The school's new access to the village hall

Park & Walk

"Our school is in the picturesque village of Blackmore, but contrary to popular belief about rural village schools, not all the children live within walking distance – we have just as big a problem with parking and road congestion at the beginning and end of the school day as many urban schools." Pauline Bowers, Blackmore Primary School's headteacher told Safety Features.

"We are very fortunate, however, that there is a car park at the village hall and recreation ground, and through the School Travel Plan process the idea for a 'park and walk' was evolved. Our plan would mean creating a new entrance and building a pathway across the school field to provide a link from the car park to the playground.

"Inevitably things are never straightforward: planning approval was required, agreement from the parish council and the village hall committee was needed, and permission for parents to use the car park has to be sought. There was even a dispute over the upkeep of the ditch running alongside our boundary! In addition, our School Travel Plan Grant would not cover all the costs but Safer Journeys was able to provide an additional grant to move our project ahead.

"Eventually our project was completed, and our 'park and walk' was launched at the beginning of the spring term. We are already seeing a significant reduction in congestion and this benefits not only the school but also the whole local community. Another advantage is that we can safely access the new 'all weather surface' at the recreation ground and the library bus which parks in the village hall car park.

"On behalf of the whole school, I would like to thank our Road Safety Officer and Safer Journeys Officer for all their support, without which our plans could not have been achieved." Said Mrs Bowers.

The Team

To find out more or to get help contact:

School Travel Plan Co-ordinator • **Jenna Morgan** – 01245 437797

School Travel Plan Assistants
Faye Kellett • Colchester/Tendring – 07717 867352
Tracey Webb • Brentwood/Epping Forest/Harlow – 07920 466857
Nicky Merrell • Basildon/Castle Point/Maldon/Rochford – 07717 867639
Rachelle Ruston • Braintree/Chelmsford /Uttlesford – 01245 436135/07920 467066

Safer Journeys Officers
Liz Powles • Braintree/Brentwood/Chelmsford/Epping Forest/Harlow – 01245 437315
Denise Edwards • Basildon/Castle Point/Maldon/Rochford/Uttlesford – 01245 435619
Iain McIntyre • Colchester/Tendring – 01245 437783

Walking Buses • **Paula Brown Safer Journeys Officer** – 01245 437246

Safer Journeys Assistant • **Andrew Scullion** – 01245 436296

School Crossings Co-ordinator • **Keith Welham** – 01245 437592

School Crossing Patrol Technician • **Ian Roberts** – 01245 437261

You can email us on **saferjourneys.web@essexcc.gov.uk** or visit our website at **www.essexcc.gov.uk/saferjourneys**

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Safety Features

Using our heads

Chaos at the school gate almost drove two Harlow headteachers to despair. Cars parked on the pavement, car doors flung open in the path of pedestrians, pushchairs forced into the road, cars obstructing the Lollipop Lady; this was the daily situation at William Martin Infant and Junior Schools and an answer had to be found.

The new zebra crossing at William Martin Church of England Infant & Junior Schools, Harlow.

Dean Moran, Infant school headteacher told us "Our schools are located on a busy commuter route and the heavy local traffic, as well as parents driving children to school, made for a very hazardous journey to school." The solution began by preparing School Travel Plans and getting involved with Safer Journeys to School.

"We started by establishing a working committee in September 2005 with staff from Essex County Council, school governors, both headteachers, parents, crossing patrol, members of the local community and most importantly the children; our main aims were to protect our children, parents and wider community from dangerous drivers and illegal and inconsiderate parking. By consulting as widely as possible we achieved agreement on a suitable scheme." said Mr Moran.

"By opening a second entrance to the Junior School, access to both schools was made easier and congestion on the footways was reduced. A zebra crossing, new road markings and pedestrian railings on both sides of the road were installed outside the school. This has produced a safer, less congested environment. In addition, parking right outside the school gate is no longer possible, and now more parents are walking to school.

"To complete the scheme, pedestrian waiting shelters will be installed in the school grounds, funded through Safer Journeys and our School Travel Plan grants.

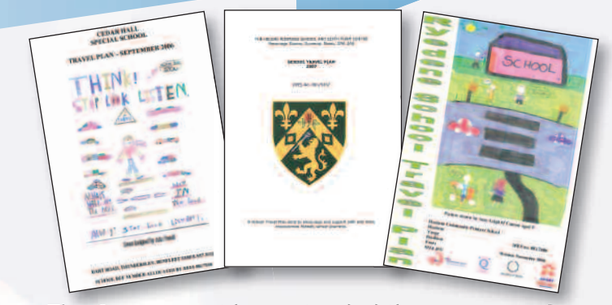
"On behalf of everyone at William Martin Infant and Junior Schools, we would like to thank everyone involved in this project."

