

# School Travel Initiatives

a practical guide to pupil participation



“Politicians often refer to us children as being the future... But we are living right now. Our childhood is happening now and not in the future. We do not think it is enough for decision-makers to speak a lot about children and how important they are. We want them to listen to us.”<sup>1</sup>



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This guide draws on case studies and uses terminology from England, however, the principles and examples of participation set out in the document are relevant to school travel initiatives across the UK.

## Overview

Innovative and meaningful participation of young people in school travel plans (STPs) and associated initiatives is a key factor to their success. This document aims to share some practical examples from schools and inspire those championing school travel to do similar. Our information sheet Pupil's engagement and participation in School Travel Plans (FS20) sets out children's rights in decision making in the UK.

Evidence shows schools with high levels of pupil participation enjoy greater success integrating school travel into the ethos and working of the school and have, as a result, increased the long-term maintenance and sustainability of their STP. Moreover, initiatives are more likely to be successful and achieve greater modal shift.

Children and young people's participation in a STP is more than completing a travel survey. Participation means the direct involvement of children in decision-making about matters that affect their lives, whether individually or collectively.<sup>2</sup> There is an intrinsic value in being asked for their view, a matter of pride and respect, though many make it clear that their views should have an impact – a tangible outcome.

"If they're not going to use our ideas, they should at least tell us."<sup>3</sup>

"They should come back and tell us what happened. They should give you a reason, because it could be that [your idea] wasn't good enough – as long as they think about it."<sup>3</sup>

## Benefits and implications of participation

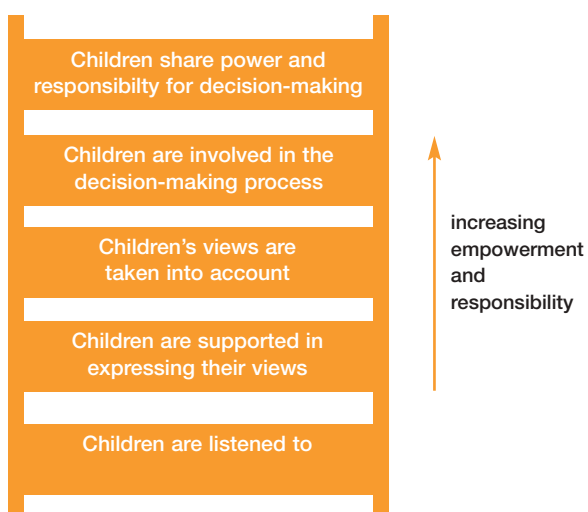
The benefits of participation include enabling children to develop to their fullest and fostering the development of citizenship; children and young people need to feel that they are active citizens with a voice. Pupil participation can help to improve policies within the school as participation leads to more accurate, relevant decisions, which are better informed and hence more likely to be implemented.

Evidence suggests that children and young people not only have much to offer in terms of their participation and ideas for change but that children do not exercise rights irresponsibly; rather they understand that doing things responsibly can open opportunities to do other things.<sup>4</sup>

In England, the Self-Evaluation Framework for school inspections requires a school to demonstrate how it seeks to involve pupils in its work and development, assessing the extent to which it seeks out, values and acts on their views. A school travel plan is an ideal means of achieving this. For example, the following was included in the 2005 inspection report for Corton Church Of England Voluntary Aided Primary School in Suffolk under the section on Quality of provision, Care, Guidance and Support:

'A strong emphasis on children's safety and well-being in all activities encourages children to support and care for each other effectively. For example, a recent project encouraged children and parents to walk part or all of the way to school. Two older children take on the role of road safety officers in the school and run a competition each term to make others aware of the dangers on the road.'

### Levels of Participation<sup>5</sup>



One way to conceptualise participation is through the 'ladder of participation'. Pupil participation can raise challenging questions about the balance of power between adults and children and young people. The different levels of participation can be represented as a 'ladder' in which each rung represents increased empowerment and shared responsibility.

