

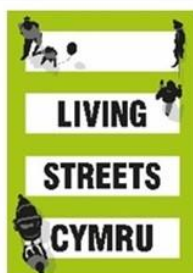
# Cross-Party Group on the Active Travel Act



## Active Travel to School Toolkit



Produced with the support of:



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## Foreword

Walking, cycling, or scooting to school brings huge benefits to children, families and communities. It improves health, protects the environment, strengthens social ties, boosts academic performance and reduces congestion. Many schools and local authorities across Wales are already taking important steps to change the school run, but the figures show we need to do much more. This Toolkit is for people who want to help make change happen. It is not an official set of instructions; every school will need to find their own path. Rather it provides ideas, techniques, examples of good practice, and sources of advice and support.



Central to the success of any attempt to bring about change will be team working. The Toolkit provides the arguments needed to help persuade others in the school community to come onboard if they aren't already. Establishing support and consensus will be essential if change is to happen. And of course, no programmes can be put in place without the approval of the school leadership.

We had hoped to publish this Toolkit in 2019 but the need to comply with the very necessary Covid restrictions caused us to hold back until school life had returned to a more normal pattern. It has never been more important that we adopt healthier lifestyles and increasing physical activity is central to that. But it is crucial that in helping to make school communities more active we are always mindful of the need to minimise Covid risks.

Producing the Toolkit has been a collaborative process and I am very grateful to all the individuals, schools and organisations who have helped develop it. My thanks also to all those members of the CPG on Active Travel who have supported this and given their time and expertise, and to our Secretary Chris Roberts for his incredible work co-ordinating this project. We hope this will be a living document and would love to hear about your practical experiences of trying to get more children and families walking and cycling.

We wish you every success on your journey to a more sustainable school run.

Huw Irranca-Davies MS  
Member of the Senedd for Ogmere  
Chair of the Cross-Party Group on the Active Travel Act

## Introduction

Increasing the numbers of children walking and cycling to school has been a Welsh policy objective for decades, yet the numbers continue to decline. The latest Welsh Government figures show that only 44% of primary school children and 34% of secondary school children travel actively to school. The level of cycling to school is desperately low in Wales; the official description is: “Cycling to school is relatively rare, with fewer than 1% cycling to primary school or secondary school on a typical day”. In the Netherlands 49% of all primary school children cycle to school<sup>1</sup>.

This document explores some of the reasons for this. Many of the challenges require government action, and the Cross-Party Group on the Active Travel Act (CPGATA) will continue to campaign for more effective policies and investment in this critical area. But there are ways of overcoming many of the issues at a local level. This Toolkit sets out to help people who are trying to make a difference for their local school and contains some practical suggestions, examples of good practice and signposts to further advice and support. Its intended audience is teachers, parents, governors, local councillors and other responsible members of a school community, who wish to help a school improve the way its pupils travel to and from its premises. The document is intended to provide evidence for individuals who wish to encourage a school to adopt measures to enable active travel, as well as suggestions for interventions, but it must be understood that actions should only be carried out with the agreement of the school and, where necessary, the local authority.

The Toolkit is not a prescription for action; what works and what does not work will be very dependent on local circumstances. The document sets out a whole range of possible measures that a school may wish to consider. It is important to be aware that almost all the international studies of these types of interventions emphasise the importance of an effective combination of a range of cultural and infrastructure measures. None of the measures will succeed without a strong underpinning of involvement and consent combined with effective local leadership.

Whilst the toolkit has not been written for school pupils, the document is very clear that successful outcomes will depend on involving children in the development of any activity. The voice of the child is key to making effective change.

There is a sister document to this Toolkit, the Ysgol Hamadryad Story which tells how a brand new Welsh medium primary school in Cardiff set about ensuring that all its children arrived by active means. You can read the story and some practical tips that come out of its journey [here](#).

Some of the quotes (those in blue and green boxes) featured in this toolkit are from a Wales-wide survey of 1000 children by the Children’s Commissioner for Wales, which aimed to gather their views about travelling to and from school. Survey findings can be found [here](#). The quotes in blue are children’s views on what they do not like about their journey to school, those in green are what they do like. The spelling is original!

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<sup>1</sup> Aldred, R. (2015) Adults’ attitudes towards child cycling: a study of the impact of infrastructure. European Journal of Transport and Infrastructure Research

This is the first edition of this Toolkit. We are very keen to improve it and make it as useful a tool as possible. If you have any suggestions for changes, additions or examples of how Welsh schools have made changes to the journey to school, please email them to [chris.roberts@senedd.wales](mailto:chris.roberts@senedd.wales)

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## How to use this document

If you are part of a school that has already decided it wants to take action to encourage active travel, the toolkit will help:

- ➔ [provide](#) you with ideas for a range of practical actions you can take
- ➔ [suggest](#) ideas for how to deal with barriers to increasing active travel
- ➔ [help you put together a school travel plan](#)
- ➔ [give you arguments](#) to help convince parents and others support your efforts
- ➔ [provide sources](#) of further information and advice

If you are a parent, governor or teacher in a school that is not currently promoting active travel, you can use the toolkit to:

- ➔ [provide the arguments](#) you need to convince other people to support change
  - ➔ [get tips](#) on how to put together a successful campaign to change the school's approach
  - ➔ [get contact details](#) for organisations that can provide advice and put you in touch with other people taking similar action
  - ➔ [get ideas on practical actions](#) you could try to get the school to adopt. You don't have to do everything to start making a difference! Getting a school to make one small change can be an important first step to greater change and provide important benefits in itself
  - ➔ **But Remember:** activities should only be carried out with the agreement of the school and, where necessary, the local authority. It is also important to ensure that any planned activities take into account relevant Covid recommendations and restrictions.
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# Why we need more of our children to walk and cycle to school

When it displaces car travel, walking and cycling helps to achieve all seven of the national goals in Wales' [Well-being of Future Generations Act](#). The particular benefits of walking and cycling to school include the following.

## Pupils' Readiness to Learn

There is significant evidence that the physical activity resulting from an active journey to school has positive impacts on children's level of alertness and their behaviour in class. A UK Department for Transport study found that: "Teachers report that children who walk to school are frequently more alert, relaxed and ready to start the school day compared to

***The fresh air and the birds chirping, clearing my mind before a day at school***

10 years old, Rhondda Cynon Taff

those arriving by car."<sup>2</sup> There is also evidence that physically active children enjoy greater academic success<sup>3</sup> Another positive aspect of active travel to school is that it helps children achieve their recommended levels of physical activity without eating into already crowded school timetables. There is clear evidence that the amount of time schools are

able to dedicate to organised physical activity within the school day is declining, which makes utilising the opportunity of the journey to and from school even more important. Estyn report that there have been: "reductions in the time allocated to physical education in both primary and secondary schools. At key stage 4, very few schools provide two hours of physical education as part of pupils' core provision and entitlement."<sup>4</sup>

## Climate Change

Wales has declared a climate emergency and is committed to reducing net carbon emissions to zero by 2050. We should all be doing everything we can to reduce harmful emissions. Transport accounts for 16% of carbon emissions in Wales and, despite Welsh Government's policies, emissions, which are mainly from cars and vans, have not fallen in the way they have for other sectors. Across the UK, the motorised school run generates two million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> every year.<sup>5</sup> Walking and cycling produce negligible amounts of carbon.

## Health - Physical Activity

The UK Chief Medical Officers' [Physical Activity Guidelines](#) highlights active travel as a way for children to reach the recommended 60 minutes per day of moderate to vigorous intensity physical activity daily for children. Unfortunately, far too few children are meeting the recommended level. 'Welsh teenage girls have the lowest physical activity levels out of the

<sup>2</sup> Department of Transport (UK): Effect of Travel Modes on Children's Cognitive Development, 2001.

<sup>3</sup> Rauner, R, Walters, R, Avery, M and Wanser, T (2013) Evidence that Aerobic Fitness Is More Salient than Weight Status in Predicting Standardized Math and Reading Outcomes in Fourth-through Eighth- Grade Students, The Journal of Pediatrics – 04 March 2013 (10.1016/j.jpeds.2013.01.006)

<sup>4</sup> <http://senedd.assembly.wales/documents/s73228/Paper%205%20-%20Estyn.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.suttontrust.com/research-paper/school-run-proposal-national-yellow-bus-scheme-uk/>

UK countries, with only 8% of Welsh teenage girls meeting the physical activity guidelines.<sup>6</sup> These low levels of physical activity are known to result in obesity and a whole range of illnesses that are estimated to cost the Welsh NHS £35 million each year to treat. Just over a quarter of children in Wales (26.2%) are overweight or obese,<sup>7</sup> the highest level in the UK.

