

GUIDANCE ON TRAVEL TO SCHOOL



**West Bergholt
Road Safety Group**



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Introduction

This leaflet has been prepared by the Parish Council in consultation with the Headteacher at Heathlands School, parents and members of the local community and has our children's safety at heart. It is intended to present to parents and carers the alternatives available for them to consider when making decisions about how their children travel to school while ensuring their safety and the wellbeing of all members of our community.

Background

Heathlands is a popular school which has expanded considerably in recent decades. It is the only school serving all the primary school aged pupils of the village while at the same time attracting many from outside the village, giving a total pupil population of over 350. At key times at the start and end of the school day this inevitably leads to congestion of children, carers and parents walking to school and those arriving by car. The school sits in a

popular residential area of the village with heavy additional use of roads and pavements during the school run.

The mix of school traffic and local resident traffic can create issues of safety for those walking to school and difficulties for those arriving by car, as well as concern for local residents.

Parish Council Role

The Parish Council is often asked to deal with concerns and improve safety and so liaises with the School, Essex County Council and Parking Wardens as well as local residents. It co-ordinates whatever measures can be taken to ease any difficulties but by itself has no powers or resources to deal with issues.

The current situation is not new and has been a concern for several years. About five years ago structural measures such as improved signage, speed limit reductions, parking restrictions at junctions and outside the school, and the creation of a pathway along the edge of Poor's Land, were taken. These measures alone do not remove the problem and so a programme of advice and encouragement has been ongoing through pupils at the school.

Many consider engineering measures and enforcement as obvious initiatives but these take many years to agree and for funding to be allocated. We advocate the following approach sometimes called the "Five E's":

- Engagement so that everyone knows how to plan their travel and understand issues.
- Education so that the consequences of school travel especially by car are understood.
- Encouragement so that all can remember the best ways to travel and park.

- Enforcement by wardens to deal with persistent transgression of waiting restrictions.
- Engineering to introduce safe places to cross the road, speed limits and traffic calming.

The first three of the “Five E’s” are simple reinforcing measures that all can understand and can bring improvements quickly. The last two take time and although there are many being pursued, inevitably take many years to bring about.

Context

Heathlands School, built on the village Heath, has only limited access and the charitable status of the Heath prevents any further use for construction, roadways or vehicle parking. The same restriction applies to the Poor’s Land to the rear of the school which allows recreational use only. The roads leading to the school are narrow. Lexden Road and Colchester Road are increasingly busy feeder roads to the village and have heavy through traffic including buses.

As the School has grown and become increasingly successful and popular, 40% of its pupils live outside the village often necessitating the use of a car.



On the other hand, most of the 60% of pupils living within the village are within walking distance of the school.

Information for parents of children living in the village

In preparing this information care has been taken to recognise the circumstances of all the families that make up the school. Hence separate guidance is given to those living inside the village to those outside.

For those living locally it is appreciated that for some the following does not apply but for the vast majority we hope it is relevant and helpful.

With busy family lifestyles and changing working patterns, it is increasingly apparent that many parents and carers who live within a mile of school could walk the journey but choose to drive instead. We urge all those that are able to do so to use walking as their regular option. This not only helps with the pressure on parking spaces but is good for children's wellbeing and physical and mental health. The school encourages this and actively promotes periodic "walking to school weeks".

Essex County Council has produced an Active Travel Toolkit for Schools. We firmly believe that its recommendations can help our situation and so the most relevant points are below

- Not all children can travel actively all the way to school. Families, both local to the school and not so local, need support to make the travel choices which benefit us all. **For those living nearby, walking, scooting or cycling should be encouraged as much as possible** as this will reduce some of the pressure on parking around the school area.
- For those a bit further away, public transport, car sharing, and 'park-and-stride' are all worthwhile options to explore.

To view the full document "An Active Travel Toolkit for Schools" please look on the website. <https://www.activeessex.org/cyp-active-travel/>

Guidance to parents of children living outside the village

If you live outside West Bergholt it is appreciated that the journey of your child to school will almost certainly involve transport by car. To ease the problems caused by excessive use of cars around the area of the school we ask that you consider the following:

- Make use of areas where there is plenty of space for parking, particularly the **Orpen Hall car park** and now **the White Hart car park has been made available**.
- Please only park in the roads surrounding the school in areas where parking is permitted, and NOT where yellow line restrictions apply, the permitted areas are parts of New Church Road, particularly the part nearer the Chapel Road end outside the allotments, Lexden Road and School Lane, as shown on the map included. It is estimated that over 150 spaces are available in these areas. It is also requested that drivers do not tour the village looking for a space as close to the school as possible as this increases congestion and pollution.
- Please consider the safety of our children and do NOT park in Colchester Road. Whilst parking is not illegal, the speed of traffic, including regular HGVs, makes parking here dangerous for residents and children walking along the road. It is for this reason that we kindly ask you not to use this road for parking.
- Please park for as little time as possible, especially if only dropping off children.
- Consider only driving in one direction down School Lane, from the New Church Road end.
- Reduce the number of cars used by doubling up with friends where possible.

We believe that if this guidance is adhered to by those that have to use a car, sufficient legal parking is available and by using this, we can greatly improve the safety of the roads around the school.

Opportunities and Constraints

Borough Councillors and the County Councillor representing the village are supportive, well aware of the issues and use their influence where possible to improve the situation. Essex County Council provides and offers support to the School through initiatives such as the 3PR scheme.

Very limited resources are available for any structural innovations and when basic changes are agreed, for instance improved signage, they can take a lengthy time to implement. The Police no longer deal with road traffic issues such as parking and the alternative enforcement agency provided through North East Essex Parking Partnership has such limited resources that its officers seldom appear in West Bergholt.

The village Neighbourhood Plan, which was adopted in 2019, has a section on Community Safety which recognises the dangers of irresponsible driving and parking.

As outlined in the Neighbourhood Plan any housing developments in the village will take place in the area to the East of Colchester Road, mainly opposite the Treble Tile. To enhance safety in this area the Parish Council is pressing for speed reduction measures and an appropriate crossing for pedestrians.

Current Initiatives and How You Can Help

- The Parish Council is liaising with Essex County Council with a view to renewing and extending the yellow zig-zag markings outside the school gate as far as the Lexden Road junction. It is also proposing the creation of parking slots for disabled drivers in Lexden Road beside the Scout Hut.
- The Parish Council will continue to press for speed restrictions/traffic calming measures in Colchester Road and the provision of a suitable crossing when any housing development takes place.
- Liaison with the School will be ongoing and support enhanced for initiatives which encourage walking to school. Any supporting contribution from Essex County Council will be considered fully, in particular the Active Travel Toolkit for Schools.
- The involvement of initiatives from the local community to help encourage parents to follow these guidelines will be welcome, for instance a link to the “Bear Man of Bergholt”.
- An updated strategy document will be produced by a reconstituted Traffic Safety Group drawn from the School (including Governors), local Councillors and community representatives. The guiding principle for the group will be based on the **FIVE Es** approach, as described earlier.

This will then be used for consultations with all responsible and interested parties such as Essex County Council, Colchester Borough Council and the Police to local residents and parents.

If you have ideas that you feel will be of help please let us know by contacting either the Parish Council, the School or your local Borough or County Councillor.