

North Central Sustrans Active School Travel Programme

Summer Term 2019 Newsletter

I'd love to hear from you...

I'm Beverley Gaston, Sustrans' schools officer for North Central. Please get in touch if you have any great school stories or would like to find out more about our schools work.

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Message from Sustrans ...

The Active School Travel Programme is an exciting initiative for schools who wish to see more of their pupils choosing an **active and healthy** journey to school. The aim of the programme is to increase the number of pupils walking, cycling and scooting to school.

Sustrans is being funded by the **Public Health Agency** and the **Department for Infrastructure** to continue delivering the Active School Travel Programme across Northern Ireland until 2021.

Sustrans has been delivering this successful programme for the past three years. In 2017-18 within participating schools, there number of pupils travelling actively increased from 34% to 44%.

We are currently working with over 340 schools across Northern Ireland. Please visit our [website](#) where you can learn more about the programme and download newsletters from other areas.



Our School Streets day at Donegall Road Primary—see inside for more

Welcoming 10 new schools to North Central!

The 2019-20 year promises to be yet another exciting year of activities, events and lots more! Our schools team have already been making use of the summer break to create new lessons, challenges and travel initiatives to help schools encourage a culture of active travel at each of their schools.

Here in the North Central region we've selected 10 new schools to join the programme, with 60 new schools getting a place across the country. So it's a big welcome on board to: Ben Madigan Prep, Dunmurry PS, Edenbrooke PS, Moyle PS, Olderfleet PS, Parkgate PS, Silversteam PS, Springfield PS, St Clare's PS, and Sunnylands PS.

It's been great to get out to visit some of these schools already to meet the new Active Travel Champions and hear their enthusiasm and ideas for the new term. I'm looking forward to meeting the others and getting started helping pupils to walk, cycle and scooter for more of their 'school run' journeys.

Meanwhile it's welcome back to the Level 2 and 3 schools for another year of active travel, building on what has already been achieved. Whether it's repeating favourite activities or trying out new ones, there will be plenty to keep the pupils inspired.

Sustrans is the charity that's enabling people to travel by foot, bike or public transport for more of the journeys we make every day. It's time we all began making smarter travel choices. Make your move and support Sustrans today. www.sustrans.org.uk

Sustrans School Streets

Sustrans School Streets is a test programme that aims to ease congestion, poor air quality and road safety concerns that many schools experience during drop-off and pick-up times, by facilitating timed traffic restrictions on the road outside the school gates.

This approach was developed in Italy, and then brought to the UK by Edinburgh, Hackney, Camden and Solihull. It has now been picked up by a number of London boroughs, with School Streets also being known as Healthy School Streets and School Car-Free Zones.



Streets around schools are often dominated by idling cars, speeding traffic and bad parking during school run time, resulting in air pollution and an environment that is generally unpleasant for walking and cycling.

By demonstrating that closing roads outside schools at drop-off and pick-up times is achievable, measuring the impact and sharing our findings, we aim to encourage more regular street closures and inspire more schools to try this approach. Ultimately, we want to affect a permanent change in the way children travel to school.

Across the UK Sustrans has been piloting School Streets, where the street outside a school is closed for the day to show what it could be like without traffic. This year, starting during the Big Pedal, over 40 schools across the UK have taken part.

Here in Northern Ireland, our first street closure was outside Donegall Road Primary in Belfast. Taking place in May to coincide with our Feet First Families day, we closed the road outside the school for the day. Pupils could enjoy safely walking, cycling and scooting to school, with no worries over crossing the road to get to school. We also used the extra space for lots of activities with classes during the day.

It was lovely seeing the street being used by pupils and families, especially on the way home. Rather than juggling with parked cars to cross the road then rushing on home, families stayed around in the street, chatting over a cup of tea or playing with friends. Activities were very simple, with balls, skipping ropes and playground chalks while those who had brought bikes and scooters could safely play on these.

Walk to School Week

Walk to School Week is a big event for lots of schools in the summer term, with many running it as an annual event.

From a simple week that promotes walking to school to a week of events such as walking buses, schools can be flexible and make it work for themselves. Some schools gave pupils stamp cards challenging them to make a certain number of active journeys, while others linked it in with a Feet First Families day.

Whatever schools did, it made a big difference, as the post from Greenisland Primary school below shows. Instead of the usual line of cars blocking the road outside school to drop off children, there is just one. They achieved this through organising five different park and stride locations, by speaking to local businesses and churches. There really was no excuse to drive!



Donegall Road Primary, with the street filled with families instead of cars



Ditch the stabilisers



This always seems to feature in the newsletter, because it is such a popular activity. Again, over this term we've had *lots* of new first time cyclists in the North Central region!

The final sessions of the year were slightly different, as Carnmoney PS organised 'learn to ride' sessions. This is a very similar format, but for older pupils who haven't yet learnt to ride. This could be due to lack of interest, opportunity or confidence, or other issues making balancing and cycling harder to master.

