

# BANNERDALE ROAD SCHOOL STREETS PILOT

EVALUATION SUMMARY, SEPTEMBER 2020

SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL AND ROAD SAFETY (STARS) GROUP

HOLT HOUSE AND CARTERKNOWLE SCHOOLS FEDERATION



**WHAT WE WANT:** For our children to have safe, healthy streets around our schools: clean air to breathe, safe spaces to play and be active going to and from school.

**WHY:** Polluted air is bad for children's health: it can affect their immune system, lung development and the risk of developing asthma, other diseases and lung infections. Safe spaces for playing and being together are important for their development and mental wellbeing.

**THE ISSUE:** Our schools are near busy roads and can get parked up: this can lead to air pollution and make travelling to school feel unsafe. We want our children to be able to reclaim the streets around our schools: to enjoy walking, scooting or cycling and for our wider communities to benefit from cleaner air and a space to interact.

**WHAT WE DID:** We worked with Sheffield City Council to pilot a 'School Streets' scheme, involving closing Bannerdale Road to most vehicles from 8:15am-9:15am and 2:45pm-3:45pm during 18-22 November 2019 (Road Safety Week). We evaluated the pilot in different ways: we asked parents, children and residents for their views; monitored views on social media; organised traffic counts and worked with the Urban Flows Observatory (University of Sheffield) to monitor air quality in the school grounds.



## WHAT WE LEARNT



### 1. TAKE ADVANTAGE OF LOCAL SUPPORT FOR SAFE AND HEALTHY SCHOOL STREETS

There is support locally for action to create safe and healthy 'School Streets', including the closure of Bannerdale Road during school drop-off and pick-up. There is also enthusiasm for getting involved in monitoring impacts of action to improve the environment around our schools. This support could be mobilised in future: we have learnt it is important to reach out, listen and discuss with different stakeholders to co-develop plans and monitor together. Involving children is essential.



### 2. INVOLVE DIFFERENT PEOPLE AND WORK TOGETHER (EXPECT TEETHING PROBLEMS!)

Road closures are not simple to implement given the resources needed to plan and supervise them. The 'School Streets' pilot was only possible through concerted community action centred around the schools (e.g. school/family support to develop promotional materials, collect data, liaise with Council), and with Council support and investment (e.g. to plan, put up and control barriers, visible support during the closure). There were issues (e.g. drivers not following closure rules/not knowing about them, traffic flows changing in adjacent streets): these are 'to be expected' and would need active monitoring and addressing in future initiatives.



### 3. CREATE A NEW COMMUNITY SPACE WITH MANY POTENTIAL OUTCOMES

The 'School Streets' road closure created a new, celebrated space for children and families: to play, have fun, interact, be active, feel safe and be independent. A short pilot is not long enough for conclusive evidence on outcomes but it is clear there can be many potential outcomes: on road safety/traffic/driving, air quality, children's wellbeing (e.g. physical activity, independence, safety). There may also be community-wellbeing outcomes related to social interaction (e.g. sense of community/belonging). A longer pilot could gather more data and have longer-term impacts on people (e.g. driving behaviours).



### 4. ADDRESS THE COMPLEX AIR QUALITY PROBLEM THROUGH SCHOOL AND COUNCIL LEADERSHIP AND ENGAGE PEOPLE IN DISCUSSING DIFFERENT SOLUTIONS

It is not clear how the road closure affected air quality around our schools: data was not collected for long enough (nor indoors); a high pressure system episode affected particle pollution during the pilot; and effects of displaced traffic along Carterknowle Road (possibly going slower and idling) on air pollution are unclear. Our air quality data did however show a persistent and complex air quality problem in the area, particularly relating to the harmful pollutants PM<sub>2.5</sub> and NO<sub>2</sub>. Many children already walk, scoot or cycle to school. Air quality locally is therefore affected by issues like parking, idling, household woodburning and private cars 'travelling through'. Because these are complex to change, future action must involve leadership by the Council as well as within our school communities: with transport planners, public health, parking teams, teachers, parents, children all involved. Options include:

- Longer road closure (+ improve traffic lights/flow on adjacent roads)
- Citizen science/participatory research to get children/communities involved
- Make Bannerdale Road one-way (+ pavement widening) to improve traffic flow and create space for active travel or parking
- Resident-only parking to reduce school-related parking/engine idling
- Action on use of home stoves
- More enforcement of engine idling restrictions



### 5. TAKE INTEGRATED ACTION TO CREATE SAFE AND HEALTHY 'SCHOOL STREETS': IT IS NEEDED NOW MORE THAN EVER IN THE CITY IN A TIME OF COVID-19

We want all Sheffield communities to have the resources to take action to create safe and healthy 'School Streets'. This is more important than ever as we collectively deal with COVID-19: air pollution may be an environmental risk factor for more severe disease and creating spaces to interact in physically distanced ways is one way to help manage risk. All children and families should have opportunities to access healthy 'School Streets'. We need integrated neighbourhood action to make this a reality.