

Five Minute Walk Zones – A toolkit for schools



Introduction

Five Minute Walk Zones aim to encourage children and families to walk for at least part of their journey to and from school. They increase opportunities for healthy exercise, reduce traffic and congestion around the school gate and improve the local environment for the whole community.

A zone around each school is measured and mapped by pupils, and publicised to parents and families by way of a map leaflet, banners outside the school, and special events. In most cases the zone is also marked out by easily identifiable stickers on lamp columns.

Families who live in, or near the zone are encouraged to walk or cycle to and from school every day, while those with longer journeys who choose to drive are asked to park safely outside the zone and to walk the last five minutes of their journey.

Walking is a great way to improve the general health of the whole family. Many parents say they drive to school because they need their car to travel on to work. This scheme shows families that it can often be quicker and easier, and indeed less stressful to leave the car at home while they do the school run, and they can get some healthy exercise at the same time.

Getting started

- A walk zone project eventually needs to involve the whole school community, but initially it will need at least one adult champion, and a group of pupils to set it up. This could be a School Travel Ambassador team, School Council, or even a class as part of a wider curriculum topic.
- Time will need to be committed for:
 - an initial meeting to introduce the scheme to pupils (approx. one hour),
 - the mapping session(s) (approx. two hours, depending on geography and group size)



walk 4 life



- planning for assembly and launch event
 - marking zone with stickers (approx. one hour, depending on geography)
- You will need extra adult support for the mapping session and zone marking, depending on your school policy regarding adult: child ratios.
 - Please contact the Road Safety Officer before starting your project to order maps and resources. The following resources can be provided:
 - Basic working maps of local area for mapping session
 - Vinyl banners for display on school gates/fences
 - Pull-up banner to promote scheme
 - Promotional and incentive items for giveaways/prizes, which may include reflectors, lanyards, stickers, bags, water bottles etc, as available.

Mapping

- You can request working maps from the Road Safety Officer at least a week before your mapping session. Alternatively you can create your own base map from an excerpt of Google map or Ordnance Survey.
- Brief the pupils beforehand to ensure they bring coats etc on the day and ensure enough adults are available.
- You will need (at least one per group):
 - Working copy of map
 - Clipboards
 - Pens/pencils
 - Stopwatches
 - Digital camera
 - Mobile phones (adults) - for emergency use
- Divide up the area around the school into sections, depending on the number of groups available. There is likely to be some overlap as paths link up. If you

have more than one pedestrian access to your site think about which routes people will logically take to/from each gate.

- You should walk as many routes out from the school as possible to enable the zone to be accurately drawn. It may not be necessary to go up every cul-de-sac if they are clearly well within 5 minutes' walk.
- All timings are from the nearest appropriate school gate. If you make a note of the time to each path junction on the map, it should not be necessary to come back to the gate each time you change direction. This is an ideal opportunity to reinforce teaching of time and calculation using minutes and seconds. ("If it has taken 2 minutes and 43 seconds for us to get to this corner, how much of our 5 minutes do we have left?")
- Walking should be at a normal pace, similar to that of a family walking to or from school. It is NOT a race to see how far you can possibly get in 5 minutes! It is fine to chat, stop to tie shoe laces etc. If you need to stop for an extended period, for example to talk about the route, you should pause the stopwatch. However, if you need to wait to cross a busy road, keep the watch running, as families will need to do this too.
- Use the working map to record timings, any problems encountered when walking, e.g. overhanging vegetation, poor visibility, broken glass etc. These issues can be reported to the local authority later.
 - You can also identify alternative parking facilities such as shopping centre car parks, pubs etc (with permission of the owners) or quiet side roads where parents could park without inconveniencing residents.
 - Mark on any crossing facilities such as zebra or pelican/toucan (light-controlled) crossings, pedestrian refuges/islands, subways or footbridges, or school crossing patrols ('lollipop people').
 - If any of the routes involve steps, steep gradients or other barriers to people travelling with pushchairs or wheelchairs, please also mark these.

- Once a group has completed their section they should return to school. If time allows, all groups should come together to discuss where they went and to plot a rough outline of the complete zone. This gives the pupils ownership of the zone and helps them all to understand and promote it.
- Do not expect the completed zone to be a perfect circle! It may not be possible to walk from areas that are close to school 'as the crow flies', in 5 minutes if there are no footpath links. Equally, walking straight along one pavement or footpath may take you much further in the time than having to link onto other paths or cross roads.

