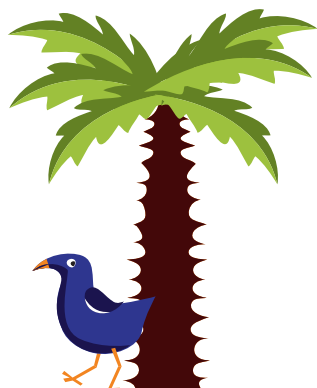




Feet First Every Week

A whānau and caregivers
guide to Feet First Walk to
School Every Week



Feet First
COMMUNITY

Walk to School Every Week

la Wiki Hikoī Ki Te Kura

What is Feet First Walk to School Every Week?

Feet First Walk to School Every Week is a programme that encourages students, whānau and caregivers to make the journey to school on foot at least once a week, every week.

This booklet discusses the benefits for you and your children of walking to school and looks at practical ways you can make it happen.

Students are encouraged to safely walk with caregivers and friends or join school walking initiatives where possible.

All schools have access to Feet First resources which support walking to school in the context of road safety, exploring, creativity and helping the planet.

For more information on Feet First Walk to School Every Week go to www.feetfirst.govt.nz.



Parent/caregivers who walk to school with their children say they find it a good way to meet people, make friends and spend some quality time with their children.

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**It's relaxing
and fun!**

A parent's perspective

Jackie's story

Our one-way trip is 1.4 km long and our children understand that we don't need to take the car every time we leave the house. They're almost always happy to walk or scoot.

As a family we value being fit and as parents, where possible, we model healthy options. The children know that we walk mainly because it is good for us. Taking care of the environment, saving money and lessening the chaos at the school gate are added advantages. Walking or scooting is relaxing and fun.

On the way to school we test spelling, practice classroom speeches, learn how to cross safely and try to catch up to the friends we can see in the distance. Our boys arrive at school with flushed cheeks and lungs full of fresh air – ready to get on with the important business of learning.

On our way home we talk about what the boys wrote at story time or heard for news, and we are joined by other children who enjoy the company on their journey home. We notice the changing gardens as the seasons come and go, and the large excavators on the construction site that we pass have been a constant source of enjoyment for our boys this year. One afternoon we watched a house being lifted on to a truck!

Why walk to school?

Walking to school has benefits for children, their caregivers and the environment.

By walking to school, students get fresh air, enjoy the activity of walking and have the opportunity to:

- learn how to safely negotiate the roads
- develop independence
- learn good habits for the future
- help reduce local air pollution
- help reduce their carbon footprint
- have fun with their friends during the walk
- arrive at school invigorated and ready to learn.

Walking to school together provides opportunities for parents and caregivers to teach young children about road skills and personal safety.

Student case study

Isabella

I think you should walk to school every Monday so you get fitter. Secondly you live longer and you grow faster like animals. Thirdly you keep healthier and fitter. It is good to have more fresh air. It's also cool seeing animals on the way. I like walking on Wednesdays too.



If you walk – your children will want to walk.

Walking is better for the environment!

Walking is the most sustainable and environmentally friendly mode of transport. It also costs nothing!

We all use our cars more than we used to, even for short trips like the journey to school. But all these short trips are contributing to a build-up of greenhouse gases in our atmosphere and adding to locally-produced air pollution.

Student case study

Meg

I think the whole school should bike, scooter and walk because it saves money and you can buy some food to eat. Secondly you get fit and fresh air which is good for you. It warms you up and helps you get ready to learn. Thirdly there would be less cars in the car park and in the traffic. Also if your Mum and Dad walk they get fit. I think it makes you healthy. For these reasons I think the whole school should walk, bike or scooter to school.



One day in five choose not to drive.

How can I teach my children about road safety?

Feet First urges parents and caregivers to consider all elements of safety when walking with children.

Children are vulnerable road users. They are not mini adults and they don't see the world the way adults do. They have physical, social and intellectual limitations around making sound road safety decisions. Parents and caregivers need to teach road safety skills at an early age and supervise children as they develop their skills in a safe and controlled environment.

