



Nottinghamshire
County Council

Communities & the Environment

Road Safety Around Schools

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Purpose

1. To present the final report of the Road Safety Around Schools Study Group.

Background

2. On 19th April 2010 a study group comprised of Members from the Communities and the Environment Standing Committee commenced examining the issue of road safety around schools. The study group received initial briefing from Nottinghamshire County Council's Head of Service for Highway Safety and Nottinghamshire Police's Traffic Management Officer. Following that, the study group undertook a number of site visits to schools in Nottinghamshire to experience road safety issues at firsthand.

Information

Casualty Data

3. Of all 269 child casualties in 2009, 11 occurred outside a school. Of the 11 injury accidents reported in the vicinity of a school nine were pedestrians, most of whom had made a misjudgement. Six were aged 11-12 in transition stage, seven were crossing with four masked by parked vehicles. There was one serious casualty and three casualties under age 11. Eight casualties occurred on the way to school and only two schools had more than one casualty.
Conclusion: accidents outside schools are rare.

Services Provided

4. The County Council provides a range of services to facilitate road safety around schools such as no stopping and zig-zag markings (which are advisory only), the School Crossing Patrol Service, road safety education and training, safer routes to school, 20 mph zones, traffic calming in residential areas – much of which has been installed over the last 30 years.

School Crossing Patrol Service

5. The School Crossing Patrol Service is a non-statutory service to support parental responsibility that was established in 1954. It is, therefore, provided under a discretionary power – there is no duty to provide a school crossing patrol. The service is provided for children aged 5-11, but can be utilised by members of the public and secondary school children.
6. Currently there are 180 sites with 127 patrols. There is a need to recruit to a further 31 sites and others are being monitored. Recruitment is often difficult, especially in more affluent areas. Posters featuring children's artwork can be effective in aiding recruitment.

Road Safety Education and Training

7. Changes are taking place to the way in which information is provided for parents of pre-school/foundation stage children. Previously the Road Safety Team delivered free DfT booklets to schools, for parents of new starters. Free resources from DfT are now limited so the delivery of these resources has been targeted to cover the areas of deprivation in the county. Under the Junior Road Safety Officer scheme, due to be piloted over the next term, parents will be guided to on-line information and activities.
8. Whilst the road safety quiz is no longer being held, the JRSO scheme will enable more children to access road safety activities, targeted to their age and local community. Child pedestrian training, with children being accompanied by a parent/carer, is offered to Foundation/Year 1 children. Over 3,000 children per year receive cycle training. Additionally RSE activities are continuing to be delivered to all key stages, particularly KS3/4, who are more at risk from road traffic accidents, reaching around 3,500 secondary school students each year.

Safer Routes to Schools

9. The Safer Routes to Schools initiative was introduced in 1998. It receives a £500K budget annually from the local transport plan. Schemes running under this initiative include:
 - Crossing facilities
 - Cycle/footpaths
 - School zones
 - Zig-zag markings (monitoring)

School Travel Plans

10. 319 of the County's 352 Primary, Secondary and Special schools (91%) have developed School Travel Plans (STP) compared to a Local Transport Plan target of 85%. These schools have developed many different schemes and initiatives to help reduce car travel to school, including: Parking permits at local stores; Home to school cycle agreements; Walking buses, 18 schools have run schemes at different times, with 8 buses currently active; over 60 schools have developed Park'n'stride schemes; Many schools have regular 'walk-to-school' days, for which awards are presented. Government funding for School Travel Advisors will cease at the end of March 2011. School Travel Plans are accredited with assisting in a 5% decrease in car journeys to schools.

20 mph Zones

11. Five 20mph School Zones have been piloted within the last 3 years. These are: advisory schemes at Coxmoor Rd, Sutton-in-Ashfield; Swingate, Kimberley; Killisick Rd, Arnold; Station Rd, Bleasby; plus a mandatory scheme at Chilwell Lane, Bramcote. The mandatory scheme at Bramcote was supported by significant speed reduction engineering measures. The effect on speeds has been minimal and the effect on casualties insignificant. Additional information is attached in Appendix A.

Interim Conclusions

12. The number of schemes resulting from School Travel Plans seems quite low when compared to the high percentage of schools participating. There seems to be little incentive for schools to revisit, revise and update School Travel Plans once they have prepared them.
13. Although child pedestrian casualties occur on school journeys the number of accidents occurring outside schools is minimal. The chance of suffering such a casualty is less than one in a thousand. The focus for preventative measures should therefore be around the whole journey to school rather than the immediate vicinity around schools.

Study Visits

14. In order to gain firsthand experience of the road safety issues facing schools the study group undertook a series of visits to Nottinghamshire schools.

Case Study 1. – Jesse Gray Primary School

15. Jesse Gray Primary School in West Bridgford [received funding in 2000 for the installation of a pedestrian crossing at the Musters Road entrance. Of the 450 pupils approximately half walk to school but this is subject to some seasonal variation.
16. The school has participated in the production of a road safety film which is used across the county to highlight problems and areas for improvement.
17. The Head Teacher maintains an excellent relationship with parents. However, when there are two complaints about the same vehicle, the Head Teacher rings the parent concerned at work to discuss the issue. This has proved highly effective and has only had to be used four times.
18. Observations from the study group: the behaviour of the parents and pupils arriving on foot, by car and the management of the crossing by school crossing patrol officer appeared exemplary. The only concern that could be raised was the possibility that the presence of the study group was causing drivers to be 'on their best behaviour.'