## Case studies: approaches to pupils' views and participation in school travel work

### Assessing pupil travel needs

#### The Wakeman School, Shrewsbury

A school travel group was set up in 2004 with representatives from all the year groups. Led by a geography teacher and the Eco Schools co-ordinator, pupils were consulted on STP priorities. A need for cycle parking provision was identified and in September 2004, a 40-space cycle shelter was opened accompanied by a Bike to School day with a bikers' breakfast and Dr Bike service. 80 cyclists were recorded on the day. Not only has the STP been used as evidence towards the Eco Schools award but two students delivered a presentation to over twenty schools at the local authority school travel plan seminar in 2005.

In March 2005 students organised a Green Fair which involved a range of organisations and a display provided by the school travel group. Local Fitness First assisted with exercise bikes and health and fitness tests and the local authority provided pedometers. This was followed in November 2005 with focus group work with female students to ascertain why more girls don't cycle. Lots of ideas were provided, including separate cycle parking, changes to uniform rules and better changing facilities.

#### Frank F Harrison Community School, Walsall

The school started a safer routes to school project in 2002 and a BUG (Bicycle User Group) was established. Pupils were involved with a cycle storage project, and after interviewing three companies, selected the new cycle shelter for the school. Pupils also carried out speed surveys on surrounding roads to identify ways to help reduce the problem of speeding cars outside the school. Following their discussions with local authority engineers, a School Zone restricting speeds to 20mph was created outside the school.

The school submitted their approved STP in March 2005. During its development pupils identified the need for improving walking and cycling provisions. As a result a Toucan Crossing has been provided outside the school to encourage more children to cycle to school and a 'dual' path for pedestrians and cyclists will be provided to link to a wider cycle scheme across the estate. With the increased number of cyclists the school BUG worked again with manufacturers to extend the existing cycle storage provision, and in October 2005 an additional shelter was installed at the school.



### **Risedale Community College, Catterick Garrison**

In November 2005 eight pupils from Risedale College met to discuss the bus and coach services to and from their school. These pupils (four boys and four girls) represented each bus and age groups Y7 to Y11. Having been briefed on the purpose of a STP and the part they could play, pupils were asked to write down the route taken by their bus, and think about the main problems associated with their individual bus journey.

After each pupil had had the chance to speak, it became obvious that there were some problems that affected most of the buses. These included a poor waiting area, overcrowding and crushing to get on over-full buses, buses that wouldn't come into the school because of the congestion and route problems associated with the Catterick Races. Several of these issues could be dealt with by the school and be included in the STP, whilst problems associated with the route would be highlighted for the passenger transport group to look at. The meeting enabled the deputy head to discuss and to receive feedback regarding the STP, and in particular how the grant should be spent when it is completed.

### **King Edward VI High School, Stafford**

The development of a STP began in 2004 with a student working party set up to take ownership of it. Instead of using the existing school council the assistant head teacher asked for volunteers that had a keen interest in sustainable travel; five Y11 pupils, the assistant head teacher and the local authority school travel adviser (STA) made up the working group.

At their first meeting the group discussed how the travel plan would help and how to take it forward. The pupils decided between them which questions should be included on the pupil survey form and how these should be issued and then collected to ensure a good return rate. It was suggested that the school council could be used for this purpose, as each tutor group had two council representatives that could be given responsibility for the surveys.

The rate of return for survey responses was over 65%, which was excellent considering pupils had been asked to complete the document in their own time. Involvement of the school council had contributed to this success. Collation of the survey was started at the working party's one-hour Friday meeting. It soon became clear that given the scale of the task it could not be completed in the meetings alone so the Y11 pupils decided to take home a year group of surveys each. One member of the group spent their time preparing spreadsheets that would enable the data to be reviewed for the whole school and year groups.

The survey analysis showed that approximately fifty pupils cycled to school each day with more than 120 who would like to cycle. Pupils' main concern was lack of safe cycle storage and lack of cycle paths in the area, so the working party agreed the grant should be spent on cycle parking. In the interim period a container was bought to lock bikes in during the school day. The school council wrote a cycle code of conduct based on feedback from a pupil consultation.

The surveys had also shown that a small number of pupils were worried about using the school bus, so a bus code of conduct was produced with the consultation of pupils via form group student council representatives.

Other initiatives that were agreed following analysis of pupil surveys were:

- bicycle MOT workshops as part of an alternative curriculum
- travel information added to school web site
- crossing patrol warden relocated to the end of footpath leading directly to main school entrance.

The school has attracted publicity for their work:

- local papers ran a story covering the success of the student working party and took photographs as the Y11 pupils were presented with certificates of achievement
- a local radio station broadcast a live interview from the school with pupils that regularly cycle to school
- local papers ran a story with photographs of the official opening of the cycle parking.

## Designing solutions

### Solent Middle School, Cowes, Isle of Wight

Having observed traffic problems outside the school as part of Y8 geography coursework, pupils made a presentation to the local town council about the issues and their suggested solutions. Although this presentation was extremely well received the local authority wasn't in a position to take action at that time.

Following the appointment of a local authority STA, the work was revisited in autumn 2004, when the school started work on their STP. The working group consisted of a governor, the geography teacher, the school crossing patroller and pupil Lawrence Stant. As well as drawing on the earlier Y8 presentation for evidence, Lawrence designed and analysed the travel surveys of pupils, parents and staff. His work was submitted as part of the STP, which was approved in March 2005. Lawrence later commented:

"It was exciting and gave me an insight into the way councils are run. It was also nice to know that my input had an effect on the end result and I will be able to see the first step of the plan being put into place with road works outside the school gates."

A route put forward by Lawrence formed part of the extension of Sustrans' National Cycle Route 23 to Solent Middle School. The local traffic engineer who designed the route also incorporated the suggestions of pupils Bill Holland and Tom Prangnell. The pupils, who cycle to school, had some very pertinent views which they expressed very clearly at a formal meeting. The traffic engineer commented:

"Having the pupils involved in the design of the safe routes to school scheme from the beginning has been of great benefit in helping to identify the road safety issues faced by the children on their way to and from the school and then in determining the most appropriate engineering solutions."

As well as the engineering measures that will enable pupils to walk and cycle to school, pupils have been empowered by having their views listened to, and seeing that their actions can have a real impact in the local community. Developing the STP in this way has satisfied all the Every Child Matters outcomes, linking particularly to 'enjoy and achieve', 'make a positive contribution', and 'achieve economic well-being'. As teacher Sally Evensen, who has supported pupils in their works, says:

"The pupils have been very enthusiastic and have come up with some extremely good ideas. I have been very impressed with the way they have conducted themselves. I am constantly looking for ways to make the curriculum 'real and relevant' as this is the best opportunity to motivate pupils to achieve their best. It has indeed been a valuable learning experience for them as well as myself."

Not only has the STP been written with pupils, it has built on work led by pupils, and is being implemented by pupils. Pupils Bill Holland and Tom Prangnell have the final word:

"It has been a pleasure to have been part of this scheme and work with such influential adults who are willing to listen to our views. We hope that we have been helpful and are very much behind this project. We are looking forward to seeing Route 23 extended, hopefully in the not so distant future."



### Hamstel Junior School, Southend-on-Sea

In May 2005, Y5 invited a member of the Safer Journeys to School team from the local authority to join them for their geography lesson. Having learned of proposals for a 20mph zone and remodelling of a busy junction north of the school, the class decided to conduct their own survey of the area so that they could compare their ideas with the local authority's proposals.

The exercise turned into a week-long project. Starting with a PowerPoint presentation to three Y5 classes, a discussion followed on the pros and cons of various traffic calming measures such as zebra versus puffin crossings. Pupils thought about the issues associated with the large roundabout to the north of the school; the facilities in place, where traffic might be travelling to, and how secondary school pupils prefer to cross the road rather than use the footbridge.

One lesson was spent on site near the roundabout, making a record of traffic movements off all the roundabout 'arms' and the number of cars that triggered the speed activated signs outside the nearby secondary school. They counted pedestrians using the zebra crossing on Hamstel Road (the road on which the school is sited), and pedestrians crossing the footbridge. They also compared crossing times for pedestrians using the footbridge with those crossing on the dual carriageway.

Each of the counts was undertaken by a small group of pupils who had chosen beforehand what to count or observe so that, together, they could build up a complete picture of the area; this information was included in their final presentations.

Back in the classroom the pupils worked on; making collage maps of road lay-outs, making a new-look roundabout, their ideas for a safe walking environment and recording video presentations of their ideas.

A special 'travel planning' meeting by Y5 was held at the end of the week, at which the video presentations were viewed and the models were displayed. Ideas included diagonal bridges across the roundabout, underpasses, cycle routes, puffin crossings into the middle of the roundabout to cut down crossing time, new improved lighting and more signposts. The local authority safer journeys to school officer attended the meeting to congratulate the children on their work and to explain the



local authority's proposals for traffic calming on Hamstel Road. He was able to discuss similarities between the children's models and the local authority plans – in several cases the children had come up with the same ideas as the professionals.

Y1 pupils at the infant school got involved with a lesson on 'how can we make our environment safer'. Following their classroom discussions, the children wrote to the safer journeys to school team at the local authority listing their ideas for improving safety around the school. Their ideas included 20mph zones, lollipop people, railings and speed bumps.

## Using the curriculum: Citizenship

### Kings Norton Primary, Birmingham

Kings Norton's STP was drafted in 2002, as a direct response to ongoing work in citizenship. The school had already identified a series of activities that they wished to explore in relation to the journey to school - being situated on a busy road into Birmingham causes a lot of problems. The STP was drawn up in consultation with the pupils, staff, governors, and parents of the school. It provided the pupils with a real basis to learn about citizenship; how they can influence the development of environments within school, in the local community and also in the wider global context, while introducing the democratic processes of the country.

Over the last four years pupils have brought about improvements to the school environment as a result of their work. They have urged parents to park safely and developed security measures, working alongside the head teacher and senior management of the school. Locally they have been involved in a number of presentations to local councillors, the chief education officer and the cabinet member for education. In response to their mature attitude and clearly presented case, the children have paved the way for improvements to be made to roads in the local area and security of the local park, all of which links in with the schools commitment to safer routes to school.

### Darton High School, nr Barnsley

At an initial meeting between the local authority STA and the school's citizenship co-ordinators the possibility of the students researching and producing part of the STP via the curriculum was discussed. The approach had already been taken in some of the local primary schools, with pupils being involved in research work and taking part in the decision making process. It soon became apparent that all the work surrounding the STP fitted nicely into KS4 citizenship, meeting criteria 1d, 1f, 2c, 3b and 3c of the programme of study. The STP would account for 40% of the GCSE citizenship marks.

A Y10 class was selected to develop the STP and their work included:

- distributing and collecting 1,200 student survey forms
- establishing four forum groups (car, walk, bike, bus)
- requesting a visit from the team leader of South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive (PTE) and the SAFE manager (safe use of public transport project)
- negotiating with PTE to provide an information board in the school which will be monitored and updated by the student council and will give details of bus routes, passes available and fares
- working with the PTE to look at teenagers' understanding of bus timetables and develop ideas for more understandable presentation
- compiling a video, taking photos and recording the four forum meetings
- undertaking map work to look at the surrounding area and to look at the infrastructure and problems surrounding the school grounds and routes to school
- presenting the STP at a school assembly
- visiting Yorkshire Traction's bus depot to look at how scheduling of the bus routes takes place

It was decided that when the STP was completed the very active student council would take over the role of championing the plan and the associated initiatives.



## Using the curriculum: Geography

### Florence Melly Community Primary School, Liverpool

Children, staff, parents and governors at the school are working together through the STP to make the school journey and the school environment a safe place to support their mission statement:

“To improve our children’s safety and health during the school journey and through the involvement of the whole school community, to contribute to a better and local global environment.”

The travel team worked with TravelWise and the local police to examine the problems distinctive to the school and drew up a plan of traffic calming measures for the vicinity of the school. A neighbourhood road safety committee is being set up with other local schools and the local authority’s road safety team, to look at how to solve problems together.

The curriculum has been adapted so that areas such as geography, under studies of our local area, include a more detailed study of the travel situation. In 2005 a group of Y5 and 6 pupils worked on a ‘Walk To School’ project which included making a video showing some of the dangers on the walk to school. A map was made showing the area around the school and annotated with areas that needed to be made safer with road traffic calming measures. The pupils worked with the cartography department at John Moores University to make a professional version of their map.

The pupils decided the STP capital grant should be spent on measures to increase walking and cycling to school. Two ideas were taken forward: additional cycle storage and a waiting shelter in the yard for parents walking to school to use at the beginning and end of the school day.

### Hammersmith and Fulham Urban Studies Centre

The Centre runs a cross-curricular school travel programme, with specific links to the geography curriculum. The programme involves a number of elements:

- looking at the school’s local area in the past and how it has changed in relation to traffic and transport
- carrying out street work activities; traffic surveys, environmental quality assessments, noise surveys, passenger counts



- peer and local community questionnaire surveys
- meeting and discussing issues with people in the local authority and local community who have an interest in travel plans

The research is brought together and the children make recommendations for their school’s STP. Teachers are encouraged to re-visit the project on an annual basis with the curriculum materials developed for them by the centre. Schools can then compare data year-on-year to establish whether progress has been made in their STP targets.

## Linking to Healthy Schools

### Harrison Primary School, Fareham

The school's STP grew out of the Healthy Schools Initiative in 2003. Two parents, two members of staff and a governor started the process that would see work by the children at the heart of the plan.

At a school council meeting in April 2004 pupil representatives were asked to discuss, then write their ideas about problems faced by pupils during their journey to school, the advantages of walking to school and also possible solutions to perceived problems. A statement written by a Y3 pupil at the meeting is on the cover of the finished STP:

"We need a travel plan because we want to have a less busy road. To do that it would be good to have speed bumps or a person who stands at the corner. We also need it because there will be less cars, less pollution and people will be getting fit."

After this initial work, the school council asked for volunteers to become 'travel planners'. The dedicated core team met six times, discussing problems and possible solutions and producing a questionnaire and newsletter. They finished their initial work at the end of December 2004 by devising and delivering assemblies to introduce the STP to KS1 and 2. The core team who represented the majority of the year groups called themselves the Travel Plan Gang.

The Travel Plan Gang, with support from the local authority and two parents, formulated and sent out a questionnaire to parents and staff. They used the Young TransNet and Multimaps websites for help, and pictures, maps and a digital camera to gain evidence and illustrate their points.

The STP was adopted in April 2005 with a special assembly and a road safety themed day. The Travel Plan Gang ran a competition to design a sign for the nearby leisure centre and supermarket car parks to complement the 'Don't Be A Fool, Slow Down Near The School' sign already in place. The winning design includes the phrase "Be Cool, Park Away From The School". The Travel Plan Gang want to discourage parking in the congested streets around the school and encourage children to walk at least part of the way to school and hope the Road Safety Day will become an annual event.

The Travel Plan Gang meets twice a term to review progress and implementation of their STP. A recent success has been for some parents to be trained to deliver the local authority's Streets Ahead pedestrian training for Y2.

### St Andrew's Primary School, Tiverton

A STP group was established comprising pupils aged between 7 and 11 who were identified as being 'vulnerable', using information drawn from specially designed questionnaires. The aim of the project was to raise self-esteem, lower emotional arousal and anxiety and facilitate learning of the pupils in the group. Nearly all of the pupils walked to school as most lived very close, so each knew well the area where they lived, which helped them have a say about local road safety issues and their community.

The group learnt about the issues of road safety and healthy travel to school. The approach was based on the 'Human Givens Approach' to learning involving building self-confidence, enabling children to be part of a community, valuing their opinions and playing games and doing activities that helped them learn and express themselves in enjoyable and fun ways.

A road safety walkabout enabled the children to lead the staff around their areas, giving scores for road safety at points where children commonly have to cross roads. Three more sessions were used to carry out surveys across the rest of the school and to develop a road safety play, posters and competitions that the group presented to the rest of the school during Walk to School Week. Many of the sessions were videoed so a film could be made, in addition to a CD-ROM about the project.

