

Introduction

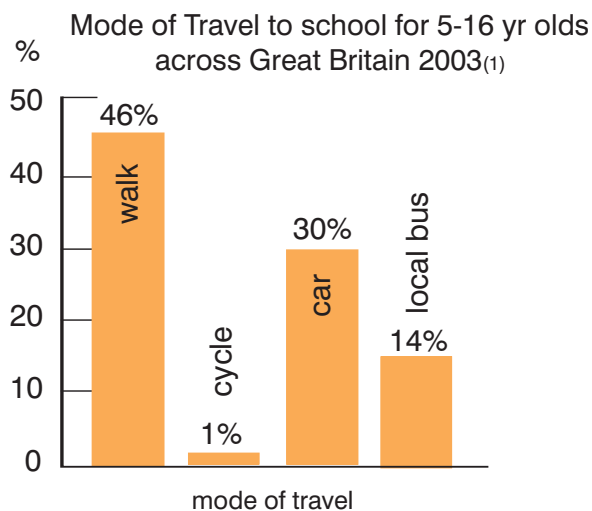
Safe Routes to Schools aim to enable more young people to walk and cycle to school. They usually involve a series of highway measures supported by other community and school projects making roads safer and providing the infrastructure and skills to make walking and cycling a popular choice.

With average distances for school journeys increasing, busier lifestyles and fears over safety, the number of 5-16 year olds travelling to school by car has doubled since 1985.⁽¹⁾ By creating Safe Routes to Schools we have a great opportunity to reverse this current trend.

Safe Routes to Schools provide health, personal development and educational benefits for young people, and safer roads and cleaner air for the entire community.

Creating Safe Routes to Schools

Identifying dangerous streets or parts of young peoples' journey is the first step in creating a Safe Route to School. Busy roads with no safe places to cross, streets with inadequate pavements and routes with no cycle lanes are common problems but can be resolved with physical measures such as these:



Department for
Transport

The **Safe Routes to Schools** project is co-ordinated by Sustrans and provides support to local authorities, schools and parents. Sustrans is the UK's leading sustainable transport charity and works on practical projects to encourage people to walk, cycle and use public transport to benefit health and the environment.

National Cycle Network Centre, 2 Cathedral Square, College Green, Bristol, BS1 5DD



Safe Routes to Schools



- Traffic calming measures, lower speed limits, speed cushions
- Zebra, puffin, pelican or toucan crossings
- Central refuges
- Paths exclusively for cyclists & pedestrians

However, highway changes alone are not enough to make a Safe Routes to Schools project successful. The involvement of the school community is vital if we are to see a real shift towards walking and cycling. Initiatives that might be considered are:

- A School Travel Plan and action group - to consult with pupils and parents, create an action plan and take initiatives forward
- Cycle storage - to provide a secure place for pupils' bikes
- Pedestrian and cycle training - to ensure young people have the necessary skills
- Bike maintenance sessions - to help young people keep their bikes roadworthy and safe
- Crossing patrols - to support young people in crossing busy roads and difficult junctions.
- Walking buses or cycle trains - to enable children to travel in a group and parents to share responsibility.
- Alterations to the school entrance or timetable - to allow pedestrians and cyclists to arrive safely away from vehicles.
- Classroom activities - to raise awareness of school travel issues with pupils and promote the school's initiatives.

The benefits of Safe Routes to Schools

Healthier lifestyles

The journey to school can make a significant contribution to the one hour per day of moderate physical exercise that the Department for Health recommends for young people. The government's Health Select Committee believes providing safe routes to school for walking and cycling to be very important in the battle against obesity.

Not only are walking and cycling both excellent forms of physical activity, they are very practical ways of getting exercise without needing to spend any extra time or money and fit in easily to most people's everyday lives.

For more information see the Health Benefits Information Sheet.

Safer roads for all

The amount of traffic on our roads can make them dangerous places and this is the reason why many parents feel an obligation to drive their children to school. Encouragingly, road safety is improving and during 2003 child road casualties fell by 8%⁽²⁾.

SRS schemes make roads safer, especially for pedestrians and cyclists, giving more parents the confidence to let their children travel to school independently. This has the effect of reducing the number of cars on the streets and making them safer still.

For more information see Staying Safe on the Streets Information Sheet.

Less pollution and congestion

With 1 in 5 cars on the road during the morning rush hour involved in the school run Safe Routes to Schools have a real impact on local air quality

and traffic volume. The average school journey is 2.7 miles, a distance that could easily be cycled. For many it is less and therefore walkable.

