

Thousands of pupils stroll to school as part of a national campaign

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Leader of Staffordshire County Council Philip Atkins taking part in Walk to School Week with pupils and volunteers at Richard Clarke First School

More than 34,000 pupils across Staffordshire strolled to school in the sunshine as part of a high profile campaign.

Youngsters across the county have been putting their best foot forward as part of National Walk to School Week which kicked off on Monday, May 17.

Richard Clarke First School in Abbots Bromley is one of 160 schools that have pledged to do their bit to reduce their carbon footprint by walking from home to the classroom.

It recently launched two walking buses which meet on Bagot Street, outside The Bagot Arms, and High Street, outside The Coach and Horses, before being guided to the classroom by parent helpers. They have proved to be popular among pupils, with around 30 children regularly taking part.

Staffordshire County Council's Road Safety Unit is spearheading the scheme which promotes the health benefits of leading an active life as well as the positive impact it has on the environment.

Reducing the number of cars travelling to school helps to combat climate change by lowering CO₂ emissions but also means there are fewer cars around schools making it much safer for cyclists and pedestrians.

Staffordshire is the leading light when it comes to the initiative in England and Wales with 148 walking buses currently in operation across the county - more than in any other local authority area.

Leader of Staffordshire County Council and local county councillor Philip Atkins hailed the initiative an overwhelming success.

He said: "Pupils, teachers and parents at Richard Clarke First School have really shown their support to this initiative and have launched two walking buses to accommodate all of the children who want to take part.

"It is great to see so many youngsters enjoying a bit of exercise on their way to school and that the parents are keen to leave their cars at home and take part in volunteering. Staffordshire is a leading light in the walking bus phenomenon and with so many environmental, health and safety benefits, it is easy to see why its popularity is growing ever stronger."

Walk to School Week has been growing from strength to strength year on year with more and more parents and children joining the movement for healthy kids and a healthy environment.

In 2009, around 26,000 children from 121 schools took part in Walk to School Week in Staffordshire.