

Car Free School Streets

Interim pilot evaluation report



June 2020



1. Introduction

School Exclusion Zones are a pioneering approach to transforming road safety and air quality outside schools, where streets are closed to most traffic at the start and end of the school day. This helps to reduce congestion and improve air quality at the school gates, making it easier and safer to walk or cycle to school, and creating a more pleasant environment for everyone.

In Birmingham this initiative has been delivered as **Car Free School Streets**, and as part of wider engagement through [Modeshift STARS](#) which offers schools a range of support and activities.

2. Background

Birmingham City Council's (BCC) Travel Demand Management (TDM) team regularly receive complaints and concerns associated with parking and congestion generated from school related journeys. It is a problem that affects many schools in the city. This results in on-going road safety issues caused by drivers bringing their vehicles too close to the school gate, and inconvenience caused to local residents by inconsiderate, dangerous or illegal parking. In addition to this, idling car engines and congestion around schools causes dangerous levels of air pollution that are particularly harmful to children.

Through Birmingham's wider School Streets programme there are already a number of initiatives available to schools to help tackle these issues, such as the promotion of Park and Stride sites, [Living Streets'](#) Walk to School Outreach programme, and BCC's specifically designed Parking 'Keep Clear' resource. These tools have had varying degrees of success dependent on the school's location and levels of engagement.

In 2016 Birmingham City Council began to consider plans for developing School Exclusion Zones, while also studying results from a pilot in Solihull that started with three schools in 2017. The positive experience from Solihull demonstrated that this approach can have a key impact and help facilitate changes in travel behaviour associated with the school run.

Following on from this, a pilot of Car Free School Streets in Birmingham was announced in February 2019 and Expressions of Interest to be part of this were invited. This was extremely well received with a high number of enquiries and formal Expressions of Interest being received from 32 schools.

3. Delivery

3.1 Selection process

A two-stage selection process was applied to the schools expressing interest in being part of the Car Free School Streets pilot to assess both their suitability and priority for such an intervention. This assessment was carried out by members of the Travel Demand Management team in conjunction with the Local Engineering team.

An initial sift of schools was carried out to determine whether the school location was suitable for this intervention, considering what purpose streets around the school currently serve, and the presence of any other schools or community facilities in the local vicinity.

27 schools were then taken forward to be scored against the following assessment criteria:

- Location;
- Information submitted on the Expression of Interest form;
- Previous engagement with the Modeshift STARS scheme;
- Application of the same criteria used for Safer Routes to School programme, which assigns all schools a score in relation to any Road Safety issues and their propensity for Sustainable Travel to school.

From this exercise, 6 schools were selected for the pilot from September 2019:

- Alston Primary School (Heartlands ward)
- Chilcote Primary School (Hall Green South)
- Cofton Primary School (Longbridge & West Heath)
- Featherstone Primary School (Stockland Green)
- Nelson Primary School (Ladywood)
- St Francis CE Primary School (Bournville & Cotteridge)

3.2 Experimental Traffic Regulation Order

Identified streets around these schools were designated as a Pedestrian & Cycle Zone for agreed times at the start and end of the school day (between 30 minutes and 1 hour). Vehicles are not permitted to drive in this zone between these times unless they have a permit.

This scheme has been delivered through the use of an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO). Under this, the first six months of the order serve as a formal consultation period where anyone can submit written comments/objections. The maximum period that an ETRO can be in operation is 18 months. A decision must therefore be made within 15 months (Dec 20) as to whether the order should become permanent, with these changes implemented before the end of the 18-month ETRO period (Mar 21).

Under the ETRO, there are a number of vehicles belonging to identified groups or situations that are automatically allowed to drive in a School Street without first obtaining a permit. These include the emergency services; utility companies; waste/refuse collection; postal services providers and delivery of goods; along with any other exemptions stated in the Highway Code. Blue badge holders are also automatically exempt.

Feedback received from residents at the start of the scheme led to the additional exception (as authorised vehicles) of taxis and health care workers. Residents also sought to add an exception for tradespeople providing a service to properties located within the zone. This has been accommodated via the provision of a temporary permit valid for a time limited period.

3.3 Signage

The scheme has been delivered with prominent signage at the entrance and exits of the restricted streets (see photo). The times vary at different schools due to different start and finish times; also, some schools now finish earlier on certain days e.g. Fridays.

Due to national signage regulations, local authorities are currently restricted in their design, however the Department for Transport (DfT) are looking to produce a clearer more simplified sign to be used nationally for these schemes in the future.