**“Being overweight has now become normal in Wales.”\***

**“Only one in six 11-16 year olds are achieving the Chief Medical Officer’s (CMO) guidelines of 60 minutes of activity every day.”**

Compelling evidence from many observational studies shows that lack of physical activity increases the risks of many non-communicable diseases such as type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, stroke, some cancers, and premature mortality.<sup>8</sup> Physical inactivity is estimated to lead to 1 in 6 deaths in the

UK.<sup>9</sup> Research has shown that children who regularly walk to school can meet between 25-35% of their recommended amount of physical activity per school day.<sup>10</sup>

Another important benefit of active travel is the positive impact it has on children’s mental health, helping, according to the Mental Health Foundation, to reduce anxiety and stress.<sup>11</sup> This is becoming particularly important given that 14.7% of 11 to 15 year olds have “symptoms of mental ill-health”<sup>12</sup>.

**“We know that 80% of people who are obese at age four to five remain obese. Overweight children are developing conditions and illnesses normally associated with adults, such as type 2 diabetes.”**

Of course, when parents accompany their children, they also enjoy the health benefits of increased physical activity.

\*The quotes in the text boxes in this section are taken from Welsh Government’s Consultation Document: [Healthy Weight Healthy Wales](#)

## Health - Air Quality

High numbers of cars around schools, means high levels of emissions from their engines and a consequent deterioration in air quality. Air quality is a serious problem in several parts of Wales. Crumlin, in Caerphilly, has the worst air quality in the UK outside London. Public Health Wales estimate that each year an equivalent of around 1,600 avoidable deaths in Wales are due to particulate

**“smelling the cars go past because they are really smelly”**

11 years old, Swansea

<sup>6</sup> Cardiff and the Vale University Health Board, *Moving forwards: Healthy travel for all in Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan*, 2017, p 10

<sup>7</sup> <http://everychildwales.co.uk/professionals/>

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(16\)30370-1/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(16)30370-1/fulltext)

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.bmj.com/content/364/bmj.l49>

<sup>10</sup> Martin A, Boyle J, Corlett F. Contribution of Walking to School to Individual and Population Moderate-Vigorous Intensity Physical Activity: Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. *Pediatric Exercise Science* 2016; 28 (3):353-63.

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/how-to-using-exercise>

<sup>12</sup>

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/file?uri=%2fpeoplepopulationandcommunity%2fwellbeing%2fdatasets%2fchildrenswellbeingmeasures%2fcurrent/childrensreferencetable2018corrected.xlsx>

matter (PM2.5 and PM10), and 1,100 due to nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) exposure. The primary source of both NO<sub>2</sub>, and particulate matter pollutants is vehicle emissions,<sup>13</sup> especially those from diesel powered vehicles. Over 2,000 schools and nurseries in England and Wales are within 150 metres of a road with illegal levels of air pollution.<sup>14</sup> Up to 40,000 early deaths are attributable to air pollution each year in the UK – only smoking contributes to more early deaths.

Those who travel by car can experience five times higher pollution levels than those who cycle and three and a half times more than those walking the same route. High air pollution has a particularly negative effect on children. It has been associated with premature births, stunted lung development, and increased risks for long term conditions such as asthma.<sup>15</sup>

Walking and cycling produce no harmful emissions.

## Forming good habits

The school journey is an important opportunity to establish the habit of regular physical activity for children. The earlier we can equip children with the skills and motivation required to travel actively, the more likely such behaviours will continue through to secondary school and into later life. Children, and parents, who get into the habit of travelling actively on the school run are also more likely to walk and cycle for other journeys, further reducing the environmental and health problems caused by an over reliance on the car. It is important that children learn road sense and

***I get to walk through the local park when it is frosty it is beautiful***

11 years old, Pembrokeshire

***I enjoy having fresh air and I can go fast on my scooter***

9 years old, Bridgend

good safety habits at an early age. An accompanied active journey from school is an excellent way of acquiring these skills giving them the confidence they need to walk or cycle independently as they develop.<sup>16</sup>

An active school journey can also help develop children's independence and provide a greater understanding of the natural environment and their local area.

Having more families walking or cycle around their neighbourhoods can also help community cohesion. As one Llangollen parent put it: "When people walk or cycle to school, kids and parents say hello to more people, and other adults look out for kids to improve safety. I know this happens on our school run, we know the cat and the old lady we expect to see every morning near the corner. We'd wonder what had happened if she wasn't there, and I think that this kind of thing helps strengthen a community."

<sup>13</sup> Cardiff City Council, Cardiff's Transport & Clean Air Green Paper: Changing how we move around a growing city, March 2018

<sup>14</sup> [https://www.livingstreets.org.uk/media/3618/ls\\_school\\_run\\_report\\_web.pdf](https://www.livingstreets.org.uk/media/3618/ls_school_run_report_web.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.blf.org.uk/support-for-you/risks-to-childrens-lungs/air-pollution>

<sup>16</sup> Paskins, J. (2005) Investigating the effects of a car culture on a child's spatial skills. Paper presented at the Walk21 Conference, held in Zurich Switzerland, 22-23 September 2006



## Relationships with local residents

All schools strive to be good neighbours and a positive part of the community they serve. Unfortunately, the motorised school run is damaging relations between some schools and local residents. The high volume of traffic arriving and parking on residential streets at school opening and closing times can seriously inconvenience people living nearby with complaints of blocked pavements, obstructed drives, even damage to cars and property.

## Congestion

Everybody is aware of how much better the rush hour traffic is during school holidays. Driving children to school puts two million vehicles on the UK's roads.<sup>17</sup> As far back as 2002, the UK National Travel Survey found that the school run made up 20% of all traffic during the morning rush hour and the number of children travelling to school by car has increased considerably since then. Congestion on our roads is currently estimated to cost Wales £2bn per annum.<sup>18</sup>

## Children want to do it

Walking, cycling and scooting are fun! Most children really enjoy the chance to be active. Sustrans Cymru's latest hands up survey of 10,000 pupils across 84 schools showed that 78.2% of children would prefer to travel to school by active means.<sup>19</sup> The Children's Commissioner for Wales Special Mission survey found that only 20% of children said they would not like to have more help in school so that they could walk, cycle or scoot to school.<sup>20</sup>

***Waving to the train driver  
when I cross the bridge***

6 years old, Caerphilly

## Saves Money

According to Living Streets, families could save an average of £400 a year if children walked to school rather than going by car.<sup>21</sup>

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## Factors influencing school travel choices - and some ideas on how to deal with them

There are usually actions that can be taken locally to make active travel a more popular and practical option for the journey to school. But even when that is not possible, what often really matters is people's perception of the importance of these factors. The school, the wider school community and local authorities can play an important role in raising awareness

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.suttontrust.com/research-paper/school-run-proposal-national-yellow-bus-scheme-uk/>

<sup>18</sup> BBC News, Newport was Wales' most congested city in 2017, figures show, February 2018,

<sup>19</sup> The Sustrans Cymru hands up survey is produced as part of the Welsh Government funded Active Journeys programme

<sup>20</sup> Children's Commissioner for Wales, Special Mission: School Journeys Survey

<https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/school-journeys-e-05.pdf>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.livingstreets.org.uk/media/1393/walk-to-school-outreach-best-practice-report-web.pdf>

of the problems caused by the motorised school run and the benefits of active travel. When balanced against health and air quality considerations, the ‘convenience’ of the car can seem less important.

## Distance

That the “school is too far away” is an often-cited reason for making the school run in a car. A Cardiff University study found that children living between half a mile and a mile from their school were 2.3 times more likely to walk or cycle than those living over a mile away.<sup>22</sup> For most children in Wales, the distance involved in travelling to school should be very manageable. In Wales in 2014-15 (the latest figures available), 60% of primary school children lived within a mile of their school (20 minute walk), and 88% live within three miles (20 minute cycle).<sup>23</sup> Distances are greater for secondary schools where catchment areas tend to be larger but there is still a very significant percentage of pupils, 29%, who live within one mile and 63% live within three miles.<sup>24</sup> Welsh Government’s Active Travel Act Guidance states that ‘three quarters of children live within a 15-minute cycle ride of a secondary school, while more than 90% live within a 15-minute walk of a primary school.’<sup>25</sup>

Rurality is clearly an issue. Children in rural areas generally have to travel further to get to school. In rural Ceredigion less than 20% of children walk or cycle to primary school.<sup>26</sup>

In practice, distance is often more an issue of perception and availability of safe routes than it is of precise measurements. There may often be a shorter more direct route from home to school, but the lack of safe walking and cycling infrastructure on that route means a longer journey is necessary. In which case the problem is not really one of distance but of infrastructure. However, even when children do have to travel distances that are not reasonably walkable or cyclable, there are measures that can facilitate active travel if only for the final part of the journey. See below for details of [Park and Stride](#) and [Walking Zones](#).

The cycle infrastructure near Pencoed Comprehensive, Bridgend, is signposted with how many minutes it will take to walk and cycle, instead of how many miles. This, from the point of view of Edward Jones, headteacher and Roger Dutton of Sustrans, helps avoid putting people off cycling and walking short distances to their school. A fifteen-minute bike ride seems more manageable than a two mile bike ride.

It is interesting to note that there is little international consensus on what constitutes a ‘reasonable distance’ to walk or cycle to school, with journeys of up to 4 km being considered acceptable in countries that already have high levels of active travel to school.<sup>27</sup> As with so many of the barriers to increased active travel, perception is key.

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<sup>22</sup> Potoglou op. cit.

<sup>23</sup> [National Survey for Wales Results Viewer](#): Active Travel – Children (2014-15)

<sup>24</sup> [National Survey for Wales Results Viewer](#): Active Travel – Children (2014-15)

<sup>25</sup> <https://gov.wales/active-travel-act-guidance> P. 40

<sup>26</sup> Potoglou, D. and Arslangulova, B. 2017. Factors influencing active travel to primary and secondary schools in Wales. *Transportation Planning and Technology* 40(1), pp. 80-99

<sup>27</sup> Potoglou, op. cit.

## Perceived Road Danger

Ironically, one of the major reasons for parents taking their children to school in cars is the perceived danger from the high number of cars around schools at opening and closing time.

***Busy roads with no crossing patrol***

7 years old, Vale of Glamorgan

Concern about traffic has had a major impact on parents' willingness to allow their children to travel independently. 60% of parents and carers who walk their child to school say that traffic danger is the main reason for accompanying them (NTS0617, National Travel Survey, 2018). The proportion of children

***one part is very dangerous because cars run like bullets***

10 years old, Rhondda Cynon Taff

aged 7-10 who are never allowed to cross roads alone has increased from 42% in 2002, to 62% today (NTS0618, National Travel Survey, 2018).

In a survey on the school journey by the Children's Commissioner for Wales, road safety was mentioned as a barrier by a significant number of children, including cars speeding and safe ways to cross roads.

The location and frequency of crossings, particularly light controlled crossings are a key factor in parents' assessment of whether a route is safe.

***If cars are parked on the pavement and there's no room to pass***

6 years old, Gwynedd

Parking is also a major concern, particularly pavement parking and on and near crossings.

Over 40% of parents said enforcing a ban on parking near the school would make them more likely to walk to school.<sup>28</sup>

The fundamental question is: should we be restricting children or should we be limiting the capacity of motor vehicles to cause them harm? The 'Taking Action' section of this Toolkit sets out a range of interventions that can reduce road safety fears.

## Convenience

For many people, taking their children to school by car seems the only way that they can incorporate this task into their working day. This is particularly true of people with inflexible working hours who also have a long commute. Issues such as timing of breakfast clubs and after school activities will also play a role. Many people will be resistant to any change but it is often possible to persuade people to re-assess the issue of convenience. Wherever possible this should be done by emphasising the positive benefits of active travel and fewer cars around the school.

People are more likely to consider changing their travel pattern when other circumstances change. So parents bringing their children to the school for the first time should be a key target for information on sustainable travel options. Similarly, any changes that are made to walking and cycling routes to school should be advertised as an opportunity for people to try a greener, healthier journey to school.

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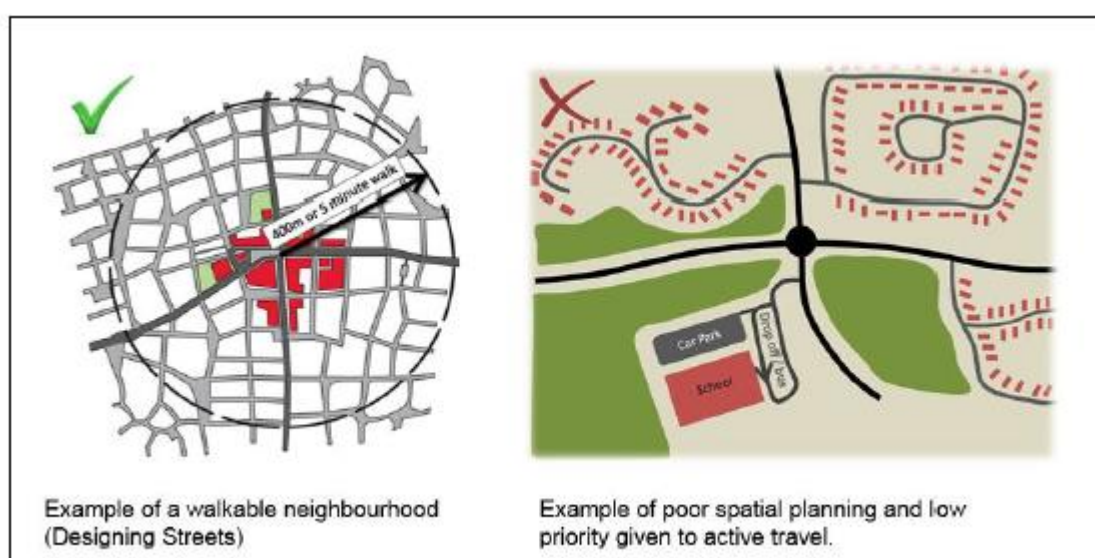
<sup>28</sup> YouGov. (2014). Living Streets Walk to School Week 2014

Increasing journey times, difficulty in parking and concern about air quality and the environment are combining to cause significant numbers of people to re-evaluate their relationship with the car, this should provide significant opportunities for changes in behaviour.

How people manage their working hours is beyond the scope of this toolkit, but it is worth being aware that people do have certain rights to request flexible working arrangements. For more information see [here](#). Covid has resulted in a major increase in home working which may make parents affected by this more amenable to changing their travel to school mode.

## Urban Design

Closely related to distance is the issue of housing estates and other developments which have been designed to favour the car rather than the pedestrian or cyclist. The illustration below shows how estates based on single vehicular access roads rather than networks of paths can magnify walking distances and make active travel less attractive. Schools wishing to encourage walking and cycling to schools should make their views known when new developments are planned. It is also often possible to retrofit active travel infrastructure to badly designed existing developments (See the section on [Routes](#) below).



## ‘Stranger Danger’

A survey for Living Streets showed that 23% of parents are so concerned by stranger danger that they either accompany or drive their child to school.<sup>29</sup> However this represents a considerable drop in the numbers from the 46% reported in 2003. A whole range of factors contribute to people’s perception of stranger danger, from the general levels of trust within a community to media coverage of any concerning local incidents. There are important practical measures that can reduce parents’ concerns, such as effective street lighting and clear sightlines along paths. Perhaps the best way of boosting confidence and diminishing fears is to have lots of parents and children using the routes.

<sup>29</sup> YouGov. (2015). Living Streets Walk to School week 2015.

## Coolness

No, not the weather! There is evidence that children and particularly adolescents will be highly influenced in their willingness to undertake active travel by whether walking, cycling and scooting are seen to be “cool” i.e., acceptable within their social circle. Coolness is determined by a whole range of factors many of which can be influenced by the school culture and the way in which active travel is promoted.

## The School Bus

For secondary school children, the school bus is the main form of transport to school, mainly because of the greater catchment areas. This is also true for many children in rural areas. Bus travel has many environmental and social advantages compared to the private car and, if the passenger has to walk a reasonable distance to and from the bus stop, can also have health benefits. Schools may want to consider whether there is an appropriate dropping off place for school buses a short distance away from the school, connected by a safe footpath that would ensure that pupils arriving by bus start the day with some healthy exercise.

A key factor in the popularity of the school bus is that they are provided free of charge to pupils who have to travel over three miles from home to school.<sup>30</sup> Eligibility for free transport can be a controversial issue, however information to parents on their eligibility, or otherwise, for free bus travel can be used as an opportunity to raise awareness of active travel routes and to promote the advantages of this mode.

