

To: Chief Executives of Local Authorities
in England that have the function of a
Local Education Authority

30 November 2009

Dear Chief Executive

Payment of Walking to School Initiatives Grant under Section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003

On 26 March 2007 we wrote to you about the Walking to School Initiatives Grant, a new grant that the Department for Transport (DfT) would be paying to local authorities under Section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003 for the next three financial years. The purpose of the grant is to provide support to schools that have made a commitment to reducing car use and increasing walking for journeys to school.

Schools that were awarded funding for 2007-08 had to demonstrate that they had saved the required number of car trips and had a reasonable expectation of continuing to do so, in order to be entitled to further funding in 2008-09 and 2009-10. I am now writing to let you have details of schools that satisfied those criteria and are therefore entitled to receive funding in 2009-10

Details of the grant and payment to local authorities

The Walking to School Initiatives Grant is a specific formula grant intended to provide support to schools that have set up a 'walking bus' or other walking initiative to encourage more children to walk to school and have saved the required number of car trips. The grant is being allocated to local authorities on the basis of the number of schools in their area that have done this.

The grant will this year be paid to local authorities by the Department for Transport rather than by the Department for Children, Schools and Families as in previous years. It is being paid as Walking to School Initiatives Grant and should reach local authorities on 2 December. Would you please arrange for it to be passed on to schools as soon as possible after that date.

The payments are being made as part of the joint DfT/DCSF *Travelling to School* project to reduce car use for journeys to school. DfT is providing the money and is working closely with DCSF and the Department for Health (DH) to integrate 'walking buses' and other walking initiatives into the Healthy Schools Initiative and promote a healthier lifestyle.

Although the grant is being paid as Section 31 grant and, as such, is non ring-fenced, you are strongly encouraged to allocate the funding to the schools that have made the required commitment to reducing car use and increasing walking. The scheme has been very enthusiastically received by most schools and local authorities, and school travel advisers in local authorities have been involved in deciding which schools should receive the funding. We have already told schools that are considered to have met the criteria for continued funding.

The overall grant allocation to be paid to your local authority is shown at Annex A of the attached Grant Determination and a list of schools in your area that should receive funding in order to enable them to continue to deliver the required outcomes is also attached.

Background

Walking buses, and walking to school generally, have several advantages. Walking improves child health. Some teachers have told us they find that children who walk to school are better able to concentrate, and therefore better able to learn, when they get there. Walking buses can reduce, and can even solve, parking problems around schools. They also provide an opportunity for children to learn road safety skills, and help to combat climate change.

DfT and DCSF therefore announced a scheme to provide grants of £1,000 a year for three years to state-funded primary schools in England that wanted to set up a walking bus, with smaller grants of £500 a year for schools wanting to set up an alternative walking initiative. State-funded primary schools (and state-funded middle deemed primary schools) and non-maintained special schools in England were eligible, but other independent schools were not.

In order to receive the £1,000 grant for the first year, the school's head teacher was required to have a reasonable expectation that a 'walking bus' would save an extra five return car trips per day, on average over the whole year. An extra five return car trips per day was required, as this was the number required to demonstrate sufficient health, congestion and climate change benefits to make the scheme high value for money. Schools applying for smaller grants of £500 a year to set up an alternative walking initiative were required to save an extra two and a half return car trips a day.

To receive the grant in the second and third years, the school needed to provide evidence that these car trips had been saved (ie details of previous mode of travel and how many pupils actually walked each day) and that they had a reasonable expectation that this would continue.

The trips required to be saved is the minimum needed to ensure that the value of the environmental, health and other benefits is at least twice the cost and thus represents high value for money in accordance with our published guidance.

If you have any queries, please contact Ruth Fagan on 020 7944 3481 or email Ruth.fagan@dft.gsi.gov.uk,

Copies of this letter are being sent to the contacts in your authority who helped assess whether or not the schools were eligible. We are grateful to them for their help and also to school travel advisers in your authority (some of whom acted as these contacts) for their continued work in improving the sustainability of travel to school.

Yours faithfully,

Matthew

Jessica Matthew
Deputy Director, Cycling and Sustainable Travel