Far from being protected from fumes, children who are driven to school are actually being exposed to high levels of pollution. Motorists and their passengers face pollution levels inside a car two or three times higher than those experienced by pedestrians.⁽³⁾

Greater independence and freedom

A knock-on effect of fears for our children's safety is the increase in parental supervision. Only one quarter of 5-16 year olds travel to school alone.⁽¹⁾ Walking and cycling to school are good ways for children to gain confidence and make friends. Surveys show that these are the ways children would prefer to get to school if they were given the choice.⁽⁴⁾

Increased academic achievement

Children who walk and cycle to school arrive more alert and ready to learn. Research from California suggests that these children also achieve better academic results than those who arrive by car or bus.⁽⁵⁾

Involvement in Safe Routes to Schools

Safe Routes to Schools projects are co-operative ventures between local authorities, school staff, pupils, parents and local residents. Everyone has a role to play and the more people involved in supporting a scheme the more likely it is to succeed.

Government

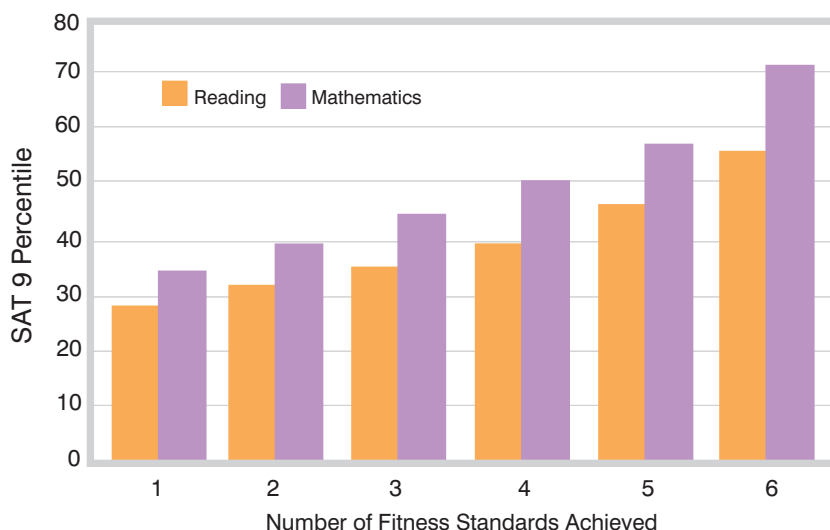
Governments across the UK are supportive of Safe Routes to School schemes and reducing dependency on the car for journey to and from schools. For country specific information visit our website.

“We are determined to ensure that cycling and walking to school become a safe and healthy option for children and reassure parents that their children are safe when travelling to and from school,” Alistair Darling, Government Minister

For more information on government policy, visit our website.



2001 grade 5 SAT 9 Physical Fitness⁽⁵⁾



Local Authorities

Each local authority will have a School Travel Advisor, School Travel Plan Officer or School Travel Co-ordinator who can support your school travel projects. Email schools@sustrans.org.uk or call 0117 915 0100 to find out who to contact in your area.

Schools

A whole school approach is vital for Safe Routes to Schools projects to be effective. They can easily be integrated into the school curriculum and can be a key part of Healthy Schools initiatives and Eco Schools projects. Look in the Routes 2 Action section of our website for curriculum links and ideas for lessons.

The community

Parents, the police and local organisations all have something to contribute, from running a walking bus to providing funding. Developing a school travel plan is a good way to involve everyone. For more information see Developing a School Travel Plan information sheet.

Funding Safe Routes to Schools

There is some money available for Safe Routes to Schools schemes from UK governments. The way in which this money is allocated and distributed varies for each country. Local authorities allocate money to Safe Routes to Schools through their highways and road safety budgets. Visit our website for details of current funding opportunities.

Don't forget that there are many very effective things you can do with no financial cost.

References

1. Department for Transport (2004) National Travel Survey: 2003 (revised July 2004), London: DfT
2. DfT (2003) Road Casualties Great Britain 2003. Annual Report, London: TSO
3. Environmental Transport Association Trust (1997) Comparative Pollution Exposure of Road Users
4. Young TransNet online travel surveys: www.youngtransnet.org.uk
5. California Department of Education (2002) State study proves physically fit kids perform better academically, News Release 12/10/02



Further information

Visit the Safe Routes to Schools website www.saferoutestoschools.org.uk for:

- latest news and information on Safe Routes to Schools
- specific information on each of the UK regions
- downloadable resources including other information sheets
- case studies, curriculum materials and newsletters

For Safe Routes to Schools enquiries call 0117 915 0100 or email schools@sustrans.org.uk

Sustrans would like to thank everyone who has contributed photography including its own staff and Kai, Leeds City Council and Julia Bayne.

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