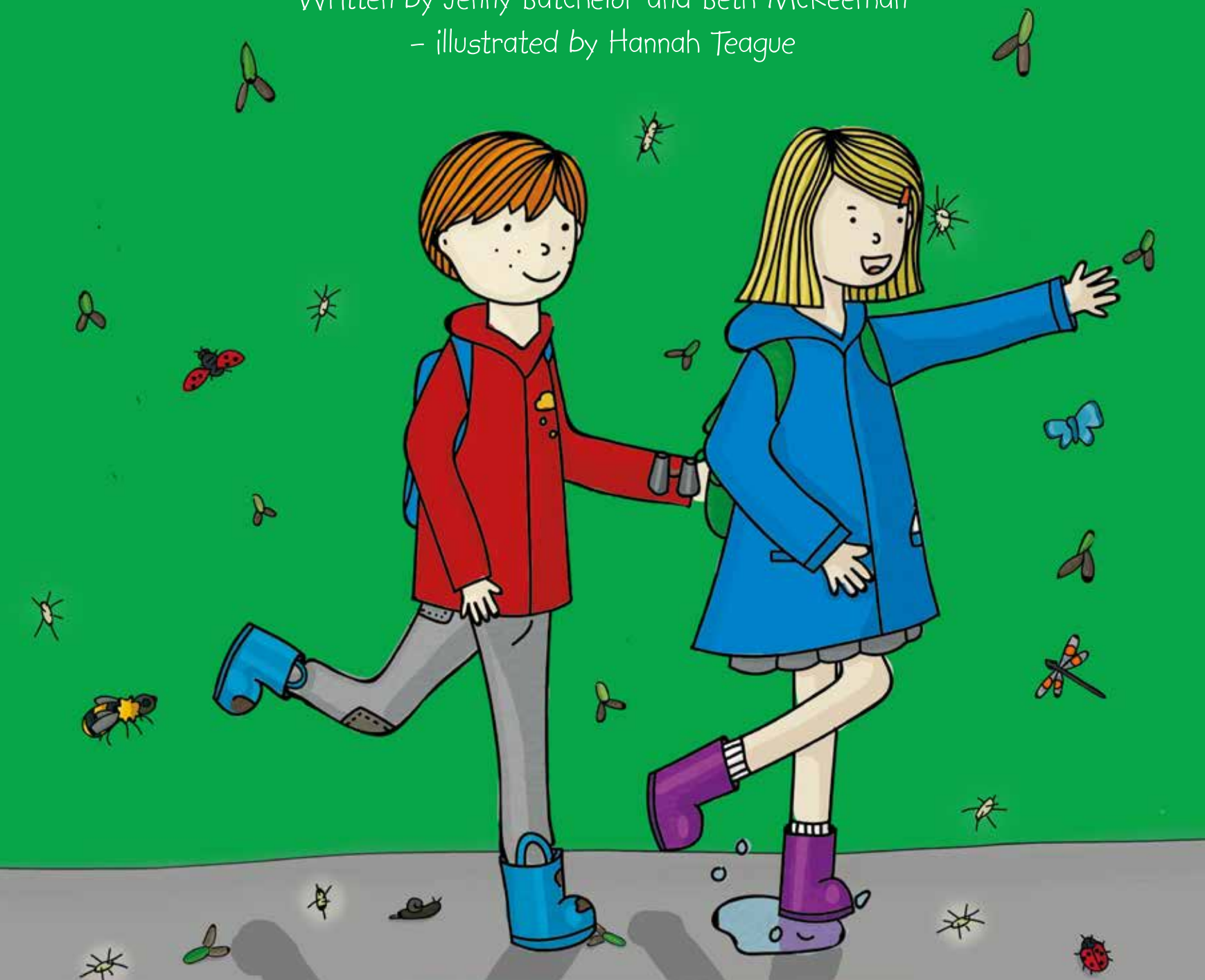
A Wild Walk to School

Written by Jenny Batchelor and Beth McKeeman
– illustrated by Hannah Teague



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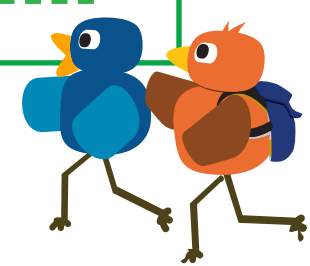

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Information for parents, carers and teachers by Helen Harris and Jean MacGrory.