Because the closure only applies at certain times when schools are open, it was decided not to install any permanent physical barriers such as bollards. If in place, these would need to be opened at any time that the restriction was not in operation, and also opened and closed to allow access for authorised vehicles.



The council did however work with some schools involved in the scheme to further emphasise the closure by using cones or banners. These closure points must be staffed at all times that these are in use. Going forward, the use of cones would be recommended over banners as they are much easier to transport. The team has also supported some schools with establishing marshalling schemes (see section 5.2).

3.4 Permits

Motor vehicles cannot drive within the restricted zones between the times stated unless they have a permit. A permit scheme was developed in accordance with the exemptions and exclusions highlighted within the ETRO.

For ease of application, it was decided that the initial permit process would be managed by the TDM team. A letter was delivered to all residents living within the zone inviting them to apply for up to two permits per household (with the facility to request additional permits where required, allocated on a case by case basis where there are specific reasons) via an online form.

The schools involved with the pilot were encouraged to arrange for any staff members or visitors to the school that need to drive to do so outside of the times of operation of the scheme, or to gain access via alternative routes where this is possible. Where there were valid reasons why this was not possible, a small number of permits were made available for school staff.

Parents and others who do have to drive are asked to park (legally) nearby and walk the last part of their journey. Any parents with children where this is not possible are advised to contact the school who are then able to request a permit taking into account individual circumstances.

From learning in Solihull, it was identified that a larger permit in a bright colour would aid both formal monitoring of the scheme by the Police, school or any marshals, as well as encouraging self-monitoring by residents and parents. As such, a clear permit was designed stating the scheme number, name of school, vehicle registration number and permit number. A QR code was added containing a link to the BCC webpage for further information. To distinguish between the different types of permit, standard permits are green in colour and temporary ones yellow.

The permit process has generally worked well, but it has involved a considerable amount of work, particularly in the early stages of the pilot scheme. Going forward this process (and capacity within the TDM team to manage it) will be reviewed prior to delivery of any future schemes. One option may be to resource additional staff capacity for a short period to assist with the demand. This system has deliberately been kept separate from parking permit schemes.

3.5 Costs

The CFSS initiative has been delivered as part of the Safer Routes to School (SRTS) programme as detailed within the Transportation and Highways Capital Programme 2019/20 – 2024/25 approved by BCC Cabinet on 26 March 2019. The costs of this initiative are considerably cheaper to implement than other physical traffic calming measures with it costing an average of £10,000 to £15,000 to deliver per school. A budget of up to £100,000 was allocated to fund the CFSS pilot and includes the following key elements:

- Signage and surface markings
- Traffic Regulation Order costs
- Delivery of permit scheme
- Consultation and communications
- Provision of resources for schools
- Staff time across TDM, Local Engineering and TRO teams

A full breakdown of expenditure will be compiled at the end of the pilot period (18 months).

4. Findings

Delivery of the pilot has involved consultation and engagement with local residents, parents and school staff through a number of statutory and non-statutory means, including the holding of information drop-in sessions, advertisement of the TRO in the press and through on-street notices, letter drops and on-line promotion. Any feedback received since the introduction of the pilot scheme in September 2019 has been recorded.

While this scheme has only been in operation for 6 months, and some of the specific data and monitoring information available is not yet comprehensive enough to draw robust findings, this initial evaluation reflects upon the positive level of feedback received to date. There has also been a high degree of demand from other schools, communities and local councillors to expand the scheme to other areas, so findings and lessons learnt from the pilot scheme will be useful in helping to shape any future phases of this initiative.

The remainder of this report considers the feedback received to date, alongside data collection and observations, to highlight the main lessons learned from this pilot and outline next steps for implementing Car Free School Streets across Birmingham.

4.1 Initial feedback

Following the selection of the six schools for the pilot scheme, emails were sent to the relevant ward Councillors, letters were delivered to residents living within the proposed zones and communications were sent out to all parents/carers by the schools. This informed people that the school had been selected for this pilot, explained the proposals, and invited them to attend a drop-in session for each school. A frequently asked questions document was produced to support these sessions and was also made available online.

The majority of the comments received at this stage were from local residents and were generally positive. People did have certain questions and wanted to clarify how the scheme would work and how they would be affected. There were also some concerns around what the potential knock-on effect on surrounding roads might be. This was a useful exercise and demonstrated the importance of informing people about what is happening and responding to the questions that they have ahead of the start of these schemes.

