

Safe Routes to School

Communications Toolkit:

How to help your school community engage with SRTS

Who are we?

The Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Programme is designed to encourage as many pupils and students as possible in primary and post-primary schools to walk, wheel and cycle.

The programme launched in March 2021 and all schools in Ireland were invited to apply to take part. The programme is an initiative of the Department of Transport and supported by the Department of Education. It is operated by An Taisce in partnership with the National Transport Authority (NTA) and local authorities.

The Safe Routes to School programme aims to:

1. To provide “front of school” treatments which will enhance access to school grounds and create a safe space for students at the front of school.
2. To accelerate the delivery of walking, cycling, and wheeling infrastructure on key access routes to schools.
3. To expand the amount of cycle and scooter parking available at schools.

How to use the Communications Toolkit

The SRTS Communications Toolkit serves to provide some context to principals and school communities about the programme and how to engage with it once accepted onto an active round. It also provides useful resources which can be shared throughout the process by principals. The resources which will be shared over time include guidance on key terms used, an introduction to how the public consultation phase works and tips on how to engage with new infrastructure. This guidance outlines the benefits of the programme and active travel, highlights examples of our work, and details the key steps involved.

While SRTS delivers the concept ideas and your local authority manages the design process, engagement with the school and the wider community is invaluable to the progress made and effectiveness of the infrastructure delivered. The process is collaborative by nature, putting safety and sustainability first, so communicating effectively is paramount. Page two can be downloaded separately to be shared with your school community.



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website
here**

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to our
newsletter
here**

Benefits of the SRTS Programme

How walking, wheeling and cycling to school is better for everyone

Over half of primary school children in Ireland are driven to school, often for very short trips. Walking, wheeling or cycling even part of the way makes a real difference to health, safety, and the environment around the school gate.

Healthier Bodies and Minds

- Active travel counts towards the 60 minutes of daily exercise children need
- Walking, wheeling or cycling builds strong heart and muscle health from an early age
- Fresh air and movement improve mood, alertness, and concentration in class
- Active Travel builds habits for a healthier, more active lifestyle for life

Cleaner Air, Less Carbon

- Cars produce on average 106g of CO₂ per km driven
- School gates become traffic and pollution hotspots at drop-off and pick-up
- Children's lungs are still developing and are more sensitive to traffic fumes
- Even short school run trips add up to a large amount of emissions over a year
- Every walked, wheeled or cycled trip is one less car idling outside the school

Less Pollution

- Tyre wear from cars and braking is a major, often overlooked, source of microplastics
- These tiny particles settle on roads and pavements right where children walk and play
- Fewer car journeys means less tyre and brake dust in the air children breathe
- Walking and cycling produce no exhaust or tyre particle pollution at all

Social and Wellbeing Boost

- Walking to school is a chance to chat, play and build friendships along the way
- It builds children's independence and confidence in their local area
- It creates a stronger sense of community among families and neighbours
- It gives parents and children valuable time together before the school day starts



A Safer School Gate for Everyone

- Fewer cars means less congestion, less rushing and improved road safety at the gate
- Idling engines outside school creates pollution right beside children, please switch off engines when stopped
- Try Park and Stride, park a short walk away and complete the journey on foot

Examples of our work

Infrastructure has been implemented at over 180 schools around Ireland since 2021. Here are some examples of solutions which could be appropriate for your school too.

School Zones



School Streets



Permeability Links

Improved Crossings



Increased Visibility



Park and Stride Connections

Key Steps in the Programme

SRTS takes schools from initial acceptance onto the programme all the way through to Delivery. Your local authority takes on a number of roles within the process and is ultimately responsible for the final design. Navigate through this section as you progress through the steps.

1. EOI, Selection & Round Announcement

By this point, your school has been accepted onto the SRTS programme. The school community may be informed via email but no action is needed from them until the Travel Survey.

2. Travel Survey

Please note: this step does not apply to school on Higher-Speed Rural Roads. This refers to schools that are located on 60-100km/h roads.

