

FOREST SCHOOL TRAVEL PLAN

Introduction

The Forest School Travel Plan is being developed based on the work of pupils, teachers, associate staff, governors and parents. The plan aims to promote a framework for changing the travel habits among pupils and staff. Sustainable transport modes will be promoted that are safe for users, benefit the environment and contribute to improving the health of users.

The Forest School is a 11-16 secondary school for boys. In recent years, the number of pupils on role has risen to just over 1,000 and staff over 100. The buildings are mainly on two levels, a mix of older and new, with the addition of a recent purpose built Business and Enterprise Centre.

The School Improvement Plan values pupil and staff participation in consultation and decision making and good communication between staff, pupils and parents. The school is developing being an eco school and a 'healthy school'. The development of the Travel Plan supports all these aims.

The school is situated within a residential area of Horsham but its catchment area also serves villages bordering the town. A few pupils travel by train or taxi from as far as Crawley. Pupils who cycle must wear helmets and have a cycle permit.

There are two enclosed and lockable cycle storage areas with cycle stands. All pupils have a locker. Staff also have access to lockers. There are several car parking areas on the school site for staff and visitors. A staff questionnaire conducted early 2008 has shown that there is adequate car parking space at present and for the foreseeable future. Car access for staff is through one driveway, a second driveway is for cycle and pupil pedestrian access. There is no provision for bus pick up and set down on the school site.

The roads in the immediate vicinity are narrow and have parked cars on them. When pupils arrive and leave the school, these roads are congested with traffic and there is further parking by parents setting down and picking up pupils. Slightly further from the school there are roundabouts and traffic speed increases. There are dedicated cycle lanes, traffic calming measures and footpaths on most local roads but no school crossing patrol, zebra or pelican crossings provision on the road nearest to the school. Staff supervise pupils at the school gates. Horsham train station is within walkable distance. Public Service buses and school buses serve both Forest and the nearby Millais schools.

Though the school is open to staff and visitors from early in the morning, most staff and pupils arrive between 8.00 am and 8.25 am when the school officially opens. The school day ends at 3.00 pm and, though many clubs and activities take place after school, the majority of the pupils leave at 3.00 pm or shortly afterwards. Lettings of the Business and Enterprise Centre have not had a significant impact on the travel patterns to the school. The BEC has its own car park.

The main safety issue for pupils using buses is that there is no provision for setting down on the school site, so the buses must be accessed from the main road. The buses also add to the congestion in the road along with parents waiting for pupils' and residents' parked cars. Pedestrians and cyclists are thus disadvantaged. Photos attached illustrate the school vicinity at 8.00 am; whilst buses and pupils arrive in the morning (little congestion) and at 3.00 pm (severe congestion). Further along Comptons Lane and Harwood Road, fast moving traffic and roundabouts are a hazard for pedestrians and cyclists.

Working Party

The School Travel Plan Working Group is lead by Mr D Kudelka, an Assistant Head Teacher, in conjunction with pupils from the Senior Prefect Team, School Council and groups developing the eco school and a healthy school. Jon Hilder, Joe Strange and George O'Shea are key pupil leaders. Mr D Walker, a Home School Liaison Officer and School Governor, has given input, as have Mr Day and Mrs S Wilcox from the Staff Association. The working party has met as a group each term and then as specific talk groups each month to implement surveys, assign but prefects and so forth. The PTA have been involved and parents informed through newsletters. Advice has been received from our local Community Police Officer and Road Safety Officer. Feedback to pupils on key issues has been through assemblies as well as the School Council. Copies of newsletters to parents and staff detailing travel plan progress are attached, as is a newspaper article on a 'walk to school day'.

Objectives

The objectives of the School Travel Plan are in accordance with West Sussex County Council objectives, which follow guidance within the local transport plan to:

- improve road safety
- reduce car use
- raise awareness of transport related environmental issues

Particular objectives are to:

- increase car sharing where an alternative mode of transport is not viable
- make cycling and walking to school safer and more attractive options
- reduce the dangers of traffic congestion in the immediate school vicinity
- better prepare pupils to cope with dangers from crossing busy roads and roundabouts on foot or on a cycle

Research

Two separate pieces of research were undertaken late 2007 and early 2008. About 700 pupils, some 70% of the school, did the West Sussex County online travel survey on the school computers during Autumn 2007. Many pupils also had their parents with them when completing the survey. In January and February 2008, 44 staff completed a modified version of the survey, this being almost a 50% of the staff (excluding clearing and catering staff on this occasion).

Pupil Survey

1. Journey to School (see appendix A)

Almost half the pupils live under 2 km from the school and two thirds less than 3 km so there is clear potential for pupils to walk or cycle. Walking is indeed the main mode of transport but only 5% cycle. However, 23% would prefer to cycle, a clear area for a shift.

Travelling by bus is the second main transport mode though fewer would like to use the bus than actually do so, suggesting either potential for more walking and cycling or some dissatisfaction with the nature of bus travel. Though about 20% of pupils arrive by car, only 7% go home by car. 15% would prefer to car share. There seems to be potential here for a move to car-sharing and particularly in the mornings. Travel by train is very much a minority mode and little potential for shift.

2. Walking (see appendix B)

Not walking to school for reasons of time and distance accounted for 37% of responses. Though only 5.4% gave a concern about safety as a reason not to walk, one third of the pupils felt the route to school to be dangerous for at least part, if not all, the way. Improving the safety of the route and perceptions of safety would therefore give a potential for a shift to walking.

