Pollution

Parents face fines for driving children to school in push to curb pollution

https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/sep/06/parents-face-fines-for-driving-children-to-school-in-push-to-curb-pollution

Many UK councils are planning to restrict parking and idling near school gates, with fines of up to £130 in some cases

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Press Association

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Councils will use CCTV cameras and mobile monitoring vehicles to crack down on parents flouting the rules. Photograph: Teri Pengilley for the Guardian

Parents across the country face tough restrictions – and even fines – over driving their children to the school gates, in a push by councils on road safety and pollution.

As the new academic year begins, a survey of councils shows many are enforcing laws preventing parking immediately outside the school gates, using CCTV cameras and mobile monitoring vehicles to crack down on parents flouting the rules.

But some are going further with schemes that close the roads in the immediate vicinity of schools to most traffic during the school run.

In some cases, parents could face fines of up to £130 for driving in the restricted zones.



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Other local authorities are considering “no-idling” zones with fines for parents and carers who leave engines running outside schools.

In Solihull, West Midlands, a “school streets” pilot is restricting traffic on streets around three schools at the start and end of the school day, preventing parents and carers driving children to the gates.

Ted Richards, cabinet member for transport and highways, said: “We know that most people do drive responsibly, but it can often be chaotic outside schools at drop-off and pick-up times.

“The aim of school streets is to create a safer and more pleasant environment for everyone around schools.”

Croydon in south London has also brought in traffic restrictions on roads outside three schools for the morning and afternoon school runs.

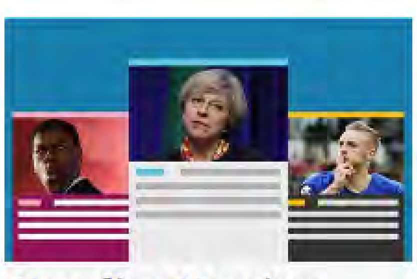
Automatic numberplate recognition cameras scan vehicles passing through the zones and those without permits – which are free for residents and their visitors – face a £130 penalty charge, or £65 if paid within a fortnight.

Stuart King, cabinet member for transport and environment, said: “The temporary numberplate cameras will help our officers make a fair decision on who can drive through the pedestrian zones and who can’t, allowing residents, their visitors, school staff and delivery drivers to go about their business as usual.”

Elsewhere in London, Hackney is planning a school streets trial around five schools, while Camden is piloting a scheme which closes the road outside a school with bollards at the start and end of the school day.

Edinburgh started restrictions around a number of schools in 2015.

And in the wake of guidance from health bodies suggesting parents should face fines for breaching “no-idling zones” to protect children from pollution, Sheffield city council is consulting on whether to bring in idling fines outside schools.



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Paul Whiteman, general secretary of school leaders’ union NAHT, said many parents had to make the school run by car on their way to work, and many schools and surrounding roads were not equipped for this reality, leading to congestion, pollution and road safety issues.

But he said: “Fines are often a blunt tool for councils to use, and can drive a wedge between parents and schools even though headteachers have no role in administering them.

“Councils must work with schools and local communities to ensure that roads around schools work for everyone,” he said.

Friends of the Earth air pollution campaigner Aaron Kiely described schemes to reduce traffic outside schools as “a positive step towards protecting our children’s health”.

He said there are “plenty of imaginative ways” to get children to school, including walking buses and riding scooters.

Steve Gooding, director of motoring research charity the RAC Foundation, welcomed children being encouraged to walk to school, but noted: “Many parents juggling the school run and their own commute to work have little choice other than to do the school drop off by car, particularly since fewer and fewer children automatically go to the school nearest to their home.”

Sam Jones, campaigner at Cycling UK, warned that without sufficient investment in cycling and walking routes, fining parents represents an “all stick and no carrot” approach.

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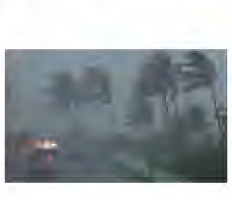
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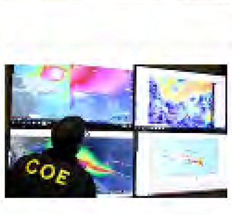
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bunkendrum 2h ago — 1
I drive for a living and school holidays are a joy. I still don't understand the parents who arrive early to bag a place close to the school gates then sit with the engine running. Our village had a new development added and the school is full so parents have to drive to the nearest school which is 8 miles away.
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ID2977899 5h ago — 1
It makes sense and mostly we can all be more efficient, greener, more organised etc. Working parents have tight schedules and it is not always possible to get a child to school before a certain time. Let a 4-10 year old walk part of the way to school on their own? Mmmm not sure that's necessarily a great idea. Don't forget those savage cuts to local council funding! We will be hearing more and more of these 'great ideas' that just happen to create a new revenue stream. We have a difficult situation and somewhere along the line their needs to be a solution that takes into account real life situations.
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JonathanHughes → ID2977899 2h ago — 0
Ten year olds can walk to school (in most cases)
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