

The School Journey

Fact sheet for parents

Over the past 20 years the percentage of children travelling to school by car nationally has doubled.

In some cases the majority of these journeys are less than one mile. At 8:50 am, almost one in five cars on the road are on the school run. There is no doubt that this causes major congestion problems in the towns and around the school gates.

Walking to school is good for the environment and it eases congestion. On a personal level, there are health, financial and even social benefits to leaving the car at home.

It is hard to break a daily habit, particularly one that might appear to be the easiest, safest and most convenient option. Yet there are many factors worth considering when deciding if the school run is really worth the headache...

Cost

- The school run can mean significant cost implications, with families spending over €400 annually on the drive to school in petrol costs and wear and tear to the average car.

Health

- Walking is good for us: a brisk one-mile walk to school and back burns around 150 calories, as well as boosting the metabolism, burning fat and helping cut the risk of heart disease by up to half. It also counts towards an adult's 30 minutes a day of exercise to keep healthy.
- Experts suggest that the best way to lose weight and stay healthy is to find an exercise that suits you and will comfortably fit into your life, such as walking to school. Walking is also free - you don't have to join a gym and you don't need to wear lots of lycra.
- There is a growing body of evidence that children who are fit and healthy do better at school compared to their unfit classmates. Children who walk or cycle to school are also more ready to learn when they get into the classroom and concentrate for longer (up to 4 hours) than those who arrived by car.

Social life

- Walking to school is good for your social life. It's a good way of meeting people and having quality time with your child. Children enjoy meeting their friends on the journey to school

What children want

- Research shows that cycling and walking are children's top choice for travelling to school. The majority who travel by car to school would rather walk or cycle, with virtually all of the primary school children who live in York and who are driven to school living within a 15-minute walk or cycle.
- The best things about walking to school include meeting and talking to friends, getting some fresh air, getting some exercise, and spending time with mum, dad or gran etc.

Road Safety

- Children learn to get around their local community and develop road safety skills which will be good preparation for going to Secondary school as independent travellers.