

Sustainable Modes of Travel to School Strategy

SMOTS (September 2026)



Foreword

The Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategy for Schools (SMoTS) has been developed by Staffordshire County Council as a statutory requirement from Government under the Education and Inspections Act 2006. The Act requires Local Authorities to:

- **Develop sustainable travel and transport infrastructure within the local authority so that the travel and transport needs of children and young people are being catered for.**
- **Outline opportunities to promote sustainable travel schemes and modes of transport for the journey to, from and between schools and other institutions.**

Through reducing journeys, shifting to an increased use of public and active transport modes, and developing zero emission vehicle options, emissions can be reduced whilst an improved and inclusive transport system can be developed. Additionally, these priorities will deliver significant improvements in air quality and the health of our residents, including in and around schools.

The Council will work towards reducing car use through increasing the use of walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport to school for staff and pupils. This will improve accessibility to education and training, reduce congestion and improve air quality and improve the health and wellbeing of the school community through increased active travel. To achieve this the Council will focus on the following:

1. **Work with schools to improve safe and active travel through comprehensive training, infrastructure schemes, and parking controls where appropriate.**
2. **Continue to develop an efficient and sustainable home to school transport policy which considers a range of options to fulfil the needs of the student and the Council's duty.**
3. **Providing resources and information to facilitate the promotion of active travel through walking, wheeling and cycling programmes.**
4. **Supporting schools and local operators to promote and encourage the use of public transport on the journey to school.**

Introduction

Staffordshire is a diverse county situated near the geographical centre of England and has the largest population of all the shire counties in the West Midlands. It is a county of contrasts, stretching from the fringes of the West Midlands conurbation in the south to the uplands of the Peak District National Park in the north; it shares borders with 11 other strategic authorities and has a sphere of influence that extends into the East Midlands and North West regions.

Staffordshire is currently a two-tier authority with 8 district/borough councils, along with a close working relationship with Stoke-on-Trent. It has over **400 Schools** with over **120,000 pupils in Infant, First, Primary, Middle and Secondary Schools**, and over **3300 within SEN and PRU schools**.

In the south of the county the economies of the Black Country and Birmingham exert a strong influence on travel patterns, so too do the economies of Stoke-on-Trent, Cheshire and Derbyshire in the north and east of the county.

The Sustainable Mode of Travel Strategy has been produced by the Connectivity Transport Operations and Future Mobility Team, with information provided by the Road Safety Team, Highways and School Admissions. This strategy will be reviewed annually and available on the county council website.



