



Buckinghamshire Council's Getting to School Strategy

Refreshed June 2024

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, and the Department for Education's (DfE) statutory guidance entitled "Travel to school for children of compulsory school age"¹, published 29 June 2023. 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 publish and maintain a SMoTS (as outlined in the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and
- DfE's "Travel to school for children of compulsory school age", published 29 June 2023) which should:
- Promote the use of sustainable modes of travel to meet the school travel needs of Buckinghamshire.
- Assess our school travel needs of compulsory school age children and persons of sixth form of age in Buckinghamshire,
- Assess our facilities and services for sustainable modes of travel to, from and within Buckinghamshire.

How we promote the use of sustainable travel to places of education in their area, with the effect of:

- 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

¹[Home-to-school travel - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/home-to-school-travel)

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Vision and Aims

This document supports the vision outlined in our Local Transport Plan 4², and our emerging Local Transport Plan 5³.

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 Buckinghamshire Climate Change & Air Quality Strategy.⁴

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.

Local authorities are not required to annually conduct a formal review of their sustainable modes of travel strategy, but they should keep it under regular review to ensure it continues to meet local needs and comply with statutory requirements. The most up to date policy must be published by the 19 September each year. This is a live document that will be reviewed annually and updated as necessary.

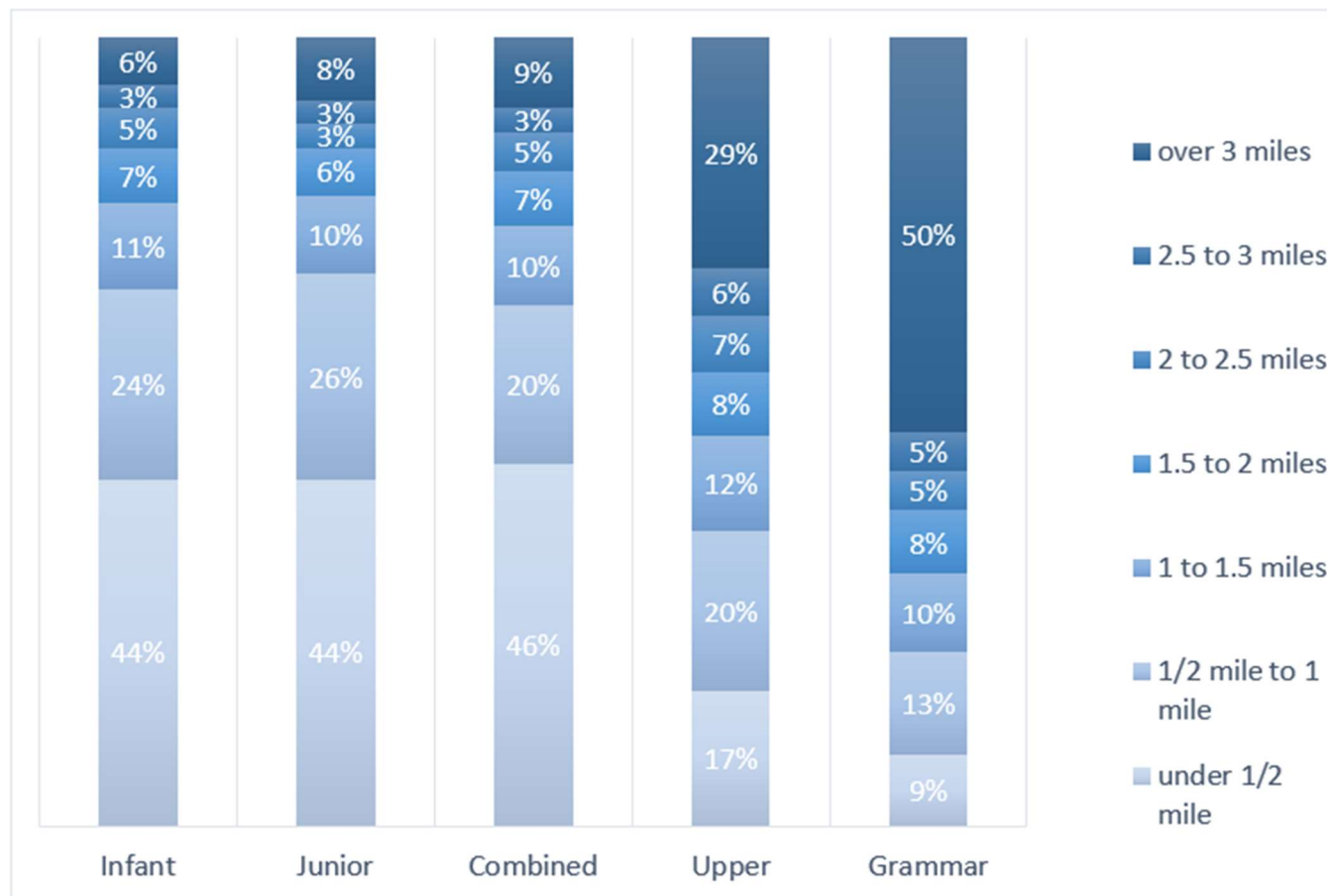
² [Our local transport plan | Buckinghamshire Council](#)

