School Streets Qualitative Research

Debrief for TfL by 2CV 2022

TRANSPORT FOR LONDON

Contents

1. Introduction
2. Overall perceptions
3. Experiences of delivery
4. Behaviour change
5. Summary and future considerations
6. Appendix: School-specifics

TRANSPORT FOR LONDON

Introduction

Introduction to School Streets

A School Street is typically a road (or roads) outside a school with a timed restriction on motorised traffic at school drop-off and pick-up times. This will typically be for one to two hours during the start and end of the school day.

School Streets provide additional space outside of the school to provide a safer, healthier, and more pleasant environment during the journeys to and from school.

They are usually enforced either by automatic number plate recognition cameras (ANPR) cameras, physical barriers such as collapsible bollards, turtle gates and/or volunteers.

As of March 2022, over 500 Schools Streets have been delivered across 31 London boroughs. The first School Street was delivered in Camden in 2017 and in 2019 there were less than 90 School Streets in London, across 20 boroughs.

The large increase of School Streets were delivered as part of TfL's emergency response to the Coronavirus pandemic. 372 School Streets were delivered across 24 boroughs under the Streetspace programme to provide space for social distancing, encourage active journeys to school, reduce car trips and improve air quality outside schools during the pandemic.

This rapid delivery of School Streets schemes sparked the need for additional research to further understand how School Streets are delivered and operated, as well as the challenges and lessons learned from their delivery and successes of each scheme.

Research objectives

Summary of research

- A deep dive of five School Street schemes, to understand experiences of key stakeholder groups and what factors have helped/hindered the planning, delivery and successful operation of the scheme

Research objectives

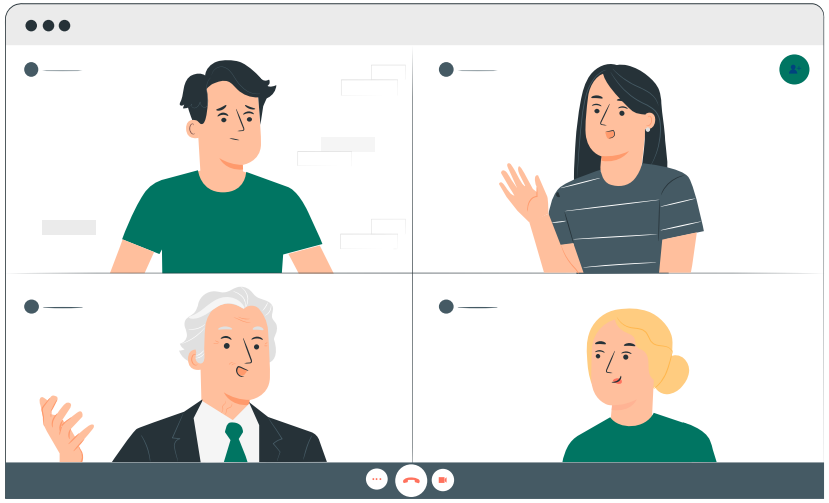
- To explore the perceptions among key audiences of each School Street scheme and to understand how the scheme functions
- To understand in detail the experiences of key audiences involved with the planning, delivery and operation of the School Street and those impacted by the School Street

Methodology and sample

Methodology

Qualitative online depths

21 x one hour video calls with a range of audiences to discuss perceptions, experiences and the impact of local School Street schemes



Sample

Who did we speak to?

Mix of key audiences linked to five School Street schools across London. Schools were pre-selected by TfL.

Southwark: Bessemer Primary School:
1 Borough Officer, 2 parents, 1 school staff

Redbridge: SS Peter and Paul's Catholic Primary School and Gordon Primary
1 Borough Officer, 2 parents, 2 school staff (1 Deputy Head)

Waltham Forest: Newport Primary School
1 Borough Officer, 2 parents, 2 school staff

Haringey: Rokesly Juniors and Rokesly Infant and Nursery Schools
1 Borough Officer, 2 parents, 1 school staff

Ealing: Holy Family Catholic Primary School
1 Borough Officer, 1 parent and volunteer, 1 school staff

Note: we did not speak to local communities therefore report findings should be viewed with this in mind.

Sampling approach

A sampling strategy was put in place to ensure a representative sample of schools and boroughs.

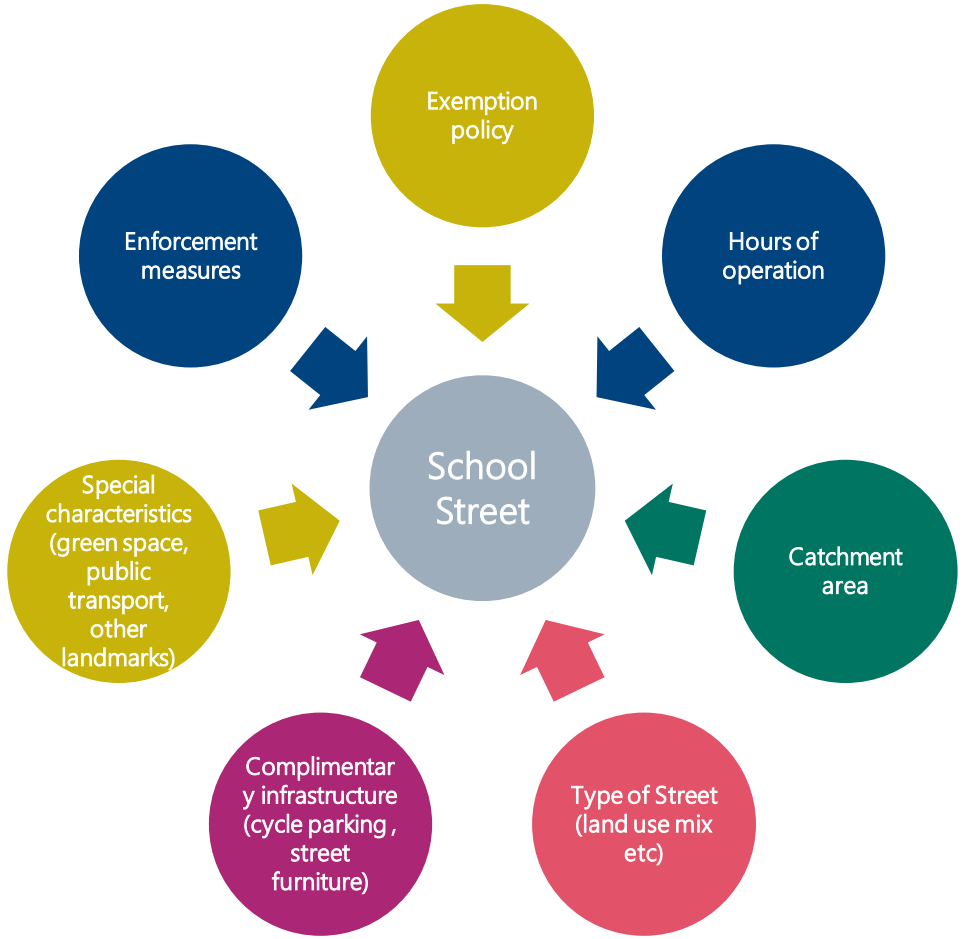
Boroughs were invited to participate in the research and were asked to submit up to five School Streets in line with the sampling strategy. Seven boroughs from inner and outer London expressed interest and put forward schools with a variety of policy levers and design factors to be included the research.

Policy levers are aspects of the scheme such as enforcement measures, hours of operation and exemption policies. Design factors include specific design characteristics and infrastructure such as the provision of cycle parking.

Factors such as the participation in behaviour change programmes/schemes, location and proximity to green space, public transport and high streets/town centre were also taken into consideration.

Each policy lever and design factor will vary between boroughs and School Streets. This is particularly the case for exemptions where some boroughs have granted exemptions to small number of vehicles (*Strict*) compared to others who will consider a wider number of vehicles and groups for exemption (*Loose*). To reflect this difference in the research we asked boroughs to submit a list of exemptions to determine their category of exemptions.

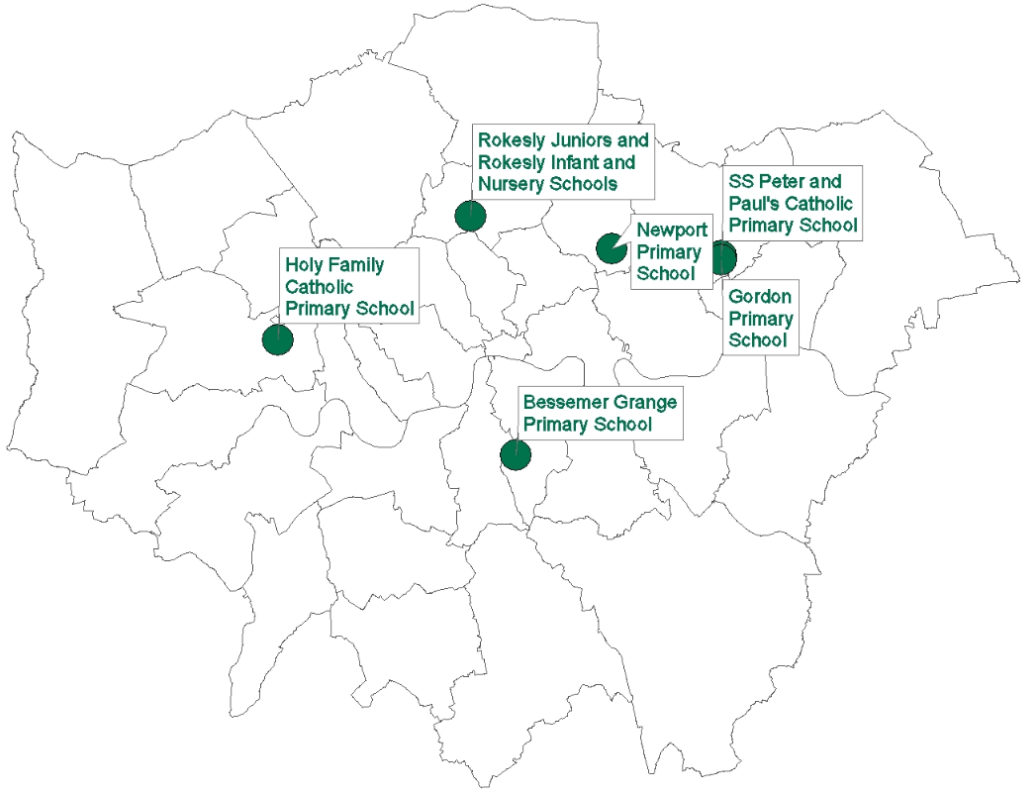
Sampling Strategy



Recruitment of schools

Each School Street was assessed against the sampling strategy and design factors. Five School Streets were selected across five boroughs each representing various policy levers and factors that have influence and impacted their delivery and operation.

School	Key factors and characteristics for selection
Ealing: Holy Family Catholic Primary School	• Outer London Borough • Wide catchment area • Strict exemption policy • Large road closure • Located next to a cycling trail • Close to the North Circular/A406 • Reported incidents and tensions between drivers and volunteers and staff
Haringey: Rokesly Juniors and Rokesly Infant and Nursery Schools	• Inner London Borough • Strict exemption policy • Large road closure • Located along a W3 bus route
Southwark: Bessemer Primary School:	• Inner London Borough • Strict exemption policy • Small road closure • Delivered prior to the coronavirus pandemic • Enforced by both physical bollards and ANPR
Redbridge: SS Peter and Paul's Catholic Primary School and Gordon Primary School	• Outer London Borough • Wide catchment area (St Peter and Paul's Catholic Primary School) • Strict exemption policy • Large road closure • 2 schools sharing one School Street scheme • Adjacent to busy commuter road
Waltham Forest: Newport Primary School	• Outer London Borough • Loose exemption policy • Large closure • Large school with over 800 pupils • Walking distance from an award winning pedestrianised local shopping parade and other walking and cycling interventions



Summary

Summary of findings from qualitative interviews

1. Perceptions of benefit

- Borough officers, school staff and parents all agreed that having a School Street was a positive step towards safer, calmer, cleaner, and more healthy local areas
    - Borough officers saw the value of School Streets alongside wider measures to improve local roads and street environments
    - School staff and parents appreciated the benefits first-hand, seeing their School Street as meeting specific local needs like congestion, child safety, pollution and car culture
- Borough officers tended to focus on the practicalities and direct impacts of having School Streets in place locally including:
    - How well they operated
    - Successes and challenges of enforcement
    - Fit with intended policy goals
- School staff and parents identified broader and indirect benefits of their School Street including:
    - Educational opportunities to engage and motivate children
    - Increasing appeal of the school and whole area
    - Social interaction and convivial pleasant atmosphere at school gates
    - Growing sense of “neighbourhood”

Summary of findings from qualitative interviews

2. Experiences of delivery

- Borough officers and school staff saw partnership-working as key to successful operation of School Streets and their long-term impact
  - Good relations and communication between key parties was felt important for both implementation and delivery
  - Partnership approach was considered good practice for working with schools and encouraging shared sense of ownership
  - Schools and borough officers agreed that collaboration enabled them to better engage and motivate their own stakeholders

- Schools and borough officers agreed on the need for flexibility in deciding on hours of operation, approach to school holidays and enforcement
  - School staff in particular felt that school environments and cultures were very varied, meaning enforcement approaches could take time to get right and involved a process of behavioural and attitudinal change
  - Parents and school staff stressed that APNR signage should be well-positioned, visible and easy to understand instantly (to avoid fines)
  - Borough officers and school staff said exemptions needed careful handling as they had to strike a balance between needs of individual residents/ staff and the scheme overall

- Measuring and monitoring how School Streets were working was felt important, but challenging in practice
  - Borough officers and school staff used a range of evidence-gathering processes but admitted that in-depth evaluation was hard, required time and resource that wasn't always there

Summary of findings from qualitative interviews

3. Lessons for the future

- Research revealed the mix of social, personal and environmental factors that contribute to the success of individual School Streets
    - Acknowledging the role local context, culture and attitudes play is therefore important for future schemes
- Key audiences interviews also showed the extent of behaviour and culture change involved in making School Streets work including:
    - Travel habits of parents and staff
    - Communication and engagement between borough officers and schools
    - Day-to-day practicalities and logistics for schools
- All behaviour change takes time and particularly where multiple players are involved it is unlikely to be a linear process so empathy and understanding is required
- Schools and borough officers agreed on some core components of ensuring success:
    - Iterative and flexible approaches to delivering School Streets
    - Integration with wider active travel and road safety initiatives
    - Open communications, partnership-working and clear lines of responsibility
- Parents were more likely to ask for clarity in terms of operational hours and a general understanding that changing travel habits around the school-run wasn't always easy (even if they saw the benefit)

Overall Perceptions

School Streets are seen as vital to safer, calmer, cleaner, more active London streets

Safer

Tackle high volumes of traffic, prevent cars parking near schools or stopping in the middle of road

- During Covid, pedestrian risk increased with narrow pavements and social distancing causing spillage onto roads
- Prior to School Streets, many local traffic issues were seen to be caused by parents coming to/ from school by car
- External factors outside of school control are also seen to be mitigated
    - Directly eg commuter cut-through, local car culture; and
    - Indirectly eg busy roads or bus routes nearby

Calmer

Reduce hostile road atmosphere and shared stresses of pick-up/drop-off

- Parents previously voiced frustration and aggression at the busyness and stresses of drop-off times
- Prior to School Street, staff often 'policed' parents eg parking too close to school, across driveways or managing frustration and aggression
- Residents also complained of negative knock-on effects eg bad atmosphere/ poor parking

Cleaner

Reduce congestion, idling and improve children's health (and school/community's)

- Often part of Council commitments around climate change/air quality
- Linked by Councils and schools to existing work they are doing around improving life chances/early years' experiences, and empowering local communities
- Fits with current curriculum and the issues schools are already talking to children about eg air quality/climate change

Active

Encourage and enable more walking, cycling and scooting

- Seen as a sign of taking action against high childhood obesity rates and overall poor health for some children
- They provide physical activity opportunities for all residents and in particular for the school children
- Schools act as catalyst for wider change, encouraging physical activity among their community