Listening to children's ideas was an essential part of the project, and this was used to support building the self-esteem of individuals and creating a positive experience for the group. The group's experiences, survey results and campaigns were fed into the STP.

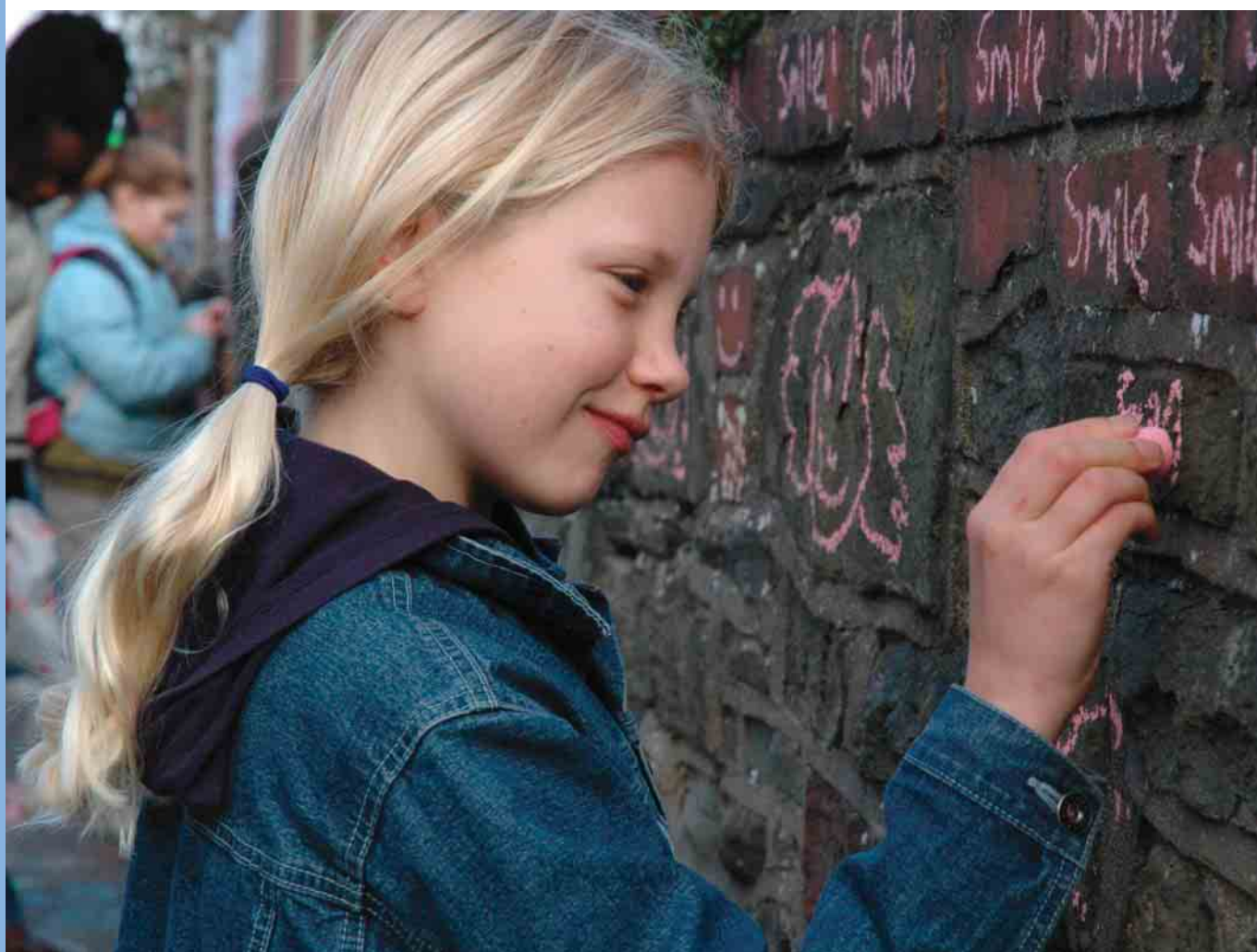
The school believes that the greatest successes that have been achieved are:

- Performing the road safety play in front of OFSTED inspectors and the rest of the school in a full school assembly. This was a major achievement for children with low self-esteem and it was very well received by pupils, staff and inspectors alike.
- Learning very effectively how to cross roads safely and

being able to pass this learning on to others. Evaluation questionnaires and discussion demonstrated that the group clearly understood the message that active ways to get to school are healthy and good for you. This message was taken throughout the school through the use of posters, assemblies and competitions.