³ [Our updated Local Transport Plan \(LTP5\) | Buckinghamshire Council](#)

⁴ [View the Climate Change and Air Quality Strategy | Buckinghamshire Council](#)

Distance to School

One of the biggest influences on choice of travel is distance to school. 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 2023 school census. The graph clearly shows that pupils in primary schools live far closer to their schools than those in secondary education. Most primary school pupils live under 1 mile from their 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 29% of Upper School pupils live over 3 miles from their school compared to 50% of Grammar School pupils live over 3 miles from the site. (compared to 30% and 57% respectively from the October 2017 census).



What we do

As the Education and Transport provider, Buckinghamshire Council promotes sustainable education travel and transport predominantly through School Travel Plans, by buying scholar passes for eligible students' use on the local bus network and by 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 Buckinghamshire (6000 pupils between 2012 to 2018) although this has now slowed and 2021/22 saw the first fall in numbers in 15 years (-112 pupils). However, we are now seeing growth again with an additional 400 primary pupils between the 2021/22 and 2022/23 academic year driven by inward migration of families. This has led to Buckinghamshire Council having to provide/invest heavily in new facilities for primary pupils in order to meet its statutory duty.

In addition to [expanding](#) existing schools a number of new schools have been delivered, are currently being progressed, or are due to be commenced in the near future to meet demand from new major housing developments in Aylesbury and in the north of the County:

- Kingsbrook View Primary Academy – new 2 Form Entry (FE) school to meet needs from Kingsbrook housing development (2450 homes) opened in Sept 2021
- Second 2FE primary school on the Kingsbrook development is being progressed and is due to open in Sept 2025
- First 3FE primary school on the Hampden Fields development (3000 homes) due to be progressed with a view to opening in Sept 2027
- 3FE primary school on the South West Milton Keynes development (1885 homes) due to be progressed with a view to opening in Sept 2027

The increase in primary pupils is now flowing through into the secondary sector. The secondary sector has seen a significant rise in pupil numbers over the last 3 years (i.e. 2500 pupils) which has required significant additional capacity to meet the demand.

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 which opened in Sept 2022.

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.⁵

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.⁶

Free home to school transport is available for pupils who are between 5 and 16 years old (of statutory school age), are attending their nearest suitable school, and

- they live further away from school than the statutory walking distances (2 miles for pupils under 8, and 3 miles for those aged 8 and above) or

⁵ [Admission policies for Buckinghamshire schools | Buckinghamshire Council](#)

⁶ [School transport policies | Buckinghamshire Council](#)

- their walking route to school is unsafe, or
- they have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) or a mobility problem which means that they cannot walk to school in reasonable safety, even if accompanied, or
- they are from low-income families (where extended rights apply)

To find out more about eligibility for free transport, visit our website.⁷

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.⁸

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.

