



Buckinghamshire Council's Getting to School Strategy

Refreshed August 2022

Introduction

The Getting to School Strategy is fulfilling our duty to produce a Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategy as outlined in the Education and Inspections act 2006. It is an accompanying document to the Council's Local Transport Plan 4. This strategy is designed to set out how we will promote the use of sustainable modes of travel to schools, colleges, and other education centres. It includes the transport needs of students aged 16+, and pupils with Special Education Needs or Disabilities.

Sustainable travel means encouraging use of transport modes that reduce congestion, improve health, and reduce reliance on private cars. This includes public transport such as buses or trains, and active travel such as walking or cycling. Within this strategy we discuss our current activities and initiatives aimed at achieving behavioural change in favour of sustainable transport use, followed by the challenges we face. Finally, it sets out actions and objectives for encouraging sustainable education travel and how we will work (and support others) to meet our targets.

This document has multiple purposes:

- Meeting our statutory duty to maintain a SMoTS (as outlined in the Education and Inspections Act 2006) which should:
 - Promote the use of sustainable modes of travel to meet the school travel needs of Buckinghamshire.
 - Assess our school travel needs
 - Assess our facilities and services for sustainable modes of travel to, from and within Buckinghamshire
- Reducing congestion around schools and education establishments
- Outlining how schools can increase sustainable travel
- Informing parents/carers on the benefits of sustainable travel
- Improving the health and wellbeing of young people

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Vision and Aims

This document supports the vision outlined in our Local Transport Plan 4¹:

Our vision is to make Buckinghamshire a great place to live and work, maintaining and enhancing its special environment, helping its people and businesses thrive and grow to give us one of the strongest and most productive economies in the country.

The following policies from LTP4 are directly supported by this Strategy:

- Policy 10 – Improving our environment
- Policy 11 – Access to education
- Policy 12 – Encouraging walking for shorter journeys
- Policy 13 – Encouraging cycling
- Policy 17 – Road safety

This also supports the aims of the emerging Buckinghamshire Climate Change & Air Quality Strategy, an early draft of which is currently available online².

In order to help achieve this vision, the overall aim of this Getting to School Plan is to **promote sustainable and active travel as the preferred choice to and from education**. In order to help accomplish this, we have the following aims:

- Keep children and young people safe, healthy, and happy
- Reduce congestion and air pollution on our transport network and around education establishments
- Increase the independence of children so that they obtain skills for later life

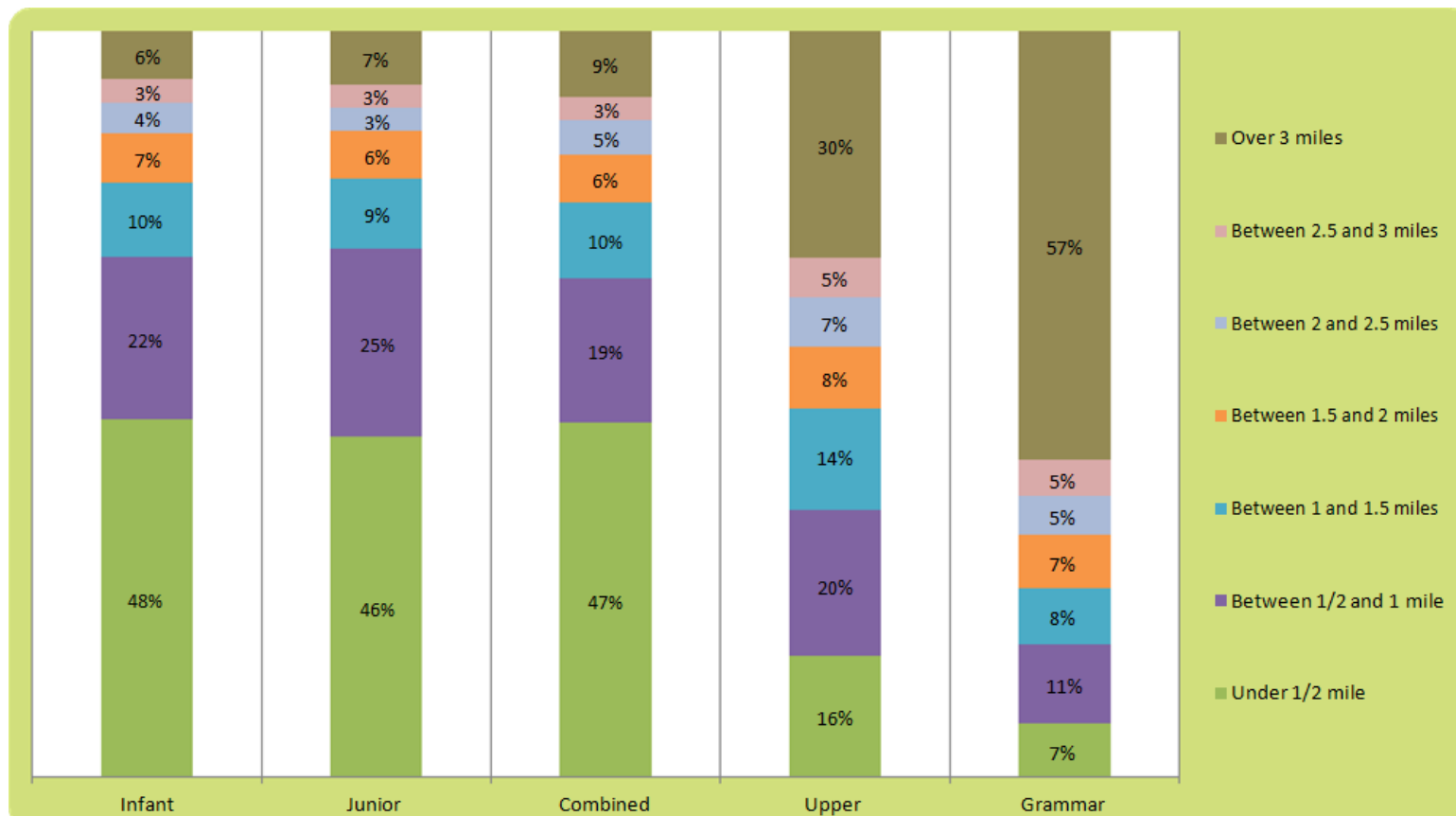
This is a live document that will be reviewed annually and updated as necessary.

¹ <https://www.buckscc.gov.uk/services/council-and-democracy/our-plans/local-transport-plan-4/>

² <https://www.buckscc.gov.uk/services/environment/sustainability/climate-change/>

Distance to School

One of the biggest influences on choice of travel is distance. Below is a graph that shows the distance that pupils live from their schools based upon straight lines. The data is derived from the October 2017 school census. The graph clearly shows that pupils in primary schools live far closer than those in secondary education. Most primary school pupils live under ½ mile from the school, whereas in secondary schools they tend to live over 3 miles away. However, there is a marked difference between Upper and Grammar Schools, where 57% of Grammar School pupils live over 3 miles from the site.



What we do

As the Education and Transport provider, Buckinghamshire Council promote sustainable education travel and transport predominantly through School Travel Plans and our contracted Home to School Transport providers (School Buses and Taxis).

School Commissioning

As the education authority, we have a statutory duty to ensure sufficient school places within the county. Part of this means securing funding from developers to increase school places.

Primary rolls have been rising rapidly in Bucks (6000 pupils between 2012 to 2018) although this has now slowed, and numbers have only risen by approximately 100 pupils per year over the last two years (2020 and 2021). This has led to Buckinghamshire Council having to provide/invest heavily in new facilities for primary pupils in order to meet its statutory duty.

During the past ten years over 26 schools have been expanded providing more than 35 forms of additional capacity and several bulge classes). In addition, a number of new schools are currently being progressed or are due to be commenced in the near future to meet demand from new major housing developments in Aylesbury:

- Kingsbrook View Primary Academy – new 2FE school to meet needs from Kingsbrook housing development (2450 homes) due to open Sept 21
- Second 2FE primary school on the Kingsbrook development
- First 3FE primary school on the Hampden Fields development (3000 homes)
- 3FE primary school on the South West Milton Keynes development (1885 homes)

The increase in primary pupils is now flowing through into the secondary sector which will require Buckinghamshire Council to provide additional capacity to meet the demand (i.e. in 2021 there was an increase of close to 1000 pupils). Significant additional capacity has already been provided to meet the increased population. Projections indicate that there remains a need for additional secondary school places to ensure that the Council meets its statutory duty to provide sufficient school places. Plans are progressing to expand existing schools in Aylesbury, Wycombe, and Chesham/Amersham as well as the provision of a new 6FE secondary school on the Kingsbrook development.

School Admissions

Each school has an admissions policy which means it can fairly decide which children can go to the school. These policies will help parents understand how the decisions will be made in their child's case. The policies can change as circumstances change, so it is important to look at

the policies for the year a child will be admitted into the school: if a child is starting part-way through a year they will be admitted according to the policies set for the previous September.

As the admission authority, Buckinghamshire Council set the admissions policies for community and voluntary controlled primary and secondary schools. Voluntary Aided and Academy schools decide their own policies; there is usually a consultation if a policy change is proposed. Following consultation, each admission authority should make a final decision about their rules and publish them.

All the admissions policies can be found on our website.³

Home to School Transport

Buckinghamshire Council is committed to fulfilling our statutory duties towards Buckinghamshire's pupils and our home to school travel assistance aims to:

- support those most in need
- promote principles of independence
- provide the most cost-effective travel assistance
- promote and encourage the use of sustainable travel

We have a statutory duty to provide free home to school transport for eligible children. We ensure that all students who are legally entitled to free home to school transport are supported to get to school, in accordance with our current Home to School Transport Policy.⁴

Free home to school transport is available if pupils:

- are between 5-16 years old (of statutory school age)
- are attending their nearest suitable school
- live further away from the school than the statutory walking distances (2 miles for pupils under 8, and 3 miles for those aged 8 and above)
- are from low-income families (where extended rights apply)

³ <https://www.buckscc.gov.uk/services/education/school-admissions/admissions-policies-consultations-and-statistics/>

⁴ <https://www.buckinghamshire.ov.uk/school-transport-policies/>

Children may also qualify for free transport to the nearest suitable school if they are unable to walk for any of the following reasons:

- they have special educational needs
- they have a disability or mobility problem
- there is no safe walking route

To find out more about eligibility for free transport, visit our website.⁵

The Council provides home to school transport in the following ways:

- School buses – for pupils who are eligible for free transport, with any spare seats offered to purchase
- Bus or train public transport travel pass - for pupils eligible for free transport
- A place in a taxi or minibus – these are usually for pupils and students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) who are eligible for free transport
- Personal Transport Budgets (PTBs) – a payment made at the Council’s discretion to families of children with SEND who are eligible for transport. PTBs give families the freedom and flexibility to make their own travel arrangements rather than relying on transport that we provide.

Where there are spare seats remaining on buses contracted by the Council to transport eligible children, these may be sold after the allocation of seats to qualifying students have been made. On routes where spare seats are available and where applications are received by the advertised deadline, spare seats will be prioritised and allocated in line with the council’s Policy. To find out more about the spare seat scheme go to our website.⁶

Dedicated school bus transport only carries school pupils; members of the public cannot travel on these services. Pupils are expected to make their own way to and from the nearest bus stop at the beginning and end of the school day.

⁵ <https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/school-transport>

⁶ www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/spare-seat-scheme

Travel for Post 16 students

There is no automatic entitlement to free home to school or college transport once a student is over 16 years and beyond statutory school age. The responsibility for making appropriate transport arrangements for Post 16 students rests with a student and/or their parents/carers.

