



Tips for implementing a school active travel scheme using St Martin's Primary School as an example



Background

Children at St Martin's School set about campaigning for their right to a safe and clean environment as a response to the Rights Respecting Schools initiative. It led to significant changes at the school regards active travel. Cars were no longer allowed to park in the playground or on the playing field at pick up time. Parents were asked to use one of nine active travel hubs in the surrounding area. Following extensive consultation, a six-week trial was undertaken and as a result 30% of people who responded to a parent survey said that they started to walk or cycle more often. A decision was made to continue with the initiative.

Key steps required to implement the scheme

1. Involve and empower the children

- Collate children's ideas for encouraging more people to travel actively - as part of the Right's Respecting or Eco Club groups.
- Discuss the merits of increasing activity; more fun time with family and friends, quieter roads around the school, being safer in the playground at pickup time.
- Contact the Active Travel Officer at the Health Improvement Commission who can advise on appropriate measures to support your school's approach to active travel
- Consider potential barriers, such as changing people's behaviour, safety, or not having anywhere to park the bike.
- Remember to survey the children and parents after any changes to get their feedback too, find some 'active travel champions' to help keep momentum going.

2. Risk assess any new pick up arrangements

- Staff at Traffic and Highways Services and Education Services can assist with this and provide advice.

3. Communicate to residents in the area

- To encourage traffic free roads at key drop off and pick up times, inform and appeal to residents in the local area. Distribute a letter written by the children asking them to support the scheme.

4. Communicate to the wider public

- Task the children to design posters to spread the message.
- Choose some of the designs to get printed into more permanent signs.
- Approach a local company to sponsor high-vis vests for the children.

5. Involve families

- Keep parents and carers informed about the scheme and get their support.

- Undertake a survey to assess the school's current starting point in terms of number of children travelling by car/bus/bike/on foot. The Health Improvement Commission can assist you with the design of an online questionnaire/ audit.
- Re-run the survey after an initial period and ask for feedback. Example questions; What do you think about the new travel arrangements? Have they changed your use of the car? What are the positives or drawbacks? Try to address any concerns.

Summary

Everyone benefits from active travel. For each individual, it boosts physical and mental health and the reduction in congestion creates cleaner air, fewer road traffic collisions and potentially reduces the impact of climate change. Most importantly it is a fun way to travel.

Each school will have different challenges, but the aim is to get more children travelling to school actively, more of the time. A generation ago 70% of the UK population walked to school, now it's less than half. The aim is to reverse this decline and to empower and energise children to make walking to school their natural choice.