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.

⁷ [School transport | Buckinghamshire Council](#)

⁸ [Spare seats on council-run school buses | Buckinghamshire Council](#)

Students are now required to be in education, employment or training until their 18th birthday, which could involve staying in full-time education in school/college, starting an apprenticeship or traineeship, or spending 20 hours or more a week working or volunteering while in part-time education or training. There has not, however, been any change to statutory school age which ends at the end of the academic year in which the student turns 16.

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.⁷

Since September 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.⁹

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.

Independent Travel Training (ITT) is offered within some of our colleges and schools. 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.¹⁰

⁹ [School transport policies | Buckinghamshire Council](#)

¹⁰ [School transport policies | Buckinghamshire Council](#)

School Travel Plans

The main aim of a School Travel Plan (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 (STPs) are developed, maintained, and monitored by the whole school community, to promote and facilitate sustainable travel for the school journey. STPs set 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 68 schools and 1 college 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.

Modeshift STARS

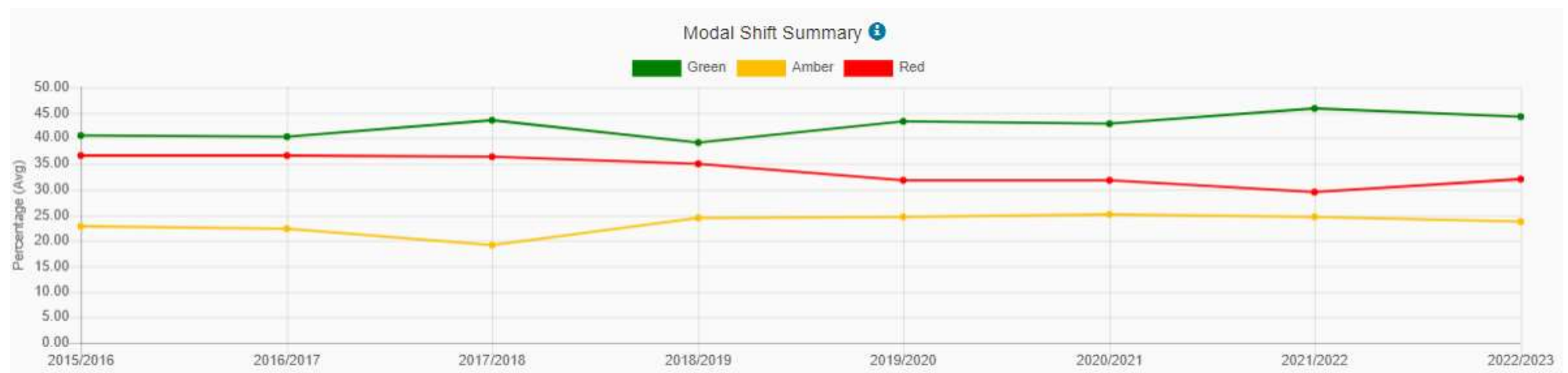
Modeshift STARS (Sustainable Travel Accreditation and Recognition for Schools) is the national schools' awards scheme that has been established to recognise schools that have demonstrated excellence in supporting cycling, walking and other forms of sustainable travel. The scheme

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.¹¹

The Modeshift STARS gathers much of the data that local authorities need to fulfil the sustainable school travel duty. Each participating school:

- provides data on how their pupils travel to school;
- conducts an audit of their sustainable travel and travel infrastructure; and
- provides details on the number and type of sustainable travel initiatives that they deliver.

Buckinghamshire are proud to have one of the highest number of STARS accredited schools of any local authority and continue to strive to engage more school in the process.



Key

Green	Walking, Cycling, Scooting
Amber	Bus, Train, Car Share, Park and Stride
Red	Single Occupancy Car

The above graph represents the Modal Shift achieved in Primary Schools from 2015 – 2023. Schools are recommended to aim for a 1-2% change

¹¹ [School Travel Planning – Buckinghamshire Council](#)

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 STP process to encourage sustainable travel to and from school and help to encourage modal shift.

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 and 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.

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.

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.

Walking Crocodiles/Bike Buses

Walking Crocodiles and Bike Buses are organised walking or cycling buses. They offer a way for children to travel safely to school without using the car. They can help to improve children's fitness, develop road safety awareness, and reduce traffic congestion and pollution around schools.

Buckinghamshire Council does not provide direct support for this initiative; however information and guidance can be provided to schools wishing to set up their own. This would include a written risk assessment which BC will be able to view and pass comment on.

School Crossing Patrollers

School Crossing 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, so helping to encourage active travel on the school run. 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.

Parking

Buckinghamshire is a rural County, and we recognise that some parents and guardians have to travel by car to school. If so we encourage schools to adopt our 'Parents' Parking Promise.' This was developed to encourage parents and guardians to think about how they are parking around the school and to sign a pledge to promise to park responsibly. The initiative works well in schools where there are particular problems with parents and guardians parking inconsiderately and dangerously and includes the identification of possible park and stride sites. Schemes such as 'Park and Stride' support all children to take part in active travel. Families are encouraged to park away from the school gates and walk, wheel, cycle or scoot the rest of the way.

Wider Activities

In addition to our more focussed work we also have wider activities that support and collaborate with the Getting to School Strategy teams, for example:

Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans

Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) are evidence-led, long-term plans that identify cycling, walking and wheeling improvements at the local level. 'Wheeling' is an emerging term to refer to wheelchair and mobility scooter users.

LCWIPs provide:

- network plans that identify preferred routes for further development
- a prioritised programme of infrastructure improvements for future investment
- an explanation of the process followed, and analysis undertaken.

We've developed and are currently developing a number of LCWIPs, most recently for High Wycombe.¹²

The Buckinghamshire Greenway will be a transformational walking and cycling route stretching from Brackley to the Colne Valley. This forms a north to south spine that will connect with local active travel networks and links.¹³

¹² [Walking, cycling and wheeling | Buckinghamshire Council](#)

¹³ [The Buckinghamshire Greenway | Buckinghamshire Council](#).

Highways

Buckinghamshire Highways (BH) 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, BH 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 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, the Council 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.

We also work closely with the Council's Public Health and Climate Change teams, which have discussed in more detail below;

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 2021, in Buckinghamshire 89% of households have access to one or more cars; this is higher than the average for the South East (83%) and significantly higher than the national average of 77%¹⁴. 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.¹⁵

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.¹⁶ 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 School 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. In 2022, 53% of primary school age children and 41% of secondary school age children walked to school.¹⁷

Just over 50% of our primary schools (infant, junior and combined) are actively promoting sustainable travel to their pupils and families. In general, 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.

Secondary School Students

¹⁴ [2021 Census Profile for areas in England and Wales - Nomis \(nomisweb.co.uk\)](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/476635/travel-to-school.pdf) Note - the results of maybe skewed by travel patterns during the Covid19 pandemic.

¹⁵ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/476635/travel-to-school.pdf

¹⁶ 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.

¹⁷ [nts0613.ods \(live.com\)](https://live.com/nts0613.ods)

Buckinghamshire has a Grammar School system, which means that once students reach year 6, they can take the Buckinghamshire Transfer Test (formerly known as the 11+). If a child scores at least 121 marks, they qualify to apply for education at one of the Grammar Schools.¹⁸ Due to this system, 11–15-year-old students may travel further afield to their chosen school, 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.