Setting up your scheme

- You will need to design and print your own information leaflets – we can advise on content.
- Once the zone has been confirmed with the Road Safety Officer, you may be able to mark lamp columns around the edge of the zone with special 5MWZ stickers. This will depend on the type of columns used in your local area, as some older types are not suitable for stickers. We have specific permission to place these stickers on lamp columns, but the following guidelines must be followed.
 - Stickers should be placed squarely and smoothly on the vertical surface of a column, facing pedestrians who would be walking towards school and at a height where they can clearly be read by young children. If the lamp column is in an awkward position, for example against a wall to the side of the path or set into a grass verge at the edge of the road, you should place the sticker on the side facing the footpath.
 - Choose columns as close as possible to the edge of the zone. In some cases you may have to go further out or closer in if there are no suitable columns nearby. If there is no lamp column available in a particular street, please leave it out and ask the Road Safety Officer for

advice. You may NOT place stickers on any other street furniture, including road signs or posts, street name plates, pillar boxes etc.

- In some streets there will only be lamp columns on one side of the road, in others on both sides. In this case you may choose to place stickers on both sides of the road.
- Record the individual lamp column numbers and locations on a copy of your working map. A copy should be sent to the Road Safety Officer for Highways records, but the information could also be used for an orienteering-type activity at school in the future.

Launching your scheme

Most schools choose to hold a special launch event to publicise their new walk zone. Check the school diary for a good day, preferably not a Monday as people always 'forget', and not just before a holiday as your scheme will lose momentum over the break. Better to have everything ready and then launch in a new term. Spring and early autumn are the best times to encourage walking, but we have held successful launches in early March and November!

Here are some ideas:

- Breakfast – serve e.g. muffins, fruit, yogurts, juice etc. If you have catering facilities, try bacon rolls, toast, hot drinks etc. (From experience cereals are messy and time-consuming!) Remember to include parents and staff too! It may be worth asking for an idea of numbers before the day to help with catering.
- Fancy dress walk – pick a theme to match topic work or the season, a colour, fancy hats, 'silly socks' etc
- Invite a special guest to walk to school with the children – a local celebrity, media contact, sports person etc. Teachers and other school staff meeting the children at strategic points always goes down with the children!
- Hold a competition – which class can get the most walkers? (Remember to encourage those from further afield to park and walk.)
- Set a challenge – who can spot the most items on a list, write a poem about your 5 minute walk, take photos, walk with a friend, bring a grandparent etc.

- Before your launch event talk to the whole school in assembly to let them know what the project is about, and why you are doing it. You might want to show them the completed zone map on a large screen
- If you can send the map leaflets home on assembly day too, the information will still be fresh in the children's minds and they are more likely to pass it on to their parents.

Keeping it all going

Like any school initiative, you will need to remind people about the walk zone regularly to keep it working. Here are some ideas that have been used at other schools:

- Display a banner on your gate or fence to remind people not to park outside. (Please take it down over holidays if necessary to prevent loss!) It may be worth taking it down for a while and/or re-locating from time-to-time to renew interest.
- Put a copy of the map on your school website – ask for a pdf copy.
- From time to time, stand at different points at the edge of the zone in the mornings and give out stickers to children who walk past. These could entitle the children to receive a small prize (reflector, pencil, team points) in assembly. (Explain to the children that these are 'spot prizes' given at random and that you can't possibly catch everyone who walks! Visit different points and choose different days each time, if you can)
- Give raffle tickets to parents as they walk past, and then have a draw at the end of term for a small prize.
- Hold regular special events such as breakfasts and competitions. People who make a special effort for one day may then be convinced to continue walking in the future.
- Make sure that new starters are given information about the zone. Give out map leaflets, point them to your website or include a display at parents' meetings.

Evaluation

If you want to see what impact your 5 minute walk zone scheme has had, you need to collect some information before you even start. Here are some types of data you could use:

- Carry out a 'hands-up survey' in classes to find out how children usually travel to school. This will only be a fairly crude snapshot. Ask younger children 'how did you come to school today?' and use picture cards if necessary.
- Carry out a more detailed survey about travel habits, preferably online. Ask about our 'surveymonkey' template. This is more likely to pick up those children who walk occasionally.
- Carry out a parking survey. Count the cars parked in specific locations outside school over timed periods, e.g. every 5 minutes
- Take photographs of parking outside the school.

Remember to repeat your surveys once your scheme is underway to monitor progress.

For further support and advice, please contact the Road Safety Officer by email stars@swindon.gov.uk