



THE WAY TO GO

Active Travel

A toolkit for primary schools



Encouraging walking, cycling and wheeling across Suffolk

Introduction

Active Travel is defined as ‘a range of methods of active mobility, including walking and cycling, trips made by wheelchair, mobility scooters, adapted cycles and e-bikes’.

The increase in cars on our roads has led to significant challenges including high levels of air pollution, greater greenhouse gas emissions, and contributing to a sedentary lifestyle. One in four cars on the road during peak times is attributed to the school run, but despite this, 84% of parents do not want to take their children to school by car.

This toolkit has been developed to support schools in identifying their travel behaviours and implementing initiatives to address the barriers to active travel. We recognise that healthy habits are cultivated at a young age, therefore, if pupils are encouraged to actively travel, they are more likely to continue these habits beyond their school years.



Benefits of active travel

Physical and mental wellbeing

Children who walk or cycle to school have higher fitness levels and it contributes to meeting their physical activity target of 60 minutes everyday. However, in 2020/21, only 42% of children in Suffolk (aged 5-15) met these guidelines.

Physical activity has been shown to improve cardiovascular fitness and contributes to a healthy weight, when used in combination with dietary change. This is important considering nearly 1 in 3 (31.7%) year 6 students in Suffolk are above the recommended healthy weight.

Physical activity has also been associated with a reduced risk of experiencing anxiety, and activity levels at a young age have been found to link to mental health later in life.

Public Health England has also demonstrated that higher attaining schools have greater participation in physical activity and sports programmes. Similarly, a Danish study found that students who actively travelled to school performed better on a concentration test compared to those who travelled by car or public transport.

Environment

Increasing active travel levels also has a large positive impact on our environment as it is considered the most sustainable and low carbon form of transportation.

Although our air quality has improved in recent years, poor air quality is still considered to be the biggest environmental risk to human health in the UK. In Suffolk there are a number of areas in which pollution levels exceed legal limits impacting the health and well-being of those that live, work and study there. According to UNICEF UK 1 in 3 children are growing up in areas of unsafe levels of air pollution, with the majority coming from vehicle emissions.

Children are particularly vulnerable to the effects of pollution. Their height puts them closer to exhaust fumes and they breathe more rapidly than adults and so absorb more pollutants which damage their developing organs.

Transport is the largest greenhouse gas-emitting sector in the UK and is one of the main drivers of climate change. If every car journey in Suffolk under 1 mile was walked or cycled, it would result in over 15 million fewer car journeys per year and over 40,000 car journeys per day on Suffolk roads.

The following pages set out ideas and initiatives for implementing active travel measures in your school. If you have any questions or would like to discuss any of these initiatives, please email schooltravelplans@suffolk.gov.uk

Modeshift STARS

Modeshift STARS provides an online platform to plan, deliver and monitor your school travel plan.

What is a school travel plan?

A school travel plan (STP) is a document which addresses the issues relating to the school journey. It sets objectives and initiatives to promote active and sustainable modes of travel to school. The document is designed to remove barriers and incentivise students, their families and staff to choose active travel.

Modeshift STARS

Modeshift STARS Education is the **National School Travel Awards scheme that celebrates schools demonstrating excellence in supporting cycling, walking and other forms of sustainable travel.**

The scheme supports schools with developing travel plans. Schools are rewarded across different levels for their efforts in encouraging more active and sustainable travel to school.



Approved
travel plan



Good
travel plan



Very good
travel plan



Excellent
travel plan



Outstanding
travel plan

Steps to getting started:

- 1 Visit modeshiftstars.org and click Contact/Register in the top right-hand corner.
- 2 Select STARS Education Contact.
- 3 Complete the form, entering your name, school and the role that is most appropriate to your position in the school.
- 4 Select 'Suffolk' under 'Your Local Authority' and then click Send.
- 5 Wait for approval from local authority.

There are three opportunities each year to apply for accreditation: **31 December, 31 March, and 31 July.** The initiatives within this toolkit can be used as evidence towards your accreditation.