Students are now required to be in education, employment, or training until their 18th birthday, which could involve mixing full time work with study, following an apprenticeship, continuing full time in school or college, or combining part time training with volunteering. There has not, however, been any change to compulsory school age and consequently there is no extension to the entitlement to free transport beyond the end of secondary education (end of Year 11).

Charging for Council-arranged transport for Post 16 students with SEND was introduced in March 2019 from the 2019/20 academic year onwards. This followed a policy review in 2018/19.

For the 2020/21 academic year only, the Council took the exceptional decision to suspend charging for Post 16 students with SEND. More information on this is available on our website.⁷

With our Post-16 Transport Policy Statement 2021/22 published in April 2021, the way we provide post-16 travel assistance for young people with SEND has changed. These changes are designed to provide more choice and freedom for families in relation to their transport arrangements, and the policy applies to all post-16 pupils and students with SEND, including those with existing transport arrangements.

Our Post-16 Transport Policy Statement has more information on this and can be found on our website.⁸

Travel for students with SEND

Children and young people who have SEND may require assistance with getting to school or further education that is over and above the usual provision made for pupils. We provide travel assistance for students with SEND in accordance with our statutory duties. We assess the needs of each individual pupil or student to determine the most appropriate type of travel assistance.

In preparation for adulthood, it is expected that the majority of young people beyond the age of 16 will travel independently to their place of education.

⁷ <https://www.buckscc.gov.uk/services/education/school-transport/changes-to-school-transport-policy/>

⁸ <https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/school-transport-policies/>

We offer Independent Travel Training (ITT) within some of our colleges and schools and are working to widen the ITT offer in Buckinghamshire. ITT supports young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to travel independently on public transport, helping them to live more independently through acquiring important life skills as they transition to adulthood.

Our current Home to School Transport Policy has more information. ⁹

⁹ <https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/school-transport-policies/>

School Travel Plans

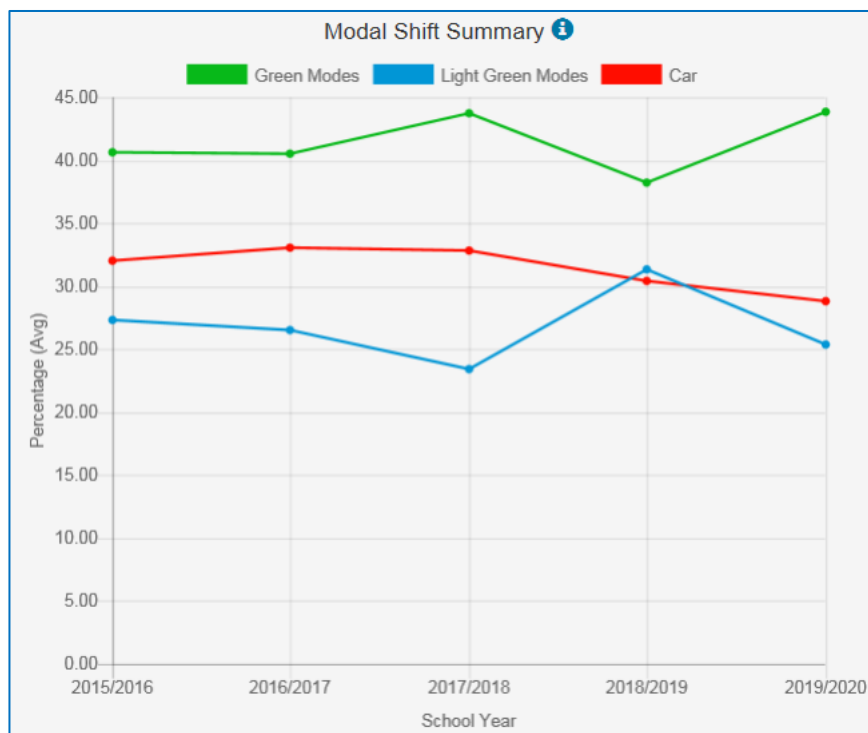
The main aim of a STP is to reduce single occupancy car use on the school journey, by promoting and encouraging sustainable travel. Increasing sustainable travel helps to reduce congestion, pollution, and carbon emissions, as well as improving the health and fitness of children and young people. These are just a few of the many benefits of an active STP.

The best School Travel Plans (STP) are developed, maintained, and monitored by the whole school community, to promote and facilitate sustainable travel for the school journey. A STP sets out practical initiatives and measures to encourage active, healthy, safe, and sustainable travel as an alternative to single occupancy car use. Input from parents and students on any ideas they wish to include in their school's travel plan is encouraged. Ideas should first go through their school's travel plan officer, who will then investigate the feasibility and either include it in the travel plan or forward on to our School Travel Plan Officer. Parents are also encouraged to volunteer, either as Travel Plan coordinators for the school or as 'Footsteps' scheme volunteers (see below).

A STP is developed and monitored by each school to:

- discover actual and preferred mode of travel for the school journey;
- identify issues to determine why people do not travel sustainably;
- set future targets to achieve or maintain use of modes of sustainable travel (e.g. cycling and walking);
- lay out a plan of action for the tasks that the school will carry out to achieve their targets and aspirations;
- encourage the whole school community to travel in a safer, healthier, and more sustainable way.

Our Travel Plan Officer provides support, ideas, and resources to schools for their travel plans. We also encourage schools to apply for recognition of their efforts through the national scheme, Modeshift STARS (Sustainable, Travel Accreditation and Recognition for Schools). Currently we have 63 schools that have achieved national recognition for their travel plan work. We know that nearly two thirds of schools in Buckinghamshire are engaged in promoting active travel in some way. The extent to which they are involved varies between schools and over time.



