Teacher’s Guide

For this assembly you will need:

- A projector and screen
- The powerpoint and videos (both can be found on the DVD)
- Some willing members of the audience to take part in the quiz
- Some prizes – such as campaign stickers and pens

**Background**

What are level crossings and why do we need more awareness of them?

There are approximately 6,500 level crossings in Great Britain. They enable us to safely cross over one of the world’s busiest rail networks.

In the past 5 years there have been 44 deaths at level crossings. Last year there were 4 deaths.

Although the number of deaths and incidents on level crossings is low in Great Britain compared with other countries, many could have been prevented.

We have developed the ‘Rail Life’ campaign to raise awareness of level crossing safety. The initiative will support school children, parents and local communities to use level crossings correctly and safely. ‘Rail Life’ will also cover other railway safety initiatives in the future.

**Aim of the assembly**

We hope that the assembly will help your pupils be more aware of:

- What level crossings are – and how to use them.
- The rules on how to stay safe.
- Why we have level crossings.
- The different types of level crossings.

Feel free to use the ‘Rail Life’ stickers, pens and other materials as prizes for the quiz!

In the PowerPoint presentation you can select the type of level crossing that’s most relevant for your local area.

(Please note: The slide numbers referenced in this guide are in the bottom right hand corner of each PowerPoint slide.)
You’re looking at a life saver
— Ask the children to put their hands up if they’ve seen one of these before. They probably have!
— Explain that it’s a level crossing and that you know that many of them have probably used one before – in the city, town or country.
— Level crossings are found where a road or path crosses a train track. They are there to stop bikes, cars and pedestrians crossing when trains are passing through. They enable us to cross the railway safely.
— They save thousands of lives every day.
— Not all have barriers – there are different types of level crossings. We will explain this later.
— Emphasise that everyone needs to know and follow the safety rules for level crossings.

The Speed Quiz
— So, why is it important to use level crossings properly? One very important reason is that trains go very fast!
— Explain that you want to test the children’s knowledge of trains, railways and level crossings in THE SPEED QUIZ.
— Encourage pupils to put their hands up when they know the right answer. Do offer campaign stickers and pens as prizes at the end if you like!

Question: Which of the following is the fastest?

a. A car travelling on a motorway (Note to teachers: 70 mph)
b. A cheetah: the fastest animal on earth (Note to teachers: 70 mph)
c. Great Britain’s intercity trains (Note to teachers: 125 mph is the average speed of an intercity train in Great Britain)

Answer: Great Britain’s intercity trains. (Note to teachers: While an intercity train travels at 125 mph, the fastest train in Britain is the Eurostar which travels from London to Europe at a top speed of 186 mph.)
Question: How much does an intercity train weigh?

- a. 120 tonnes (that's the same weight as a blue whale – the largest mammal on Earth)
- b. 225 tonnes (that's the same weight as the Statue of Liberty in New York)
- c. 400 tonnes (that's the same weight as about 80 elephants)

Answer: 400 tonnes – 80 elephants

Question: When an intercity train brakes, how far will it travel before it stops?

- a. The length of 5 Premier League football pitches
- b. The length of 15 Premier League football pitches
- c. The length of 20 Premier League football pitches

Answer: 20 Premier League football pitches

(Note to teachers: Because intercity trains travel so quickly and are very heavy, they can take a long time to stop when the driver applies the brakes.)

Question: Which country has the busiest railway?

- a. Great Britain
- b. France
- c. Italy

Answer: Great Britain

Fact – In 2010 we carried 1.33 billion people on our railway – making it the fastest growing railway in Europe. (Note to teachers: That’s the same number of people who live in the world’s most populated country – China.)

Question: Who is allowed to cross a level crossing when the lights are flashing?

