

North Central Sustrans Active School Travel Programme Autumn Term 2017 Newsletter

I'd love to hear from you...

I'm Beverley Gaston, Sustrans' Active Travel Officer for North Central.

Please get in touch if you would like more information on how the Active School Travel Programme works and how your school can get involved.

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Message from Sustrans ...

The Active School Travel Programme is an exciting initiative for schools who wish to see more of their pupils choosing an **active and healthy** journey to school. The aim of the programme is to increase the number of pupils walking, cycling and scooting to school.

Sustrans is being funded by the **Public Health Agency** and the **Department for Infrastructure** to continue delivering the Active School Travel Programme across Northern Ireland until 2021.

Sustrans has been delivering this successful programme for the past three years. Since 2013 within participating schools, there has been a **38% increase** in the number of pupils travelling to school by an active mode.

We are currently working with over 280 schools across Northern Ireland. Please visit our [website](http://www.sustrans.org.uk) where you can learn more about the programme and download newsletters from other areas.



Edmund Rice College always have a great turn-out for their active travel days

Leading by example

One of the most effective ways to help pupils make a long-term commitment to staying active is to show them it's a normal thing for the adults around them to be doing as well. It's brilliant to have a number of staff in different schools who regularly walk or cycle to school, and even better to see this number increasing. Some staff cycle, some walk, some park and stride, some are active every day while others aim for one day a week. It's about making it work for you.

Pictured are some of the cycling staff from Acorn IPS, Carrickfergus. If you have staff who get active on the way to school, send in a photo for the next newsletter.

Feet First Families is coming up next term (see the last page of this newsletter), and we will be encouraging all staff to think about joining the pupils on that day and walking even just the last part of their journey; so be inspired to consider how you could join in.



Sustrans is the charity that's enabling people to travel by foot, bike or public transport for more of the journeys we make every day. It's time we all began making smarter travel choices. Make your move and support Sustrans today. www.sustrans.org.uk

National Standards

Ten new schools have been welcomed to the programme in the North Central area this term, and they have been very keen to get going, with five of them already having completed their National Standard cycle training.

This is a great opportunity for pupils to build confidence and learn new skills on their bikes. Starting with a play-ground session and progressing onto local roads, pupils learn how to make short on-road journeys, dealing with traffic and things like parked cars.

During the term 68 pupils in Primary 6 and 7 took part in the training, receiving certificates at the end to show their achievements. Well done to all of them.



Above, Mercy PS and right, Harmony PS pupils get practising. The course includes learning how to start and stop an on-road journey, turn right and left into and out of junctions, and pass a parked car. There is plenty to learn over the 3 days!



Below: Rathcoole PS pupils take a break during their Level 2 on-road training



Pupils from St Anne's Primary, Dunmurry, showing they have good bike handling skills during Level 1 training.



Above: Fane Street pupils get ready to set off to cycle back to school, led by Gerry, from our super team of instructors



Super bright

The Public Health Agency has again provided funding for all pupils at schools in their first year of the programme to receive hi-vis vests. Here is Ashgrove PS looking brilliantly bright.



Autumn activities

Even as the weather turns colder, there have still been plenty of activities happening in schools—both inside and out. In case you need some inspiration for next term, here are some snapshots of what's been going on.



Learning to cycle without stabilisers at Mercy PS

P5 pupils at Whitehead Primary can now fix a puncture



Orienteering in the playground at Carrick Central PS

Sacred Heart Primary's P2 class assembly all about road safety



'Build a bike' lesson with P5/6 at Cairncastle PS—not as easy as it sounds

On the move

There has been a range of walk to school events at schools across the North Central area. Many schools in Belfast and surrounding areas took part in Beat the Street. Pupils collected points by tapping a special fob on Beat Boxes which were attached to lamp posts. Top scoring school in the total points category in North Central area was St Teresa's PS, west Belfast, coming an impressive 13th out of 138 schools. Ashgrove PS came highest of the local schools in the average points category.

Always popular in Autumn term are ditch the dark days, reminding pupils to wear bright and reflective clothes in the darker days. Showing how it is done is Ballycarry PS.

Some schools took part in an Autumn Active Fortnight. Cairncastle PS rounded this with off with a bling your bike day— Happy Hallowhe'el.

Then in the run up to Christmas there have been a number of Christmas Jumper Day Danders and Santa Hat Strolls, some combined with walking buses. Below is the Christmas jumper walking bus about to depart for Tir na nOg PS.



Feet First Families

On **9th March 2018**, Sustrans will be launching a new national initiative within the Active School Travel Programme called 'Feet First Families', which aims to inspire families to put their feet first by walking, cycling or scooting to school and making their school a car-free zone. School all across the country will be encouraging families and staff to ditch the car and use their own steam to travel to school. Some schools will be hosting a 'Party in the Parking Lot' on the day! Please put this date in to your school's calendar. There will be more information and resources to come. Come along to one of the School Champion Training workshops for more information as well.



The Daily Mile

One of the aims of the Active School Travel Programme is to increase children's physical activity levels. Walking, cycling or scooting to school is a great way to help children reach their 60 minutes of exercise per day. It's also important to build physical activity in to the school day. The Daily Mile is a perfect way to do this.

It is a profoundly simple but effective concept, which any primary or nursery school can implement completely free of charge and without the need for staff training. Its impact can be transformational – improving not only the children's fitness, but also their concentration levels, mood, behaviour and general wellbeing.

The Daily Mile takes place over just 15 minutes, with children averaging a mile each day. Children run outside in the fresh air – and the weather is a benefit, not a barrier. There's no set up, tidy up, or equipment required. Children run in their uniforms so no kit or changing time is needed. It's social, non-competitive and fun. It's fully inclusive; every child, whatever their circumstances, age or ability, succeeds at the Daily Mile.

Please visit the [Daily Mile website](#) to learn more, access resources, register for newsletters and add your school to the worldwide participation map.

Save the date: **Big Pedal 2018**

23 April - 4 May

Registration opens in January
via www.bigpedal.org.uk

Message from Eco-Schools:

Eco-Schools is thrilled to see so many schools getting active with Sustrans, one of our delivery partners, with every step, cycle and scoot counting towards the Eco-Schools Transport topic.

If you're collecting data for Sustrans, this can now be easily added to the Eco-Schools Data Zone on the [Eco-Schools website](#) to track how travel habits have changed and contribute to your Monitoring and Evaluation step. If you're not sure of your log in details or you would like to find out how you can become more engaged with the Eco-Schools programme, please contact eco-schools@keepnorthernirelandbeautiful.org.

Green Flag applications can be made at any time throughout the year, but we have some deadlines if you want to be assured of being assessed before the 22nd June:

- If your school is renewing its Green Flag, even if it is currently lapsed, by **Wed 10th January** and your assessment will be scheduled for Feb – May.
- If this is your school's first Green Flag, please submit an application by **Thurs 15th March**, and your assessment will be scheduled for April – June.

The application process is the same for first flags and renewals; however this year not all renewal schools will receive a site visit. For more information on this, please visit the Eco-Schools [awards page](#).

Pictured below is the Eco-Committee in St Colum's Primary School, Portstewart, celebrating their first Eco-Schools Green Flag award.



Sustrans is grateful for the continued support of our schools work in Northern Ireland from the following:

