**BLS Brief: School Streets**

A briefing note by Bromley Living Streets, published 16 June 2022

*Key points:*

1. Agenda item 12f in the 21/6/22 Environment meeting is a review of school streets which recommends the portfolio holder agrees that school streets should not be actively rolled out across Bromley Borough. The report is rather selective when it comes to setting out context and considerations that should go into this decision. This brief aims to fill gaps, to provide committee members with a fuller picture.
2. All school streets trialled in Bromley Borough relied on marshals and physical barriers, and paragraph 3.9 of the report notes “*If ANPR camera enforcement was available in Bromley it is possible that a number of School Streets would have remained active and other schools would want to join the scheme*.” Every school street in Lewisham and Hackney relies on ANPR camera enforcement, and so an important question to ask is why ANPR for enforcing Moving Traffic Contraventions at School Streets is not currently a Bromley policy.
3. Relevant context missing from the report includes:
   1. All Bromley schools exceed the World Health Organisation (WHO) guideline for nitrogen dioxide (NO2).
   2. Children are at most risk of dangers of air pollution, and 60% of their pollution intake is during school run and breaks. 25% of cars driving at peak times are doing the school run.
   3. There are now more than 500 school streets across London.

*Background and detail:*

Children need to breathe clean air. Air pollution permanently damages kids’ bodies, stunting lung development and risking a lifetime of ill-health. Air pollution contributes to thousands of early deaths every year. Children are at most risk of the dangers of air pollution due to a number of factors: they have smaller lung capacity than adults, but breathe faster and more deeply. They spend more time outdoors than adults and are closer to car exhausts. The Royal College of Physicians say [air pollution is contributing to about 40,000 deaths a year in the UK](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-35629034).

According to the report “[Air Quality Information for Public Health Professionals – London Borough of Bromley](https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/bromley_air_quality_for_public_health_professionals.pdf)” published by GLA in February 2022, 57 schools in Bromley exceed the interim WHO guideline of 10µg/m3 for PM2.5, and all schools exceed the WHO guideline of 10µg/m3 for Nitrogen Dioxide (NO2). NO2 is a pollutant that is often taken as a proxy for all air pollutants. “PM2.5”, or particulate matter, is the technical term for tiny particles that are inhaled and can end up in organs. These particles can include dust, soot, organic chemicals and metals.

School Streets are temporary road closures around schools at drop-off and pick-up times. By reducing traffic around schools, pollution decreases.

It is a year since a coroner called for a change in the law after air pollution led to the death of a nine-year-old girl. Ella Adoo-Kissi-Debrah, who lived in Lewisham near the South Circular Road, died in 2013. An inquest found air pollution “made a material contribution” to her death.

Complaints, traffic displacement and claims of inconvenience are inevitable short-term responses to interventions that require behaviour change. Opinion surveys conducted too soon don’t allow enough time for people to make the small adjustments needed to make a scheme successful, and evidence indicates little or no increase in traffic elsewhere in the long-term. (For evidence of this, see [*Gear Change: one-year-on review*](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gear-change-one-year-on-review)(Department of Transport, 2021)

*Annotated bibliography:*

Literature review on School Streets, focused in particular on whether any traffic displacement brought about by schemes was associated with negative safety issues in surrounding streets. <https://www.napier.ac.uk/~/media/images/news/school-street-closures/school-streets-closure-traffic-displacement-literature-review-final2.pdf>

Success of School Streets in London - stats from other boroughs who have done this. <https://www.london.gov.uk/press-releases/mayoral/mayor-hails-success-of-schools-streets-programme>

Useful stuff in here about the reality of introducing School Streets in Croydon - displacement didn’t really happen, residents and parents in favour etc. <https://democracy.croydon.gov.uk/documents/s15143/TMAC_20190502_School%20Streets_final.pdf>

Global report on School Streets. <https://cleancitiescampaign.org/2022/05/03/school-streets-to-shape-child-friendly-cities/>

Majority of parents want to walk and cycle with their kids to school - polling done in May. <https://airqualitynews.com/2022/05/06/school-run-accounts-for-nearly-30-of-morning-traffic-in-london/>

This report on the potential for School Streets. <https://www.wearepossible.org/latest-news/school-streets-reducing-childrens-exposure-to-toxic-air-and-road-danger>

Hackney toolkit. <https://www.transportxtra.com/publications/parking-review/news/68587/hackney-school-streets-toolkit-d/>