

Running a Walk to School event



Events are fun ways to raise awareness with a lot of people, about specific issues.

We have put together a few tips to help you run a Walk to School event. Some of these may seem obvious, but it is hard to cover all bases when you are running event, especially if there's only a few people organising it or if it's a particularly large event.

Good luck with your event, and thank you for taking part in the campaign!

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1. Planning

Firstly, consider what do you want to achieve by running the event? For example:

- Have all pupils in the school attend?
- Have 50% of parents take home a leaflet on walking to school?
- Simply celebrate Walk to School Week?
- Increase walking on a particular day, or for the long term?

You might want to generally promote walking to school, or the WoW scheme, or you might want to use the event to positively address local issues such as congestion. You can use Walk to School Week for example, to get media attention for your local issue or use it as a way to publicise a positive change being introduced by your school or organisation.

Throughout your planning, bear your main objective in mind as this will dictate other decisions.

Brainstorm

Now the creative bit...you need to come up with the content for the event. Are you going to have activities, freebies, information, a theme or competition?

The more creative you are the better. You could do a:

- Hot chocolate party and reward all those who walked in that day.

- Photography competition, asking children and parents to take snaps en route and use the winning photo for the next school prospectus.
- Walk to school in fancy dress!
- Arrange meeting points on the route to school, so groups of children and parents can meet and join forces! Encourage usual drivers to park and stride on that day.

Need inspiration? Grab a friend or another member of staff for some creative input.

Otherwise, we've come up with various themes and ideas in the past, so visit the website: www.walktoschool.org.uk, for more ideas.

Run your ideas past someone else (preferably children!) for their immediate feedback.

In deciding the event, consider:

Budget

How much budget have you got; will it cover what you want to do? Remember to leave a contingency! If you don't have much budget, think about local sponsors; could any local businesses sponsor or contribute (financially or with products) to the event?

Location

Have you got permission from whoever manages the venue/location for your event (if you want to hold an event in a public place outdoors, you may need to get permission from your local authority)? Is that location accessible? Choose somewhere which will maximise turnout.

Is it in a controlled area? Think about whether you want to draw members of the public in, or whether you only want parents involved.

Date/Time

When picking a date for the event, make sure you have left enough time to organise and market the event. Consider external factors too, like national holidays, weather (if you can!) and other local events. It's useful to check if other events are being run (e.g. by the school or council) on that day or near it, as these will influence attendance and volunteers to help.

Human resources

Have you got enough people to deliver your idea? If not, you may need to scale it down. Work out how many people you'll need to deliver your event smoothly, before you approach the school or parents for help. Alternatively, think about who else could help; the local council, school travel team, local volunteer groups?

Tip: Being ambitious is great, but be aware of your limitations!

2. Communication/marketing

Events work best when everyone knows what's going on and what to do. The more people know about it, the more likely it is to be a success. Let people know as far in advance as possible so that they can get organised. It's also important to make sure that people understand what will happen during the event and how they can take part, so keep it simple.

Ways to publicise your event:

- Posters in the local area/around the school/key venues such as libraries, leisure centers etc.

- E-newsletters/newsletters
- Flyers (check whether this is allowed wherever you are flying!)
- Local newspaper
- Stands (in prominent places)
- Agendas in PTA/community meetings
- Intranet
- Noticeboards

To make sure everyone's involved and knows about it, you could:

- Provide key information; when and where the event is happening, and for how long it will last!
- Remind them it's happening in the run up; think about how many times you have to be reminded about things before you remember!
- Highlight it in school PTA meetings (use this to sign up volunteers!)
- We have adaptable newsletter templates at www.walktoschool.org.uk for schools to send to parents, announcing events or participation in the campaign
- We will try to highlight your event on the Walk to School website; email us details: walktoschool@livingstreets.org.uk
- Use existing communication channels. Brief teachers in a staff meetings and make sure they know how to run WoW and decide where materials will be kept and how teachers can collect them.
- Contact your local newspaper to let them know about your event. Write a letter telling them about the campaign, why you are supporting it and why it is so important that others do the same.
- We have press release templates on our website that you can use.
- Have a flyer or something to hand, explain more about the event if you get any inquiries, or highlighting ways people can get involved with the campaign after the event (depending on your main objective)
- Use big outdoor banners to let everyone know there's an event going on
- You could invite a local celebrity to show support – this may give your local media reason to attend.
- Let us know what you're doing so we will endeavor to send you materials or provide logos

People you may wish to influence

- School governors
- Parents
- Teachers

- Your local MP
- The media

3. Planning in the run up to event

Checklist:

- Make sure you have volunteers and/or delivery or courier agency contact numbers to hand on the day of the event
- Make sure you have designated everyone helping a clear task and use a timeline or schedule, especially if tasks are rotated and volunteers need breaks (recommended for work over 4 hours)
- Communicate expectations to those helping you deliver the event; do those individuals know to turn up early, what they need to bring, what they will be doing etc?
- Have you done a risk assessment of the site? This is to 'cover' yourself as well as others. Consider what risks associated with your event, what you can do to reduce risks and how you would deal with any problems that arise.
- Do you need to measure specific data such as number of people attended, minutes walked etc? If so, make sure you have a volunteer designated to counting people using a clickers or clipboard, pen etc. An easy way is to count the number of flyers/materials you have printed off, hand them out and then count the remaining ones; this will give an indication of how many people attended.
- Have you got someone taking photos? Do you need to book a professional photographer, or if local media are attending, will they send you their photos? Do you (or the school) have photo permissions from parents? Be clear about where the photos might feature.
- Do you want to invite your members from your local council, governors, local celebrities, media, MPs?
- Plan for if events/activities over run; schools run to strict timetables so bear this in mind, or ask how much flexibility you have in preparation for changes to schedule
- If it is a really big event or space, where the event is happening, you could have walky-talkies or use mobiles to save time finding people on the ground; this can take up a lot of time during the actual event! So ensure your team keep their mobiles switched on and visible to them
- Do you have a contingency plan in case there is a problem with the venue? Try to have an idea of a 'Plan B' in case there are any unexpected problems on the day

4. Deliver the event

Prepare yourself for organised chaos! No matter how prepared you are, running an event is always stressful and busy, so remember to stay calm and have concise answers ready for questions from people, whether its staff, parents or members of the public.

- Make sure you arrive early to set up

- Once people arrive, clarify what their role is and what they need to do (and by when!)
- Stay calm! Be prepared to answer questions and change the plan according to the day. Remember to stay friendly to everyone!
- If your event runs for over 4 hours, ensure that everyone gets a short break or time off to have lunch. Plan this in using a timeline or schedule
- Pack up at end; it is important to leave the space as you found it!

5. Follow up after the event

Key to an event is the follow up and impression of the event afterwards.

- Make sure you tell everyone that attended how it went and flag up your successes! If you got any local coverage, highlight that too. You could feature this on a notice board at the school, a newsletter, or a follow up flyer
- Reiterating key messages and recounting the fun things achieved through the event will make sure it stays a positive memory for participants. Make sure you've thanked everyone for attending.
- Be sure to thank all your volunteers for their efforts
- If you will be holding other events in the future, it may be worth holding a de-brief with key parties/people. This will help you prepare better for next time by asking what went well, what didn't, what would have been helpful to have in advance, how could the event be improved etc.

6. Let us know how you get on

Sharing your experiences with others helps us to raise awareness about the benefits of walking to school. If you have been campaigning for change, we are really keen to hear from you; it helps us to connect with the public and communicate the progress being made.

If you want, send us your photos and a short description of the event, we will try to highlight it on the website, or in the e-newsletter, or use your photos in our future publications.

7. Tips to bear in mind:

- Remember, change takes time – you will make lots of incremental steps that will add up, so don't be disappointed if you don't get everything you want immediately!
- Not everyone will walk to school; remember that in primary schools, some parents do need to drive to school (eg. maybe a pregnant mum, or parents with children at numerous schools) so don't be judgemental of travel choices! Instead focus on the positive messages around walking to school.
- Organising events can be fun, and they don't have to take up a huge amount of your time.
- The children are the key players in changing opinion so always include them in events, brainstorming or decision making!
- Link up with your local authority; perhaps the School Travel Advisor or Road Safety Officer, or the person in the school who is responsible for the Healthy Schools Initiative, to get more done.

Extra information:

8. Working with Member of Parliament

The House of Commons is made up of 600+ Members of Parliament (MPs), each representing one constituency. Constituencies contain approximately 67,000 voters.

MPs have responsibilities to three main groups: their constituents, Parliament and their political party. Your MP gained the right to represent your constituency by receiving more votes than any of the other candidates at the last general election or by-election. Even if you did not vote, or voted for another candidate and disagree with the views of your MP's party, your MP is still there to help you with all matters for which Parliament or central government is responsible.

How to find your MP

- Useful websites are:
<http://findyourmp.parliament.uk/commons/>
<http://www.theyworkforyou.com>
<http://www.writetothem.com/>

How to contact your MP

It is important that you contact your own MP, as MPs deal only with the issues of their own constituents, not those of another MP's constituents.

- Telephone any MP's Westminster office through the Parliament switchboard on 020 7219 3000 Or write to them at: House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA
- Not all MPs have published email addresses, but you can send messages to most MPs through a form using the list at: www.parliament.uk/directories/hciolists/alms.cfm

9. The golden rules of campaigning

- Clarify the aims of your campaign and what you are trying to achieve
- Target the audience you want to reach
- Provide them with concise information to support your campaign, which has the key information that they need to know
- Work in partnership with others who share your campaign aims
- Remember, it is not just the beginning of a campaign that is important, you need to invest in it so it maintains momentum; most change will only happen over the long term

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