Surveys

Surveys will help you identify the travel patterns of your school as well as the barriers to actively travelling. You will then be able to determine the appropriate initiatives to deliver.

We highly recommend conducting surveys annually to understand how travel behaviours have changed in response to your active travel measures.

Parent surveys

These will help you understand the challenges and concerns parents face with their child's journey to school so you can identify initiatives to address these concerns.

The survey can be given out during parent evenings and/or promoted through the school's newsletter.

Pupil hands-up survey

We recommend conducting the survey during the registration period or if you are a smaller school, you can also conduct the survey during a school assembly.

The survey can be conducted with or without collecting postcode data. If postcode data is collected, this can be plotted on a map to provide information on pupils' travel patterns and the distance they travel to school.

- 1 Count the number of pupils in the class.
- 2 Ask your pupils to indicate how they travelled to school that day by raising their hand.
- 3 Use the spreadsheet to note down each mode of transport.
- 4 Then ask what the pupils' preferred mode of travel to school would be.
- 5 After you complete the hands-up survey with the pupils, complete the postcode section.
- 6 Before you send this form to us, please ensure you have deleted all student names.

Staff survey

The process would work the same as a pupil hands-up survey, asking staff members how they currently travel to work and what their preferred method of travel would be. We suggest conducting this survey during a staff meeting where most staff members would be present. Postcode data does not need to be collected, unless you wish to do so.

To request a copy of the surveys please email schooltravelplans@suffolk.gov.uk

On your bike!

We deliver Bikeability sessions, as well as family cycling sessions to increase parents' confidence in cycling with their children. We also offer Dr Bike sessions to ensure childrens' bikes are roadworthy.

Bikeability

Bikeability training is designed to give children the skills and the confidence to cycle on the road.



Between April 2022 and March 2023, over 460,000 children received Bikeability training, with 66% of primary schools in England participating (excluding London).

Currently, 4000 students are being trained annually within Suffolk.

Benefits of Bikeability:

- Children who cycle to school are more physically active than those who travelled to school by other means.
- Children who undertake Bikeability have greater hazard perception and appropriate response strategies compared to children who don't, and these skills and knowledge are sustained over time.
- Increases confidence with cycling on the road.

Levels of Bikeability:

The training consists of two levels and is held over four sessions. The students must already know how to ride a bike.



Level 1 – Carried out on the school playground, students are taught the skills needed prior to going on the road. This includes – getting on/off safely, a bike safety check, and steering to avoid objects.



Level 2 – Carried out on the road on a risk-assessed route, allowing the children to experience and learn manoeuvres necessary for their cycling needs. This includes – understanding positioning on the road and signalling, use of cycle lanes, and passing side roads safely.

Family cycling session

Families who are looking to cycle more frequently and want a refresh of their cycling skills can book a family cycling session. During this free three-hour family session, the trainer will seek to understand what the family is trying to achieve and then work on the specific route or challenges they have.

The trainers will:

- Show the family how to ride with their children and help them gain confidence.
- Teach the family a simple system for remembering how to deal with different road scenarios.
- Work with the family to improve safety at junctions.
- Guide the family on using their road position to control other road users and enhance their safety.

If you would like to sign your school up for Bikeability or there is a family that is interested in a family cycling session, please get in contact: CyclistTraining@SuffolkHighways.org

Bike maintenance events – Dr Bike

We provide 'Dr Bike' or 'Bike check' sessions for schools. Ensuring students' bikes are well-maintained is essential for promoting cycling to school.

Our bike mechanics conduct a full safety check to ensure that bikes are road-worthy. They can make adjustments during the session or make recommendations for future work, depending on the timings of the sessions.

There are many ways we can tailor these sessions to meet the needs of the school.

These sessions align well with events such as Sustrans Big Walk and Wheel or Cycle to School Week in September.

If you're interested and want to find out more about the options available, please contact: schooltravelplans@suffolk.gov.uk



Walking bus

A walking bus is where children are escorted to school by adult volunteers. They travel along an approved route and stop at set points, 'bus stops', to collect additional 'passengers' (children).

