

# Going back to school

Advice for schools on promoting active travel & using space to maintain social distance



Managing a safe return to school presents a number of challenges for schools and head teachers.

For pick-up and drop-off, schools will need to effectively manage timings (perhaps staggering arrival and departure) and space (at the school and in the roads around the school).

Many families have been enjoying walking, running, scooting and cycling as part of their daily exercise. It's a great opportunity to keep this going when schools go back. Many of us have experienced how we can maintain distance from others while travelling actively, including making use of the quieter roads even if that is to briefly step into them to move around people.

Parked cars and traffic around the school makes it difficult to safely maintain distance. Instead space can be used to create active travel corridors. The UK government has produced emergency statutory guidance for local authorities to do just this.

Our surveys show that pupils would prefer to travel actively if they were given the choice. Children arrive at school fresh and ready to learn. The streets around school are safer with less congestion. It's healthy for us all and it's also good for the planet (and doesn't create air pollution around the school).

We think active travel will be an important tool in tackling Covid-19. Collectively we will be healthier and stronger. Studies have linked severity of Covid-19 symptoms to poor air quality, which is made worse if there is lots of traffic around the school.



Over one-third of pupils would like to cycle to school if they could.



Active journeys to school contribute on average 17 minutes of MVPA (Moderate to Vigorous Physical Activity) for primary school children.



Active travel to school can increase a child's concentration level by up to 4 hours.

Sustrans is the charity making it easier for people to walk and cycle.

[www.sustrans.org.uk](http://www.sustrans.org.uk)

Registered Charity No. 326550 (England and Wales) SC039263 (Scotland).

## What the school can do

- Contact Sustrans and your local authority about School Streets. School Streets tackles the congestion, poor air quality and road safety concerns that many schools experience, by restricting motor traffic at the school gates for a short period of time, generally at drop-off and pick-up times. School Streets can help ensure physical distancing around the school.
- Contact Sustrans and your local authority about the possibility of suspending parking bays, removing traffic lanes, discouraging through traffic or temporarily closing streets to traffic to allow for the widening of footways, pop-up cycle lanes and the development of a safe active travel network to the school.
- Encourage parents to choose active travel modes when their children return, sending a letter explaining the safety problems congestion around the school creates.
- Identify an off-road park-and-stride location 5-10 minutes walk away from the school. This could be a supermarket or a council car park. If there is a charge, discuss with the landowner an amnesty during drop-off and pick-up times given the circumstances. Let parents know about it.
- Use marker cones both inside and outside school to encourage physical distancing.
- Allow bike and scooter parking on school walls/fences avoiding grouping at pods/shelters.
- Discuss opening as many school entrances as possible with your site agent. Let parents know how they can best access the school site.
- Remind children about slowing, stopping and giving space, especially those scooting and cycling. Explain why they should do this and they will be more likely to listen.
- Encourage parents to give older children (Y4 and above) responsibility for getting themselves to and from school. This helps their road confidence and reduces the amount of people around the school.

## How Sustrans can help

Sustrans can help you establish a plan for managing the space around the school to ensure families can get to and home from school safely. We can liaise with your local authority to see how they can support your ambitions.

Sustrans can provide educational resources that help you maximise indoor and outdoor space for education. This includes activities that reinforce current social distancing guidelines, build confidence and understanding as well as meet curriculum objectives. For core project schools, this might include on-site officer support.

Stay in touch with us. Share your ideas and concerns. We can work with local authority officers and school staff.

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We expect traffic-free space in town and city centres when we shop, but why not also outside schools, where our children go every school day?