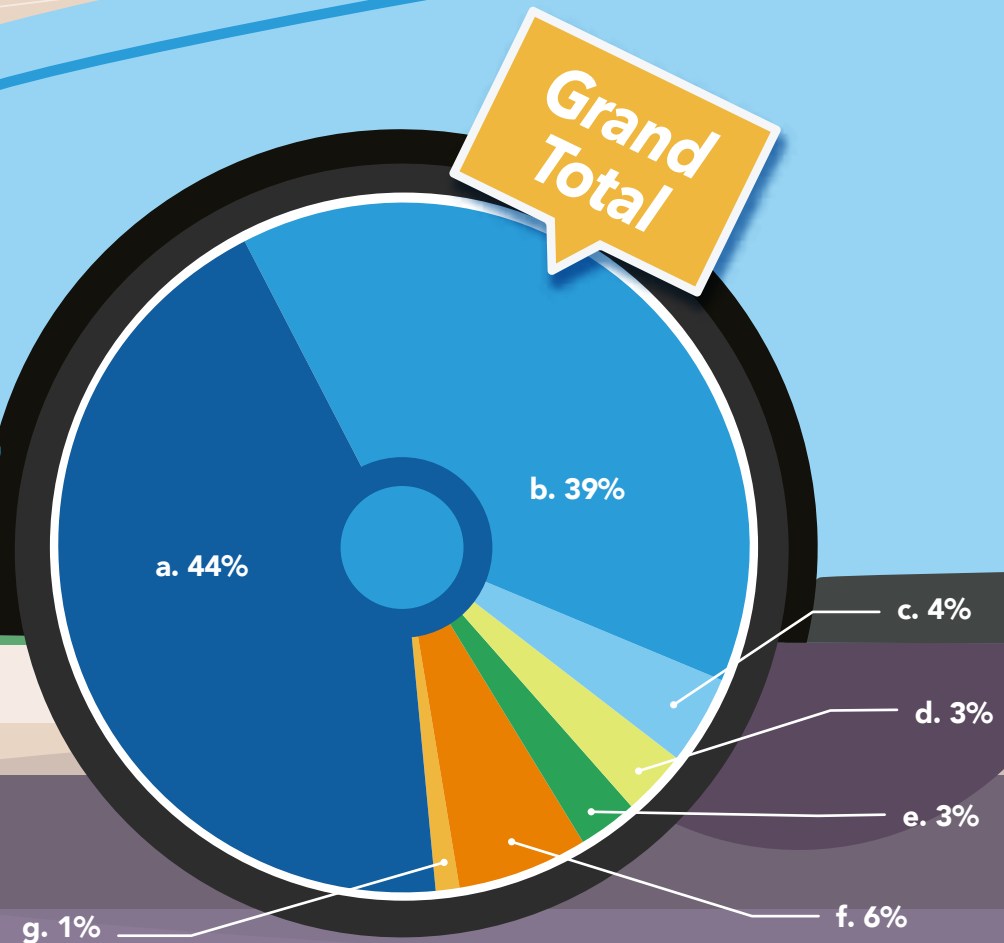
Annual Mode of Travel Census

The Active School Travel and Education Teams work with schools to collect an annual mode of travel survey using a hands up method. The most recent results from Autumn Term 2025 show the combined total for all 89% of school responses. Further category data shows responses per school type across the county.

Data collected supports planning of staff resource to support targeting in areas where modal shift can be achieved. As a county with many schools in rural areas the overall walking rates are lower than the national average of 44%, however in urban areas many schools are successfully seeing many families still choosing to walk the school journey.

SEN and Independent schools along with Nursery age pupils are not included.

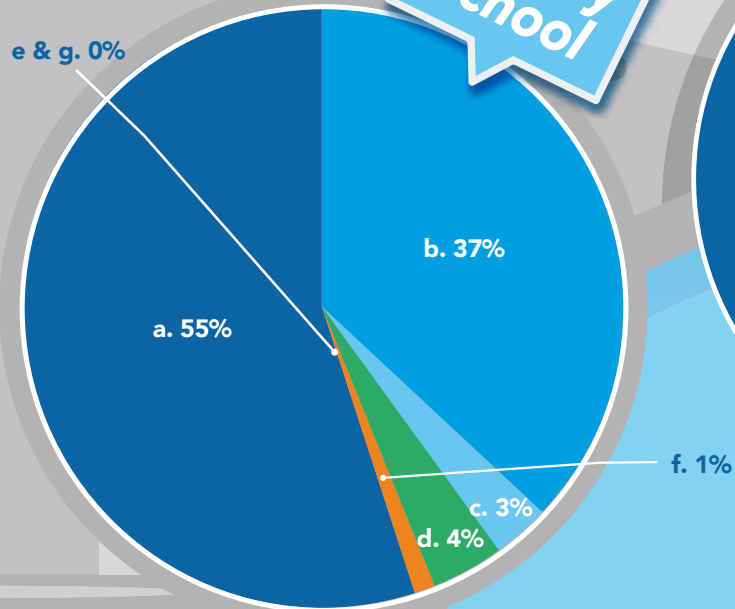
a. Car b. Walk c. Cycle d. Scoot e. Public Bus Service
f. Dedicated School Bus/Taxi g. Train