Students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

Students with SEND may have complex needs and sustainable transport is not always a viable option for them. We currently provide transport for students with SEND to schools across the county and beyond. Where journeys are similar, we combine transport arrangements on shared vehicles, however this does depend on the student’s travel needs assessment. Additionally, we place students with SEND on dedicated mainstream school buses where appropriate.

Where possible, we keep journey times within the national guidelines, i.e. 45 minutes for primary and 75 minutes for secondary school transport. 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.¹⁹

Post-16 Students

Post-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.²⁰

According to the National Travel Survey, the level of driving license ownership among 17–20-year-olds has stabilised since the 1990s.²¹ Of those in this age group who choose not to learn to drive, the main cause is the cost.²² However, there is also a slight increase in car sharing in this age 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.

¹⁸ [Grammar schools and Secondary Transfer Testing \(11+\) | Buckinghamshire Council](#)

¹⁹ [School transport for people with special educational needs and disabilities \(SEND\) | Family Information Service \(buckinghamshire.gov.uk\)](#)

²⁰ [School transport policies | Buckinghamshire Council](#)

²¹ [nts0201.ods \(live.com\)](#)

²² [nts0203.ods \(live.com\)](#)

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.

Healthy Weight and Physical Activity

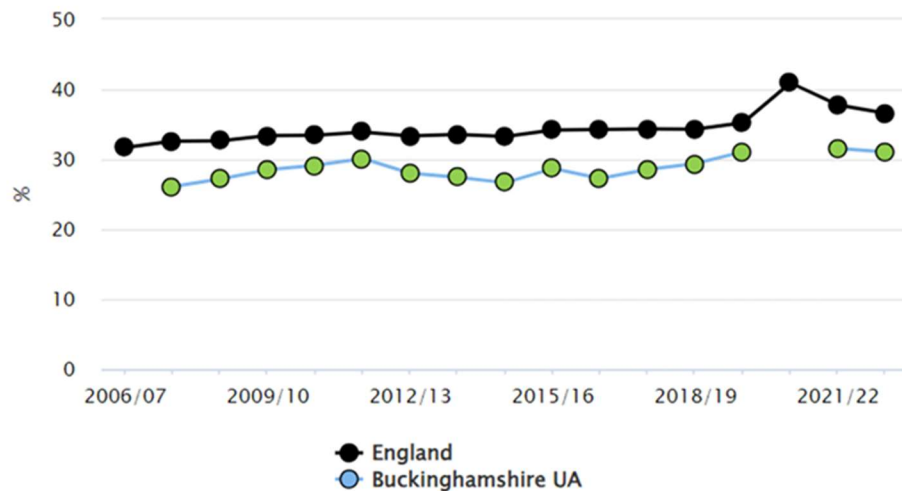
Childhood obesity, excess weight and physical inactivity are significant health issues for individual children, their families and public health. It can have serious implications for the physical and mental health of a child, which can then follow on into adulthood. Managing a healthy

weight and being active in childhood has significant health and wellbeing benefits; reduces risk of disease/ill health during childhood and later in life, helps manage stress and improves mood, increases concentration and improves learning.

The health of the population in Buckinghamshire is generally better than the England average and across the Southeast region. However, about 31% of Year 6 children are classified as overweight or obese (compared with the England average of 36.6%).²³ Physical inactivity is associated with 1 in 6 deaths in the UK and is estimated to cost £7.4 billion annually (including 0.9 billion to the NHS alone).²⁴ In Buckinghamshire, 57.6% of children and young people (aged 5-16) achieve the recommended guidelines of being physically active for at least 60 minutes per day.²⁵

Addressing inactivity and obesity are key priorities in the Buckinghamshire Joint Local Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2022 to 2025 and the Bucks Physical Activity Strategy 2024 to 2029²⁶. We consider that the wider benefits of sustainable travel should not be underestimated with active modes of travel supporting the reduction in obesity and increasing activity levels.

The graphs below show the trend of overweight and obese and physical activity levels in Buckinghamshire comparable to our neighbouring counties (BOB).