Your SRTS Infrastructure Officer (IO) will share a digital link to the Travel survey with you for onward circulation to your school community. The data collected gives us an indication of student travel habits, how far students are traveling and their perception of safety at the front of school. The survey is designed to be completed by parents/guardians as representatives of the students and should take 5-10 minutes to complete. The information gathered is key to our work and allows IOs to make informed and detailed recommendations to the local authority.

3. Site Visit and FOS Assessment

The IO assigned to your school will conduct a site visit and a Front of School Assessment after the travel survey is completed. They will be present for drop-off and/or pick-up times in order to observe pedestrian, cyclist and vehicle movements as well as any issues that arise at the busier times of the day.

4. Route Audits

IOs assess the key routes that students take on their way to school based on data collected in the travel survey. This will provide us with information regarding any current barriers to students travelling to school and identify opportunities for improvement and connection to more populated areas or to Park and Stride locations.

5. Draft Delivery Plan

The Draft Delivery Plan (DDP) is a report that combines travel survey data, front of school assessments, route audits, and local knowledge. This data shapes concept ideas to improve safety at the front of school and supports those that walk, wheel and cycle to and from school.

6. Stakeholder Engagement Meeting

The stakeholder engagement meeting is an opportunity for IOs, principals, school representatives, local authority staff and key stakeholders to meet and discuss the draft delivery plan. The IO presents the findings of the draft delivery plan to the group and explains the proposed infrastructure interventions. Those in attendance are invited to comment on the proposals and put forward suggested revisions for consideration.

7. Outline Delivery Plan

The Outline Delivery Plan (ODP) is the final deliverable of the IO. This report includes all information provided in the DDP and any modifications that may arise from the stakeholder engagement meeting. This report feeds directly into design development which is progressed by the local authority.

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8. Project Delivery

The local authority progresses the project in accordance with the Project Approval Guidelines which is a framework to ensure the successful delivery and oversight of capital infrastructure projects funded by the NTA. The local authority progresses concept development and preliminary design in preparation for statutory processes.

9. Statutory Process

Following the completion of preliminary design the local authority will lead the public consultation phase of the SRTS scheme. Public consultation can be in the form of a Part 8 or a Section 38 planning application, both of which are an opportunity for the public and the school community to observe the proposals and make a submission to the local authority. We encourage the school community to make submissions in support of the works and help this process by sending communications materials such as a leaflet outlining the proposals and a link to the online consultation portal. Dependent on the outcome of statutory processes phase, the scheme may proceed to detailed design and procurement phase.

10. Construction

Ideally projects are completed over the summer months when schools are closed however, projects may be delivered during the school year and/or in phases dependent on the capacity of the local authority. Should works progress during the school year student and school community movements as well as safety will be prioritised while obstructions will be minimised. SRTS issues targeted leaflets throughout project delivery, covering initial works through to the return to school. These leaflets may explain temporary route changes during construction and outline how to safely use the new road layout. Our goal is to help families, students, and staff adapt their travel routines and benefit from a safer school frontage.

11. Delivery/Launch

Once the works have been completed, your school or local authority may want to hold an official launch. Usually the school hosts the school community, representatives from the local authority, An Taisce, the National Transport Authority and in some cases The Department of Transport.

12. Follow-on Survey

Please note: this step does not apply to schools on Higher-Speed Rural Roads. This refers to schools that are located on 80-100km/h roads.

After works have been completed, the school will be asked to complete a Follow-on Survey, which is in the form of an online questionnaire (similar to the Travel Survey) which is sent to parents/guardians. It shows how mode share (how the school community travels to school) has changed before and after works are delivered. It is vital for our continued improvement of the programme that parents and guardians complete the survey. Students may also be asked to take part in focus groups. These will gauge the effectiveness of the improvements from the students point of view and aim to offer insights into what students value in terms of their route and the front of school environment.