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## Bringing about change

Changing people’s behaviour is always challenging. However, with an effective campaign it is possible. Simply getting people to talk about this issue is an achievement. A survey by Living Streets found that: “One in five (21 per cent) of parents with children who travel to primary school have never considered making sure their child walks to school”.<sup>31</sup> The car has become such an integral part of many families’ lives that they rarely consider alternatives.

### Top Tips for an Effective Campaign

- Be realistic. Success doesn’t have to mean everybody walking and cycling every day, any increase in active travel to school is good.
- Change takes time, especially infrastructure improvements, so plan for the long term. (If you are a parent, try to ensure that there will be others in the school interested in carrying on your work after your children have left).
- What support do you have? Involve as many people as possible.
- Seek advice from outside organisations such as [Cycling UK](#), [Living Streets](#), [Sustrans](#) and [Welsh Cycling](#).

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<sup>30</sup> For more information on free motorised school transport see: <https://gov.wales/school-transport-guidance-parents>

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.livingstreets.org.uk/media/1393/walk-to-school-outreach-best-practice-report-web.pdf>



- Find a helpful contact in your local authority.
- Work with other schools in your area that are on the same journey.
- Be aware of best practice elsewhere – so that you can demonstrate change is possible.
- Use national events like [Walk to School Week](#), [Bike Week](#), [Big Pedal](#) (now called Sustrans Big Walk and Wheel) etc as a hook to get people's interest and establish a clear date for starting activity.
- Budget. Do you have the resources you need? Lots of the activities suggested in this Toolkit are free or quite cheap. Find out what resources your local authority has available. It may also be worth considering whether a local business would sponsor some activities.

## The key players in bringing about change

### School staff

The head teacher is clearly the key figure to get on board. Many headteachers are already enthusiastic advocates for active travel to school. As the chief executive of the school, they are often the ones bearing the brunt of the problems caused by the motorised school run, particularly disputes with local residents. However, given their already heavy workload, a head's main concern is likely to be the amount of work involved in transforming the school journey. Thus, the level of support from other members of staff, governors and volunteers will be a major factor in their decision to authorise the activity.

Many schools have made major progress through the efforts of just one or two teachers who are committed to making their school more sustainable. A number of schools have formalised this role by making them Active Travel Champions, helping to provide them with some status in dealing with outside organisations and clarifying who is the key point of contact in the school for this agenda.

Cath Morris is a teacher and an Active Travel Champion at Fitzalan High School in Cardiff. She is part of an Active Travel team made up of staff and pupils who organise events and promote active travel causes within the school. Cath, along with Roger Dutton of Sustrans, believes that having a diverse team to champion active travel in the school overcomes issues of dedication and workload while providing a broad perspective and feedback for any plans.

### Pupils

According to a survey by the Children's Commissioner for Wales, 78% of children think they should have a say in planning safer routes to school.<sup>32</sup> Getting pupils involved in the changes you are planning is essential to the success of the project. They are often in the best position to identify the problems on the route to school; they are much more likely to be prepared to change to walking and cycling if they have worked through all the reasons for the change and helped design the new processes; their enthusiasm for changing the way they travel can be extremely influential for parents. There is hard evidence to support this: research for the Department for Transport into the effectiveness of School Travel Plans

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/school-journeys-e-05.pdf>

found that schools which had involved pupils in developing travel projects ‘had achieved the greatest success.’<sup>33</sup>

Schools can use already established pupils’ voice groups to enable young people to take a strategic part in decision making about active travel or could set up a pupil group specifically to develop a strategy and approach on this issue. It is important to ensure that this group has a good representation of the different groups within the school community, and reflects, for example, different ages, genders, ethnicities and community groups. It will also be important to ensure that there is a participation mechanism to enable all children and young people to contribute views, so that as well as young people having a strategic role, there is wide consultation in which all can take part. This is important because needs may vary widely depending on factors such as where pupils live. Setting up surveys, comment boxes or running activities such as community mapping can be useful tools to ensure everyone has a chance to have their say.

Wales has national participation standards for involving children in decision making. A useful poster explaining the standards can be accessed [here](#).

## Parents

Parents (and/or guardians/carers) are the key decision makers on how children travel to school and, as such, are a key group to bring on board in any effort to make real change. If a parent or governor is attempting to build support for an increased emphasis on active travel to school, then early discussions with other similarly minded parents will be vital in developing a wider group to support change. Consider a simple notice on the PTA notice board or school Facebook group inviting interested parents to an informal meeting/chat about travel to school.

If the school is already signed up to this agenda, then engaging with parents should be a key part of any plan. A vital first step in engaging with parents is to find out their current views on the journey to school. The best way to do this is through a survey. Set out below is an example of a survey produced by a local cycling group, Cardiff Cycle City which worked with a local primary school to assess the potential for change.

### **Cardiff Cycle City school active travel engagement survey**

Through 2018 and ‘19 Cardiff Cycle City carried out an engagement with a north Cardiff primary school. Its aim was to better understand the barriers to active travel and to promote more active school runs. What started as a dialogue with the Headmistress led to an on-going liaison between two enthusiastic teachers (both cyclists) at the school, Cardiff Cycle City, and Cardiff Council’s Planning, Transport and Environment department.

Initial dialogue focused on the need to better understand the travel habits of parents and guardians on school runs and establish what barriers there were to

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<sup>33</sup> <http://democracy.york.gov.uk/documents/s47286/Annex%20A.pdf.pdf>

less car use and more active runs. To this end, Cardiff Cycle City drew up, agreed and published an on-line survey which the school asked parents to complete. Respondents to this survey confirmed a high proportion of school runs defaulting to the car. Other useful data was captured on journey distances, route concerns and suggested improvements and attitudes (broadly very positive) to cycle and similar road safety training. The most commonly cited barriers to active travel were busy / dangerous / fast roads, onward travel to work or similar, and overall distance (although circa 88% of respondents travel two miles or less to / from the school). Broadly it would appear that the barriers to changing the journey to school are a mix of infrastructure, motivation and lifestyle.

Our Cardiff Cycle City parent survey (using Google Forms) is easily reusable for other schools.

This specific school dialogue continues. Teachers, Cardiff Cycle City and Cardiff Council staffed a joint stall at the school Summer Fair gathering further route information and promoting active travel. The children have been engaged via an active travel poster competition and similar initiatives. Latterly, the school has been working with the local authority to develop options for active travel. To date the Council's Neighbourhood Regeneration and Transportation teams have supported the construction of a 3m wide walking and cycling route through Llanishen Park to facilitate walking, cycling, scooting and park and stride. Work is also underway to improve safety and accessibility along Llangrannog Road, one of two entrances to the school. The school has applied to the Bike Fleet scheme giving them access to bikes and training materials and received two new bike shelters in 2020.

Information on accessing the Cardiff Cycle City Survey can be found [here](#).

An alternative approach would be to organise a focus group where parents would be encouraged to talk about why their child travels to school in the way they do and what would be needed to encourage them to change to a more active mode. You can find some ideas on how to run a focus group here: <https://www.wikihow.com/Run-a-Focus-Group>

Parents' own behaviour has a significant impact on children, so if activities can be designed that persuade parents to themselves become more physically active, this will help inspire and reinforce changes in the behaviour of pupils. This should be borne in mind, for example, when offering cycle training to children: would it be possible to also offer similar training to parents so that they can accompany their children? A Cardiff University study found that in Wales: 'When parents cycled at least 1-2

Roger Dutton, a Schools Officer at Sustrans, and Cath Morris, Fitzalan's Active Travel Champion, believe that organising weekend bike rides with parents who are nervous about their child walking or cycling to school can engage them in active travel and demonstrate that their child is capable and responsible enough to do so.

times per week, the likelihood of their children and adolescents walking or cycling to primary and secondary schools doubled.’<sup>34</sup>

## Local Authorities

All local authorities will have an officer with responsibility for encouraging active travel, but you may need to make some enquiries to find out who the best person is to help you with your project. Normally they will be based within the transport or highways department. They can be called the active travel or walking and cycling officer or road safety officer. There may be people in the education department with specific responsibilities for at least part of this agenda. If you have a friendly local councillor, they may be able to point you to the most appropriate person in the authority.

The local authority is a key partner in assisting with regulatory issues, such as criminal record checks, and providing access to Welsh Government funding for infrastructure and cycle and road safety training.

When making a case to the local authority try to align the project with the local authorities’ priorities. It may be worth searching the council’s website for their corporate plan (or similar document) and trying to set out the arguments for your project in line the council’s key ambitions. All local authorities in Wales are covered by the [Well-being of Future Generations Act](#), which requires them to help achieve Wales seven national goals. Active travel can contribute to all of these goals because of its positive contribution to health, the environment, the economy and community cohesion.

Edward Jones, headteacher at Pencoed Comprehensive, Bridgend, sees schools’ engagement in infrastructure consultations and with local councillors as vital to ensuring that new proposals address the difficulties for pupils and staff in travelling to school by bike or on foot.

## Local Politicians

Having the support of your local councillors and Senedd Members can be very useful. At the very least it is worth dropping them a line to keep them informed of your plans and activities. Consider involving them in any media activities you organise around your actions.

## Celebrate success

Let people know what you are doing and how you have done. The media will often carry stories about children, particularly when related to safety, health or the environment. You could also consider getting recognition for all your work by getting involved in competitions like Sustrans’ Active Travel School Award, see more details [here](#).

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<sup>34</sup> Potoglou Op. Cit.

## Taking Action

Your first step should be to know where you are starting from. If possible, conduct a survey of some sort to record how children are travelling to school before you make changes. This will allow you to measure the impact your work is having. It could be as simple as a hands up survey amongst the children where, perhaps once a year on the same date, all the children are asked: “how did you travel to school today?” and the results are recorded by class and across the school. In Scotland this has become an annual event organised by Sustrans, you can find more information about it [here](#) and access a copy of the form used to record the survey [here](#).

Public Health Wales will be rolling out the validated Travel to School Hands Up Survey across Wales in autumn 2021. This annual event will give all primary schools in Wales the opportunity to take part in a simple survey [less than 10 minutes per class to administer] and find out how their pupils travel to school. Once the schools have provided their data, a school level active travel report will be instantly generated for them. Public Health Wales will also provide local authority level and national reporting, enabling schools to benchmark themselves against others.

The survey results will help schools get an understanding of their pupils’ behaviour and alongside information from the Welsh Network of Healthy Schools Schemes this will inform action that aims to increase the numbers of children who are actively travelling to school. Further benefits to schools that adopt the survey include that it:

- Provides school level data that can be used as evidence as part of the new Health and Wellbeing Area of Learning and Experience and contributes to one of the four core purposes of the new curriculum, to develop Healthy and Confident Individuals
- Supports schools’ commitment to improve pupil health, wellbeing, safety; and environmental responsibility
- Enables schools to contribute to a better understanding of the national picture of travel to school behaviour.

The Hands-Up Travel to School Survey will provide a means of monitoring children’s travel behaviour across Wales, helping schools, local authorities and others assess the impact of any actions they take.

To complement the Hands Up Survey, schools can also sign up to the Living Streets WOW - the Walk to School Challenge which includes access to the bilingual WOW Travel Tracker for pupils to record their daily journeys and 11 themed badges to collect on a monthly basis. Living Streets can also supply banners, trophies and school assembly presentations to complement the programme ([see below](#)). There is a charge to sign up to the WoW challenge starting from around £1 per student per annum.

For secondary schools that are part of the [School Health Research Network](#), a Student Health and Wellbeing Survey captures travel to school behaviour for this age group in Wales. Schools that join the network receive an individualised student health and wellbeing report every two years. Secondary schools value this data for:



- Engaging all members of the school community with the health needs of their learners
- Planning and enriching the curriculum
- Informing health initiatives.

## School Travel Plan

Drawing up a School Travel Plan can be a great way of focussing the whole school on the issues involved and the challenges that need to be met. A study by the Department for Transport showed that well designed travel plans lead to an average drop in car use of 23%.<sup>35</sup>

### Top tips for drawing up your travel plan

- Think carefully about who needs to be involved in drawing up the plan: staff, pupils, parents, governors, local residents, councillors, council officials, transport operators, police?
- Involve people who you need to help make the plan happen, they are far more likely to want to implement it effectively if they had a say in its design.
- Appoint a plan coordinator to bring everybody together and to keep the plan refreshed. They should report to the head and/or the governors.
- Be clear about what you are trying to achieve.
- What evidence do you have to back up your actions?
- List the actions you want to take, who will make them happen and by when they are to be completed.
- Include indicators that can be monitored.
- Keep the plan under review, include a review schedule in the plan (the [National Institute for Care & Excellence](#) recommend an annual review).

Cardiff Council recommend the following structure for a school travel plan:<sup>36</sup>

- Introduction — What is an STP and why is it required for your school.
- Brief description of school — This will include the number of pupils, where the school is located, catchment area and any relevant factors that may be affecting school travel.
- Evidence of consultation — This will involve school travel surveys and or questionnaires.
- Proposed initiatives with objectives and targets — These could include traffic calming measures, safer crossing facilities, cycle paths and other remedial measures .
- Programme for implementation — When will steps be taken by the school and what needs to be undertaken by the local authority.
- Plans for monitoring and review — How will the changes be monitored and reported.

You can access Cardiff's guide to drawing up a plan [here](#)

<sup>35</sup> Cairns and Newson, (2006) Making School Travel Plans Work: Effects, Benefits and Success Factors at English Schools. <http://democracy.york.gov.uk/documents/s47286/Annex%20A.pdf.pdf>

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.cardiff.gov.uk/ENG/resident/Parking-roads-and-travel/Road-Safety/School-Travel-Plans/Pages/default.aspx>

Sustrans Scotland has produced an excellent guide to producing a school travel plan, which can be accessed [here](#). However, please be aware that some of the content will not be applicable in Wales.

## Infrastructure

Providing safe and convenient walking and cycling routes, that remove or reduce contact with traffic, is one of the most effective ways of enabling more children to actively travel to school. Creating entirely new routes can be challenging, requiring significant investment of time and resources. Nevertheless, with the support of their local authority, many schools in Wales have successfully made it happen. However, more modest improvements to existing routes can also make a significant difference. An additional crossing, parking restrictions or even cutting back brambles that have narrowed a path can be quite



*A Newport school's novel approach to ending pavement parking*

transformational. The key to providing effective infrastructure is to understand the journeys children are making and the barriers they are encountering on those journeys. Set out below are some possible approaches to a variety of infrastructure issues. The needs of disabled users should be a key consideration in the design of all infrastructure.

## Routes

Evidence shows that improving walking and cycling infrastructure has been highly effective in increasing active travel journeys to school (and for other local journeys) and has improved safety and perceptions of safety of the school journey. Sustrans' work to transform local walking and cycling routes has increased annual usage by children by 117% and delivered a 151% increase in children using the routes to get to school. Department for Transport analysis shows that such investment offers extremely high value for money, returning at least £10 (including congestion, physical activity, and safety benefits) for every £1 invested.<sup>37</sup>

The starting point to any work on routes should be a route audit. Both Living Streets and Sustrans have materials that can help schools organise an effective audit. Your local authority may also be able to help. The best audits will allow pupils, parents and teachers to identify the barriers to walking and cycling to school.

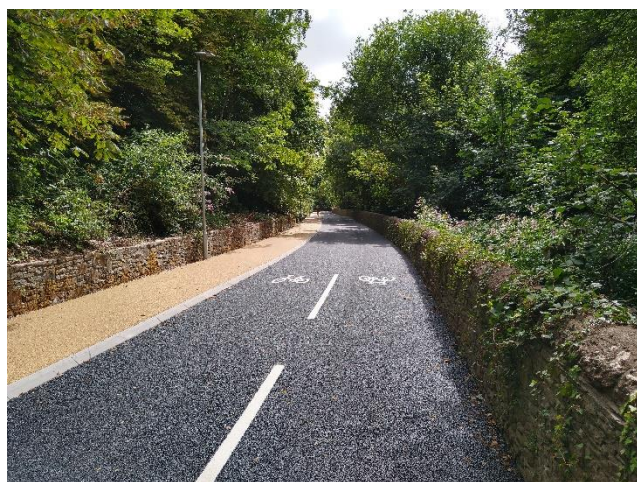
Your audit could be used to influence the Active Travel Network Maps your local authority is required to draw up under Wales' Active Travel Act. Every three years each local authority

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<sup>37</sup> CLES (2012) Evaluation of Sustrans sustainable transport infrastructure work. Sustrans (2010) Review of the Impact of Interventions on School Travel. Sustrans/Cycling England/DfT (2006) Links to Schools; Sustrans (2014) Linking Communities programme evaluation

has to compile a map showing both their existing active travel routes and their plans for future and improved routes over the next fifteen years. The first set of maps were approved by Welsh Government in February 2018. Welsh Government set a deadline of December 2021 for the submission of the second set of maps. The preparation of the maps is an ideal opportunity for schools to set out the new and improved routes they believe they need. Local authorities are obliged by law to consult with anyone who registers their interest, so your school should ensure that they contact their council and have themselves listed as a consultee.

