

Car Free School Streets: Frequently Asked Questions

What are Car Free School Streets?

Car Free School Streets is a pioneering approach to transforming road safety and air quality outside schools, where they are closed to motor traffic at the start and end of the school day. This helps reduce congestion and air pollution, making it easier and safer to walk or cycle to school and creating a more pleasant environment for everyone.

Why is this being introduced?

The Car Free School Streets scheme aims to:

- cut down on traffic and parking pressures outside schools;
- discourage car journeys to school and encourage walking and cycling;
- make the streets outside schools safer at the start and end of the day;
- improve air quality and create a more pleasant environment for everyone.

How long will this scheme last?

The council is trialling this initiative with a number of schools from September 2019 for the duration of the 2019/20 academic year (to July 2020).

How is this implemented?

This scheme is being delivered using an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO), which can stay in place for a maximum of 18 months. During this time, we will monitor and assess the impact of these changes to decide whether they should be made permanent.

How does it work?

Identified streets around schools become a Pedestrian & Cycle Zone for agreed times (of between 30 minutes and 1 hour) at the start and end of the school day. Signs at the entrance to the zone will inform people of these restrictions. Motor vehicles cannot drive in this zone between these times unless they have a permit.

What times do these restrictions apply?

The times vary at different schools due to different start and finish times; also some schools now finish earlier on certain days, e.g. Fridays. The times for each individual scheme will be included on the signs at the entrance to each zone and will be widely publicised locally. Details of the times and locations for the six pilot schools can be found online (see below).

How will people know where this applies?

There will be gateway signs at the entrance and exit of each zone with details of the times that the restriction is in force, and violation of this is an offence.



How will it be enforced?

Driving in the zone is a moving traffic offence, so it is the Police who are the enforcing body. They are able to issue a £50 fixed penalty fine to anyone caught driving in the zone without permission when this restriction is in place. The council is working with the Police to agree how this will be enforced, as well as ensuring that everyone is aware of this new restriction.

Will there be any physical barriers?

Because the closure only applies at certain times when schools are open, it is not planned to install any permanent physical barriers such as bollards. The only infrastructure required for enforcement is signage, which will be placed at the entrance and exit of each zone.

We are, however, working with some schools involved in the scheme to further emphasise the closure by using cones or banners during school term time. The closure point must be staffed at all times that these are in use, and anyone acting as marshals or stewards will be briefed in this role.

What if I have to drive a child to school?

Parents and others who do have to drive are asked to park (legally) nearby and walk the last part of their journey. Where possible, we are working with schools to identify suitable locations for Park & Stride schemes and/or to develop Walking Buses.

Won't this just move parking problems somewhere else?

It is generally the area nearest to the school gates that sees the most problems with parking and it is hoped that this scheme will disperse cars over a wider area than at present and to more suitable locations. Also, by making it safer for people to walk, scoot or cycle to school there should be less people feeling that they have to drive for this journey.

Will residents be able to access their homes when the streets are closed?

Residents living on streets included in this scheme are able to apply, free of charge, for a School Streets permit. This will allow them to drive that vehicle in the area the restriction is in place. (The application process for these permits will be open from Monday 15 July, 2019.)

What if I change my vehicle?

Residents will be able to apply to transfer their permit to a new vehicle by contacting the council and informing us of this.



What about visitors to my property?

Any visitors are generally asked to arrive outside of the times this is in operation or to park outside of the zone (and move once the restriction ends). In exceptional circumstances where this is not reasonably possible then residents can apply for a permit for visitors.

In circumstances where someone requires access to your property for a particular period of time, e.g. builders or decorators, it is possible to apply for a temporary permit. Please allow at least 7 days' notice for this to be issued and received.

Are any other vehicles permitted to access the zone?

Some vehicles belonging to identified groups or situations are automatically allowed to drive in a School Street without first obtaining a permit. These include emergency services; healthcare workers; utility companies; refuse collectors; postal services providers and delivery of goods; licensed hire vehicles and any other exemptions stated in the Highway Code. Blue badge holders are also exempt.

What about school staff and deliveries?

We are working with the schools involved to try to arrange for anyone that needs to drive to the school to do so outside of the times that this is in operation or to gain access via alternative routes where this is possible. Where there are valid reasons why this is not possible then these people can be issued with permits.

What else can be done to tackle problem parking and improve road safety?

The schools chosen to take part in this scheme have already carried out other things to improve the environment around the school gate. They are all part of the Modeshift STARS scheme and have in place or are developing a School Travel Plan. This includes education, training and promotional activities to encourage safer, greener and healthier travel to school and this will continue in support of the School Streets pilot.

How will this scheme be monitored?

Surveys will be carried out with pupils, parents and local residents at the start of the pilot and later on to follow up on this to get feedback on any changes resulting from this. Schools are also able to take part in an air quality monitoring project currently being delivered by Birmingham Public Health.

How will you know if it has been successful?

The road should be visibly calmer, safer and cleaner during the times this is in place. We will collect data and capture feedback to identify if this has been achieved during the trial period. School Streets projects in other parts of the country, including Solihull, have shown that schools and local residents are generally in favour of this continuing as they have seen a reduction in parking problems and more children walking or cycling to school.



How is this being funded?

The scheme is being delivered as part of the council's Safer Routes to School programme. Funding was agreed as part of the Updated Transportations & Highways Capital Programme 2019/20-2024/25 Options Appraisal approved by Cabinet on 26 March 2019.

How can I give my views on this scheme?

The first six months of the project will serve as a formal consultation period where you can make any written comments or objections – further details will be provided on how to do this. There would also be a formal public consultation before this scheme was made permanent.

Find out more at: <https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/schoolstreets>

