

# Chepstow School Travel Plan



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## Background



## **Chepstow School – its situation within the community**

Chepstow School is situated on the outskirts of the town and is largely away from the main pupil catchment area, i.e., Town, Garden city and Bulwark. This necessitates a large number of pupils either walking, cycling or being transported to a site that has limited accessibility and is served by one main road.

The position of the Dell Primary School on Welsh Street also adds to the number of pupils and parents walking or being driven to school.

## **The movement of traffic in the area and its implications for pupils walking or cycling to school**

The movement of commuter traffic through the town at the start and end of the day creates obvious dangers for pedestrians and cyclists and the main arterial route, the A48 road, dissects the community, and is particularly hazardous to negotiate. The main B4293 road (Welsh Street) that runs adjacent to the school is a main route for traffic entering and leaving Chepstow town.

More recent housing developments off the St Lawrence Road has further added to the congestion of already busy roads and the funnelling effect of pupils travelling into school. There is one zebra crossing outside the main school entrance in Welsh Street; the next crossing is found at the Town Arch, some considerable distance from the school site. Despite an obvious increase in the number of pupils travelling to school from the new St Lawrence Road housing development, there are no recognised, designated crossing points on this very busy road.

There has been some public disquiet about the designated route for walkers from the Bulwark area of Chepstow, and Monmouthshire Education Authority carried out an enquiry into its feasibility some 18 months ago.

One overriding feature of the objections to the designated route was that because of the lack of crossing points on the main A48 arterial road, pupils were encouraged to walk out of their way through Garden City to access the underpass at Hardwick Hill. Pupils have expressed uneasiness about walking via Piggy's Hill and using the underpass.

There is a Pelican crossing at Larkfield Garage on the main A48 road and although its position makes sense from a Health and safety standpoint, pupils tend to take the most direct route when getting from one point to another.

They cross at Larkfield Roundabout on the junction of the A48 and the A466 at very busy times of the day. Pupils elect to follow alternative routes into and away from school which are, in many instances, risky at critical times of the day, e.g., walking from Bulwark and Thornwell to Bulwark corner on the A48 – the pavement is very narrow and has overhanging shrubs.

The lack of safe crossing points on the major roads is one very large concern, but so too is the token gesture of the provision of safe cycle lanes throughout Chepstow. Pupils are being encouraged to walk or cycle to school to improve

their life styles but the lack of safe routes to and from school discourages many parents from pursuing this healthier option.

### **Travelling by Bus**

A large number of pupils travel into school by bus.

There is considerable bad feeling expressed by some parents over the boundary drawn for those pupils entitled to free transport. Although there is a perfectly sensible rationale used to arrive at a free transport boundary, some parents felt that the entitlement process was arbitrary and unfair. e.g., one street was entitled to receive free transport but an adjoining street was not.

Some pupils felt that some buses were overcrowded, unruly, and not always safe. Not everyone had a seatbelt for their journey into and out of school and there appears to be a wide discrepancy between the attitude and control exercised by some drivers. Attempts to meet representatives from each of the bus providers failed on 2 separate occasions, so there has been no avenue in which to pursue grievances or to hear the drivers' version of events.

(Copies of letters to the bus companies are to be found in the appendix.)

### **Car use**

The fact that the school is so far away from large pockets of the population means that many parents bring their children to school by car and pick them up again at the end of the school day. At peak periods during the day, parents' vehicles are competing with buses to get into the site and have to negotiate a narrow but busy entrance system. There is often a tail back of traffic into Welsh Street, which then contributes to problems for walkers trying to use the Zebra crossing in order to get into the Danes. The entrance to the school is on the crest of the hill and is also opposite a very busy road junction – the zebra crossing is set into these road configurations.

Bus bays normally set aside for the picking up and dropping off of pupils are very often taken by parents or visitors to the school, causing double banked parking. The restricted width of the school drive often results in buses unable to get to their designated slots, so pupils end up moving to an alternative bay or part of the drive, in order to get onto their bus.

The problem is intensified by Sixth form students bringing cars into school as well as delivery vehicles entering and leaving the site.

Rather than enter the school site to pick up children, some parents arrange to pick up in the Danes on St Kingsmark Avenue. This results in a build up of traffic in St Kingsmark Avenue towards the junction with Welsh Street and necessitates the pupils moving against the flow of traffic into the school entrance, and again adding to the numbers having to cross Welsh Street via the zebra crossing.

## **Tackling the Problem**

### **2006 – 2007**

A pupil questionnaire was devised by the school council, and sent out to homes to consult parents and families about their feelings and experiences travelling to and from school. All households were catered for with the questionnaire going out by pupil mail.