You are the main role model for road safety behaviour and children will pick up both your good and bad habits.

For more information on how to give your children road sense, talk to the road safety coordinator at your local council or check out the Helping Hands booklets developed by the Police for parents and caregivers at www.police.govt.nz/service/yes/schools.html#SRSE

A separate activity book aimed at children supports the messages in the Helping Hands booklet. It's available from your local police education officer based at your nearest police station.

What if the local route to school is not practical for my children to walk?

If your area isn't well suited for walking, talk to your local council to discuss the walking environment.

Children may have to walk on their own when they grow older. It is important for children to learn road safety skills and develop confidence by the time they are able to walk on their own, even if they don't walk to school. Children also need to understand how to make safe decisions when planned routes change because of road works, etc.

Ideas for walking your child to school safely

Take the first step towards walking to school by trying one of ideas below:

Walk a block (or 'park and stride'): Park your car in a safe parking spot a few blocks from the school, then walk the remaining distance with your children. When you are sure your children can confidently and safely walk the last blocks to school they could go with friends.

Ensure you pick a parking space which has a safe route to school. You could discuss and plan the route with your child and talk about why that one is best.

Walking bus: This is when children walk to school in an organised group. Talk to your school to see if they already have a similar scheme or can start one. Helpful information can be found at www.landtransport.gov.nz/travel/school/walking-school-buses/index.html.

Informal organised walking: Children walk with their parents or caregivers in small or large groups. Families and whānau might like to agree on a meeting point and leaving time.

Parents can talk to road safety coordinators at their local councils about how to educate their children on travelling safely to school. Police resources such as Helping Hands and Safely Home have some excellent information.

Walking Wednesdays (or Mondays, Tuesdays etc): If you can't walk to school every day, try to choose at least one day a week when you can.

Student case study

Ella

I think you should walk to school every Wednesday. Firstly you get fit if you walk. If you go in the car you will not get fit. Secondly if you walk you might see an animal that is your favourite one. Thirdly I love Wednesdays because I love walking. For these reasons I will keep walking to school.





A parent's perspective

Phill's story

Starting work each day by going for a walk in the fresh air with your child, and meeting up with others in the neighbourhood, sounds like a great way to start the day. For Phill, the ideal has become the reality. Phill is a volunteer on one of three walking school bus routes at his son's primary school and regularly walks with his son.

Phill is self-employed and works from home. He finds that while walking with the walking school bus isn't the same as going for a run, he still enjoys the chance to get away from his desk.

Phill encourages all parents to think about getting involved with walking school buses. The advantages he's identified include health benefits for your children, being kinder to the environment, reducing petrol costs and making new friends in your neighbourhood.



Think about how you can be more actively involved in walking your children to school.

Frequently asked questions

How can I walk with my child when I don't have enough time?

Driving children to school doesn't necessarily take less time than walking to school.

Not when you consider:

- waiting for the car to warm up on a cold morning
- getting the car out of the garage or parking space
- stopping for petrol
- queuing in traffic
- finding a safe parking space.

How do I know my child will be safe walking to school?

Feet First strongly emphasises the importance of adequately supervised walking for young children. Walking with your child enables you to teach them important safety skills.

Use the opportunity of walking to school to discuss strategies with your child about what they should do if they find themselves walking alone, being approached by people they do not feel comfortable with and/or feeling scared.

What if my child misses the walking school bus?

Discuss with your child what they should do if they miss the walking school bus. Ensure your child knows the route back to your house if it happens on the journey to school.

How will walking work for me when I drop my child off on the way to work?

For some parents and caregivers, walking children to school simply won't fit in with their lifestyle. Dropping another child off at a different school or having to get to work early are issues that can make walking to school difficult.

Consider the list of walking scheme ideas in this guide and talk to friends and neighbours you know well about how they take their children to school. You might be able to share the job.

Related website links:

www.feetfirst.govt.nz

www.police.govt.nz/service/yes/schools

www.roadsense.co.nz

www.livingstreets.org.nz

www.gearednz.co.nz – children's waterproof high-vis jackets



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