Some residents were initially concerned about how these timed closures might restrict their ability to travel freely or for visitors to have access to their property. Cofton Primary School had previously taken part in a one-off street closure event as part of a Sustrans' project, and there did appear to be a higher level of support shown by residents at the drop-in event here. If it is possible to organise similar one-off events for future schools then this could go some way towards alleviating such concerns around the introduction of these measures.

4.2 Pupil travel survey information

All schools in Birmingham are encouraged to carry out regular 'hands-up' surveys via either a Modeshift STARS' Travel Survey or the Living Streets' Travel Tracker. The majority of baseline data for the CFSS pilot was collected during the summer term (Jun-Jul 2019). In order to make a like for like comparison, follow-up data collection would ideally take place at the same time the

following year, but this was generally not possible in summer due to the COVID-19 outbreak and subsequent knock-on effect on school operations. Therefore, we have examined data that some schools have collected during the Autumn term in 2019 with the caveat that seasonal differences are likely to have some impact on mode of travel.

However, early indications show that since the introduction of the CFSS scheme walking rates have increased at at least half of the schools involved. The most significant change has been shown at Alston Primary School with an increase of 10% in walking rates and a reduction of approximately 16% in car usage. Other positive findings show a decrease of 10% in travel to school by car at Cofton Primary School, and Nelson Primary School has seen an increase in cycling, scooting and the use of a park and stride facility.

We hope that other schools participating in the CFSS pilot will be able to carry out follow-up travel surveys shortly and completing these on an ongoing basis will play an important part in showing the continued impact of this initiative over time. The need to carry out a baseline pupil travel survey and regular (at least once a year) follow-up surveys is also something that will be clearly highlighted to other schools wanting to be considered for future CFSS phases.

4.3 Air quality data

Birmingham's Clean Air Strategy sets out a series of high-level pledges as to how the council and others in the city can support the journey towards cleaner air. The Car Free Schools Streets initiative aligns with a number of these pledges.

In order to capture information on levels of air pollution, Birmingham's Public Health team has provided diffusion tubes to all the schools involved and these are replaced on a monthly basis. This is part of a wider air quality monitoring project they are carrying out.

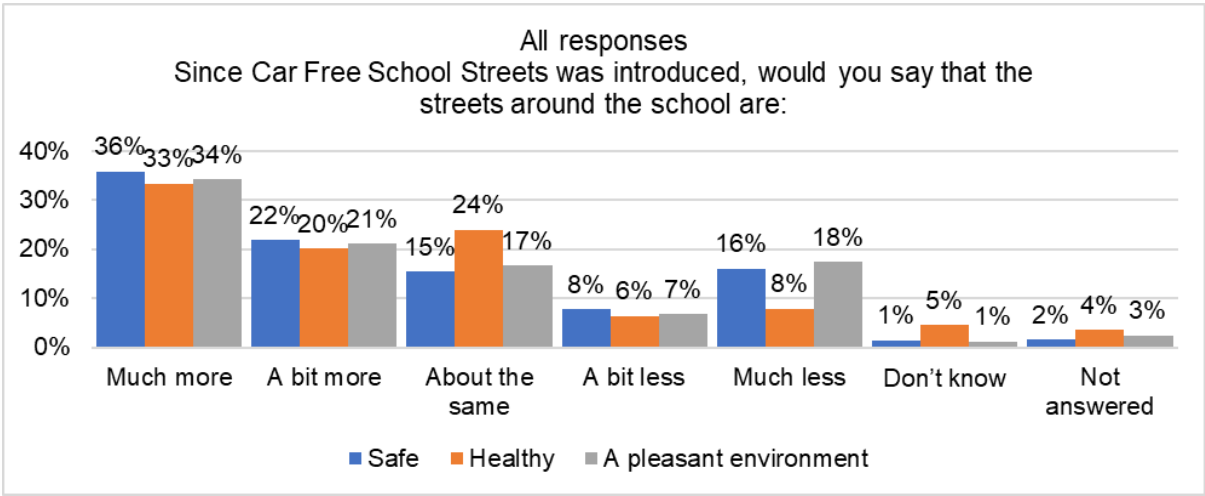
This project has been impacted by COVID-19 and Birmingham Public Health colleagues having to pause much of their 'business-as-usual' activity during this time. We do have some air quality readings from the first few months of this, but it is too early to draw any sound conclusions from the data available so far. We would hope that this scheme is having a positive impact on air quality locally, as there should be a reduction of vehicle related emissions at times when children are arriving and departing the school and the road closure is in place. We hope to be able to resume monitoring activity to further consider this shortly.