General written responses referred to 'busy road', 'dangerous motorists', specific problems highlighted the Comptons Lane road immediately outside the school, a blind spot along Comptons Lane, Harwood Road and the roundabouts on Comptons Lane, Harwood Road and at 'Tesco Express'. St Leonards Road, Crawley Road and the roads near Horsham and Littlehaven Train Stations were also mentioned.

3. Cycling (see appendix C)

The main reason for not cycling were lack of time and distance from school. About 1 in 10 felt it too dangerous to cycle, a view shared by 1 in 3 saying the route was at least partially dangerous. As 23% would like to cycle, improving safety and the perception of safety could bring a shift in the mode of transport. Improving facilities for secure and weatherproof storage of bikes would also lead to a potential shift.

General and specific cycle route problems were as for walking with the addition of Kerves Lane.

4. Train (see appendix D)

The distance pupils lived from the train stations, the cost of travel and lack of a service were cited by many pupils as reasons for not using the train. 1 in 5 had concerns about the safety of the route from train stations but there were few written comments relating to this and safety concerns did not seem to be a major cause for not using trains. It was judged that there is little potential for shift to trains.

5. Car (see appendix E)

One third of the car users already carried at least one other pupil and 15% of pupils would like to join a car sharing scheme. It was noticeable that, though 20% came to school by car, only 7% went home by car. There does seem to be the potential for a shift to car sharing, particularly in the morning. Parking and walking did not seem an option though.

6. Staff Survey (see appendix F)

The results were very different from the pupil survey. Only 18% lived less than a mile from the school and 61.5% were more than 3 miles away. This was reflected in 82% using a car with only 4.5% sharing the journey, 14% walked and 4% cycled.

64% said it was too far to walk and 18% not enough time. 20% thought walking to be partially or wholly unsafe.

Reasons for not using a bus were mainly lack of service (45%) and the time factor (25%). 9% said it was easier to get a lift. Written comments pointed out the inconvenience of carrying school materials to a bus stop and on a bus. Concerns for safety to and from bus stops were not a concern.

Again, reasons for not using a train reflected lack of a service (36%) and the time factor (18%). 23% lived too far from a station. Written comments referred to the high costs of trains, it being easier to get a lift and the inconvenience of carrying school materials by train. Safety was not a major concern. Reasons for not cycling were: 50% saying 'too far', 7% lack of time. Written comments referred to problems carrying school materials and changing and bike storage facilities at school. 7% felt cycling to be dangerous with 36% saying at least part of the route was unsafe. Only 5% felt age, fitness or disability ruled out cycling.

In summary, there seemed little potential to increase staff use of buses or trains. However, 14% would choose to cycle and there were clear indications as to their needs. 45% wanted more specific and secure staff cycle racks, 9% more storage for equipment and several written comments for dedicated showers/changing facilities.

Though 68% would prefer to drive to school themselves (written comments illustrated staff problems with timetabling meetings etc. before and after school to fit in with colleagues), 16% did state that they would like to car share. There seems to be potential for a shift on car use.

25% said they would like to walk so, again, there seems potential for a shift here.

Overall Summary of Research Findings

The patterns for travel of staff and pupils differed, most probably because the majority of staff lived some way from school, whilst the reverse was true for pupils. Staff reliance on the single occupancy use of cars for travel is likely to remain high but there is potential to increase the degree of car sharing for environmental and, increasingly, economic reasons. Cycling is not likely to be a major mode of travel, but there is again the potential for a greater uptake for environmental, economic and health reasons. Walking could see an increase for health reasons. Greater staff use of trains and buses is unlikely.

For pupils, there is the potential to promote car sharing, particularly in the morning. Improving the conditions on the buses could direct pupils from car usage. Better provision for cycle storage at school and addressing safety issues could lead to an uptake in cycling. Similarly, improved road safety could see more pupils walking. There is not much potential for greater train use.

Targets

The West Sussex County Council headline target for school travel is for all schools with a travel plan to have 80% of pupils traveling by sustainable mode of transport by 2010. Sustainable mode of transport includes walking, cycling, using public transport, car sharing and parking and walking.

The Forest School has identified there is up to 10% potential for modal shifts amongst its pupils and aims to achieve this by initially aiming for an 8% for pupils and 5% for staff shift by setting the following targets.

TARGETS FOR PUPILS	%	BY (DATE)
Reduce single occupancy car journeys	1	Spring 2009
Increase walking	1	"
Increase cycling	3	"
Increase car share	2	"
Increase public/LEA transport use	1	"
TOTAL	8	

TARGETS FOR STAFF	%	BY (DATE)
Reduce single occupancy	1	Spring 2009
Increase walking	0	"
Increase cycling	2	"
Increase car share	2	"
Increase public transport	0	"
TOTAL	5	

Monitoring Targets

To monitor targets, the Working Group will meet termly to monitor overall progress and its sub-groups more frequently to implement and monitor specific areas of the plan. The action plan will be updated as a result of these monitoring reviews.

Formal reviews of the numbers using each mode of transport will be undertaken in the Summer and Autumn terms to ascertain shifts from the gaseline figures. A 'hands up survey' will be used in the Summer and the online survey in the Autumn.

Following the Autumn survey, an annual review meeting will be set up with the School Travel Adviser.

The take up of 3 in 1 cards usage; cycle permit numbers; staff and pupil car-sharing will be incorporated in the review as will the impact of the West Sussex Staff Car Sharing Incentive Scheme. In 2011, a full re-survey of all pupils and staff will take place.