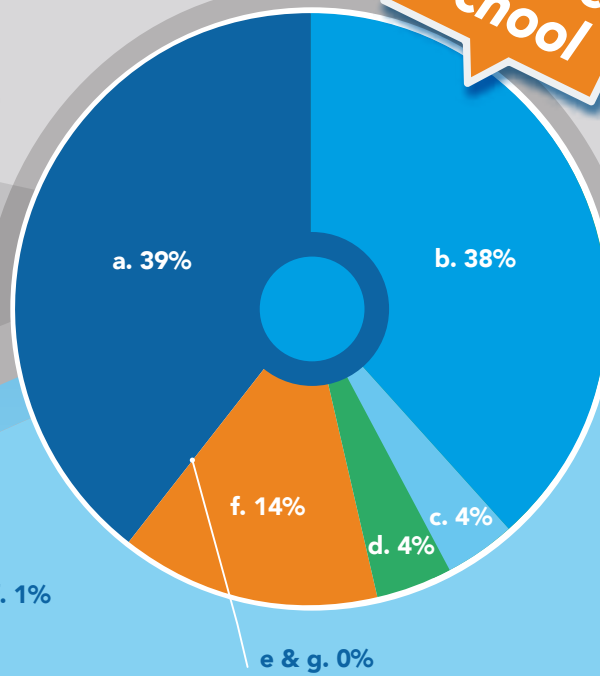


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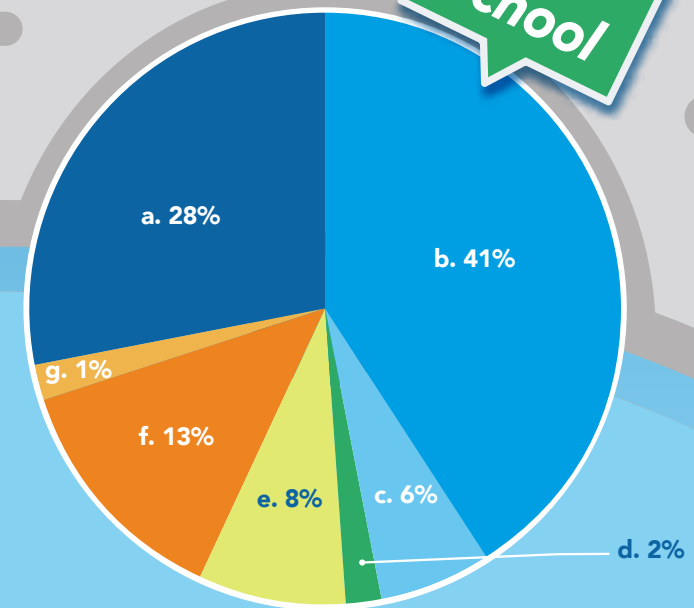
Primary
School



Middle
School



High
School



Sustainable and Active Travel projects for schools

The Council are delivering a number of projects which support and promote safe, sustainable and active (walking, wheeling and cycling) journeys.

Since 2003 Staffordshire County Council has consistently provided a range of behaviour change activities and training for all school types and ages through the team of School Travel Advisors.

School Travel Advisor

School Engagement

Whether it is to improve congestion and air quality around a school or to improve physical health and wellbeing, a School Travel Plan provides a range of initiatives to meet a school objectives.

Initiatives and campaigns include, but are not limited to:

- **Walk to School Week and Month** – printed and digital social media, certificates and rewards to encourage walking to school
- **Walking Buses** – route assessments, training and equipment
- **WOW – Walk once a Week with Living Streets** – trackers and rewards to encourage walking
- **Air Aware** – wide range of lessons and activities to raise awareness of air quality issues and potential solutions
- **Anti Idling, Pupil Parking Toolkit and Active Travel Inspectors** – pupil led activities with toolkits which can be loaned or for schools engaged with an Advisor they can support these sessions
- **New Family and Transition Toolkits** – information for parents and pupils where new journeys are planned to encourage active travel
- **Be Bright Be Seen** – assemblies, resources and lessons where learning how to be visible to other road or pavement users is vital for winter months
- **Bikeability and other cycling and scooting campaigns** – training and other activities to encourage more children to cycle or scoot
- **Cycle to School week** – national campaign run by Bikeability with rewards for schools who pledge to promote cycling to school
- **Active Travel maps** – mapping bespoke to schools highlighting potential routes and crossing points to support journey planning
- **Support for funding grants for equipment** – where additional storage or help with initiatives the Advisors can support external grant applications.

