Islington Clean Air Toolkit for Schools

Islington Clean Air Parents

Working in partnership

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Islington Clean Air Toolkit for Schools

We encourage all schools to take action to reduce air pollution in and around the school site. There are a number of actions that schools can take, with the best option different for each school. This document has been designed to help school groups decide on the best actions for them to improve air quality and provide them with the help to do this.

Why is air quality important?

Air pollution can impact our health, and children are some of the most vulnerable to the impacts of exposure to air pollution. In periods of high pollution some people with existing heart and respiratory conditions, such as asthma, may find their symptoms worsen. Over the long term, air pollution can:

- increase the risk of many respiratory and cardiovascular diseases
- impact the lung development of children

Air pollution is also increasingly being linked to a range of other health conditions and potentially neurological development in children.

The quality of our air has been improving over the last few decades, however parts of Islington do not meet the national air quality limits for one of the main pollutants; nitrogen dioxide. While we meet legal limits for other pollutants, given the health impacts of pollution even at lower levels, we need to continue to try and improve air quality. The equivalent of over 9,400 people die prematurely every year in London due to long term exposure to air pollution (nitrogen dioxide and particulate matter), that's equivalent to around 26 people a day.

Why do we need a toolkit?

There are many measures that can be taken at or around schools to help improve air quality, with the best measures varying from one school to another.

Whilst schools and school communities cannot control external sources of air pollution (such as non-school traffic or emissions from nearby construction and commercial properties), they can take some actions themselves to improve air quality. This is where the toolkit comes in, to:

- Provide examples of what measures can be taken in a school to improve air quality, with a focus on which ones that you can take as a school right now
- Give a brief outline of what other measures might be possible over a longer time period or with the help of others
- Provide details of where to get help; including case studies, resources and contacts

This toolkit was developed by Islington Council Pollution Team with the support of the Islington Clean Air Parent group.

What can we do? List of options available to your school

Air Quality Engagement

Action	Why	Deliverability & cost*
Raise awareness	Many people do not know about the impact air pollution can have on their children. Reaching them through the school network could be a very efficient way to raise awareness. Sharing information to parents, carers, PTA, governors and teachers about air pollution is a sensible first step. This can include websites, newsletters and playground banners.	**Quick and low cost**
Establish a working group	Parents, carers and school management can work together to form an air quality working group to address issues at your school.	**Quick and low cost**
Get the kids involved	This can include assemblies, workshops and classes. Example lessons have been created for Science, PSHE, English, Geography and ICT and links to some of these can be found in the resources section.	**Quick/medium term and low cost**
Events	Events are a great way to create interest around air quality and an environment less dominated by vehicles. This could include play streets where you can apply to the council to close the street to traffic on a weekly basis, playground events and one off events on roads outside schools. See Appendix 1 for case studies and Appendix 2 resources section for more information on how to do this and timescales involved.	**Quick/medium term and low cost**
External schemes	There are a number of schemes run by the council and external organisations available to take part in. Some of these are longer term programmes and some are one off events or schemes. Examples of current or recent schemes include cycle training for pupils and staff, STARS, Clean Air Day lessons and play street and school streets. See the contacts and resources section in Appendix 2 for information on current schemes, help on how to get started and materials to download.	**Ranging dependent on scheme**

*This is meant as an indication of length of time/ease in which measures can be implemented and cost of doing so, but this will vary

Getting to school

Action	Why	Deliverability & cost*
Suppliers	Changes to school suppliers can be a great way to improve air quality without having to make physical changes and can help a school show it is leading by example. The existing supplier may offer cleaner alternatives of product or delivery, in regards to air quality and climate. Or this could be a consideration when suppliers are changed.	**Quick and low cost**
Deliveries	One way to reduce emissions from vehicles is to look at how deliveries are made to the school. Can deliveries be grouped together so less trips are required? Is a switch to a cleaner vehicle or last mile by cargo bike possible? Can deliveries be made when pupils are not around? Can you stop private deliveries to the school and encourage collection instead? Do drivers know not to idle when delivering? See appendix 2, for contacts and resources to help with idling training.	**Quick and low cost**
School pick up and drop off	Endorse a shift from vehicle use to active travel. There are a number of ways to do this. For example; walking maps, increasing scooter and cycle parking for students and staff, adding sheltered waiting areas for those waiting and discussing with the school community how children get to school and low pollution and active alternatives.	**Quick and low cost**

Internal changes

Action	Why	Deliverability & cost*
Cleaning materials	Many products used in schools, for example those used for cleaning or painting, can produce air pollutants (called VOCs). However, there are low-VOC eco-friendly alternatives that can reduce pollution produced within the school building and impact on the natural world.	**Quick and low cost**
Ventilation	Ventilation and filtration systems could potentially improve air pollution by reducing pollutants entering a room or removing existing pollutants. These technologies are still developing and being tested and will be more effective in some settings than others. For more information on recent testing see appendix 2.	**Ranging dependent on method used**
Heating	Within the building one of the main pollution sources can be from heating as boilers can produce the air pollutant NOx. Through regular servicing or upgrades to the heating system, whether that is the boiler, radiators, controls or flues, pollution and costs can be reduced. If possible, consider replacing the boiler with a heat pump, which will eliminate pollutants and carbon emissions.	**Ranging dependent on changes made**
Building efficiency	Improving the energy efficiency of the building, through insulation, new windows etc., can reduce heating requirements and bring monetary, air quality and climate benefits.	**Ranging dependent on changes made**
Behaviour change	Changing behaviour can also improve the performance of the building and reduce heating requirements. For example, turn down the heating rather than open windows if rooms are too hot or avoid leaving windows and doors open in cold weather.	**Quick and low cost**
Greening	Plants can have some air quality benefits, help create a nicer indoor environment and growing and caring for plants can be incorporated into educational material. However, care should be taken on choice of plants as some can have a detrimental impact on air quality. It is worth noting that a large number of plants would be required to have any measureable impact on indoor air quality.	**Quick and low cost**

External changes

Action	Why	Deliverability & cost*
Greening	Greening around the school can help capture and absorb pollution, and can help act as a barrier from local air pollution sources. Careful consideration of maintenance, species and location are required to ensure pollution benefits. See contacts and resources section (Appendix 2) for toolkit on greening and case studies for examples of greening at schools.	**Quick/medium term and low/ medium cost dependent on scheme**
School streets	School Streets is a scheme that closes roads outside schools at school pick up and drop off time. This scheme is currently being expanded to all schools in Islington where possible. Be aware that sometimes School Streets may not be the best solution for your school. Talk with the council to find a more comprehensive and holistic solution for your requirements and think about other measures such as school layout changes discussed below. See contacts and resources section (Appendix 2) for help on who to contact and the case studies section (Appendix 1) for more information on the process of setting up a school street.	**Medium term and medium cost**
School layout changes	You may be able to reduce exposure to pollution by changing the school layout. For example, moving the entrance into school onto quieter roads or moving the playground away from busy roads. You could also remove, reduce or move any vehicle parking on the school site to reduce emission sources inside the school site and encourage alternative transport methods.	**Ranging dependent on method used**
Wider changes	There are also wider area changes that you can potentially ask or lobby about, such as: • Restrictions based on vehicle type such as weight, width or emissions level • Traffic filters • Road redesign to encourage a shift to active travel by reducing the dominance of traffic around the school and making a nicer environment for those walking or cycling. For example; kerb build outs, footway widening, green infrastructure. • Improvements to yellow lines, keep clear markings and yellow zigzags or signs to reduce drop off activity outside schools • Moving or reducing parking or loading bays near the schools for all or some vehicles. • Promoting a switch to low emission vehicles by installing adequate charging points etc. • Bus stop changes	**Ranging dependent on method used but likely to be longer term**

So now what?

Use the table above as a source of inspiration and ideas and amend it to your own requirements, prioritising actions and adding notes or deadlines.

You can start with engagement activities and smaller, less expensive measures, while planning for larger measures.

It is always useful to create a small group of interested people with the view to eventually get everyone in the school aware of air quality and engaged in making changes to reduce pollution.

If you're not quite sure where to start, get help! Contact the council to see what help is available, as well as other responsible organisations, experts or schools. Use the case studies and useful contacts section below. Reading up on existing or new schemes that can help and searching for funding possibilities will also provide you with further ideas and inspiration. Good luck!