Benefits:

- Promotes and increases physical activity of children.
- Decreases congestion and increases safety through the reduction of cars outside the school.
- Children are taught road safety skills and increased awareness of the environment around their school.
- Saves time for parents.

A walking bus can be combined with a park and stride scheme to make it more accessible for children and families who live further from the school. Children can be dropped off near one of the 'bus stops' and join the walking bus, giving them the opportunity to incorporate physical activity into their travel to school.

The sustainability and success of a walking bus rely heavily on having enough volunteers running it. We can support you with identifying the most appropriate route, risk assessing the route and training the volunteers.

If you are interested in setting up a walking bus, please email schooltravelplans@suffolk.gov.uk



Park and stride

Park and stride enable families who live a longer distance away from the school to incorporate active travel into their day by parking a short distance away from the school and actively travelling the remaining distance.

Families are encouraged to park 10 minutes away from the school or, for families taking public transport, they are encouraged to get off a few stops earlier and walk the rest of the way to school.

- **Informal** – Parents/carers find a suitable parking spot a short distance away from the school.
- **Formal** – Parking spots that have been established by the school; this can be in the form of restaurant/shop car parks. Providing a designated parking space can alleviate concerns for parents about finding parking without causing disruptions.

Benefits:

- Enables children and families who live farther from the school to incorporate an active component into their commute.
- Increases physical activity of children.
- Decreases congestion at the school entrance.
- Enhances safety by reducing the number of cars outside the school.

If you are interested in setting up a Park and stride scheme, please contact schooltravelplans@suffolk.gov.uk



School street

A school street is the restriction of motorised vehicles* outside of the school during drop-off and pick-up times. This results in a pedestrian, cycle, and scoot zone.

*Exemptions include but are not limited to: school transport, blue badge holders, residents living within the closed area and emergency services.

Benefits:

- Decreases congestion by reducing the number of vehicles present.
- Improves air quality by reducing air pollution levels.
- Promotes and increases active travel among pupils and families.

If you are interested in a school street and would like more information, please email schooltravelplans@suffolk.gov.uk

In some circumstances it may not be feasible to implement a school street in the desired location, if this is the case, we will seek to find the best alternatives for your school.



Air quality

Road vehicles contribute about 80% of nitrogen dioxide (air pollutant) at the roadside, with children being exposed to five times higher concentrations of air pollution on the school run compared to when they are at school.

Anti-idling

Idling engines, where a car is stationary with its engine on, cause peaks in harmful pollutants which when breathed in overtime can lead to asthma, heart disease, cancer and stunt children’s growing lungs. Research has shown that idling engines produce up to twice the amount of exhaust emissions compared to when a vehicle is moving.

The harmful impact air pollution has on children has been highlighted in a 2024 study which found that hospital admissions among children were “significantly associated” with exposure to higher levels of air pollution over a two-week period and that only around half of them would have needed hospital care if pollution had been within legal limits.

Anti-idling campaigns encourages motorists to switch off their engines while stationary to reduce the levels of air pollution.

- Anti-idling campaigns have been found to be very effective, with most drivers (80%) switching off their engines when asked in a friendly manner.
- Air pollution levels were reduced by 20-30% following anti-idling campaign days.
- 38% decrease in idling time and 11% decrease in the number of vehicles idling at school drop off zones following an anti-idling campaign.



The Suffolk County Council Idling Action Campaign was re-launched in March 2024 and provides a range of materials you can use in your school to promote anti-idling:

- School leaflet
- Portable air pollution monitors for loan and recording sheet
- Outdoor banners and signage
- Posters
- Myths and Facts Postcards
- Car stickers
- Infographics for school website and newsletters

To request materials, email:
ph.widerdeterminants@suffolk.gov.uk



Clean Air for Schools Framework

The Clean Air for Schools Framework is a free, online tool to help every school create a tailored clean air action plan to tackle air pollution both inside the school and out. The framework provides recommendations for improving air quality inside schools, looking for example at planting and ventilation, as well as tackling pollution at the school gate by reducing traffic.



Road safety

School crossing patrol

School Crossing Patrol Officers help children and adults cross the road safely on their journey to and from school.

Visit the suffolkroadsafe.com/scp-service for further information.

Junior Road Safety Officers

Junior Road Safety Officers (JRSOs) are pupils from year 4 and above who share road safety messages within the school and the local community. There are many ways this could be achieved: competitions, posters, assemblies, and newsletters for example.

Every JRSO team receives resource packs, a scrapbook, and selection of prizes to support their activities.

Students have the opportunity to deliver important road safety messages to the school community in a fun and innovative way.

JRSOs keep a record of all their activities in the scrapbook and are awarded bronze, silver and gold at the end of the year.

- **Bronze** – Sharing messages with their peers through assemblies, classroom talks, and noticeboard.
- **Silver** – Bronze criteria + Sharing messages with parents/guardians.
- **Gold** – Silver criteria + Engagement with the local community e.g. notices in local shops, parish newsletters, writing to your local councillors/MPs.

For further information or if you are interested in running a JRSO scheme at your school, visit suffolkroadsafe.com/education-home/junior-road-safety-officer or contact jrso@suffolk.gov.uk

Road safety education

Our Road Safety Officers visit schools to deliver classroom workshops and engage in class discussions. This enables the students to develop an understanding of how to stay safe and manage their risk when near or on a road.

Reception to Year 3

Our Road Safety Officers will conduct a 30-minute session using a physical role-playing kit, to develop younger children's understanding of crossing roads.

Year 4 to Year 6

Our Road Safety Officers will deliver a bespoke 60-minute classroom workshop. The content of each presentation relates to the local infrastructure and travel patterns of the pupils.

Visit suffolkroadsafe.com for more information or contact suffolkroadsafe@suffolk.gov.uk



Increasing active travel among staff members

Promoting active travel to staff is just as crucial.

Free E-Bike trials

The Way to Go Suffolk team is offering free E-Bike trials for people who want to try one before buying. The scheme provides staff with a top-of-the-range Hurricane E-Bike, helmet, charger and a lock for a 6-week period, free of charge. If you are interested or would like more information, please contact thewaytogosuffolk@suffolk.gov.uk

Liftshare

The Suffolk Liftshare scheme provides a matching service for all those who live, work and travel in and around Suffolk. This service helps people who struggle to use other means of sustainable transport.

Through this service, individuals are matched up with potential partners as drivers or passengers, allowing them to share journeys as frequently or infrequently as they prefer.

A commuter typically saves over £1,000 a year. Therefore, by sharing your car journey, you not only save money but also reduce the stress of travel and contribute to alleviating road parking and congestion.

For more information visit liftshare.com

Hop off – get off two stops early

Similar to the Park and Stride scheme, if you are taking public transport to go to work, simply hop off a few stops early and walk the remainder of the journey. This helps to avoid traffic congestion while reaping the benefits of walking.



Newsletter

School termly newsletter

This newsletter is sent out termly to schools and contains a range of information:

- New national and global research on active travel.
- Upcoming active travel days/events and related resources.
- Advice on running active travel initiatives and how to engage your pupils.
- Updates and inspiration from other schools in our community.

Parent/carer newsletter

This short content of approximately 100-150 words will be sent out to your school at the start of every half term, which you add (very simply copy and paste) into your newsletter that goes out to parents/carers.

Content will include benefits of active travel and how parents/carers can support their children with actively travelling to school.

If you would like to sign your school up for either of these, please email: schooltravelplans@suffolk.gov.uk



Important dates

Autumn term



Walk Once Weekly (WOW) Challenge (year-long)

This is a year-long challenge which has been effective in increasing walking rates (23%) and reducing car use (30%). Pupils are encouraged to travel sustainably and actively (walk, wheel, cycle, or scoot) once a week, logged on an online travel tracker, and if they achieve this each month, they are rewarded with a badge.



TravelWise Week (mid-September)

A week promoting active and sustainable transport, to raise awareness on the impact our travel choices have on our health and our environment. Participating schools (and other organisations) can be recognised for their efforts in Modeshift's TravelWise Week Awards.



Cycle to School week (last week of September)

A week where pupils and their families are encouraged to cycle and scoot to school. Teaching resources including lesson plans and activities are provided on the Bikeability website, used to encourage pupils to think about their travel to school.



International Walk To School Month (October)

Children from all around the world celebrate the benefits of walking and wheeling to school. Living Streets provides teaching resources encouraging students to think about how children from different countries and generations walk to school. They also provide resources for families to make their walk to school more fun!

We are proud to support



Road Safety Week (mid November)

Road Safety Week is the road safety charity, Brake's biggest road safety campaign. Every year, thousands of schools, organisations and communities get involved to share important road safety messages, remember people affected by road death and injury, and raise funds to help Brake care for more road victims and campaign for safe roads for everyone.

Spring term



Sustrans Big Walk and Wheel (second week of March)

Sustrans encourages pupils to actively travel to school across 10 days. Schools sign up for free, and they compete with other schools to see who can get the highest percentage of students to actively travel to school, competing for daily prizes. Teaching and promotional materials are provided to support with running this event.

Summer term



Walk to School Week (third week of May)

This 5-day challenge encourages pupils to walk, wheel, cycle, or scoot every day of the week. Living Streets have Walk to School week packs which include pupil activity diaries, daily stickers, and end of week pupil rewards.



Clean Air Day (third Thursday in June)

Clean Air Day is celebrated to raise awareness of air pollution and find practical ways to tackle it. The charity Global Action Plan provides teaching resources including a lesson plan with a corresponding PowerPoint, encouraging students to think about air pollution and cleaner air.

Useful links



Sustrans

sustrans.org.uk

A UK Charity that aims to make active travel (walk, wheel and cycle) easier for everyone in the community. They host the annual Big Walk and Wheel, and work alongside Bikeability to host Cycle to School Week. There is a host of teaching resources that can be used to encourage children and their families to adopt sustainable and active modes of transport.



Living Streets

livingstreets.org.uk

A UK charity that aims to inspire people to choose walking for their everyday local journeys and improve streets to make walking a better environment. Living Streets hosts the WOW challenge and the Walk to School Week challenge in May. They also provide resources for early years and secondary schools.



The Way to Go Suffolk

thewaytogosuffolk.org.uk

The Way to Go Suffolk is a Suffolk County Council initiative to encourage everybody to actively travel within Suffolk. This information hub includes resources such as walking and cycling maps, journey planner and travel planning resources.



Suffolk Roadsafe

suffolkroadsafe.com

The aim of the Suffolk Roadsafe board is 'working together to reduce road collisions in Suffolk'. This brings together the agencies that are involved in road safety, including the Suffolk County Council. You can find out more about the Road Safety Education that is offered to schools.



Healthy Suffolk – Air Quality

healthysuffolk.org.uk/current-campaigns/suffolk-air-quality

Healthy Suffolk is a Suffolk Public Health Initiative aimed at improving the health and wellbeing of residents in Suffolk. The Air Quality page provides information about air pollution in Suffolk, how it affects both our health and environment and resources on what we can do to make our air cleaner and healthier.



Contact us

schooltravelplans@suffolk.gov.uk

Queries regarding Modeshift STARS, School Travel Plans or Active Travel to School initiatives.

jrso@suffolk.gov.uk

Signing up or any queries regarding Junior Road Safety Officers.

suffolkroadsafe@suffolk.gov.uk

Queries about classroom road safety education.

cyclisttraining@suffolkhighways.org

Queries/signing up for Bikeability sessions.

thewaytosuffolk@suffolk.gov.uk

E-bike trials and any other queries, and we will forward you to the correct individual.

ph.widerdeterminants@suffolk.gov.uk

Suffolk air quality queries and to request Idling Action Campaign materials.





THE WAY TO GO