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Sophie's mum was getting a lift to work.

"Bye Mum!" shouted Sophie, excitedly.

She bounced up and down while her big brother Lukas shut the front door. Today they were leaving the car at home to reduce air pollution and keep the air clean. They were walking to school with her friend Mason. Sophie hoped it would be like a nature safari.

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"Keep away from the road so you don't breathe in the car fumes," said Lukas. "Besides, the big puddles near the hedge are more fun to jump in."

Sophie made sure to jump in all of them. Her wellies splish-splashed.

"I bet I can make a bigger splash than you," boasted Mason. When they jumped together they splitter-splatter-splish-splashed.

A helicopter landed on Sophie's nose. Mason laughed and threw another. It helter-skeltered through the air, knocking a thistledown fairy off-course.

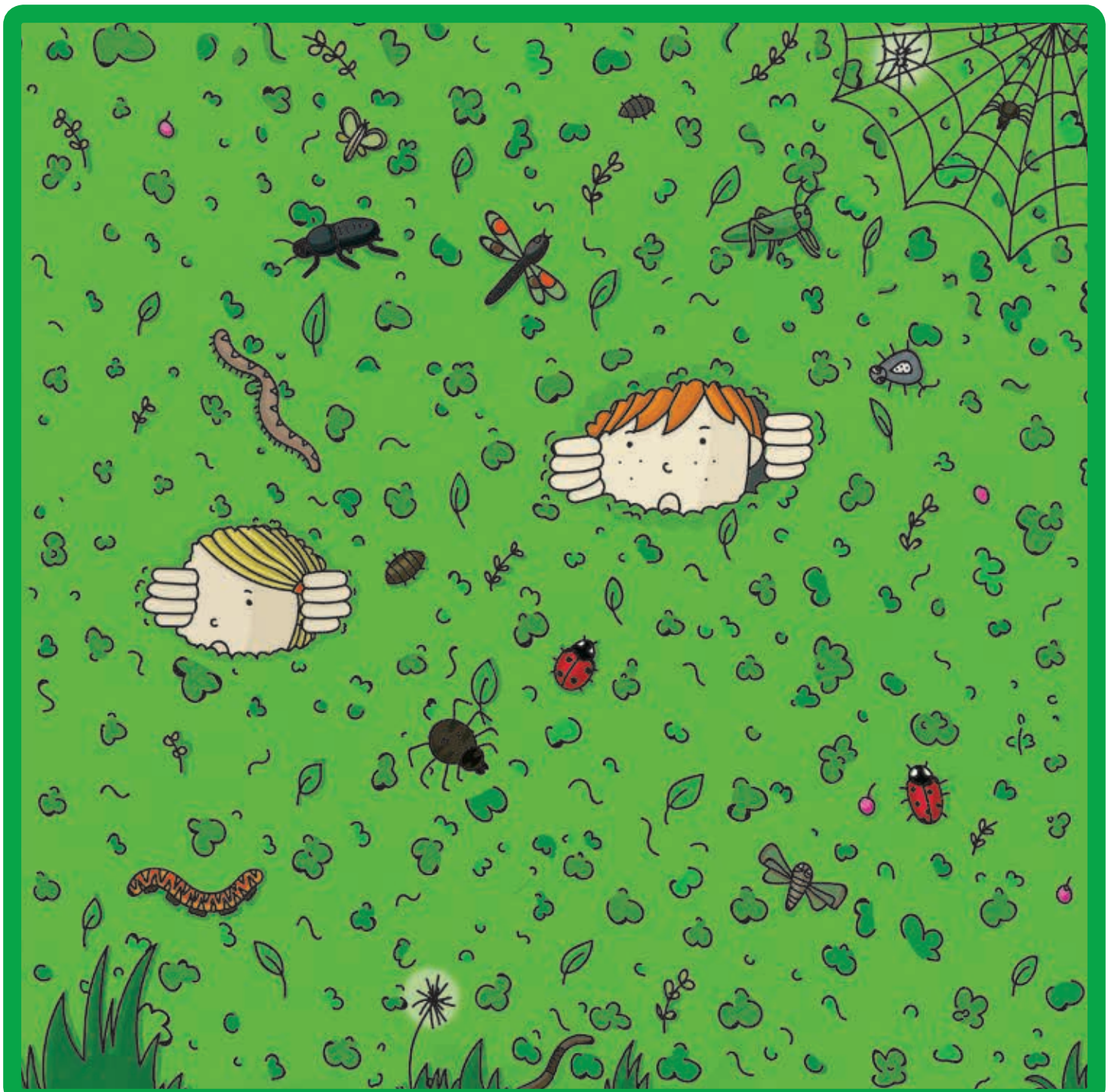
"Look, a fairy!" shouted Sophie.

