



Adapting School Transport Arrangements to the COVID-19 Situation - Additional guidance for school leaders

The Public Health guidance around COVID-19 is likely to affect school transport arrangements due to the continued need to maintain social distancing during Phase 4 of the Bailiwick's exit strategy. This document is provided in addition to 'Return to Education, Operational Guidance for School Leaders'. It is intended to provide additional support to school leaders, recognising the fact school leaders are having to work extremely hard to prepare for schools to open fully. It is appreciated that Headteachers are experts in running schools but may not feel as confident in running transport systems. This document sets out the main considerations and suggestions required when making changes to school travel arrangements, but more specialist support is available to school leaders in interpreting and implementing any necessary changes.

Quick contacts

The people listed below are available to support schools with implementing any changes required as a result of the requirement to meet the Public Health guidance for Phase 4.

Name & Contact Details	Role
Mark Brockway Mark.Brockway2@gov.gg Tel: +44 (0)1481 243400	Senior Traffic Officer, Traffic and Highway Services. Support. Can provide advice around safe access to school sites.
Colin Le Page Colin.LePage@gov.gg Tel: +44 (0)1481 243400	Manager, Strategy & Policy, Traffic and Highway Services. Can provide advice and guidance around active travel.
Alun Williams Alun.Williams@healthimprovement.gg 07839 741223	Education and Be Active Lead for the Health Improvement Commission. Can provide advice and guidance to support active travel plans.
Jon Williams Jon.Williams@gov.gg Mob: +44 (0)7781 123587	Head of Resources and liaison point for school buses. Can provide advice on school buses and support with additional resource requirements.

How and why will school transport be affected?

The guidance from Public Health means that school buses will have a maximum of 16 passengers on a standard vehicle, and fewer on smaller vehicles. This translates to just under 40% of capacity and will have a big impact on the total number of students who will be travelling to and from school by bus, meaning many students will need to travel in other ways.

The default option for those students is likely to be car travel. If the majority of students who previously travelled by bus travel by car, this is likely to exacerbate any existing problems with congestion, road safety etc., and it could also create new problems in terms of compliance with Public Health's advice on social distancing. Parking arrangements at or near schools may therefore need to be adapted, either in direct response to Public Health's guidance, or to mitigate problems associated with any likely increase in car travel.

The public health advice still includes social distancing, especially between adults. Existing parking arrangements at some schools make social distancing difficult or impossible – for example, where cars are parked in the same space that parents and carers wait to collect children at the end of the school day, as illustrated in the picture below. Where parking impacts on social distancing, parking provision may need to be relocated, reduced or even removed from the school premises. To compensate for and support these changes, it is important to make alternative transport options and to find ways to make walking and cycling easier, more accessible and, crucially, safer. The Education Office and Traffic & Highway Services will do everything possible to advise and facilitate this in a timely and effective way.



Existing parking arrangements may make social distancing difficult or impossible.

Even where parking arrangements do not come into direct conflict with the public health advice, it may still be advisable to adjust them in order to mitigate the problems associated with a spike in car use. Some of the key considerations are outlined below.

What are the problems associated with high levels of car travel?

Each school will already be familiar with the specific practical problems associated with traffic in their area, but there are broader considerations as well, such as high levels of car use particularly around schools at drop off and pick up times which can cause congestion and pollution, increase carbon emissions and negatively impact road safety.

It is recognised that that motorised traffic is the single biggest barrier to active travel. There is much evidence to show that many (even the majority of) students want to walk or cycle to school, but they or their parents do not feel that it is safe enough to do so. Conversely this means more people feel it is not safe to walk or ride to school, which increases the numbers of people travelling by car. In turn, this increases traffic volumes, which makes people feel less safe, which leads to more people choosing to travel by car instead – and so on.

Figure 1: The School Journey¹



School leaders will be familiar with the health and wellbeing problems associated with physical inactivity, and the 2019 Child Measurement Programme was a reminder of the challenges faced by the Bailiwick. In Guernsey, for example, 17% of children aged five to six are overweight or obese, along with 29% of nine- to 10-year-olds. The significant majority of children do not meet the minimum daily recommendations for physical activity: this problem gets progressively worse as children move up through year groups, and affects girls disproportionately to boys.

It is important that learners and parents are not in a position where they feel they have to choose between doing what is right to support Public Health requirements in order to

¹ Oliver CW, Kelly P, Baker G, et al. Br J Sports Med, March 2019

maintain social distancing and what they feel is safe. Safety (or the perception of safety) is widely recognised as the single biggest barrier to active travel. The arrival of a 'new normal' in Phase 4 will allow schools to provide safe opportunities to walk and ride a bike to school for many more people. During Phase 4, this may involve new measures such as pop-up infrastructure alongside keeping as much motorised traffic away from the school at drop off and pick up times as possible.

Parking management at a location near the school will be essential in providing a safe space, in which social distancing can be maintained and congestion prevented, at the school site itself.

What are the benefits associated with Active Travel?

The health and wellbeing benefits associated with physical activity are well known, and evidence shows that increasing active travel (i.e. walking, scooting, riding a bike etc.) is the most effective way to increase levels of physical activity across the community. Additionally, in 2012 a large-scale Danish study² of around 20,000 students aged between five and 19 looked at the relationship between diet, exercise and concentration at school. The research was surprising as it showed that how children travelled to school had a much more significant influence on their concentration than whether or not they had eaten breakfast. Those who had travelled actively to school had significantly improved levels of concentration for up to four hours of the school day compared with their peers who had arrived by motorised transport.

