

# Pupils learn to walk the walk

© The Guardian 2006

A nursery class pupil at Coppice Primary School in Redbridge, Essex, picks up a giant piece of jigsaw puzzle almost as big as he is. He holds on to it tightly and proudly leaves the classroom to take his piece of puzzle home for the night, the envy of his classmates.

Two pupils from every class at Coppice Primary took home a piece of a giant jigsaw puzzle on Tuesday May 23 during Walk To School Week. The next morning the children brought the jigsaw parts back to school on foot, accompanied by parents and grandparents.

To mark the week, Coppice thought of Walk On Wednesdays, or Wow, to encourage children and their parents to use modes of transport other than cars to get to and from school. It is part of the school's efforts to achieve healthy school status.

Once all the pieces had arrived, the children completed the jigsaw, which showed the story of why walking to school is good; they were so excited about the event that teachers were persuaded to keep the weekly Wow going.

"Other children wanted to join in, so now every Tuesday we are giving another two kids from each class a piece of jigsaw to take home," says Chris Whellams, reception teacher and healthy schools leader at Coppice. "They walk it to school on the Wednesday morning and then we build the jigsaw again. Some children actually cry to make their parents let them walk to school!"

## Reclaiming public spaces

National Walk to School Week is coordinated by Living Streets, which campaigns to reclaim public spaces from traffic. In 2005, 6,380 schools and 1.8m schoolchildren took part in the event in England and 30% of students came to school using a different form of transport other than car or bus.

Ladygrove Primary School in Didcot, Oxfordshire, already has a fair proportion of walkers and non-car users among its pupils.

According to a survey carried out with the help of ICT supplier RM, 23% of students normally walk to school, 14% use a cycle, scooter or skateboard and 24% come by car.

Even so, the school has incorporated the week into its whole-school approach to environmental awareness.

"We see it as a big part of that strategy," says headteacher David Burrows. "Quite a lot of our pupils walk to school anyway, but we wanted to try and get to the ones who don't.

"Children are very amenable to helping the environment, but their parents can be more difficult to convert. The estate where we are situated is very nice, but parents are anxious about dangers or have to drive as they drop the kids off on their way to work."

The idea of children persuading parents is good, he adds. "That's often where the persuasion has to come from, and we have to support children in doing that."

• October is International Walk to School month. For more information on Walk to School, see: [www.walktoschool.org.uk](http://www.walktoschool.org.uk)