Appendices

Appendix 1- Case Studies

Funding, Greening and Engagement Work

School A took part in the Mayor's air quality audit scheme which recommended air quality engagement and greening. To enable this work the school, with the help of the Pollution Team, applied for several pots of funding over several months, including; the Mayor's audit scheme, councils ward funding, the Greener Community Fund, Islington Sustainable Energy Partnership, City of London Low Emission Neighbourhood and the neighbouring Taylor Wimpey construction site.

With the help of an external organisation pupils from the schools Eco and Outdoor Champions group used hand held monitors to measure pollution around the school and create low pollution walking maps. They presented this information to the school community in an assembly and playground event. The map was made available on the school website and put on a playground banner. Over the course of a year as funding was received ivy screens were planted around the perimeter of the school using a contractor and additional sensory planting installed with pupils help.

The school is now looking to include air quality in the curriculum as part of wider work they conduct on the environment.

Clean Air Day Event

The Pollution Team worked with School B to run a range of workshops and events. Before the event the school liaised with the council and an external organisation on times for lessons and events, planned staffing and advertised the scheme. An application was also made for an event on the road outside the school (a six week minimum time period is required for these applications).

During the week, a facilitator from an external organisation gave lessons to all year groups throughout the school, teaching them about air pollution - what it is, where it comes from and how to avoid it. They learnt about active travel, getting to school without causing pollution and avoiding heavily polluted areas and made posters about clean air or active travel which were displayed at the Play Street.

An anti-idling event was held with support from the council during the week at one pick up time, with students helping to speak to drivers that were idling outside the school. This proved very effective and all drivers turned off their engines when asked by a student.

On Clean Air Day a Play Street was held outside the school, closing the road to through traffic for two hours from pick up time. The students played in the street, using the large road as somewhere free from traffic to play outside safely. The Play Street was a great opportunity to solidify the messages, celebrate what the children has learned and was a chance for parents and carers to get involved and hear more.

Wider road changes

The road outside School C– once blighted by traffic and high speeds – was rebalanced in favour of children and local people, with wider footways, traffic calming to cut vehicle speeds, brightly painted areas and new plants and seating.

The safer, more comfortable space has a child-friendly theme and was developed closely with the school, local residents and local councillors to help encourage people to walk and cycle and to tackle poor air quality.

A consultation was conducted in June 2018 and final installation completed in June 2019. School D was located on a busy road that has now become part of a people friendly streets area, meaning it will benefit from the removal of through traffic through use of a traffic filter.

School Street

School E is one of the schools in the borough with a School Street. This scheme closes the road outside the school from 8.30am to 9.15am and 3.15pm to 4pm during term-time to all vehicles except those with exemptions using signs and camera enforcement. This makes the school entrance a quieter and safer environment for children to get to school.

Discussions among the council and school started in 2018, with time required to assess the best traffic filter option.

In February 2019 the council consulted local residents, businesses and the school community on the planned changes to close two roads and introduce a no left turn on another. The school helped facilitate engagement with the school community.

The consultation showed the majority of respondents supported the scheme, so in June 2019 the scheme was introduced.

Getting organised as parents and carers

School F is near a very busy main road that is a major traffic artery for London. Pollution modelling suggested air pollution at this school exceeded legal EU limits. In September 2018 the headteacher was approached by a parent regarding putting air filtration into the classrooms at the school, but at the time this was not seen as possible.

A group of parents/carers formed and a WhatsApp group was set up. This became an essential tool for information sharing and the group discover that modelling suggested the school was in the top five most polluted schools in the borough. The group started to regularly communicate with the head regarding their concerns about the air pollution levels at the school and encouraged their year groups to do the same.

After three months the head started to address the air pollution levels in the school newsletter. The school carried out some in-house NOx diffusion tube testing and levels were shown to be just below the legal limits in the school courtyard.

The parents/carers group continued to raise the issue of air pollution in as many ways as possible; in person, in meetings and sharing press and research through email. After eight

months, the head announced the school would be installing air filtration. This was fully operational 12 months after the first approach was made to the head.

The group continues to campaign to Islington Council for a school street or traffic filter scheme to reduce traffic pollution directly outside the school.

Getting the kids involved

A group of parents and carers got together and met with the headteacher at School G, raising their concern about air pollution. As a consequence a commitment was made to increase awareness across the school. One outcome was to use two assemblies to focus on air pollution and why it's important to reduce driving. Year 5 & 6 students pulled together a fantastic show for the rest of the school, explaining the need to improve air quality and how to do it. A representative from Islington Clean Air Parents was also invited to speak at one of the Assemblies to share what the group is doing and how other parents and carers can get involved.

Appendix 2- Useful contacts and resources

Contacts

Contact	Details	What to contact them on
Council		
Pollution	pollution@islington.gov.uk www.islington.gov.uk/airquality	Information about this toolkit Advice and support on air quality and where to go for extra help Current air quality schemes /funding Idling events or training for schools and businesses Air quality monitoring
Public Realm	publicrealm@islington.gov.uk	School Streets Road safety One off events on roads Traffic filters Changes to school entrances Zig zag line, yellow lines etc. Local road redesign People friendly streets
Play Streets	road.safety@islington.gov.uk www.islington.gov.uk/roads/play-street	Setting up a longer term play street
Active Travel	https://islington.coordinate.cloud/	Advice on increasing active travel Cycle training STARS Travel Plans
Energy Services	energyservices@islington.gov.uk	Energy audits and advice on insulation etc.
Councillors	Enquire about your community plan funding www.islington.gov.uk/about-the-council/have-your-say/community-plans Find your local councillor https://democracy.islington.gov.uk/mgMemberIndex.aspx	Issues you are experiencing /actions you'd like to see Ward funding
Other Council Teams	contact@islington.gov.uk www.islington.gov.uk/ 020 7527 2000	If contacts aren't provided Contact Islington should be able to direct you to the best person.
Other		
TfL	0343 222 1234 https://tfl.gov.uk/help-and-contact/ for forms on issues such as roadworks, buses etc.	Changes to red routes Changes to bus services Road redevelopment on main roads
Islington Sustainable Energy Partnership (ISEP)	info@isep.org.uk https://isep.org.uk/	Organisation in the borough looking to reduce their environmental impacts
Islington Clean Air Parents (ICAP)	islingtoncleanair@gmail.com	Parents/carers air quality group

Resources

There are a range of resources available that can provide you with further information on air quality and where to get help as a school. Below are just a few examples:

Council

- The council website holds information on a range of services and schemes. The air quality website is a good place to start and includes a FAQ document that might answer some of your questions. Further teams that might be of help can be found in the table above.
- The council's pollution team has a handheld air quality monitor which it can lend out. This measures particulate matter and while not 100% accurate can be useful in engaging pupils.

Existing toolkits

- Clean Air 4 Schools Toolkit - advice on citizen science, air quality in the curriculum, lesson plans and activities
- Groundwork Green Infrastructure Toolkit
- Mayor's School Audit Toolkit - measures to take to improve air quality, including further information on many measures mentioned in this toolkit, such as air filtration systems.
- Hackney School Streets Toolkit
- Clean Air for Schools Framework- online tool for schools to create a clean air action plan
- Cleaner Air Sooner scheme- resources to help schools take action on air quality

Information hubs

- Clean Air Day website - includes information, toolkits and templates for schools to run events on Clean Air Day that may also be useful at other times
- Walk to School Week - ideas and advice for Walk to School Week
- Clean Air Hub - collection of air quality information
- Mayor of London air quality website - information on a range of air quality topics relevant to London
- Idling Action London website – information on idling, including training and event offers, as part of the London wide idling behaviour change programme
- Healthy Streets tools- tools for communities to assess how their area meets healthy streets criteria

Air quality data and alerts

- London Air - information on monitored and modelled pollution in London
- AirText - alerts to your phone or email alerting you to high pollution days
- Mayor of London - Information on air quality modelling and monitoring
- CityAir app - shows clean air routes
- Clean Air Route Finder - shows clean air routes

Funding

Funding sources will change over time, however below are examples of sources that have been used in the past:

- Council funding for the local area in the community plans. Contact your ward councillor to propose a new project.
- Local businesses or developments
- Mayor of London- these change over time but have in the past included funds for audits and greening. News on schemes are normally announced on the Mayor's website.
- Use of internal school funding
- Fundraising events
- Companies and charities with funding schemes that you can apply for e.g. Trees for Schools, Trees for Cities, Big Lottery funding
- Joint schemes with the council or academics which can pull in external funding e.g. Defra funding