School/parent priorities ⟷ Council priorities

Councils see School Streets as part of broader efforts to improve local roads for all users
Schools appreciate their concerns being recognised and supported by the Council

Shared view of benefits and rationale for having a School Street

Safety for families/children

'It was school traffic and it seems that it was predominantly parents who live within walking distance and who were using cars when they could have walked or cycled.' *School staff, Newport, Waltham Forest*

'There was an accident involving a Year 6 child, at which point it became imperative that some kind of change should be made. The Council were very responsive.' *School staff, St Peter & Paul, Redbridge*

Atmosphere at school gates

'We did have some problems with people being abusive to staff at the school gates, and cars going up on the pavement. It just wasn't on.' *School staff, Newport, Waltham Forest*

'We had a lot of idling by the school gates.' *School staff, Bessemer, Southwark*

'It's a Council priority to tackle air quality.' *Borough Officer, Haringey*

Pollution/air quality for all

'It fits very well with everything that we as a borough are working towards.' *Borough Officer, Southwark*

'I wanted to cycle, but it was very stressful, with 3 little ones. They'd be all over the place and you just have to be on high alert all the time.' *Parent, St Peters & Paul, Redbridge*

'It felt polluted and dangerous and scary. It was very stressful.' *Parent, Rokesley, Haringey*

Active Travel for communities

School Streets are largely felt to deliver on their intended goals

Active Travel

'It's been so well received by the school community. And it's an absolute pleasure to stand out there in the morning and see my families riding and walking in.' *School staff, St Peter & Paul, Redbridge*

'Now, because of the bit that's closed off, we can cycle on the road. This is so exciting for the children, they feel really grown up and to me it feels OK, it feels safe. It is such a massive difference.' *Parent, St Peter & Paul, Redbridge*

Atmosphere at school gates

'The feeling outside school changed very quickly, it was calm, it was quiet… It's been transformational for the school community.' *School staff, Holy Family, Ealing*

'Now there's a really nice positive start to the day. It's improved the start and end of the day enormously.' *School staff, Newport, Waltham Forest*

Safety for families/children

'It was very well received by the people who are already walking and cycling. They feel it is much safer and they like the quieter journey.' *Borough Officer, Ealing*

'Watching my son cross the road, he's much more comfortable because he can see when it's safe and I feel more confident letting him go independently. *Parent, Rokesley, Haringey*

Pollution/air quality

'The air smells better. Parents would get here and sit for 45 minutes with their engines on. They're not doing that any more.' *Parent, Rokesley, Haringey*

'It's one part of the puzzle to tackle air quality, and no cars in front of the school means cleaner air for children when they're growing and their lungs are developing.' *Borough Officer, Redbridge*

With some pleasant surprises too

Broader educational benefits

The children are proud of it because they helped make it happen. They brought the issue to me and they can see that their ideas have had an impact and that they have a part to play in the community as well – School staff, Newport, Waltham Forest

The children were proud when it was their year group's turn to be on the barriers. I think they enjoyed being out there and saying Good Morning to everyone – School staff, Holy Family, Ealing

Social benefits

The barriers helped to make it a community thing. It was great. The kids really got into it, I actually loved doing it and it helped understand the scheme better, everyone took responsibility – parent, Holy Family, Ealing

It's a calmer environment, it's more social, there's room for parents to talk. It's changed the way the roads operate and impacted the whole area, residents aren't beeping their horns like they used to – Borough Officer, Waltham Forest

Increased appeal of school

Other schools nearby are on main roads so couldn't do School Streets and that was a reason why we didn't send our children there and chose this school instead – parent , Bessemer Southwark

Connection with local areas and London

It feels like the whole street is part of our school now – School staff, Bessemer Southwark

The school has been seen to be doing something positive, to help keep the community safe. I see lots of cyclists using the roads now and people have stopped me when I've been out on the gate and said how much safer it is. There's a real positivity and community spirit around it – School staff, Newport, Waltham Forest

Experiences of Delivery

Implementation decisions are led by Councils with schools informed once key criteria are considered

A range of criteria are used when deciding where to put a School Street

Borough Officers informally weigh up individual factors:
- Needs of school
- Scale of benefits
- Impact on local community
Feasibility of location

Borough Officers look to schools already engaged in behaviour change eg
- Gold STARS accredited
- School community known to be active vis. climate change/ health issues

Some Borough Officers called out very explicit criteria that they use:
- High Black, Asian and minority ethnic local population
- Poor air quality
- High volumes of traffic

Decisions largely shaped by individual Borough Officers and their knowledge of local area

Some adopt a more systematic approach

Once decided, Borough Officer contacts relevant school to discuss plans

In some cases, the School Street proposal comes after months of schools and parents raising concerns to the council and requesting support eg traffic reduction measures

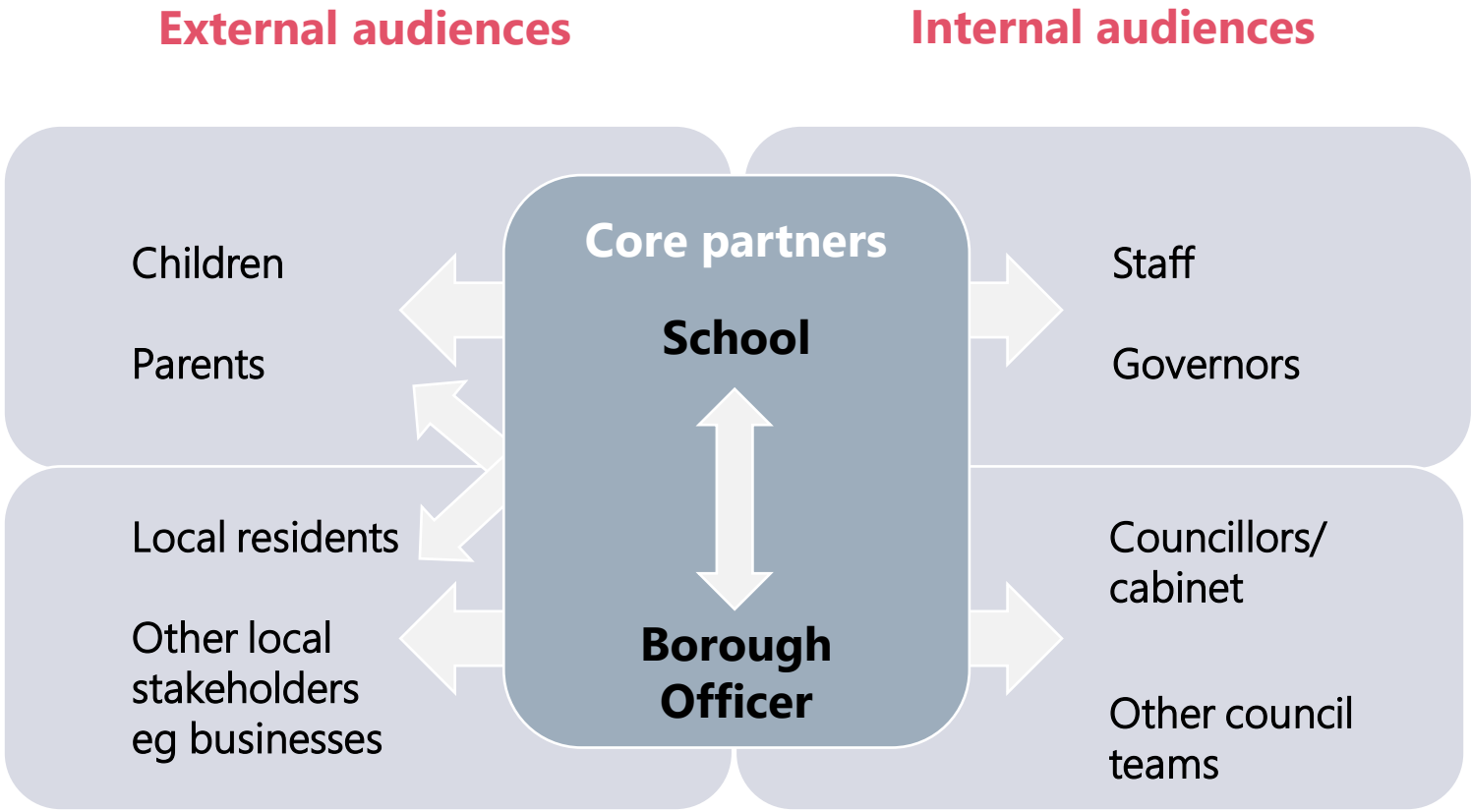
'We had tried lots of other incentives and initiatives to encourage active travel, but it came back to the fact that the roads aren't safe.' *School staff, St Peter & Paul, Redbridge*