- Children enjoyed the work more than normal lessons especially the games and fun activities, making posters, murals and leaflets, the play and the road safety walkabout.
- Modal shift: walking has increased from 56% to 62%, car use has fallen from 39% to 36%.
- Teachers reporting that those children who walk or cycle to school are more alert.
- A greater understanding of working with children with vulnerabilities and how to help them achieve.

'The children worked very well together and really enjoyed being involved. Many of them continue to be part of a 'Travel Club'. They have felt empowered and an important part of the school and local community. They were proud that they are doing something to improve the school and its surroundings,' Deputy Head.



## Involving school councils

### Wellfield High School, Leyland

Members of the school council were inspired to develop a STP after attending a Sustrans conference in 2003.

Following a conference presentation by Sally Dowler, mother of the schoolgirl Milly Dowler who had been tragically murdered, the group decided to ensure the additional topic of personal safety was included in their STP work.

The school council made a start on the STP by splitting into four groups, each group looking at a different aspect of the journey to school. The groups all had a common purpose - to examine ways that will enhance safety on the route to school and that will encourage and enable more pupils to choose more sustainable forms of travel to school such as walking, cycling, or public transport.

The pupils looked at some of the barriers that some people have to making these healthier choices, and explored ways that these obstacles could perhaps be removed. If, for example, secure, attractive cycle parking were to be provided, would this encourage more to cycle, particularly if backed up with publicity about cycle routes, health benefits and incentives? Would prospective Y7 pupils be more inclined to walk, cycle or use the bus to their new school right from day one if they were helped in these choices by a 'buddy' until they settled in?

The STP team provided large-scale maps overlaid with spots indicating roughly where pupils lived. Four sub-groups were then formed to look at the situation in more detail, the groups examining:

- pupils who lived less than two miles away - these could cycle or walk
- pupils who lived more than two miles away - these could cycle, come by bus, or car share
- links with the feeder primary schools - to encourage them to make healthy travel choices right from the start
- personal safety

The school council hosted a Theatre in Education production of 'Car Story', a fast-moving, highly interactive drama aimed at Y6 that gets pupils to think about the way they travel to school. The High School students were able to use the occasion to engage with the primary pupils as part of their preparation to move up to the High School, with the aim of encouraging them to make healthy travel choices to their new school.

The STP was completed, making the school one of the first in the county to utilise the school council in getting actively and responsibly involved in school travel issues.

### St Joseph's College, Dumfries

In 2002, St Joseph's College, Dumfries, decided to start working towards becoming an Eco-School and set up an Eco-School committee. Currently the school is working towards the Green Flag award.

Pupils have been heavily involved from the start and there are currently fifteen pupils and six adults on the committee. The student representatives are drawn from across the school.

As part of the Eco-Schools process, the committee has been looking at the school journey and starting its STP. One of the pupils stated: "Pupils will be much more likely to use the travel plan if they are involved in setting it up."

The committee meets every Thursday lunchtime for about half an hour and keeps the rest of the school informed via the school's website, an eco noticeboard and through weekly assemblies.

After conducting an online survey in which pupils discussed their current routes to school and whether they would welcome/use new bike facilities, the committee put together a plan to buy cycle racks with profits from events such as school discos which were run by the Eco-group.

The committee has also been looking at alternative means of transport in the community and one of its pupil members wrote to the local council to request that secure cycle storage be included in plans for the new leisure complex opening in Dumfries in 2007.

Next up, the committee is hoping to start a campaign, with the local council, to link up the existing walking/cycling routes around the town. The school has already had two cycle racks from Sustrans, which hold 10 bikes each. Cycle use has increased on some days by as much as 50%, and the school hopes to eventually see the bike racks fully used.

The committee would also like to encourage parents that must bring their child to school in by car, to park further away and the pupil can then walk the remaining distance to school. This will help to ease congestion round the area of the school at peak times.

The group is also campaigning to get more staff to walk, cycle or use public transport in the hope that by setting an example, pupils will be encouraged to do the same.

## Involving feeder schools

### Penketh High School, Warrington

When the school began its STP in October 2004 it set up a group of pupils, governors, parents, LEA organisers, community police, and staff to lead the process. The main focus has been on pupil governance; from the beginning they have led much of the discussion, formulated policies, and organised the agenda to set priorities. The group felt that communication within the school, feeder primaries, authority and the community was a key factor in the process.

To ensure group members felt that their contributions were always respected and valued the group has had regular monthly meetings to develop and maintain the momentum of the initiatives. Prior to the plan being approved, group members pushed forward an idea of a competition to be organised in conjunction with a series of assemblies to raise awareness of the travel plan group, and of how they were going to influence the culture of our school and its neighbours.

The competition for a futuristic mode of (green) transport proved a great success, and voucher prizes were offered to group winners. With help from the local authority, the

contest was extended to several feeder primary schools, with the group modifying the theme to fit the age of the pupils. Success was assured with the use of humour in the script and a film presentation, which proved an excellent vehicle to convey the message.

Since the STPs approval in September 2005 the group has many ideas for involvement in other projects. One of these has been to integrate the activities with the school's work on the Healthy Schools Initiative. Bringing these two projects and their action groups together has given pupils a real chance of forming policies of lasting value. The school intends to develop healthy modes of travel linked with a reformed diet and exercise regime. New cycle parking is in the process of construction, as well as changing and drying facilities inside school. There are plans to incorporate a fitness centre within the school for early bike riders.

In addition, the school has produced visual information and loop displays for plasma screen TVs, suggesting alternative transport and parking facilities, linked to parental letters and requests for help. One of the next ventures is a Travelling Newsletter and cycle route planner, to encourage more to walk and ride generally. The STP group is now well established and the impetus is self-generating.



## Levels of involvement

The examples below use the development of a school council to demonstrate how participation can be developed in different ways, depending on the confidence and competence of pupils and staff and the stage each is at in their journey of participation.<sup>5</sup>

	Teacher activity	Pupil activity	Power balance	Risk
Level one	Teacher sets up and chairs a school council.	Pupils ratify any decision.	Power is with the teacher, but pupils may initially enjoy the activity.	Pupils may become bored and marginalised. Teacher may feel disappointed that they are not motivated.
Level two	Teacher chairs the school council and asks the pupils what they would like to discuss.	Pupils volunteer as school councillors and decide on issues to be addressed.	Power is beginning to be shared. Communication about the process is starting.	Limited risk, teacher is still in control and pupils are likely to enjoy increased responsibility but learning is limited.
Level three	Teachers help pupils set up an election and develop a needs assessment, which involves a survey questionnaire and an analysis.	School councillors hold an election to ensure fair representation and find a pupil chair. They carry out a survey to identify pupils' views and set an agenda.	Teachers and students are sharing power. Probable that responsibility still lies mainly with teachers. Discussing what is happening (and why and how) is crucial.	Limited risk because teachers and students are sharing the process. Teachers are still taking responsibility so pupils are unlikely to feel overwhelmed.
Level four	Teachers are invited to attend meetings and act as advisers. Pupils and teachers work together on some tasks and reflect on and monitor progress.	Councillors work together on priorities from the needs assessment. They have an office and a budget that they manage. They have access to SMT and teacher support when necessary.	Power and responsibility are shared, though ultimate responsibility stays with school SMT.	Risk is limited because pupils have worked through the process. There is only a risk if there is a communication breakdown between pupils and staff.

School Councils UK provides support and guidance in setting up and running a school council, visit [www.schoolcouncils.org](http://www.schoolcouncils.org) for more information.



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## Credits

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