Key

Green Mode	Walking, Cycling, Scooting
Light Green Mode	Bus, Train, Car Share, Park and Stride
Car	Single Occupancy Car

The above graph represents the Modal Shift achieved in Primary Schools from 2015 – 2020. Schools are recommended to aim for a 1-2% change each year, e.g. a 1% reduction in Single Occupancy Car use. This is individually set by each school, but this could be shown as a decrease in single occupancy car use or an increase in walking or cycling. The data is collected through Hands Up Surveys, where a teacher will ask their students how they travelled to school that day. This is the only method available since the Government removed “Travel” from the School Census. The graph shows that the car is still the 2nd highest form of transport although it has reduced since the first survey. Park and Stride was first introduced in 2013 and still is very popular with parents and children. Overall, the data suggests that there has been a positive modal shift away from the private car into more active travel modes.

Below is a list of the initiatives that we use as a part of our School Travel Plan process to encourage sustainable travel to and from school and help to encourage modal shift.

Modeshift STARS

Modeshift STARS (Sustainable Travel Accreditation and Recognition for Schools) is the national schools’ awards scheme that has been established to recognise schools that have demonstrated excellence in supporting cycling, walking and other forms of sustainable travel. The scheme

encourages schools across the country to join in a major effort to increase levels of sustainable and active travel in order to improve the health and well-being of children and young people. This is measured through their School Travel plans and has 5 levels of accreditation; Platinum, Gold, Silver Bronze and Green. More about how to achieve these can be found on our website.¹⁰

Buckinghamshire are proud to have one of the highest number of STARS accredited schools of any local authority.

Bikeability

Bikeability is cycling proficiency training for the 21st century, designed to give the next generation the skills and confidence to ride their bikes on today's roads. There are three Bikeability levels and children are encouraged and inspired to achieve all three levels, recognising that there is always more to learn and to enjoy on a bike. Training is provided by instructors, accredited to the National Standard, whose qualification has been approved by the Cycle Training Standards Board.

Walk Once a Week (WOW) and Next Steps

Buckinghamshire Council continues to promote Living Streets to deliver the WOW in Primary Schools and Next Steps project in secondary schools.

WOW is a year-round walk to school challenge. Pupils who walk to school at least once a week are rewarded with a monthly badge, helping build healthy habits for a lifetime. Journeys are logged by pupils on our interactive Travel Tracker or paper wallcharts, this can equate to approximately 30,000 trips a week.

Next Steps is Living Streets' walking challenge for students transitioning to secondary school. There are two easy to run and fun touchpoints for the Next Steps Challenge with engaging, top quality educational resources for every student.

Step one is run on transitions day at secondary school in the summer term and includes a workshop and supporting leaflet which encourages students to think about how to get to their new school safely and actively. Discussion with parents and carers at home is encouraged with a take home magnet.

Step two involves additional targeted messaging about why walking to school is important to run through in an assembly with new students and a further walking challenge is given out to complete at home.

¹⁰ <https://schooltravelplanning.com/>

Footsteps

Footsteps is a practical pedestrian training scheme for young children, which develops awareness of roads and helps them live safely with traffic. Children are taken into the local area with a trained tutor to observe the traffic and discuss road safety. Parents and carers are encouraged to volunteer as trainers for this programme.

Walking Maps- Walking Bubble Maps

Modeshift STARS and Buckinghamshire Council work with schools to encourage them to make a walking bubble map for their area. A bubble map is a map that shows a 5-minute walking bubble around a school which can also indicate where parents can park and stride. The maps will help to encourage more families to walk to school, increasing active travel, reducing congestion, reducing car use for the school journey, and improving air quality in the local area. The bubble maps have also helped the schools to put in place COVID measures, e.g. staggered start times or multiple entrances and exits.

Each school has been encouraged to engage with the school community and encourage families to participate. Each student receives a copy of the map, and further copies are available to download via a PDF on the schools' website. This then helps to get parents and children to look at alternative modes of transport and build in physical activity.



Wider Activities

In addition to our more focussed work we also have wider activities that support the Getting to School Strategy:

Highways – Transport for Buckinghamshire (TfB) are responsible for maintaining our road network (the ‘Highway Authority’). This includes management of road markings and signage, as well as the general condition of the roads. Outside schools, TfB maintains warning markings, flashing warning lights and traffic calming. As a Council, we also look to deliver new walking and cycling links where there is the opportunity to do so.

Safety – Our Network Safety team is a team within TfB who have a statutory duty to investigate the causes of road traffic collisions on Buckinghamshire Council’s roads and take measures to prevent them. They do this by analysing personal injury data, (which is supplied to Buckinghamshire Council by the police), to decide whether behavioural or engineering improvements would be most effective. We review crashes on an annual basis countywide to draw up a priority list of sites and routes for action.

Development Management - As the responsible highway authority, TfB must ensure that any new development has the minimum adverse impact on highway safety, traffic capacity, environmental capacity, and convenience to transport users as a whole. We are currently in the process of reviewing our Highways Development Management guidance, setting out a range of policies to inform new developments and ensure they meet Buckinghamshire’s needs. The guidance provides developers with the information they need to prepare successful proposals in Buckinghamshire. This includes:

- The information the Council requires for different types and sizes of development.
- How new developments should meet transport and highway requirements.
- How the Council considers developments’ transport impacts.

School Crossing Patrol Service - Patrollers have an important role within the community helping children and their parents/carers to cross busy roads on their journeys to and from school. We currently have 50 School Crossing Patroller sites across the county. These are funded through BC own funding and external sponsorship. Many of our patrollers actively engage with schools and pupils to encourage walking to school. For example, through attending assemblies highlighting the benefits of walking and road safety.