'School Streets are costly and intrusive, so we want to try everything else before we put in a School Street.' *Borough Officer, Waltham Forest*

'We knew that the parents at the school were very engaged, so we thought that at this school there would be a receptive community.' *Borough Officer, Haringey*

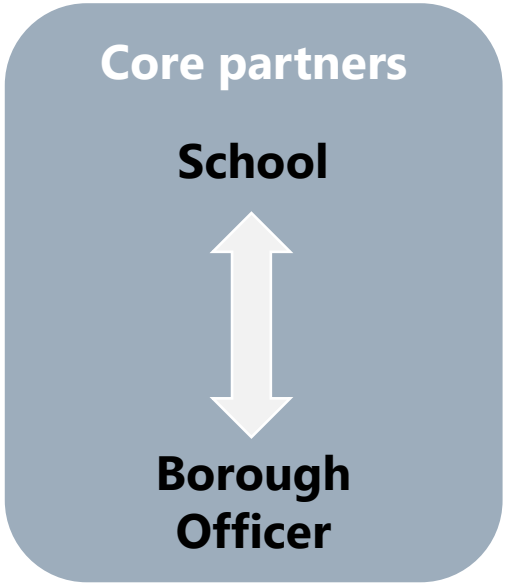
Schools and Councils recognise partnership-working is key for operational success and long-term engagement

- Partnership-working around School Streets is complex
  - Requires engagement with several internal and external audiences with other priorities
- Cooperation and open discussion between core partners is essential throughout
- Schools and Councils need to communicate with one another, and engage their own internal and external audiences
- Despite the complexity, cooperation and support between core partners is seen as crucial for ensuring:
  - Shared sense of value and vision
  - Practical support
  - Operational success



Pre-existing relations and good communication between Councils and schools helps smooth implementation and operation

- Existing links between schools and Council staff can help support better school engagement – for example, links with staff sitting in "school travel", "active travel" or "Healthy Streets" teams
- Potential for misunderstanding where Borough Officers have less experience working with schools eg over timescales, responsibilities
- Borough Officers suggest enthusiasm of school staff and time available impact the success of School Streets both at roll-out and long-term management
- However, schools can feel let down by the Council:
  - Deadlines pushed back
  - Lack of clarity on next steps
  - Undefined roles and responsibilities eg enforcement, signage, compliance



'I'm very grateful to the Council for being very supportive and for all he hard work they put into it.' *School staff, Newport, Waltham Forest*

'We never understood why the dates kept being pushed back. It all took longer than we expected it to.' *School staff, Bessemer, Southwark*

'We are engineers. Our expertise is not going into schools and explaining things.' *Borough Officer, Southwark*

Partnership-working exists along a spectrum – best practice examples show it has real power to engage and motivate all sides

At worst → *At best*

- School feels School Street imposed to suit council agenda/priorities, little sense of ownership
- Timescales feel rushed with not enough time to communicate with parents

- Low involvement of children
- Little trickle-down communication or enthusiasm to families
- School Street perceived as disorganised/confusing, an imposition

- Deadlines and responsibilities not clearly established, communication inconsistent
- School may feel dragged into activity outside core remit
- Council frustrated that school not promoting ongoing behaviour change

'We produced materials for the schools to disseminate, but really we rely on the schools to do the awareness raising.'
Borough Officer, Ealing

- School and council work as partners
- Open, transparent relationship, clear responsibilities and deadlines
- School is confident of council support if problem occurs
- School has a stake in scheme success

- School-led activities for children/parents
- School community appreciates benefits of scheme
- Sense of all working together for benefit of children
- School and council promote ongoing safe, active travel

Schools and Councils recommend familiarity with school processes and role of empathy and understanding of the additional work involved for Schools and individual staff

Shared responsibility for communicating the benefits prompts higher levels of engagement and support

Parents

- Using a mix of council/school generated communications eg school newsletter and mail-out announcements followed by specific information (eg maps provided by council) closer to launch
- Explanatory communications help reassure parents and answer questions that some have over impact on their journey
- Direct contact from school is most reassuring channel but can be very time-consuming for staff

Children

- Discussion and promotion of School Streets in classrooms/assemblies/school council etc applauded as a great way to cascade information to parents and to engage and excite children
- Children can be an effective channel for helping to counter objections or initial reservations from parents. They voice the benefits and are motivated by the underlying rationale and social benefits vs individual impact

Residents and local stakeholders

- Council-led approaches include face to face consultations; letters to local residents; presence at launch; social media; direct liaison with local stakeholders; signage
  - Important for residents to feedback concerns via email, website etc
  - Some schemes have 'experimental' basis, so formal consultation not required
- Baseline data important to evidence progress/changes made

'Our mantra was that it was to do with safety and air quality and that it would make It better for the children and really no one can argue with that can they.' *School staff, Newport, Waltham Forest*

'I volunteered really because my little one wanted to do it, she came home from school saying I had to help.' *Parent, Holy Family, Ealing*

'We used a digital platform to gather feedback, we could get both positive and negative comments without going through a formal consultation process.' *Borough Officer, Waltham Forest*

By working together, Schools and Councils can also better engage with their internal audiences and influential stakeholders

Staff and governors

- Positive about scheme, although staff want to understand impact on them
- Understanding develops over time
  - Eg at some schools staff movements were restricted until established that drivers are able to leave School Street area during operational hours

Cabinet/ward members

- Borough Officers report that good communication with Councillors is crucial
- Tend to be supportive as School Streets fit with Council priorities
- But Ward members can feel pressure
  - Local residents *resisting* School Streets – evidence required of need/value eg air quality, road safety stats
  - Local residents *pushing* for School Streets – useful for Borough Officers to refer to decision-making criteria eg STARS accreditation

Council teams

- Involvement from outset and ongoing liaison helps deliver successful roll-out and maintenance
  - Eg School liaison/engagement, highways/engineers, parking, streetlighting/CCTV

'We spent nearly a year believing that we couldn't exit during the times either, which we eventually found out is not the case!' *School staff, St Peter & Paul, Redbridge*

'It's really important to get as much evidence as you can that might help your case. Anything you can present to the Cabinet Member, especially when it moves to being a permanent order.' *Borough Officer, Southwark*

'It has involved an enormous amount of cooperation between different people at the Council and beyond.' *Borough Officer, Haringey*

A flexible approach to hours of operation and school holidays is important for ensuring local schemes suit local needs

Hours of operation

Schools chose hours to suit their own schedule
Tweaks often made after trial period

- Balance between:
  - Impact on local community…
  - And deterring parents from arriving early/late to avoid restrictions
- Tend to be:
  - 60-75 minutes in total - start/finish 15-30 minutes either side of gates opening/closing

- Some parents want hours to include breakfast/after-school etc
- But schools wary of negative impact on local community

'We didn't want to make life harder for those living in the area.' *School staff, Newport, Waltham Forest*

Hours need to be kept under review to ensure balance of traffic prevention with minimal impact

School holidays

Parents/residents unsure whether School Streets operate during school holidays (and lockdowns)

- Some assume/have read that restrictions do not operate during holidays
- But road signage not clear/makes no reference
- Particularly confusing when moving from manned barriers (in operation when schools fully open) to ANPR enforcement

'If I didn't have kids, I wouldn't know when the terms are. I think it's up to the council to tell the resident.' *Parent, Rokesley, Haringey*

Requires communication of operating dates to local residents, especially after Summer
Unclear if responsibility of school or Council

Each school is different therefore getting the enforcement approach right can take time and involve trial and error

ANPR

- Simple, straightforward enforcement
  - Borough Officers feel ANPR shows commitment to making School Street work
  - Once set up requires little involvement from schools or councils
  - Allows for monitoring around compliance

