

Going back to school

Advice for parents on keeping safe on the journey to school



Have you thought about how you will get your children to and from school when it is time to return? Everyone is having to consider new approaches to how we travel to school and ensure that social distancing and the health of the pupils, parents and staff is protected.

At Sustrans we believe that an important tool in tackling Covid-19 is to increase walking, cycling and scooting to school as collectively we will be healthier and stronger. By reducing cars at the school gate we are creating space for children to see and be seen, and access the school safely. Studies have linked severity of Covid-19 symptoms to poor air quality, which is made worse if there is lots of traffic around the school.

We have seen many Plymouth families enjoying walking, running, scooting and cycling as part of their daily exercise. It's a great opportunity to keep this going when schools go back. Our surveys show that pupils would prefer to travel actively if they were given the choice.

Children enjoy being active. They arrive at school fresh and ready to learn. The streets around school are safer with less congestion. It's healthy for us all and it's also good for the planet (and doesn't create air pollution around the school). It's a chance to chat and share things as a family.

Many of us have experienced how we can maintain distance from others while travelling actively, including making use of the quieter roads even if that is to briefly step into them to move around people. Hopefully we can keep travelling actively, but the roads may get busier, so there is some advice overleaf so we can do this safely.



The majority of primary school children in the UK walk to school, with average trip distances less than 1.5 miles (20-30 minute walk).



15 minutes of exercise (including a walk, scoot or cycle to school) can improve a child's mood.



Active travel to school can increase a child's concentration level by up to 4 hours.

Advice on Social Distancing on the Journey to School

When schools return, the pavements and roads may become busier again. Here are some ideas to help you feel comfortable travelling actively to school:

- Give yourself a bit more time in the morning. People walking, running, scooting and cycling tend to arrive at school over a **staggered time period**. This makes it easier to manage limited space on the roads and paths around school.
- Vary your route if you can. This can be more interesting and pleasant, especially if you can stay away from busy roads. Try and find the route less travelled. **Explore routes using the new School Travel Maps, see below for more information.**
- Stop and wait for people to pass (and say hello). Look for wider areas of the path, for example at junctions and feel confident about using other people's driveways so people can pass.
- Remind children about slowing, stopping and giving space, especially if they are scooting and cycling. They might make mistakes, but try not to get angry, just remind them that it's really important right now.
- If you do have to step in the road to pass people, reinforce looking and listening with your family. Looking and listening is how we understand the world around us, so the more looking and listening we do by the roads the better decisions we make.
- Try and give older children (Y4 and above) responsibility for getting themselves to and from school. You might prefer to arrange to meet them near the school (outside the library or a shop). This helps their road confidence and reduces the amount of people around the school.



Get yourself a free School Travel Map

Plymouth City Council's Plymotion team are pleased to offer your school a customised walking map with useful 5 and 10 minute walking zones. If you live within 5 or 10 minutes' walk to school why not use the map to plot a route together with your children. Vary the journey, start off by doing five minutes and progress to a 10 minute walk. The map is pocket sized and has lots of great tips and games to keep you learning and having fun.

If you live too far away to walk, scoot or cycle, or don't feel it is possible for you, it can also help with planning where to park to avoid overcrowding and help to ensure space for safe social distancing nearer the school. By parking outside the five minute zone your children will still get the benefits of active travel.

You can request your active travel maps from us using the contact details below:

Tessa Price, Plymotion School Travel Engagement officer:
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