

COVID-19 Walking and Cycling Emergency Response Measures: Proposed Measures at James Gillespies & Sciennes Primary Schools to aid safe travel to school

Response from Spokes – the Lothian Cycle Campaign, August 2020

This response considers the proposals shared by the Spaces for People Team on 4th August 2020

General comments

We welcome the measures being taken to create safe spaces around the school gates of the schools and these measures seem to reflect the wishes of the Parent councils at each of these schools. However we see this as only a first measure.

Although many pupils currently walk or cycle / scoot to each of the primary schools in this cluster, some arrive by car and cause problems in the roads around and there is a risk that the numbers of parents dropping off by car could increase because bus travel may be avoided in the short term.

Enabling more pupils to walk or cycle / scoot may require changes to the Travel Route to School (we think all schools have Travel Plans) to make them safer as well as the proposed spaces at the school gates. We have included some pointers but these will not be complete.

We're generally pleased by the proposals put forward, but we urge the council to review our detailed comments carefully.

Detailed comments

James Gillespies Primary School:

- *Pavement improvements on Warrender Park Road*

Around the school entrance:

The measure in Warrender Park Road for wider pavements seem to be in line with parent council requests. We understand the exit into Whitehouse Loan is to be used to manage traffic in a one way system so It's not clear why pavements are not being made wider at this exit too. There is a developing problem with speeding and rat-running between Warrender Park Road and Whitehouse Loan. JGPS transport Committee has recommended a modal filter to stop vehicles using the stretch of Warrender Park Road from Lauderdale St to Whitehouse Loan.

Spokes supports this SfP measure and the modal filter recommendation.

Routes to school:

Spokes is aware of the well attended 'Wee Unicorns' bike bus which assists pupils travelling to the PS by bike. We would support a review of the information they have on Safe Routes proposals to Schools here; <http://blackfordsaferoutes.co.uk/>

Here is a quote from the 2016 Travel plan for JGPS;

'The vast majority of car users (80%) would consider not using the car if there were safe crossing points on the journey to school. The majority of the open text comments were about the difficulties and safety concerns with crossing particular roads, such as, Kilgraston Road and Grange Loan and the need for safer crossing points to be established on a number of the routes to school'.

These difficult roads need to be identified and made safe to discourage unnecessary car transport to school. Any safe routes should be connected to enable safe access between schools within the catchment area.

Sciennes Primary School:

- *Remove guardrail and extend pavement by 1.5m outside school*

Around the school entrance:

Sciennes school has played a pioneering role in promoting cycling as a means of travelling to school in Edinburgh. It was the first school to initiate the "bike bus" concept by which parents and children travel to school by bike and this has been very popular with on occasions over 100 pupils and parents cycling together to school. It also has a bike blog on its website which has encouraged family cycling during lockdown.

Before lockdown parent volunteers closed the street outside the school during the morning when children were arriving and, in the evening, when they came out. This provided a safe environment by avoiding the problems posed by through traffic and parking outside the school.

We consider that the proposed temporary measures should build on this and that removing the guardrail and extending the pavement by 1.5m alone lacks ambition and will be inadequate to cope with the 600 plus children who attend the school, particularly since we understand that parents will not be allowed into the playground area and the need for social distancing.

Instead, we suggest that temporary measures should be used to allow for a 24/7 closure of the road along the curtilage of the school. This would avoid the need for parent volunteers to close the road, provide a large safe space for children and parents to gather at either end of the school day and also make it easier for children to use both the playground and play space on the other side of the street. The removal of the guardrail should be incorporated into this broader plan.

We do not think this closure should be achieved by the use of cones alone given the scope for abuse. The necessary temporary road closure order should allow for access by pedestrians and cyclists and for access by emergency vehicles.

In due course, the temporary closure measures should be replaced by a design to achieve a permanent closure. There should be a seamless transition from one to the other.

Routes to school:

Any safe routes should be connected to enable safe access between schools within the catchment area.

Additional comments

James Gillespies High School:

- *No specific measures suggested by City of Edinburgh Council*

Around the school entrance

As noted for JGPS there is a developing problem with speeding and rat-running between Warrender Park Road and Whitehouse Loan. The JGPS transport Committee has recommended a model filter to stop vehicles using the stretch of Warrender Park Road from Lauderdale St to Whitehouse Loan. This would also benefit pupils to JGHS.

Routes to school:

As per the JGPS comment above, any safe routes to this JGPS could also be utilised by pupils of JGHS. Any safe routes should be connected to enable safe access between schools within the catchment area.