

Additional Information

If a medication existed which had a similar effect to physical activity, it would be regarded as a 'wonder drug' or 'miracle cure' - Chief Medical Officer for England

The easiest and most acceptable forms of physical activity are those that can be incorporated into everyday life, such as walking or cycling instead of travelling by car, bus or train
the four UK Chief Medical Officers

How to value and enjoy the new daily journey to and from school

Appreciate and love your local area more by walking or cycling to school on a daily basis. Allow enough time for your journey so that you can enjoy it without rushing. Explore different routes regularly with your children so you both get to know Tower Hamlets better.

Choose a school where the daily journey is easy and pleasurable

Your child will make more than 4,500 home-school journeys through their school life – so choose your child's school to make the daily journey as easy as possible, where your child can be in control of their own journey routes and times. An extra 30 minutes' journey time every day mounts up to 190 hours spent away from home each year – that's the equivalent of another 12 weeks of your child's evening free time every year!¹

The benefits of a quick and easy sustainable journey to school which doesn't need your involvement every day will also give you as a parent or carer much more personal freedom and time.

If you were originally thinking of driving your child to school, the Travel Champion at the school or the council's School Travel Adviser (020 7364 5000) will help you choose a different option that will improve both you and your child's quality of life and self-esteem.

The council discourages use of the car for environmental reasons, reducing congestion, saving money on parking and petrol and for health and fitness reasons. We encourage the use of public transport for long school journeys and walking and cycling for shorter ones.

We have one of the biggest, most frequent transport networks in the world, and Tower Hamlets has some of the best transport links in London. All school children (up to age 15) can travel free on buses within London if you pay a one-off administration fee (£10 for a 5-10 and £15 for an 11-15 Zip Oyster photocard).

Children under 11 can also travel free on tubes and trains with a Zip Oyster card. Find out all about your and your children's travel options at www.tfl.gov.uk/fares-and-payments/travel-for-under-18s.

Your child should be getting at least 60 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity each day (three hours for under-fives)² – the walk to and from school can be incorporated into this – easy if you live within 2 km of school. Older children living within 5 km can cycle to school, or get off a few bus stops early and walk the last 10 minutes if they choose free bus travel. Children learning about all aspects and modes of travel, and experimenting with them during their teenage lives, can enrich their adult lives through better, cheaper, faster and

above all more enjoyable travel, giving access to better employment prospects, more leisure time and the ability to discover and explore new places.

Secondary school

When your children move up to secondary school they can earn independence through responsibility. Encourage your child to plan their own journeys and ask them to explain why they have chosen a route and how they will address the risks they have identified.

Persuade your child to walk all the way rather than take the bus if they live within 15 minutes' walk – this will relieve congestion on the network for others who need to commute much longer distances. Students will learn as part of the curriculum how to stay safe, reduce their personal risk on the street and become a model citizen for their own benefit and others'.

Ask them to repeat what you have taught them and help them understand why you also want them to behave this way. You will then be able to start to give them more freedom once they show you how they follow their own standards of behaviour and ethics.

For some children who have special educational needs our Independent Travel Training team can give them the freedom to travel to school safely by themselves so they do not need to be limited by the constraints and long journey times of a school bus. Contact the ITT team on 020 7364 0818 for details.

If you still have to drive to school be a responsible driver – show and tell your children why you drive and park safely, legally and considerately. Allow plenty of time for your journey to prevent rushing, taking chances and breaking the law.

Since April 2015 all Tower Hamlets borough streets now have a 20 mph speed limit. Roads maintained by Transport for London may have different speed limits.

Re-read The Highway Code³ – you might be surprised how useful this will be. Take an official practice driving theory test to see whether you would still pass today. Stopped and parked cars outside schools are a risk as they obstruct sight lines for children, and so Keep Clear markings are used to keep traffic moving: even stopping for a few seconds on them puts children at risk, and is considered serious enough an offence to attract a fine of £130.

Do not drive near or past the entrance to the school – park safely and legally in another street and walk between the car and the school leaving the entrance area clear for pedestrians and cyclists.

The School Travel Plan (STP)

A school travel plan (STP) is a package of measures tailored to a school's needs to help make journeys to school safer, healthier and environmentally friendly. Every school in Tower Hamlets has an appointed School Travel Champion and an approved STP. STPs include initiatives to help pupils walk, cycle and use public transport more and travel independently to school, reducing car use on the school run and removing barriers to travelling sustainably to school. If you are interested in joining the Working Group for the Travel Plan speak to the Head Teacher of your child's school.

School Travel Initiatives

Key initiatives that you should look out for when choosing a school for your child to attend that encourage sustainable travel include:

- Getting to know your neighbours
- Prioritising pupils who live within walking and cycling distance
- Personal travel planning and safety training
- Buddy walk or cycle to school schemes
- Cycle training
- Covered secure cycle parking
- Bike It
- Walk and Bike to school campaigns
- Organised walks for families within and outside school hours
- School crossing patrols and Junior Road Safety Officers
- Finding friendly, easy routes to walk or cycle to school
- School curriculum travel and transition materials
- Safer Neighbourhoods Teams and Community Police Support links

Ask your new school what support and schemes they have in place to help you travel sustainably or actively to school every day.

¹Based upon a secondary year student having an average of three hours' free personal time each evening outside of meals and homework. And for you, maybe 190 hours of sleep!

²Source: <http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/fitness/Pages/Howmuchactivity.aspx>

³<http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/TravelAndTransport/Highwaycode/index.htm>⁴ http://www.safedrivingforlife.info/practicetheorytest/practicetests_car.html