



Education Resources

Secondary School Transport

West of Scotland Road Safety Forum Guidance

and

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

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West of Scotland Road Safety Forum Guidance

This document produced by the West of Scotland Road Safety Forum gives guidance on the identification and assessment of road safety hazards to pedestrians on route to school.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Each Education Authority has a policy on the provision of free school transport within council areas. Where provision is denied under this policy, parents may appeal on the grounds of road safety if they consider the route to school unsafe to walk.
- 1.2 In considering any appeal the Education Authority arrange for a road safety assessment to be carried out by the council service responsible for road safety. The Education Authority must specify the route to be assessed. This assessment considers the road safety risks resulting from pedestrian and vehicle conflict or safety hazards resulting from defects within the road such as tripping points. Personal security issues are not addressed by this assessment.

2. The route assessment procedure

- 2.1 In carrying out the assessment, it is assumed that the parent or carer has arranged for the child to be accompanied as necessary by a responsible person.

3. Walking along a footway

- 3.1 The assessment will require the route to be walked in both directions on a school day and where practicable at a time when the child or children would be expected to walk.
- 3.2 During the assessment, any hazards that present unmanageable road safety difficulties be noted.
- 3.3 Where a footway is provided it should be continuous – excluding gaps of up to 20m – or be an acceptable local equivalent e.g. dedicated part of road sectioned by white lining.
- 3.4 Areas where children are expected to congregate such as bus pick up points should be of adequate size to safely accommodate the required number of pedestrians.
- 3.5 Some routes may lie along roads that have neither footway nor verge. On such roads, consideration must be given to the width of the carriageway, traffic speed and composition (such as frequent long / heavy goods vehicles) and to both pedestrian and driver visibility. (i.e. sharp bends with high hedgerows or other obstructions to visibility). Refer to the flow chart for guidance (Appendix 1).

4. Road crossing assessment

- 4.1 Where pedestrians are required to cross a road the availability of any facility (e.g. central refuges, pedestrian crossing, traffic signals etc) to assist such crossing should be taken into consideration. Where no crossing facility exists, a suitable location should be identified and an assessment of the risk generated by crossing the road should be made.
- 4.2 If a crossing manoeuvre is required, the gap time in traffic should be measured to ensure child pedestrians have frequent and sufficient time gaps to cross the carriageway. The assessment procedure is detailed below.

4.3 Crossing time and visible gap time

The crossing time required for a child pedestrian to safely cross a carriageway should be calculated as:

Crossing time (seconds) = thinking time + carriageway width / walking speed

This is based on 1 second thinking time and a walking speed of 0.9metres per second e.g.
 $1 + 7.3 / 0.9 = 9.11$ seconds

The visible gap time in traffic is the time between approaching vehicles in either direction to reach the crossing point. At sites where visibility is limited a measure of time should be taken from when a vehicle comes into view until it reaches the crossing point and that should exceed the time required for pedestrians to cross the road.

For a crossing to be considered acceptable, 4 visible gap times each greater than the crossing time is required in each 5 minute period.

4.4 Site survey.

The heaviest vehicle flows usually occur during the morning journey period. Therefore, the site surveys should generally be conducted during this period, unless it is proven that the afternoon period is the busier. The crossing should be walked in both directions to ensure adequate visibility from both sides of the road.

4.5 Traffic counts

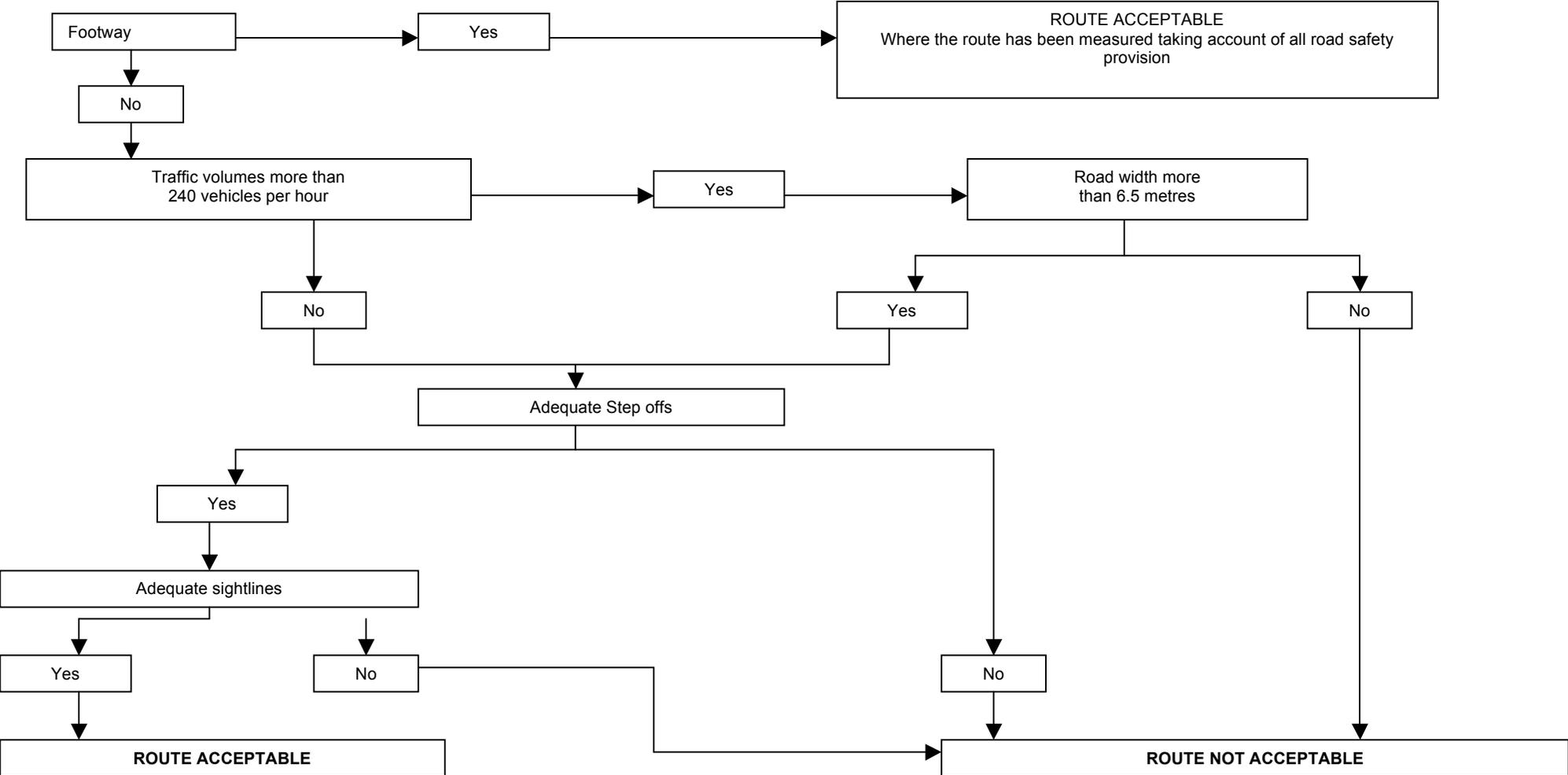
There is no need to classify vehicles, as pedestrians do not consider vehicle classification when determining whether to cross or not.