Challenges We Face

This section explores the issues that we face implementing the strategy. These have been divided into 5 categories:

- Car Dependency
- Transport User Choice
- Health and Environment
- Attitudes to Sustainable Transport
- Financial

Car Dependency

In Buckinghamshire 87% of households have access to one or more cars; this is higher than the average for the South East (82%) and significantly higher than the national average of 74%. Since the 2001 census, there has been an increase in the ownership of vehicles with more households owning four or more cars and a decrease in those owning only one car. Statistics show that households that own at least one car are more likely to use the car as their main mode of travel, and this increases with the number of cars that each household owns.¹¹

According to the reported road casualties in Great Britain annual report (2016) there were nearly 16,000 child casualties. Of these, 22% occurred between 3pm and 5pm on a weekday and 14% between 7am and 9am on a weekday.¹² This seems to indicate that around 36% of incidents occur during the school commute. Congestion around schools is one possible cause of road traffic incidents, particularly in more rural areas where roads tend to be narrower, with more visibility obstructions.

Transport User Choice

Primary Students

Primary school students are generally the pupils who can travel the most sustainably. Often, they attend a local school that is within walking distance and can do so safely. The majority of our primary schools are actively promoting sustainable travel to their pupils and families. In general,

¹¹ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/476635/travel-to-school.pdf

¹² https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/648081/rrcgb2016-01.pdf Note: Road casualty reports from years after 2016 do not break down casualties by time of day, hence the reference to earlier data here.

research shows that children will be driven to school because parents are travelling on to work, live too far away to walk the whole distance or have safety concerns for their children, for example risk of abduction or dangerous traffic conditions.¹³

Secondary Students

Buckinghamshire has a Grammar School system, which means that once students reach year 6, they can take the 11+ exam. If a child passes the 11+ they are then able to apply for education at one of the Grammar Schools. Due to this system, 11–15-year-old students can often travel much further afield, and it is hard to predict exactly where a secondary school pupil will attend once they leave primary school. Our Client Transport Team use historic data trends and school catchment areas to organise dedicated home to school bus transport routes.

Special Educational Needs and Disabled (SEND) Students

SEND students have complex needs and sustainable transport is not always a viable option for them. We currently provide transport for students to schools across the county and beyond, generally using taxis. Where journeys are similar, we combine transport arrangements, however this does depend on the nature of a pupil's SEND. Additionally, we do endeavour to place SEN pupils on dedicated mainstream school buses where appropriate, we are not able to do this for the majority.

Where possible, we endeavour to keep journey times below the national guidelines, 45 minutes for primary and 75 minutes for secondary. However, journeys may be more complex and a shorter journey time, although desirable, may not always be possible. More information on our current provision for SEND pupils can be found on our website.¹⁴

16+ Students

16+ students are not entitled to free transport to and from their place of education unless they meet certain criteria.⁶ They may be able to buy a place on one of our dedicated bus services. Details of funding that may be available to help with home to education transport costs are detailed in our Post 16 Transport Policy Statement.¹⁵

According to the National Travel Survey, the level of driving license ownership among 17–20-year-olds has stabilised since the 1990s¹⁶. Of those in this age group who choose not to learn to drive, the main cause is the cost¹⁷. However, there is also a slight increase in car sharing in this age

¹³ <https://www.livingstreets.org.uk/resources?c=1188&q=parentline>

¹⁴ <https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/schools-and-learning/schools-index/school-transport/>

¹⁵ <https://www.buckscc.gov.uk/services/education/school-transport/post-16-transport-policy-statement-20202021/>

¹⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-travel-survey-2018>

¹⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-travel-survey-2016> p10

group as friends who live near one another will drive their other friends to school, at least until they themselves pass their driving tests. These additional car drivers can create traffic issues at schools or in nearby residential areas due to inconsiderate parking, so it is important that we engage with schools and colleges to promote sustainable travel and educate their students about parking.

Health and Environment

In order to get some understanding of the benefits of active travel to school, in early 2018, we undertook a health and economic assessment on the levels of those walking and cycling to school within the County using the Health Economic Assessment Tool (HEAT). This assessment proposed to identify the degree to which pupils cycling and walking to school has varied between 2003 and 2016/17 in Buckinghamshire, the health and economic benefits of these modal shifts and the impact of financial spending focused on promoting a modal shift towards walking and cycling. That is the cost of School Travel Plans, initiatives, and associated infrastructure. The assessment was split by mode (walking and cycling) and within BCC was split into the four districts; Chiltern District Council, Aylesbury Vale District, South Bucks District and Wycombe District. A total of eight assessments were undertaken.

The benefit cost ratio calculated by the model relates to the total value of reduced mortality due to the level of walking or cycling entered by the user. The benefit cost ratio for each district relating to the economic value of walking and the economic value of cycling were all positive. The benefit cost ratio of pupils walking and those cycling to school between 2003 and 2016/17 show that higher benefits were achieved in this period in Wycombe and Aylesbury Vale when compared to the districts of Chiltern and South Bucks. The table below shows the full outputs of the model for each district by mode.

District	Benefit Cost Ratio	
	Walking	Cycling
Aylesbury Vale	32:1	31:1
Wycombe	40:1	16:1
Chiltern	8:1	4:1
South Bucks	8:1	8:1

For comparison, a typical road project would expect have a cost benefit ratio of about 2:1.

Childhood Obesity

Childhood obesity, and excess weight, are significant health issues for individual children, their families and public health. It can have serious implications for the physical and mental health of a child, which can then follow on into adulthood. The numbers of children who continue to have an unhealthy, and potentially dangerous, weight, is a national public health concern.

In Buckinghamshire physical inactivity costs an estimated £84.5m per year. Currently 36% of boys and 45% of girls aged 5-15 are inactive. Only 22% of 5–15-year-olds achieve the recommended level of daily activity of 1 hour a day.¹⁸

Addressing inactivity is a key priority in the Health & Wellbeing Strategy and the Bucks Physical Activity Strategy.¹⁹²⁰ We consider that the wider benefits of sustainable travel should not be underestimated.

