



## Green-Schools Travel

### *An Taisce – The National Trust for Ireland, Ireland*

#### Summary

An Taisce – The National Trust for Ireland administers the Green-School's programme in Ireland on behalf of FEE. Green-Schools is currently running a Travel Pilot Programme funded by the Dublin Transportation Office (DTO) in partnership with six Local Authorities. Green-Schools is working with a total of twenty nine schools in the Greater Dublin Area (Dublin, Meath, Kildare and Wicklow) from September 2005 to August 2007 to promote sustainable modes of transport on the journey to school. This represents approximately **10,400 children** and **545 teachers**.

Green-Schools focuses on empowering students, teachers and parents to take action and play a part in decision making through the structure of a Green-Schools Committee. In this way schools will decide the most appropriate way to reduce their car dependency over the two year period. To date schools have chosen to run a number of initiatives and competitions which have worked successfully internationally. The most popular idea is Walk On Wednesday (WOW) which is a UK campaign aimed at promoting walking to school once a week. Schools have also successfully organised a number of walking buses, Golden Boot Awards<sup>1</sup>, Green Tree schemes<sup>2</sup>, travel surveys and mapping exercises to promote car pooling. Seven schools have also successfully applied for funding for cycle parking due to an increased need for parking as a result of the pilot programme.

It is hoped that the project will be launched nationally in August 2007 once the twenty nine schools have shown a level of success which is sustainable.

#### End-user area

- New buildings
- Refurbishment of buildings
- Transport and mobility
- Financial instruments
- Industry
- Legal initiatives (regulations, directives, etc)
- Planning issues
- Sustainable communities
- User behaviour
- Education
- Other

#### Target Audience

- Citizens
- Households
- Property owners
- Schools and universities
- Decision makers
- Local and regional authorities
- Transport companies
- Utilities
- ESCOs
- Architects and engineers
- Financial institutions
- Other

#### Technical

- Energy efficiency
- Heating
- Cooling
- Appliances
- Lighting
- CHP
- District Heating
- Solar energy
- Biomass
- Wind
- Geothermal
- Hydro power
- Other

#### Context

The Green-Schools Travel Pilot Project follows on from the DTO's Safe Routes to School (SRTS) pilot schemes which were carried out in 2000-2003. The SRTS pilot schemes focused on encouraging parents and children to walk, cycle or take the bus to school.

<sup>1</sup> The Golden Boot Award is a great way to promote walking and cycling to school. The greatest number of pupils per class who walk or cycle to school within a particular time period are awarded the coveted Golden Boot.

<sup>2</sup> The aim of the Green Tree scheme is to turn the tree from brown to green. Students who cycle, walk, use public transport or carpool are given a green 'leaf' to place on the tree. Over the course of the scheme the tree should turn from 'brown' to 'green'.



Six schemes were selected, which were focused on four objectives:

- To achieve a modal shift away from the car
- To reduce the number of school based accidents
- To provide a front of school environment focused on the pupil, not traffic
- To improve the levels of fitness amongst students by promoting more active travel patterns.

## Objectives

The aim of Green-Schools Travel is to encourage schools to promote sustainable modes of transport to and from school. Put simply, Green-Schools Travel aims to encourage students and parents to walk, cycle, use public transport or car pool instead of using the private car on the school run. As a consequence of reducing the number of private cars on the school run, Green-Schools hopes schools improve safety on the school journey, increase the health and fitness of the student body and further reduce their environmental impacts.

## Process

The key concept of the project is to reduce the amount of cars on the school run by promoting alternative modes of travel. A similar school travel programme called Safe Routes to School has been running successfully in the UK for the past ten years. The programme aims to encourage and enable children to walk and cycle to school through a combined package of practical and educational measures.

The project is presently in the second year of implementation and to date the main problems encountered are infrastructural shortfalls and parental concerns relating to safety. The project will not address infrastructural provision at this stage as schools are encouraged to promote a mode of transport that is achievable with the infrastructure currently available. The project has however provided bicycle sheds to seven schools which are actively encouraging cycling to and from school.

Schools are encouraged to provide on-road cycle training, and to adopt a 'Commitment to Cycling' ethos, prior to actively promoting cycling to school this will go some way towards alleviating parents concerns regarding safety. Personal safety on the school journey is also being addressed through the provision of road safety training.

## Financial resources and partners

The Travel Pilot Project is being funded by the Dublin Transportation Office (DTO) through the National Development Plan 2000-2006. The DTO is a government agency, formed in 1996, which provides transport and land use advice to organisations operating in the Greater Dublin Area. The main partners working with Green-Schools on the pilot programme are:

- DTO
- Dublin City Council
- Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council
- South Dublin County Council
- Fingal County Council
- Wicklow County Council
- Kildare County Council



## Results

Results have not been collated to date. It is hoped Green-Schools Travel will achieve fundamental behavioural change which in turn will result in a modal shift away from the private car. The structure of Green-Schools is one in which individuals are actively involved in decision making therefore any actions which take place will be as a result of engagement with the school population.