5. Reporting assessment

5.1 A completed road safety assessment should be reported to the Education Authority stating whether the route is considered acceptable to be walked or not.

5.2 If hazards are identified that are unreasonable for supervised, child pedestrians to cope with these should be listed along with any recommended measures required to mitigate them.

Appendix 1 – Flow chart



Appendix 2 – Frequently asked questions regarding walking route to school assessments

What about...

Q The child's home circumstances? A parent may be unable to escort the child to school.

- The route and not the child is assessed. The child need not be accompanied by a parent – but by any responsible person.
- Whilst the parent or guardian has the responsibility for decision-making, another family member, neighbour or friend can be deemed capable of accompanying the child to school.

Q Personal safety? Children taking remote paths, underpasses etc. are at risk.

- Stranger danger is covered by the fact that the child is accompanied by a responsible adult. The Roads authority assesses the route on the basis of road safety hazards only.

Q The older school pupil? It is obvious that older secondary school pupils will not be accompanied.

- Parents or guardians must assess if their child is competent to make the journey independently and cross the roads safely. If parents do not feel this to be the case then alternative arrangements require to be made.

Q Extended school days? Many children will stay after school for extra-curricular activities.

- This is done with the permission of the parent who still carries the responsibility for the safe movement of the child.

Q The need for high visibility clothing for child pedestrians?

- Whilst the Council may promote such aids to road safety, it is the responsibility of the parent to decide on clothing.

Q Availability and condition of footways, footpaths, street lighting etc?

- Any faults will be picked up by the normal inspection procedures of the Roads authority.
- Guidelines state the presence or absence of street lighting on a route is not considered to be a factor.
- A dedicated footway or footpath is not required for a route to be deemed suitable. The availability of "step-off" areas from the carriageway e.g. a grass verge may be deemed sufficient.

Q Complexity of junctions?

- Complex junctions require safe crossing facilities for all pedestrians and, therefore, do not present a hazard for responsible adults – and are certainly not specific to the school journey.

Q Traffic calming?

- Lack of traffic calming could, in fact, mean lack of traffic problems, and need not mean that the route is unsafe.

- Q Indiscriminate parking? Obstructive parking e.g. parking on the footway can make life difficult for the pedestrian.**
- This holds true for all pedestrians and is not specific to the journey to and from school. Such problems are within the remit of the police as part of their normal traffic duties. Roads with parking restrictions can be enforced by the Council's Parking Attendants.
- Q Bad drivers?**
- It is impossible to cover poor driving behaviour in any set of procedures.
- Q Quiet country roads with the occasional speeding driver – where an accident 'might' happen?**
- Where there is little traffic, there is little chance of a road traffic accident. In such cases, the pedestrian may well be known to the driver, since both are using the road in a fixed pattern.
 - The assessment will consider the visibility of both the pedestrian and the vehicles as well as considering factors such as carriageway width, vehicle speeds etc.
- Q Being able to get across the road?**
- This is covered in the measurement of traffic volume. Vehicle volumes of 240 vehicles per hour and under indicate there will be suitable gaps in traffic to allow safe crossing. This will be used as a guide where deemed necessary by the assessing officer. More detailed investigations will only be made where this is considered necessary e.g. road crossing times and visible gap times.
- Q School Crossing Patrollers?**
- Patrollers will only be provided at locations serving predominantly secondary pupils where there is a defined need. Research has shown that children under the approximate age of eight often still have difficulty dealing with traffic and judging vehicle speeds or distance, although this depends on the individual. Therefore, the Council's position is that pupils of secondary school age should, in general, be capable of crossing the road safely themselves. Parents or guardians must assess if their child is competent to do this. If parents do not feel this to be the case then alternative arrangements require to be made.
- Q Variations in weather conditions e.g. extreme snow?**
- Varying weather and seasonal conditions are considered within the assessment; however, the result can only be based upon "normal" conditions and not extremities. In such cases, parents/guardians will have to decide on appropriate action.
- Q The competency of the officer making the assessment?**
- Routes will be assessed by an experienced road safety professional to ensure pupils can still walk to school safely provided that reasonable care is taken and that the children are accompanied, if required.