it’s good to walk
Walking to School is great for children. It helps keep them fit and healthy and more alert and ready to learn when they get to school. It is also a sociable way to travel and helps children build up their road safety skills.

Encouraging children to walk to school will also help to reduce the traffic congestion and parking problems that most schools experience in the area around school in the morning and at home time.

However, some children will live a long way from school making it unrealistic to walk the whole journey. The good news for these children is that there is an alternative to being driven all the way to the school gate. Why not think about introducing a ‘Park and Stride’ scheme where parents are encouraged to park at a designated area away from the school and walk the remainder of the journey with their children.

The main aim of Park and Stride is to try and reduce the dangerous car congestion outside the school gate thereby creating a safer and healthier environment for our children.

This will in turn reduce the stress levels of parents who otherwise would have to battle to find a parking space close to school.

It could also improve the school’s relationship with its neighbours who often get fed up with inconsiderate parking and heavy congestion outside their homes.

Park and Stride will encourage children to walk to school who would not normally have the option therefore encouraging active travel and a healthier lifestyle.

Park and Stride can also be added to the school’s Travel Plan as well as linking to other initiatives like Eco Schools and Healthy Schools.

What are the benefits of Park and Stride for our school?
Firstly, identify at least one parking area which would be suitable for parents to park in. The ideal distance would be between 5 and 10 minutes from school but could be longer for older children.

There are many types of parking areas that could be used for Park and Stride. Possible ideas could be a local pub, community hall, social club, church or shop. Local supermarkets with large car parks are usually excellent as they have lots of room and are keen to enhance their green credibility.

Once you have identified possible parking areas you will need to contact the owner or manager to seek permission to use it.

You will also need to check with the owner that their insurance has a public liability clause in the event of injury or an accident. This shouldn’t be an issue if the car park is already being used by members of the public but it is strongly recommended that you check.

At this point we would ask that you contact Solihull Council’s Safe and Active Travel team on 0121 704 6569 or email roadsafety@solihull.gov.uk who will carry out a risk assessment of the car park and the route to school.

Once a suitable parking area has been identified it is then time to promote the scheme amongst the school community.

Steps to setting up a Park and Stride

Promote the scheme through newsletters, notice boards, the school website, parent's evenings and other events such as school fairs and festivals.

As part of literacy lessons (persuasive writing) children could write letters to parents.

Run a competition to design a poster to advertise the scheme.

Have a Park and Stride themed assembly to get the children interested or each class could produce their own Park and Stride assembly to perform in front of parents.

Consider having a well advertised launch. Seek publicity from local media or tie it in with another initiative such as Walk to School Week.

Consider rewarding pupils (and parents) with badges or stickers or other small incentives. A local business may be keen to help with this in terms of sponsorship.

Ideas to promote Park and Stride to parents and children
10 good reasons to start a Park and Stride scheme

1. supports the school’s travel plans and Healthy Schools Initiative.
2. reduces traffic congestion and pollution levels around schools.
3. eases the problem of school gate parking.
4. could improve the school’s relationship with its neighbours.
5. enables children to walk to school who otherwise live too far away to do so.
6. children who walk to school arrive more alert and ready to learn.
7. provides a healthy dose of exercise for children and adults.
8. walking improves children’s road safety skills.
9. walking is kind to the environment.
10. increased opportunity for parents and children to socialise with other families.

Safe and Active Travel team
Telephone: 0121 704 6569
email: roadsafety@solihull.gov.uk