

CYCLING TO SCHOOL

Advice for parents and schools

Sustrans regularly receives enquiries from parents whose children have been told that they are not allowed to cycle to school. When teachers and governors ban cycling, they usually do so because of an entirely understandable concern for the safety of pupils. Some governors have also expressed concern that in the case of a pupil being injured in an accident while cycling to or from school, the school or governors may be held liable, particularly if they have actively encouraged cycling. Sustrans has now taken legal advice on this question and the situation as the law stands at the moment can be summarised as follows:-

- **Schools do not have the right to ban pupils from cycling to or from school**
- **Schools do not owe a duty of care to pupil cyclists who are permitted by their parents to cycle to or from school, and so could not be held to be liable in the event of an accident**
- **The decision of how a pupil travels to or from school is a matter for the pupil's parents and the pupil.**

Although schools have no right to forbid pupils to cycle to school if the bike is left outside the premises, clearly they can refuse to allow bikes into the school. **Sustrans suggests that a way forward would be for schools to agree to provide cycle storage, in return for a commitment from pupils to cycle responsibly and carefully, and from parents to encourage them to do so.** This agreement could be expressed as a school cycle parking permit, and an example is given here. Such permits are already operating successfully in a number of schools around the country and, when carefully administered, have been shown to encourage cycling and improve cyclists' safety. However, Sustrans does believe that streets should be made safer and more pleasant for children and families, and we will continue to work in partnership with local authorities towards the provision of traffic-free and traffic-calmed routes to schools, together with improved crossings and other safety measures, as part of our Safe Routes to Schools project.

School cycle parking permits

Cycle parking permits are agreements or contracts drawn up between pupils, parents and schools which clarify conditions for pupils cycling to school. They are used as a way of encouraging safe, responsible and courteous cycling. Suggestions for what a school cycling parking permit might usefully include follow, together with an example for adaptation. Such a permit could be issued either as a free standing document or could be combined with a questionnaire issued to parents of new pupils asking about intended travel mode, dietary requirements, medical conditions, etc.

A cycle parking permit should contain advice and guidelines on safe, courteous and responsible cycling, as well as a consent form. The headings below are intended to cover the key areas where a school may wish to provide guidance.

Insurance

Most cycles should be covered by standard household contents insurance provided that they have been locked up securely. Zurich Municipal, among other companies, will insure bikes for all risks on a replacement value basis under their household contents policy, which is less likely than a separate policy would be. Expensive bikes valued at £250 or more may require separate insurance. Parents and pupils should be made aware that the school will not be held liable in the event of theft and that parking a bike at the school is carried out at the rider's own risk.

Security

The school should provide cycle parking stands, preferably in a covered area overlooked by classrooms or the school reception area. 'Sheffield' type stands (see above), where the frame and front wheel can be locked to the stand which also supports the bike, are preferred as they are much more secure. A CCTV camera, linked to the school's existing security system, where one exists, is likely to greatly reduce the incidence of theft. In the event that demand for secure spaces exceeds supply, the school could allocate permits to those travelling further to school or to those pupils needing to cycle for special reasons.

Bicycles should be locked up in the appropriate storage area using a 'U type' lock or similar to secure the frame to an immovable object. This rule should apply even to bikes parked within an enclosed parking area, as there will be times when gates will be open during the school day. If possible, schools should encourage post coding or data tagging of bicycles by a police officer and should keep records of bike descriptions and frame number for insurance purposes. It is also useful to keep a note of the serial number of D locks, so that the keys can be replaced if lost.

Cyclists training

Schools may want to insist that some form of appropriate training has been undertaken. Approved 'Cycling Proficiency' type courses are usually organised by the local Authority's Road Safety section. Training should be provided for children aged 10 and over, by an experienced adult cyclist, preferably on the road. All instructors should have received – training from a road safety officer and should have undergone police vetting for child protection purposes. A useful cyclist training video is available from City of York council (see Resources and Addresses). Not all local authorities make training available. Some authorities

offer one-to-one training on the route between home and school.

Storage of books and equipment

Good panniers are desirable for pupils carrying books and equipment: a badly laden bike is much more difficult to control. The amount which children need to carry to and from school can be greatly reduced by the provision of secure lockers. Schools should provide a safe place to store books and equipment. Helmets, lights can also be stored in lockers, so reducing the risk of theft. The provision of spare sets of lights, locks, pumps and repair kits for loan to those children who have lost theirs is helpful.