With advice, guidance and resources from the School Travel Advisor behaviour change can be achieved benefiting school staff, pupils, parents and the community. Teaching staff can speak to their Advisor to see what PHSE curriculum links are available.



Modeshift STARS

School Travel Planning



Schools are invited to join a major national campaign supported by the Department for Transport to increase levels of active travel on the journey to and from school through School Travel Plans which are produced using the Modeshift STARS online system.

Modeshift STARS supports Local Authorities, and schools directly, to produce travel plans which layout clear aims, objectives and targets to increase active travel. The Active School Travel Team help deliver the aims of the plan through our annual campaigns.

Schools accreditation levels range from Approved to Excellent with annual recognition awards for School of the Region or School of the Year. Awards recognise excellence and demonstratable modal shift from car use to increased levels of walking, wheeling and cycling.

Staffordshire Schools have been recognised as "Regional School of the Year" on four occasions, with Outwoods Primary School in Burton-on-Trent awarded National School of the Year in 2026.

[Case studies are available on request.](#)



Over 70 schools have been supported since 2024 to produce a Modeshift STARS Travel Plan with a School Travel Advisor.



Walking Bus



Walking Buses can remove up to 12 vehicles from the school run traffic each day. They are usually led by volunteers, with some schools using paid school staff to provide consistency. The setting up of a Walking Bus requires assessment of route, training of leaders and equipment which is all provided by the Active School Travel Team.

Following a dip in the number of running Walking Buses a refresh of the scheme has been conducted with new routes launching in 2025 and 2026.

1. School enquiry

2. Potential routes assessed



3. Routes checked by Highways team

4. Leaders checked, trained and equipment provided

5. Walking Bus is launched and ready for passengers



Bikeability Cycle Training and other wheeled activities



Active Travel England funded National Standard Bikeability training has been provided free to all schools since 2006.

The national aim is to increase take up to 80% of all year 6 pupils receiving training before they leave Primary School settings. As Staffordshire is one of the largest local authority areas this requires either one large provider or a number of providers to meet this target.

Level 1

gives trainees the skills to ride their bike with control and prepare for on road training.

Level 2

teaches trainees to ride on quieter residential single lane roads and use junctions.