The **benefits** of the project may potentially be:

- a safer school environment
- an accessible and inclusive school
- less congestion in front of the school
- less traffic in the local community
- less pollution
- fitter and healthier pupils
- independent pupils
- less use of non-renewable resources
- support for local bus networks
- support for cycle routes and pedestrian routes
- a safer, quieter, more pedestrian friendly local environment

Some **results** to date include:

- ⇒ Co-ordinators from all 29 schools have attended workshops on sustainable travel which were delivered by An Taisce.
- ⇒ An Taisce has delivered sustainable travel workshops to students in all 29 schools.
- ⇒ 19 schools in total have begun WOW days and continue to promote WOW on a regular basis.
- ⇒ 11 schools have promoted Park n Stride and have teamed up with local supermarkets/churches to provide short term parking for parents.
- ⇒ 6 schools have held road safety awareness talks and 3 have held road safety awareness weeks.
- ⇒ 10 schools have taken part in International Walk to School Month held in October.
- ⇒ 9 schools promote walking using the Green Tree initiative which monitors walking levels in the school over time.
- ⇒ 8 schools have Golden Boot/Bike Awards to promote regular walking and cycling.
- ⇒ 10 schools have availed of cycle training for students.
- ⇒ 8 schools have secured funding for cycle parking.
- ⇒ 1 school has organized and continues to run 2 walking buses. In total 30 children participate and currently there is a waiting list for places.
- ⇒ All schools carried out a qualitative survey with older classes. Respondents felt that raising awareness of the issues (environment, health, money, exercise etc) was the most effective way to encourage them to leave the car at home when travelling to school.
- ⇒ Teachers are reporting to GS Education Officers that children are more alert arriving to school and that they are enjoying walking & cycling.
- ⇒ When schools run initiatives such as WOW days, local residents have reported back that congestion in the locality has been positively affected. Initiatives have also enabled schools to gain some valuable publicity from local press and radio.



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**Photo 1:** Cycle Action Day at St. Brigids N.S., Annacurra, Co.Wicklow. The whole school participated in this action day and 90% of pupils and staff walked and cycled to school.



**Photo 2:** Pupils from Our Lady of Victories B.N.S., Ballymun, Dublin carrying out a traffic survey outside their school. The pupils found that volumes of car traffic were high however buses had capacity for more passengers.



**Photo 3:** Pupils from St. Joseph's N.S., Terenure, Dublin showing their Green Tree which monitors walking rates to school. The green leaves indicate those who walk and the brown leaf indicates those who travel by car.



**Photo 4:** Pupils from St. Marys Girls Secondary School, Arklow Co.Wicklow displaying the school's Golden Boot Award.



**Photo 5:** Rathmichael Parish School, Shankill Co.Wicklow walking bus.



**Photo 6:** Scoil Maelruain Senior School, Old Bawn, Dublin. A pupil demonstrating how a bike can generate energy to make smoothies as part of the school's Travel Action Day.



**Photo 7:** Pupils from St. Cronan's B.N.S, Bray Co. Wicklow taking part in a travel workshop with An Taisce.



**Photo 8:** Pupils of St. Brigid's G.N.S, Cabinteely, Dublin displaying their posters for the launch of their WOW day.

## Lessons learned and repeatability

The Green-Schools programme is the perfect mechanism in which to promote sustainable travel in schools in Ireland. The seven steps of the programme ensures a representative number of students are actively involved in setting objectives and targets, surveying current trends and taking action to achieve whole school change. The key to the success of the project is the Green-Schools Co-ordinator who champions the theme throughout the school and supports the Green-School Committee.

The project could effectively be carried out in non Green-Schools however, a strong school ethos relating to student participation must be evident as well as the willingness of a staff member or parent to become a school champion. Non Green-Schools who wish to address the issue of travel to school should initially undertake a travel audit to assess the current pattern of travel. Schools should then formulate a School Travel Plan which sets achievable targets within a specified timeframe.

Other lessons include:

- **School visits** are critical to the programme as they offer support, ideas, build relationships and are a focal point for action.
- **Training of Co-ordinators** is fundamental to the programme. Travel workshops are a perfect tool with which to train teachers and also an opportune time to formally meet co-ordinators. Co-ordinators also use it as a networking opportunity to discuss barriers and opportunities.
- **Raising awareness works.** Awareness raising primes the school for action and schools, which have undertaken extensive awareness campaigns, are more likely to succeed when they run initiatives and actions.
- **Maintaining ongoing contact** with schools is essential especially during the most intensive phase of work i.e. the first year.
- **Development of the theme** must be ongoing. It is essential to provide schools with new ideas and options for the further development of the theme.
- It is essential to make **curriculum links** to ensure a whole school approach to travel and to avoid overburdening teachers.
- **Barriers can be overcome.** The majority of barriers are due to perceptions as opposed to reality therefore it is important to overcome these through discussion and debate.
- **Annual initiatives**, such as cycle training, can be a real bonus for schools which have limited resources. Cycle training can also help schools overcome negative perceptions of cycling and can turn around attitudes in a short period of time.
- Promote **key initiatives** which are shown to work. WOW is one such initiative which is easy to run and really captures the imagination of students.



**Contact for more information:**

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Web Site: none

Printed reports or other literature available:

Title: Green-Schools Travel Handbook

Cost: 40 euros