Condition of bicycles

It is essential that bikes ridden to school are roadworthy and regularly maintained. Random checks should be made by staff, police or road safety officers to check that bikes are properly maintained. This should include condition of tyres, brakes, pedals, steering, lights, reflectors and chain. All bikes should be fitted with a bell, especially if any of the routes to school are shared with pedestrians. Bikes should also be kept clean in order to protect books and school uniforms.

Safety Gear

Helmets

Safety helmets undoubtedly provide head protection in the unfortunate event of an accident: however they only provide protection at collision speeds of up to 12 mph. In the event of a collision between a bike and a car the speeds are likely to be greater than this.

Pupils should be encouraged to discuss wearing a helmet with their parents. The school should advise children to use a cycle helmet, which conforms to one of the following standards: BS 6863; AS 2063.86; ANSI Z90.4; SNELL B90 or B95. Helmets also need to be properly fitted if they are to be effective. There is some evidence (in research undertaken in Australia) that children take more risks when wearing helmets, and so accidents can rise. If helmets are insisted upon then appropriate storage space or lockers should be made available.

Lights and reflective clothing

Lights and reflective clothing are of crucial importance in avoiding collision with cars. Cyclists need to be visible at all times.

- avoid letting batteries run low, and carry spares. Rechargeable batteries are less reliable than disposables

- fix lights securely to bikes to avoid them being lost or stolen
- apply reflective tape and motifs to the bike
- wear reflective clothes/accessories

Reflective accessories are now widely available and include: reflective patches for school bags and coats, reflective tape to apply to the bike or bags, reflective tabards gloves, belts and ankle and arm bands. All these items can be bought from bike shops.

Sometimes schools and road safety officers have reflective items for sale cheaply. Bells, reflective tabards and bands may also be bought from Sustrans.

Cycling behaviour

Cycling carelessly or dangerously are offences for which the police may prosecute. The scheme can play its part in encouraging safer cycling by temporarily withdrawing the pupil's cycle permit in the event that they are seen riding to school inappropriately, for example: riding on the footway; riding two on a bike, riding without appropriate lighting or riding in a way which endangers or threatens others. An additional advantage of this scheme is that it explores issues of citizenship and driving licence endorsement at an early age. Pupils should be encouraged to consider the needs of others when cycling, particularly on shared use paths, or where cycle paths intersect with pedestrian areas. Indeed, if the school implements a good cycling code, this may well make the establishment of shared use paths easier. The pupils should be aware of the extra care needed when using facilities shared with pedestrians who may be elderly, having impaired vision or mobility, or have young children with them.

The Sustrans cyclists' code contains this advice to cyclists:

be courteous – always cycle with respect for others, whether they are other cyclists, pedestrians, people in wheelchairs, horse-riders or drivers.

When cycling on shared use paths, please:

- give way to pedestrians, leaving them plenty of room
- keep to your side of any white dividing line
- be prepared to slow down or stop if necessary
- don't expect to cycle at high speeds
- be careful at junction, bends and entrances
- *remember that many people are hard of hearing or visually impaired – don't assume they can see or hear you*
- *carry a bell and use it - don't surprise people*
- where there are horses, don't surprise riders from behind – let them know you are there.

When cycling on roads, please:

- always follow the Highway Code
- fit and use lights in poor visibility
- keep your bike roadworthy
- *be seen* – most accidents to cyclists happen at junctions
- remember; pavements are for pedestrians – don't cycle on them expect where designated
- use your bell 0 not all pedestrians can see you.

Recommended routes

The school may wish to recommend the safest routes to school – or equally, those routes best avoided. Parents may wish to accompany their child on the chosen route to school, in order to point out potential hazards and ways of dealing with them.

Resources and addresses

- **Bicycle Association of Great Britain**

Starley House
Eaton Road
Coventry
CV1 2FH

Child Safety – 20 steps to safe cycling for children (free with SAE)

- **City of York Council**

Road Safety Department
9 St Leonard's Place
York
YO1 2ET

Cyclists training video (£7.99)

- **Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents**

Edgbaston Park
353 Bristol Road
Edgbaston
Birmingham
B5 7ST

Code of good practice: The Practical Aspects of Cycling Training
(£6.66 – minimum order £20)

- **Sustrans**

PO Box 21
Bristol
BS99 2HA

Tel No. 0117 929 0888

Catalogue with details of bells and reflective clothing
(Code YY 34567 – free)

Safe Routes to Schools Information Pack
(Code FS03 – free)

The Safe Routes to Schools project is supported by the Environmental Action fund, Esmee Fairbairn Charitable Trust, Rees Jeffreys Road Fund, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and other charitable trusts, and Sustrans supporters.

