School Streets Bristol

Bringing together children, parents, carers and schools to improve children’s health and wellbeing.

Aim

School Streets Bristol aims to provide health and wellbeing benefits to children by creating a safer, cleaner, and calmer environment outside schools. We aim to increase road safety so that more children can walk and cycle to school, and to improve air quality during the times that children are walking to and from school.

Air Quality

- Over 300 premature deaths a year in Bristol are related to air pollution.
- Bristol is one of the most polluted cities in the UK, with 10 micrograms per cubic metre of fine particle emissions in the city's air – this is the current limit set by the World Health Organisation (WHO).
- The Exhale study showed that by the age of eight to nine, children from the most polluted areas have 5-10% less lung capacity – and they may never get that back.
- Pollution has been referred to as a 'public health timebomb' for the next generation – 90% of the world’s young people are breathing toxic air according to a 2018 report by WHO.
- Driving isn’t safer - exposure to air pollutants is typically higher inside a car (sometimes up to 10 times higher), because cars take in emissions from surrounding vehicles and recirculate them.
- Many of the areas of highest deprivation in our city also have the highest levels of air pollution, particularly in central wards.

Clearly, now is the time to act. Public Health England agrees – its latest review of air quality interventions calls for councils to introduce more school street zones to clean up the air our children breathe on their journey to school.
Road Safety

Parents’ fear of traffic-related danger is the main reason they don’t let their children walk to school alone. So, while Bristol parents want their children to be safe and healthy, many are avoiding the very thing that offers them a daily dose of exercise and fresh air.

This results in more parents driving children to school, increasing congestion around schools and exasperating the situation rather than relieving it. The more parents drive, the more fraught it is and the more dangerous it feels, leaving us in a vicious cycle.

Over the last 50 years, children have lost the freedom of mobility that they once had - to play out, and to get around on their own. Today’s children are the least physically active and most obese generation, and unsafe roads are only contributing to the problem.

Results

Hackney, Camden, Solihull, and Edinburgh have already led the way by closing streets outside schools. This has given parents and children the chance to experience a safe and calm journey to school and enjoy physical activity along cleaner streets. It has created a safe entrance to the school, and sent out a message that the health and wellbeing of our children are more important than saving a few minutes of journey time. The schemes have also alleviated conflict around parking between schools, parents, and residents.

Action is needed in Bristol

The School Streets Bristol campaign is calling for the council to close streets around schools to traffic at the beginning and end of the school day. School Streets is enforced through appropriate traffic regulation orders, signage, and either bollards or number-plate recognition cameras. This enables residents to retain vehicular access to their houses, and likewise parents of children with SEND can be exempted from the restrictions.

Join

Please get in contact to find out how you can get involved. We need parents, carers and schools to join the campaign, share it, and demonstrate support for the scheme to Bristol City Council.

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References:
https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/mar/17/air-pollution-london-low-emission-zone-deadly-toxic-fumes