This newsletter is written by the Safer Journeys to School Team at Essex County Council. The Safer Journeys to School initiative aims to reduce the number of children travelling to school by private car and aims to increase the number of children travelling safely by sustainable transport. Please contact us if you would like your school to be featured in a future issue or on our web pages.

Essex County Council

School Travel Plans

Well done to the 72 schools that have completed their School Travel Plans in time for the end of March 2007 deadline. This brings the total number of schools in Essex with an approved School Travel Plan to 436, including 9 special schools and 9 independent schools, which is an amazing 71%.



Many of these schools are already planning how they will implement the measures they have identified to encourage safe, sustainable and healthy journeys to school. School Travel Plan Assistants and Safer Journeys Officers are always happy to advise schools on how to move their projects forward.

Payment of grants to this year's successful schools will be processed towards the end of the summer term. Independent schools, although they do not receive a grant from Central Government, can apply to Essex County Council for an equivalent grant – please contact your local School Travel Plan Assistant for further details.

The Government has extended the payment of grants for the final year and all those schools that have not yet completed a School Travel Plan will be contacted before the end of the summer term. We urge these schools to act quickly to take advantage of this opportunity, and to contact your School Travel Plan Assistant for help with getting started.

2004 School Travel Plans

If your school wrote a travel plan in 2004 we would like to remind you that the grant funding has to be spent within 3 years on the measures identified in the school travel plan. If you have not yet done so, and need advice on what to do next, please contact us as soon as possible.

WALKING BUS AT LATCHINGDON

Q: What's Brightly Coloured and has 36 Legs and 11 Wheels?

A: It's Latchingdon's Walking Bus!

We want to congratulate the parents and children of the Latchingdon Walking Bus for walking every morning and afternoon for a whole year!

To celebrate this achievement, the school held a special assembly and each of the children were presented with a certificate, and their end of term incentives from Essex County Council. Keep up the good work Latchingdon.

There are over 80 walking buses in Essex, but only a small number of them walk in the afternoon. In Latchingdon, this is only possible due to a very dedicated group of parents who are committed to ensuring the children's journey to and from school is safe and healthy. The heavy traffic travelling through Latchingdon throughout the day makes the journey quite difficult, but the parents told us that when the Walking Bus is out and about, the lorries and cars slow down and are patient while they are crossing the road. Susan Bence, the Walking Bus Co-ordinator, said they are very pleased with the footway improvements which have been carried out on the approach to the school. Alterations are due to be carried out soon to improve the school entrance by widening the footway and erecting guardrail, and will improve the safety not only of the walking bus, but for all the children.

A 'special' thanks

Many special schools, with their very specific travel problems, wonder what School Travel Plans and Safer Journeys can offer them. Southview School in Witham is an excellent example of how we can work together to make a difference and improve safety and accessibility for children and their helpers.

This school for children with physical and neurological impairments has around 50 children on roll, who travel from all over Essex, and every morning and afternoon more than 25 contract vehicles arrive on site, as well as a number of parents who bring their children to school. With very limited space available, at school journey times the bus turning circle became extremely congested and the tailbacks even caused problems for the neighbouring primary and secondary schools.

As well as concerns about safety, the start of the school day often had to be delayed until all the children had been escorted into the building. John Baker, the interim head in 2006, set out to solve this challenging problem. After writing a School Travel Plan and involving Safer Journeys to School, a scheme was drawn up to provide wide wheelchair-accessible footpaths around the perimeter of an expanded bus turning area, accommodating more vehicles, and allowing for a freer traffic flow. Also, an improved disabled parking bay with better links to internal footpaths would mean pupils would no longer need to be escorted between parked vehicles. To complete the project, a cycle rack for staff and visitors was installed, and a canopy shelter was erected near the school entrance. The school was very enthusiastic and committed to achieving this project, but a major obstacle was lack of finance; by using a combination of the school's own resources and their School Travel Plan grant, with a contribution from Safer Journeys, the project finally had the go ahead!

We were invited back to the school to see the completed scheme, to speak to members of the School Council, and to hear views about the new layout. Karl (13) was especially pleased with the canopy that provides shelter when it's raining and Guy (18) told us "Getting on and off the minibus is quicker and safer". Parents told us how much safer the designated disabled parking bays are, accessing directly onto the main footpath into the school. School Governor, Malcolm Ward told us "Our pupils spend much less time sitting in vehicles waiting for a vacant bay. Now, our school day starts promptly with a smooth handover between escorts and staff, without the delays we used to have."

See more photos and read more about this project on our website **www.essexcc.gov.uk/saferjourneys**

Southview's new bus turning area... The canopy provides shelter on wet days

Please let us know if you have a good news story – and **your school's** project could be featured in the next issue of Safety Features or on our Website.