The health of people in Buckinghamshire is generally better than the English average. However, about 27% of Year 6 children are classified as overweight or obese (compared with the English average of 34%).²¹ Tackling obesity is an important aim of the Council's and active modes of travel can help achieve this.

The graphs below show the trend of overweight and obese levels in Buckinghamshire and comparable counties using the NHS National Child Measurement Programme. The trend in Buckinghamshire for Reception children is that numbers of overweight and obese children are falling, and we currently have the lowest percentage with comparable areas. However, recently the numbers of overweight and obese children in year 6 have risen, demonstrating that more needs to be done to encourage weight loss.

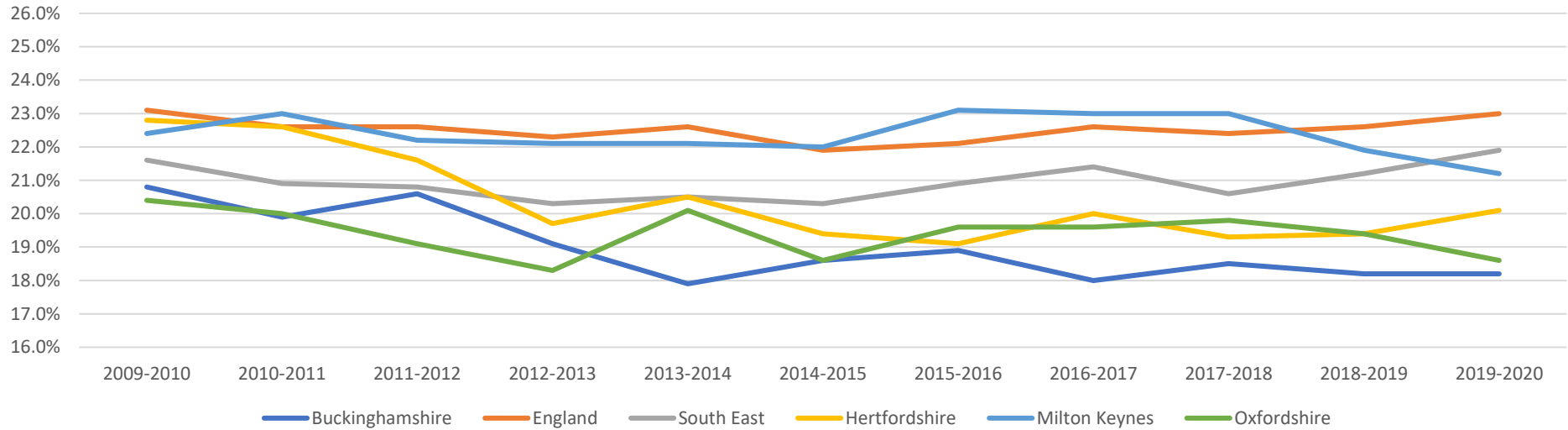
¹⁸ <https://files.digital.nhs.uk/publicationimport/pub22xxx/pub22610/hse2015-child-phy-act.pdf>

¹⁹ <http://www.healthandwellbeingbucks.org/Resources/Councils/Buckinghamshire/Documents/Bucks-PA-Strategy-14-17.pdf>

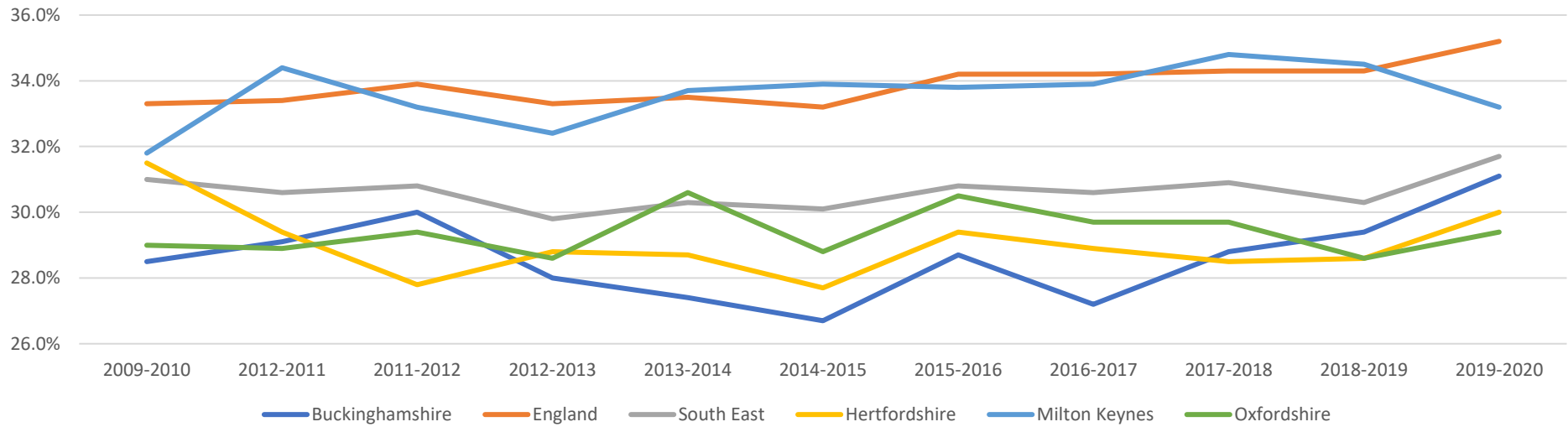
²⁰ https://www.buckscc.gov.uk/media/1131/hwb_jhwbs-refresh_engagement-document-oct-2016_final.pdf

²¹ <https://files.digital.nhs.uk/excel/5/8/nati-chil-meas-prog-eng-2016-2017-tab.xlsx>

Overweight & Obese - Reception



Overweight & Obese - Year 6



Within the national public health policy there is recognition of the benefits to health of active travel (walking and cycling).

