Schools will be able to apply to the Wet Weather Gear fund to allow provision of waterproof outdoor clothing to facilitate walking to school.

* Modeshift STARS

What is Modeshift STARS?

Modeshift STARS is a scheme, backed by the Department of Transport, that recognises schools and other educational establishments that have shown excellence in supporting cycling, walking and other forms of sustainable and active travel.

What does it do?

The Modeshift STARS online Travel Plan Toolkit provides a comprehensive Travel Plan tool that will help:

- Create, develop and implement Travel Plans
- Monitor and evaluate Travel Plans and the initiatives contained within them
- Recognise and reward excellence in the promotion of sustainable and active travel

What is a travel plan?

A travel plan is a package of actions designed by a workplace, school or other organisation to encourage safe, healthy and sustainable travel options. By reducing car journeys, travel plans can improve health and wellbeing, free up car parking space and make a positive contribution to both the community and the environment.

Modeshift STARS offers National Accreditation for sites that have demonstrated best practice in the implementation of their Travel Plan. Sites are awarded Green, Bronze, Silver and Gold accreditation, with Silver and Gold reserved only for those sites that achieve a reduction in single-occupancy car journeys to/from their site.

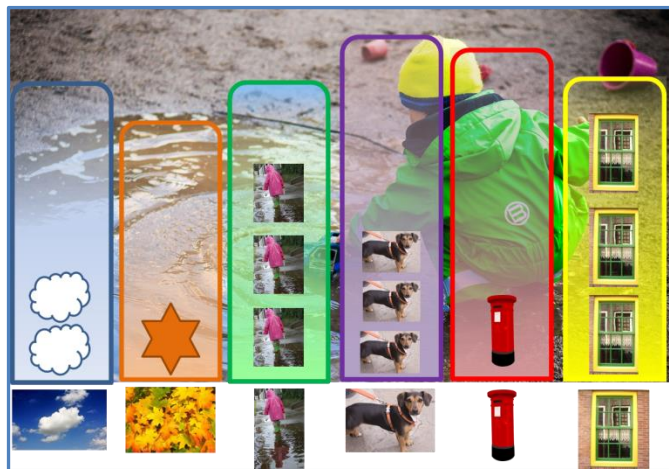


Appendix 1 - Resources

Each school would receive an individually tailored set of resources to enhance pedestrian engagement with the locality: routes to school and areas (eg parks) that can be utilised.

1. Resources for use in/by schools

- **Walking Board** – The Walking Board is a laminated picture board with an unpopulated bar chart. The idea is that when children arrive in class, they choose an item from the board that they saw on their walk to school and stick it in the relevant bar. There would be a theme for each week so the pictures would change throughout the seasons.



(Temporary design – example only)

- **Walk to School Resource Box** containing a selection of the following:
 - Locally tailored Scavenger Hunt
 - Locally tailored ideas for Eye Spy (eg landmarks or notable features)
 - Suggested books for reading with children (chosen because they are engaging, representative, local, inclusive, a prompt for discussion and/or travel related)
 - Simple pedometer for all children to use when walking to school
 - A wide range of activity ideas designed to make walking easy and fun (eg paper Fortune Teller, number games, sensory activities)



- **Access to a 'Walking Fund'** – Walking to school in the spring and summer is easy, but it's much harder to motivate both adults and children when it's colder and wetter. For some families inadequate clothing is a real barrier to being outside. A small discretionary fund would be made available for those for whom paying for suitable outdoor clothing is difficult. Primary schools can also apply to the Ernest Cook Trust for funding:
<https://ernestcooktrust.org.uk/what-we-do/everything-outdoors/outdoor-essentials-grant/>
- **School Routes Audit** - Every school/nursery participating in Walk to School would benefit from a School Routes Audit (SRA). This is a review of a specifically defined area by the community that use it, highlighting what works and what can be improved with solutions. We will work with the school/nursery community to decide on the route to review (eg the route from a Park and Stride site) and who to engage with (eg teachers, pupils, local community) and how to engage them (eg online meeting with key stakeholders). BCC would then provide a simple survey to complete, walk the route (ideally with stakeholders), compile data and submit an overview to the school/nursery. Solutions can be actioned or planned for as appropriate.
- **Mapping**
 - 5-10 minute walking zone map. This map helps parents/carers see how long it would take to walk to school/nursery if they live within the 5-10 minute zone.
 - Walking and mapping app – Go Jauntly is a free walking, wayfinding and nature connection app designed to help us to walk and explore new routes.