

Road Safety Outside Schools

Surrey County Council's Policy



1. Introduction

One of the most frequently expressed road safety concerns is that of the safety of children outside schools. At school drop off and pick up times the roads in the immediate vicinity of schools are especially busy and there is usually a high level of vehicle, pedestrian, and cyclist activity. This causes slower vehicle speeds and congestion and very often leads to frustration from residents and motorists at the apparent chaos caused by parents and children arriving or leaving the school.

The purpose of this policy is to set out the process that will be used by Surrey County Council for investigating and responding to concerns about road safety outside schools. The aim is to reduce the risk of collisions, and to make the road feel safer in order to improve the attractiveness of walking and cycling to and from schools.

The county council would like to encourage safe walking and cycling to school, as this is better for the health of children, and reduces congestion and pollution. The perceived danger to children on busy roads on the school journey, especially in the vicinity of a school, can prove to be a barrier to more walking and cycling. This then results in more car journeys and more congestion.

This policy was approved by the county council's cabinet on 24 June 2014, and became effective on 3 July 2014.

2. Main Principles, Roles and Responsibilities

Local committees allocate funding for highway improvements

Within Surrey decisions over most local highway matters are made by local committees of elected councillors in each District or Borough. Each local committee is provided with an annual budget for highway improvements, and it is for the committee to decide where best to spend their money. Therefore any proposals for highway improvements outside a school will require money from the local committee, and the committee will have to weigh this up alongside other requests for highway improvements at other sites.

The county council's road safety and highways colleagues will assess the site and develop possible solutions

The county council's Sustainable Transport Team will lead the process to investigate concerns over road safety outside a school, and the county council's local highways engineers, road safety engineering specialists and police road safety colleagues will also be invited to assist. This will result in a report containing options, where possible, to tackle the concerns that were raised. The local committee will then decide whether to allocate money from their budget on any improvements depending upon the extent of the problem, the estimated costs and the funds available.

Schools and parents have a responsibility to provide road safety education and training

Road safety education and training for children is just as important as improving the safety for road users outside schools. Schools and parents have a vital role to play in child pedestrian and cycle training, and encouraging responsible attitudes to using motor vehicles as children grow older. An assessment of the road safety education provided within a school will always be undertaken alongside an assessment of the road safety situation outside the school gate. The county council provide a range of resources for delivering road safety education and training to children and this can be found via www.drivesmartsurrey.org.uk.

Different problems require different solutions

The type of roads and problems will not be the same outside every school. There may be a mix of different problems such as inconsiderate parking, inappropriate vehicle speeds or difficulties in trying to cross the road. Therefore highway improvements provided outside one school will not necessarily be effective or useful outside another school. It will be important therefore to assess and understand the unique problems outside each individual school before any improvements can be developed and agreed.

School Crossing Patrols

A School Crossing Patrol is one possible road safety measure that could be considered when investigating safety issues outside schools. The School Crossing Patrol service is overseen by the county council's Sustainable Transport Team who ensure that School Crossing Patrols are recruited, trained and appropriately supervised, that adequate records are kept, and that potential sites are risk assessed to ensure that they are appropriate and safe. The operation of the School Crossing Patrol service will be based on the Road Safety GB School Crossing Patrol Guidelines (2012).

The Education and Inspection Act 2006 (section 508A) puts a duty on schools to promote sustainable travel to school and School Crossing Patrols are one option that can contribute to this duty. Whilst the county council's Sustainability Group oversees the service, day to day management and the first line of management lie with the school.

Any school that has, or receives approval for a School Crossing Patrol will be expected to undertake further road safety education with their pupils and commit to reviewing their school travel plan with help and resources provided by the Sustainability Group.

The county council will undertake a review of road safety outside a school whenever a school crossing patrol employee leaves their employment. This will provide an opportunity to assess what solution would be the most effective to improve road safety before taking a decision on whether to recruit a replacement.