Inactive children become inactive adults. Investment in walking and cycling can benefit the individual and the wider community. The school commute can build activity into daily life that physical activity for school pupils helps:

- Alertness and concentration for all and improve learning for children with learning difficulties
- Achievement at GCSE - active young people have 10-20% better results

Those who walk or cycle to school achieve about 20 minutes extra physical activity per day than children who are driven there²²

Involvement in active travel increases children's awareness of their surroundings and gives them valuable road safety experience and experience of travelling independently.

Air Quality

Air Quality is a pressing issue for the country. Nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) emissions from diesel traffic cause 23,500 of the 40,000 premature deaths from air pollution each year, according to figures from the Department for Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs (Defra), and these are usually amongst the most vulnerable. Some studies suggest Air Pollution is linked to poorer student health and academic performance was a correlation between air quality and student performance.²³ Schools located in areas with the highest pollution levels also had the lowest attendance rates (a potential indicator of poor health) and the highest proportions of students failing to meet some educational testing standards.

In Buckinghamshire, our air quality issues are focussed around our urban centres' Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) are designated by the District Councils (who monitor and report on progress). There are AQMAs (where national thresholds are exceeded) declared in Aylesbury, Chesham, Marlow, the centre of High Wycombe and around the M40²⁴.

As Buckinghamshire's population grows, we need to mitigate the effects of growth on our environment by introducing and enforcing environmental laws and fostering good practice. Improvements to air quality and lowering pollutant levels across the board are strongly supported by encouraging active travel and public transport use. This will allow our residents to continue to enjoy the benefits our green spaces and live healthier, happier lives. This review will assist the developmental process in ensuring targets are achieved.

²² Davidson, K, K. et al (2008) - from Public Health Wales infographic

²³ <http://stopgrayson.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Pollution-Linked-to-Academic-Performance.pdf>

²⁴ <https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/aqma/maps/>

In order to improve air quality around schools, parents and teachers should be encouraged not to drive or to park elsewhere and walk the rest of the journey. In a recent report from ClientEarth, it was revealed that 60% of parents want traffic diverted away from schools at the beginning and end of the day.²⁵ Therefore there is clearly an appetite for this kind of intervention.

The UK has set a goal of achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050²⁶. Reducing car use and encouraging active travel or public transport use will also reduce emissions. Our Strategic Transport Body (STB) partner, England's Economic Heartland, are also driving a change toward net zero emissions, with the ambition of achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions from transport by 2040²⁷. Around 50% of Buckinghamshire's greenhouse gas emissions in 2018 originated from transport²⁸, therefore any efforts to increase walking, cycling and public transport use will make significant progress towards Buckinghamshire's climate change contribution.

On 15 July 2020 Buckinghamshire Council committed to working alongside national Government with the objective to achieve net carbon zero for Buckinghamshire as a whole by 2050. The council should also evaluate reaching 'net zero' for its own emissions no later than 2050 and possibly before this, potentially by 2030, subject to resources. Buckinghamshire Council's Climate Change and Air Quality Strategy sets out the strategy for helping achieve national air quality objectives and zero carbon ambitions. It details over 60 actions to address climate change and poor air quality regarding council operations, the work and contracts with partners and suppliers, and how it will influence activity county-wide."

Attitudes to Sustainable Transport

In order to implement this strategy we need to ensure that education centres, parents and students are aware of sustainable travel and their school travel plans. According to the British Social Attitudes Survey, although the public agree that fewer people should drive in order to benefit the environment (56%) only 36% were willing to reduce their own car use.²⁹ There was also an understanding by the public that for journeys of less than 2 miles that they currently make by car, 39% said they could easily cycle, 44% could easily walk and 31% could use the bus.³⁰ Although attitudes in Buckinghamshire will differ from these national figures, it is reasonable to assume that some degree of support and facilitation for active travel has potential. Parental choice is an important part of the ability to travel to school sustainably.

Financial Challenges

²⁵ <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/feb/26/most-uk-parents-back-air-pollution-exclusion-zones-around-schools>

²⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-becomes-first-major-economy-to-pass-net-zero-emissions-law>

²⁷ <https://www.englandseconomicheartland.com/transport/our-strategy/>

²⁸ <https://data.gov.uk/dataset/723c243d-2f1a-4d27-8b61-cdb93e5b10ff/emissions-of-carbon-dioxide-for-local-authority-areas>

²⁹ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/586193/british-social-attitudes-survey-2015.pdf

³⁰ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/586193/british-social-attitudes-survey-2015.pdf

Due to ongoing austerity measures, and pressures introduced since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, funding pressures are increasing across most areas within the Council. Although the recent Travel Demand Management Grant from the Department for Transport (DfT) provided some additional resources for travel planning, this is a relatively small one-off fund to help Councils deal with the additional demands seen during COVID-19 lockdown periods. Therefore, any initiatives must be completed within existing budgets where possible. In the case of Home to School transport, there is a challenge to find savings which has led to the Transport Review.

Our Approach

Based on the challenges, aims and vision described above, we have determined the following actions for our strategy:

Service Area	Action
School Travel Plans	Provide travel plan support to schools from a Council Officer to ensure that schools currently engaged maintain an active travel plan
	Run the school crossing patrol service in accordance with the BC policy and guidelines
	Offer cycle training to pupils through our Bikeability and Bikeability Plus programmes during the academic year
	Provide an integrated approach through the planning process to ensure that new or expanding schools address increased travel to their sites by publishing revised Highways Development Management Guidance.
	Increase the number of schools with Travel Plans
	To increase the number of schools participating in an Active Travel Zone Mapping Project
Home to School Transport	Providing home to school transport for entitled pupils according to our policy
Public Health	Implement two initiatives from the Active Bucks and the Bucks Physical Activity Strategy and Action Plan

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Relevant Policy

Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4)

The overarching objectives of LTP4 are as follows:

Objective 1: Connected Buckinghamshire - Provide a well-connected, efficient, and reliable transport network which links to key national and international destinations helping Buckinghamshire's residents and economy to flourish while capitalising on external investment opportunities.