- Some Councils wary of schemes requiring school staff/parental involvement
  - Inherently riskier, less sustainable

- However, expense means some councils are wary and short supply of CCTV cameras have caused delays
- ANPR systems not always working as well as parents/staff would like

'It is more costly but we wanted to ensure maximum impact.' *Borough Officer, Waltham Forest*

Dependent on effective signage to deter traffic, and this not always felt to be delivered on

Mobile barriers, collapsible bollards etc

- 'Temporary' solution fits with Experimental Traffic order (ETO)
- Councils also cautious about investing immediately in ANPR
  - Especially for first School Streets

- Staff/volunteer involvement is challenging to sustain in long-term, so moving to ANPR is a relief
  - Large commitment/drain on resources
  - Unpleasant experience due to aggressive drivers, cold/dark weather etc

- Although manning barriers by staff/parent volunteers/children has contributed to 'community feel' around School Street

'As it was still a trial we didn't want to install anything permanent or too expensive.' *Borough Officer, Southwark*

Value in coming together to launch School Street as a community, but likely unfeasible in the long term

Schools and parents cite improvements needed to ANPR signage which must be well-positioned, visible and instantly understood

Badly positioned

- Drivers commit to turning into road before aware of restrictions
- Leading to dangerous U-turns
- Or signs being completely missed, drivers having to continue

Improvements:
- Prior warning on approach to School Street
- Broader awareness-raising of School Street areas locally

'The fact that people are driving through unwittingly shows the signage really isn't doing its job.' *Parent, Rokesley, Haringey*

Recessive

- Signs not standing out in midst of other signage
- Can even feel temporary

Improvements:
- Road markings (eg like Congestion Charge Zone)
- Use of children's art?

'All the signage looks the same, it needs to stand out more.' *School staff, St Peter & Paul, Redbridge*

Too much info

- Text heavy, can't take in details when driving
- Impossible to know at glance whether School Street operating or not

Improvements:
- Flashing lights when operating
- Awareness-raising across general population; inclusion in sat navs

'It needs to be jumping out at you so that you can't miss it. We're not trying to catch people out.' *School staff, Holy Family, Ealing*

Parents and staff fear non-resident traffic still present within School Street – assumption drivers unaware of scheme
Point of ANPR controls is seen as deterring traffic rather than to 'catch drivers out'/fine them

Schools and Councils say exemptions need careful handling and must strike a balance between residents' needs and scheme

Residents always offered exemption, but different approaches adopted for other driver categories

- Exemptions usually based on resident parking permits
- Exemptions also apply to:
  - Registered carers, blue badge drivers
  - In some boroughs also local businesses and deliveries
  - Some temporary exemptions during lockdown for deliveries/support to vulnerable residents

- Other categories/exemptions in individual Councils/schools:
  - Car sharing clubs – still in development
  - Coach company taking children to regular swimming
  - Question: what if eg emergency plumber needed?

Exemption policy for many Councils is still a work in progress
Achieving a fair, pragmatic system often more complex than anticipated

In non-ANPR areas system is more flexible

- Lower residential areas so simpler approach to resident exemptions possible:
  - Hard copy permits issued, checked at barriers
  - And in time, regular drivers are recognised

- Other drivers at discretion of those on barriers
  - Stressful responsibility for parent volunteers

- Switch to ANPR welcomed for clarity
  - Although community has to adapt to more rigid approach

'I feel we're still in the process of fine-tuning our exemptions. We want our decisions to be made in a clear and fair way.' *Borough Officer, Waltham Forest*

'Parents had to speak to people and decide whether to let them through or not and some really didn't like being in that position.' *School staff, Holy Family, Ealing*

Views on staff exemptions vary but all agree that clarity at outset works best

Approach 1: In principle

Some schools and some Councils:
- Staff should set an example and therefore not be exempt

In practice

- Most schools happy to comply and adapt
  - Eg Support Staff arrive at school earlier
  - Challenging for federated schools if staff working across sites
- Some reports of staff being fined eg after meeting/training off-site
  - Need to get used to restrictions
  - But additional burden for teachers in an already stressful role
- Schools embarrassed when visitors are fined, so have had to learn to warn of restrictions
- Realisation that it is OK to drive out during operational hours has made things much easier

'If we are genuine in our reasoning about reducing traffic then staff shouldn't be exempt.' *School staff, St Peter & Paul, Redbridge*

Approach 2: In principle

'The exemption gives them a bit of a buffer. I don't want them to get a fine.' *School staff, Newport, Waltham Forest*

Some Schools
- Staff play a vital role, don't always live in local community
  - Should be able to drive to work without being fined
  - Parking at a distance can raise safety concerns

Some Councils
- Reasonable to offer exemptions to (some) staff as with other organisations/businesses within the School Street

In practice

- Some councils automatically provide X% of staff with exemptions; some expect staff to apply
- Welcome flexibility and acknowledgement that staff need to access their place of work
- Schools point out exemptions only used to cover exceptional circumstances rather than as routine practice
  - Eg if staff member held up, has appointment off-site etc

Upfront conversation between school and Council at outset is important to understand expectations and needs

Evidence-gathering and evaluation practices are hard to manage, and Councils and schools do what they can

Borough Officers conscious of need to gather evidence to:

- Demonstrate impact
- Counter objections
- Help with planning of future School Streets

However, evidence-gathering is complex, time-consuming and expensive

'We had no data to justify why we did it.' *Borough Officer, Ealing*

- PCN data can be used to help show level of compliance
- Some Councils have done or plan to do pre and post traffic counts
  - Although some realise they have already missed boat on this
- Schools are encouraged to run annual 'hands-up' surveys – although these don't seem to be consistently carried out
  - One school recorded 20% increase in walking to school, with 92% of the school now walking
- No air quality measuring had taken place at these schools, although some councils have done this at other schools in their patch
  - Borough Officers report air quality tests are expensive and limited by number of monitors they have access to

Behaviour Change

Parents widely appreciate the idea of their School Street but changing behaviour can be complex and challenging

'Once it was up and running it was clear that the vast majority of parents did support it.' *School staff, Holy Family, Ealing*

The need to drive, park and actively travel final part of journey is problematic

- Feel forced into making a change that does not suit them or their family
- Can feel unsupported and that their needs/circumstances are not recognised

'I have no choice but to drive.' *Parent, Newport, Waltham Forest*

Accept the need to park and actively travel final part of journey

- Getting used to the idea and working out new routine are enablers here

'I think there's lots of people who walk now because it's just not worth it to drive, it actually takes them longer.' *School staff, Bessemer, Southwark*

More likely to travel actively to school from home and welcome this

- Very willing to change behaviour
- Welcome a safer, more active and pleasant school run

'I'm not so fearful of a car appearing out of nowhere, it's so much easier.' *Parent, Gordon, Redbridge*

Have always actively travelled to school but now safer, more pleasant

- Haven't changed existing behaviour
- Quality of journey to school has improved
- More comfortable with older children making journey independently

'The school run is so much more manageable.' *Parent, Holy Family, Ealing*

There is a belief that some school runs still need to be by car

Two main reasons for using car

Distance from school

Religious schools - wider catchment

Areas where children less likely to attend local schools (over/under subscribed, high mobility)

If moved house and don't want to disrupt child's education

If travelling beyond school

Parents going on to/coming back from work

Going on to after-school activities

'The Council gave us this school further away, it wasn't our first choice and then they're telling us we can't drive there. How do they expect us to get there? *Parent, Newport, Waltham Forest*

Other factors increase likelihood of car use (influence family choices in different ways)

Multiple children

Younger children

Disabilities/illness

Other carers doing school run eg grandparents

- Families who come by car can feel unfairly targeted
  - Journey is harder, and takes more time
  - Parking on periphery of School Street is often difficult eg due to resident parking
  - Increase in stress

'I'm a busy mum, I often take my niece and nephew as well and you can only hold 2 hands when you cross the road.' *Parent, Gordon, Redbridge*

These parents appear to be supportive of School Street and want it to succeed but need support/help to:

- Complete final stages of their journey safely
- Be open to behaviour change and consideration of alternative modes of travel when possible

eg come by bus once a month, park further away as children get older etc

Ongoing communication, management and development can help support individuals and encourage behaviour change