National guidance advises that school crossing patrols should not operate where there is a light controlled crossing already in situ as this is a duplication of

resources and could cause confusion. Therefore any request for a new school crossing patrol at a site that has a light controlled, or zebra crossing, will not be approved. Existing sites where there is this is the case will be reviewed. If there is a request for a new school crossing patrol where there is a pedestrian refuge, this will be subject to risk assessment.

If a new light controlled or zebra pedestrian crossing is installed (or installed nearby to) where a school crossing patrol is currently operating, then the service will be reviewed and may be relocated or withdrawn after a provisional period of 3 months.

If the outcome of an assessment of road safety outside a school concludes that a School Crossing Patrol is the most appropriate measure at a site, the site will be prioritised as being high, medium or low risk. It is the intention of the council to fund all approved School Crossing Patrol sites at maintained schools and Academy and Free schools, although this is only possible where there is sufficient funding. If there is a shortfall in available funding, priority will be given to high risk sites, over medium and, in turn, low.

For Independent schools, a charge of £3,600 per annum will be made to cover the cost of salary, uniform and training.

If a school leadership disagree with a decision by county council officers in relation to a School Crossing Patrol, then a meeting will be held with the school staff and governing body to explain the reasoning behind the decision. The school staff and governing body can then appeal to the Cabinet Member responsible for road safety if they wish.

3. Procedure to Assess Road Safety Outside a School

Step 1: Request received

Any request for road safety improvements outside a school will be referred to the council's Sustainable Transport Team. If necessary the person making the request will be contacted to clarify and understand their concerns.

Step 2: Consultation with local county councillor and highways colleagues

The Sustainable Transport colleagues will inform the local county councillor and local highways colleagues of the concerns who will in turn will be able to highlight any issues that have been raised before, and any work that has been completed previously. Consequently the local county councillor will confirm the need to proceed or not with the assessment described in the steps below. If the concerns are submitted to the local committee (for example by petition), then the local committee will confirm whether or not to proceed with the assessment described in the steps below.

Step 3: School Travel Plan and road safety education assessment

A meeting will be set up with the school to discuss the concerns and to complete an audit of the road safety education provided within the school. Sustainable Transport Team colleagues will advise the school if there are any gaps in provision and whether the school's travel plan needs to be updated.

Step 4: Conduct site meeting and produce risk assessment

The Sustainable Transport Team colleagues will arrange a site meeting with key colleagues including the council's local highways engineers, road safety engineering team and Surrey Police Road Safety and Traffic Management Team. A risk assessment will be carried out for the area immediately outside the school. Other nearby points of concern on the journey to school may be assessed too if necessary. The assessment will include analysis of collisions, speeds, and may include the views of the school and comments from road users. The existing road conditions, signing and highway infrastructure will also be checked and noted.

Step 5: Assess and report upon options

The Sustainable Transport Team colleagues will present a report to the school and local county councillor containing the results of the road safety education assessment and a description of any potential highway improvements along with estimated costs. The Surrey Police Road Safety and Traffic Management team will also be consulted. It will be then for the local committee to decide whether to allocate funding to implement any improvements depending upon the extent of the problem, the estimated costs and the funds available. In some cases improvements may be possible through improved maintenance of the existing infrastructure, rather than through the implementation of new infrastructure. Sometimes there may be money available from developers as a result of the planning process.

Step 6: Scheme implementation (if the decision is taken to proceed)