Objective 2: Growing Buckinghamshire - To secure good road, public transport, cycle and walking infrastructure and service provision, working in partnership with local businesses, the community and district councils through a range of initiatives and taking advantage of new and emerging technologies to meet the (current and future) needs of our residents as Buckinghamshire grows.

Objective 3: Healthy, Safe and Sustainable Buckinghamshire - Allow residents to improve their quality of life and health, by promoting sustainable travel choices and access to opportunities that improve health. Ensure transport systems are accessible by all, safe and allow people to make the most of Buckinghamshire whilst protecting its special environments.

Objective 4: Empowered Buckinghamshire - Allow everybody to access the educational, work, and social opportunities they need to grow. Increase opportunities for residents to support themselves and their communities by enabling local transport solutions.

The SMoTS will form a supporting document to the LTP4 enabling us to deliver its Access to Education Policy:

Policy 1 – Access to education - We will continue to encourage the development and implementation of school travel plans across all of the county's schools. Our 'Sustainable Modes of Transport Strategy' for Schools (SMoTS) will help to provide access to good quality schools, colleges and training in a way that will benefit children and young people as well as the rest of the county.

Our Strategic Plan is the key document for the authority as it sets out our key aims and priorities for the next three years. It also sets out the values that guide the council's work and where it works with valuable partnerships. The Plan has 4 aims:

- Safeguarding Our Vulnerable
- Creating Opportunities and Building Self Reliance
- Ensuring Buckinghamshire is Thriving and Attractive
- Delivering Value for Money

The Council aims for all residents to be safe, happy, and healthy; for children to have the best start in life, and young people to thrive in Buckinghamshire schools. We will continue to plan and deliver early interventions with our partners to drive forward and secure good jobs, good road, rail, and other essential infrastructure, which will meet the current and future needs of our residents.

Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)

The joint strategic needs assessment provides a picture of the current and future health and wellbeing needs of the local population.

The JSNA will:

- Characterise the health and wellbeing status of the local population
- Identify inequalities
- Illustrate trends
- Describe local community views
- Highlight the key findings

It is divided into 5 sections: Population, Wider determinants of health, Healthy lifestyles and Children, young People and their families, Adults, Older people.

School Transport Policy and Guidance

This document sets out the policy together with many questions parents ask and guidance about school transport in one place. It sets out entitlement for free home to school transport and also what parents can do if they are not entitled. This is a description of the types of school travel services we can provide and what parents need to do to obtain a space.]

Buckinghamshire Children's Strategy 2016 - 18

This document describes our ambitions and priorities for all children and young people in Buckinghamshire. This is built on the foundation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) to which the UK Government is a signatory. As statutory agencies and partners, we should do all within our powers to protect and promote the rights of children as enshrined in the convention. This includes the child's right to protection, family life, a good education, proper health care and decent housing.

The vision of this strategy is as follows:

"Children and young people are safe, happy and healthy, feel valued and value others, are treated fairly, have lives filled with learning, thrive and are able to enjoy life and spend quality time with family and friends."

It focusses on three main areas to achieve the above vision:

- Together keeping our children safe
- Enabling all our children to learn and develop skills for like and empowering schools to lead the way
- Improving our children's health and wellbeing

National Context

The Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategy for Schools (SMoTS) was first developed by Buckinghamshire County Council in 2008, in response to a statutory requirement under the Education and Inspections Act 2006. Section 508A of the Act requires local authorities to promote the use of sustainable travel and applies to both children at school and young people of sixth form age. The Act defines sustainable modes of travel as follows:

"Sustainable modes of travel" are modes of travel which the authority consider may improve either or both of the following-

The physical well-being of those who use them.

The environmental well-being of the whole or a part of their area.”

Guidance on home to school travel and transport published in July 2014³¹ by the Department of Education reiterated the duty on local authorities to keep their strategies up to date and published on their websites. Accordingly, this update reassesses the school travel and transport needs of children and young people within Buckinghamshire and presents a strategy to encourage and promote sustainable modes of travel to, from, and between all schools in the county.

¹⁸³¹ Home to School travel and transport guidance- Statutory guidance for local authorities, Department for Education July 2014

Appendix 2 - Useful Information

Useful Websites:

School Travel Planning Website	https://schooltravelplanning.com/
Buckinghamshire Council School Transport Policies	https://www.buckscc.gov.uk/services/education/school-transport/school-transport-policies/
Modeshift STARS	https://www.modeshiftstars.org/
Local Transport Plan 4	https://www.buckscc.gov.uk/services/council-and-democracy/our-plans/local-transport-plan-4/
Joint Strategic Needs Assessment	What is the JSNA (healthandwellbeingbucks.org)
Buckinghamshire Strategic Plan	https://www.buckscc.gov.uk/services/council-and-democracy/our-plans/our-strategic-plan/
Buckinghamshire Children's Strategy	https://www.buckscc.gov.uk/services/council-and-democracy/our-plans/our-strategic-plan/childrens-services-strategies/

School Travel Planning in Neighbouring Authorities

Milton Keynes	https://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/highways-and-transport-hub/road-safety/road-safety-for-schools/school-travel-planning
Oxfordshire	https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/roads-and-transport/transport-policies-and-plans/transport-new-developments/travel-plans-advice
Slough	https://www.slough.gov.uk/transport-travel/smarter-travel-schools
Hertfordshire	https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/schools-and-education/travel-to-school/school-travel-plans.aspx

Central Bedfordshire	https://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/info/3/schools and education /531/sustainable modes of travel
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