Year 6 prevalence of overweight (including obesity) (10-11 yrs.)²⁷

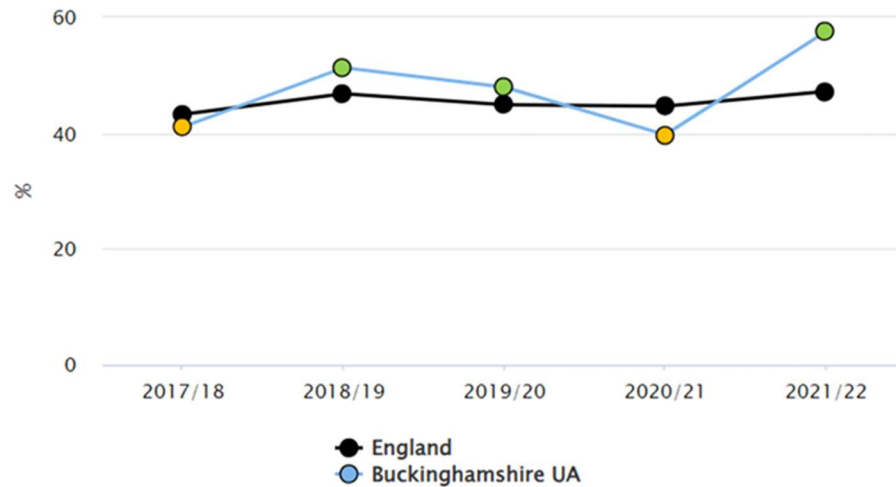
²³ [Obesity Profile - Data - OHID \(phe.org.uk\)](https://phe.org.uk/data/obesity-profile)

²⁴ [Physical activity: applying All Our Health - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/physical-activity-applying-all-our-health)

²⁵ [Public health profiles - OHID \(phe.org.uk\)](https://phe.org.uk/data/public-health-profiles)

²⁶ [Activity strategy \(healthandwellbeingbucks.org\)](https://healthandwellbeingbucks.org/activity-strategy)

²⁷ [Obesity Profile - Data - OHID \(phe.org.uk\)](https://phe.org.uk/data/obesity-profile)



Percentage of physically active children and young people²⁸

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

Evidence shows that inactive children are likely to 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 results²⁹

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

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

²⁸ [Physical Activity - Data - OHID \(phe.org.uk\)](https://phe.org.uk/data/physical-activity)

²⁹ [HT_briefing_layoutvFINALvii.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/101111/HT_briefing_layoutvFINALvii.pdf)

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. 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 former District Council areas (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 M40³⁰.

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.

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.

The UK has set a goal of achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050³¹. 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 2040³². Around 50% of Buckinghamshire's greenhouse gas emissions in 2018 originated from transport³³, 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

³⁰ [AQMAs interactive map \(defra.gov.uk\)](https://defra.gov.uk/aqma-interactive-map)

³¹ [UK becomes first major economy to pass net zero emissions law - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-becomes-first-major-economy-to-pass-net-zero-emissions-law)

³² [Publications - England's Economic Heartland \(englandseconomicheartland.com\)](https://englandseconomicheartland.com/publications)

³³ [UK greenhouse gas emissions: local authority and regional - data.gov.uk](https://data.gov.uk/dataset/uk-greenhouse-gas-emissions-local-authority-and-regional)

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 (61%) only 47% were willing to reduce their own car use.³⁴ There was also an understanding by the public that for journeys of less than 2 miles that they currently make by car, 28% said they could easily cycle, 10% could easily walk and 33% could use the bus.³⁵ 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

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 was 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. Nationally the cost of delivering Council-funded home to school transport has increased significantly in recent years. Key drivers of cost identified nationally, which are in line with the experience in Buckinghamshire, are:

- Market and inflationary pressures increasing the cost of mainstream and SEND home to school transport
- Increasing numbers of children with Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs)
- Increasing complexity of needs
- Increasing distance travelled due to school occupancy and distribution of specialist provision

Owing to the statutory requirements to provide home to school transport the Council is legally obliged to ensure provision. This national cost pressure is particularly acute for rural county authorities like Buckinghamshire and all options to control costs, whilst meeting statutory requirements, are pursued.