- a. The headteacher
- b. Police
- c. Fire brigade

Answer: No one

(Note to teachers: Even though the police, the fire brigade and ambulances are allowed to jump traffic lights on red, no one is allowed to jump the flashing red lights at any level crossing.)
Slide 17-18
— Question: How many level crossings are there in Great Britain?
  a. 700
  b. 4,700
  c. 6,500
— Answer: 6,500

Slide 19-20
The answers to the quiz have shown us that:
— There are a lot of trains travelling across the country at all times – Great Britain has one of the busiest railways in the world.
— Trains are heavy and also travel at very high speed – so it takes them a long time to stop. Also, they cannot swerve as they’re running along the train tracks.
— Level crossings are there to protect us when a train is coming – they’re life savers.

Slide 21-22
Death on the line – a train driver’s story
— So, what’s it like for the driver of a train who sees something or someone on the track in front of them when the train is travelling very fast?
— The truth is, they know they won’t be able to stop the train in time, or to steer it out of the way.
— Ask a pupil or a teacher to read out the following real life testimony from a train driver who couldn’t stop his train in time. He talks here of how he felt waiting for the train to stop after he applied the brakes.

“I had to sit there for four or five seconds, knowing that these poor lads were dead. I was blowing the horn and the train was in emergency braking, but there was just physically nothing I could do.” – Train driver.
— Ask the pupils how this story has made them feel. You could specifically ask them what the impact might have been on the train driver and other people involved, especially the friends and family of the young people that died on the rails.
There are many types of level crossing in Great Britain, and we are going to run through some of the main ones now.

Full barrier crossings have two barriers which cover the whole road and half barrier crossings have one barrier which covers half the road. At a full barrier crossing the alarm stops when the barriers are lowered, however at a half barrier crossing the alarm continues until the barrier is raised. At either crossing don’t go around or jump the barrier when it is closing or down. Stay safe and follow these rules...

**At a full barrier or half barrier crossing:**
- **STOP** when you see the red lights flashing and hear the alarm ringing – stay behind the white line.
- **WAIT** if the red lights carry on flashing after the train’s gone by – another train will be passing soon.
- **WALK** only when the lights go off and the barriers open.

(Note to teachers: Pupils should continue to look both ways when crossing.)

Now, what would be a good way for us to remember this?
(Note to teachers: Encourage students to copy you in making the hand gestures to accompany this advice.)
- **STOP**
  - WHEN YOU SEE THE RED LIGHTS FLASHING
    - hands opening and closing three times at shoulder height
  - STOP – palm facing forward indicating ‘stop’
- **WAIT**
  - WAIT – hands/arms down by side
- **WALK**
  - WHEN THE LIGHTS GO OFF
    - palms at shoulder height into closed fist
  - ONLY THEN IS IT SAFE TO WALK
    - marching movement with arms

**LEVEL CROSSINGS = LIFE SAVERS**
Slide 34-37

**At an open crossing:**
At an open crossing you must be extra careful as they may not have gates or lights:

— **STOP.**
— **LOOK** both ways.
— **LISTEN** carefully before you cross.
  (Note to teachers: They should continue to look both ways when crossing.)

Slide 38-41

**At a footpath crossing:**
These level crossings are often found in the countryside, but you must still take care because they are potentially dangerous.

— **STOP.**
— **LOOK** both ways.
— **LISTEN** carefully before you cross.
  (Note to teachers: If the crossing has red warning lights they must not cross until the lights go green. They should also continue to look both ways when crossing.)

Slide 42-44

**Don’t get distracted**
— Many accidents are caused by people in a hurry, people messing around or people who are distracted by things like headphones or mobile phones. Respect level crossings. Give them your full attention. Stay alert.

Slide 45-46

**National TV advert**
— This advert is running on national television.
— Ask the children to put their hands up if they’ve seen it.
— It has an important message for all of us in this room: you must continue to wait at a level crossing if the lights are still flashing and the barriers are still down.
— Show the video of the national TV advert ‘Life savers – not time wasters’.
Slide 47
Talk about it...
— Make sure your parents or carers know the rules.

Slide 48-50
Ask the children what they’ve learned from the assembly.

Then introduce what you think the main messages are:
— Level crossings are there to save lives.
— Know the Cross Safe rules and follow them.

Remember (WITH HAND GESTURES):
— STOP
— WAIT
— WALK