

# North East Sustrans Active School Travel Programme Spring Term 2019 Newsletter

## I'd love to hear from you...

I'm Johnny McCrystal, Sustrans' schools officer for the North East of NI. Please get in touch if you have any great school stories or would like to find out more about our schools work.

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## Message from Sustrans ...

The Active School Travel Programme is an exciting initiative for schools who wish to see more of their pupils choosing an **active and healthy** journey to school. The aim of the programme is to increase the number of pupils walking, cycling and scooting to school.

Sustrans is being funded by the **Public Health Agency** and the **Department for Infrastructure** to continue delivering the Active School Travel Programme across Northern Ireland until 2021.

Sustrans has been delivering this successful programme for the past three years. In 2017-18 within participating schools, there number of pupils travelling actively increased from 34% to 44%.

We are currently working with over 340 schools across Northern Ireland. Please visit our [website](#) where you can learn more about the programme and download newsletters from other areas.



Image description

## Spring in our Steps

The spring term was yet another action packed one on the Active School Travel programme in the North East!



Schools throughout the region have had lots going on to keep their school communities active on the school run.

I've pedalled my way round over 300 activities in schools so far this year including assemblies; on-road cycle training; road safety lessons; ditch the stabilisers sessions and run countless laps of playgrounds during 'The Daily Mile' sessions. It's been brilliant fun!

In this term's issue read about The Big Pedal 2019; our regional Champion training workshops; our tips for how to spread the news about your active travel work at school as well as how pupils achieved 'Superhero Status' in Stranocum.

Enjoy!

Sustrans is the charity that's enabling people to travel by foot, bike or public transport for more of the journeys we make every day. It's time we all began making smarter travel choices. Make your move and support Sustrans today. [www.sustrans.org.uk](http://www.sustrans.org.uk)

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## Superheroes at Bushvalley PS



**Bushvalley PS** in Stranocum took on their first whole school travel challenge this term with the aim of pupils achieving 'Active Travel Superhero' status by walking and wheeling their way to a target 10 journeys each.

A grand total of 715 active journeys were completed during the challenge with 46 pupils collecting their Superhero certificate at a celebration assembly. Well done to all!



A new Superhero banner for the school's front gate, a daily reminder of their Superhero achievement!

## Daily Mile Intro

**Did you know that just 43.4% of children in NI get the recommended 60 minutes of moderated to vigorous intensity physical activity per day. This is the lowest in the UK!**

An active journey such as walking, scooting or cycling to and from school is a great way to contribute toward this daily target.

As part of our work in the Active School Travel programme we encourage schools to help pupils to be active not just on the journey to/from school but also during school time, such as through initiatives like 'The Daily Mile'.

If you'd like help to introduce The Daily Mile at your school please get in touch as I can help host introductory assemblies and class sessions. It takes just 15 minutes per session with a recommendation of classes doing 3 sessions per week, whilst some schools do it once or twice a week, others every day!



## Cycle Training

Since September, seven schools in the North East have received their 3-day course of on-road cycle training tuition. It's always a big hit!

Our brilliant instructors take the pupils through some real life, practical training to help them understand how to cycle safely.

Pupils are shown how to be more aware of road safety by learning how to signal to other road users; when and where to look for traffic; road positioning at junctions as well as much more.



A total of 99 pupils have gone through their cycle training already this year, with more ready to start in the new term.

I've had numerous schools give glowing reports of the children's experience of their cycle training, so here's one piece that sums them all up,

**"Hi Johnny, Cycle training is brilliant! Children are really loving it! Instructors are fantastic! I'm sure the children are sad tomorrow is their last session."**



# Champion Workshops

All across the country our team of Schools Officers led a range of Champion workshops covering a wide range of themes.

In the North East we put on 2 regional workshops, which were kindly hosted by **Camphill PS**, Ballymena and **Macosquin PS**, Coleraine.

Both host Champions (Mrs McCullagh & Mrs McLean) presented their experiences of coordinating the Active School Travel programme in their schools to help share and discuss best practice, tips and ideas.

We also discussed how to prepare for The Big Pedal 2019 and the upcoming Feet First Families campaign in May.



A great turnout of staff from schools in the North Coast met up at Macosquin PS in March.

# First time Cyclists

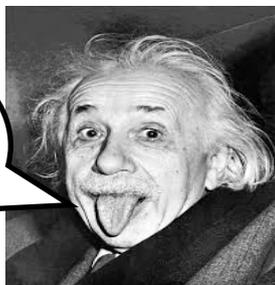


Over 50 pupils accompanied by a parent/guardian have taken part in a 'Ditch the Stabilisers' session in the North East in the two first terms.

Many of these pupils reached the point of cycling independently by the end of the session, which is always exciting to see!

Picture left—Erin 'ditched her stabilisers' at Millquarter PS!

"Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance you must keep moving!"



# Start spreading the news

There are lots of ways to share the news of your active travel work at school to keep the school community up to date and motivated to walk, scoot and cycle to school. Here are some tips, taken from schools on the programme.

**Active Travel Noticeboard**—Here's a brilliant example of an Active Travel noticeboard taken from **St Malachy's PS, Coleraine**. It helps keep pupils and parents up to date with the latest active travel events, photos as well as their own travel data collected by the Eco team!



**Newspaper articles**—It can be really useful to invite your local newspaper photographer along to school for events like **Buick Memorial PS** did for the Big Pedal. It helps to raise awareness amongst the local community of the great work that your school are doing!

**Social media** platforms like **Twitter** and **Facebook** can be really useful ways to keep parents up to date with active travel. **St Colum's PS, Portstewart** keep active school travel in the spotlight with regular posts including their walking bus leaving times, photos of the front of their school—car free! And even weather updates to encourage everyone to make the school run an active journey!





The Big Pedal competition is the UK's largest inter-school cycling, scooting and (for the first year ever) walking challenge. Taking place over two weeks in March/April, pupils parents and teachers in our Northern Ireland schools have done us proud, clocking up impressive journey numbers, and finishing high up the UK leaderboard.

The addition of walking into the Big Pedal seems to have been a very positive change for schools, opening the challenge up to everyone to participate. Many schools set up Walking Buses, with families and staff meeting at an agreed point and walking 10/15 mins together into school. Also, 'Park & Stride' options worked well for pupils who live far from schools - driving part of the journey, then walking the last 10/15 mins ensures that kids have the opportunity for some healthy exercise and fresh air first thing in the morning.

## NI School Stats:

**Total Journeys: 260,983**

### Child Journeys:

- By bike: 25,046
- By scooter: 20,130
- On foot: 117,952

**Supporter Journeys: 97,855**

## NI Leaderboards

### Small School Category:

1. Christ the King PS Drumaness
2. St John the Baptist PS Belleek
3. St Mary's PS Maguiresbridge
4. St Brigid's PS Ballymoney
5. St Patrick's PS Glenariffe

### Large School Category:

1. St Kieran's PS Belfast
2. Holy Family PS Belfast
3. Waringstown PS
4. Carnmoney PS
5. Greenhaw PS Derry

The Big Pedal has a theme each year, and 2019 was the turn of 'The Human Body'. Each day, children journeyed around the human body, learning all kinds of interesting & weird facts about muscles, organs, skin, and how our bodies are naturally wired for movement and exercise. With loads of easy ways to link in with the school curriculum, we hope that the Big Pedal competition has been a great learning experience.



**SAVE THE DATE**

**Feet First Families**

**Friday 17 May 2019**

Sustrans is grateful for the continued support of our schools work in Northern Ireland from the following:

