

Living Streets is the national charity that stands up for pedestrians. With our supporters we work to create safe, attractive and enjoyable streets, where people want to walk.

Department for Education consultation on Review of the National Curriculum in England

Response on behalf of Living Streets, April 2013

We are the national charity that stands up for pedestrians. With our supporters we work to create safe, attractive and enjoyable streets, where people want to walk. We work with professionals and politicians to make sure every community can enjoy vibrant streets and public spaces.

We started life in 1929 as the Pedestrians Association and have been the national voice for pedestrians throughout our history. In the early years, our campaigning led to the introduction of the driving test, pedestrian crossings and 30 mph speed limits. Since then our ambition has grown. Today we influence decision makers nationally and locally, run successful projects to encourage people to walk and provide specialist consultancy services to help reduce congestion and carbon emissions, improve public health, and make sure every community can enjoy vibrant streets and public spaces.

We are interested in this consultation because of our experience working with schools in relation to our Walk to School Campaign since 1995. Our interaction with schools complements and supports the national curriculum in a variety of ways.

General comments

We are concerned that the proposed emphasis on the attainment of skills and knowledge is narrow and focused on academic achievement rather than one that promotes the long term development and success of children.

Living Streets welcomes the inclusion of Citizenship in the national curriculum as a statutory foundation subject, which prepares young people to be able to play an active role in democratic life in society and live responsibly to reduce environmental damage.

We would like to highlight the importance of how schools can benefit from working and engaging with the local community to provide opportunities for children to develop independence skills and to actively participate in community activities which puts into practice what they are learning in Citizenship lessons. Our experience has shown that walks out in the community can provide interesting stimuli for learning maths and developing literacy skills.

Walking to school has a number of benefits for everyone, but in order for all children to be able to enjoy them we feel that they should be attending their local school, which can make the choice to walk much easier. Furthermore, when local children do attend their local school it enhances the school's role as being the hub of the local community. As a result children should be engaged in their local community to learn about it, for example by identifying problems and solutions with the local environment.

The National Curriculum and Walking to School

The National Curriculum makes an important contribution to helping children and young people and their parents lead safe, healthy and active lifestyles. Activities and messages that support

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active travel integrate easily into the core subjects of study in the National Curriculum, bringing it to life.

Our Walk to School programme can help schools to offer a curriculum that:

- promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society
- prepares pupils at the school for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life.

Physical Education

Living Streets welcomes the proposal to keep physical education as a compulsory part of the national curriculum at all four key stages.

Walking to school supports the aims, in the National Curriculum, of enabling pupils to be 'physically active for sustained periods of time' and to 'lead active, healthy lives'. With pressure on the time available during school hours it is not only PE lessons that are needed to give children the healthiest start in life. Evidence has shown that being sufficiently active can be achieved by regularly engaging in moderate intensity exercise such as walking that can be easily incorporated into everyday life. A fifteen minute walk to school and back each day provides half of the 60 active minutes per day recommended for all children by the Chief Medical Officer, as demonstrated by the Living Streets Walk to School Campaign running since 1995. It is known that 68% of boys and 76% of girls in England are not achieving the government's recommended '60 active minutes' per day.¹

As well as its impact on obesity and the long-term health of the child, active travel improves children's academic achievement, attendance and behaviour. Teachers have reported that children who walk to school are frequently more alert, relaxed and ready to start the school day compared to those arriving by car.²

Walking to school promotes the development of life skills, such as those related to road safety, confidence, interpersonal communication and mobility, helping them to gain independence at an earlier age than children who only travel to school by car.

A shift towards active travel reduces existing spend from the department's budget on school transport. Furthermore it contributes to wider government objectives relating to the economy, health and carbon: a fifth of traffic at morning peak times is associated with the school run,³

¹ [Statistics on Obesity, Physical Activity and Diet: England 2013](#), Health and Social Care Information Centre

² Hertfordshire Walk to School Outreach Pilot, Qualitative Evaluation by Indigo Children's Services Community Interest Company, 2011

³ 23% of cars are taking children to school during the morning peak traffic time (0835). Department for Transport, National Travel Survey, Table NTS0615, 2011

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contributing to the annual £4.3bn cost of congestion in the UK⁴; over 10% of school carbon emissions are associated with transport⁵.

Embedding walking to school in the national curriculum

Just as the school journey is key to both everyday patterns and lifelong habits of travel, embedding walking in the school curriculum is central to active travel initiatives across government. The introduction of a curriculum requirement for walk to school schemes would be a key step towards ensuring that all children - including those who don't thrive in competitive sport environments – have opportunities to be active.

For more details please contact:

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⁴ [Survey by the Centre for Economics and Business Research and traffic information company Inrix](#), December 2012.

⁵ [Carbon Emissions from Schools: Where they arise and how to reduce them](#), Sustainable Development Commission, 2008