

Regeneration, Culture and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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School Streets Tranche 1 – Monitoring and Review Report

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Summary

School Streets Tranche 1 schemes are delivering safer, calmer streets, significant reductions in car use during the school run, and improvements in air quality, based on the first full year of monitoring data.

This report presents the findings from the first full year of monitoring of Medway's School Streets Tranche 1 schemes, implemented in March 2024 at seven school locations. It provides Members with assurance on scheme performance based on robust monitoring evidence.

The monitoring reflects constructive Member engagement at the Regeneration, Culture and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 19 December 2024 and draws together evidence on air quality, road safety, traffic displacement, compliance and community views. This work forms part of the Council's evidence-led approach and aligns with national guidance on monitoring and review.

Overall, the monitoring indicates that Tranche 1 School Streets are meeting their core operational objectives during restricted periods, including safer and calmer environments, reduced traffic dominance and improved air quality indicators. The approach to monitoring has also been positively recognised by Active Travel England, which has referenced Medway as an example of good practice in evidence-led delivery and review.

At a glance – Year 1 outcomes

- Safer streets: 68% of parents/carers and 69% of staff report noticeably safer, calmer environments.
- Reduced car use: Car trips during restricted periods have fallen from 28% to around 10%.
- More walking: Pedestrian trips rose from 68% to approximately 86%.

- Improved air quality: Most sites recorded reductions in traffic-related pollutants during operating times.
- No collisions during operating hours at any School Street site.

1. Recommendation

- 1.1. The Committee is asked to note the findings of the School Streets Tranche 1 Monitoring Report (Appendix A) and support the continued development of the programme, informed by this evidence and national best practice.

2. Budget and policy framework

- 2.1. The monitoring activity supports the Council Plan, Climate Change Action Plan, Local Transport Plan and the Medway Sustainable School Travel Strategy by providing evidence on safety, air quality and travel behaviour during the school run.
- 2.2. This report does not seek approval for new schemes or funding but focuses solely on the outcomes of the monitoring programme.

3. Background

- 3.1. The decision to introduce School Streets and the selection of Tranche 1 locations have been considered at previous Council meetings. This report does not revisit those decisions.
- 3.2. In line with national School Streets guidance, officers have undertaken a comprehensive monitoring programme over a 12-month period (March 2024 to February 2025) to assess scheme performance and identify any unintended consequences.
- 3.3. The monitoring programme comprised:
 - Air quality monitoring during school travel periods;
 - Traffic counts within School Street zones and surrounding roads;
 - Road traffic collision analysis;
 - Analysis of compliance, Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) and exemptions;
 - Parent/carer and school staff surveys;
 - Officer site visits and observational assessments.
- 3.4. The detailed methodology, data tables and site-specific analysis are contained within Appendix A.

4. Advice and analysis

4.1. Safety and street environments

School Streets Tranche 1 schemes are achieving their core objectives during restricted periods, creating safer and calmer environments, reducing traffic

dominance, and contributing to improved air quality around school gates. Monitoring evidence from the full first year strongly supports the operational effectiveness of the programme.

Parent and carer survey results show that:

- 68% agreed or strongly agreed that the road outside the school feels safer; and
- 69% agreed or strongly agreed that the environment feels calmer.

School staff feedback supports these findings, with reports of fewer traffic-related incidents and reduced need for staff intervention at the school gate.

4.2. Road Safety outcomes

The monitoring report distinguishes clearly between Medway-wide road safety trends and outcomes specific to School Street locations.

Across Medway, the number of child casualties reduced from 109 in 2023/24 to 65 in 2024/25. This 40% reduction cannot be attributed solely to School Streets and reflects the combined impact of wider road safety initiatives.

Importantly, no road traffic collisions were recorded at any School Street location during the restricted operating times over the monitoring period. Where isolated collisions occurred near School Street sites, these took place outside operating hours and were therefore unrelated to the restrictions.

4.3. Travel behaviour and traffic volumes

Traffic count data shows a measurable change in travel behaviour following the introduction of School Streets.

Comparing data across monitored sites from February 2024 (prior to implementation) with February 2025, full-day averages show that the proportion of all journeys made by car fell by around 10 percentage points, (with a corresponding rise in pedestrian journeys), based on aggregated counts across sites excluding Miers Court due to data availability.

To understand travel activity during the School Street operating times, traffic counts were analysed specifically for those restricted periods. Across monitored sites (excluding Miers Court Primary), car journeys made up around 28% of all trips during operating times in February 2024, compared with approximately 10% in February 2025 — an 18-percentage-point reduction in the share of trips made by car. Similarly, pedestrian journeys comprised approximately 68% of all trips in February 2024, rising to around 86% in February 2025 — an increase of 18 percentage points in the share of trips made on foot.

This demonstrates that the schemes have their strongest effect during peak school travel times, where the shift from car use to walking is greater than the full-day averages suggest.

4.4. Air quality during school travel periods

Air quality monitoring was successfully undertaken at six of the seven Tranche 1 sites. Despite typical seasonal factors that would normally worsen air quality during winter months, monitoring shows encouraging trends during restriction periods.

Reductions in traffic-related air pollutants, including nitrogen dioxide and fine airborne particles that affect respiratory health, were observed at most monitored sites during School Street operating times.

As explained in Appendix A, observed changes in ozone levels reflect normal atmospheric processes, whereby reductions in traffic-related pollutants can lead to modest increases in ozone, and do not indicate a deterioration in local air quality.

National guidance is clear that air quality impacts should be assessed through trends over time rather than short-term absolute changes. The monitoring undertaken provides a robust baseline for longer-term assessment.

4.5. Traffic displacement

Monitoring confirms that some level of traffic displacement has occurred at certain locations. This is an anticipated and well-recognised effect of School Streets schemes and is acknowledged within national guidance, which notes that restricting traffic at the school gate can result in changes to traffic patterns on surrounding streets.

The monitoring shows that displacement has varied by location:

- Minimal at smaller or more self-contained streets;
- Moderate at sites with nearby through-routes; and
- More pronounced where multiple schools and strategic roads interact.

Importantly, officer site visits indicate that displacement has generally been dispersed rather than concentrated and has not resulted in systemic safety issues.

Where displacement has been identified through traffic counts, surveys or officer observation, officers have responded proportionately — primarily through ongoing liaison with schools, periodic site visits, and targeted communication with parents and carers to encourage safer, more considerate behaviour. Parking enforcement has been focused where recurring issues have been reported, rather than systematically increased across all sites.

As part of the next phase of engagement, officers will work closely with schools through their School Travel Plan to promote practical alternatives such as car sharing, walking buses and other active travel to school initiatives in locations where displacement is more noticeable.

Officers will continue to monitor localised impacts and make ongoing refinements where appropriate. This reflects a realistic and proportionate approach consistent with national guidance, which emphasises continued monitoring and localised adjustment rather than the elimination of displacement altogether.

4.6. Compliance, enforcement and exemptions

Monitoring data shows that more than 1,392 exemptions were granted across Tranche 1 sites, the majority of which were issued to residents. This demonstrates that access requirements are being appropriately managed and that the exemption process is functioning as intended.

Following the end of the six-month Warning Notice period in August 2024, the number of Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) issued initially increased, reflecting the transition to full enforcement. Volumes have since declined, indicating growing public awareness of the restrictions and improving compliance. This pattern is typical for new traffic management measures and aligns with a proportionate enforcement approach.

A comparison of PCNs issued between September - December 2024 and the same period in 2025 demonstrates a 20.8% overall reduction, as set out in the following table.

	September – December 2024	September – December 2025
Number of PCNs issued	8,673	6,867
Payment recovery rate	73.8%	65.7%

School Streets PCNs are processed and recovered by the same Parking Processing Team that handles all Penalty Charge Notices across Medway. There are no separate or additional costs associated with recovering these fines beyond the existing staffing resource and operational budgets.

The lower recovery rate for the 2025 period reflects the fact that a proportion of PCNs remain within statutory recovery or appeals processes. These cases continue to progress through the established enforcement pathway and will be monitored accordingly.

Further information on compliance, exemptions and PCN trends is provided within Appendix A.

5. Risk management

- 5.1. There are no significant risks arising directly from this report. Its purpose is to present monitoring outcomes and provide Members with assurance. Any operational risks associated with School Streets are managed through existing service processes and will be addressed through future decision-making reports where required.

6. Consultation

- 6.1. The monitoring programme has been informed by parent/carer and staff surveys, school liaison, informal engagement and officer site visits.
- 6.2. Schools have continued to engage through travel planning activity and participation in active travel initiatives, which complement the School Streets programme.

7. Climate change implications

- 7.1. The monitoring evidence demonstrates that School Streets contribute to the Council's climate objectives by reducing short car trips during the school run, supporting active travel and improving local air quality during peak periods.

8. Financial implications

- 8.1. Tranche 1 monitoring activity is funded from existing service budgets. This includes the collection, analysis and reporting of air quality, traffic, collision and community perception data in line with national guidance.
- 8.2. The monitoring findings will inform any future recommendations relating to subsequent tranches. Subject to future decisions, additional resources may be required for enforcement or physical measures, which would be addressed through separate reports and approved through the appropriate governance processes.
- 8.3. Any future additional costs would need to be managed within available budgets or through external funding opportunities, including Active Travel England.

9. Legal implications

- 9.1. The monitoring activity itself does not give rise to direct legal implications. Data has been collected and reported in accordance with relevant legislation, guidance and Council policies.
- 9.2. School Streets operate under statutory Traffic Regulation Orders, which provide the legal basis for restrictions and enforcement. Any future changes would be subject to appropriate legal review and statutory processes.

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Appendices

Appendix A - School Streets Monitoring Report 2025 (Tranche 1)

Appendix B - Medway Sustainable School Travel Strategy 2026-2030

Background papers

[School Streets: How to set up and manage a scheme](#)