Although the period of lockdown has been a substantial challenge for the Bailiwick and there will be long-term impacts as a result of this, the need to maintain Public Health advice during Phase 4 enables greater opportunities to maximise the benefits of active travel.

How do we facilitate Active Travel in practical terms?

Many children in Guernsey, especially those at catchment primary schools, live reasonably close to their school. Surveys have strongly indicated that learners in both primary and secondary schools are keen to walk or cycle to school, but the reality is that a much smaller proportion do.

Walking and cycling are not inherently risky forms of transport: most of the risk (both actual and perceived) is from motorised vehicles – i.e. the possibility of a collision.

There are two core principles involved in facilitating active travel. These are:

- Minimising the volume of motorised traffic;
- Separating and protecting people on foot or on bikes from traffic.

² The Mass Experiment 2012, University of Aarhus, Denmark, Professor Niels Egelund

Therefore, it is recommended that schools focus on two key areas: parking management and the creation of neighbourhood ‘hubs’ for ‘drop & stride’ or ‘park & stride’ arrangements.

Parking management principles

- If parking arrangements on school sites make adherence to social distancing (of 2m) difficult or impossible, parking provision should be adjusted. With the requirement to maintain social distancing, space for people should be prioritised over space for vehicles. This might involve:
 - Relocating the parking;
 - Rearranging the space used for parking;
 - Reducing the space allocated for parking;
 - Removing parking from the school premises.
- Even if there are no direct public health compliance reasons to alter parking arrangements, schools could consider whether changes could be made in order to facilitate active travel, in the knowledge that the increased traffic volumes associated with parking provision discourage active travel.
- It is important that changes to school car parking don’t adversely affect other neighbourhood roads as parents look for an alternative parking solution, or create more congestion around school gates. Wherever possible, problems like these should be anticipated and mitigated. Traffic & Highway Services will be happy to advise. It may be possible to introduce a temporary clearway along a particular stretch of road, for example, to mitigate against congestion, or even a School Streets³ initiative, such as those being prioritised in the UK⁴.
- Where there is parking on school premises, a conscious effort should be made to prioritise people over vehicles. For example, students and carers leaving on foot or by bike should be given a good head start on anyone leaving in a motorised vehicle such as a car, van or motorbike, so that they don’t feel intimidated by traffic trying to squeeze past them all the way down the road.

Drop & Stride and Park & Stride Hubs

- Hubs will help to mitigate any reduction in parking at schools. They could be, for example:
 - A parcel of States land;
 - A States’ office;
 - A hotel;
 - A retail outlet;
 - A business;
 - A visitor attraction;
 - A sports venue;
 - A large private property.
- Ideally, they should:

³ <http://schoolstreets.org.uk/>

⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2020/may/09/uk-councils-to-enforce-temporary-road-closures-for-safer-school-runs>

- Have enough space for children to be dropped off and/or picked up and/or wait;
- Have some space for temporary parking at school drop off or pick up times, if parents/carers need to walk with their children to or from school;
- Be within a ten-minute walk of the school.
- Multiple drop & stride and/or park & stride hubs would be ideal, especially if they are located in different directions from school, as that will help disperse concentrations of traffic and people.

Making hubs effective

- Schools are well placed to identify potential hubs in their area, and are hopefully also well placed to have any conversations needed to secure the landowner's agreement. The Education Office will try to support schools in these conversations if required.
- It is essential that the hub provides a safe walking route to the school or parents will not want their children to use it.
- Schools should carry out an audit (either desktop or walked) of the walking route to school. Traffic & Highway Services will be able to advise, but the initial questions to ask are:
 - Is there a continuous pavement or footpath?
 - Are there any crossing points and, if so, are they safe?
 - Are there any specific blackspots or known issues, such as pavement surfing?
- Once any safety concerns have been identified, Traffic & Highway Services will advise on how they might be mitigated. This could include, for example, measures such as pop-up pavements, temporary crossings, reduced speed limits and traffic calming infrastructure.
- Information and communication – The Health Improvement Commission can advise and share useful resources promoting active travel.

What should schools do to ensure safe access to school sites during Phase 4?

- Assess the current transport arrangements, taking into consideration:
 - How the advice from Public Health around bus use is likely to impact on students needing to find alternative ways to get to and from school;
 - Whether social distancing will be possible – and easy – at pick up and drop off times under current arrangements, especially relating to parking;
 - Whether, given the need to make active travel easier, safer and more accessible because of the pressure from reduced bus capacity, it would be possible to manage parking in a way that properly prioritises people over vehicles.
- Assess the area for potential drop & stride and/or park & stride hubs. The school community itself may be able to contribute suggestions and assist in making contact

with the relevant landowners, and The Education Office can support these efforts as well.

- Once potential hubs (where permission has been given or seems promising) have been identified, assess the walking route between the hub and school. Traffic & Highway Services can advise on this, as well as on mitigating any potential safety issues.
- Review and implement any other measures or policies that could support the aims of mitigating the problems associated with reduced bus capacity and encouraging much more active travel.
- Communicate the new arrangements to students, parents and carers. The Education Office may be able to help communicate any key messages to the wider community through the media etc. so that everyone understands the reason for the changes and is encouraged to support schools in supporting Guernsey to meet the challenge of COVID-19.

Although this document is primarily a response to the public health advice around COVID-19, facilitating significantly more active travel to and from schools has many benefits in its own right, and so has the potential to create a positive legacy from this very challenging time. There is support from across the States to help schools make these changes, so please do not hesitate to seek advice where required.

Figure 2: A cycle train in action in Guernsey⁵



⁵ Picture with kind permission of Brehon Chartered Accountants Ltd.