"Let's get it. It'll give us a wish!" said Mason.
They ran after it.

The fairy got caught in a spider's web.

"Careful, Sophie," said Lukas as Sophie reached for it. "Someone lives there. See? This whole hedge is home to lots of creatures. It stops air pollution getting through, too."

Sophie and Mason peered in closer and closer.



'BOO!'

"Lily, you made me jump!" said Sophie.
"Why isn't your dad driving you to school?"

"Dad wanted to try Park and Stride. It's where you park away from school, then walk, scoot, cycle, or wheel the rest of the way there. It reduces air pollution, and the exercise and fresh air is really good for you," said Lily.

"But what were you doing behind that hedge?" asked Mason.

"Looking for ladybirds," replied Lily.

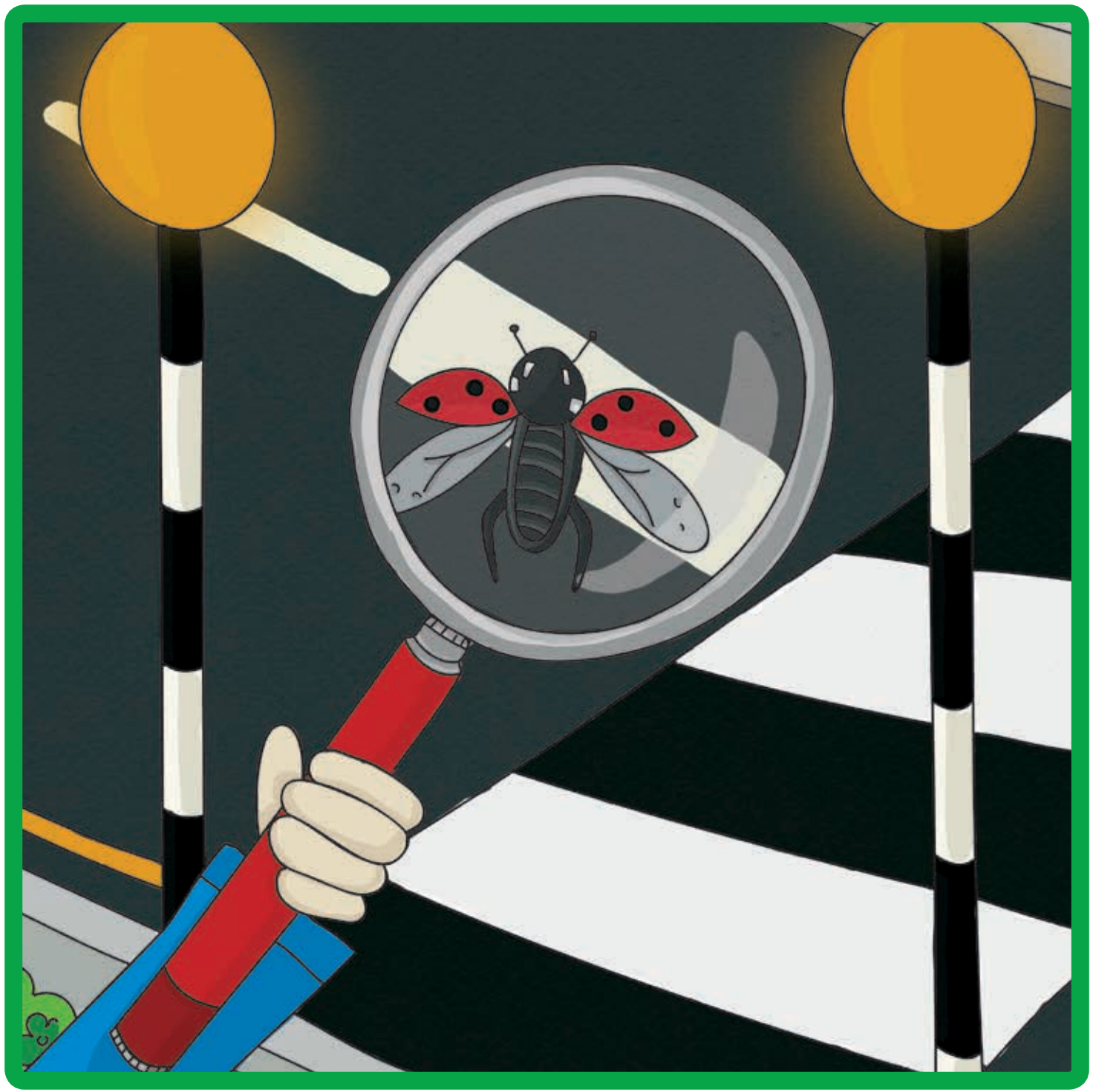
"There's one." Mason pointed excitedly.

"How many spots does it have?" asked Lukas.

"Quick, it's flying away," said Sophie. Sophie and Mason started to follow the ladybird as it flew across the road.

"Stop!" shouted Lukas. "We need to find a safe place to cross. Look, there's a zebra crossing."

"A spotty bug and a stripy road," Sophie giggled.



Sophie and Mason held Lukas's hands to cross the zebra crossing.

"What do we do now?" asked Lukas.

"Look and listen," said Sophie.

As Sophie looked she saw a cat waiting to cross too. He padded across the road with them, swinging his head from right to left, checking for cars.

"Look at that!" Mason pointed.

"Ahh! A bee!" Sophie ran away.

"Don't be afraid," said Lukas. "Bees help more plants grow and more plants mean less air pollution." Sophie got a bit closer. The bee landed on a flower and wiggled happily.

"I think it's cute," said Lily. Sophie agreed.

"A squirrel!" shouted Lily and everyone ran after it – right through the school gates.

"Thank you for walking us here, Lukas," said Sophie. "We wouldn't have seen any of that from the car."

"It was amazing," added Mason. "We saw loads of stuff and breathed cleaner air."

"I'm going to tell everyone about our nature safari. They'll all want to walk to school after they hear about it!" said Lily.

"Can we do it again soon, please?" asked Sophie. "Definitely!" replied Lukas and everyone cheered.

What do you remember in the story?

1. Why were Sophie and Mason walking to school?
2. Why is it healthier to walk away from the edge of the pavement and the road?
3. What does Park and Stride mean?
4. What did Lukas make the children do to make sure that they crossed the road safely?
5. What animals did the children see on their way to school?
6. Why are bees good for the environment?
7. Why did Sophie and Mason enjoy walking to school?

Information for parents, carers and teachers around sustainable transport / living.

Choices – it's not about walking or cycling the whole journey. There are many alternatives that could be considered:

If distance is an issue, an alternative is to find a suitable place to park away from the school that is only a 5-10minute walk. This relieves congestion and improves air quality around the school gate, giving child and parent a chance to talk, reduces the stress of trying to find a place to park and provides some fresh air and exercise. Children are ready to learn when they arrive at school having exercised and perform better in class.

For some parents, time is a key factor if the school run is on the way to work. One option could be for the parent to drop off their child(ren) at a friend's house so that they can walk in with them, allowing the parent to go on to work, again without the stress. This needn't be every day – just once a week can still make a difference to the congestion and safety around the school gates.

