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BRIGHTON & HOVE



Golden Flip Flop Walking Initiative Pilot Scheme Evaluation

Brighton & Hove City Council

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Reason for running the scheme

The School Travel Team at Brighton & Hove City Council was established in 2001 and has worked intensively promoting School Travel Plans since then. Schemes were trialled with individual schools but to date there has been no whole school approach. The team felt that the potential for a Walking Initiative was enormous and the timing fell into place to trial the scheme. The success of the current “Bike-it” Project in Brighton and Hove had an influence on the way the scheme was designed.

(The “Bike it” Project is funded by “Sustrans” www.sustrans.org.uk/about-sustrans)

From September 2008 - July 2009 the School Travel Team at Brighton & Hove City Council ran a Walking Initiative Pilot Scheme within three schools in Brighton and Hove.

These were:

- St. Andrew’s Church of England School, Hove
- St. Paul’s Church of England School, Brighton
- St. Martin’s Church of England School, Brighton.

The School Travel Team designed the Walking Initiative which they called The Golden Flip Flop and the logo for all the materials that were used during the pilot scheme was of a golden flip flop.

How the initiative worked

The aim was to see what impact the incentive scheme would make on the travel habits of the families at the three schools. The scheme rewarded children for walking to school by using a sticker system. A sticker was given to the child each time they walk to school.

The system was managed by the parents and their children by keeping a chart at home and adding the totals up every week.

The class teacher/teaching assistant was asked to add up the scores from each child at the end of each half term. As well as the sticker reward at home, the students received other rewards (a certificate and a Golden Flip Flop magnet) that were presented in their class once they had achieved a certain number of days of walking. The class teacher was free to decide when and how to present these additional rewards.

Another form of reward/recognition was for the children to have their name put on a “cup style” golden flip flop. This consisted of an actual flip flop painted gold and set on a plinth with a whiteboard surround which could be displayed in the classroom. It was designed so that teachers could write a child’s name on the whiteboard if they had made a special effort to walk.

The final type of reward was the Giant Golden Flip Flop! This was designed together with a local artist and measures approximately 2 meters in length. It is light so that the Team could carry it around on the bus or on foot and it has a rope on the back so that it can be put into a display area of a school. The idea was that the schools could compete against each other to achieve the highest walkers in any half term period.

The Pilot Scheme was introduced to the Reception Class (4 and 5 year olds), their teachers and their parents in each of the three schools in September 2008. The scheme started in October 2008 and ran for six week periods over the next three half terms. It ended in April 2009.

Aim of the Golden Flip Flop Walking Initiative

The main aims of the Walking Initiative pilot scheme were as follows:

1. To evaluate whether the sticker reward scheme has an impact on walking journeys to school.
2. To find out from the users of the scheme (teachers, parents, students) whether it was effective. This includes whether it was targeted at the correct age group and whether the length of the scheme and the rewards that were given were appropriate for the children.
3. To find out if collecting information in this way was practical i.e. relying on parents to bring the information to school and for teaching staff to collate this information.
4. To make the initiative as self-sustaining as possible among the schools.

Approach (*Changes to the original Pilot Scheme*)

The original idea behind the Golden Flip Flop Pilot was to see what difference a sticker-based incentive scheme makes to the number of walking journeys in Primary school. The age group that was chosen was Reception age (4 and 5 year olds). Their parents were also involved. The reason for involving the parents was because it is they that make the decisions about how their children travel to school particularly at this very young age.

However in the early stages of delivery, the team realised that the scheme in its initial form was too ambitious for the human resources that were available. Whilst the team continued with design of the scheme, the emphasis of the Evaluation changed and the delivery changed with it.

The emphasis changed from **monitoring travel behaviour** to:

Monitoring:

1. The appropriateness of the scheme for the age group
2. The time scale

3. The involvement of parents
4. The involvement of teaching staff
5. The design of the Golden Flip Flop itself as a symbol for walking in Brighton
6. Cost of the scheme

1) Age group of the children

The initiative was designed with the idea of targeting parents as well as their children. This was the reason for trialling the Golden Flip Flop with Reception aged children. The team felt that parents (assuming that they were new to the school) would be more likely to take on a scheme like this than parents whose children were already established in the school.

Teachers and parents were questioned on the appropriateness of the scheme for this age group.