Infrastructure (Councils)

- Provide/communicate parking, beyond immediately adjacent streets
- Ensure safe and easy access routes into School Street for those travelling actively from locations outside
    - Eg pedestrian crossings, width of pavements, walking/scootering routes

Engagement with school community (Schools)

- Continued reminders of purpose/impact of School Street eg
    - Positive achievements, eg how it 'used to be'
    - Reminder of operational hours
    - Information for new families joining school

'There is wider work to be done beyond the SS so that people don't feel like they're trapped on the other side.' *Parent, Rokesley, Haringey*

'If you were new here you would have no idea. You are told about it when you do the induction to the school, but I think there's confusion about what it is.' *Parent, Bessemer, Southwark*

'It's good to give them the option to park on another road. Working parents may need to drive, not everyone can walk or cycle…you have to be mindful that some will drive and give them options to park.' *Parent, Holy Family, Ealing*

'We do have a part to play, we have to continue to remind parents not to park badly.' *School staff, St Peter & Paul, Redbridge*

Schools and Councils recommend iterative approaches and integration with wider active travel or road safety initiatives

Review and further development (Schools and Councils)

- Review after initial period, to fine-tune hours of operation, layout, exemption policy etc
- Ensure School Street remains effective, still supported by communities eg shift in catchment could impact feasibility
- Environmental enhancement to support behaviour change and School Street as 'special area'
    - eg signage designed by children, planters, street furniture, bike parking

Active travel and behaviour change initiatives (Schools and Councils)

- Councils expect continued engagement by schools eg cycle training, competitions/certificates etc
- Some Borough Officers concerned School Streets treated as 'car free', families walking in road
- Want to see schools doing more to remind community that cars may still be present eg road safety assemblies

'I think our school community is getting more transient, there's less stability because of the pandemic and Brexit and if families are coming from a wider area, that will make it more challenging.' *School staff, St Peter & Paul, Redbridge*

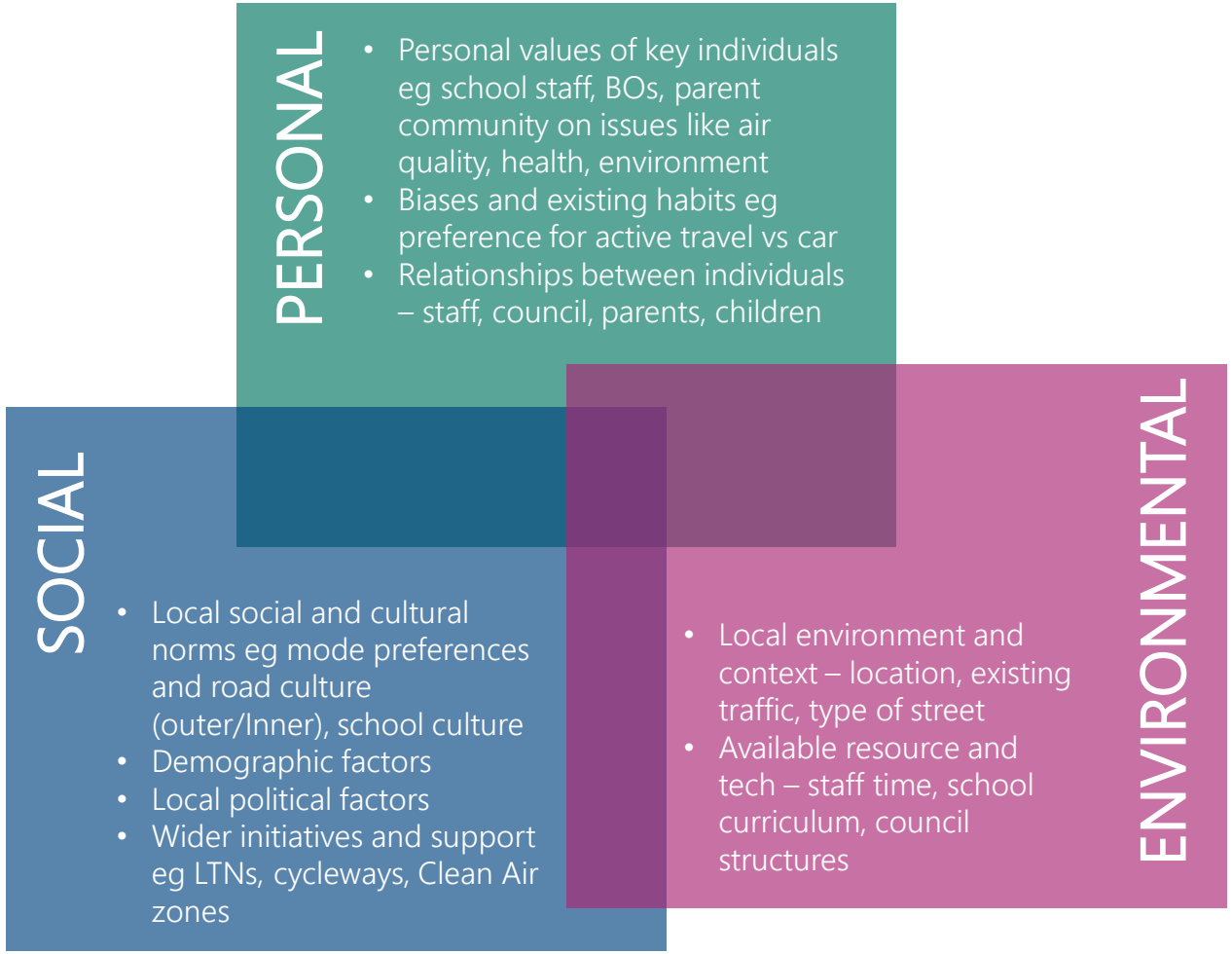
'This is the school's responsibility. It's up to the school to make sure families are still adhering to road safety." *Borough Officer, Ealing*

'I'd hope in the future we can put a bit more into making the environment attractive.' *Borough Officer, Haringey*

'Going into the future I'd like to see more behaviour change work at the school.' *Borough Officer, Waltham Forest*

Summary and Future Considerations

A mix of social, personal and environmental factors can all contribute to making School Streets work well



School Streets aren't operating in a vacuum – they require people to adapt and change which takes time and is hard

Parents

- School run is stressful time of day – busy, time-pressured, many things to remember
- Especially if younger/multiple children
- School Street adds level of complication:
  - Need to remember
  - Force a change to routine: working out timings, where to park, how to access School Street area
- For some, may involve cascading info to nannies/family members doing school run and ensuring they understand arrangements

Schools

- Busy environments, staff pulled in multiple directions
- Managing traffic seen by some as 'additional' to their core role
- Launching and embedding School Street takes time, resource, planning to get right
- And can throw up unexpected stresses and tasks – eg logistics of food deliveries, swimming bus; ongoing activities to support and enable active travel; renegotiating hours of support staff

Councils

- Part of a complex and quite fragmented organisational structure
- School Street requires liaison between different teams, ideally from outset – may not be used to working together
- More time and resource heavy than many expected – including gathering baseline evidence, dealing with objections
- Understanding of school context and ability to manage relationship with school are crucial
- School Streets benefit from ongoing review and management by Council – not always planned for

'Because of the busyness of the school, I just didn't push through with it. There's always something to do, but actually it was very easy and I probably over-complicated it before we did it.' *School staff, Newport, Waltham Forest*

'There was no real guidance on how we should be delivering. We had to come up with our own guidance and so we overlooked an issue with Highways that meant there was a delay to the scheme.' *Borough Officer, Ealing*

Acknowledging and understanding the types of adjustment/challenge and compromise key audiences go through could help ensure better engagement and communication

Context and culture matter – no two schools, streets or areas are the same

Flexible and tailored approaches work best to accommodate local contexts and culture

Existing engagement with active travel/air quality initiatives

- At council, school or parent level
- Extent to which behaviour change initiatives have already made a difference, started school community on journey to more active travel
- Affects awareness/levels of buy-in around the topic
- Age range of children at school also impacts: families with older children better placed to respond positively to active travel initiatives

Original rationale for the School Street

- Can help with bringing whole school community on board
  - Eg recent traffic accident
  - If traffic problems caused by 'external' issue rather than parents eg commuter cut-through
- Whereas if School Streets feel more targeted at 'other parents' communication has to be carefully handled

