

# South Central Sustrans Active School Travel Programme Summer Term 2019 Newsletter

## I'd love to hear from you...

I'm Claire Lundy, Sustrans' schools officer for South 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, the 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.



Teachers put their skills into practice after the training sessions

## Teachers roll their sleeves up at Braniel

Braniel Primary School in Belfast began their third year of the Active School Travel Programme in September 2018 with a determination to help all teachers in the school develop the skills required to help them support their pupils when they are walking, cycling or scooting to school. The school already complete their Daily Mile outside the school grounds, giving their pupils a daily opportunity to practise their road safety skills. They decided that it was time for the teachers to get up to speed on basic bike maintenance and practise teaching pupils cycle skills as well. Throughout the year, the school champions Mrs Carson and Mrs Miller arranged my visits to coincide with staff training on topics ranging from Dr Bike to Ditch the Stabilisers. Mrs Carson would then arrange sessions where teachers had the chance to show off their skills to their pupils, who were really impressed that they had teachers who could help them with their bikes and scooters. I had the great pleasure of watching the teachers at the school deliver a brilliant and engaging Dr Bike Day in March and a really successful Ditch the Stabilisers morning led by Mrs Carson and her army of trained staff helpers in May. Braniel have been taking some great steps towards their School Mark Award progression. With Silver already under their belt they are aiming for Gold, and this is a great example of an independent school doing Active Travel, their way! **This training (and the tools required) are provided free of charge to the schools I work with so please do get in touch if you are interested in adding this to your ongoing school activities.**

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

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# Welcome to our new schools

Another year has begun, the summer holidays flew by as quickly as they ever do! When schools are off, everybody talks about how light the traffic is and how much quieter the roads are when people aren't using their cars to make the school run. More children can be seen out on their bikes and scooters, making their way from their friends' houses, to the shops, or wherever else their summer adventures are taking them. We know from school surveys that even when children are not travelling actively to school, they would prefer to be. We also know that there are lots of reasons why they don't; from parents heading straight on to work or simply just not having a safe route to take on their bike or scooter. The Active Travel Programme works with schools to improve active travel in a way that suits the families in their school and helps them find solutions to the barriers that they face. This term we welcome the following 10 new schools to the Active School Travel Programme in our area and I look forward to seeing where they take the programme in their schools.

- Ballinderry Primary School**
- Ballymacrickett Primary School**
- Downpatrick Primary School**
- Drumlins Integrated Primary School**
- Holy Family Primary School, Teconnaught**
- Our Lady and St Patrick's Primary School, Downpatrick Spa Primary School**
- St Colman's Primary School, Lambeg**
- St Joseph's Primary School, Ballycruttle**
- Sullivan Upper Prep Department**

# St Colmgall's Bike Wash



When pupils on the School Council at St Colmgall's PS in Bangor planned a Dr Bike Day for pupils, they decided to go one better and offer a Bike Wash service on the day as well. Dr Bike is an event that offers pupils a bike and scooter safety check with some minor maintenance like pumping up tyres or oiling chains, completely free of charge!

The School Council made sure that the optional bike wash was low cost and great value and on the day everybody who brought a bike or scooter to school decided to avail of their special offer. With the help of Mrs Hunter their Principal, the P7 team advertised and promoted the event, gathered buckets and sponges and then washed every single bike, as well as helping me pumping up tyres. The P7 team did a great job; pupils were delighted to pick up their sparkling clean, freshly serviced bikes and scooters at the end of the day and the team even managed to throw a few wet sponges at each other in between all the hard work!

# Feet First (Forge) Families

Feet First Families is an initiative that encourages schools to close their car park and reclaim their space for play and learning whilst enabling families to walk, cycle or scoot to school instead of taking the car. This is a one day event with the aim of showing families that if they enjoy it they can make a long term change to how they travel. Forge Integrated PS closed their car park on their Sports Day to



Forge IPS has traffic free routes through nearby Ormeau Park

enable them to use the extra space for their senior competitions. When you take a look at Forge's grounds on Google, you get a sense of just how much space this gave them to use on Sports Day, the equivalent of a whole additional playground! On a day when many parents were staying after the school run, this extra capacity gave everybody a bit more space to move, and more room to breathe; not least because they had significantly reduced the number of cars being driven to the school gates on the morning in question. During drop-off

and pick-up times the streets around a school are usually packed with traffic, engines idling while parents wait to collect pupils. The school encouraged parents to leave the car at home completely if they could. A local church gave teachers the option to Park and Stride. The parents I spoke to on the morning commented how much more relaxed they felt without having to queue up in the car park to drop-off, and those who were regular active travellers were delighted to see more people like them, out on a pollution-free school run.