Jackie Tillson (Reception Class Teacher, St.Paul's school, Brighton) said:

“The scheme worked well for Reception aged children and it fits well within the PSHE (Personal Social and Health Education) curriculum. It sits nicely with the *Understanding changes* part of the curriculum.”

She also said that she enjoyed looking at the walking results for the week with her class as a good “whole class” based activity.

Parents from St. Martin's School said that the children looked forward to receiving the stickers and liked to see their friends' getting them.

Fran Backhouse (Reception Class Teacher, St. Martin's school, Brighton) felt that if older children were involved there would be the opportunity to communicate between classes or schools electronically to bring in an element of friendly competition.

Jackie Tillson also felt that if it had been targeted at older children (7-8 year olds), there would have been some advantages including that the children would have been in control of their own charts and have a sense of ownership of the scheme. With this age group issues such as health benefits and the environmental impacts of their actions could also be looked into.

The Giant Golden Flip did not really work in its original form. It was hoped that schools would compete against each other to gain the Giant Flip Flop in their school for the term. This is an example of how in reception class the children are too young to appreciate the competitive element and the children were pleased just to have the Giant Golden Flip Flop in their school!

2) The timescale of the scheme

From the parents that we asked, they were pleased with the look of the scheme and with the idea itself. Some felt that running it over 3 terms was too long as they and their children ran out of motivation. Others said that it should take place throughout the school year.

On a feedback form one of the parents from St. Martin's School said “A good scheme. Do not shorten it – you need to create a habit not a prize system”.

However Fran Backhouse a teacher at St. Martin's School felt that it would be better to keep the scheme to one term so that it is given high priority. Fran suggests that if the scheme were to take place in the summer term when the mornings are brighter, the school could promote the scheme in the spring term and deliver it in the summer Term. This would get the children and their parents in the habit of walking for the following academic year.

Some of the parents from the Reception year commented that there was too much time between rewards. They said that for a four or five year old, the reward needs to happen immediately or at least within one or two days and to wait any longer was not within their concentration.

3) The Parents' Role

What the parents had to do - The scheme was designed with the focus on the parents. Their role is to record the walking results on a daily basis, at home, onto a walking chart. Each time their child walks to school they gained a sticker on their sticker chart.

The responsibility was then with the parent to feedback these results on a weekly basis (or whatever was seen as most practical) to the school via their child's class teacher. Each teacher had a wall chart allocated to their class which could be used directly by the parents or by the teacher or teaching assistant.

Induction - Each school received an introduction to the scheme through the Parents' Induction Day during the first few weeks of the September term. Both the team and the schools felt that this would be the ideal time to talk to parents as a group, as it is the only time that they are all together. Parent inductions are busy times for all concerned but the team felt this was the best place for the introduction to the initiative.

The team spent between 5 and 15 minutes talking to parents at St. Paul's and St. Andrews and to parents and students at St. Martin's.

Playground visits - This was seen as a good time to talk to parents and get feedback as it was a less formal setting with the opportunity to talk to a variety of parents for some time. The disadvantage is that parents have other things on their minds at this time of day. The team did find that parents on the whole were open and a number of them were happy to give their contact details when asked if they would be happy to offer more detailed feedback.

4) The importance of the staff at the three focus schools

Whilst the initiative was designed to take the onus off the classroom teacher and placed more in the hands of the parents, the teacher's role was very important to the scheme. The discovery that the team made through the Pilot Project was that it was vital to its success.

The support from the classroom teacher was necessary both in the context of supporting the scheme from a practical point of view, as well as a commitment to sustainable transport initiatives.

At schools where there was both commitment from the teacher and the Head Teacher, the scheme was well regarded and became integrated into the class' routine.

At St. Paul's school, Jackie Tillson was able to integrate the responses from parents as part of the school day. The Wall Chart for the Scheme was situated in a sheltered area where parents waited to pick up their children. Parent filled in the chart as part of their school routine once a week.

5) The Design of the Scheme

The Golden Flip Flop idea was arrived at by using an existing idea – that of the Golden Boot - which is currently used by the School Travel Champion, Jane Johnson at Downs Junior School. This is used to reward classes who walk to school during Walk to School Week. The team adapted the idea of a boot to a flip flop because of the City's location by the sea.

Having worked with the Golden Flip Flop icon for a whole year, the team were able to establish whether the symbol was received in a positive way. The symbol of the Golden Flip Flop was well received by all who we approached. The team talked to parents, students and teaching staff from all the three schools as well as members of the public and other professionals in the field of sustainable transport. All of them liked the design of the Flip Flop as well as the idea behind it.

The Golden Flip Flop seemed to bring a smile to people's faces and they liked the link to the seaside.

Most people felt that it reflected well the slight "quirkiness" of Brighton as it is a City that is likely to adopt ideas that are different from the mainstream.

6) Cost of the Scheme

The cost of all the materials was £4,400. This included:

- Designing and printing packs for each parents in the Reception class of all three schools
- Enough wall charts, instruction leaflets and stickers for each of the packs
- Giant Wall charts for each of the classrooms
- The Giant Golden Flip Flop
- The four mounted golden flip flops for each class in the three schools

Approximate cost for officer time dedicated to this: £3,000

Results

Conclusions

The scheme of encouraging children to walk to school through a sticker based system achieves several outcomes:

1. The Golden Flip Flop symbol is well received with the residents of Brighton and Hove

2. It raises the profile of walking to school within the City – during the nine month period of running the pilot scheme, the Walking Initiative achieved some major publicity coverage within the City
3. It raises the profile of walking to school with the parents, the children and within the school
4. It can be linked into many different curriculum topics within PSHE including the topic “Understanding Changes”
5. The scheme is more likely to succeed if the staff of the school are committed to the initiative as it raises the profile and helps to maintain momentum
6. The scheme is not self sustaining as the commitment/time needs to be included in the success of the scheme
7. If the scheme is adopted for older children, this might give children more ownership of the scheme. The other advantage is that older children might have more of an influence over their parents travel choices or they may be travelling by themselves
8. Parents felt that there was too long between rewards. Particularly for children aged 4 and 5, the rewards need to be more immediate. If the scheme is aimed at the younger age groups (ages 4,5 and 6) , more frequent and more regular rewards would have more impact
9. The competitive element (The Giant Golden Flip Flop) - The Reception class is too young to make the scheme competitive with other schools – the concept of competition would be more successful from around year 3 (ages 7 and 8)

Recommendations

- The Golden Flip Flop team recommends that the Golden Flip Flop Walking Initiative is developed further within the School Travel Team. The Pilot scheme has shown that the Golden Flip Flop would be successful in the following ways:
 - ✓ It has an influence on the way that walking to school is regarded
 - ✓ It raises the profile of walking to school in Brighton and Hove
 - ✓ It is a doorway for the public to access the School Travel Team
 - ✓ As the Golden Flip Flop logo has been well received, we recommend that it remains at the heart of any future delivery of the scheme
- The team recommends that the scheme is aimed at older children. By 7 or 8 years old, children have a wider concept of the world around them and will be more aware of the reason for doing the scheme. They are also more responsive to reward charts over a period of time so longer term rewards will have more impact than at age 4 and 5.

- If the scheme is established in schools the team would recommend that a less fraught time for the school would be the parents' induction near the end of the summer term (before their children are due to start school). Ideally this would then be followed up with a presence at one of the school social events to reinforce the message.
- The team originally thought that once launched the Walking Initiative could be self sustaining with schools being able to order materials directly from the School Travel Team. However the team has concluded that the scheme is not self sustaining in this way and that it would be essential to the success of the scheme to have a dedicated Project Officer.

Recognition and Thanks

CIVITAS Plus Archimedes – The funding for the Evaluation of the Golden Flip Flop Scheme has been thanks to the CIVITAS Plus Archimedes Project. It is hoped that the continuation of the Golden Flip Flop Walking Initiative will form part of the CIVITAS Plus Project in Brighton and Hove.

The Golden Flip Flop Team consisted of Stephen Kelly, Eleanor Togut and Delphine Jacq – Transport Planners from Brighton & Hove City Council.

The Team would like to thank all the staff, students and parents at St. Andrew's School, St. Martins and St. Paul's School for accommodating the Golden Flip Flop team within their schools between 2008 and 2009.

Without their support and input we would not have been able to evaluate the scheme.

The team would also like to thank all their colleagues at Brighton & Hove City Council who gave professional advice and support for the scheme.

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