4.4 Questionnaire

To coincide with the end of the 6-month statutory consultation period (under the ETRO for this scheme), school staff, parents and local residents were invited to complete a questionnaire to provide their feedback on the pilot initiative and the difference they felt this was making.

Just under 500 responses were received, with the largest proportion of these coming from parents/carers (64%), followed by residents (28%). (One school was unable to circulate details of this questionnaire to their parents/carers so this will be carried out at a later date instead.)

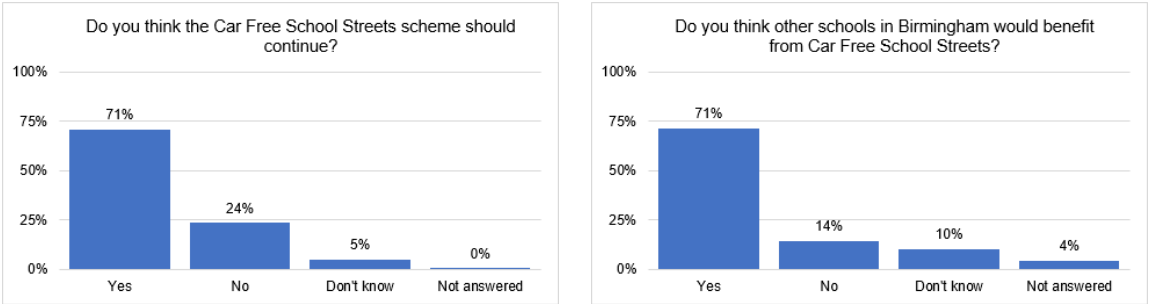
Feedback received was largely positive, with a majority of respondents (58%) stating they feel that the street around the school is safer (much more or a bit more), 55% feeling that the street is a more pleasant environment, and 53% feeling that it is healthier.



As one parent from Alston Primary School commented:
“It’s the best decision ever to have been taken. It’s much safer for kids which are our main priority.”

A resident living in the vicinity of Cofton Primary School stated that:
“The scheme has made a big difference in our road. We no longer have cars parked all along the road, on every available foot of pavement and don’t have a constant stream of cars turning round at the end of the cul-de-sac.”

71% of respondents felt that the scheme should continue at the school, with the same number of people stating that they felt other schools in Birmingham would benefit from the scheme.



Support was higher among residents, with 80% of them stating that they would like the scheme to continue compared to 64% among parents/carers.

Individual reports with findings from each school will be produced shortly and made available ahead of any process to make these schemes permanent.

There were a lot of comments received through the questionnaire highlighting how people feel this initiative has made the streets around schools safer, healthier and a more pleasant environment for everyone.

“The road has become a much nicer place to live on, nobody parking over your drive and causing residents a misery. Also, my grandchildren go to that school and it's much safer for them to walk up and down the road without traffic everywhere and it's much better for my cats. Please keep it as it is safe friendly and a lot healthier for everybody concerned.”

(Featherstone Primary School)

CASE STUDY – Alston Primary School

Alston Primary School is located in Heartlands ward on a short one-way road. This street has experienced numerous issues due to staff from the nearby Heartlands Hospital using Alston Road and the surrounding roads to park on for the duration of their shift. This has caused issues for residents whose driveways are blocked on a regular basis, particularly at school drop off and pick up times. Congestion on this road is further exacerbated by many drivers using the road as a cut through to the main Bordesley Green road.

Despite not having a marshalling scheme in operation, the number of cars dropping children off on Alston Road have been noticeably fewer. This is backed up by travel data collected through the Modeshift STARS hands up survey which shows an increase of with an increase of 10% in walking rates and a reduction of approximately 16% in car usage.

There are still a number of cars parked on this road each morning which are thought to belong to hospital staff. It has also been observed that some vehicles, particularly taxi drivers, continue to use this road as a through route at school drop-off and pick-up times. It may be necessary to look to address these issues in different ways. One possible option could be to close Alston Road at its junction with Bordesley Green (with filtered permeability) and turn the road into a cul de sac.

5. Lessons Learnt

5.1 Location

It is recognised that the closure of streets around schools to traffic at the start and end of the day will not be appropriate for all locations. This is particularly true where the school is located on a main road or through route, or there are other community facilities on these streets with access required. It is also important to consider alternative parking provision in the local area, so that problem parking is not just being displaced elsewhere (see next section).

Learning from other areas delivering similar schemes helped to inform the criteria to be used when considering appropriate locations and included:

- Roads where there is little or no through road access;
- Public transport usage (generally can't consider roads on a bus route);
- Other traffic generators in the area, e.g. shops, businesses, GP surgeries, leisure centres;
- Capacity/ability of surrounding streets to accommodate any displaced traffic;
- Local infrastructure conducive to alternative means of travel especially walking and cycling, e.g. local routes/network, safe crossing points, cycle storage.
- Availability of any suitable 'Park & Stride' locations nearby.

We also took into account the need to ensure a good spread of locations across the city.

From the initial pilot experience, it is clear that this scheme is most appropriate for schools located in cul-de-sacs or on very quiet residential streets. Areas with a lot of through traffic or other trip generators present additional challenges to the delivery of this scheme.

The other location factor impacting on the effectiveness of this initiative is the number of closure points involved in the implementation of such a scheme. Schools located in cul-de-sacs are simpler to deliver as these only involve one closure point and this was also the case for Alston Primary School, which is on a one-way street. As well as being more straight-forward to implement, these locations are also beneficial in relation to enforcement and marshalling.

The location for the scheme at Nelson Primary School covered a larger geographical area and involved two points of entry. This was further complicated by the introduction of a resident parking scheme which led to some confusion among residents. If the scheme is to continue at this school, then the area included in the restriction should be reviewed and possibly reduced.

For future CFSS phases, clear guidance will continue to highlight what locations can (and can't) be considered for this initiative and to emphasise that this is most suited to streets where there is little or no through road access and with only one or two points of entry.

5.2 Vehicle Displacement

It is generally the area nearest to the school gates that sees the most problems with parking. This scheme seeks to disperse cars over a wider area and to more suitable locations. Also, by making it safer for people to walk, scoot or cycle to school there should be less people feeling that they have to drive for this journey and consider alternative ways of travelling instead. It is

hoped this will see a reduction in car trips to school and minimise the displacement of school run traffic onto nearby streets.

However, there will inevitably be some people who still need to travel to school by car, and thought needs to be given to how this is best accommodated. Concerns have been raised about displacement of residual car traffic, with some school children now being dropped-off and picked-up in neighbouring roads. Observations in Birmingham suggest that this has also occurred at some closure points and nearby junctions.

“I feel the area near to the school is better around school time now, but unfortunately there are parents now parking on the corners of the roads, on pavements and across the local residents’ driveways which is obviously causing issues”
(Cofton Primary School)

A number of residents living on Berberry Close in Bournville contacted the council with concerns that traffic from nearby St Francis CE Primary School had been displaced onto their road. Due to this level of feedback, the following question was included as part of the evaluation questionnaire for this school: “If Car Free School Streets continues, do you think it should be extended to include Berberry Close?”. 60% of people responded positively, so this area will be considered for an expansion of the scheme in the future.

“Since the scheme has been introduced in Teazel Avenue, all that has happened is that the problem has moved to the next street along. The dangerous parking, congested road, pavement parking and risk to the children is still very much there, it's just moved to Berberry Close.”
(St Francis CE Primary School)

Evaluation from introducing School Streets in other parts of the country suggests that any initial traffic increases in adjoining roads can be expected to ease off as parents find alternatives to using the car. People can be socially influenced by observing others, so visibly demonstrating that children can easily walk to school may help encourage others to follow suit.

Where issues with displacement to surrounding streets are identified then parking enforcement officers can help prevent the establishment and acceptance of poor parking practices (although it must be acknowledged that capacity for this is limited). BCC can also consider further parking control measures through the Safer Routes to School programme, particularly where there are potential road safety concerns, e.g. at junctions or crossing points.

For future CFSS phases, consideration will continue to be given to the extent that surrounding streets are able to accommodate parking from any displaced vehicles.

5.3 Park and Stride

It is recognised that a number of people will still have to (or choose to) drive children to school. Parents and others who do need to drive are asked to park (legally) nearby and walk the last part of their journey. In order to alleviate issues around displacement of parking the council have worked with schools to help identify suitable locations for Park and Stride schemes and/or to develop Walking Buses. Living Streets has also been encouraging schools to take part in their Walk to School reward programme (WOW) as well as providing advice and support.

At Francis CE Primary School there is a Park and Stride facility at nearby Rowheath Pavilion. Over 30% of children stated that Park and Stride was their main mode of travel prior to the launch of the scheme, which has increased slightly. The local police and the school have been investigating the possible option of setting up a Walking Bus from the car park to the school which would help to further increase the number of people using this.

