



Setting up a Walking Zone

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All you need to know to set up a Walking Zone around your school.

Living Streets' Walk to School campaign reaches over 13 million people, making it one of the UK's leading behaviour change campaigns for young people. We work directly with over 750,000 children in 2,000 schools and every year thousands more take part in the national schemes and events we run, including Walk once a Week (WoW) and Walk to School Week.



What is a Walking Zone?

A Walking Zone is a clearly defined area around the school, within which children and families are encouraged to walk rather than drive. Families who live in, or near, the Walking Zone are encouraged to walk to and from school every day. Those who live further away, and choose to drive, are asked to park outside the zone and walk the rest of their journey.

Walking Zones are a brilliant way to encourage parents and their children to add some physical exercise to their journey to school, as well as providing some valuable social time. Walking Zones can also help to reduce traffic levels near to school, improving safety and creating a more pleasant environment for everyone. A Walking Zone can help make the walk to school safer and easier for everyone.

How does a Walking Zone work?

Walking Zones can work in three ways:

- 1 **Informal** – the school and its pupils develop a map of the Walking Zone and share it with families, encouraging them to walk more within the Walking Zone.
- 2 **Semi-formal** – the local authority provides permission for the school to set up signage to promote their Walking Zone. The school communicates this to families and the local community, asking for their support.
- 3 **Formal** – the Walking Zone is officially recognised and upheld with support from the local authority, including formal signage and parking enforcement.

Signage used in a formal Walking Zone in Scotland





How to set up a Walking Zone

Step 1: Mapping out your Walking Zone

Think about how far you would like people to walk and sketch out an approximate area for your Walking Zone on a map of the local area. We recommend that the boundary of a Walking Zone should be roughly 10 minute's walk from school.

Things to consider:

- **Parking availability around the boundary of your Walking Zone** – If there is a suitable site, you could set up a **Park and Stride Scheme** and identify a designated parking site outside your Walking Zone.
- **Public transport links** – if your zone is on a bus route or near a train station, consider aligning the outside of your Walking Zone with the station or stop, so pupils can easily 'hop off' and walk the rest of the way to school.
- **Walkability of the area** - check if there are any busy roads or other possible barriers to walking within your proposed Walking Zone (these can be further explored in step 2).



Step 2: Take a walkabout

Using the information from step 1, organise a walk around the area with pupils to finalise the Walking Zone.

We recommend the walkabout is led by pupils, and could also involve other members of the school community. This is a good point at which to involve the local authority to see what advice and support they can provide.

Refer to the template lesson plan at the end of the pack to get you started.

Step 3: Communicate to the school and local community

Once you've finalised the Walking Zone, communicate this to the school and wider community. Check out our top tips for promoting your Walking Zone on page 5 and use the template letter for parents/carers at the end of the pack. Don't forget to include a map of your Walking Zone.

Step 4: Track success

After your Walking Zone has been set up a while, it is a good idea to conduct monitoring and questionnaires to find out how much it is being used and to obtain feedback on it. Don't forget to share achievements and continue to promote it to your school community.



Why 10 minutes?

¹ Department of Health (2011). Start Active, Stay Active: A report on physical activity for health from the four home countries' Chief Medical Officers

Health – the Chief Medical Officer currently recommends 10 minutes as the minimum duration of physical activity which will have a positive contribution to health¹

Environment – it reduces congestion at the school gate

Fun – children learn new routes and see new places

Social – children and families have time to chat

Safety – areas close to school are safer as fewer people park on pavements and zigzags

What happens if we don't have a large enough safe zone around our school?

Sometimes there are too many busy roads close to a school to promote a Walking Zone. If this is the case, the school can look at suggesting a Park and Stride Scheme on an identified safe route, as well as promoting walking to school, wherever possible.

More information on Walking Zones, including successful examples, can be found at www.livingstreets.org.uk/parkandstride



Promoting your Walking Zone

Once you've got your Walking Zone set up, don't forget to let everyone know about it. Here are our top tips for making your zone a success:

Get the whole school on board

Speak to your Headteacher and senior management first, highlighting how a Walking Zone will ease congestion and improve safety around the school gates. You can also show how your Walking Zone can be added to the school's travel plan or linked to other initiatives like Eco Schools and Healthy Schools. Once you have their support, ask them to help you share the plans with the rest of the staff and governors.

