

Best Practice In York

A cross sample of York schools were contacted for more details of their activities and the examples below are typical of the successful schemes running in York schools:

Robert Wilkinson

This is a school sited in what is now a residential area, but was originally built some 200 years ago. The school has worked hard to try and reduce the number of cars to the site including setting up a Park and Stride site, scoot to school, promoting their own walk once a week scheme and in place of a walking bus (it proved difficult to find volunteers to run one) with the support of the school travel adviser 'Walking Buddies'. This successful scheme is aimed at KS2 and encourages children to organise themselves to walk together to and from school rather than being driven by their parents.

The school promotes sustainable travel in a number of ways, including letters to parents, 'stickies' on the white board (notes to children reminding them to walk, cycle or scoot to school, and using the School Council in a number of ways such as designing posters, monitoring the Park and Stride car park and generally promoting sustainable travel to their class mates. It should be noted that much of the adult effort is down to one teacher in the school.

Ralph Butterfield

This is a school with high car use and parking problems outside the school gate. To address this the school set up a Park and Stride site at the Ethel Ward playing fields. This is now being well used. Installation of cycle sheds has meant that from around 8 children cycling to school, the bike sheds, which take 30, are now often fairly full.

Woodthorpe

Woodthorpe has a successful walking bus which has been running for some time now. It currently has 10 walking passengers who go from Foxwood Community Centre to school, leaving at approximately 8:45am daily. The children are from years 1-4. There are two paid drivers - there used to be parent volunteers but both have moved away from the area.

Our Lady's

Our Lady's RC Primary school is one that regularly promotes walking and cycling to school to its pupils including involving the School Council. They communicate with parents to encourage active travel to school through newsletters and parental surveys. As a result, the school reported that the children were pressurising their parents to allow them to walk to school.

The school has severe parking problems outside the gates, in part due to its location in a residential area. To help ease this, the school has negotiated Park and Stride sites away from the school. Originally this was the Edmund Wilson swimming baths, but to replace it once the baths closed, use of a local pub car park on Hamilton Drive was negotiated. Through parental surveys, a need for a second Park and Stride site was identified and duly set up. Both of these work well most of the year, except in severe weather when it can be hard to encourage parents to use them.

Archbishop of York CE Junior School

This was one of the schools specifically contacted for the purpose of this report as over the years it has been noted that, mainly due to the untiring and enthusiastic efforts of Romy

Dunn (a school governor and teaching assistant at the school) much has been achieved by encouraging the children to travel to school in a sustainable and healthy way.

Romy kindly took the trouble to document the school's efforts since their travel plan was first published in 2005 and her contribution is reproduced in full below:

"Our travel plan was published in March 2005 – so I think we must have had our first travel plan action group meeting in September 2004. We are now in 2010 so the plan itself is more than 5 years old. The junior school also has a whole extra class and the infant school about 20 more children (approx 15% increase each)

I have looked up our targets from the travel plan. I have detailed them below with comments in italics.

- increase the number of pupils walking or cycling to school for their whole journey by 10% - I haven't got a percentage increase but last week I noticed we had about 20 bikes parked at school – bikes were not allowed before our plan was published.*
- increase the number of alternative modes of travel available to pupils – children now park bikes and scooters at school and parents are heavy users of the park & stride initiative.*
- see a decrease in car journeys to and from school from within the village by 10%*
- provide at least 3 walking bus routes (serving the main residential areas) – we ran one route that serviced the bulk of the village (south of school) but this has been in abeyance for the last couple of years due to lack of demand – we always ask the new intake to the infant school if they are interested.*
- see a decrease in cars parking at the school by 50% of parents who have to drive and transfer these cars to the Park and Stride sites – a lot of parents certainly use the park and stride but they still prefer to park as close as possible to the school.*

And thereby,

- halve the number of cars parking in the school safety zone within 2 years – I don't have the figures to hand to say whether or not we achieved this – you might have them.*

We were fully supported in creating the travel plan by the School Travel Plan Co-ordinator (STPC). Further more, once the plan was published the STPC took great care to ensure that we set up a working group to implement our action plan. She always attended meetings, made sure we left each one with something which had to be completed before the next meeting, and a date on which it was to happen.

As a direct result of our work on the travel plan we were also picked up by Sustrans as a 'Bike It' school. The support offered was explosive – we were not allowed to sit still and wait for things to happen!