“Parents/carers have in the past been offered an alternative place to park (Rowheath) which is just 3 minutes’ walk away - the footpath was improved for this reason. The head teacher has promoted this.”

(St Francis CE Primary School)

At Alston Primary School, the TDM team initiated discussions with a nearby McDonald’s regarding the potential use of their car park as a Park and Stride site. They agreed to make some car parking spaces available during the morning on a trial basis. This has so far led to a doubling in the number of people stating Park and Stride as their travel mode at this school.

For future CFSS phases, schools will be asked to identify and promote any potential Park and Stride locations in the local area.

5.4 Enforcement

Driving in the Pedestrian & Cycle Zone during the identified times that this restriction is in place is a moving traffic offence, so it is the Police who are the enforcing body and they are able to issue a £50 fixed penalty fine to anyone caught driving here without permission.

West Midlands Police have been supportive of this scheme. Prior to the launch, BCC liaised with the Road Harm Prevention Team (part of the Central Motorway Policing Group) to consider how this should be enforced. They cascaded information to local neighbourhood policing units (LPUs) along with advice around the issuing of penalty notices in relation to this offence. There has been a varied response and levels of engagement across the LPUs associated with each scheme.

At Alston Primary School the local Police have been supportive and visited on a weekly basis where possible. For the first half term, this was done to raise awareness and educate drivers. After October half term (once the scheme had been in operation for a month) enforcement visits were carried out, with an average of 10 fixed penalty notices (FPNs) being issued each time.



At St Francis CE Primary School the Police visited on a few occasions, particularly at the start of the scheme. In this area, the scheme has become largely self-enforcing with only the occasional need for Police visits to act as a reminder. At Nelson Primary School there has been a limited amount of enforcement of the scheme. From responses to the questionnaire, it is clear that visible enforcement is something that many want to see.

“Needs more enforcement. Nothing has changed.”

(Nelson Primary School)

"Random enforcement would send a message to these drivers. The scheme has been in place long enough now for all drivers to be aware. Less advice and a ticket would send the correct message."

(St Francis CE Primary School)

With limited enforcement, some motorists will continue to drive along some of these streets while the restriction is in place. However, the Police do not have the capacity to provide this on a regular basis at all locations. Different levels of enforcement might be required and appropriate in different areas, so consideration needs to be given to how this is best targeted.

Some people expressed a view that these restrictions should be enforced by the Council rather than (or as well as) the Police.

"If the Council are serious on this issue then they should police and enforce more through their own means."

(Cofton Primary School)

The enforcement powers associated with this restriction currently rests only with the Police, and while enforcement of this offence is permitted for London Boroughs, provision for local authorities outside of London to do so has not yet been enacted. This has caused a degree of confusion around enforcement powers both within the Police and among the wider community. Local authorities can enforce breaches of any prohibition of waiting and stopping restrictions (e.g. yellow School Keep Clear zig zag lines) but not moving traffic offences. A more visible presence of local authority Civil Enforcement Officers might help lead to a greater level of compliance, but again there is a challenge around the lack of capacity to support this.

Some respondents stated that enforcement cameras might lead to a higher degree of compliance:

"In the first few weeks the police used to come, and it worked, then people realised when no police they still drive down the road and, in some instances, very fast speed. It's a good scheme but a permanent camera would help more."

(Alston Primary School)

Whilst some schemes in London are using such equipment, the Department for Transport are not currently taking forward or considering any such requests for camera-based enforcement of moving traffic offences outside of London. Should this situation change in the future then it is something we could consider, but it should be noted that the installation of cameras would be costly and only a limited number of CFSS schemes could be delivered on this basis.

Police forces nationwide are increasingly making use of third-party reporting systems whereby photographic evidence of certain offences can be submitted via an online portal. Staff at Alston Primary School have been sending evidence of illegally parked vehicles on the road outside of the school to their LPU and this has led to a number of FPNs being issued. While it is possible to record evidence of illegally parked stationary vehicles, it is not yet possible to submit evidence capturing moving vehicles travelling in the area within the restricted times.

Enforcement activity does have a part to play in promoting and reinforcing the restrictions that are in place and the penalties that motorists face for not complying with these and clearly this can positively impact on driver behaviour. While the Police are supportive of this initiative, it is unlikely that we will see a significant increase in the level of enforcement currently available and this should be focused on reinforcement and tackling repeat persistent offenders.

Police Community Support Officers can also support schools to spread greater awareness of the scheme and the reasons for it through broader road safety education campaigns and a visible presence in the area – alongside BCC Civil Enforcement Officers where possible – can also help to encourage and facilitate greater compliance with the restrictions in place.

5.5 Marshalling

It was identified in the early planning stages for the pilot that Police capacity to enforce the restriction would be limited, and that it would be necessary to find other ways and approaches that help achieve compliance. It was acknowledged that a 'signs only' approach to enforcement of the traffic order was likely to have minimal impact and something further would be needed.

Therefore BCC developed an option for schools to further emphasise the closure through the use of cones or banners to introduce a physical barrier at these locations. Due to the need to allow access for permitted vehicles, any closure point using this must be staffed by identified marshals at all times that this is in place. Levels of marshalling has varied considerably across schools, but there are some good examples of this working well along with challenges in delivering this.

At Featherstone Primary school, members of the school building management team have regularly staffed the closure in the morning and afternoon. This has resulted in very good compliance, with only the small number of vehicles with permits accessing the road at these times. Due to its success, the school have put in place a one-way pedestrian system in order to give people room for movement on the footpaths.



It is clear that this is making a valued contribution to the success of the scheme in this location. There is some concern that if the school ease back on staffing the closure, then streets will revert back to their previous situation.

“The only concern I have is that the system is working well at the moment but once the regulatory warden and traffic cone system are withdrawn will we return to the unholy chaos and parental abuse that existed before the system was introduced?”
(Featherstone Primary School)

Cofton Primary School had two dedicated parent volunteers staffing the closure during the first few weeks of its operation and this helped to emphasise the restriction; however, many residents have expressed a need for this to continue on a more regular basis.

“When the scheme was first introduced the road was noticeably quiet, parents obviously observing the ban on cars driving in the road. Unfortunately, more and more vehicles are entering the road during the restricted period, especially on wet days. If the scheme is to continue there must be regular spot checks to avoid this happening. When the scheme was first introduced a physical barrier was placed halfway across the entrance to the road, but this no longer happens, and many drivers just ignore the signs advising the prohibited times.”
(Cofton Primary School)

Nelson Primary School has experienced difficulties with the recruitment of volunteers. At the start of the scheme a few volunteers from a local community group committed some time, but as the scheme continued this dropped off. During observational visits, parents and residents have stated that they were reluctant to volunteer due to a fear of threat to personal safety.

It is clear that regular marshalling of these closure points can make a significant contribution to the success of CFSS in achieving compliance. While BCC can provide support to set-up these schemes, it is not possible for council staff to physically staff the closures on a regular basis. Going forward, schools will be advised of the positive impact that marshalling can have and that this should take place for at least the early stages of the scheme, with reminder activity taking place throughout every term. This is highlighted as a prerequisite that schools must sign up to as part of the CFSS Memorandum of Understanding.

6. Modeshift STARS: a framework for wider promotion and engagement

Schools that do not meet the CFSS criteria or are not selected to be part of this initiative can still benefit through the Modeshift STARS scheme which offers support and rewards to schools for taking steps to promote safer, greener and healthier travel. Participation in Modeshift STARS also provides schools with access to a wide range of support services, activities and initiatives delivered by the city council and our partners. This enables them to tailor the most appropriate solution towards reducing congestion outside of their school and creating environments which are more conducive to encouraging travel to school by foot and by bike.

Specifically, schools are able to access:

- Keep Clear School Streets – campaign resources to address school gate parking, supported by parking enforcement visits.
- Slow Down School Streets – a toolkit originally developed for the 20mph pilot that addresses speeding concerns, along with possible traffic calming measures.
- Switch Off School Streets – a new toolkit with resources to support schools with tackling air pollution at the school gates by running an ‘anti-idling’ campaign.
- Air quality (NOx) monitoring project for schools to inform them about air quality in their area and how they can effect change in emissions and exposure, delivered by Birmingham Public Health.
- Staff CPD training sessions on the topics of road safety and clean air, with accompanying lesson plans and homework books.

In Birmingham we promote all of these various elements together as part of an overarching School Streets brand, with Car Free School Streets forming one aspect of this.

There is also scope to work with schools whose locations mean they are not suitable for Car Free School Streets and identify whether they might be able to organise street closures on an occasional basis, delivered in partnership with The Active Wellbeing Society (TAWS) as part of their Active Streets initiative.

To take advantage of the traffic free environment created by the CFSS pilot, some activities have been taking place on a regular basis at Featherstone Primary School, as well as a launch event at Cofton Primary School.



All of the CFSS pilot schools were asked to document the various activities they have carried out as part of their Modeshift STARS action plan. Currently four of the six CFSS schools have achieved their bronze award and we are supporting the other two to complete this ahead of these schemes being made permanent. Generally, we would expect any future CFSS schools to already have a bronze award or complete this within the first year of the initiative being in place.

7. Conclusion and recommendations

Although it is still very early to draw final conclusions, the CFSS pilot to date has demonstrated that such a street closure at a suitable location, combined with active engagement in a wider programme of travel behaviour change initiatives, can bring about reductions in driven trips to school and increases in sustainable modes of travel.

Overall the scheme has been well received with over 70% of people stating that the scheme should continue. Assessment of results alongside other feedback and observations carried out during the first six months of the pilot indicate that there is a sufficient level of support for the scheme to continue at Alston, Cofton, Featherstone and St Francis CE Primary Schools and steps to make the Traffic Regulation Orders permanent at these schools will commence.

Chilcote Primary School still need to issue the questionnaire to parents/carers and pending sufficient level of support this scheme will also be made permanent. There is a need for further discussions with Nelson Primary School to consider the challenges they have experienced with CFSS delivery and agree whether the scheme should continue or if alternative approaches might be more suitable here instead.

It is also clear that there is potential for more schools, children and families across Birmingham to benefit from having Car Free School Streets and we are keen to build on and develop this programme in future. There are a number of lessons learnt (highlighted throughout this report) that should help to inform any further delivery of CFSS.

An expansion to the CFSS scheme is proposed for the academic year 2020/21, with an initial application process having already started. Due to COVID-19, the deadline for expressions of interest was extended until 22 May. It is envisaged that this next phase will include a similar number of schools as the original pilot.

Sustrans have been successful in securing funding through the Road Safety Foundation to work with two of these schools to carry out some more in-depth before and after monitoring activity, which will help to develop more robust evidence on the wider impact of this initiative.

The Safer Routes to School programme (used to fund this pilot) has traditionally sought to improve the safety of the highway and the quality of walking and cycling routes around schools through the implementation of physical measures. Going forward, this programme could offer a suite of capital measures under the banner of School Streets. This could fund further phases of CFSS, additional measures identified at CFSS pilot schools, and alternative physical measures (e.g. parking restrictions) at schools not suitable or eligible for CFSS.

For further information, please email connected@birmingham.gov.uk
or visit www.birmingham.gov.uk/carfreeschoolstreets.

8. Impact of COVID-19

(added September 2020)

As we approached the end of the formal six-month consultation period (in line with the ETRO for these schemes) and while we were carrying out the evaluation questionnaire, the UK went into lockdown due to the COVID 19 outbreak. This saw the closure of schools, except for looking after the children of essential workers, and as a result the CFSS pilot was temporarily suspended.

This did create some difficulties and challenges in terms of completing this evaluation and also with progressing the next phase of CFSS for September 2020, particularly in relation to holding discussions with schools and providing information to parents/carers and residents.

However, thanks to the commitment and hard work of BCC officers working on this, along with great support from schools and other partners, it has been possible to launch CFSS at a further six Birmingham schools on 28 September 2020. We are also now undertaking what is required to make this scheme permanent at CFSS pilot schools where this has been identified and agreed.

At the same time, we have been supporting all schools across the city with reopening from September 2020 as part of 'School Restart' in conjunction with Transport for West Midlands. This included providing a risk assessment around the journey to and from school as well as some guidance around social distancing at the school gate. Changes such as staggered start/finish times and use of multiple school entrances/exits have impacted on the journey to school. We are monitoring any changes in mode of travel as well as any new issues that might be arising.

Some schools have expressed a desire for the introduction of emergency school streets measures, including pavement widening, parking restrictions and road closures. We are working to identify the best way to consider and respond to any such requests and we have included an ask for additional funding as part of our submission for the second tranche of funding within the DfT's Emergency Active Travel Fund.

Examples of best practise from the CFSS pilot, such as the pedestrian one-way system put into place at Featherstone Primary School and the identification and promotion of suitable Park and Stride locations, will be promoted as part of this offer too. This will be delivered, where funding and capacity is available, alongside wider communications and school travel planning support.

It is hoped that this coordinated and comprehensive approach to encouraging and enabling safer sustainable travel to school will achieve the most impact and benefit the greatest number of schools across Birmingham, with Car Free School Streets being an important part of this offer.