

## School Streets

A School Street is a road outside a school with a restriction on motorised traffic at school opening and closing times. The restriction applies to school traffic and through traffic but not directly to residents living in the designated area. The aim is to create a safer, healthier and nicer environment for everyone.

School Streets are a joint school and community led way to tackle air pollution, poor health and road safety. Oxfordshire County Council are looking at how we can facilitate the uptake of School Streets or similar initiatives across Oxfordshire[1].

### Why do we need School Streets?

A generation ago, 70% of children walked to school – now it's less than half and this is damaging children's health and congesting our neighbourhoods[2]. Even in a more active county like Oxfordshire, 79% of children do not meet the Chief Medical Officers daily physical activity recommendations[3]. The 'school run' significantly increases traffic congestion and exposes children to increased road safety hazards[4] [5].



High volumes of stopping and starting traffic can result in localised air pollution spikes around school gates. This 'Toxic air' has long term health impacts[6] and increases incidences of hospitalisation[7]. Public Health England recommend that local authorities use powers to reduce air pollution near schools[8]. Tailpipe emissions dissipate quickly making the buffer zone created by School Streets an effective way to significantly reduce children's exposure to toxic air.

### How do School Streets work?

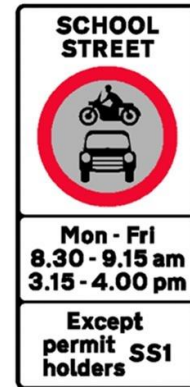
Residents and businesses around a school that wants to implement School Streets are formally consulted. Any consultation would consider and seek opinion on elements such as the extent and type of any traffic restrictions and who will be exempt. A Traffic Management Order (TMO) is applied to a street or streets around a school which restricts access to motorised vehicles at certain times. Time restrictions are determined by school opening and closing times.

Depending on the TMO, the Council will install fixed signage and possibly bollards. To ensure the schemes ongoing success a governance plan is agreed with schools. This includes web-based resources to communicate to local residents how the scheme works and important information, such as the location of designated park and stride sites. The penalty for ignoring the traffic restriction is a fixed penalty notice that is issued by the Police.

In Edinburgh, traffic restrictions around nine participating primary schools resulted in a two thirds decline in traffic levels. Only one third of the original traffic was displaced to surrounding streets[9].

### Potential concerns

- School Streets schemes are not suitable for all schools (those with a majority of coach travel, for example) and must be agreed on a case by case basis. Schools located on or near the strategic highway network will need other initiatives to increase physical activity rates and reduce exposure to air pollution.
- Depending on the circumstances, traffic restrictions could push some traffic into neighbouring streets or increase journey time times for some residents.
- Outside of London and Wales, local authority powers to enforce 'moving traffic offences' have not been fully enabled meaning it is more difficult to set School Streets schemes up and ensure that they are adequately enforced.[10]
- Cost implications depend on the nature and complexity of each individual scheme
- Despite these points, as part of our commitment to supporting strong and healthy communities and taking steps to reduce our climate impact, Oxfordshire County Council supports the idea of School Streets where possible.



There are, however, other ways of working with schools to improve air quality and lower carbon emissions, for example:

- **Schools Tackling Oxford's Air Pollution (STOP)** is an Oxford City Council project which aims to raise awareness of the main sources and health effects of air pollution emissions among the school community. Schools are able to download an air quality toolkit
- **Engine anti-idling campaigns:** Vale of White Horse & South Oxfordshire District Councils ran their 'Turn it off' campaign which encourages drivers to turn off their engine when it is not being driven.

We also want to work with all schools to encourage alternative modes of transport, both for the children and the adults who work there. Examples of what could be explored include:

- Walking trains for younger children
- Cycle facilities, both at school and on the routes to school.
- Reduced or paid for parking at school
- Shared transport, including 'booking' apps
- Joined up approach with neighbouring schools, sharing school transport
- Incentives for staff who travel together
- More 'offsite' learning
- Sharing opportunities with other workplace travel

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[1] <https://news.oxfordshire.gov.uk/pilot-project-could-restrict-traffic-outside-oxfordshire-schools-in-a-bid-to-reduce-air-pollution/>

[2] <https://www.livingstreets.org.uk/walk-to-school>

[3]

[https://insight.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/system/files/documents/JSNA\\_2019\\_Ch6\\_Lifestyles.pdf](https://insight.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/system/files/documents/JSNA_2019_Ch6_Lifestyles.pdf)

[4]

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/476635/travel-to-school.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/476635/travel-to-school.pdf)

[5] <https://www.admiral.com/pdf-control?file=sites/admiral-drupal-site/files/press-office/2019-07/Admiral%20-%20School%20Crawl%20-%20FINAL>

[6] <https://www.unicef.org.uk/clean-air-child-health-air-pollution/>

[7] <http://www.erg.kcl.ac.uk/Research/home/projects/personalised-health-impacts.html>

[8]

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/795185/Review\\_of\\_interventions\\_to\\_improve\\_air\\_quality.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/795185/Review_of_interventions_to_improve_air_quality.pdf)

[9] <https://www.citymetric.com/transport/here-s-why-uk-should-start-closing-school-streets-traffic-4535>

[10] <http://eservices.solihull.gov.uk/mginternet/mgConvert2PDF.aspx?ID=66510>

## Question 15

### **School Streets - What do you think?**

How do you think School Streets could work in your community? Given climate emergency, air quality problems and public health issues, how important a priority should School Streets be for all Councils and Local Communities? What do you think needs to change to make School Streets happen?

What else could schools and parents change to help tackle climate emergency, and improve air quality?

To respond please use the online consultation form.