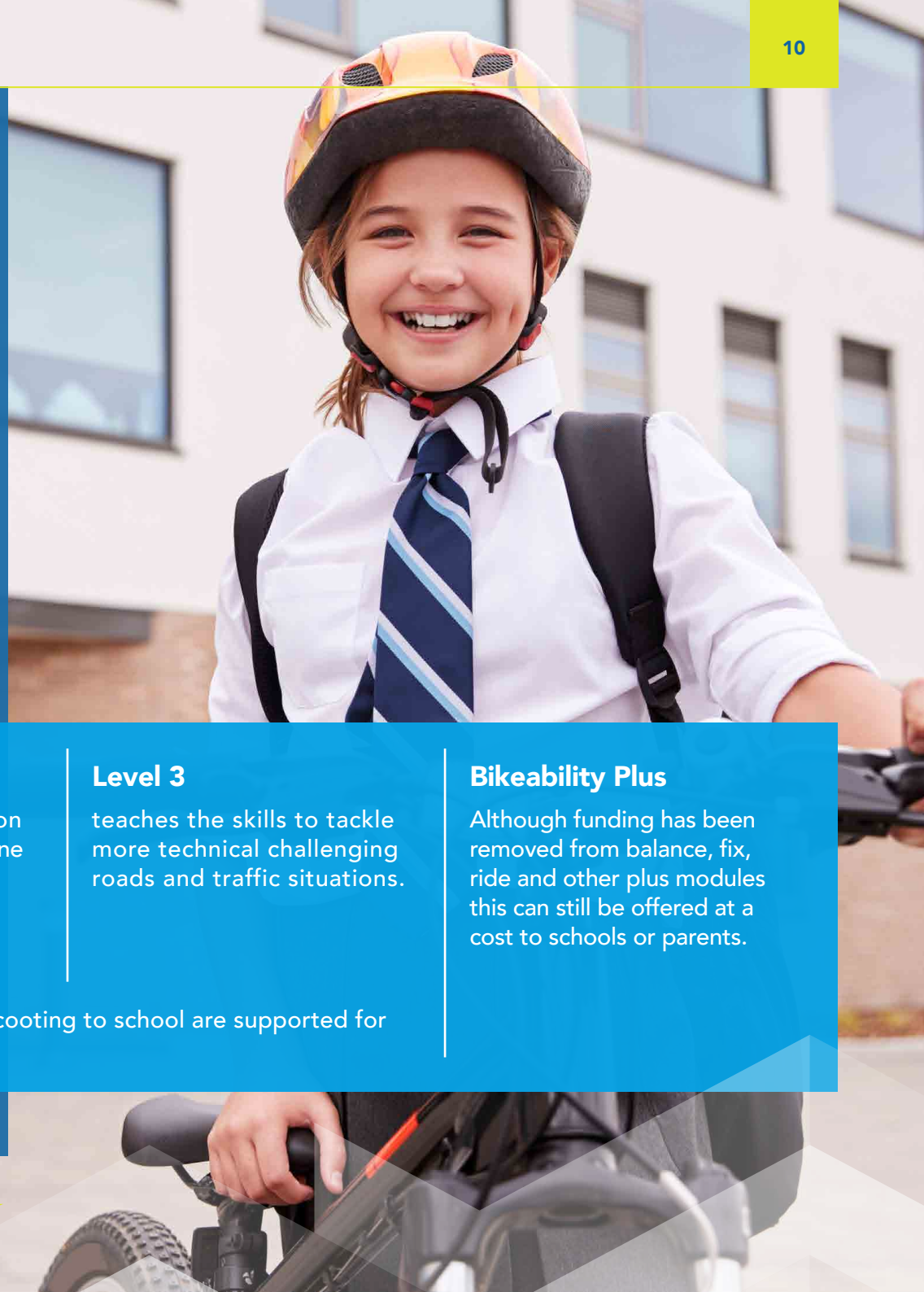
Level 3

teaches the skills to tackle more technical challenging roads and traffic situations.

Bikeability Plus

Although funding has been removed from balance, fix, ride and other plus modules this can still be offered at a cost to schools or parents.

Many other non-training activities to encourage cycling or scooting to school are supported for schools with a travel plan (see page 8)



Travelling to Schools and Colleges

SEN Transport

Travel assistance is provided for primary aged children with a Statement of SEN or EHCP who attend a school which has been designated by the LA as the appropriate school that meets the needs of the child or other nearest qualifying school and the distance between home and school is more than two miles.

Travel assistance is provided for secondary aged children with a Statement of SEN or EHCP who attend a school which has been designated by the LA as the appropriate school that meets the needs of the child or other nearest qualifying school and the distance between home and school is more than Three miles.



Additional SEND Entitlement

If a pupils EHC plan names a preferred school with no conditions and it is the only school named, then it automatically counts as the closest suitable for transport purposes. The local authority must provide free school transport if your child is eligible.

In addition to pupils who meet the statutory entitlement Staffordshire may offer travel assistance for pupils below the walking distance who cannot be reasonably expected to make the journey safely to school (even when accompanied) due to their disability or medical condition.