The latest Welsh Government Guidance requires local authorities to map links between all schools in designated localities (a full list of the communities covered can be found [here](#))



and their wider active travel network. Future routes added to the Active Travel Network Map do not need to be highly detailed, they can be as simple as a desire line which states that there is a need for a route to get children living in housing estate A to school B. Obviously, a more detailed plan will be needed before the route can be built, but once a vague route is part of the map it may be possible for the local authority to obtain Welsh Government funding to pay for the development of the plans.

As part of the Active Journeys programme Sustrans Cymru has developed techniques for involving children in identifying routes for the Active Travel Network Maps.

It is important to be aware that being on the map is not a guarantee that the route will be built, but routes not on the map will not qualify for Welsh Government funding.

Further information on the way the maps are compiled and the standards to which the infrastructure has to be built, is contained in the Active Travel Act Guidance, which can be found [here](#).

## Funding for Infrastructure

Wales has a specific funding stream for active travel to school, the Safe Routes in Communities Fund, which has been a long-standing component of Welsh Government funding for active travel. In May 2019, Welsh Government allocated £10.9 million for the creation of Safe Routes in Communities and road safety schemes. Whilst the title of the fund has changed from Safe Routes to Schools to Safe Routes in Communities, in fact almost all the funding goes to school routes. Applications are made by local authorities, not individual schools, so if you have a route that you would like funded it is important to start discussions with your local authority at an early stage. The funding is very limited and there is already a backlog of applications. In 2020/21 local authorities were limited to three applications each, with a new focus on the development of School Streets ([see below](#)). Technical details of the grant can be found [here](#).

Welsh Government's main funding pot for walking and cycling, the Active Travel Fund, can also be used for developing routes to schools. In recent years, this fund has increased substantially, for 2021/22 its value is over £70m. The fund is administered by Transport for Wales and applications can only be made by local authorities.

Local authorities may also be able to access funding for improved walking and cycling infrastructure from local developers who can be obliged to contribute Section 106 funding to help provide local infrastructure when building new housing and other developments. They can also use their own resources either to fully fund projects or as match funding with Welsh Government or private funding.

In arguing the case for funding, it is worth remembering that children are citizens and can be a powerful voice when campaigning for improvements in road safety. The media, in particular, are always interested in child safety stories so a group of children writing to the council to ask for a safer walking and cycling route or road crossing can be very effective.

## School Entrance

The entrance to the school is a key part of any child's route and can be a real deterrent if it is crowded with cars. Walking and cycling routes within the school ground should be direct and avoid car parks, drop off areas and service roads. There should be clear priority for pedestrians both in signage and the design of the space.

Parents who walk their children home from school will really appreciate a shelter so they can wait for their children outside school without getting soaked.

## Storage

Provision of secure and weather protected storage for bikes and scooters is an essential part of any plan to increase cycling and scooting to school. Bike theft is a major problem in many areas and the theft of a bike or scooter is a major reason for many people abandoning cycling. Children should be encouraged to use quality "D" locks to secure their bikes, and the bike storage area should be designed so that the frame and a wheel can be secured to a stand using this type of lock.

When installing storage, it is important to choose the right type and install it correctly.

- Get the pupils to decide where the best place to build it is.
- Make sure child size Sheffield stands are used
- Avoid scooters having to use bike storage, they don't mix well and just fall over
- Consider green storage (wooden constructions with built in habitat for invertebrates, sisal roofs etc.) e.g. <https://greenroofshelters.co.uk/green-roof-cycle-shelter/> which can then be used as an educational tool.

Walking and cycling in Wales will inevitably mean occasionally getting wet. Appropriate clothing can stop this being too much of a problem, always providing there is somewhere for children to store their wet

***Jumping in the  
puddles – it's nice!***

5 years old, Torfaen

clothing, and allow it to dry, whilst they are in class. Some schools have even invested in portable coat and welly racks, that allow children to change their footwear and outerwear in a sheltered area outside, before the loaded racks are wheeled into a drying area.

## Behaviour Change

### Personalised Travel Planning

Providing individual advice on sustainable travel options has been shown to be highly successful in persuading people to reduce car use. This can be carried out by an external organisation, if you have the resources. Alternatively, this is how [Ysgol Hamadryad](#) set about it: 'The aim here is to have an open conversation with parents about their potential active travel journey to the school. The best way to do this is to ask all parents / pupils to try out an active travel journey to the school. Parents can then submit feedback to the Governors (a survey – paper or online is a good way to do this). This feedback is crucial in identifying barriers to active travel – there may be a lack of facilities at the school, there may be dangerous junctions nearby, or pupils may not feel confident cycling.'

### Walking bus

A walking bus is just a group of children, parents and/or volunteers walking to school at a set time and along the same route each day. Children can enjoy walking to school with friends in safety. The most recent systematic review on interventions that increase active travel to school concludes that walking buses and educational strategies are the most effective.<sup>38</sup> A walking bus can be very informal where a group of parents agree to meet together at a certain time to walk their children together, providing moral support and companionship on the journey. This can be a great way to test the water for a wider scheme. Once it becomes more formal and the organisers of the bus are taking responsibility for other people's children then care has to be taken to ensure proper procedures are followed. Your local authority should be able to provide advice on issues such as Criminal Record Checks and assessing route safety. Ysgol Hamadryad in Cardiff have had a walking bus in place since they opened. They have chosen to pay staff to run the daily bus. You can read their story [here](#).

Clackmannanshire Council in Scotland has produced a [useful guide to walking buses](#), (rules can be different in Scotland so be sure to check with your local council's road safety or active travel officer). These are their top tips:

### Top Tips for Walking Buses

- **Start informally** Talk to parents in your immediate area and arrange to walk together. Let people know what you are doing and encourage them to walk with you at the same time of day.
- **Get help** Contact the Road Safety Officer. It's also important to have the school's support.
- **Don't criticise** Don't be negative towards those who drop out or never seem to volunteer to help. Instead find out the reason and work towards a solution. Maybe they do not

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<sup>38</sup> <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0091743519301069>



understand the scheme fully or cannot take part because of the logistics of doing school runs to more than one school.

- **Start a Park and Stride Scheme** Children living too far away to walk all the way to school will be able to take part. Find a car park 5 or 10 minutes walk from the school, eg a shop or community hall and ask permission to park in the car park at school run times. If a walking bus route starts from or comes past the car park the children can join in and at least walk some of the way.
- **Involve as many children as you can** Establish several routes to cover all approaches to the school. Try to set it up so every child has a chance to join in.
- **Make it cool** Older children might not like the idea of travelling with younger pupils if they feel they are all being treated the same. Why not set up a conductors scheme where the older pupils can join in and have special roles as 'official helpers'.
- **Involve as many parents as possible** Even if a parent, carer or grandparent only makes it once, at least they can say they have been part of it.
- **Reward** Give out certificates in school assembly. Make them feel like they are part of an important club.
- **Let the local media know** Local papers love stories about children. The children love to see themselves in the newspaper. It is a good way to inform parents as letters from school do not always get home. Make sure you have parental permission before any press photographs are taken.
- **Issue a Walking Bus Pass** Children like official papers.
- **Adapt ideas** Walking bus schemes cannot be standardised and are individual to every community. Hand out guidelines for your particular bus.
- **Listen to complaints** Grumbles from parents and children can be useful if they cause you to work out a solution to a problem.
- **Maintain momentum** Promote your walking bus every now and again, especially at the start of a new term. Hand out reflective stickers as children join.
- **Make it part of the school's culture** As new children join the school you won't have to change old habits to get them to join in. They won't have formed habits and will accept it as normal.
- **Put it in the school prospectus** If your school has a Travel Plan put it in there as well. For new parent induction evenings have a short talk from the walking bus coordinator. Ask the head teacher to emphasise the importance of the walking bus.
- **Find ways of measuring your success**
- **Be proud of your success**

Living Streets has produced free online guides to two alternatives to the walking bus:

## Park & Stride

Park and Stride is a simple idea for families who live further away to enjoy the benefits of walking to school. Simply ask parents to park a ten-minute walk away from school and complete their journey on foot or if they take public transport suggest they get off a few stops early. This makes it easier for families to incorporate walking into their school journey and is a great idea where school streets have limited space for vehicles. Your school can also set up a formal Park and Stride scheme, download Living Streets' helpful guide [here](#).