The pupils did really well, with lots of them getting to the point of cycling all by themselves for the very first time, some before the session had even officially started much to their parent's surprise!



It is worth quietly finding out if there are older pupils in your school who would benefit from a learn to ride session. Cycling is a great life skill—not least with many going cycling or mountain biking as part of their P7 residential—and if children don't learn by the end of primary they often never do.

If you'd like to hold a ditch the stabilisers or learn to ride day at your school please get in touch.

The photos show some of our Primary One and Two cyclists from this term, from Ashgrove PS (both photos above) and St Bernard's PS (right)



Cycles and scooters

Even once you have learnt to ride, there are still lots of skills to practise, so we offer skill sessions tailored to all ages and abilities of cyclists. From the basics of controlling your bike to the skills needed to head out on short on-road journeys, there is a huge range of games and activities to learn these in a fun way.



There are also scooter skill sessions, usually aimed at Primary Four and Five, combining a mixture of games with discussions about how to scoot safely on pavements and how to cross a road.

Here are a few snaps of skill sessions from the summer term.



Above: Primary 6 pupils in Ballyclare Primary during their National Standard Level 1 cycle training.

Right: Scooter skill sessions at Victoria Primary, Carrickfergus.

School Mark awards

The School Mark awards, with Bronze, Silver and Gold levels, are to recognize schools promoting active and sustainable travel to their pupils, parents and staff. Over the year lots of schools have achieved awards, so well done to their hard working champions and pupil groups for their organization, and to all the pupils and staff for supporting the activities and most importantly getting active on their way to and from school.

Congratulations on achieving the Bronze award go to: Carnmoney PS, Corran PS, Greenisland PS and Larne and Inver PS

Some schools in their second year of the programme also wrapped up their Bronze award in the Autumn term: Harmony PS, Hollybank PS, Mercy PS, St Anne's PS, St Bernard's PS, and St James' PS.

Huge congratulations to Mercy PS and St James' PS who then spent the rest of the year working towards the next level, and got their Silver award at the end of Summer term. Other Silver awards over the year went to Botanic PS, Sacred Heart PS, and St Anthony's PS.

Well done to all!

The Daily Mile

Did you know that just 43.4% of children in NI get the recommended 60 minutes of moderated to vigorous intensity physical activity per day. This is the lowest in the UK!



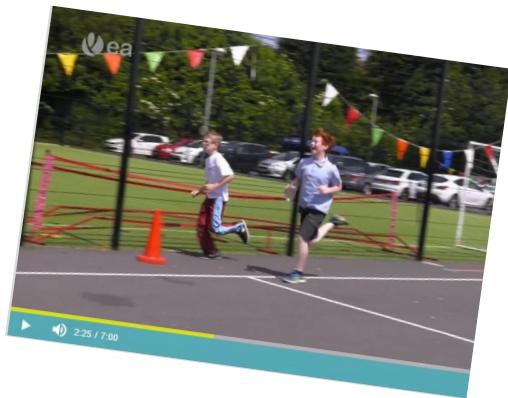
An active journey such as walking, scooting or cycling to and from school is a great way to contribute toward this daily target.

As part of our work in the Active School Travel programme we encourage schools to help pupils to be active not just on the journey to/from school but also during school time, such as through initiatives like 'The Daily Mile'.

If you'd like help to introduce The Daily Mile at your school please get in touch as I can help host introductory assemblies and class sessions. It takes just 15minutes per session with a recommendation of classes doing 3 sessions per week, whilst some schools do it once or twice a week, others every day!

If you'd like to hear feedback directly from other schools check out EA TV for their Daily Mile promotional video to hear from teachers and Principals who have given it a go in their schools.

Link—bit.ly/2NPKvYv posted on EA TV September 2018



There are 237 schools in NI registered with TheDailyMile.co.uk Check out their interactive map to see which schools are already taking part in your area.



Thinking of starting up a Walking bus at your school?

Involving your pupils and parents is a great way to get good support from the get-go.

Eco-Council, School Council or JRSO pupils can lend a hand in the creation, running and promotion of the scheme to ensure you keep it fun, engaging and unique to your school.

Top tips:

- ⇒ Choose a day and give it a cool name like 'Walk on Wednesdays' or 'Fit Fridays'
- ⇒ Reward your walkers by recording participation on a wall-chart and awarding a trophy to the class with the highest % of walkers every month. Even some light touch incentives like Sustrans slap-bands, stickers or a 'No Homework' pass work well!
- ⇒ Publicise it! Get the news out on your website, social media, local press.
- ⇒ Keep safe—always encourage the use of hi-vis vests when travelling actively to school. Risk assess the route, and plan how to safely navigate awkward junctions.



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

- World Car Free Day; Sun 22 Sept 2019
- Walk to School Month; Oct 2019
- Road Safety Week; Mon 18 - Sun 24 Nov 2019
- Sustrans Big Pedal; Wed 22 April - Tue 5 May 2020
- Sustrans Feet First Families; Friday 13 March 2020

Sustrans is grateful for the continued support of our schools work in Northern Ireland from the following:

