

Benefits of Active School Travel

www.sustrans.org.uk/schooltravel

School Travel initiatives bring many benefits including:

- fewer child casualties and road accidents
- healthier lifestyles
- safer roads for everyone, especially pedestrians and cyclists
- less pollution and congestion
- greater independence and freedom.

You can read more about these benefits in full by downloading our *Health Benefits and Facts and Figures* infosheets from the Resource section of our website, or contact us for hard copies.

Other benefits include:

- physically active students are generally more alert, better students
- the development of the 'whole student'
- active travel can fulfil National Curriculum requirements
- it can help keep you fit and healthy
- being self-reliant for travel brings greater independence
- it's also fun!

Physically active students are more alert

Walking or cycling to school makes children more alert and ready to face the school day than if they had been sitting in a car. Much research suggests that educational achievement improves in line with increased physical activity. It has even been shown that when you take hours out of the academic curriculum for physical activity, academic grades actually rise.

School Travel projects can also motivate pupils by generating interest in relevant, local issues and have been linked to raising academic standards in schools. Used as a topic for GCSE geography coursework:

"Our project produced results 30% better than in previous years, a rise in standards that can be attributed to the sense of ownership and involvement the group experienced from the Safe Routes to Schools project."

Melanie Fenn-Smith, Geography teacher, Wallingford School.



Development of the 'whole student'

For many schools, in spite of intense pressure to raise academic standards, the development of the 'whole child' still remains a priority. At Hamilton Primary School in High Wycombe, a child's social development, the acquisition of life skills and the pursuit of a healthy lifestyle are seen as being of paramount importance.

"Safe Routes to School has been an excellent vehicle to help us teach our goal."
Mike Ashford, Head teacher, Hamilton Primary School.

Enhanced development and education of a young person involved in a Safe Routes project is gained through:

- their direct involvement in the project
- encouraging a wider perspective and understanding of their local area
- providing safer, healthier and fun routes to school.

Fulfils National Curriculum requirements

School travel can be used as a topic to deliver the English, Welsh and Scottish National Curricula as well as the Curriculum Cymreig. The topic can be applied in all areas including Citizenship, English, Maths and Geography. We have free Curriculum guides to download in the Resources section of our website, identifying activities related to the programmes of study in most subjects.

"The Sustrans pack allowed us to easily incorporate Safe Routes to Schools as a curriculum topic in maths, languages, design and technology, physical education and art, providing fun and stimulating activities for Year 5 pupils."

Angela Oram, Road Safety Officer, Powys County Council.



School Travel initiatives can also help fulfil the governments Every Child Matters agenda and are often considered favourably in OfSTED reporting. There are many free curriculum resources out there. Ask your council's School Travel Advisor and have a look at the Useful Links section under Resources on our website, www.sustrans.org.uk/schooltravel.

Keeps you fit and healthy

*"I'd like to cycle to school because it gives you exercise and you'll get to school early."
"I would like to walk to school because you keep fit and see things."
Pupils at Temple Moor High School, Leeds.*

An hour of physical activity a day – such as walking or cycling to school – makes a real difference to keeping fit and healthy. Yet surveys have shown that 29% of boys and 43% of girls under 16 have less than the 60 minutes of physical activity on most days recommended by the government. One 2007 study from the University of Bath of over 5000 children found that over 99% of girls and 95% of boys didn't reach these levels! This is one reason why there has been a rapid rise in obesity and overweight children over the last 10 years, and will have serious implications for our children's health in later life (research by Kings College, London).

Research by Professor Roger Mackett of the University College London, has also shown that for primary school children, calories burnt in weekly school travel exceed those burnt in two hours of PE per week.

Greater independence and it's fun!

Several reports in 2007-08 highlighted the concerns over a generation of 'cotton-wool' kids who are not allowed to cycle or play outside and consequently have little ability to assess risk when they are older, or to even know their own neighbourhood.

Restricting young people's independence and mobility not only deprives them of the freedoms enjoyed by previous generations, such as being allowed to play outside and visit friends on their own, but will also have potentially serious impacts on the physical health and mental development of future generations.

"Having a bike and having more independence may make you more inclined to do things. It's important to me that I have my independence."

"Because I've done cycle training and there are cycle paths, my mum and dad let me go further because they know I'm safe."

"One of the main advantages of cycling is that it's so cheap!"

– comments from school pupils in York.

School exchanges to Odense in Denmark (where over 60% of school children cycle to school and where there has been an 85% reduction in child casualties) brought the following responses from British school pupils:

"We could go to other people's houses in the evening. Why? Because it's a lot safer there. The Danes were really surprised that in England you are not allowed out in the evenings."

– Callum, King John School, Thundersley, Bentfleet.

"Children in Odense enjoy a level of freedom and safety which is impossible in York given the traffic and road layout."

– Pupils from schools in York.

Further information

Further information can be found in our Infosheets *The Health Benefits of Walking and Cycling to School* and *Safe Routes to Schools*. These are free to download from the [Resources section of our website](#).



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