## Walking Zones

A walking zone is a way for a school to define an area around the school within which children and families are encouraged to walk rather than drive every day. Those who live further away, and choose to drive or take public transport, are asked to park or hop off outside the zone and walk the rest of their journey. Living Streets has published a helpful [guide](#) which provides a step-by-step approach to setting up a walking zone at your school.

## Cycle training

Cycle training has a positive impact on a child's readiness to cycle and on their parents' willingness to allow them to do so. An assessment of [Bikeability](#) cycle training in Scotland (there has been no evaluation of cycle training in Wales) showed that 65% of children were more confident when cycling after the training and 36% cycled to school more often. Surveys from Sustrans cycle training in Northern Ireland show that it gave parents 'more confidence and peace of mind to let their children walk and cycle to school.' 'Parents' concern about distance fell from 68% to 43%; and concern about busy roads fell from 57% of parents to 35%.'

Wales is not currently part of the [Bikeability](#) scheme<sup>39</sup> used in England and Scotland but training in Wales is conducted to the same National Standards. Level 1 provides children with the basic skills needed to ride a bike and is conducted off road, usually in the school playing ground. Level 2 introduces children to riding on the road and Level 3 provides the skills necessary for negotiating busier main roads. Levels 1 and 2 are usually taught in primary schools and, the far less common, Level 3 in secondary schools.

Given that it is almost impossible for a child to cycle to school without having to use some sort of road, training should be at least to Level 2. Welsh Government provides funding for National Standards training via local authorities. However, currently only 20% of Welsh school children receive cycle training to National Standard level 2. Local authorities differ in the way they provide the training for schools, and schools will need to contact their local council for information on how to apply. There are also independent cycle training organisations such as [Cycle Training Wales](#).



*A bicycle maintenance session at Ysgol Penyrheol*

When providing cycle training, consideration needs to be given to children with disabilities. Organisations such as [Pedal Power](#), based in Cardiff, [Pedal Power – Cycling 4 All](#), based in Wrexham, [Queensferry Wheels for All](#) in Deeside and [Bikeability Wales](#) in Swansea specialise in providing cycle training for people with a wide range of disabilities. A useful bilingual booklet that explains the different levels of cycle training to children and provides some helpful tips can be found on the Road Safety Wales website [here](#).

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<sup>39</sup> A review is underway with a view to Wales joining the scheme in the near future.

In addition to training in riding a bike, consideration should be given to providing training in maintaining it. Simple mechanical problems can cause children to give up on their bikes. Sustrans' Doctor Bike sessions in schools often see pupils, staff and even parents bringing their broken and neglected bikes in to be repaired and serviced for free. Regular maintenance of bikes, as seen in Penyrheol Primary in Swansea through a third party provider, is vital for reducing the costs of repair and replacement. Secure and dry storage of bikes is also important for reducing rust and preventing theft.

### The Cardiff Bike Fleet

Cardiff Council believes that not owning a bike shouldn't be a barrier to taking part in cycle training and other bike-based activities. So they have invested in a fleet of high quality children's bikes - procured from Welsh-based bike manufacturer, Frog - that are permanently available at participating schools. Working in partnership with Welsh Cycling and with funding from Welsh Government, the Council has already provided bike fleets to over 80 schools and other educational providers in the first two phases of the project.



By the end of Phase 3 100 schools will benefit.

The scheme also involves providing each school with secure storage space (re-furbished shipping containers) for the cycles. So far these have been procured through south Wales-based Odoni Elwell.

The availability of a quality bike for each pupil has made it much easier to organise in-school bike-based activities since no child need be excluded because their parents can't afford a bike or the bike that is brought to school is in a poor mechanical condition.

Fleets have also been provided to the Education Other Than At School (EOTAS) unit and the Cardiff Youth Offending Service (YOS). The bike

fleets are being used to give pupils extra training opportunities, to support continuing education, and for travel to other provisions and social rides. This is helping to build relationships between youth workers and fellow pupils and develop confidence and independent mobility.

The EOTAS team and YOS have partnered with Cycle Training Wales to provide bike maintenance courses to their pupils. They are also providing free maintenance for their community and other schools locally, giving the pupils opportunities to give back to their

community.

Bespoke fleets with adapted bikes and trikes are also being placed in specialist resource bases and special schools to allow everyone access to cycling. When mainstream schools apply to take part in the project, their Additional Learning Needs register is reviewed to ensure the fleet enables all pupils to take part in cycling. The Council is working in partnership with inclusive cycling charity Pedal Power to procure bespoke adapted cycles to meet the needs of pupils. Initial feedback indicates that pupils are benefitting in terms of building up strength, improving balance and coordination.

Another aspect of cycle training is making parents aware of the different types of cycle that are now available. Cargo bikes are specially adapted to carry bulky loads and/or young children, which can make the school run by bike much more feasible for families, especially when younger siblings and school equipment need to be transported. Pedalling loaded bikes can now be made much easier by the addition of an electric motor, converting a cargo

bike into an e-cargo bike. For more information see this [article on the Sustrans website](#). For parents and older children, electric bikes, or e-bikes, can make long and hilly journeys much more manageable (please note that children under 14 cannot legally ride an electric bike on the road in Britain). Electric bikes are just like ordinary bikes and can be used on cycle paths but have a battery powered motor that can be used when going uphill or when a little extra help is needed. They have to be pedalled, so they still provide healthy exercise. They are more expensive than conventional bikes but are becoming cheaper as their popularity increases. Cycling UK have produced a useful guide to electric bikes that can be found [here](#).

### Road Safety Training:

Kerbcraft is a national strategy for child pedestrian safety funded by the Welsh Government. The programme teaches children in year 2 how to be safer pedestrians by taking them onto roads and showing them how to make the right decisions to keep safe. It also contributes to the safety aspect of the Healthy Schools Scheme as it can play a key role in promoting better health and safety for children. The road safety officer in your local authority should be able to provide further information and how your school can apply for funding. To accommodate Covid restrictions, the Road Safety Wales website now contains information on teaching Child Pedestrian Training in a less structured setting, see more information [here](#).

### School culture:

One of the biggest challenges we face is that driving has been normalised as the obvious way to take children to school. One of the best ways to get more people walking and cycling is to have more people walking and cycling. If we can normalise walking and cycling as the 'common sense' way of getting to school, many more parents are likely to do it.

One of the ways in which this can be achieved is to make how children get to school a part of the school's ethos. See [the story of Ysgol Hamadryad](#), a Cardiff school that is Wales' first active travel school by design. On a more modest level, this is the [website](#) where Fremington Community Primary School in Devon advocates for active travel. Welsh schools are also increasingly using their websites to get their sustainable travel message across. [All Saints Primary School](#) in Gresford, Wrexham feature their active travel champions, activities and policies on their website. [Ysgol Bryn Deva](#) in Connah's Quay highlights its involvement in the Sustrans Active Journeys programme and [Oystermouth Primary School](#) has made its Active Travel Plan available online.

The school's policies on travel to school, with an emphasis on active travel, should feature in the welcome and induction materials issued to new parents.

Many schools have designated dedicated Active Travel champions among school staff to encourage walking, cycling and scooting.

## Active Travel in the Curriculum

The journey to school can be a useful topic in a number of subjects from Geography and Literacy to PE and PSHE. Sustrans Cymru has produced a range of curriculum resources that schools can access free of charge. They are available [here](#).

HSBC UK Ready Set Ride is a simple learn to ride programme for children aged 18 months to eight years, created by British Cycling together with the Youth Sport Trust. It is designed to enable schools and families to introduce pedalling to playtime and to be part of a child's learn to ride journey, helping them to become confident and happy cyclists for life. It sets out three simple stages which focus on the fundamental movements required to gain coordination, balance and confidence on two wheels. All of the games and activities are designed to be easily delivered by teachers and school staff without training – and even without bikes. The resources include an activity pack, online video resources and app. Parents, teachers and carers are supported to teach children the essential skills needed to ride a bike while having fun playing together. For more information and to access the free resources, see [here](#), or contact Welsh Cycling ([info@welshcycling.co.uk](mailto:info@welshcycling.co.uk))

The Eco Schools and Healthy Schools programmes both have some transport content.