School Cycle Parking Permit

(schools should adapt this to their own circumstances)

Cycling to School – Important Notice to Parents

While XXX school wishes to encourage an increase in the number of pupils cycling to school, as to whether your child is competent to negotiate such hazards as may present themselves on the route from home to school and back must be yours and yours alone. XXX school does not accept liability for any consequences of that decision.

XXX school supports pupils who wish to walk or cycle to school since it improves their health and fitness, reduces traffic outside the school making conditions safer for everyone and benefits their general development. If you wish your son/daughter to cycle to school, would you please complete the form below. It is important that we know the numbers of children cycling to school even on an irregular basis in order that we can make appropriate security and safety arrangements.

Parents are advised to take out appropriate insurance cover as the school's insurances does not cover loss or damage to bicycles.

Cycle Helmets

Pupils are advised to wear a correctly fitted cycle helmet and use appropriate reflective clothing and bike lights when visibility is poor.

Conditions for Cycling to School

1. All bicycles must be in a roadworthy condition.
2. Cyclists must ride sensibly and follow the Highway Code.
3. Approved cycle training must have been undertaken, where available.

4. All bicycles must be locked securely in the approved cycle parking area.

XXX school reserves the right to revoke this permit in the event that these conditions are ignored.

Name of Pupils..... Date of Birth.....

Cycle serial no..... Lock serial no.....

Cycle make..... Model.....

Cycle colour..... Features.....

I accept the above conditions and request permission for (name) to be given access to cycle parking at the school.

Signed..... Date.....
Parent/Guardian

Brookside Primary School Cycle Pass Scheme

Attached below are the two pass schemes developed by Brookside School in Street. The idea of developing a pass scheme was taken to the staff, PTA and governors after the children at a School Council Meeting raised the issue of cycling to school. Using the Sustrans guidelines above a new pass system was developed at the school. One scheme called the 'Child Pass' for children who had successfully completed their cycle awareness course, another scheme called a 'Buddy Pass' for children of any age who would be cycling with another adult.

**CYCLING
BUDDY PASS APPLICATION**

SAFETY RULES

- An adult **MUST** accompany the cyclist at all times and appropriate road awareness **MUST** be maintained.
- Helmets* **MUST** be worn when cycling to or from school.
- Bicycle **MUST** be in a roadworthy condition.
- Cyclists **MUST** dismount and wheel their bicycle when on paths or school grounds.
- Where or when appropriate, bicycle lights must be used.

*Helmets may be stored in school during the school day.

SECURITY

- The cyclist is responsible for providing and using their own lock.

**.....SCHOOL CANNOT BE HELD RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY LOSS OR
DAMAGE TO BICYCLES.**

Please complete and return the slip below, retaining the above for future reference.

.....

BUDDY PASS APPLICATION

NAME

ADDRESS

TELEPHONE

I have discussed the above recommendations with my child and agree to maintain these standards.

An adult will accompany my child to and from school **AT ALL TIMES.**

Signed.....

Date.....

**CYCLING
CHILD PASS APPLICATION**

SAFETY RULES

- Appropriate road awareness, as taught on the Right track cycle awareness course.
- Helmets * **MUST** be worn when cycling to or from school.
- Bicycle **MUST** be in a roadworthy condition.
- Cyclists **MUST** dismount and wheel their bicycle when on paths or school grounds.
- Where or when appropriate, bicycle lights must be used.

*Helmets may be stored in school during the day.

SECURITY

- The cyclist is responsible for providing and using their own lock.

..... **SCHOOL CANNOT BE HELD RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY LOSS OR DAMAGE TO BICYCLES.**

Please complete and return the slip below, retaining the above for future reference.

.....
CHILD PASS APPLICATION

NAME

ADDRESS

TELEPHONE

I have discussed the above recommendations with my child and agree to maintain these standards.

Signed.....

Date.....