Case Study 2. – Mapperley Plains Primary School

19. Mapperley Plains Primary School developed a comprehensive School Travel Plan in February 2008, but the plan has not been revisited since a review and comparison of travel habits by its steering group in October 2008. The plan indicates that pupils are encouraged to walk to school wherever possible with parents encouraged to set up 'walking buses' – the week following the study visit was 'walk to school' week and scooter racks had now been installed at the school too.
20. This school has developed an imaginative approach to reducing congestion in the road near the school by getting agreement from the nearby Mapperley Social Club to allow land alongside the football pitch (which is seldom used during the day) to be used as a drop-off point.
21. While observing the collection of pupils at the end of the school day with the Head Teacher, the study group once again formed the impression that the presence of an authority figure outside the school was improving driver behaviour – especially around parking.

Case Study 3. – Carlton Le Willows Secondary School

22. Carlton Le Willows School occupies a large site with several entrances and exits – the exit at the rear is Wood Lane which is narrow, becomes easily congested and only has a footpath on one side. The Head Teacher has stopped departure from the school along nearby Military Road following an accident in which a pupil was knocked over by a car on the way to school and suffered a broken leg.
23. The Study Group observed firsthand the traffic congestion on Wood Lane at the end of the school day. There would seem to be no obvious solution, engineering or otherwise, to this problem. In an ideal world a school as large as Carlton le Willows should not have a small narrow lane as one of its main exits. The lesson to be learned would seem to be around how schools are sited and that population growth and increases in car usage are factors that should be taken into consideration when schools are planned. The issue may be related to catchment area problems and parental choice will have made a difference to the issue.

Case Study 4. – Hucknall National School

24. A member of the Study Group also attended Hucknall National School and observed that people parking in proximity to the school were causing difficulties for parents and children trying to cross the road. Some of the problems associated with this site might be alleviated if the gate at the rear of the school onto St Mary's Way was reopened.

Conclusions

25. The traffic congestion around some schools can act as a 'rolling road block' and this may be a factor in keeping speed and accidents down. The downside to this is that local residents have to suffer the inconvenience of the congestion.
26. A 'global' application of 20 mph speed limits outside all schools would be disproportionate and ineffective. The pilot scheme demonstrated that imposing a 20 mph limit can actually serve to increase the speed of drivers.
27. The imaginative problem solving at Mapperley Plains Primary School (where land alongside the Miners Welfare football pitch was used as a drop off point) should be replicated at other schools where similar opportunities exist.

28. Although funding for new School Travel Plans has now ceased it would be useful for schools with existing travel plans to update and amend them as necessary with a focus on solving problems as they arise.

Recommendations

29. It is recommended that this Authority:
- i. Undertake a frequent analysis of land use near schools with a view to identifying places that could be used as a parking/drop-off point for use by parents and carers at the beginning and end of the school day – even if these places are only available in the relative short term, schools should be strongly encouraged to broker their use
 - ii. Encourage Head Teachers and other senior school staff to regularly monitor and observe any congestion outside their school in a highly visible way since their presence may serve to improve matters
 - iii. Encourage Head Teachers to maintain and keep up to date School Travel Plans where they already exist
 - iv. Ensure that when new schools are built thought is given to how increases in local traffic and the school population may impact on road safety in the future.

Councillor Geoff Merry
Chair of Road Safety Around Schools Study Group

Scrutiny Co-ordinator: martin.gately@nottscc.gov.uk

Background papers:

Nil

Appendix A.

1.0 Nottinghamshire trials.

Five trial 20mph speed limits were introduced during 2007/08 at the following sites: -

1. Coxmoor Rd, Sutton In Ashfield – Hillocks Primary School – Advisory 20mph limit introduced summer 2007
2. Swingate, Kimberly – Kimberly Primary School – Advisory 20mph limit introduced summer 2007
3. Killisick Rd, Arnold – Killisick Junior School – Advisory 20mph limit introduced summer 2007
4. Chilwell Lane, Bramcote, Alderman White Secondary School and Language College – Mandatory 20mph limit introduced summer 2008
5. Station Road, Bleasby, Bleasby CofE Primary School – Advisory 20mph limit introduced summer 2008.

The 20mph speed limits are in operation from 8am to 9am and 3pm to 4pm on school days, at all other times the normal speed limits apply.

2.0 Results obtained from the trial sites

As part of the trials before and after electronic recording of vehicle speeds was carried out. Overall average speed variations during the time the speed limits are in operation (both directions) are shown below:

1. Coxmoor Rd – before 25.5 after 24.2 – difference = 1.3mph decrease
2. Swingate – before 25.6 after 23.9 – difference = 1.7mph decrease
3. Killisick Rd – before 23.9 after 24.1 – difference = 0.2mph increase
4. Chilwell Lane – before 22.3 after 21.8 – difference = 0.5mph decrease
5. Station Road – before 23.8 after 25.8 – difference = 2.0 mph increase*

* Data collection difficulties at this site appear to be giving rise to spurious results. It is recommended that the data for this site is not included in the review process.

The recorded speed data indicates that the average speed across the four sites (ignoring Station Road) was 24.33mph before the introduction of the 20mph limits and 23.5mph during the trial. Speeds have therefore decreased by 0.83mph (3.42%).

In addition to comparative speed data, research was also carried out into the recorded accident history at each site both before and during the trials. This is given below:

School	*Before		#After	
	Serious	Slight	Serious	Slight
Coxmoor Rd.	1	0	1	3
Swinegate	0	3	0	0
Killsick Road	1	1	0	0
Chilwell Lane	3	5	0	0
Station Road	0	0	0	0
Totals	5	9	1	3

* **'Before'** statistics show recorded casualties from 1st Jan 2003 to 23rd Sept 2006 i.e. 45 months.

'After' statistics show recorded casualties from 1st Sept 2007 to 2nd June 2009 i.e. 21 months.