Tell parents/carers about the scheme

Include an article in the school newsletter or send a letter home explaining how your Walking Zone works (you'll find an example letter included in this pack). Include a map of the zone to help engage families.

Involve the pupils in creating resources to promote the zone

For example:

- Write persuasive letters to parents/carers as part of literacy lessons.
- Design posters that promote your Walking Zone and run a competition with prizes for the best design.

Get support from the local council

Getting your local council and councillors on board will help the scheme to run more smoothly. They may also be able to lend valuable support such as parking enforcement around the school gates, councillor visits and publicity.

Become a WoW School

WoW is Living Streets' Walk Once a Week Scheme. The scheme encourages pupils and parents/carers to walk to school at least once every week, and rewards children who do so with collectable badges. Since Walking Zones are all about walking, this incentive scheme encourages everyone to participate. For more information about WoW visit www.livingstreets.org.uk/wow

If your school already runs WoW, setting up a Walking Zone can help to encourage even more families to take part, particularly those who live further away from school. Every pupil who walks to school within the Walking Zone can earn a WoW badge.

You may be able to think of other ways to promote your Walking Zone. If so please do contact us at walktoschool@livingstreets.org.uk as we're always looking for examples of good practice that we can use as case studies.

Template letter

You can use this letter to write to parents/carers to inform them about your Walking Zone.

[Download editable version of this letter](#)



Dear Parents/Carers,

As you may be aware, the school is working very hard to try to reduce congestion outside school. We hope that by doing this, the journey to school will be safer and easier, enabling more parents to walk their children to school.

On the reverse of this page is a map of a Walking Zone which we have recently introduced. We are asking parents/carers who are unable to walk the whole way to school, to park outside the zone and walk the rest of the way with their children.

We hope that you will be able to observe the Walking Zone, which has been developed by pupils, and enjoy walking the last ten minutes to school. This will make the area around school safer and less congested and increase walking rates.

Thank you for your continuing support,

[Name of Headteacher]

Walking Zone lesson plan

This activity is most suitable for older primary children and links well with the geography curriculum.



Resources:

- Maps of the local area
- List of pupil postcodes – could be put into an online mapping tool in advance
- Risk assessment
- Additional adults so that the children can go out in smaller groups
- Camera – to photograph locations.

In the classroom...

Explain that the children are going to be creating a Walking Zone around school.

Ask what pupils think a Walking Zone is. Explain that a Walking Zone is a defined area around school, which aims to encourage children and families to walk for at least part of their journey to and from school. Families who live in, or near, the Walking Zone are encouraged to walk to and from school every day. Those with longer journeys, who choose to drive, are asked to park safely outside the zone and to walk the rest of their journey.

Discuss why a Walking Zone would be beneficial to the school and how you could go about setting one up.

Look at a map of the area and mark where children live. This can be done on paper, or using pupil postcodes in an online mapping tool (for example, batchgeo.com).

Ask the children to identify any places on the map that would be helpful or challenging when setting up a Walking Zone (e.g. car parks where a Park and Stride scheme could be set up; or roads that are difficult to cross).

Explain that the children will go out in small groups and walk different routes from the school to decide on our Walking Zone.

Out and about...

In small groups, with an adult, children walk approximately 10 minutes from the school and plot their route on a map. If they find a potential Park and Stride location, they should label this on their map. They should also identify any potential risks that children and adults will need to be aware of and note these on their map too. It is really helpful to take out a camera with the group so pupils can take photographs of key locations.

Back in class...

On their return, children feed back on their route and any potential risks. They discuss whether they feel the routes are safe. The routes are plotted on a large map and streets identified that could form a Walking Zone. The Walking Zone map can be completed by highlighting the streets that are included in the zone and/or drawing a perimeter around the edge of the zone.

The school can now send a letter out to parents/carers, including a map of the Walking Zone. This may be written by children or use the template letter from this pack can be used as a starting point. The children could also design signs to mark the Walking Zone.

Template letter available at:

www.livingstreets.org.uk/walkingzones

The content of this pack is correct at the time of writing (April 2014).

For the most up to date information please visit www.livingstreets.org.uk/walkingzones

or contact us at walktoschool@livingstreets.org.uk

Living Streets is the national charity that stands up for pedestrians. With our supporters we work to create safe, attractive and enjoyable streets, where people want to walk.

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