³⁴ [British Social Attitudes Survey 2017: Public attitudes towards transport \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/622222/british-social-attitudes-2017-transport.pdf)

³⁵ [British Social Attitudes Survey 2017: Public attitudes towards transport \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/622222/british-social-attitudes-2017-transport.pdf)

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 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 Bikeability cycle training to school pupils 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.
Home to School Transport	Providing home to school transport for entitled pupils according to our policy
Public Health	<p>Implement the required actions (at least two) from the Bucks Physical Activity Strategy and Action Plan 2024 – 2029.</p> <p>Commence a two-year project to pilot a Healthy Schools Neighbourhood (HSN), based on the school Superzone concept, around two Buckinghamshire schools: one primary and one secondary. Targeted actions will be implemented across eight health domains including active travel.</p>

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Relevant Policy

Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4)

The overarching objectives of LTP4³⁶ 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.

³⁶ [Our local transport plan | Buckinghamshire Council](#)

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.³⁷

School Transport Policies

As well as setting out the Councils policies on School Transport they include the many questions parents ask and guidance about school transport in one place. They set out entitlement for free home to school transport and also what parents can do if they are not entitled. This is

³⁷ [Joint Strategic Needs Assessment | Buckinghamshire Council](#)

a description of the types of school travel services we can provide and what parents need to do to obtain a space.³⁸

Buckinghamshire Children and Young People 2019 to 2024 Partnership Plan

This plan sets out our shared vision to provide the best support possible for all our children, young people and their families. It does not include everything we will be doing but concentrates on the outcomes for children and young people which will make the biggest difference.

This plan has been drawn up by the Buckinghamshire Children and Young People's Partnership Board, a multi-agency group of representatives from all the different organisations in Buckinghamshire who work with children, young people and families.

The experiences and chances that Buckinghamshire children and young people have will shape their lives. Listening to what our children and young people have to say is central to the planning and delivery of services in Buckinghamshire. One of our strengths is the way organisations work together across the county. We share the determination and commitment to provide high quality services that give children and young people the best possible chances in life, especially for those who are most vulnerable. To this end we will ensure that we have a well led and trained workforce with the right knowledge, skills and understanding.

Our vision:

'We aim to build a better future for all children and young people in Buckinghamshire so that they realise their potential, whatever their starting point is.' We aim to ensure that our children:

- are safe
- live fulfilling lives
- are healthy
- reach their potential in education and other aspects of their lives
- together with their families are resilient and can identify their own solutions
- make a positive contribution to their community.³⁹

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

³⁸ [School transport policies | Buckinghamshire Council](#)

³⁹ [Children's Services strategies | Buckinghamshire Council](#)

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 2014 and updated in 2023⁴⁰ 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.

⁴⁰ [Home-to-school travel - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/115444/Home-to-school-travel-2014.pdf)

Appendix 2 - Useful Information

Useful Websites:

School Travel Planning Website	https://schooltravelplanning.com/
Buckinghamshire Council School Transport Policies	School transport policies Buckinghamshire Council
Modeshift STARS	Modeshift STARS - Travel Plan in Education, Business & Communities
Local Transport Plan 4 and 5	Our local transport plan Buckinghamshire Council
Joint Strategic Needs Assessment	About the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment Buckinghamshire Council
Buckinghamshire Corporate Plans	Corporate plans and priorities Buckinghamshire Council
Buckinghamshire Children's Strategy	Children's Services strategies Buckinghamshire Council
Buckinghamshire Climate Change & Air Quality Strategy	View the Climate Change and Air Quality Strategy Buckinghamshire Council

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