The Welsh Network of Healthy Schools Schemes (WNHSS) play a key role in supporting schools to facilitate active, healthy and sustainable travel to school by the whole school community. Led by Public Health Wales and funded by the Welsh Government, the aim of the scheme is to promote and protect the physical, emotional and social health and wellbeing of children and young people in Wales. Recognised by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as playing a key role in promoting the health of children and young people, the Healthy Schools Scheme has been rolled out across Wales since 2000, and now covers all mainstream nursery, primary and secondary schools.

Each local scheme is responsible for supporting schools to develop a 'whole school approach' to 7 topic areas through policy development, curriculum, ethos and physical environment and community links. Local schemes work closely with partners on the topic of active travel, including Sustrans, Living Streets, Eco-Schools, Road Safety Teams, and Sport and Play among others. The topic areas most relevant to active travel are environment, food and fitness and safety with mental health and wellbeing a cross cutting theme. Any school working towards the prestigious WNHSS National Quality Award (NQA) will be expected to demonstrate how it encourages active travel to school including developing a 'School Travel Plan', inclusion in the curriculum, providing cycle skills and child pedestrian training, involvement in national initiatives such as those provided and promoted by key partners (e.g. Active Journeys, Walk to School week or Big Pedal (now called Sustrans Big Walk and Wheel) and creating a safer environment around the school (the 'green cone' scheme). See more information [here](#).



## Restricting Cars

### School Streets

School Street schemes close the road to vehicles during peak drop-off and pick up times with signs, barriers and/or cameras to stop non-residents driving through the area. Schemes are administered through Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs). Permits are issued to residents, local businesses, Blue Badge holders and other permitted vehicles, such as emergency services, exempting them from the prohibition. Living Streets has drawn up a free, online guide offering advice and support for schools on creating car-free streets outside a school. School Streets have been shown to have minimal impact on residents and businesses on the street. You can download Living Streets' School Streets Toolkit [here](#).

Hackney council in London was one of the pioneers of School Streets. A recent review of their first four School Streets showed that traffic and vehicle emissions outside the school gates was reduced and the number of children walking and cycling to school increased. The schemes have also proved popular with residents with the two latest consultations showing 86% and 69% support.<sup>40</sup> School Streets can make it significantly easier to encourage social distancing at school opening and closing times.

Cardiff Council has embarked on an extensive school streets programme. There is more information [here](#). Early analysis of travel to school data from schools in the programme has shown that car usage has dropped by 14% whilst active travel modes have increased by 23%. There has also been a 23% improvement in air quality.

Local authorities can apply for funding to introduce school streets through the [Welsh Government Safe Routes in Communities programme](#).

### Speed limits

Speeding traffic is a major deterrent to increasing walking and cycling. According to a survey commissioned by Living Streets, 60% of parents say that speeding traffic is a concern on their walk to school (OnePoll, 2016).

There is considerable evidence that 20 mph limits result in more people taking up active travel. A number of local authorities in Wales have imposed 20mph limits in certain areas, particularly outside schools. Cardiff Council is pledged to continuing expanding the areas of the city covered by 20mph limits until it becomes city wide. Welsh Government has recently pledged to make 20mph the default limit in urban areas in Wales. The report of the Welsh Government taskforce on 20mph limits can be found [here](#).



<sup>40</sup> <https://airqualitynews.com/2019/11/05/hackney-launches-8th-school-street/>

A report by Public Health Wales has shown that 20 mph limits offer a wide range of benefits, contributing to most of the goals of the Well being of Future Generations Act.<sup>41</sup> In particular it found that they had led to decreases in injuries, crashes, pedestrian and child pedestrian injuries of 17% to 70%.

**“People to stop  
speeding”**

10 years old, Swansea

Birmingham council have produced a 20mph toolkit which contains lots of useful ideas for schools who want to tackle problems with traffic speed. It can be accessed [here](#). The toolkit also addresses the problematic but vital issue of the enforcement of the limits.

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## Useful statistics

Welsh Government produces an annual bulletin on active travel, which includes data on walking and cycling to school. The most recent edition is available here:

<https://gov.wales/active-travel-walking-and-cycling>

Potoglou, D. and Arslangulova, B. 2017. Factors influencing active travel to primary and secondary schools in Wales. *Transportation Planning and Technology* 40(1), pp. 80-99

Children’s Commissioner for Wales, Special Mission: School Journeys Survey

<https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/school-journeys-e-05.pdf>

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## Sources of advice and support

### Sustrans Cymru’s Active Journeys Programme

This Welsh Government funded programme provides free advice and support to schools that want to increase levels of walking and cycling to school. Active Journeys incorporates a range of engaging activities helps to build the confidence, enthusiasm and skills needed to help form new active travel habits. These activities and lessons support schools' efforts in achieving Eco-Schools and Healthy Schools awards as well as working towards Sustrans Active Travel School Award which recognises excellence in sustainable travel. More details can be found [here](#).

### Living Streets’ WOW Travel Tracker (Bilingual Tool)

With WOW Travel Tracker, pupils who travel actively to school each week e.g. walking, cycling or scooting, are rewarded with a monthly badge, helping build healthy habits for a lifetime. The web-based system records all modes of travel to school and can be used on classroom interactive whiteboards, PCs and iPads for pupils to input their journeys each day.

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<sup>41</sup> Sarah J Jones, Huw Brunt, Public Health Wales, Safeguarding the health and well-being of future generations by introducing Wales-wide 20mph speed limits, 2016

It also offers schools and local authorities a comprehensive method of gaining valuable insights into school travel habits especially when used in conjunction with the free WOW classroom resources or any other active travel initiatives.

The WOW Travel Tracker uses icons instead of pupil's names, but classrooms have the option to display name tags should they wish to. To find out more about the WOW Travel Tracker programme see [here](#) or contact Living Streets on 02073774900

### **Living Street's Family Walk to School Kit (free online)**

With step-by-step advice for stress-free walks and safer streets, this toolkit helps to get families walking to school. Aimed at parents and carers, the guide offers ideas and advice to make the walk to school easier and more fun for everyone. You can download Living Streets' Family Walk to School Toolkit from [here](#).

**Welsh Cycling** has a number of programmes which may be useful to schools who wish to increase levels of cycling. Its key resource for learning to ride is [here](#). Schools can also access training for their staff to enable them to deliver the balance bike activities, see [here](#). For riding on the road and advice on riding in traffic (primarily for adults) see [here](#). For social riding, families and group rides see [here](#). Pages for young people are [here](#).

Welsh Cycling is creating a skills award package to help young people develop their bike handling skills, we anticipate this launching late 2021. Contact [Georgina.harper@welshcycling.co.uk](mailto:Georgina.harper@welshcycling.co.uk) for further information. If your school is interested in affiliating to Welsh Cycling, please contact your local development officer.

## **Contacts**

### **Cycling UK**

<https://www.cyclinguk.org/>

[cycling@cyclinguk.org](mailto:cycling@cyclinguk.org)

01483 238300

### **Living Streets**

<https://www.livingstreets.org.uk/about-us/wales>

[Wales@livingstreets.org.uk](mailto:Wales@livingstreets.org.uk)

07714 616589

### **Sustrans Cymru**

<https://www.sustrans.org.uk/about-us/our-work-in-wales/>

[schoolswales@sustrans.org.uk](mailto:schoolswales@sustrans.org.uk)

02920 650602

### **Welsh Cycling**

Cycling Development Officer South East Wales

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## Further Reading

[How to get more children walking to school - A best practice guide by Living Streets](#)

[Swap the School Run for a School Walk Living Streets](#)

[Sustrans position on the school journey and physical activity](#)

Cardiff Council have a whole section of their website dedicated to Active Travel Schools. Whilst it is aimed at schools in Cardiff, there are lots of useful ideas that can be used by schools anywhere in Wales. You can access it [here](#).

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## About the Cross-Party Group on the Active Travel Act

The Cross-Party Group on the Active Travel Act is an organisation established by Senedd Members from four different political parties with the aim of raising awareness of the Active Travel Act and its implementation.

The Chair of the Group is Huw Irranca-Davies MS and the Secretary is Chris Roberts. More information on the Group and its activities can be found [here](#).

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