91 completed questionnaires were returned, mainly from those concerned parents who felt strongly about specific issues. This represents roughly 10% of the school population, bearing in mind siblings.

(The findings of the questionnaire survey can be found in the appendix.)

### **2007 – 2008**

**The School Council decided to tackle the travel plan** directly by canvassing fellow pupils directly. The findings of the survey can be found in the appendix indicating a more thorough set of conclusions. This is the main thrust of the review carried out and represents the views of the pupils.

**Scheduled meetings with the bus companies** proved fruitless and extremely disappointing.

**An Open Meeting for parents and residents** was poorly attended. 5 adults turned up for the meeting and expressed their reservations about issues that specifically applied to them and their children. Much of what they had to say had in fact been covered by the findings of the school council. The 5 adults were shown the Power point presentation from the school council's work and were generally happy with what they saw.

(See the appendix for a copy of the Power point presentation)

### **Additional Meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2008 at Chepstow School**

In attendance: P.C. O'Connor, D.C. P Tozer, A. Farr (School), M. Collins (School Council), S.C. A. Jones, Mrs. J. Sullivan (Councillor), Mr. D. Calver (Resident), Mr A Farr (School), Mrs P Thomas (Governor)

The police put forward their concerns about the behaviour of pupils walking and cycling to school and the impact this had on residents, more especially on those who live close to the designated walk to school.

Mr David Carver pressed the need for pelican crossings to be installed on the A 466 road to allow pupils and residents to cross safely into the Danes and on towards the school. He stated that there are 300 new houses constructed on the new Barnett Woods Site with no safe means of crossing the main A466.

Mrs J O'Sullivan felt the need for pupils to be once again allocated to specific buses when they travel from Bulwark into school. Pupils pile onto the first bus to come along and overload it as a result. This creates obvious health and safety issues for all riding on these buses. Pupils need to have bus permits that control admission on to buses.

If more buses were put on to transport pupils from Bulwark to school, there would be less vandalism and disruption caused to residents.

There are no flashing lights indicating the presence of a school and the possibility of pupils in the immediate vicinity.

Can the roads have specific speed limits painted on them to remind drivers.

The problem of a lack of cycle paths in and around Chepstow was raised.

The same buses are used in both Caldicot School and Chepstow School. Having been used in Caldicot first, buses are arriving late in Chepstow to pick up pupils. This has a knock on effect with pupils constantly arriving in school after the first bell in the morning.

## Recommendations

- Make the exit section of the road from the Leisure Centre car park a 2 way road for parents and visitors. Pupils would be dropped off/picked up in the bottom leisure centre car park. The original top entrance would be for staff cars, buses and school delivery vehicles only. This would relieve the pressure on the main entrance and ease congestion problems. Vehicles would still have to leave the site at the leisure centre exit. There may well be the need to widen this exit road to have 2 lanes exiting the school (1 lane for turning left; 1 for turning right) and 1 entering. There is ample space to accommodate this alteration.
- Create safe cycle lanes from the major population centres of Chepstow as well as from outlying villages (Pwllmeyric, St Arvans, Devauden, Itton), into the vicinity of the school.
- Install a number of Pelican and Zebra crossings for pupils to cross the busy main roads safely. A number of crossings are required on the St Lawrence road (A466) to allow pupils and the public to cross from the new housing developments on the western side of the road from the hospital to the Racecourse Garage.
- Install a crossing in Welsh Street to allow pupils to cross from the leisure centre exit into the Danes.
- Install school warning lights for drivers to be aware that they are approaching a school.
- Paint speed limits on the roads. Limit speeds to 20 mph near school.
- Reintroduce bus passes for pupils travelling to Bulwark to restrict numbers on buses. A record of pupils travelling on specific buses should be held by the school.
- Employ a second person (old type conductor) to monitor behaviour on buses. Incorporate it into the tendering process.
- Purchase more modern, secure cycle racks that are weather proof. This might encourage more pupils to cycle rather than travel by car. Pupils are also reluctant to bring their bicycles to school because of the risk of theft or vandalism or being open to the elements.
- Provide transport at a reduced rate for Bulwark pupils so as to reduce the number of cars that travel through Chepstow and enter the school site.
- Rethink the 'designated walk' to school from the Bulwark area. No one wants hundreds of pupils walking past their door but pupils tend to walk on the most direct routes to get to destinations. The big issue is how to cross the main arterial route through Chepstow to get from Bulwark to school? E.g., Bulwark to Larkfield to The Danes to school. This would avoid walking through town, up Welsh Street, and ease congestion outside the Dell Primary School.
- Include community issues as part of the Year 7 curriculum. Geography could contribute a great deal to transport /travel.