By September 2005 we had got bike stands installed both at the front and rear of the school and a cycle policy for the children to follow. We ran a 'green' event each term – some based on cycling but not exclusively. One of the early initiatives was to have a large tree for each classroom. The children then had a leaf for each week (maple

leaf – 5 parts) which was coloured in red for car, brown for bus or green for power free transport. The leaves were stuck on the tree and the trees were hopefully going to get greener as the message was taken on board.

We ran a competition to ‘cycle’ to see one of the teachers who was on an exchange visit to San Francisco. This involved a large map in the hall and a line showing the progress of each house group depending on how many miles they had cycled (pedalped over water!). All children who cycled to school had their names entered into a draw and the STPC was able to help source prizes from local shops. By doing it this way nearly every child cycled once during the term so most of them had their name in the draw.

Information on the activities we have undertaken, can be provided. The list includes:

- A weekly power free travel day – originally Target Tuesday, this became Walk on Wednesday, then WOW what a walker and is now ‘Walk with Wilf’
- An annual family sponsored cycle ride to raise funds for the school
- Making a mosaic on the travel theme – every child in the school took part
- Painting an outside wall on a travel theme.
- Bike It Breakfasts
- A competition to design bright logo’s for fluorescent vests
- A termly travel newsletter to both schools (looking for a new editor at the moment)
- A children’s competition/activity page on the back of each newsletter
- Spot the Gnome on Walk to School Week
- Ran a bike club for two summer terms
- Encourage children to take part in cycle training – trialled L3 cycle training and now encourage children to do this during Y6.
- Celebrated children’s achievement when they get their cycling certificates
- Celebrate children’s achievement when they take part in out of school events such as the scouts long distance cycle rides.
- Had visiting cyclists ie, paramedics, police and Jim Coles assemblies.
- The Walking Bus when running used to have a Walking Christmas Party and on one occasion became a Bike Train.
- On Walk to School Weeks we persuaded the headteachers to join the walking bus (OK – only for one day each!)
- ‘Bling your bike’ competitions (very popular)
- The Viking Bike Ride (they’d like to do that again please)
- Carbon Free Travel Week we handed out BBQ Breakfast tickets at special points several hundred yards from school. If you didn’t pass them on foot or bike you didn’t get the breakfast.
- Parents Christmas visit to Designer outlet – they gave us 20% off vouchers for our group of walkers and cyclists – and we all met for coffee on arrival.

There have also been a number of changes to the fabric of the school which have been a direct result of the school’s travel plan e.g.:

- Putting in benches in the playground so that parents who walk to school can sit for a while when waiting for their children to come out.
- Putting in a pavement to the left of the school gate (previously grass and a bus stop) meaning that children don’t have to cross the road directly outside the school.
- Installing cycle racks front and rear for the school (have I mentioned those).

- *Changing a piece of corner pavement outside the infant school so that it is now wide enough for two people to pass each other rather than trimmed to fit drivers needs as it was before.*
- *Removing barriers (old gates) in the junior car park so that staff cars are not parked on the road outside school.*

So we've done quite a lot! And it is noticeable that when we had our own Bike It officer and were still regularly meeting with our STPC, then there was a lot more activity. It does take quite a lot of time if there is only one individual in a school to put ideas into action – however willing the teachers are, they simply don't have the time to put together competitions and the other activities.

Every year it has seemed a little bit like starting from scratch with very few cyclists in the September term but a gradual build throughout the year after that. This is our first year when we've had a fairly large number of cyclists in September – and that's a whole school generation from when we started!

Now we are 5 years on we need to revisit our travel plan and this process has just started. A parent approached me last week offering to help and I think with the experience we have gained over the past 5 years I can see where we can make changes. (Rewrite the cycling rule book for one).

In reality, my overwhelming impression has been one of finding it very hard work – and the biggest impetus to continue and take part in more initiatives has always been from outside the school. The City of York Walk to School weeks, the Carbon Free weeks, the Bike It events and the rest have all been the spur to continue and try to make that bit of a difference just one more time – in spite of the fact that some parents just don't seem to care – there are others who say thank you.

Permanent changes – the families that cycle can now cycle to school, the park and stride has been taken up by all the pubs in the village and looks like it's going to stay. There is a general assumption that children should be walking or cycling and that cars are wrong!

But – there are still a lot of cars in particular round the infant school.

We have the knowledge and skills to run a walking bus but no parents want to join it. And – I'm not quite sure who's going to provide the kick start once the school travel office has gone!"