Space to breathe: the empty car park became a playground

This is a great way to test the waters for a school wishing to take a bit more control of the traffic flow through their grounds in the mornings or, like Forge, schools who want to use their space a bit differently for whole school events. This flexible initiative can be held on any day in any term; this year we will be supporting even more schools to find a Feet First Families event that fits them.

## School Mark Success

Pupils at Grey Abbey Primary School celebrated the end of their first year on the Active School Travel Programme by picking up a Bronze School Mark Award. The school on the Ards Peninsula made great strides towards being a more active, healthy school community by encouraging pupils to walk to school, or to Park and Stride from the other end of the village.

Led by Mrs Gamble, the school's Active Travel Champion, they have tried their hand at all the activities and incentives on offer through the programme this year. From a Walking Bus to Big Pedal to Scooter Skills, you name it; they've done it! The school partnered up with their neighbour, a popular restaurant, to encourage parents to ditch the car for the school run and inject a little activity into their mornings, and managed to increase the number of active travellers in their school by over 20%! Congratulations Grey Abbey!



Grey Abbey PS found great success with Park and Stride

## Champion Corner

Each termly newsletter will feature a short profile of a Champion (or Team of Champions) from one of my amazing schools, sharing good practice of how they create Active Travel opportunities for their pupils.

This term's featured Champion is **Miss O'Riordan** from **St Mary's PS, Killyleagh**. Just a stone's throw away from Killyleagh Castle, Miss O'Riordan oversees the budding brains of the school's P4/5 class, who recently showed off their Active Travel knowledge in a nail-biting Active Travel Quiz before the end of term. St Mary's have just completed their third year on our Active School Travel Programme and just received their Silver School Mark Award in recognition of their excellence in sustainable travel. Miss O'Riordan runs a series of successful initiatives throughout



each year, including Ditch the Dark and Walk to School Week and has also enjoyed a brilliant first term as the school's Cycling Proficiency Instructor. With several Big Pedal victories under their belt, St Mary's have seen their Active Travel numbers rise from 45% at the beginning of the programme to over 85% this year.

## Schools Out (for a bike ride)!



Pedal ready!

One of the best ways to consolidate riding skills for young people is to enable them to put them to use outside the playground.

This term my colleague, Sarah (Communities Team) and I had the pleasure of taking a group of P6 students from two primary schools in Belfast on a led ride along the traffic free route that links their two schools.

The Connswater Community Greenway stretches along a corridor through the East of the city, with a mostly traffic free section running from The Hollow at Elmgrove Primary School, to Orangefield Park near Orangefield Primary School.



Pupils enjoyed chatting to each other on their cycle

On 20<sup>th</sup> June, which also happened to be Clean Air Day, a group of pupils from each school made the journey by bike to visit each other and share some of their best Active Travel work from the year. Elmgrove pupils presented an assembly on Air Pollution and Orangefield pupils showcased their successful Feet First Families car park closure days. We were accompanied by Mrs McVittie from Elmgrove and Ms Greenwood from Orangefield; what teacher wouldn't enjoy a spin out of school on a sunny day? The two schools were already making plans to meet up again on the greenway and enjoy more active journeys together in the new year.

Our recent teacher feedback surveys showed that 63% of teachers would be interested in having a led ride or a bicycle bus for their school and this is something I would be delighted to assist with; so if you are an interested school please do get in touch!



## Sustrans School Streets

During this year's Big Pedal, Sustrans piloted an initiative called School Streets across the UK, with over 40 schools taking part between March and May. The programme, where the street outside a school is closed for the day to show what it could be like without traffic, aims to ease congestion, poor air quality and road safety concerns for parents and teachers during peak times at the school gate. A YouGov poll, carried out for Sustrans, surveyed 840 teachers across the UK about their attitudes towards air pollution and the actions they think should be to improve air quality outside the school gates. This revealed that 63% of teachers would support a ban on motor vehicles outside the school gates during drop off and pick up time.



In Northern Ireland we held our first street closure at Donegall Road PS in Belfast, where the street was closed to traffic for the day on Friday 17<sup>th</sup> May. The school used the extra space for lessons and activities during the day and held a street party for families once the bell rang for the end of the day. We used our Street Kit resource, a system of bright and colourful interlocking links, to create temporary seating and traffic calming. The Schools Team will be using Street Kit with selected schools across the region this coming year, so look out for it at a school near you.

## 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:

