

The Education and Inspections Bill 2006 – Key Points

The Education and Inspections Bill inserts a new section 508A in the Education Act 1996. This places a general duty on local authorities to promote the use of sustainable travel and transport. There are four main elements to the duty:

1. An assessment of the travel and transport needs of children, and young people:
 - School travel plan data
 - School census data
 - Our own surveys

2. An audit of the sustainable travel and transport infrastructure within the authority that may be used when travelling to and from, or between schools/institutions:
 - Assessment of accessibility should include a mapping audit, and a review of existing knowledge and experience.
 - The audit will show how schools are served by a sustainable transport infrastructure and arrangements (i.e. cycle training, walking buses) to support sustainable school transport.
 - Audit must also contain data on other factors (i.e. speeding traffic, lack of safe crossing points) that influence travel behaviour.
 - Information should highlight what the problems are and what measures can be taken to tackle them.

3. A strategy to develop the sustainable travel and transport infrastructure within the authority so that the travel and transport needs of children and young people are better catered for
 - Strategy for developing infrastructure so that it better meets the needs of children
 - A statement of the overall vision for improving accessibility to schools
 - How can improvements help deliver other objectives?
 - Evidence based
 - Fit in with the life of the LTP2
 - The school transport strategy must be published annually as part of the schools admissions round.

4. The promotion of sustainable travel and transport modes on the journey to, from, and between schools and other institutions
 - promotional strategies should link in to the range of potential benefits
 - reward pupils & schools for promoting sustainable travel

Publication of sustainable school strategy

In the Department's view, local authorities should integrate their sustainable school travel strategies into their school transport policy statements, and publish them together.

Risk assessments

Risk assessment of a walking route should take into consideration:

- the age of the child;
- whether any potential risks might be mitigated if the child were accompanied by an adult;
- whether it is reasonably practicable for the parent/carer to accompany the child;
- the width of any roads travelled along and the existence of pavements;
- the volume and speed of traffic travelling along any roads;
- the existence or otherwise of street lighting; and
- the condition of the route at different times of the year, at the times of day that a child would be expected to travel to and from school.

In conducting their risk assessments, local authorities should use data on recorded accidents along potential routes. However, a lack of such accidents should not be taken as conclusive evidence that a route is safe. It may well be that a route is potentially so dangerous that no reasonable person would walk along the route, or allow their children to do so – resulting in such a low level of pedestrian use that there were very few or no recorded accidents.