Travel culture of local area

- Outer boroughs can feel more car-oriented (families and staff)
- Also driven by catchment area of school

Consensus on key improvements suggests shared vision and motivation to see School Streets succeed – locally and city-wide

Engaging whole school community

- Good communication between Borough Officer and school will help to build sense of control and ownership
- Involving children will help them understand and be excited about the School Street
- And will help enthusiasm and commitment trickle down to families
- Consider area surrounding School Street to ensure there are safe routes to facilitate active travel

'I think the school could be doing more to get the children involved designing posters and fliers and through assemblies and homework. This would help with whole family engagement and help them understand why it's being done.' *Parent, Rokesley, Haringey*

Supporting those who have to drive to make right choices

- Some school runs will always be made by car
- Drivers may be positive about School Street, but want help so they can park safely and appropriately,
- Eg identify parking spots, suggest walking/scootering routes with estimated journey times, encourage alternative transport when possible

'If I lived nearby I would walk or cycle. I have no choice but to drive and every day I worry about whether getting a ticket.. I'm always rushing my children. I just want to be able to park somewhere safe.' *Parent, Newport, Waltham Forest*

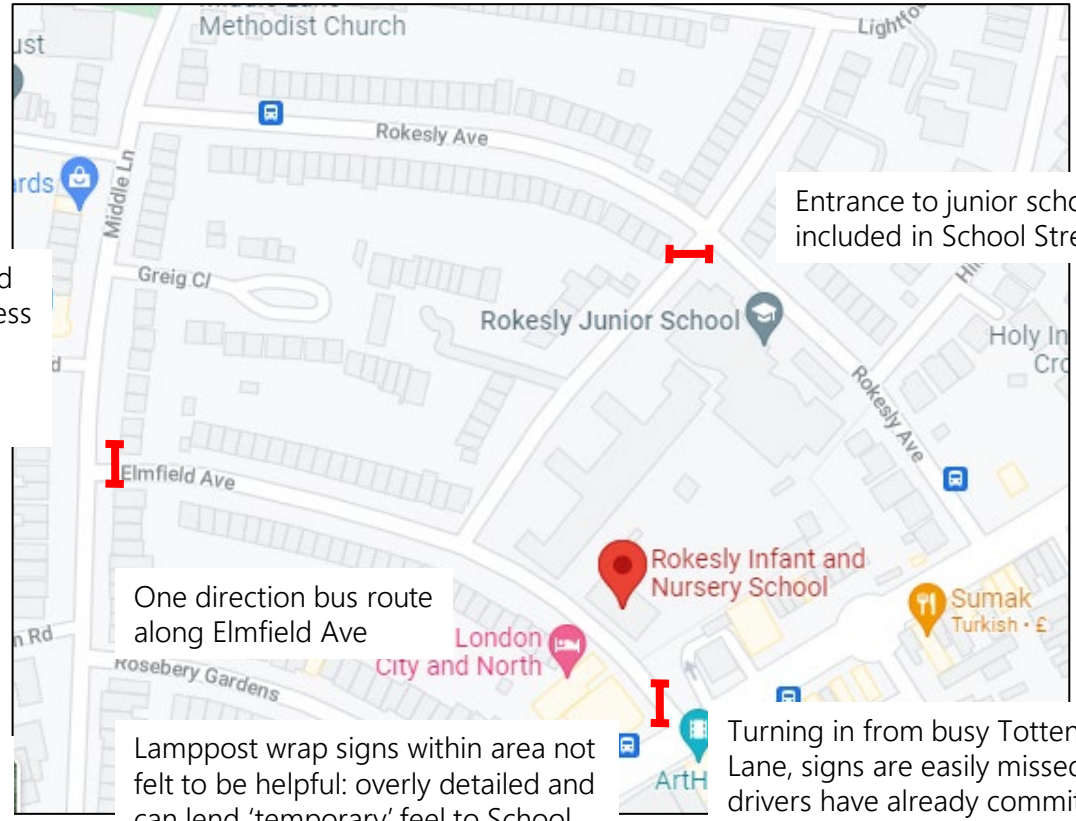
Raising awareness across wider community

- Keeping local residents on board – within and adjacent to School Street – clear and transparent communication essential
- Better signage so that drivers are more aware of School Street as they approach and conscious of when they're in operation
- Clearer communication to residents about when School Streets are operating
- Promoting existence of School Streets at national and local level will help drivers understand what they are when they see them

'My mum keeps being caught out by it, which isn't really the intention. People should know when it is in operation and not go in.' *Parent, Rokesley, Haringey*

Appendix: School Specifics

Haringey: Rokesly Juniors and Rokesly Infant and Nursery Schools



Middle Lane is busy and difficult to cross to access School Street. Could more pedestrian crossings be provided?

Entrance to junior school not included in School Street.

One direction bus route along Elmfield Ave

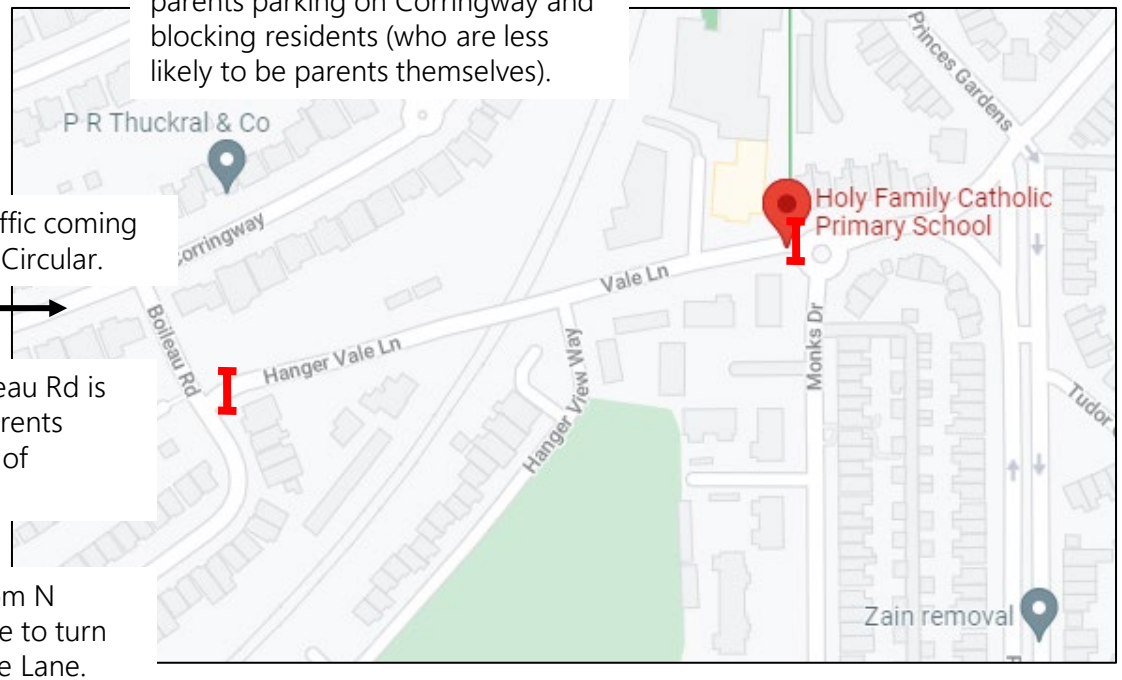
Surrounding roads are primarily (all?) resident parking creating issues for parents who drive.

Lamppost wrap signs within area not felt to be helpful: overly detailed and can lend 'temporary' feel to School Street scheme.

Turning in from busy Tottenham Lane, signs are easily missed, and/or drivers have already committed to turn before seeing signs.
Staff, parents and Borough Officer suggest increased visibility of School Street via more prominent signs, street furniture, physical barriers.

Ealing: Holy Family Primary School

Headteacher concerned about parents parking on Corringway and blocking residents (who are less likely to be parents themselves).



Commuter traffic coming in from North Circular.

Surgery on Boileau Rd is experiencing parents parking in front of entrance.