Consider organising a coffee morning to look at possible car sharing matches for parents. Often there can be a couple of parents who are both driving and would value the opportunity to car share and save money. It also provides a chance to chat and share ideas.

Encourage children to use walk-to-school schemes, e.g. the walking bus – this is not only environmentally friendly but good exercise. It's great fun too and a

positive way to begin and end your day. Walking to school allows children to become street savvy and learn road safety skills.

Travel plan – it's more than a paper document! By bringing together pupils, staff and parents to work together on a school travel plan, you can identify what the key issues are and possible solutions. This is great evidence for securing funding and provides a benchmark for any achievements the school community makes. Travel plans really can make a difference and they are a good way of making new friends in the school and local community. There are also lots of cross curricular opportunities.

Curriculum – making the links! There are endless opportunities to link sustainable travel into the curriculum including being active, effects of pollution on the environment, local area, road safety and much more. Key subjects include PSHE, Citizenship and Geography.

Air pollution information for parents, carers and teachers.

Road vehicles are a major source of air pollution in towns and cities and release harmful pollutants, for example particulate matter and nitrogen dioxide, from their exhausts. Poor air quality is particularly damaging to babies, children, older people and people with existing lung conditions, such as asthma.

Local authority staff are required to monitor air pollution including nitrogen dioxide, and their measurements are available for the general public on council and central government websites.

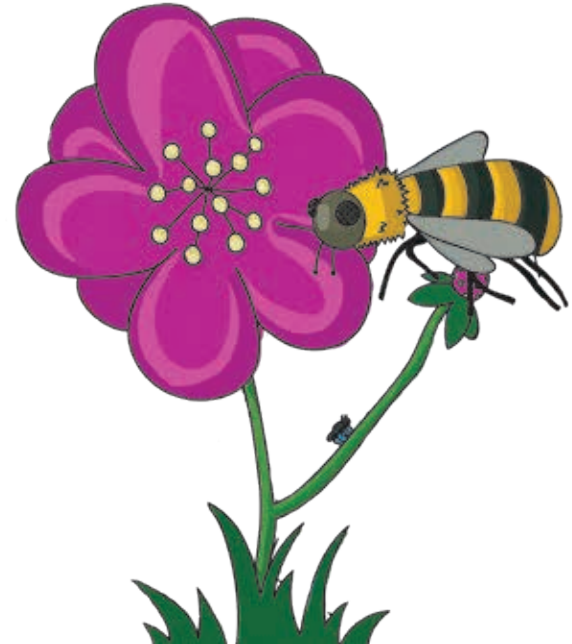
To help to reduce air pollution and to breathe cleaner air, whenever possible leave the car at home and travel actively by, for example, walking, cycling or scooting. Pedestrians and cyclists breathe the cleanest air as levels of pollution inside cars can be significantly higher than the levels outside: car occupants breathe fumes from the car in front, which are then trapped inside the vehicle.

If driving is the only option, engines should be switched off when stationary to keep the air cleaner by reducing fuel use. Idling a car engine unnecessarily when parked on a public road can result in a £20 fixed penalty fine.

Schools could provide parents with information about safer, quieter walking and cycling routes that avoid heavy traffic. Using quieter streets when walking or cycling and walking on the inside of the pavement, away from the kerb, can reduce exposure to air pollution.

Remember, the proximity of young children in buggies and prams to exhaust pipes can increase their exposure to harmful emissions!

Too many cars in rush hour traffic are on the school run. Using public transport or car sharing can reduce the number of polluting cars on the roads, if distances are too great.



Sophie, Mason, Lily and Lukas decide to help to reduce air pollution by walking to school. See what natural wonders they discover on their journey and what they learn about the other benefits of leaving their cars at home.

This book also contains information for parents, carers and teachers, along with questions for children, which raise awareness of sustainable travel and highlight the issue of air pollution associated with road vehicles.

my journey
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SOUTHAMPTON CITY COUNCIL
UNIVERSITY OF Southampton WINCHESTER SCHOOL OF ART
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