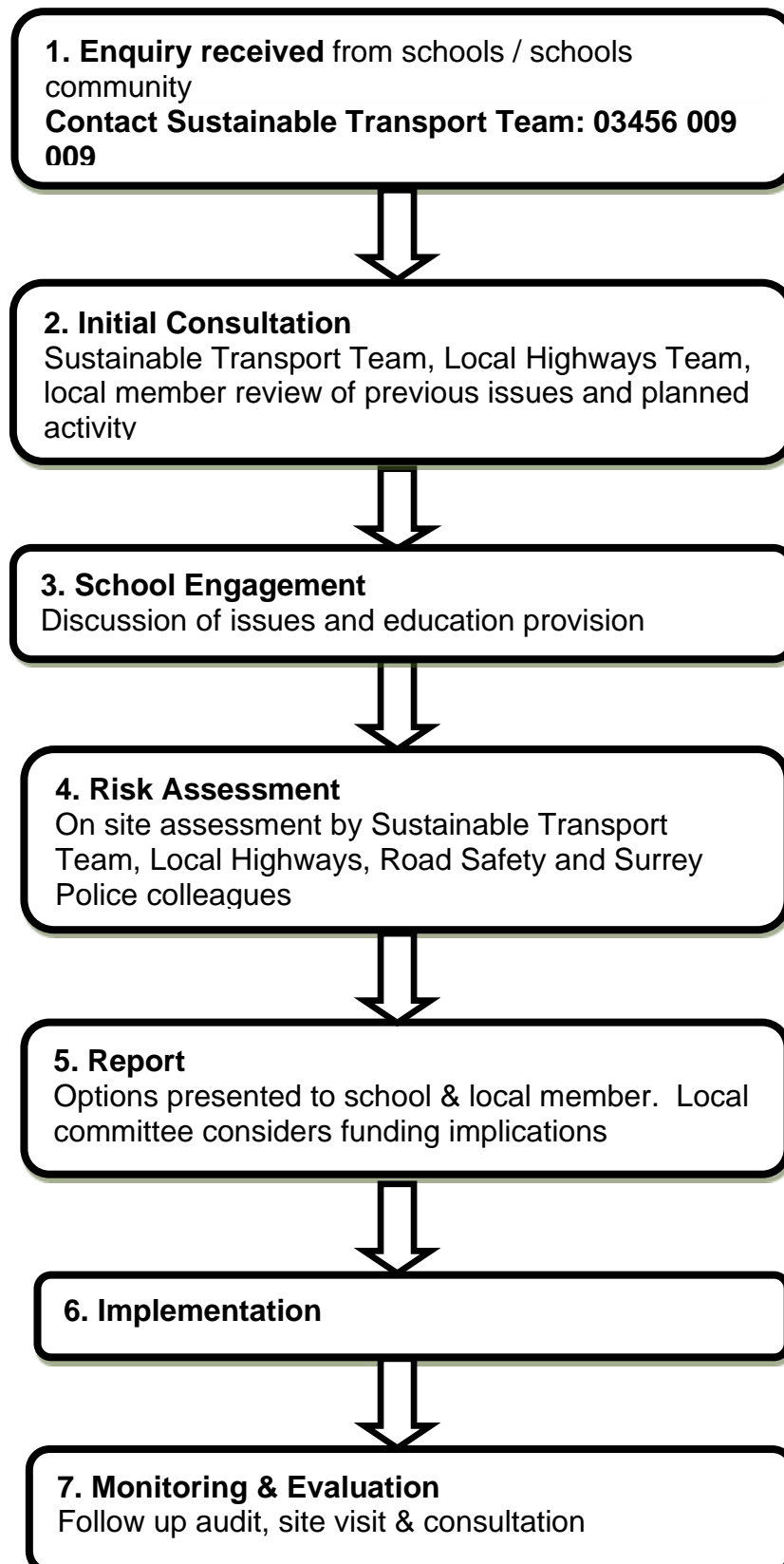
If funding is provided by the local committee, then the scheme will be submitted for design and then construction by the county council's highway contractors. A standard road safety audit of the design will also be completed as an integral part of the design process for schemes that involve changes to the highway.

Step 7: Evaluation and monitoring

Following implementation, the Sustainable Transport Team colleagues will visit the site and will consult with the school and local councillor to check upon the effectiveness of the improvements. A stage three road safety audit involving a site visit by road safety engineers and police will also be undertaken following implementation.

The diagram below sets out this process.

Flowchart showing the Procedure to Assess Road Safety Outside a School



4. How to Get in Touch about Road Safety Outside a School

If you have concerns about road safety outside a school, please get in touch with Surrey County Council's Sustainable Transport Team via the county council's contact centre 03456 009 009.

Alternatively you may wish to lobby your local committee to explain your concerns and to ask them to fund road safety improvements outside a school. Information on how to lobby your local committee can be found via www.surreycc.gov.uk or by calling 03456 009 009.