Post 16 Transport

There is no statutory requirement for travel assistance to be provided for pupils when they complete their compulsory education at year 11. Each authority is required to produce a statement detailing what travel options are available and what assistance (if any) they will provide. Ours is available at www.staffordshire.gov.uk/post16transportstatement - we focus our support on those with low incomes and where their learning difficulties or disabilities mean they are unable to access public transport even when accompanied.



Travel Assistance Options

Whilst recognising our statutory responsibilities, Staffordshire stress the importance of promoting independence for children and young people, and the need to provide travel assistance (not necessarily transport) via a range of solutions to support its ambition of promoting independence, whether its independent travel training, personal transport budgets, or other ideas such as walking buses.

Staffordshire employs two full-time travel trainers who provide a 'free service' to train people with special needs in travelling independently to school, college or work placements.

Giving them the skills and confidence to be able to travel safely and independently. This could involve buses, trains or walking.



*Click to visit our
'Boldly Go' video*

Where the travel assistance options detailed above are unavailable or unsuitable to meet a pupil's needs Staffordshire Council may provide a shared taxi or minibus which is procured through its Dynamic Purchasing System.

Passenger assistants are provided in exceptional circumstances such as:

- if a number of children are travelling together and need supervision
- if a child has a severe medical condition or behavioral need that requires support during transportation



School Travel for Under 16s

Getting a particular school place does not give you the right to free transport.

If your child attends a school which is not the catchment or nearest school with places available, or to which they are not entitled to travel assistance under the income assessed transport criteria you will have to arrange and pay for your child's travel.

Children in classes reception up to year 11 are entitled to free home to school travel assistance if:

- They live in Staffordshire and
- They live beyond walking distance from the school where they are registered (and which is a non fee paying school). and
- They live in the catchment area, or are at the nearest suitable school with places available. A suitable school is one which provides education appropriate to the age, ability and aptitude of the pupil and any special educational needs that the pupil may have (as recorded in an Education, Health and Care Plan or Statement of Special Educational Need), and could be within or outside of Staffordshire.

Assistance may also be provided when:

- A pupil lives below walking distance from the nearest or catchment school but the route has been declared unavailable and there is no other alternative route below the walking distance.
- Under the low-income criteria for income assessed travel assistance.
- When attending the closest or catchment school and a medical condition or disability prevents the pupil from making the journey even when accompanied.



School Streets

School Streets can be found in many areas of the country with varied types of schemes to temporarily restrict traffic during school start and finish times.

Since 2025 three school sites have taken part in trial closure dates with community consultation, monitoring and evaluation. The next stages of the trials are in progress with aims to seek volunteers or school staff to steward closure points.

As part of the scheme schools engaged with have the opportunity to receive increased engagement with the Active School Travel Team and wider partners who will support them through the stages of setting up a School Street.

Bus Travel

Pupils and parents are currently directed to bus operator websites to find the cheapest fare options available. These are most likely to have a £2 fare cap (due to end December 2024). Subject to funding there are plans to introduce a discount card for 16-25 year olds through the Bus Service Improvement Plans.

School Crossing

There are currently 225 School Crossing Patrols across 260 sites covering all areas of Staffordshire. The service is one of the county's critical services.

All sites are assessed and categorised in order that the Area Managers can prioritise coverage of unmanned sites for whatever reason including sickness, unplanned emergencies and vacancies.

The criterion for the establishment of new sites is based on guidelines agreed by the Local Authority Road Safety Officers Association and RoSPA in 2008. The guidelines are based on traffic and child pedestrian figures (PV) and other site factors. This criterion has been universally adopted by Local Authorities throughout England and Wales. More information can be found at [School Crossing Patrol Service - Staffordshire County Council \(contensis.com\)](https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/school-crossing-patrol-service)



Road Safety Education

All schools are supported with road safety education via a team of Road Safety Education and Training Officers. This takes different forms depending on the type of schools and can include access to digital materials, loaned resources and in some cases, visits by officers to deliver training and presentations.

The work is funded by Staffordshire Safer Roads Partnership, a partnership between public sector organisations within Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent. Approximately **30,000** children and young people are engaged with every year.

All schools can borrow resources on free loan which are age appropriate and interactive.

Loans are arranged via the Road Safety Education and Training Officers. Use of many of the resources can be used as evidence towards a schools' Modeshift STARS award. A range of downloadable digital materials are also available to schools.

Road Safety

Key Stage 1 and 2

Resources may include:

EYFS and Key Stage 1

- **Teddy Takes a Tumble** interactive story sack about staying safe in the car
- **Stop, Look & Listen Box** resources to teach basic road safety skills
- **People Who Help Us** literacy pack including a focus on school crossing patrols
- **Role Play Equipment** e.g. zebra crossing mat and school crossing patrol stick
- **First Steps** a pedestrian skills pack for whiteboards
- **Around our School** geography based project with a road safety emphasis
- **To Go & No Go** interactive resource for computer/whiteboard
- **It's Not Far!** seatbelt resources for KS1 and 2
- **Humpty Seatbelt** session digital or may be delivered by an officer.

Key Stage 2

- **Be Bright Be Seen** science based resource, learning how to stay safe by making more conspicuous to other road users
- **It's Not Far!** seatbelt resources for KS1 and 2
- **Egg Head Project** a D&T based project designing and testing a cycle helmet for an egg
- **Speed Project** a maths related project converting time and distance travelled into speed and debating speed and speed limits
- **Crashed Vehicle Project** a D&T/science project making and testing cardboard cars to look at in-vehicle safety
- **Stepping Out** a pedestrian training scheme. Materials are provided and training may be delivered by an officer
- **Transition session** Year 5 (Middle schools) & Year 6 (Primary) digital or may be delivered by an officer.



Road Safety

Key Stage 3, 4 and 5

Resources may include:

Year 8

Stepping up to high school

This session is designed to support students in planning safe routes while recognising and assessing potential risks. It also empowers them to develop practical strategies for managing peer pressure when travelling as a cyclist or pedestrian.

(Middle Schools only may be offered digitally or be delivered by an officer)

Year 9

Good decisions

Focusing on risk-taking behaviour, distractions, and hazard perception. This session aims to enhance students' knowledge and understanding of the importance of using all their senses to remain safe around roads. The content supports the development of students' safety awareness when travelling by different methods of transport.

Year 7 Distraction & risk-taking

Focusing on distractions, cognitive, visual, and auditory, and the potential consequences and risks associated with being distracted. This session aims to provide pupils with an understanding of the potential consequences of their actions and behaviours, the impact this may have on others. Pupils will have opportunities to identify strategies to minimise distractions and be attentive and mindful of the road and their environment.

Year 12

Pre-driver and passenger safety

This session looks at the cost of learning to drive, and the challenges faced by newly qualified drivers. It explores how students, primarily as passengers, can help overcome some of these issues by being a positive influence on the drivers they travel with, both now and in the future when they become drivers themselves.

Year 13

Young driver awareness

This session tackles some of the issues involving young drivers and highlights the consequences of drink-and drug-driving. It helps students understand the implications of the New Drivers Act and that poor decisions could result in them losing their licence and having to start the driving process again from scratch. Basic vehicle maintenance is also covered, helping students understand how simple checks and regular upkeep can prevent fines, penalty points, and unnecessary costs.



Contacts

Project	Audience	Responsible team	Website link for further information
School Travel Planning – STARS & all initiatives	All Schools	Future Connectivity	<u>Active School Travel</u>
Walking Buses	Primary and Infant Schools, Care Clubs		
Bikeability & Cycle Training	All Schools		
Road Safety Education	All Schools and Colleges	Road Safety Team	<u>Road Safety Overview</u>
Travel Training	SEN	Transport Operations	<u>Travelling on school transport</u>
Home to School Transport	SEN		
Transport to School and College	All Schools		
School Crossing Patrol Service	All Schools	School Crossing Patrol Service	<u>School Crossing Patrol Service</u>