Cars coming from N Circular continue to turn into Hanger Vale Lane. Warnings of School Street on approach eg Corringway, Boileau Rd would help to prevent this.

More space for parents to park on Monks Drive and Princes Gardens, and these streets more likely to have parents as residents.
Parents still need to be reminded to park considerately (via school newsletter).

Redbridge: St Peter & Paul's School and Gordon School

Accessing the School Street area by bicycle '*still quite stressful, the stress has just been taken away for the last 1/3 of my journey.*'

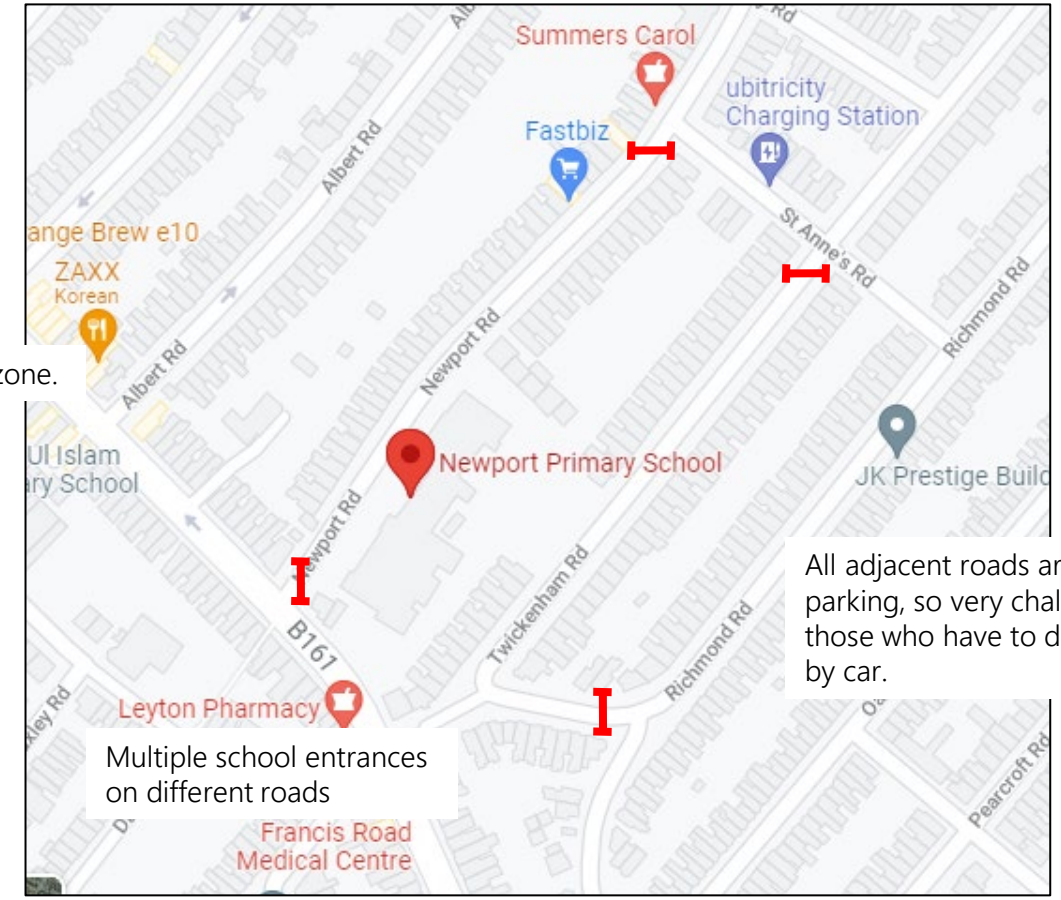
Sunnyside and other adjacent roads have got busier so *'the journey is still nerve-wracking.'* (parent)

School Street does not seem to be contiguous at corner of Golfe and Gordon Rd – PCNs given when driving from one road to the other during School Street hours of operation.

Gordon School belongs to federation. Teachers moving between sites have been fined.

Waltham Forest: Newport Primary School

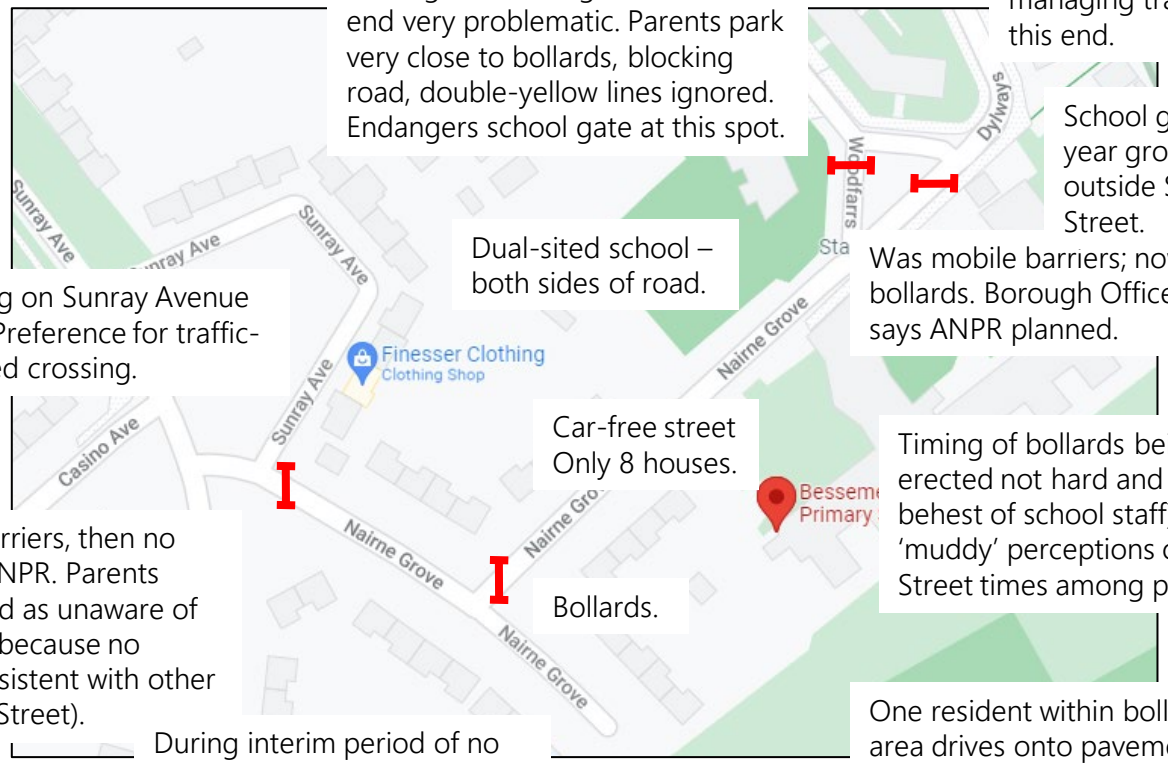
Pedestrianised zone.



All adjacent roads are resident parking, so very challenging for those who have to do school run by car.

Multiple school entrances on different roads

Southwark: Bessemer Grange Primary School



Parking and turning at bollards end very problematic. Parents park very close to bollards, blocking road, double-yellow lines ignored. Endangers school gate at this spot.

Staff still involved in managing traffic at this end.

School gate for 2 year groups falls outside School Street.

Dual-sited school – both sides of road.

Was mobile barriers; now bollards. Borough Officer says ANPR planned.

Zebra crossing on Sunray Avenue is well-used. Preference for traffic-light controlled crossing.

Car-free street
Only 8 houses.

Timing of bollards being erected not hard and fast (at behest of school staff); can 'muddy' perceptions of School Street times among parents.

Was mobile barriers, then no control, now ANPR. Parents have been fined as unaware of these controls because no bollards (inconsistent with other end of School Street).

Bollards.

One resident within bollards area drives onto pavement and squeezes past to exit. Others come to school to ask staff to put bollards down (occasional).

During interim period of no control Nairne Grove cul-de-sac very congested – now much improved.

Resident-only parking 12-2 on school road and adjacent roads further confuses re times and parameters of School Street. Is this all part of same scheme?

Naomi.Boal@2cv.com
Ali.Percy@2cv.com
Martha.Sitwell@2cv.com

TRANSPORT FOR LONDON